CHANGE IN RINGUET'S NOVELS

A CHANGING WAY OF LIFE AS SEEN IN THE PRINCIPAL NOVELS OF RINGUET

by

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SCOPE AND CONTENTS: A discussion of some of the changes in French Canadian society, as seen in the principal novels of Ringuet, in which he depicts an age of increasing prosperity brought about by a growing urban and industrial civilization imposed on Quebec culture resulting in a break-down of tradition.

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PREFACE

Some years ago while taking an under-graduate course in French-Canadian literature and civilization, I became interested in Canadian novels written in the French language. Since that time it has been one of my ambitions to deal with some aspect of our literature from Quebec. Subsequent familiarity with the province of Quebec and the acquisition of French speaking friends there have further whetted the desire to pursue such a study.

Upon reading some of the novels of Ringuet, the name under which Philippe Panneton published his books, an interest which led to this study was stimulated.

It is to be noted further that the topic of this study, a changing way of life as seen in the principal novels of Ringuet, has a direct bearing on only three of his novels. The ideas and comments expounded will refer to Trente Arpents, Fausse Monnaie and Le Poids du Jour. Entirely different from these are Ringuet's other books: L'Héritage et autres contes, a collection of short stories, chiefly about people in humble circumstances, L'Amiral et le facteur, a dissertation on the discovery of the new world, discussing the relative contributions of Columbus and Amerigo Vespucci to the discovery of America, Littératures. . .à la manière des auteurs canadiens, a series of parodies of French-Canadian authors

written in collaboration with Louis Francoeur, Un Monde était leur empire, a history of the American Indian which Ringuet defined as a popularization of science, and Confidences, which is autobiographical.

Written by a Canadian of Anglo-Saxon background about Canadians of French ancestry, this study involves research which results in a deeper understanding of the French-Canadian mind. From this acquaintance comes naturally a great sympathy and attachment for the rich culture and the way of living of our compatriots of French heritage. Fortunate are we who are able to draw on the talents of those who can express themselves in the languages of Shakespeare and Molière. Finally, I wish to express my sincere esteem for the novelist, Ringuet; my hope is that "anglophones" may become more familiar with a man already highly respected in his own group.

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INTRODUCTION

Born in Trois-Rivières on the thirtieth of April in 1895, Marie-Joseph-Philippe Panneton grew up in a well-established French Canadian family. His paternal ancestors settled in New France in 1686 in the very district of Trois-Rivières which he describes in his writings. His maternal ancestors came to Canada as early as 1640. Trois-Rivières in 1895, the year of Panneton's birth, was a country town of some 15,000 inhabitants, and entirely French Canadian in population. There, Panneton received his early schooling, and at the age of eighteen he set off for Montreal.

In Montreal, he began his career as a newspaper man, but after spending a year as a reporter for La Patrie, at a weekly salary of eight dollars, he decided on a medical career. After studying medicine at the University of Montreal and at Laval, he began to make a name for himself in the group of young French Canadian intellectuals known as the Nigog. The years 1920-1923 were spent in post-graduate study in Paris. Then Panneton returned to Canada to set up practice as an ear, eye, nose and throat specialist in a Montreal office. Retaining his interest in writing, he was an occasional contributor to discriminating French-Canadian periodicals such as L'Ordre and Idées. A man who spoke English, Spanish and Italian in addition to his native

French, he was an avid reader and had an extensive library. Often he said, "Je ne dois pas grand' chose aux collèges, mais tout à la lecture".[1]

In addition to his practice, Panneton led a busy round of activity doing hospital work, lecturing at the University of Montreal on the history of medicine, and travelling extensively. For example, on a trip to Brazil in 1946 he gave a series of lectures on both medicine and literature.

At this time in his career, at fifty years of age, he is reported to have been a charming man of average size, well built, with dark hair and eyes, and a close-cropped moustache turning grey. A friendly man who wore horn-rimmed spectacles, he was quick, suave and neat. He is quoted as saying, "I love my profession. It permits me to see people naked--not their bodies, but their minds. They have no reserve against us".[2]

Panneton was a man with a keen sense of humour; witness two examples from Confidences.

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[1] Françoise Magnan, Bio-bibliographie du Docteur Philippe Panneton, (Montréal: Université de Montréal, 1942), p. 4.

[2] The Globe and Mail, March 30, 1946.

> Pour moi j'aime mon pays. Mais surtout en été, pour être franc.3

Concerning the office where he worked for La Patrie, he said:

> Il y avait deux rangées de pupitres. Sur chacun, une machine à écrire modèle 1900. . .avant Jésus-Christ; ou à peu près.4

It was to writing that Panneton turned as a hobby. He found medicine and writing a desirable pair of complements. "In both," he said, "curiosity is the most wonderful vice in the world".[5] He was forty-three years of age when his first novel, Trente Arpents, was published in Paris under the pseudonym, Ringuet, his mother's maiden name. Panneton guarded his identity for some time, partly as self-protection, since in pre-war Montreal the literary profession was still considered somewhat raffish for a respectable doctor. "I always find time to write", he said, "because I do not golf, drink or smoke. Furthermore, I travel a great deal, and that gives me both material and leisure".[6] Being told how highly all of Canada regarded his Trente Arpents, he said,

> Doctors write the best French in Canada, it has always been noticed. I came from Trois-Rivières where my father was a doctor; he

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[3] Ringuet, Confidences, (Montreal: Fides, 1965), p. 38.

[4] Ibid., p. 61.

[5] "Fruitful Vice", Time, December 19, 1949, p. 16.

[6] The Globe and Mail, March 30, 1946.

> wrote. My sisters write. So do my brothers who are also doctors. Once, one of them, named Auguste, wrote to a paper over a pseudonym. A reader replied, and quite an interesting correspondence went on until Auguste discovered that the other correspondent was our other brother.7

Indeed, the vocations of doctor and writer seem hereditary in the Panneton family:

> Médecin même par hérédité, si cela se peut. Fils de médecin, frère de médecin, deux fois oncle de médecin.8

It was for diversion, then, that Panneton wrote, since he ranked high in his medical profession. With a good income, he could afford time to gather and assess his material as well as to develop the art of expression. To-day his work is widely acclaimed. Trente Arpents, for example, circulates in five languages: French, English, German, Dutch and Spanish.

Many have been the literary awards received by Panneton from both Canada and France. These include Prix Girard; Prix David, 1924; Prix du Gouverneur général du Canada, 1938; Prix de l'Académie Française, 1939; Prix de la Province de Québec, 1940; Prix des Vikings, 1941; Prix Duvernay, 1955; Lorne Pierce Medal, 1959. In addition, Panneton was a founding

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[7] The Globe and Mail, March 30, 1946.

[8] Ringuet, Confidences, p. 71.

member and several times president of l'Académie canadienne-française. Panneton admitted with some modesty, "I consider myself an amateur author because I was never good enough to make a full time profession of it. There are too many good writers, and the competition is too rough".[9]

In the spring of 1957, Panneton gave up his busy practice in Montreal and sailed for Portugal, to become Canadian ambassador in Lisbon. As he said:

> It was a difficult decision to make, but the opportunity to represent Canada. . .to be a piece of Canada abroad and serve one's country is an honour that I couldn't turn down.10

Dr. Panneton had been in Portugal only for a few days some twenty years before on his way to Italy, where it had been his ambition to retire and live. It was not without some apprehension that he accepted the life of a diplomat. He is quoted as saying:

> I'm a homebody who stays away from bright lights and night clubs. And I don't drink, only port wine now and then. And that's another thing I'll have to remember when in Portugal--port is made in Portugal; so you don't ask for sherry because that comes from Spain.11

In Lisbon, Philippe Panneton suddenly died on December 30, 1960. His wife, France Lerigrer de La Plante

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[9] The Hamilton Spectator, January 29, 1957.

[10] Ibid.

[11] Ibid.

of Montreal, predeceased him, and they had no children. He was survived by two brothers, Dr. Auguste Panneton who wrote, over the pseudonym Sylvain, a series of sketches of the Trois-Rivières area, the people, and their ways of life, and Canon Georges Panneton, also of Trois-Rivières.

Thus passed away a man of three identities: His Excellency Philippe Panneton, Canadian Ambassador to Portugal; the physician, Dr. Philippe Panneton; and his third self, Ringuet, one of the masters of Canadian fiction.

The ensuing discussion of change in an era of increasing prosperity as depicted in the novels of Ringuet will perhaps be more fully appreciated after a brief study of the views of other writers who have attempted to analyse the effects of an affluent society on its people.

The theme is an old one; witness the Greek philosopher and critic of the third century, Longinus, who expressed the idea that men were lost in their money-making and inevitably they ceased to look up. Although it is not my purpose to discuss morals, Ringuet's novels are not without reference to these problems. It has often been pointed out that a time of prosperity is a time of disregard or, at least, questioning of religious belief. Whether or not religious faith is giving way to a growing faith in the power of money, Ringuet seems to suggest that the reign of the creed has yielded to the reign of credit. This trend is recognized by Miriam Chapin in her book, Contemporary Canada, in which

she says that no one knows better than the Catholic intellectual, whether he wears the soutane or not, that the Church is losing the city working class. She refers to an editorial in a Montreal French daily which spoke of the dechristianization of the masses which accompanies industrialization.[12]

In the realms of French literature, however, one soon turns to the pages of Balzac in considering attitudes to money. His writings depict a miserly attitude presenting perhaps a realistic but pessimistic picture of nineteenth century society where evil seemed rampant. Balzac had three passionate desires--love, fame and money--but fortune escaped him. In Balzac's writings the underlying theme seems to be that money can do everything. In the picture he paints of society, restraints of religion and of parental authority have vanished, for the most part, leaving self-interest as the supreme motive of human conduct. The way to success is paved with money and whoever wishes to acquire wealth must play a dangerous game in which the stakes are wealth or disgrace. A great force Balzac painted is that exerted by the desire to gain money and the power and the amenities of life that the possession of money brings. Balzac, thoroughly familiar with money and financial operations and

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[12]Miriam Chapin, Contemporary Canada, (New York: Oxford University, 1959), p. 198.

personal debts, depicted exactly the different fashions in which a man may gain or lose large or small sums of money. He calculated in exact figures the income required to keep up various styles of living. The cost of living often appears in his stories and the reader follows all financial circumstances and the cost of everything. Money is indispensable to the person who wants to get on. "Money is life. Money is all-powerful", Goriot cries and it is not the least part of his pain that he knows in dying he is leaving his daughters at the mercy of rascals who will strip them of every penny of the fortune he has spent his life building up for them.

Another of Balzac's misers is Grandet, who chooses a wife whose relatives are about to die and who have property and money. Later, Grandet dies ignominiously worrying about his treasure, uttering his last words, "You will account to me for it up there". The theme of Eugénie Grandet, or indeed of Balzac in general, is the gradual evolution of the quality of thrift till it becomes inhuman avarice, and herein is found the basic difference between Balzac and Ringuet: Ringuet demonstrates nothing of the miserly attitude to material possessions. In French-Canadian literature, the influence of Balzac's attitude is seen to some extent in Henri Grignon's novel, Un Homme et son Péché.

Previously, this theme had been considered comic, but Balzac's deep probing precludes any desire to laugh.

L'Avare of Molière amuses most people in its depiction of the rich miser who wants to marry his daughter to a man who will take her without a dowry while he himself proposes to marry a well-dowried young lady.

Throughout the writings of François Mauriac there are themes on strong family traditions rendered dramatic through a rather haunting fear of the consequences should such traditions collapse. This situation offers some parallels with the events described in Ringuet's novels, although Mauriac gives the reader psychological studies written from the standpoint of his fervid Roman Catholicism. His characters, beneath an exterior of ordered, wealthy respectability, are the helpless victims of disordered uneasy passions which are continually at war with religion.

In Thérèse Desqueyroux the traditions of French provincial life of the Bordeaux area are active elements in the experiences of the Desqueyroux family. Bernard Desqueyroux, the oaf that he is, unable to feel and think independently of the time-honoured narrow traditions of his family, accepts a marriage to the rather aesthetic Thérèse largely in order to please the families and round out their estates, since social status is of paramount importance. The result is a life of loneliness, misery, boredom, jealousy and frustration. No genuine love is enjoyed although the couple attempt to display an outward show of harmony for the sake of family and tradition. Various conflicts and clashes of character

result only in a nervous depression for Thérèse. Divorce is impossible, but their estrangement is final.

"Le silence" of the estate and "le vent dans les pins" are recurring phrases in the story and they seem to emphasize the importance of the land in the lives of the characters; a similar attachment for the land will be noted in Trente Arpents. Both Thérèse and her husband are passionately attached to the land--the only taste they have in common. Otherwise, unrelieved unhappiness dominates the novel, and this resembles the sense of frustration to be seen in the way of life depicted in Ringuet's novels.

The novel Génitrix permits Mauriac again to dwell on the idea of the bitterness of life and the desire to love and to be loved. Here, in a conflict of personalities, Mathilde Cazenave, whose one aim is to get the better of her mother-in-law, Félicité, finds satisfaction posthumously, since her spirit lives on, giving her a grip on Félicité greater than she could accomplish while living. However, in reading Ringuet, we cannot help but notice a different clash, a conflict of generations, to be exemplified in the pathetic dilemma of a society which evidently has thrown tradition to the winds.

