

ESSENTIALLY CANADIAN

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IN "The Fourth Separatism" (*Canadian Literature* 45),¹ Ronald Sutherland discusses five recent works of Canadian fiction: Hubert Aquin's *Prochain épisode* (1965); Jacques Godbout's *Le Couteau sur la table* (1965); Claude Jasmin's *Ethel et le terroriste* (1964); Hugh MacLennan's *Return of the Sphinx* (1967); and Ellis Portal's *Killing Ground* (1968). Sutherland uses these works, all about some aspect of English-French relations in Canada, to analyze "four kinds of Quebec Separatism" and to argue that, "in the light of the psychological problems discussed in all the novels", a "special status" for Quebec "within a confederate system makes sense". "The Fourth Separatism" is, on the whole, an eloquent plea for the need to create "a genuine feeling of cultural security . . . once and for all in Quebec". Two issues Sutherland raises, however, need further comment.

One is his definition of a "distinctive Canadian literature". Sutherland thinks that its "main distinguishing feature would have to be dependent upon the main distinguishing feature of the Canadian Nation — the co-existence of two major ethnic groups. To be in the . . . mainstream of Canadian literature, therefore, a writer must have some awareness of fundamental aspects and attitudes of both language groups in Canada". He argues that Aquin, Godbout, and Jasmin, "by virtue of a broadening awareness which includes English Canada to varying degrees, are moving definitely towards the Canadian mainstream" and that MacLennan "is already there". Most other writers in Canada, he explains, "are in the tributaries rather than the mainstream". English-Canadian writers like Sinclair Ross, Morley Callaghan, and Stephen Leacock are, in fact, "in the tributaries of American literature". "The great majority" of French-Canadian writers have "until recently been caught up in the various Quebec tributaries of Canadian literature". Some more recent ones "have embraced spheres of conscious-

ness which, like those of many of their anglophone colleagues, are more or less extensions of spheres already defined in the United States”.

The main purpose of this article is not to argue with Sutherland's definition of a “distinctive Canadian” fiction.² Since an acceptance or rejection of it, however, does affect one's views of the importance of the theme of English-French relations in Canadian fiction, some observations about it are necessary. Canadian fiction in both English and French has always been strongly influenced by both the form and content of non-Canadian fiction. Frédéric Houde's “Le Manoir mystérieux” (1880), plagiarized from Scott's *Kenilworth* (1821), and Charlotte Führer's *The Mysteries of Montreal* (1881), based on Eugène Sue's *Les Mystères de Paris* (1843-1844), are two obvious examples of this fact. Yet both are adapted to some extent to their Canadian settings. “Le Manoir mystérieux” is partly concerned with moral corruption in New France shortly before the English conquest. In “Among the Fenians”, one of the stories in *The Mysteries of Montreal*, Mrs. Schroeder, the narrator, describes her experiences with a “sick woman at Point St. Charles” whose husband she suspects is a Fenian. Convinced that the “long, coffin-shaped boxes” in the lady's room “contain arms and ammunition . . . sent here from the Fenian headquarters in New York . . . for the destruction of the peaceful inhabitants of Montreal”, Mrs. Schroeder calls in the police, and, the Fenians arrested, prides herself on helping to “break up this den of ruffians”. Corruption in New France in the eighteenth century and Fenianism in Montreal in the nineteenth century are themes which, like that of English-French relations in Canada, are based on Canadian history and therefore contribute, like it, to the development of a “distinctive Canadian” fiction.

Even if a writer swims in Sutherland's “mainstream” of Canadian fiction and shows “some awareness of fundamental aspects and attitudes of both language groups in Canada”, usually he does not stop swimming in Sutherland's “tributaries”. Motifs of Gothic fiction help shape both the form and content of William Kirby's *The Golden Dog* (1877), the most popular nineteenth-century work of Canadian fiction in English, which Kirby wrote after a careful study of the works of such French-Canadian authors as François-Xavier Garneau, Philippe Aubert de Gaspé (père), and Joseph Marmette. Balzac is cited and some of his techniques are used in probably the best novel about English-French relations in Canada published in the nineteenth century, Mrs. Rosanna Leprohon's *Antoinette de Mirecourt* (1864). In fact, most authors of Canadian fiction in both English and French have not tried to cut themselves off from non-Canadian fiction but have tried to adapt the form and content of this fiction to Canadian

themes. Thus, while the influence of foreign fiction may have sometimes weakened both the artistic and cultural significance of their works, it has not prevented them from dealing with Canadian themes or from developing a "distinctive Canadian" fiction. Sutherland's image of a main stream and several tributaries in Canadian fiction should be changed to an image of one river of Canadian fiction with several currents, one of them foreign influences, another the theme of English-French relations in Canada.