Still another novelist reflecting attitudes to the new way of life is Gabrielle Roy, whose Bonheur d'Occasion depicts a way of life fraught with grinding poverty and despair. The novel describes life in a poor class district

of Montreal during the depression and subsequent war years. It is humble living; there is no money. Economic salvation comes only through enlistment at the outbreak of the Second World War. As soon as we meet Florentine Lacasse, we share her hopes, pleasures, disillusionments and her overwhelming sense of frustration. The mother, Rose-Anna, shows genuine heroism in fighting on grimly against constantly increasing odds. Real happiness seems beyond the grasp of any of these Saint-Henri folk. The sympathetic author relates the age-old story of the unsophisticated girl who gives herself completely to a lover who later scorns her. The author produces a faithful portrayal of poverty-stricken inhabitants set amid sordid slums, rows of grimy, dilapidated houses, railways showering clouds of soot, shabby lunch-counters and cheap stores. From this setting of poverty and despair, Florentine dreams of emancipation and happiness with the virile Jean Lévesque, but at best she manages to salvage her reputation with Emmanuel Létourneau, less glamorous but more reliable.

Through the novel Gabrielle Roy presents a social theme of the progressive urbanization of modern life in Quebec and of every other society where city patterns replace country and village ones, and where the urban proletariat struggles obscurely for existence and happiness as its members gradually lose their individual identity. There is also an economic theme concerning the industrial masses'

loss of control over their own sources of food and shelter. This is the theme of the great depression of the thirties and of its ghastly remedy, total war.

Studies presented by sociologists suggest that Ringuet's assessment of life in Quebec is reasonably accurate and realistic. Facts concerning the changes in family, religion and tradition under the influence of a modern industrial and urban society show a number of parallels with Ringuet's picture. The trend is demonstrated by the consequent writers.

Miriam Chapin, in her book, Contemporary Canada, points out some interesting details. She says that only about one fifth of the people of Quebec are now on farms, for people tire of the farm, of subsisting by tenacity, miserliness and greed. The number of farms dropped from one hundred and fifty-four thousand in 1941 to one hundred and twenty-two thousand in 1956.[13] The Quebec farm house is customarily part of the village since the system of land tenure divides the land into long strips running back from a river and including tillable land, pasture and woodlot. Houses are strung along the main road which is often one continuous village; thus the farm is not isolated. To-day, though the village is still conservative, pious, and distrustful of urban ways, it is no longer a self-sufficient

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[13] Chapin, Contemporary Canada, p. 41.

unit, no longer fully convinced of its own righteousness and no longer decisive in Quebec life. The automobile, television, the efforts of government agronomists to teach scientific farming and the departure of youth to shops and factories have broken the old pattern.

In the years since 1920, the whole north shore of the St. Lawrence has become a land of company towns where clusters of houses are congregated around some big mill. The company rules the town, and in Quebec the company management invariably consists of men of different language, religion and background from those who live in the towns. The boss is never "un des nôtres". A struggle for "our way of life" goes on without respite through the churches, the unions and the schools. Often the company builds far better houses than the people have known before and provides paved streets and electricity, but the inhabitants who enjoy these advantages are regulated and cut off from political debate and action. They must do as they are told.[14]

Concerning the importance of Montreal, this writer states that nearly half of Quebec's population and sixty per cent of its manufacturing are there. Montreal is a business centre, unlike Quebec City, which is a cultural centre.

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[14]Chapin, Contemporary Canada, p. 42.

Without Montreal, Quebec would be another Maritime Province--rural, grumbling, helpless.[15]

French Canada in Transition, an enlightening book by E. C. Hughes, presents a number of interesting ideas. In Quebec, as everywhere that the industrial revolution develops, people move from the country-side to the cities. The rural folk are compelled to move to the town in order to survive.[16] In 1931 the Quebec male labour force was twenty-seven per cent agricultural, but in 1961 this was reduced to nine per cent.[17] In rural Quebec the French population has increased very slowly from seven hundred and forty-five thousand in 1871 to nine hundred and twenty-one thousand in 1921 when for the first time more French Canadians were classified as urban than as rural, because of the industrial development during the war. The divergence is now considerable. In 1961 there were three million nine thousand urban French-Canadians and one million two hunded and thirty-two thousand rural.[18] The pace of urbanization has outstripped that of employment. Unemployment is high--ten per cent compared with

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[15] Chapin, Contemporary Canada, p. 43.

[16] E. C. Hughes, French Canada in Transition, (Chicago: University of Chicago, 1963), p. 40.

[17] Ibid., p. v.

[18] Ibid., p. v.

six per cent for Canada as a whole.[19] Whatever economic factors may underlie these figures, French Canada looks for the resolution of the problem in a better place for its members at all levels of the labour force. There is concern about this unemployment level which reflects difficulty in getting a grip on the bottom rungs of the labour-force ladder, and the even better-known fact that the leaders of industry are for the most part English. French Canadians see both these facts in terms of their coming later than the English to industry, and so being threatened with a permanent disadvantage. Consequently French Canadians are now seeking equality. Such things as survival of language and religion are no longer an issue; they are taken for granted. There is now a bold attack on the very citadels of English power. Equally out of date is the aspiration to a "victoire des berceaux"; this is evident in the declining birth rate in Quebec. In 1921 there were thirty-five and a half births per thousand population, but forty years later the rate was twenty-seven. For Canada as a whole in the same period of time the decrease was only from twenty-seven point four to twenty-six point nine.[20]

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[19] Hughes, French Canada in Transition, p. vi.

[20] Ibid., p. vii.

According to this book, French Canada in Transition, nationalism, everywhere an urban phenomenon, tends to clash with religion, at least in the forms that were appropriate to the rural scene, and religion is changing rapidly in consequence. The whole process of change finds its culmination in the educational system, now discovered to be inadequate to produce either the technicians or the leaders that the new situation of industrialization and urbanization demands.

Mason Wade, in his book entitled Canadian Dualism, confirms our findings. He points out that between 1931 and 1951 the population of Quebec living on farms dropped from twenty-seven per cent to eighteen point nine per cent.[21] Wade goes on to say that it seems that when they could, the rural people left their farms for other places and occupations: witness the fact that in the 1930's it is reported that there were two million French Canadians in the United States and three million in Canada. For a number of years "the mills" of New England have beckoned with jobs, and to-day the cities of this area offer abundant testimony to the vitality and achievement of this hardy peasant stock. About four out of five Franco-Americans live in an urban environment, and return to migration to the farm, or to Canada, has been small. Since 1945 comparatively few French Canadians have gone to New England and few have returned.

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[21]Mason Wade, Canadian Dualism, (Toronto: University of Toronto, 1960), p. 190.

There is something unique about the Franco-Americans, according to Wade. Upon the spiritual plane, they are Roman Catholic; upon the temporal plane, they are American citizens; finally they are by tradition, language and spirit French; and the whole is co-ordinated and combined in such a manner as to produce a way of life without parallel in the United States.[22] Among the young, however, English tends to be the language in use, and one is tempted to wonder whether the traditional rallying cry of the Franco-Americans, "Qui perd sa langue, perd sa foi", will become a reality. This eventuality appears unlikely. Substantial losses have been and probably will continue to be suffered by the Chruch, but the measures taken by the Church to counter this threat are impressive. Whatever the future holds in store for the Franco-Americans of New England, their experiment in survival in the midst of a society and culture as kinetic as that of the United States is no inconsiderable testimony to the vitality and staying power of "notre héritage".

Yet another aspect of an age of prosperity and urbanization is the trend towards feelings of nationalism. Little will be said, however, on the present day controversial problems in Canada since Ringuet only briefly hints at this aspect of society.

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[22] Wade, Canadian Dualism, p. 393.

Concerning the relationships between the French and the English in Canada, nevertheless, Wade believes that each group has demonstrated superiority in some respects. He sees the English as leaders in managing great business enterprises, but the French, he thinks, lead culturally, creatively and linguistically. However, many of the differences between the two will probably disappear. The French Canadian knows he cannot survive alone in North America today, and the English Canadian now accepts the fact that Canada must be both French and English if it is not to become American. As the birth rates level out under the impact of urbanization, and the French and English families become more familiar, much fear of the other group will disappear. As the two ways of life draw closer together under the powerful forces of urbanization and industrialization, the differences tend to disappear. The language barrier becomes less significant when the way of life is much the same. Some differences doubtless will remain; the French Canadian family will probably always remain a stronger social unit because of powerful cultural traditions; it is doubtful whether the French Canadian wife will become as emancipated from domestic concerns as the English-speaking career woman. French Canada's problem of survival is assured through its vitality, its will to live as a distinct entity, and its determination to triumph over unfavourable environmental conditions. Therefore, the French Canadians can and are devoting energy to a creative collaboration with their English compatriots,

according to Wade.

Yet another study, La Vie Familiale des Canadiens-Français by Philippe Garigue, provides us with statistics on sociological changes in Quebec. Between 1841 and 1951 the number of farms in the province decreased by ten thousand;[23] nevertheless, as late as 1941 agriculture was still the occupation of the majority of working males. Not until 1951 did manufacturing take first place. During this century the number of men in agriculture has continually diminished: in 1901 forty-five per cent of the working men were in agriculture, but by 1951 this percentage had dropped to seventeen.[24] The importance of agriculture in the life of Quebec is a basic concept--"la vocation agricole des Canadiens-français" is a common saying despite the fact its duration was short. Agriculture as such did not exist before 1760, when the men hunted and fished. After the conquest, commerce fell into the hands of the English and the French Canadian turned to the land. Traditionally, the farm is passed from father to son, but this procedure is not necessarily always followed. In some areas, the farmer may plan to dispose of his land as he pleases; in others, the farm may be divided

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[23] Philippe Garigue, La Vie Familiale des Canadiens-Français, (Montréal: Université de Montréal, 1962), p. 22.

[24] Ibid., p. 97.

among all the sons and daughters. For years it has been recognized that everyone cannot make a living on the farm. Consequently, many have been forced to seek other occupations to be able to survive.

Garigue also makes reference to the steadily declining birth rate in Quebec, and he makes the observation that the result of the smaller birth rate will be, to some extent, offset by the decreasing rate of infant mortality.

With regard to urban development, Garigue points out that in 1956 seventy per cent of the population was city-dwelling and the remaining thirty per cent were rural inhabitants.[25] This situation, he goes on to say, is the reverse of that of the turn of the century. In 1951 the urban family averaged three persons as opposed to five and a half for each farm family.[26] With urbanization and industrialization, the rôle of women in society increases with the rise of education; consequently, women are now found in the professions. However, for the most part, married women work out simply as a means of adding to the family income; their basic interest is in the home. If it is true that the family is being transformed under the influence

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[25] Garigue, La Vie Familiale des Canadiens-Français, p. 120.

[26] Ibid., p. 120.

of the urban "milieu" and industrial activities, this does not mean that family bonds are disappearing. It is not true, according to this sociologist, that family ties diminish automatically in importance in an urban setting and disappear in an industrial society. Ringuet bears this out, particularly in Le Poids du Jour, where the Garneau family unit remains basically intact.

In the recent period of dynamic growth, the traditional French Canadian way of life has been transplanted from the isolated rural, parochial village setting to which it is indigenous, to struggle for life in the new environment of a dynamic highly industrialized urban "milieu", and is exposed to the ceaseless pressures and influences of a culture embodying in so many respects social, religious and political values antithetical to its own. Following the war, which brought the full impact of the industrial revolution to bear upon Quebec, hastening its transition from a rural agricultural society to an urban industrial one, the old standing order has been questioned and challenged. Consequently, two mentalities have evolved: the traditionalists, who are determined to maintain the old closed world, since the new industrial life menaces many of French Canada's traditions, and the others, who want to evolve a new social order incorporating what the outside world has to offer, with the best of French Canadian tradition.

These sociological implications concerning new attitudes to life in French Canada give to Ringuet's works an importance and significance beyond the ordinary. We see, first of all, concerning the distribution of the family heritage, the feudal instincts of the French peasant farmer persisting from one generation to another, fixing, without benefit of law but from ingrained desire, the primogeniture right of the eldest son to take the farm undivided and to pass it in turn to the eldest male of his own almost invariably prolific family. So in Quebec, we find the other sons having to make their own way differently in trades or professions or in industry, as had their forebears. These traditionally Catholic families usually gave one son to the priesthood, but the tougher of the youths turned naturally north to the rough lumber camps. Others went to the cities or to the United States, where, particularly in New England, they were rapidly modernized, and soon lost much of their ethnic identity. These streams of migration are all well illustrated in Ringuet's books.

In Trente Arpents Ringuet paints an enduring picture of the tranquil farm life of the old parishes of Quebec--a life so satisfying to the weatherbeaten "habitants" of the older generation and so exasperating to the restless young people of the new generation; thus are introduced the migrations from the farm. Fausse Monnaie presents a pattern

of behavior depicting the empty lives of a group of well-to-do young people escaping to the hills over the week-end only to return dejected to the city to face another week of industrial slavery. With Le Poids du Jour, the author presents an even broader picture, reflecting changes in the business life of Montreal, tracing the emergence of a new industrial middle class through the career of the tycoon Robert Michel Garneau, a sadly citified country product ill-at-ease in the city.

The novels of Ringuet seem to show, then, that the people of Quebec have adopted a new philosophy of life involving fundamental changes in society and family relationships. Evidently the new-found wealth of an industrial society has precipitated the breakdown of tradition in French Canada. While Ringuet seems to unfold a panorama of French Canadian society in search of happiness through material wealth, it must be remembered that his people are caught up in a new society in which they must find a niche despite their feelings, which, perhaps, have not modified as rapidly as society. Change must be accepted, since this is the way things are in a day of changing world conditions. Nostalgia for a disappearing way of life is of little significance in a society where it is a necessity to find one's own way in order to survive.

In order to appreciate fully the changes in society and the break-down of tradition as seen through Ringuet, we must also understand Ringuet's significance in the history

of the French Canadian novel, for, in this respect, he symbolizes a break-down in literary tradition. No investigation will be made, however, into the psychological motives of the characters. The people in Ringuet's novels are being accepted as they are and presumed as actual people the novelist could have known. No reference is to be indicated concerning the more modern psychological studies of sadistic, abnormal people, as writers like Marie-Claire Blais have done in recent years. Even Garneau, with his warped mind, hardly fits into this category. The most representative books of Ringuet's day were sociological novels. The writers of his generation threw much more light on the social behaviour of their characters than on their inner struggles; it was only with the younger generation that the psychological novel came into being.

CHAPTER I

RINGUET'S SIGNIFICANCE IN THE HISTORY OF THE FRENCH CANADIAN NOVEL

The early literature of French Canada was conditioned by one dominating historical fact: the isolation of an infant colony far from the motherland in the more or less unfriendly surroundings of the new world. This feeling of isolation was abruptly intensified by two major events in the eighteenth century: the British Conquest and the French Revolution. Because of these two crises the thinking of French Canada was oriented around the problem of survival, with the result that a strong urge to hold to its past in the new world has been a prominent feature of the French Canadian outlook. At the same time, a feeling of suspicion developed with regard to metropolitan France; there was fear of the social, religious and political thought in France following the revolution. This rupture with tradition had a profound effect on the French Canadians, with the result that they have always been somewhat hesitant to accept change. Consequently a hard tenaciousness, particularly concerning language, religion and customs, has been characteristic of the people of French Canada.

The novel as a genre was slow in appearing in Canada for two reasons. First, it requires on the part of the

writer:

> une imagination bien disciplinée, une science profonde de la vie et un art très adroit, et il suppose de rares qualités d'esprit et une forte culture générale.[1]

These qualities appeared only after long years of hard work. The French Canadians, obliged by fate to endure persistent struggles for their existence in the new world, and forced constantly to attend to their material requirements, did not have the time to devote to literature the talents they possessed. Secondly, those who should have welcomed with enthusiasm the first literary productions just did not have leisure to devote to reading. It is hardly surprising, then, to note that between 1608, the founding of Quebec, and 1837, the rebellion year, the novel simply did not appear as a literary genre.

Early French Canadian novelists, for the most part, found inspiration in history or the soil. Some point to Chercheur de trésor (1837), a story of adventure and black magic, a tale of buried treasure and superstition, by Philippe-Aubert de Gaspé, Jr., as the first novel written in Quebec. However, the best-known nineteenth century novel is Les Anciens Canadiens (1863), the work of an old man. Its author, the senior Philippe-Aubert de Gaspé, describes

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[1]Camille Roy, Manuel d'Histoire de la littérature canadienne de langue française, (Montréal: Beauchemin, 1962), p. 70.

seigniorial life and the tragedy of divided loyalties caused by the Conquest. This novel is still remembered as a particularly successful picture of the life and customs of the early settlers and their conflicts with the British during the Seven Years' War. There was also Antoine Gérin-Lajoie, who, in novels like Jean Rivard (1862), described the simple life of forest-clearing pioneers. While depicting pioneer life, he intended to show that it is the duty of young Canadians to remain in Canada and not to emigrate to the industrial cities of New England. The French Canadian novel, despite some early manifestations in the nineteenth century, does not really develop until the twentieth century. Ringuet summed up the situation in these words:

> Que lire dans le désert livresque qu'était le Canada français aux abords de 1900?[2]

Louis Hémon, a Frenchman from France, has the honour of giving to the French Canadian novel "un élan" until then unknown. Maria Chapdelaine, published in 1916, revealed to French Canadians the beauty of their country, the many qualities of the simple life, and the interest which a Canadian novel can possess. Despite resentment towards the novel for its representation of an isolated pioneer settlement made to stand for the province as a whole, it

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[2]Ringuet, Confidences, p. 151.

opened the eyes on the richness of inspiration to be found in French Canada. Although French Canadians hesitate to include Hémon in their ranks, nevertheless, following the publication of Maria Chapdelaine, there was a more rapid development of the French Canadian novel. The novel came to be used for depicting the customs of the country, and tiresome tales of grievances gave way to intensely interesting studies of human problems.

Louis Hémon, who seems to have captured the quintessence of the spirit of "la survivance", had said in the final pages of his book when the heroine, Maria Chapdelaine, had to decide whether to emigrate to a city in the United States or remain in Quebec, on the land of her fathers:

> Nous sommes venus il y a trois cents ans et nous sommes restés. . .toutes les choses que nous avons apportées avec nous, notre culte, notre langue, nos vertus et jusqu'à nos faiblesses deviennent des choses sacrées, intangibles et qui devront demeurer jusqu'à la fin. . .Au pays de Québec rien ne doit mourir et rien ne doit changer.

This was the voice of her province speaking to her in a dream. But since Maria Chapdelaine, which has given an image of a French Canada frozen in the conservatism of tradition, much has changed and continues to change with alarming acceleration. It may have been an accurate picture fifty years ago, but now it evokes only nostalgia for a disappearing way of life. The novels of Ringuet exemplify this change. It has been said that the publication of his Trente Arpents

in 1938 marked both the culmination of twenty-five years of regionalistic fiction and the opening of a new era of realism in the French Canadian novel. His book thus reaches back to Hémon's Maria Chapdelaine in its portrayal of rural life, and points forward to the urban realism of Gabrielle Roy and Roger Lemelin when the protagonist is found in an industrial community.

Some novels, however, remain on the theme of peasant life. Notably, Germaine Guèvremont retains the rustic tradition with Le Survenant, 1946, and Marie-Didace, 1947. But the main theme is city life. Gabrielle Roy, in Bonheur d'occasion, 1945, records her observations in a working class district of Montreal during the 1939-34 war years. Her novel, Alexandre Chenevert, 1954, in which she relates the simple, uneventful life of a sort of Canadian Salavin, might be compared with André Giroux's Le Gouffre a toujours soif, 1953, which describes the state of mind of a cancer victim who sums up his insignificant life; in both the theme is the frustrating insignificance of modern urban living. Another outstanding novelist of the post-war period is Roger Lemelin, who exposes the ambitions and frustrations of French Canadian youth. In his novels such as Au pied de la pente douce, 1944, and Les Plouffe, 1948, he describes people torn between a desire for material grandeur and a paralysing fear of inability to achieve. Futility is, indeed, a recurring theme in French Canadian literature, perhaps engendered by a sense of guilt over deserting a

revered past. This theme reminds us of the so-called deserter novels of writers like Claude-Henri Grignon, author of Un Homme et son péché, 1933, and Le Déserteur, 1934, where the theme is the sanctity of the land and where the habitant who sells his farm and goes to live in the city is called a deserter. The thesis is the overwhelming superiority of farm life over city life.

Trente Arpents is a chronicle of a farm and of the folk who tilled it, and, as such, it is considered the most authentic account of rural French Canada since the publication of Maria Chapdelaine about a quarter of a century earlier. But while Hémon was a Frenchman writing of a country he had known for only one year, the author of Trente Arpents is a genuine French Canadian. French Canadian stories about the habitant are inevitably compared with Maria Chapdelaine. This comparison is unfortunate, since each book has its own distinctive merits. Maria Chapdelaine, set in a remote and isolated pioneer district near Lake St. John, enshrined the ancient and enduring spirit of the peasant who felt duty-bound to remain on the land and to open up new farms, whereas Trente Arpents, placed in an old established area along the St. Lawrence, analyses rather the modifications of the modern mind, focusing our attention on the lure of the city.

In its depiction of the decline of Quebec's rural economy and of the growing importance of the outside world, Trente Arpents, although a masterpiece on rural life,

indicates a transition in the attitude of the French Canadian to the rural environment. The emphasis shifts to life in the cities where big industry and wealth are the dominating factors. The countryside has become a place for outings, a haven of escape from the pressures of modern living. This is seen, for example, in the story of a group of young people from Montreal spending the week-end in the Laurentians, as related in Fausse Monnaie written in 1947.

Ringuet was full of enthusiasm for Gabrielle Roy's Bonheur d'occasion when it appeared in 1945. He described it as new and more human than any previous Canadian novel. He thought this was because it was about town people. As he said, "We have exhausted the rural areas as material for stories. Now we must move into the cities where the people are more alive".[3]

It was the 1939-45 war which accelerated the migration of the rural population to the city and caused the social transformations seen in the novels. The rush towards the cities resulted in the novelists painting the ways of the city folk and analysing the state of their minds. This is what Ringuet did in Le Poids du Jour, in which he tried to write realistically of present day French Canadian life. He tells the story of Michel Garneau, whose life is warped

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[3] The Globe and Mail, March 30, 1946.

when his drunken father breaks the son's violin; as a result Michel gives up music to become a flint-hearted industrialist, rediscovering the values of life only in old age, through his daughter's devotion.

Le Poids du jour was published in 1949, and twelve thousand five hundred copies were sold in the first two weeks. The author said, "It is only since the war that good sales are possible. There has been remarkable development in French Canadian literature in the past ten years".[4] And Ringuet symbolizes this development. He no longer had to publish under the pseudonym Ringuet, as when Trente Arpents appeared in 1938. Now a respectable doctor could be involved in the literary profession--an avocation more steadily pursued by Panneton than by most others. To some extent the war helped to elevate writers to the realms of respectability, for French Canadians, cut off, it seems, from the French novels which had been their main literary diet, turned to their own authors. Faced with the silence of France during the German Occupation which isolated continental France from the rest of the free world, French-speaking Canadians felt even more intensely the need to express themselves. In addition

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[4]"Fruitful Vice", Time, December 19, 1949, p. 16.

to this, new publishing houses sprang up in Montreal to publish or reprint French works. Thus Canadian writers found publishers who were prepared to accept their work much more readily than during the difficult years of the depression. Finally, the war itself threw a spotlight once more on the great problems of man and society, and did not fail to leave its mark on the new literature.

CHAPTER II

MANIFESTATIONS OF A CHANGING WAY OF LIFE IN TRENTE ARPENTS

Commencing during the closing years of the nineteenth century, an age of economic stability, and terminating in the 1930's, a time of economic crisis, the story of the novel depicts a French-Canadian family in a small farming community where life ran fairly smoothly before economic and social pressures transformed the countryside. There are bound to be undertones of a broad significance in the study of the changes imposed on a traditional rustic culture by the impact of a developing urban and industrial civilization, since the setting is an era of rapid change and earth-shattering events.

The story begins in a traditional rural setting where the central figure, Eucharist Moisan, having inherited a farm and married the neighbour's daughter, settles down to the conventional life of the area as it has been lived by generations of his forebears; he intends to raise a family, to work hard and to stay close to the beloved land, and his children will follow the traditional pattern. The farm he has inherited is one of those long narrow strips bordering the St. Lawrence, and sufficiently fertile to guarantee independence in return for industry.

These are still the "good old days". The Roman

Catholic cult is a daily reality. A crucifix in every bedroom, religious pictures on the walls are to be seen everywhere:

> Aux murs des lithographies à bon marché: le Christ, et, faisant pendant, la Vierge, vous regardant tous deux; le Fils, châtain; la Mère, blonde. Tous deux d'un geste identique offraient un coeur, l'un ouvert d'une blessure pleurante de sang et couronné de flamme, l'autre rayonnant des sept glaives de douleur. Au-dessus du lit, son cadre surmonté d'un rameau bénit de sapin, une Sainte-Face au visage anguleux et torturé.[1]

Blasphemy is rare, and "jurons" are rather innocuous. The influence of the priest is respected:

> A son passage il s'agenouilla, osant à peine regarder le visage du prêtre que l'Hostie Sainte nimbait d'un reflet de majesté.[2]

There is also the legitimate desire of the farmer for a priest or a nun in the family:

> Oui, d'un de ses fils, il ferait un prêtre, qui chanterait la messe, qui ferait le prône le dimanche et qui passerait sur les routes portant le Bon Dieu devant les hommes agenouillés. Et plus tard, quand lui serait vieux, il irait le visiter dans son grand presbytère au coeur de quelque beau et riche village; pourquoi pas celui-ci même? Tout le monde saluerait son fils, tout le monde le respecterait comme il convient et un peu de cette gloire rejaillirait sur lui, père d'un prêtre.[3]

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[1] Ringuet, Trente Arpents, (Montreal: Fides, 1938), p. 26.