While, however, the theme of English-French relations in Canada is only one current in the river of Canadian fiction and only one characteristic that distinguishes it from other national fictions, the theme itself is in some ways more significant than Sutherland implies. In "The Fourth Separatism" he not only confines his main comments on this theme to recent novels, but he also states that it is only now "emerging" in Canadian literature. Hugh MacLennan is an early champion:

Provided that Canada continues to exist as a single nation, he may well be creating for himself a special status. I suspect that the day will come when Hugh MacLennan is considered to occupy a position much like that of Mark Twain in the United States, as the prime mover in the emergence of a distinctive Canadian literature.

Hubert Aquin, Jacques Godbout, and Claude Jasmin are moving Canadian fiction in French towards this theme.

These statements are not true. MacLennan has made important contributions to Canadian literature. But he is not the first author of Canadian fiction in English to show "some awareness of fundamental aspects and attitudes of both language groups in Canada". Aquin, Godbout, and Jasmin have presented in their novels important contemporary views on the province of Quebec and its future in Canada. But they have not invented this theme in Canadian fiction in French. The theme of English-French relations in Canada is not an emerging theme in Canadian fiction in either English or French. It has been present in Canadian fiction from its beginning. The main purpose of this article is to discuss some contributions made to this theme by some early writers and to compare some characteristics of their handling of the theme with its treatment by more recent Canadian writers.

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HE FIRST NORTH AMERICAN NOVEL, Frances Brooke's *The History of Emily Montague* (1769), introduces the theme of English-French

relations in Canada. In this epistolary novel, the chief characters living in Canada are British men and women associated in some way with the military personnel occupying New France as a result of the English conquest. They are all interested to some extent in the French-Canadians and in their role in English Canada. Arabella Fermor, the coquette of the story, writes to a friend in London that she has been "rambling about amongst the peasants, and asking them a thousand questions"; she reports:

The Canadians live a good deal like the ancient patriarchs; the lands were originally settled by the troops, every officer became a seigneur, or lord of the manor, every soldier took lands under his commander; but, as avarice is natural to mankind, the soldiers took a great deal more than they could cultivate, by way of providing for a family: which is the reason so much land is now waste in the finest part of the province: those who had children, and in general they have a great number, portioned out their lands amongst them as they married, and lived in the midst of a little world of their descendants.

Her father, William Fermor, writes a series of letters about "the Canadians" and advocates ways of reforming them into loyal "British subjects". One method strikes a particularly familiar note: "It were indeed, my Lord, to be wished that we had here schools, at the expence of the public, to teach English to the rising generation: nothing is a stronger tie of brotherhood and affection, a greater cement of union, than speaking one common language". The chief male character, Edward Rivers, meets some Canadians in Montreal and briefs his sister on them:

tho' I have not seen many beauties, yet in general the women are handsome; their manner is easy and obliging, they make the most of their charms by their vivacity, and I certainly cannot be displeas'd with their extreme partiality for the English officers; their own men, who indeed are not very attractive, have not the least chance for any share in their good graces.

We may not like some of these ideas, but we must admit that Mrs. Brooke is aware of some "aspects and attitudes of both language groups in Canada".

It might be argued that neither Mrs. Brooke, an English lady who only lived in Canada from 1763 to 1768, when her husband was chaplain of the garrison in Quebec City, nor *The History of Emily Montague*, which was first published in England, belongs to Canadian fiction. Many stories, however, written about Canada in the eighteenth and nineteenth centuries were written by English, American, and French writers who at most lived only for a short time in Canada.

One of the recurrent themes in this fiction was English-French relations in Canada. In Ann Eliza Schuyler Bleecker's *The History of Maria Kittle* (1781), Mrs. Bratt, who has been captured by Indians in New York and delivered to the French in Montreal, announces at a tea party that her reception in Montreal has made her "reject . . . all prejudices of education. From my infancy have I been taught that the French were a cruel perfidious enemy, but I have found them quite the reverse". Although much of Mrs. Bleecker's information about Canada and Montreal is inaccurate, this American writer does present the latter as a place where "prejudices of education", particularly those about national differences, can be overcome. On the other hand, in Henri-Émile Chevalier's *Poignet d'acier* (1863), M. Villefranche, lying on his death bed, makes his grandchildren swear to continue the revenge he already has wreaked for 53 years on the English: "Et pourtant, moi, je n'ai jamais pardonné . . . je ne puis pardonner . . . aux Anglais . . . Ah! le froid me gagne . . . ta main sur mon cœur, Alfred . . . la vôtre, Victorine . . . Adieu, mes enfants . . . Adieu . . . Vivez pour arracher le Canada à l'odieuse tyrannie anglaise!" Chevalier, a Frenchman who lived in Montreal from 1853 to 1860, wrote a series of *Drames de l'Amérique du Nord* featuring the revenge of M. Villefranche, a Montreal lawyer whose wife or daughter³ had been seduced by an English officer.