[2] Ibid., p. 42.

[3] Ibid., p. 44.

And the land itself is something to be revered, not possessed:

> Il avait la parole du notaire; il avait même vu les papiers. Néanmoins quand il parlait, il ne pouvait arriver à dire "ma terre, ma grange, mes vaches"; mais bien "la terre, la grange, les vaches".4

Indeed, the land and the Church are the two poles around which Moisan's life turns:

> Y a deux choses de plus connaissantes que nous autres dans le monde: le curé, pi la terre.5

It is natural, then, that Euchariste wishes his first-born to be a priest, since producing a priest is an honour not only for the family, but also for the parish; furthermore, the local priest is willing to help parents pay the cost of the education if necessary:

> Pour ce qui était de la dépense, et bien! lui, monsieur le Curé, qui ne possédait pas de bien, trouverait de quoi payer la moitié des frais de collège.6

The rural "épouse" is eager to have children, as nature and Providence wish. Moisan's wife bears him some thirteen children of whom nine survive.

There is a certain frugality to be noted even at this early stage in the story. When we first meet Moisan, a young man in his early twenties, he is about to take the sturdy

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[4] Ringuet, Trente Arpents, p. 42.

[5] Ibid., p. 166.

[6] Ibid., p. 94.

Alphonsine Branchaud for a wife, but not before her father has pledged a good wedding and a substantial dowry. In this proposition, it is the question of money that is the deciding factor:

> Malgré son dire, il avait pour le certain de l'argent de côté. Peut-être pas de l'argent sonnant. Mais l'oncle Ephrem lui devait pas mal, depuis dix ans qu'il travaillait sur sa terre. Qu'importe! Bien qu'économe, le père Branchaud entendait bien faire les choses. Il paierait d'abord les frais de la noce et d'une belle noce.7

A similar attachment for money is noted when Mélie is unwilling to call a doctor for Uncle Ephrem:

> Elle avait pour le médecin cette horreur commune à tous les paysans. . .Au médecin on laisse ses écus péniblement gagnés sans rien recevoir de tangible, à peine parfois une méchante petite fiole de quatre sous.8

Thrift and the tendency to bargain are inherited from old France, and practised diligently, they have survived the centuries. 'Charis, as Euchariste is called, follows tradition and prospers in a modest way during the summer of his life. He buys and sells judiciously, especially in war time, and each year he adds onehundred and fifty dollars or more to the one thousand dollars Uncle Ephrem had left in the care of the notary.

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[7] Ringuet, Trente Arpents, p. 19.

[8] Ibid., p. 34.

His passive Alphonsine brings into the world more children than enough to help in the house and the fields; and 'Charis feels that God will be pleased when he contributes two nuns and a priest to the Church. Here we see life in its basic elements--the prime importance of the land, marriage, birth and death. Here one chooses a bride partly because she is a strong worker, or a husband because he has a good farm. If a child dies, his memory is quickly obliterated by next year's baby in the cradle, and when death comes to an adult, it is fortunate if he passes on in the slack season, not interfering with the seed-time, haying or harvest. Even the loss of a day in these seasons can destroy the happy harmony between the farmer and his land, since the financial loss is a matter of great regret.

> Etienne allait bientôt prendre femme; mais
> il n'eût pas songé à le faire autrement
> qu'à l'automne, afin que même la fondation
> d'un nouveau foyer ne vînt retarder les travaux.9

The theme of possessions is evident in the attitude of the habitant to his land. Indeed, he always thought in terms of his land.

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[9]Ringuet, Trente Arpents, p. 148.

> Mais ni l'un ni l'autre des deux hommes ne voyait le visage de la terre, ce visage trop maquillé de vieille en qui l'hiver s'insinue déjà. Car leurs bras et non leurs yeux les reliaient à la grande nourricière, leurs bras trapus que le dimanche paralysait et faisait pendre inutiles le long des montants de leur chaise.10

In a way, these people are serfs of the land, paying it their forced labour, yet living by it:

> Lui qui, à peine quelques mois auparavant, n'était que le neveu recueilli sur la terre d'un autre, il se savait devenu, de par la magie de cette procréation, le maître de cette terre où il était hier étranger; le tuteur en quelque sorte de ces trente arpents de terre dont par un mystère bizarre, il était à la fois serf et suzerain.11

It is the custom to designate time by features of the crops, and years by memory of freaks of the weather:

> Il pouvait dire: "L'année quand je me suis marié"; tandis qu'il compterait maintenant les époques non plus par ce qu'il avait fait, mais par les événements de la terre et du ciel: "L'année de la grand-grêle"; "l'automne ousqu'i' y a tant mouillé". Tel serait l'an prochain qu'avait été l'année précédente. Labours, semailles, moissons, repos désoeuvré de l'hiver. Puis, recommencement. Avec, régulièrement sans doute, une naissance qui ne serait plus la naissance de l'enfant, mais bien celle d'un enfant.12

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[10] Ringuet, Trente Arpents, p. 14.

[11] Ibid., p. 49.

[12] Ibid., pp. 77-78.

Man seems to consider himself an integral part of the land, as seen in Trente Arpents where the land and the habitant are firmly linked, with the land dominating. That had been the way of Uncle Ephrem, whose body Euchariste found in the woods where he had been chopping wood,

> . . .était mort sur sa terre, poitrine contre poitrine, sur sa terre qui n'avait pas consenti au divorce.13

And later:

> . . .le paysan seul ne se peut séparer de la terre, tant ils sont ligotés l'un à l'autre. Sans l'homme la terre n'est point féconde et c'est ce besoin qu'elle a de lui qui le lie à la terre, qui le fait prisonnier de trente arpents de glèbe.14

And a prisoner the farmer seems to be. Thinking that he possesses the land, he is really the slave of it. The principal character of the novel may not be Euchariste Moisan, nor any of his sons, nor indeed any human being, but the land itself whose presence is felt so strongly. The people of the story are defined through their relationship to the land. It is the story of the peasant who progressively attaches himself to the land by what he naively calls a

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[13] Ringuet, Trente Arpents, p. 36.

[14] Ibid., p. 75.

possession--in reality it is he in bondage--and he who is cast aside in the end like a useless servant. The novel opens with the rejection of the former owner Ephrem Moisan, and closes with the rejection of his successor, Euchariste Moisan. Throughout these changes, the permanence of the land is underlined:

> Chaque année, le printemps revint. . .
> . . .et chaque année la terre laurentienne, endormie pendant quatre mois sous la neige, offrit aux hommes ses champs à labourer, herser, fumer, semer, moissonner. . .;
> . . .à des hommes différents. . .
> . . .une terre toujours le même.15

This attachment to the land is deceptive, for the farmer really does not own it. It is a false possession. His firm connection to the land may be explained in part by his attachment to God, to his country, and to his family. The land is a manifestation of the Divinity, the prize of ancestors struggles, the very source of life.

> . . .Monseigneur?. . .a dit que c'était nous autres, les habitants, qu'étaient les vrais Canayens, les vrais hommes. I' a dit qu'un homme qu'aime la terre, c'est quasiment comme aimer le Bon Dieu qui l'a faite et qu'en prend soin quand les hommes le méritent. . .
> --. . .I'a dit encore que lâcher la terre, c'est comme qui dirait mal tourner.16

This brings us to one of the principal themes of the novel. The land continues season after season with a new

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15 Ringuet, Trente Arpents, p. 306.

16 Ibid., pp. 134-135.

slave who will be cast aside on becoming useless. As is suggested by Gilles Marcotte,[17] the great rhythm of possession and dispossession is the very architecture of the book. Divided into four parts, each bearing the name of a season, the story thus symbolizes the different ages of the hero. Spring and Summer indicate the growing feeling of possession; whereas, Fall and Winter outline the process of dispossession. The first two parts of the novel, Spring and Summer, recount in detail the slow but sure ascent of complete possession of the land. This process begins when the first child comes along. Now Moisan is certain of a successor to the family farm. As the family increases, Moisan's hold on the land is strengthened. Although he considers himself master of the land, his strength is reinforced through the ties of all his children. His land is secure with as many ties as he has children, for each child is a son of the land, as much as his father. This is the zenith of the possessions, the prosperity and the happiness of Euchariste. He is able to look up and down the path of his life.

> Tandis que, pour certains, l'avenir jusqu'à sa consommation reste sujet aux bourrasques du caprice des hommes et du hasard des choses, Euchariste Moisan pouvait désormais contempler placidement sa route; tout droit derrière, tout droit devant.[18]

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[17] G. Marcotte, "Ringuet Romancier", L'Action Nationale, janvier, 1960, p. 68.

[18] Ringuet, Trente Arpents, p. 165.

It would seem as though nothing could separate this man from his beloved farm in which he puts so much trust. As he often said:

> Laisse-toé mener par la terre, mon gars, elle te mènera p'têt' pas ben loin; mais en tout cas, tu sais ous'que tu vas.19

Nevertheless the land knows that man does not last and that succession is the law of nature. Little by little, Euchariste is abandoned, not just because he has become too old, but also because he is assured of his possession, which he takes for granted. First it is the disintegration of the family: the death of Alphonsine and the departure of the eldest son, Oguinase, for the priesthood. This of course, is a natural reason for abandoning the land.

> Oguinase, lui, avait pris la seule avenue qui puisse élever quelqu'un au-dessus de la terre.20

On the contrary Ephrem leaves the farm because of his own personality. Although his father prefers him, he is not chosen by the land because his temperament is not that of a slave. Ephrem wants to be a free man. His desire for money is underlined at this point when he is lured by the money and the pleasures of life that are to be found in the city.

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[19] Ringuet, Trente Arpents, p. 166.

[20] Ibid., p. 166.

Before he leaves, he feels that he should be paid something for the years of hard work he has done on the farm:

> Aussi bien, n'avait-il pas droit à sa part du patrimoine qu'il n'osait demander, mais qui lui revenait, A Etienne, la ferme; et à lui?. . .Les années qu'il avait passées à peiner sur cette terre qu'il n'aimait point ne valaient-elles pas un salaire?21

He leaves for the New England States, much to the disgust of his poor old father:

> Un Moisan désertait le sol, le pays de Québec et tout ce qui était leur depuis toujours pour s'en aller vers l'exil total.22

The impact of these events is heightened by a disastrous land deal. The neighbouring farmer sells at great profit a piece of land he had bought cheaply from Euchariste. The effects of this sale on the Moisan family provide a dramatic departure for Ephrem.

It is Etienne whom the land chooses to succeed Euchariste.

> Il avait déjà trois enfants. D'ailleurs la terre avait besoin d'eux; ils faisaient partie d'elle et cette certitude suffisait à son esprit arrêté.23

Etienne is "un fils et un paysan selon le coeur de la terre".[24]

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[21] Ringuet, Trente Arpents, p. 184.

[22] Ibid., p. 182.

[23] Ibid., p. 171.

[24] Ibid., p. 182.

Thus chosen, predestined by the land, Etienne is able to win out over his father whom he is eager to dispossess. A series of disastrous happenings mark the stages of the decline of Euchariste and the ascent of his son towards complete possession. Euchariste's downfall is consummated with his trip to the United States to visit his son Ephrem. Cut off in a hostile city from all that has been so dear to him, he is obliged to stay there, prevented by various circumstances from returning to his land.

> Il n'a pas renoncé à là-bas, à Saint-Jacques; renoncer, cela voudrait dire une décision formelle qu'il n'a pas prise. . .
> Ce sont les choses qui ont décidé pour lui, et les gens, conduits par les choses.[25]

The novel comes to a close with this pathetic situation--in the distant city, old age and helplessness overtake poor 'Charis, for, once separated from the land, he has lost the very principle of his being. So the cityward movement is triumphant over the land.

In summary then, we can say that upon the death of old Uncle Ephrem, Euchariste becomes attracted to the land. However, it remains for him to conquer the land, for the possession which he affirms and enjoys at the apex of his career is only an illusion.

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[25] Ringuet, Trente Arpents, p. 306.

> Parfois, dans les champs, Euchariste, s'arrêtant de travailler pour échanger quelques paroles avec un voisin ou avec ses fils, se penchait machinalement pour prendre une poignée de cette terre inépuisable et bénie, de cette terre des Moisan, que personne n'eût pu blesser sans atteindre en même temps cruellement les hommes qui y vivaient enracinés par tout leur passé à eux, et par toute sa générosité, à elle.26

In reality, Euchariste possesses the land less than it possesses him, for it is not long until the process is well underway whereby Moisan is cast aside in favour of his son, Etienne, chosen precisely because of his obedience to the desires of the land.