Most stories published about Canada in the nineteenth century were written by Canadians; that is, people who were born and/or brought up in Canada or who made Canada their permanent home. Some of these writers, however, either left Canada as adults and pursued their literary careers elsewhere or, living in Canada, published their works abroad. Thus, there is a group of stories written primarily for a non-Canadian reading public. Even in these stories English-French relations in Canada are discussed. *A Comedy of Terrors* (1873), written by James De Mille, a Nova Scotian who taught at Acadia and Dalhousie and produced a large number of stories for American publishers, comments on this theme. Set in Canada and abroad in 1870, *A Comedy of Terrors* describes the courtship of two English ladies by two Americans. These love affairs begin in Montreal where Mrs. Georgie Lovell is pursued by Seth Grimes and where Miss Maud Heathcote is duelled over by Paul Carrol and the Count du Potiron, a Frenchman. Although the setting of Montreal is not particularized — De Mille implies at one point that it is an American city — the grouping of the characters in Montreal for their initial meeting suggests the author's awareness of the bilingual and multinational character of the city. The love triangle developed among Maud, Paul, and the Count; the victory over the Count both in the duel and in

love designed for Paul; and the name Potiron, a bilingual pun (pumpkin and pot/iron) given to the Count: all imply De Mille's awareness of cultural tensions in Montreal and his conviction of the superiority of the English and the Americans to the French.

One of the first short stories published in Canada was John Howard Willis' "The Fairy Harp" (1824).⁴ A very simple tale strongly influenced by Gothic motifs, its subject is music heard by a platoon of soldiers encamped on "the Lower-Canada frontier" during the War of 1812-1814. Almost every night they hear strange music coming from a nearby valley. When they cannot discover its source, the French-Canadians in the party call it "la harpe de la fée"; the Indians think it is the spirit of the Manitou. The mystery is partly resolved in 1815 when the narrator, an English soldier stationed in Montreal, goes on a hunting trip with an Indian chief from Caughnawaga to the same area where he has previously been encamped. Remembering the music, he enters the valley and discovers in a clearing a deserted log cottage. Inside it are the "mouldering remains" of books and elegant women's clothes. Beside it is a grave. Although the narrator never solves the mystery of the lady, the source of the music is explained.

There are several Canadian motifs in "The Fairy Harp", but the most relevant for the theme of English-French relations in Canada is Willis' indication of the different reactions of the French-Canadian and English soldiers to the music. The former dub it "la harpe de la fée", and accept it as magic. The narrator, representing the latter, seeks to find a natural cause for it and, through an enterprising act, finally solves the mystery of the music. Willis does not imply that these different attitudes are sources of conflict: all the soldiers are fighting together against the Americans; the English soldier gives the music the same name, although anglicized, as the French-Canadians. But he does suggest his awareness of a fundamental difference in emotional response to the unseen between the French-Canadians and the English.

Another early short story published in Canada is Pierre Georges Boucher de Boucherville's "La Tour de Trafalgar" (1835). Like "The Fairy Harp" it is strongly influenced by motifs of popular non-Canadian literature, but it too comments on English-French relations in Canada. "La Tour de Trafalgar" describes the adventures of a hunter who becomes lost and spends a day and a night on Mount Royal. During the night he takes shelter in a tower. While there, he sees blood on the wall and a hand in the air. Frightened by these apparitions, he leaves the tower and continues his search for a way down the mountain. Early in the morning, he finds a cabin and asks its inhabitant for food. The man re-

fuses to give the hunter food, but he does read him a story from a worn manuscript. The story concerns the double murder of Léocadie and Joseph, two Montrealers, at the tower many years before. Léocadie, in love with Joseph, is courted by a handsome stranger. When Léocadie spurns him for Joseph, the stranger murders them both one day when they are in the tower. Having achieved his revenge, he disappears, presumably to the cabin on the mountain.

Several motifs in "La Tour de Trafalgar" are relevant to the theme of English-French relations in Canada. The two murders in the tower, the past cruelty of the stranger, and his present rudeness are connected through the title both to Nelson's victory over the French at Trafalgar and to the monuments erected in Montreal to commemorate that victory. Thus, de Boucherville, like Willis, shows his awareness "of both language groups in Canada". Unlike Willis, however, he seems to insist on the destructiveness of the English both in Europe and in Canada and in the past and present. It is interesting to note that the story was published only two years before the outbreak of the Rebellion of 1837 and that de Boucherville, a Montreal lawyer, went into voluntary exile in Louisiana from 1837 to 1850 because of the part he had played as a *Patriote*. In the light of his political activity, "La Tour de Trafalgar" might be read as a thinly-disguised warning by de Boucherville to his compatriots that English-French relations in Canada were disintegrating once again into violence.

IN THE YEARS FOLLOWING THE 1830's, the Rebellion became a popular subject for writers of fiction. Frequently they used it to explore English-French relations in Canada. Some of the earliest stories with this subject and theme were published in the *Literary Garland* (1838-1851), itself partly an attempt by John Lovell, its publisher, to increase Canadian "prosperity"⁵ by encouraging tolerance among English-Canadians for the French-Canadian *Patriotes*. The most significant stories about the Rebellion, however, appeared later in the century. These include Jean-Talon Lesperance's "Rosalba; or, Faithful to Two Loves" (1870)⁶ and François-Benjamin Singer's *Souvenirs d'un exilé canadien* (1871).

When "Rosalba; or, Faithful to Two Loves" opens, two friends, an American and a Canadian, are discussing Canadian life, particularly the French-Canadians and the Rebellion. The Canadian eventually gives the American a manuscript to read about this event. The manuscript, "Rosalba", takes place over several years.

It opens on April 5, 1837, when the ice is breaking up on the St. Lawrence. Rosalba Varny, a wealthy farmer's daughter, who lives near Montreal, goes down to the river, hears a cry for help, launches a boat, and rescues a man from drowning. The man is Walter Phipps, a wealthy English-Canadian merchant from Montreal. By the time he leaves the Varny's farm for the city, Phipps has fallen in love with Rosalba, but she is already unofficially engaged to Edgar Martin, a French-Canadian lawyer educated in Montreal who is practising in a nearby village. In August, 1837, they are about to announce their official engagement when M. Varny demands that it be delayed because of Edgar's activities with the *Patriotes*. In a dramatic scene, M. Varny reveals that he is a "bureaucrat" and supports the government.

The story then switches to events during and after the Rebellion. In November, 1837, Edgar joins the rebel forces at St. Denis and St. Charles. When they are defeated, he tries to flee to Montreal, but he is warned by friends to go to the United States. On the way he is captured near Lacolle by Phipps, who is serving with the government troops. Phipps, however, remembering that Edgar is Rosalba's fiancé, helps him escape. Eventually, Edgar goes to France. Rosalba, obeying her father, refuses to join him. When her father dies, she and her mother move to a small cottage near Montreal. In 1849 Walter Phipps is on business at the docks in Montreal when he hears that one of the people on a newly-arrived immigrant ship is a *Patriote* coming home to die. He goes to see the *Patriote* and recognizes Edgar. Phipps immediately takes him to the Hôtel-Dieu, sends for a doctor, and goes for Rosalba. She and Edgar are married just before he dies. In 1852, when Rosalba's cottage burns down, Phipps finally proposes to her. They marry, move to a splendid home "at the foot of the mountain", and have one son. In 1867 they are still living in Montreal. At the end of the story, the Canadian promises to introduce the American to them.

Thus, in "Rosalba", Lesperance not only shows his awareness of "fundamental aspects and attitudes" of both English-Canadians and French-Canadians, but he also makes several points about their relationship. He shows that strife in Canada is not just between different cultural groups. Varny rejects Edgar; Phipps helps him. He demonstrates, however, that when violence between cultural groups does occur, it leads to loneliness, exile, and death. Rosalba, Walter, and Edgar all remain unmarried for several years; Edgar's exile helps bring on his sickness and, ultimately, his early death. He suggests that French Canada can achieve both wealth and happiness in a union with English Canada. Rosalba finds both in her

marriage to Walter. Finally, he implies that this union is the most suitable way to preserve the traditions of French Canada. The Phipps' son is named Edgar Martin.