> C'était un vrai paysan qu'Etienne, un vrai paysan par le sérieux et l'application, sans âge aussi comme beaucoup de ceux qui vivent en contact avec la grande immortelle, la Terre, et se penchent sur elle constamment avec un sentiment mêlé d'affection, de respect, d'entêtement, mais jamais de crainte;27

Uprooted like an old tree, the old man must finish off his life in the United States with a son who prefers the comforts and pleasures of city life. Here Moisan is lost; for him, this existence in the mechanized city is not living. Although he can never return, he has left the best part of himself on the farm. Memory is the only real thing left to him in a puzzling world. Destiny seems to have dealt Euchariste a cruel blow, since he had been a man of astute sense:

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[26] Ringuet, Trente Arpents, pp. 161-162.

[27] Ibid., p. 159.

> Avisé en affaires et prudent, point pressé, il semblait deviner quand il fallait vendre et quand garder. Il avait mis le comble à sa réputation d'habile homme quand il avait refilé à un agent de l'Etat venu acheter pour la remonte de l'armée tous les chevaux disponibles.[28]

It seems, then, that the root of Euchariste's tragedy lies to some extent in his failure to realize that a thirty acre farm cannot support a "famille nombreuse", especially when the factories of New England, such a comparatively short distance away, beckon so temptingly with easy money. Perhaps Alphonsine bears too many children, for even when the eldest has become a priest, and two of the daughters have become nuns, there is still room for jealousy over the property at home. 'Charis prospers in a modest way, but he cannot prosper enough to satisfy his son, Ephrem, who leaves for Lowell to work in the mills of that New England town. After that a daughter goes off to Montreal, and then Moisan's luck leaves him too. A lawsuit proves disastrous and humiliating, his barns burn down, his health declines. He turns over his farm--the whole of his existence--to a son who is eager to dipossess him, and goes to visit his eldest son Ephrem and his English-speaking family living thoroughly americanized in an industrial community. Euchariste is now trapped in the United States. This series of unfortunate events provides yet another opportunity for us to see Euchariste's anxiety to add to his wealth and Etienne's desire to possess it.

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[28] Ringuet, Trente Arpents, p. 161.

From this point of view, these happenings take on a particular significance for they emphasize the clash between father and son over the ownership of the family farm.

Many are the problems encountered because of matters concerning money. The farm can belong to only one. What are the others to do? The father would like to see his younger sons open up new farms:

> . . .car la division des terres répugne au paysan. Le père préfère en général voir ses fils puînés partir pour les terres neuves. . .Aussi bien, le cadastre en longues bandes étroites rend-il impossible le parcellement.29

The necessity for survival leads to various types of migration, and all too often towards the cities.

> Il ne se passait pas d'année qu'on n'apprît le départ d'un homme, parfois d'une famille entière, qui s'en allait retrouver des cousins dans les villes de la Nouvelle-Angleterre où les filatures et les usines étaient insatiables de bras. . .quelques-uns, les courageux et qui ne savaient la vie que comme la lutte entre la terre et l'homme, montaient vers les terres vierges du Nord. Les autres s'en allaient là où tout un chacun était sûr de trouver du travail et la vie facile.30

The need for money and the father's failure to understand the situation, cause lack of harmony in the family. Ephrem wants to get away where he can collect more money than his father can let him have. "Quant à Euchariste, de moins

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[29] Ringuet, Trente Arpents, p. 57.

[30] Ibid., p. 114.

en moins il comprenait son fils".[31] Euchariste thinks he is doing what is required, but he cannot content his son:

> Comment Moisan eût-il pu savoir que ce quelque chose était la résolution formée de lui parler un jour nettement? Ephrem en avait assez de tirailler chaque fois pour obtenir quelques sous de son père qui ne comprenait pas qu'on pût dépenser de l'argent quand on avait tout ce qui est nécessaire: un toit, une table largement servie et, pour le luxe, du bon tabac à pleine blague. . .
>
> --Comment, tu veux encore cinquante cents? Mais qu'est-ce que t'as donc fait du trente sous que je t'ai donné la semaine dernière?
>
> --Ciboire! oùs'que tu veux que j'aille avec trente sous? Quand on est avec le monde, i' faut ben être poli et payer à son tour. Pi j'travaille assez icitte. . .[32]

Another dispute arises over the type of clothes worn by the daughter who has been working in Montreal. Here is evidence of a changing standard of dress and behaviour of women as a result of increasing independence in a changing society:

> Elle avait une robe neuve de taffetas vert sans manches qui offrait la chair appétissante de ses bras nus. En la voyant ainsi accoutrée, l'abbé Moisan s'était levé, le visage dur; et, devant tout le monde, il lui avait dit:
>
> --Tu n'as pas honte, toi, soeur de prêtre, de te montrer ainsi quasiment nue, comme une bonne à rien; surtout devant moi!
>
> Mais elle, qui avait pris à la ville un invraisemblable aplomb:
>
> --Si ça te fatigue, t'as qu'à pas me regarder![33]

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[31] Ringuet, Trente Arpents, p. 125.

[32] Ibid., p. 126.

[33] Ibid., p. 168.

This incident shows a definite break from conventional practices, and the loss of tradition is emphasized by further references to the growing significance of money.

> . . .était venue une lettre du cousin Larivière où celui-ci parlait des affaires merveilleuses et des salaires extraordinaires que la guerre avait engendrés dans la république voisine. D'ailleurs les effets bienfaisants ne laissaient pas de s'en faire sentir jusqu'au fond du pays de Québec. Le foin était monté jusqu'à vingt-deux dollars, et encore, à ce prix-là, les paysans se faisaient-ils prier, espérant des lendemains encore plus généreux.34

The influence of money brought by the war upsets the usually charitable peasant mind. "Euchariste Moisan, orphelin de père et de mère, recueilli par charité chez l'oncle Ephrem. . .",[35] the farmer now thinks only of his gain and does not worry at all about the sufferings of others; we see the startling remarks about the secret wish to see the war continue:

> Non, jamais la terre n'avait été si généreuse. Si bien que lorsque le Curé, suivant les instructions de Monseigneur, faisait faire des prières publiques pour la cessation de la guerre et le retour à la paix, les paysans rassemblés dans l'église se demandaient intérieurement où l'on avait l'idée de vouloir à toute force ramener le temps où les fruits de la terre se donnaient quasi pour rien. Ils n'en priaient pas moins, par obéissance et habitude, mais d'une voix faible, avec l'espoir enfantin que le Ciel

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[34] Ringuet, Trente Arpents, p. 170.

[35] Ibid., p. 157.

> pourrait bien ainsi ne pas les entendre ou
> du moins se rendre compte qu'ils ne tenaient
> pas tant que cela à voir exaucer leur prière.36

Yet another influence leading to a change in the ways of thinking is the growing significance of the city as the novel proceeds. Stealthily, almost as a thief in the night, Ringuet introduces this element which unfolds with ever-increasing proportions the theme of changing interests.

The influence of the city, particularly the American city, cannot be avoided for long. The Americans appear in the novel to have two idols--money and pleasure. The way of the American citizen inspires a taste for an easy life. The lives of the people appear dominated by a different set of values pushed to the extreme; these values constitute a menace for the old-established values.

The arrival of a cousin, Alphée Larivière, and his family, from New England, introduces these elements of discord into the Moisan family.

His cousin's anglicized name, Walter Rivers, shocks Euchariste, and he expresses his thoughts:

> Mais changer son nom de famille, celui que l'on
> a hérité de toute la lignée des vieux, c'est
> un peu répudier les ancêtres et dépouiller tout
> ce que le passé familial a pu accumuler sur ce
> nom d'honneur, de tradition laborieuse,

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[36] Ringuet, Trente Arpents, p. 161.

> de continuité malgré tout. Et si déjà le départ aux Etats-Unis était une façon de désertion, ce dernier abandon, il le sentait, était en quelque sorte un reniement comme celui de saint Pierre, et même une trahison, comme celle de Judas.37

Having repudiated his family name in order to be a good American, the cousin has also abandoned the habitant's tradition of the constantly-used cradle. Moisan is astonished to see only two children, but soon he hears the shocking explanation:

> C'est-y que ta femme est malade?
>
> "Rivers" se mit à rire bruyamment et traduisit la question à Grace qui ouvrit des yeux stupéfiés, puis convertit une immense envie de rire en une grimace mi-sourire, mi-mépris.
>
> --Well, cousin, on trouve que c'est assez de deux, un boy pi une fille.
>
> --Moé itou j'aurais p'têt' aimé autant pas en avoir treize. Mais on mène pas ça comme on veut.
>
> --Damn it! ma femme pi moé on a décidé me mettre les brékes, déclara-t-il péremptoirement.
>
> Moisan se tut, déconcerté, gêné. Comment pouvait-on parler ouvertement de pareilles choses? Il n'avait pas compris le mot. Mais pour lui il n'était pas douteux qu'il s'agit là de quelqu'une de ces pratiques monstrueuses dont M. le Curé avait parlé un jour à la retraite des hommes et qui ont pour but d'empêcher de s'accomplir les desseins de la Providence.38

Later, when visiting his own son, Ephrem, he must face a

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[37] Ringuet, Trente Arpents, p. 139.

[38] Ibid., pp. 140-141.

similar shortage of children:

> Eucharist se souvint du cousin Larivière dont c'était aussi le nombre. Quelles sortes de femmes étaient donc les femmes des Etats? Pourquoi aussi les fils du Québec émigrés dans cette terre étrangère ne venaient-ils pas chercher leurs compagnes au pays, des épouses fécondes et douces qui sauraient peupler la maison et mettraient au monde fils ou fille une fois l'an, comme le veulent nature et Providence.39

With the loss of the language and of the principles of his forebears, Ephrem seems to have adopted the indifference to religion characteristic of modern industrial society, as Eucharist fears:

> Car c'est en vain qu'il avait cherché au mur de la maison de son fils une seule des images dévotieuses qui fleurissent les foyers de Québec. Rien. Si bien qu'il en était venu à se demander si son fils n'avait pas commis la suprême infamie d'apostasier. Dame! n'avait-il pas épousé une "Anglaise"! et qui dit "Anglaise" dit protestante et païenne.40

These cousins from the "States" stir up desires in young Ephrem who has already shown his restlessness on the farm:

> Ephrem sortait de plus en plus, le soir. . . cette échappée hors du cercle familial. . . parmi de mauvais compagnons. . .de plus en plus, il s'en allait le soir vers le hameau où la veuve Auger tenait toujours boutique ouverte. . .un samedi soir il était entré à deux heures du matin et ivre.41

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[39] Ringuet, Trente Arpents, p. 260.

[40] Ibid., p. 266.

[41] Ibid., pp. 120-121.

The arrival of these relatives serves to point out the effects on the habitant family of the proximity to American, and even urban Canadian, ways. Thus we are able to understand better the alacrity of the newer generation to adopt foreign ways.

Fortunately, since for Ephrem an interest in these ways of the city is whetted, the visit is brief, terminated by the wife's expression of the American attitude towards the peasant of Quebec:

> Larivière, venu au Canada pour deux semaines, annonça son départ après huit jours à peine. Sa femme n'en pouvait plus d'habiter chez ces petites gens ignorants et rustauds, fils d'une race qu'elle méprisait de tout son orgueil d'Américaine de sang anglais. Le mari même commençait à sentir qu'elle le méprisait aussi d'affirmer sa parenté avec eux.42

But the cousin leaves with the remark:

> . . .envoye un de tes boys pour quelques semaines. On y trouvera p't'êt' une job qui paiera son voyage.43

And this idea is all that Ephrem needs, for later we hear him tell his father:

> --Ouais, aux Etats! Le cousin m'a trouvé une bonne place à Lowell, ousqu'il est à c't'heure.44

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[42] Ringuet, Trente Arpents, p. 143.

[43] Ibid., p. 145.

[44] Ibid., p. 182.

To this, Euchariste utters his thoughts:

> Ainsi voilà donc à quoi Ephrem n'avait jamais cessé de penser. Voilà ce qu'il ruminait depuis si longtemps: le départ, la rupture. Un Moisan désertait le sol, 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. Cela lui cuisait plus que tout au monde, et surtout que ce fût Ephrem qui partît.
>
> Car au fond et sans qu'il eût jamais su dire pourquoi, c'est Ephrem qui toujours avait été son enfant de prédilection, . . .45

The effects of the money of the city on the French Canadian are much more pronounced when Moisan goes to the United States to visit Ephrem and his family in White Falls. After seeing "Marial"[46] where he feels "seul, noyé dans l'océan de la grande ville",[47] Moisan is met by his son at the station in White Falls.

> Ephrem se mit à rire d'un rire prospère, d'un rire qui laissait jaillir comme d'un phare les feux éclatants de ses dents couvertes d'or.48

Euchariste Moisan is at a loss to understand this different way of life he finds in the United States.

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[45] Ringuet, Trente Arpents, p. 182.

[46] Ibid., p. 245.

[47] Ibid., p. 246.

[48] Ibid., p. 252.