Jean-Talon Lesperance, born in the United States of French-Canadian parents, educated there and in France, and at the time of the publication of "Rosalba", living permanently in Canada, appears hopeful, then, that the "romance" of French Canada can be preserved in a union between French- and English-Canadians. François-Benjamin Singer, a French-Canadian notary, seems less optimistic. In *Souvenirs d'un exilé canadien*, the *Canadien*, Hamelin, dies sorrowing over his exile from his native land. But this land is presented as a place where English-Canadians, chiefly in Montreal, rob, betray, and torture French-Canadians. They deprive them of their language, religion, and customs; they encourage them to rebel; and they destroy them when they do. Hamelin's father is ruined by an architect, "un anglais du nom d'Henderson", who comes from Montreal to help M. Hamelin construct a building on his farm. Hamelin himself has been imprisoned in Montreal for his activity as a *Patriote* in the Rebellion of 1837, found guilty of murdering an English officer, although he is innocent of the act, and condemned to death. Hamelin, however, has escaped from prison and run away to Chile. His final advice to Canadians is that they should continue to fight for a nation which is French-speaking, Catholic, and French in tradition, but eschew open, armed rebellion. This message is written on his tombstone: "O, mes bien-aimés compatriotes, fuyez les séditions; soutenez vos droits, celà est juste, mais soutenez-les par des moyens qui ne vous mettent pas dans la triste alternative de choisir entre la mort et l'exil. . . . Fuyez donc la révolte, car la rébellion conduit à l'exil ou à l'échafaud".

Souvenirs d'un exilé canadien concentrates mostly on the more melodramatic events of Hamelin's life and death in Chile. Nevertheless, the cause of his exile and the message on his tombstone are worth noting. In the Rebellion Hamelin has been both a criminal and a scapegoat. He has been guilty of sedition. He has been wrongly accused and convicted of murder. And he has been punished by exile. Thus, Singer presents him as a man whose advice is based on experiences of violence, injustice, and loneliness. His message is that while French-Canadians must preserve their culture, they must choose peaceful methods. The circumstances which led to a choice between the "scaffold" and "exile" — Hamelin's in 1837 — must never again be created. *Souvenirs d'un exilé canadien* seems to warn French-Canadians against both the English and themselves.

SOME WRITERS chose to discuss English-French relations in Canada in stories about the Rebellion of 1837. Others used earlier events in Canadian history to explore this theme. Of these writers of fiction set in Canada before 1800, Mrs. Rosanna Eleanor Mullins Leprohon, the Montreal-born daughter of an Irish immigrant and the wife of a French-Canadian doctor, is one of the more significant. Her historical novel *Antoinette de Mirecourt* opens in "November . . . in the year 1762" and ends about two years later. Antoinette, the beautiful 17 year-old daughter of the *seigneur* of Mirecourt, has just arrived in Montreal to spend some time with her cousin, Lucille D'Aulnay, and her husband, another aristocratic, wealthy French-Canadian. The purpose of the visit is to introduce Antoinette to Montreal society, which, while aristocratic and military, is now, on the male side at least, mostly British and Protestant. Antoinette's introduction to society is a resounding success. She is admired by all, courted by several, and loved by two English officers, Colonel Evelyn and Major Audley Sternfield. When her father hears of her success, however, he fears that she will be lured into a hasty, unsuitable marriage. Thus, he informs her that she must marry Louis Beauchesne, a childhood friend. Antoinette, encouraged by Lucille, refuses to obey her father and secretly marries Audley in a Protestant ceremony.

The result of this marriage is many sorrows. Audley is a passionate, moody man who has married Antoinette partly because she is a rich heiress. Antoinette regrets her disobedience of her father, her apostasy in marrying outside the true faith, and her choice of husband. She discovers that she is really in love with the reserved Colonel Evelyn. These sorrows are brought to a climax when Audley and Louis meet in a duel. Audley is mortally wounded. Antoinette, told this by Louis, who is about to escape to France, rushes to the Major's quarters and announces that she is his wife. Antoinette is thus involved in a great scandal. But Audley dies; Antoinette is too ill to know of the gossip about her; the revelation of her marriage and widowhood allows Colonel Evelyn to forgive her for her previous mysterious attitude to him and to marry her a year after these events.

In *Antoinette de Mirecourt* Mrs. Leprohon uses several melodramatic motifs of popular nineteenth-century fiction. Like many of her contemporaries who used historical settings, she includes quotations from historical works to provide background material. But she is skilful at character analysis and dialogue. And she presents much of the history through character and action. The result is that *Antoinette de Mirecourt* is both a good novel and an important contribution to a study of English-French relations in Canada.

In the opening chapter, Mrs. Leprohon sets the stage, introduces the characters, begins the action, and announces the main theme of her novel in a manner reminiscent of the comedy of manners. In the first paragraph the time, the setting, and the theme of the story are introduced. Their reality is enhanced by precise descriptive details and two metonymies: "The feeble sun of November, that most unpleasant month in our Canadian year, was streaming down on the narrow streets and irregular buildings of Montreal, such as it existed in the year 176-, some short time after the royal standard of England had replaced the fleur-de-lys of France". The concreteness of the setting is further developed in the second paragraph where Mrs. Leprohon focusses on the D'Aulnay's house and chooses details about it that create the vivid image of "unmistakable wealth and refinement" for which she is striving. In the next three paragraphs more *objets d'art* are mentioned to introduce M. D'Aulnay, to explain his motives for staying in New France after his "country has passed under a foreign rule", and to describe one method of dealing with English-French relations: living among, but in isolation from, the "proud conquerors":

In vain some fiery spirits indignantly asked him how he could brook the arrogance of the proud conquerors who had landed on their shores? how he could endure to meet, wherever eye or footstep turned, the scarlet uniforms of the epauletted heroes who now governed his native land in King George's name. To their indignant remonstrances he sadly but calmly rejoined he should not see much of them, for he intended establishing himself henceforth permanently in his beloved library, and going abroad as little as possible.

The conversation which comprises the rest of Chapter One repeats the theme of English-French relations and enunciates another attitude to them. Lucille has decided to entertain the British. She announces to her husband that she proposes to end the "cloister-like seclusion" in which they have been "vegetating" because of the defeat of "Lévis and his gallant epaulettes" and re-enter society.

In the rest of the story, the theme is further developed, various attitudes to it are explored, and their wisdom is examined. The most extreme anti-English attitude is held by Antoinette's father, Arthur de Mirecourt. Having spent some time in "that gay sunny land of France, that polished brilliant Paris", he returned to his native country, "fonder and more devoted to it than when he had left its shores". Living a quiet, retired life in rural New France, he had a great determination to retain that life both for himself and his daughter. He tells Antoinette that he will never allow "any secret love-engagement with those who are aliens alike to our race, creed, and tongue". When Arthur comes to Montreal, a hint

that Antoinette might be involved with an Englishman throws him into a violent rage:

“Listen to me, daughter Antoinette, and you, my too officious niece, bear witness,” he resumed, after a short pause, which had been merely a lull in the tempest. “I must be plain, explicit, with you both. I forbid you, child, to have any intercourse, beyond that of distant courtesy, with the men I have mentioned; and if you have entangled yourself in any disgraceful flirtation or attachment, break it off at once, under penalty of being disowned and disinherited.”

The price of this attitude is made clear in the story. Antoinette’s knowledge that her father will not allow her to marry Audley is one reason for her hasty and secret marriage to him. Her father’s threat to disinherit her prolongs the secrecy of the marriage. Her suffering over her disobedience to her father is one cause of her serious illness. While by the end of the novel, de Mirecourt has learned that not all Englishmen are villains, and has allowed his daughter to marry one, the cost of this lesson has been high. Mrs. Leprohon thus rejects the idea that French-Canadians can preserve easily or successfully a Roman Catholic, French-Canadian life in complete isolation from English-Canadians.

De Mirecourt, unlike the other French-Canadians, almost succeeds in his isolation by remaining on his estate and by making only quick visits to Montreal and Quebec. The other minor characters, Louis Beauchesne, Lucille, and M. D’Aulnay, have to come in contact with the English in Montreal. Louis, sharing de Mirecourt’s views, is prompted to duel with Audley. The price he pays for this act is permanent exile from Canada. Lucille, determined to have warm relations with the English, entertains them, encourages Antoinette to marry Audley, and announces that her father’s attitude is a “mere prejudice”. The remorse she feels when the marriage is so unhappy teaches her that her flippant acceptance of the new order is dangerous and impious. Even M. D’Aulnay has to learn that his way of handling the new government is potentially disastrous, for his disinterest in the affairs of Antoinette and Audley is partly responsible for their “secret sorrows”. Thus, Mrs. Leprohon implies that all these attitudes are imperfect, limited responses.

In *Antoinette de Mirecourt*, only two English characters, Audley and Colonel Evelyn, are fully developed. Of the two, the less sympathetic is Audley. Although he is partly sincere in his love of Antoinette, he is presented chiefly as a penniless, proud gambler and flirt who is interested mostly in marrying and exploiting a rich heiress. His desire for money and his treatment of Antoinette suggest that he is materialistic and sensuous and that he has no spiritual values. Although he

dies "peacefully", Mrs. Leprohon carefully avoids an explicit statement about his acceptance of God and the afterlife. The manner in which his death is described suggests, in fact, that she felt it a fitting end for a man so lacking in respect for people from a different cultural background.