> Ephrem montra du bras un vaste hôtel particulier dentelé de clochetons et de poivrières.
>
> --Celui qui reste icitte c'est Frank B. Somners.
>
> Ces mots-là sonnaient dans sa bouche comme un comptoir des dollars d'argent.
>
> --Au coin icitte, c'est le plus riche de tout.
>
> --I' est ben riche?
>
> --Riche!!! Aouf. . .
>
> Son bras tomba, découragé de ne rien trouver qui pût exprimer une telle gloire.
>
> --Qu'est-ce qu'i' a fait' pour venir si riche que ça?
>
> --I' a fait ça dans la booze.
>
> Ephrem eut un regard mystérieux et complice:
>
> Le père hésita. Il ne comprenait pas qu'on pût faire fortune dans. . .49

However, Euchariste is happy on Saturday night when Ephrem announces:

> --C'est demain dimanche. On va aller à la messe à l'église canayenne.50

In this church Moisan finds

> . . .l'atmosphère de sa vieille église de Saint-Jacques. Vêtu des mêmes ornements, l'officiant faisait les mêmes gestes universels, à peine un peu moins posément peut-être. Et sur tout cela régnait la suavité céleste et catholique de l'encens.51

Nevertheless, even here, his happiness is short lived, for when he puts his offering on the collection plate: consternation!

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[49] Ringuet, Trente Arpents, pp. 253-254.

[50] Ibid., p. 266.

[51] Ibid., p. 269.

> Le vicaire s'arrêta net. Il abaissa les yeux sur l'offrande pour les relever sur Eucharistе. Alors seulement celui-ci s'aperçut que dans le plateau il n'y avait, à part quelques grosses pièces d'argent, que des billets verts. Il se tourna vers son fils qu'il vit le rouge au front. Et il resta là, paralysé, sentant au fond de son âme agoniser sa joie comme tout à l'heure était morte son amertume, pendant qu'Ephrem se hâtait de déposer un dollar.52

From time to time Eucharistе has his happy moments:

> Certes, depuis trois mois qu'il était aux Etats, il n'avait pas manqué d'invitations;. . .53

Later, in the spring he prepares a vegetable garden for his grandchildren:

> L'idée de cette entreprise amena une explosion d'enthousiasme chez les enfants et, pour la première fois, Eucharistе se sentit le grand-père de ses petits-fils.54

This attempt at gardening shows the impatience of the newer generations in face of "slow returns" from cultivating the soil. Despite the approaching depression and the consequent unemployment, people realize that subsistence farming offers no solution, and the farmer has no convenient relief office down the street. Land-desertion is a very real phenomenon for there are fewer people living on farms and fewer farms and farm workers in Canada to-day than a half, or even a quarter, century ago. At the beginning of the twentieth

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[52] Ringuet, Trente Arpents, pp. 269-270.

[53] Ibid., p. 278.

[54] Ibid., p. 282.

century, roughly three fifths of the people of Canada were living in rural areas, but to-day agriculture accounts for less than a tenth of the labour force. The process of urbanization has continued with only minor interruption; in the 1930's, with severe shortages of industrial job opportunities, the off-the-farm flow was slowed.[55] Garigue points out that in Quebec the proportion of men engaged in agriculture was 44.68 per cent in 1901 and this dropped to 27.09 per cent in 1941 and further diminished to 16.62 per cent in 1951.[56] Thus, however rural French Canada may seem in spirit, the French Canadians are far from a predominantly agricultural people.

The sad outcome of the gardening effort serves to underline the fact that, for Euchariste, any occasions for joy are merely transitory. In poverty and despair he finishes his days; in the spirit of true tragedy, we cannot refrain from feeling pity for the old man who now seems more sinned against than sinning. An unfortunate combination of his family's greed and the approaching depression of the thirties leaves Euchariste to pine away in despaire and destitution. Etienne writes:

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[55] Canada One Hundred 1867-1967, (Ottawa: Queen's Printer), p. 273.

[56] Garigue, La Vie familiale des Canadiens français, p. 97.

> Pour les oeufs j'ai pas encore été payé. Ça fait que je peux pas vous envoyer l'argent de votre rente cette fois icitte. . .57

A later letter announces further disasters:

> Marie-Louise toussait et maigrissait sans être encore assez malade pour qu'on allât voir le docteur. Napoléon était revenu de Québec où l'ouvrage manquait, et ramenait sous le toit paternel une femme et deux enfants. On ne savait plus où mettre tout ce monde. Cela tombait mal alors que rien ne se vendait. . .
>
> "Y a un inspecteur du gouvernement qu'est passé pi qu'a trouvé que nos poules étaient malades. Il en a tué dix-huit."58

However, what perturbs Euchariste most is this:

> De sa rente, de son argent, pas un mot!59

Next, it is Ephrem's job that becomes uncertain:

> I's nous ont dit aujourd'hui que l'ouvrage i'était un peu slack; pour qué'que temps on va loafer deux jours par semaine. I's ont même déchargé un peu de monde.60

The situation deteriorates, and Ephrem tells his father:

> . . .mais vous savez que l'ouvrage va pas ben ben. I's nous ont coupé la paye.
>
> De nouveau, Euchariste essaya de dériver la conversation.
>
> --Ben! C'est-y que les affaires vont mal aux Etats?

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[57] Ringuet, Trente Arpents, p. 273.

[58] Ibid., pp. 282-283.

[59] Ibid., p. 283.

[60] Ibid., p. 286.

> --Hell! non. Les Etats, c'est un pays trop ben organisé. Best in the world. Mais i' a les aut' pays qui sont jaloux pi qui payent pas leu' dettes, pi qui veulent monter leur tarif, à ce qu'i' paraît. En tous cas, pour le moment, on est un peu hard-up.61

At this point Euchariste is forced to go to work, since his son feels he can no longer give him free board. Ephrem finds his father a job as night watchman in a garage at fifteen dollars a week, out of which he charges ten dollars a week for board.

Indeed it is a bleak state of affairs:

> Car les usines chômaient de plus en plus; le fils ne travaillait maintenant que deux jours par semaine et encore le salaire avait-il été rogné.62

This is how Ephrem explains to his father:

> --Well, son père, c'est pas que j'suis pas consentant à vous garder. Mais la maison, ça coûte cher. Money! Money! Y a les enfants. Icitte, c'est pas comme su' la terre. Su' la terre, on veut des légumes? on va dans le jardin. On veut de la viande? on fait boucherie. Pour s'habiller, on peut mettre le même coat pendant des années. Pi les boys ça va nu-pieds; i's aiment ça.63

Nevertheless, Ephrem has no desire to leave the United States to return to the farm:

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[61] Ringuet, Trente Arpents, p. 287.

[62] Ibid., p. 298.

[63] Ibid., p. 289.

> --Ben! C'est-y que les affaires vont mal aux Etats?
> --Hell! non. Les Etats, c'est un pays trop ben organisé. Best in the world. Mais i'a les aut' pays qui sont jaloux pi qui payent pas leu' dettes, pi qui veulent monter leur tarif, à ce qu'i paraît. . .
> --Moé, à c't'heure, j'ai fait ma vie par icitte. J'su' t'un citoyen américain. On fait une belle vie, aux Etats. C'est pas en Canada que j'aurais une job pour appartenir une maison comme celle que j'ai, pi un char.64

Throughout the story we see the great changes imposed on the traditional rustic way of Quebec life where there has always been a profound respect for the past, for faith and for traditions:

> La vieille terre des Moisan, riche et grasse, généreuse au travail, lentement façonnée autrefois, des milliers et des milliers d'années auparavant, jusqu'à ce que le fleuve amoindri quittât son ancienne rive, le coteau, là-bas, après avoir patiemment et des siècles durant étalé couche ses lourdes alluvions.65

The past leaves an indelible trace on one's thought. A return to the old way of life is the only cure Moisan can see for the evils brought about by the modern way of living:

> Toute la crise actuelle n'était-elle pas le plus beau démenti à cette fausee et dangereuse idée de "progrès". Pour lui, Euchariste, la voie était claire: ce qui s'imposait, c'était le retour au monde sain d'autrefois; renoncer aux mécaniques et vivre sur les trente arpents de terre en ne leur demandant que ce qu'ils pouvaient donner.66

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[64] Ringuet, Trente Arpents, pp. 287-289.

[65] Ibid., p. 17.

[66] Ibid., p. 301.

It is abundantly clear that this action is impossible. Forward is the only direction in which life may move. There seems to be no turning back the development of the urban and mechanical civilization. Trente Arpents is hardly a consoling story in its depiction of the disintegration of family bonds and the fragmentation of rural tradition under the encroaching pressure of the outside world. The migrations to the United States, originally intended as a kind of panacea which would remedy all the ills of life in Quebec, may even be destructive to the French Canadian for, according to Ringuet's story, he is in danger of losing his ethnic identity and he does not really better himself.

Trente Arpents describes three generations, against a spacious background of farming, who work out a pattern of life centring in the man who dominates the book. In all three of them it is the passion for the land which is the supreme instinct. In old Uncle Ephrem it is entirely unselfish; in young Etienne it is meanly acquisitive; in Euchariste it is an all-devouring love that blinds him to reason. A lawsuit, an absconding notary, an old man's fierce pride and foolish trustfulness all contribute to the ironic and pitiful outcome. His inability to understand the changing world outside his fences causes his tragic clash with the tendencies of modern times. The tragedy of Euchariste Moisan is that his love for the land, his avarice, and his resistance to change blind him to the needs of his family and to the

changes taking place around him. The author relates a deeply moving story of a Lear of the soil who in old age has his kingdom reft from him through his own fault. It is a story of a life that goes the full human cycle, as has been pointed out in the fact that it is divided into four seasons, those reckonings of time which so intimately affect the daily routine and the hopes and fears of the farmer. This is the cycle of successful manhood followed by waning mental vigour, collapsing finally because of the uncontrollable passion of possessiveness. Moisan, like Lear, gives away his patrimony. However, there is no Cordelia in his story. Nor, in his unutterable wretchedness as night watchman in a gloomy New England garage, paying to a grasping son the small weekly sum he earns, has he even the oblivion of madness. Unfortunately he never realizes why his life has been ruined. Moisan illustrates the pathetic dilemma of the French Canadian who can neither prosper on the land nor be satisfied in the city. Within Moisan, tradition and progress are at war, and therein lies the drama of his life. This conflict is stated plainly to the reader when Ephrem hears his father say:

> Ecoute, mon gars. . .le progrès, moé,
> j'sus ça, tout le monde le sait. J'ai
> eu le premier centrifuge de la paroisse
> et je me suis quasimet battu avec mon
> oncle Ephrem pour acheter une lieuse.
> Mais il y a des choses qui sont pas

nécessaires. J'en ai rencontré un
qui en avait un tracteur à gazoline,
y a tout ruiné sa terre avec.67

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[67] Ringuet, Trente Arpents, p. 158.

CHAPTER III

FURTHER CHANGES IN SOCIETY AS SEEN IN FAUSSE MONNAIE

Appearing in 1947, Fausse Monnaie aptly illustrates certain social transformations brought about by the new way of life in the post-war period. A new age of prosperity with increased leisure time in the lives of young city folk engenders new attitudes to life. Dealing with the activities of a group of young people over a September week-end at Le Manoir, a lodge in the mountains north of Montreal, the novel offers little by way of plot. Rather it depicts a pattern of behaviour which provides a week-end escape from the dejection of industrial life in the city during the week.

> Pour chacun le départ vers les montagnes
> avait un avant-goût d'évasion.[1]

Travelling in two cars, ten young people set out from Montreal on a Saturday afternoon headed for the Laurentians. The lodge where these people are to gather is owned by l'oncle Amédée whose only known relative, the adventurous young Suzanne Lemesurier, is one of the excursionists. The protagonist, a rich young man named André Courville, cancels a Saturday night date with Marjorie, his latest interest, in order to join four young couples: Lucien and Suzanne, Tony

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[1] Ringuet, Fausse Monnaie, (Montreal: Variétés, 1947), p. 18.

and Lucette, Jean and Gladys, and Coco Laframboise and Mireille. Marie-Charlotte Lespinay, known as Tootsie, completes the ten. Although Tootsie is intended to be André's companion, he soon becomes attracted to Suzanne, the heroine, and it is not until the return to Montreal that André makes a date with Mlle Lespinay.

> Ils se sentaient redevenus enfants et leur joie était sans ride. Rien ici, et en ce moment, ne leur rappelait la vie journalière et banale qu'ils ne reprendraient que demain, autant dire jamais.2

The new generation, as portrayed in the novel, shows a transformation to superficial religious sentiments. Although the young people on the week-end excursion still have some religious practices, there seems to be little sincerity:

> Mais avant, nous dirons le chapelet, tout à l'heure.
>
> Cela remplacerait la messe, car l'église la plus proche était celle de La Passion, à neuf milles par des chemins vraiment incommodes.3

This attitude is particularly significant in the case of the rich young man, André Courville, who illustrates the ambivalent attitude of the new generation.

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[2] Ringuet, Fausse Monnaie, p. 160.

[3] Ibid., p. 117.