While there are similarities between Audley and Evelyn, the latter has money, family connections, and a latent Roman Catholic faith which allow him finally to accept and to be accepted by the French-Canadians. Although Evelyn's Catholicism permits Mrs. Leprohon to duck religious differences between the two groups, his marriage to Antoinette is clearly meant to symbolize the union of the old and the new orders in Canada and the emergence of a new society. When Antoinette marries the Colonel, she has openly confessed her sinful marriage, been purged of her evil through her illness, and been forgiven by her father and her church. In her marriage to Evelyn, she unites this heritage to his. The new society, bilingual and binational — if not interdenominational — is one of happiness and "unclouded domestic felicity". Mrs. Leprohon, then, after exploring English-French relations in Canada from several points of view and after canvassing various solutions to their problems, opts at least emotionally for a bicultural Canada. She claims, moreover, that this choice is "essentially Canadian".

IT IS EVIDENT, then, that the theme of English-French relations in Canada does not emerge with the works of Hugh MacLennan in English or those of Aquin, Godbout, and Jasmin in French, but that it is a seminal theme in Canadian fiction in both languages. It begins in the first novel about Canada. It continues in the fiction about this country published in the nineteenth century and written by both non-Canadian and Canadian authors. It recurs today in Canadian fiction. Thus, while it is not the only theme which makes this fiction "essentially Canadian", it does help to distinguish Canadian fiction from that of other countries. There are, moreover, similarities in the way the theme is handled by the writers.

In the stories the theme of English-French relations in Canada is often connected with other dominant themes in Canadian fiction. One of these is Canadian-American relations. In "Rosalba; or, Faithful to Two Loves", the Canadian makes his longest explanations about English-French relations in Canada to an American who has come to "Montreal purposely to study the history and condition of the country"; Edgar flees to the United States to avoid arrest. In *Ethel et le terroriste*, Paul escapes for the same reason to New York City. In *Return of*

the Sphinx, Alan Ainslie goes into politics and to the Ministry of Cultural Affairs partly because of his anger at Americans exploiting Canada. In *Killing Ground*, it is American intervention in the Canadian Civil War that forces the English-Canadian federalists and the French-Canadian separatists to work together again to prevent "a complete American takeover".

While the settings of the stories vary, the locale of Montreal is used in some way in them all. *Antoinette de Mirecourt* is set chiefly in Montreal. In *Souvenirs d'un exilé canadien*, Hamelin ponders events which occurred in Montreal. Often these events are crucial for the characters and their country. In *Ethel et le terroriste*, the lives of Paul and Ethel become extremely complicated because of Paul's terrorist activities in Montreal; the bomb-throwing and killing force him to continue to work for the revolutionaries. Montreal, finally, is often the place where the English-Canadians and the French-Canadians have the most sustained relations with each other. In Lesperance's story, Walter and Rosalba marry and live "happily ever after" in Montreal.

Two stylistic devices help to create the reality of bilingualism in this fiction and to suggest the complexity and confusion of English-French relations in Canada. One is the habit of mixing English and French. Mrs. Leprohon uses French expressions like *mon cher* in *Antoinette de Mirecourt*. Godbout includes such sentences as "Je ne suis pas une raciste moi, mais les seuls nègres que j'ai connus étaient porteurs à bord des trains, *I can't get upset like you*". The other is the terminology used to describe the national origins of the characters. The narrator of "Rosalba" calls the French-Canadians both "French Canadians" and "Canadians". The English-Canadians are usually called *les Anglais* in the stories in French, even though the term is often inaccurate. The narrator of *Le Couteau sur la table* considers Patricia *une Anglaise*, although her father was a Czechoslovakian Jew, her mother Irish. It is difficult to say whether the plethora of terms used to differentiate Canadians and the tendency of one group of Canadians to categorize another in simplified national terms is a result of, or a cause for, the ambivalent relations between English-Canadians and French-Canadians that the fables of the fiction reveal.

Actual political events frequently help to shape their fables. The fall of New France to the English is the starting point of Mrs. Leprohon's *Antoinette de Mirecourt*. The writing of *Ethel et le terroriste* was, according to Jasmin, "one manifestation of the acute examination of conscience which seized French Canada in the spring of 1963 . . . when a terrorist bomb exploded in a Canadian military recruiting centre in Montreal, killing the night watchman". The last chapter of

Godbout's *Le Couteau sur la table* is mostly taken up with two reports, one in English, one in French, of this same action.