> C'est le carillon de Sainte-Madeleine, de l'autre côté de l'avenue Lajoie, qui le tirait de son lit en sonnant l'appel pour la grand'messe. Habillé à la hâte, ne prenant point le temps de déjeuner, il arrivait à l'église au moment du Sanctus. Cela était valable, avait concédé monsieur le Curé tout en protestant contre les retardataires. Pour André cela, en tout cas, suffisait à sa religion machinale comme son travail, mais aux pratiques de laquelle il n'eût jamais manqué volontairement.[4]

One is inclined to think that these young people illustrate the attitude of lukewarm indifference towards the Roman Catholic Church among the lower bourgeoisie of Quebec.

Twice only during the course of the story does a priest make an appearance. First, in the old church of Caughnawaga:

> Le curé leur avait fait admirer, au creux des vieilles armoires de chêne sentant la naphtaline, les chasubles écrasantes de dorure que le Roi de France avait autrefois données à la Mission.5

However, there is no significance; he is just an unseen attendant, and this is simply one in a series of incidents. Later, "Voilà un prêtre".[6] This time the priest is tending to those wounded and killed in the car accident caused by

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[4]Ringuet, Fausse Monnaie, p. 110.

[5]Ibid., p. 77.

[6]Ibid., p. 222.

alcohol on the highway to Montreal in the Sunday night traffic. Nevertheless, these events make no impression on the fast-moving passers-by:

> . . .les automobilistes pressés qui rentraient sans joie vers le travail et la longue semaine de six jours, jusqu'à la prochaine échappée.7

Nowhere do we meet any attack against the church or family tradition throughout this story which, however, well illustrates that these forces of a bygone day no longer have any real significance in the lives of the characters.

Readily seen throughout the story is the new spirit of the time in the lives of young people for whom a newly-found affluent society demands little in the way of inhibitions. For them there seems to be no anxiety between opposing tendencies. It is quite natural to have a "compagne d'exursion".[8] Traditional morals have gone by the board and there are no qualms.

> André fut piqué de s'être ainsi laissé deviner. Il aimait le secret, même relatif, qui était à ses aventures charnelles un condiment savoureux.9

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[7] Ringuet, Fausse Monnaie, p. 225.

[8] Ibid., p. 62.

[9] Ibid., p. 11.

> Pour la première fois, elle avait eu conscience de sa bouche qui était belle; de la rougeur juteuse de ses lèvres, qui éclataient dans le visage gris de poussière; de l'appel charnel de sa jeunesse. Elle avait eu obscurément conscience de l'homme sous l'enfant. Pour la première fois, elle avait senti le désir d'un baiser.10

Alcohol and tobacco are common escapes from reality, and cost is no impediment.

> A dix-neuf ans, elle était déjà alcoolique, incapable de trouver du plaisir là où il n'y avait point à boire. Tout le monde le savait, alors qu'elle croyait son vice encore secret; prenant des précautions enfantines, comme de parler avec horreur des "ravages de la boisson"; ou des détours ingénus, comme de cacher pendant les soirées des fonds de bouteille qu'elle allait boire à la chambre de toilette. Pourtant, avec sa voix déjà rauque et ses doigts cernés par la cigarette, elle restait une camarade amusante et une amie étonnamment dévouée. Quand elle avait bu, la vie en elle s'allumait.11

The times have changed and the young people have accepted the change:

> Aussi bien, les compagnes habituelles de leurs soirées, fussent-elles de famille bourgeoise, n'avaient point non plus, sitôt loin des gens plus âgés, la bouche innocente et pudique. Il était des jeunes filles dont les père et mère se fussent évanouis de stupeur à les entendre.12

These young people seem to ignore the idea of responsibility, and to have adopted a sybaritic standard. André sums up

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[10] Ringuet, Fausse Monnaie, p. 83.

[11] Ibid., p. 33.

[12] Ibid., p. 64.

quite succinctly his attitude to the social customs of the day:

> La poursuite du plaisir était de sa vie la principale occupation.13

Moreover, he records his adventures:

> Puis, en se mettant au lit il tira de sa cachette le carnet secret où il consignait, en ce demi-chiffre que lui seul pouvait comprendre, la mémoire détaillée de ses bonnes fortunes. Son livre de gloire. . .14

Indeed, escape from daily routine seems to have become uppermost in men's eyes. This is a vast change from the ways depicted in Trente Arpents. For Euchariste there was no escape from the never-ending chores on the farm.

Changing tendencies have resulted in this new set of values or attitudes. People are making money in industry in the city, and they have lost the sense of community values; consequently, their almost exclusive concern is the pursuit of pleasure.

The wordly attitude of the characters of the story who look for the elements of their happiness in escape, that is to say, elsewhere than in the family or church or the

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[13] Ringuet, Fausse Monnaie, p. 56.

[14] Ibid., p. 235.

community as was formerly done, is a chief characteristic of the novel. There is almost a frantic desire to escape to the great out-of-doors. This is the experience of the young heroine, Suzanne Lemesurier, in the massive Laurentian forest:

> Il lui parut qu'elle se fondait en même temps dans cette nature sur laquelle, de leur cime comme d'un trône, ils régnaient conjointement en souverains. Perdus dans le lac immense de l'espace et du temps, ils n'étaient plus que deux grains de sable parmi l'entassement cosmique des rochers, deux feuilles anonymes dans l'innombrable végétation, deux souffles fondus dans le vent illimité. . .N'était-ce pas maintenant et le jour et l'heure et le lieu? Et l'échéance fatale de la destinée?15

This attitude of the girl blasée and proud of her independence is somewhat difficult to understand for she had made "son pèlerinage à Rome et Lisieux".[16] One suspects the pilgrimage is simply the "thing to do" in her society. Evidently she forgets her upbringing in the ecstasy of her present milieu:

> Et en même temps, sans qu'il eût rien démandé, en un emportement d'orgueil, à la fois, et de renoncement, elle s'offrit elle-même toute; afin que, asservissant ce corps jusque-là défendu par sa superbe, il en fît à son désir; en maître à qui, en un élan suprême, elle faisait entièrement hommage et abandon. Alors, profondément joyeuse et troublée, elle attendit sans hâte la consommation du sacrifice auquel pour la première fois elle se savait prête.17

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[15] Ringuet, Fausse Monnaie, p. 172.

[16] Ibid., p. 80.

[17] Ibid., p. 173.

Here, too, is evidence of another change, that of the break-down of class barriers, for one gets the impression that André and Suzanne are not of the same social background.

This "élan" of revolutionary independence yields during the Sunday night return to the depressing city. Suzanne is overcome with a feeling of disgust--a reaction, having no connection with any feeling of guilt concerning the sensual activities of the week-end, which she explains:

> Soudain, il lui déplut.
>
> Et comme remontait à son esprit le souvenir du midi, elle en ressentit un commencement comme de nausée intérieure. Se contractant, elle essaya vainement de rompre le contact physique avec ce corps contre lequel, faute d'espace, elle était pressée. . .
>
> Comment avait-elle pu prendre quelque intérêt à ce garçon banal?. . .comment avait-elle pu s'approcher de lui et lui offrir son propre visage à baiser?. . .
>
> Brusquement son orgueil s'interposa. La tache pâlit visiblement à ses yeux volontairement trompés. Un caprice. Ce n'avait été qu'un simple caprice.[18]

The week-end escape is only a fleeting pleasure, and soon reality must be faced once more.

Essentially these young people are searching for wordly pleasure and happiness, and in the end they find that it is only a transitory experience. André at first is uncertain whether to reamin in the city where "le quotidien c'était la vie mondaine à Montréal ou Québec",[19] or to go

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[18] Ringuet, Fausse Monnaie, pp. 215-216.

[19] Ibid., p. 161.

on the trip.

> Il hésitait encore, ce dont il était coutumier. Seul l'emportement, par la surprise ou les circonstances, le pouvait porter à des mouvements rapides. Ce qui généralement le retenait dans l'indécision était la crainte de perdre quelque chose pour avoir choisi.20

However, it is not very long until he feels that he has made the proper decision:

> Certes, il ne regrettait plus Montréal, sa chaleur, son bruit, ses odeurs mêlées de bitume et de pétrole.21

The group feel they work hard during the week with the result that they now deserve all the pleasures their money can buy for them:

> . . .Ce qu'ils veulent, ces gens-là, c'est notre argent. Eh bien!. s'ils en veulent, qu'ils fassent comme nous, qu'ils LA gagnent.22

For making money a multitude of things can be done; it is André's father, a "parvenu", who "fit fortune à vendre de l'alcool de contrebande".[23] The gratification of their desires is, in the end, unsatisfying, for on Sunday night the group return "sans joie"[24] to the city and "la plate

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[20] Ringuet, Fausse Monnaie, p. 7.

[21] Ibid., p. 37.

[22] Ibid., p. 33.

[23] Ibid., p. 14.

[24] Ibid., p. 225.

vie quotidienne".[25] To these people, tragedy means little, so long as it does not affect them personally:

> --On dirait un accident, dit Charlotte que l'arrêt venait d'éveiller.
> --Probablement, répliqua Suzanne, haussant les épaules. Il y en a une bonne demi-douzaine chaque fin de semaine.[26]

Ringuet has thus given us a realistic picture of modern ways, emphasizing the search for satisfaction in life through sensual pleasures and the benefits of an age of prosperity. Nevertheless, lacking any basic purpose in life, the young people are frustrated because of the sense of futility of their endeavours. These are some of the changes imposed by the impact of a developing urban and industrial civilization on the traditional rustic culture of Quebec. The growing influence of wealth is producing a new philosophy of life underlining the evolution of family life and religious faith. One would be inclined to feel that these tendencies have accelerated at an alarming rate during the twenty years since Fausse Monnaie appeared in 1947. Indeed, a cursory glance at the Quebec Yearbook leads one to see, for example, the change in attitudes to religion as reflected in birth rates. Until the late 1930's the birth rate in Quebec stood higher generally, than the Canadian rate, reflecting

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[25] Ringuet, Fausse Monnaie, p. 197.

[26] Ibid., p. 220.

the presence of the French culture and the Roman Catholic religion, as well as the rural character of the Quebec economy. In the following years, the rate dropped progressively until the post-war "baby-boom". Since 1954, there has been a steady drop in the Quebec birth rate, the 1964 rate of twenty-three point five being the lowest.[27] In the field of education, too, there is a reflection of changing attitudes, for in recent years, education in Quebec has undergone rapid changes. The tendency is to set up a system resembling more closely the ones in the rest of Canada, where there is a unified public authority at the provincial level.[28] There is a desire for non-denominational schools with "lay" teachers; this represents a fantastic change in attitude among a people to whom the confessional school system has been so cherished.

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[27] Annuaire du Québec, 1966-1967, L'Imprimeur de la reine, Québec, p. 315.

[28] Ibid., p. 447.

CHAPTER IV

LE POIDS DU JOUR

A PICTURE OF SOCIETY PERMEATED BY A NEW WAY OF LIFE

Although Le Poids du Jour, which was published in 1949, is a novel depicting city life, it can hardly be called the antithesis of Trente Arpents, for in the latter the soil plays, in a sense, the principal rôle; whereas, in the former, the principal rôle is taken by the man, Michel Robert Garneau. Nevertheless, the city itself does exert some influence on the people of Le Poids du Jour. This life in the city is exactly the kind of city life alluded to in Trente Arpents:

> . . .sans cesse mobile et passager au milieu des choses mobiles et passagères qu'il crée, détruit, recrée, (l'homme de la ville) ne saurait vivre que d'une vie précaire et momentanée.[1]

Particularly the second part of Le Poids du Jour illustrates this same impression of confusion and instability which terrified Euchariste Moisan. When Moisan left the farm to visit his son in the United States, he felt quite separated from the ways of the city; however, Garneau is thoroughly involved in city life.

The life of the hero, Michel Robert Garneau, is set in a triptych of perfect composition which echoes the perfection of the plan of Trente Arpents with its Printemps,

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[1] G. Marcott, "Ringuet Romancier", L'Action Nationale, 1950, p. 74.

Eté, Automne et Hiver. In Le Poids du Jour, the first section, entitled Hélène et Michel, describes the life of the young protagonist and his pleasant relationship with his mother, Hélène, in the village of Louiseville. Here is depicted Michel's passion for music and we witness the melodramatic scene in which his father, in a drunken rage, ruins the boy's violin. Following the death of his mother, Michel leaves for Montreal, and it is at this time, when he is a young man of twenty-five at the outbreak of the First World War, that he learns of his illegitimate birth:

> Moi, je ne suis qu'un bâtard.[2]

Les Antipodes, the subtitle of part two, shows in detail the hero's attempt, through feverish ambition in the city, to make for himself a new life which would be the exact opposite of everything bearing on his former days. Driven by the shame of his illegitimacy, he sets out to build an economic empire and he even abandons his name, Michel:

> Il s'appelait Robert M. Garneau. Le rejet de son prénom de Michel, réduit à une initiale à la mode américaine, symbolisait le dépouillement de ce passé qu'il avait voulu arracher de sa chair.[3]

Married and the father of two children, Garneau is now, several years later, occupied in industry. His ideal is:

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[2] Ringuet, Le Poids du Jour, (Montréal: Variétés, 1949), p. 131.

[3] Ibid., p. 146.