One of these events, the Rebellion of 1837, links closely some of the nineteenth- and twentieth-century stories. Chevalier's character, Villefranche, pursuing his revenge against the English, becomes a leader in the *Fils de la liberté*. Lesperance weaves "Rosalba" around events related to the 1837 crisis. In one of the most moving passages in Aquin's *Prochain épisode*, the narrator dreams of a house on the Nation river and links his crisis and that of present-day Quebec with the battle of Saint-Eustache and Papineau. In *Killing Ground*, the headquarters of the "P.D.Q." at the beginning of the Civil War is the Seignior Club, "a site . . . of great historical significance" for the separatists since "it was the home of Louis Joseph Papineau".

Violence, death, guilt, and loss are often the result of both group and individual confrontations between English-Canadians and French-Canadians. In *Antoinette de Mirecourt* Louis duels with Audley, kills him, rushes to Antoinette to confess, and leaves for exile in France. In *Ethel et le terroriste* Paul throws the bomb, escapes to New York, and suffers guilt pangs about the death and homesickness for Canada. These feelings are often associated with a reluctance to kill and a recognition of brotherhood. In "Rosalba", Walter, fighting with the government against the rebels, spares Edgar's life and later helps him marry Rosalba. In *Prochain épisode* the narrator hesitates to murder Heutz when Heutz repeats the narrator's alibi to him. Although he does not believe Heutz, the narrator finds himself identifying with him.

The same ambivalent feelings that exist between English-Canadians and French-Canadians are shown in another frequently used motif: a love affair. Mrs. Brooke, Chevalier, De Mille, de Boucherville, Lesperance, Mrs. Leprohon, MacLennan, Aquin, Godbout, Jasmin, and Portal: all use a version of this motif. Sometimes deception and misunderstanding are involved. Mme Des Roches, misinterpreting Rivers' sensitivity for sentiment, is partly tricked into loving him in *The History of Emily Montague*. In *Prochain épisode* Aquin suggests that K, the narrator's blonde mistress, is also Heutz's and that she has betrayed the narrator to him. Even in *Antoinette de Mirecourt*, which is most optimistic about a union between the two cultures. Antoinette is tricked by Sternfield into a secret marriage and betrayed by him, when he courts other women. Yet the characters continue to be fascinated by members of the other group. Antoinette, despite her unhappy marriage to one Englishman, marries another. In *Le Couteau sur la table*, the narrator, despite Patricia's affair with the rich *Anglais* from West-

mount and his own affair with Madeleine, continues to love Patricia and later returns to her, although he admits, "je ne suis pas chez moi ici" and he says, "le couteau restera sur la table de la cuisine".

"The knife on the table": this image summarizes the theme of English-French relations in Canada as it is presented in Canadian fiction from its beginning to the present day. These stories reveal that there is a knife, composed of real acts of violence, between English-Canadians and French-Canadians. They reveal that the knife has been used periodically to cut more wounds on the bodies, minds, and souls of members of both groups. But they also reveal that the wounds are the kind that one member of a family inflicts on another. For the image of a knife on a table implies a house shared by people in a domestic relationship with each other. Wounds which result from the cut-and-thrust of "domestic felicity" are often more damaging, it is true, than injuries from mechanical objects or foreign intrusions. On the other hand, a family breakdown after 200 years would probably be even more destructive. Perhaps, then, instead of wondering if we should "let Quebec go" or "free Quebec from the English", we should examine more closely the rules of this family game which we have played as a nation for such a long time, expose them, as some Canadian writers have traditionally done, and change them, if we choose, not with a knife but with a pen.

FOOTNOTES

- ¹ "The Fourth Separation" has since been reprinted with only a few changes as a chapter in Ronald Sutherland's *Second Image*, 1971.
- ² Although he speaks of "literature", Sutherland's examples are drawn from fiction.
- ³ The reason for M. Villefranche's hatred of the English differs in the novels where he is the chief character. In *Poignet d'acier*, his hatred is attributed to the fact that his daughter has been seduced by an English officer. In *Les Derniers Iroquois* the woman seduced is Villefranche's wife.
- ⁴ John Howard Willis, "The Fair Harp" *Canadian Review and Literary and Historical Journal*, 1, 2 (December (1824)), 3 11-348.
- ⁵ Mary Markham Brown, *An Index to the Literary Garland* (Toronto: Bibliographical Society of Canada, 1962), iii.
- ⁶ Jean-Talon Lesperance, "Rosalba; or, Faithful to Two Loves", *Canadian Illustrated News*, 1, 20 (March 19, 1870) — 1, 24 (April 16, 1870).