> Vaincre. Vaincre les choses. Vaincre les hommes. Vaincre le temps. Et pour cela, se vaincre soi-même, surtout soi-même. Tuer la tendresse qui est un leurre. Tuer la douceur qui est un lien. Arracher de soi la compassion et la bonté, qui font l'homme faible. Tel lui apparut le destin de l'homme, le sien. Il s'y entraînait.4

However, this resolution hardly seems realistic, but rather a cover and a reaction to his early life described in part one:

> Ce qu'il désirait vaincre surtout,--il ne s'en rendait point compte--c'était non pas un monde, ni un pays, ni une capitale, mais bien une petite ville.5

Evidently it is his wish to kill the memory of his mother and everything connected with his childhood, and in order to do this he will devote his life to making money.

The third part of this trilogy, La Soumission de l'Homme, brings about Garneau's return to the ways of his childhood years during the time of the Second World War. He is able to regain the calm atmosphere of his small village in the home of his daughter Jocelyne in the town of Saint-Hilaire, and to rediscover little by little everything that he had tried so desperately during his business career to

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[4] Ringuet, Le Poids du Jour, pp. 155-156.

[5] Ibid., p. 157.

destroy. Even his mother's name, Hélène, the name Garneau wanted to bury in the depths of forgetfulness because of his illegitimate birth, is revived; it will be the name of his first grand-daughter. The disturbed life of the boy who gave up music to become an ambitious industrialist returns to a sense of values only in old age. The circle is complete; Garneau has borne "le poids du jour" only to return to the way of life enjoyed years before in the days of his childhood.

Thus we see it is a tragic story--a story, on the whole, in which there reigns everywhere a sense of individualism which seems to change otherwise good citizens into hard, grasping, greedy creatures. Ringuet himself says in the preface that the hero represents many others like him:

> Je raconte ici l'histoire d'un homme qui, comme tant d'autres, porta longuement le poids du jour et la chaleur.6

As the story opens, a pleasant relationship exists between Michel and his mother. Nevertheless, cruel reality is suggested right on the first page: "Elle avait eu à choisir". Life is to be a series of choices, and once a decision is made there can be no turning back. The father, Ludovic Garneau, an employee of the Canadian Pacific Railway, is no asset to the family, and indeed he shows very little interest in family life for he works nights, sleeps mornings and drinks the rest of the day.

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[6]Ringuet, Le Poids du Jour, p. 8.

This situation leaves young Michel in a dilemma, for he is interested in a career in music, whereas his father, whose attitude is typical of his class and time, expects to get the boy a job with the Canadian Pacific Railway, since he is old enough to be working:

> --Qu'est-ce que c'est que tu veux faire, Michel? T'es en âge. . .
> --Sais-tu que serre-frein on est pas si mal. Ça fait bientôt dix-huit ans que je travaille pour le C.P.R. Les gages sont pas gros; mais c'est à l'année. Puis au bout de trente ans, on a une pension; on fait a qu'on veut.7

On the other hand, Michel's godfather, Lacerte, is determined to see him in business where he will make money. Lacerte's mercenary outlook on life is summed up in the sentence:

> Tout l'intéressait qui se pouvait acheter à bon compte et revendre à bénéfice.8

Lacerte has little sympathy for Michel's desired career in music:

> Mais qu'est-ce tu vas faire pour <u>gagner</u> ta vie?. . .pour gagner de quoi manger. Tu ne peux toujours pas manger la musique.9

Despite this, Lacerte promises Michel a violin by way of encouragement if he comes first in arithmetic:

> --Si tu arrives premier en arithmétique, je te rapporterai de Montréal un violin, un vrai.10

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[7] Ringuet, <u>Le Poids du Jour</u>, pp. 23-24.

[8] <u>Ibid</u>., p. 13.

[9] <u>Ibid</u>., p. 15.

[10] <u>Ibid</u>., p. 20.

This is accomplished and soon we reach the pathetic scene where the violin is destroyed by the father:

> Michel bondit vers le coin où gisaient les débris de son instrument. A genoux, il les recueillit de ses mains qui tremblaient. Il chercha à retrouver dans ces informes éclats l'objet de sa joie et de ses rêves. . .
> Alors de toutes ses forces, à son tour, il jeta sui le parquet le cadavre de son violon. Ses pieds rageurs achevèrent la destruction. Il sentit en lui un effroyable chaos:. . .11

Thus having warped the boy's mind, the father's rôle in the story is complete, and in the next chapter he dies in a railway accident, victim of his befuddled judgment.

Since the young man is now squarely faced with the necessity of working in order to support himself and his mother, with the help of Lacerte, Michel gets a position in a bank. Eventually, after Hélène's death, Lacerte brings Michel to Montreal with him, and there Michel is confronted with the necessity of adjusting himself to a new way of life:

> Mais plus que tout il désirait passer inaperçu dans cette foule montréalaise, se fondre en elle, n'y être plus qu'une cellule sans identité personnelle, sans rien qui le distinguât des autres Montréalais.12

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[11] Ringuet, Le Poids du Jour, p. 45.

[12] Ibid., p. 124.

It is in the city that Michel feels forced to make a complete break with his past life when he learns of his illegitimacy--his real father being no other than Lacerte himself.

In the second part of the novel, Les Antipodes, we read of Garneau's flight, his complete break from his past, along the road to authority and success through the power of money.

> Pour être heureux: faire fortune. Pour faire fortune: être fort. Ce qui se ramenait à l'équation: pour être heureux, être dur.13

Garneau is now launched on a career in industry and nothing must stop his progress. With his wife, Hortense, and two children, Jocelyne and Lionel, Garneau forges his way ahead, "brutal et impérieux".[14] A flint-hearted industrialist, he must let nothing interrupt his career which climbs until he owns his factory:

> Les enfants eux-mêmes ne tenaient dans sa vie qu'une place restreinte et peu sensible. Rien n'existait vraiment devant son ambition sourde de réussir, devant la résolution obstinée sur laquelle il s'hypnotisait.15

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[13] Ringuet, Le Poids du Jour, p. 200.

[14] Ibid., p. 153.

[15] Ibid., p. 190.

At the same time, he must climb socially, and here his wife participates:

> Hortense était ravie de son appartement Il était un progrès sensible. . .D'habiter Outremont la rendait très fière. Garneau lui, n'y voyait qu'une étape dans son ascension.16

Similarly a few pages later:

> . . .Robert avait acquis à bon compte cette nouvelle maison à laquelle Hortense avait si longtemps aspiré. Ils avaient ainsi quitté le logement de l'avenue Dollard qui avait succédé à l'appartement de la rue Bernard. Malgré tout, l'ascension continuait.17

Even the choice of school Lionel is to attend gives cause for social snobbery to appear:

> A la fin de l'été, et comme Lionel allait avoir dix ans, il fallut décider du collège où il entreprendrait ses études secondaires. . ..La mère surtout avait hâte de pouvoir dire à ses partenaires de jeu: "Mon garçon qui est au collège. . .". Elle y voyait une victoire sur les Lanteigne et sur les Carrière dont les fils n'allaient qu'au Mont-Saint-Louis.18

Still another rung on the ladder to his success is membership in the golf club:

> "A propos! J'ai acheté la part de Leblanc, il y a quelques jours: je suis membre du Club de golf de Grande-Baie,". . .

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[16] Ringuet, Le Poids du Jour, p. 162.

[17] Ibid., p. 205.

[18] Ibid., p. 164.

> Ce n'était pas que le jeu du golf dît grand-chose à Garneau. Mais la culotte knickerbocker, les bas à revers et la casquette de toile, avec le sac à bâtons de golf, symbolisaient pour lui le gravissement d'un échelon de plus dans son ascension. . . Ce à quoi il songeait par-dessus tout, c'était aux rencontres qu'il savait devoir y faire et aux "contacts" qu'il y établirait.19

Then, like the decline of Eucharist Moisan through a succession of events he could not control, there follows the disintegration of the Garneau empire which had been so carefully built up. In fairly rapid succession his wife dies, his daughter suffers an attack of polio, his son leaves for the United States, and his factory, the St. Lawrence Corporation, is sold. All these events bring Garneau to understand a true sense of values, and at last he finds happiness with his daughter Jocelyne who is a living portrait of her grandmother, Hélène Garneau. His flight from his childhood is in vain. Whatever he does, with whatever fervour he tries to obliterate his early days, he cannot efface his mother's memory. There is always someone who perpetuates her memory.[20] Living in his daughter's home, Garneau manages to salvage from life a certain amount of contentment.

Ringuet, the philosophic novelist, gives us a thought-provoking work in that Le Poids du Jour may actually

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[19] Ringuet, Le Poids du Jour, p. 170.

[20] Ibid., p. 287.

symbolize the evolution of the French Canadian mind as a result of the influences of an age of prosperity. He is perhaps announcing the submission that will follow the evolution. This submission, or acceptance, may not necessarily be to the traditions of the land, but perhaps to the social conditions which have changed since the beginning of the twentieth century. It may be that the writer wants to show that such things as new social mores and religion, and Anglo-Saxons and French Canadians can co-exist peacefully without producing the crises which we so often tend to think of in traditional situations, some of which loom up in Trente Arpents. How, then, does Ringuet develop some of these transformations?

The author affirms at the beginning of his story one of the fundamental principles of the Christian faith, the acceptance of suffering:

> Ces derniers n'ont travaillé qu'une heure, et tu les as traités comme nous, qui avons porté le poids du jour. . .21

This suggests that the acceptance of suffering was at one time the practice in Quebec. However, the hero, Michel Garneau, even if he does bear the burden of the day, does not seek his salvation in religion, but in his success in amassing a fortune and in keeping it despite the crises

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[21]Ringuet, Le Poids du Jour, p. 7.

which dismay the others. For him, hope is found in the gospel of Mammon; Garneau must have wealth, power and prestige.

How does the hero arrive at such a conception of life, especially after growing up in a home where his mother attempts to raise him to observe the outward practices of a Christian?

> Savoir que demain était vendredi rendait automatique l'achat du poisson. L'arrivée du dimanche fermait non moins automatiquement la boutique et entraînait la sortie de son meilleur manteau pour l'assistance à la messe, de préférence la grande. Tout comme elle ne se fût pas levée sans refaire sa coiffure et laver son visage, elle faisait en quelque sorte la toilette de son âme en disant, à genoux au pied de son lit, la prière du matin dans le délicieux engourdissement qui suit le réveil. Elle n'eût pu imaginer une vie d'où ces pratiques eussent été absentes. Pour elle, il y avait de par le monde d'une part les catholiques, tous pratiquants comme elle et à sa façon, avec les mêmes petites superstitions touchant les images, les agnus dei et les médailles de Notre Dame des Oliviers qu'elle invoquait contre les éclats de la foudre; et d'autre part, hors du sanctuaire des élus, les gens qui ne croient à rien, payens, athées et protestants, qui se livrent à toutes les débauches et glissent sans recours droit en enfer.22

This is a "Christian" mother who tends to her son with loving care, who goes to high mass, who prays for her family and for the conversion of the whole world. Nevertheless, after her death, Michel discovers that she was his godfather's mistress and that he is the son of this man. And is it not precisely

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[22] Ringuet, Le Poids du Jour, p. 110.

such contradictions in the lives of his characters that Ringuet wants to show us? Not only is there no contrition or remorse, but rather the author succeeds in making us sympathize with the erring wife while the deceived husband is given no consideration.

Ringuet's treatment of things spiritual can be seen in his hero Garneau; for example, the distress that he undergoes after the discovery of his real parents and the hatred that he feels as a result are due perhaps to a wounded self-esteem, and for vindication he turns, not to religion, but to his industrial enterprise where he puts to work his formula for success. Providence, in the eyes of Garneau, plays no rôle in his climb to success:

> "Un an de plus, et ma fortune était faite. La paix arrive juste comme j'allais faire ma boule."
>
> Et parce qu'il venait d'agrandir son usine dans l'espoir de nouveaux contrats, il avait eu le sentiment que le sort n'avait pas été juste à son endroit.23

At this point, Garneau seems to have forgotten completely the days during the First World War when, for lack of money, he had thought about suicide. And has he not forgotten that during the winter of 1914-1915 any job at any salary was acceptable when one was hungry:

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[23]Ringuet, Le Poids du Jour, p. 311.

> Pelleter la neige dans les rues à vingt sous l'heure, les mains saignantes, les pieds glacés dans les chaussures béantes. Les nuits au refuge de l'Armée du Salut![24]

Yet Garneau's rise to wealth was based on a fortuitous fact causing him to escape military service: the condition of his feet.

> Rien d'anormal à ces pieds. Et pourtant de les voir le fit rire intérieurement. Grâce à eux il avait été rejeté de l'armée alors qu'il s'offrait, poussé par une bouffée d'écoeurement. N'eussent été ses pieds plats, il serait peut-être celui qui tout à l'heure demandait l'aumône d'un peu de travail.[25]

Neither these former difficulties, nor the success which follows them, will bring him to thinking of anything spiritual. For him, nothing counts but the money he earns, thanks to the war:

> Aujourd'hui l'usine était reconstruite et aux frais de l'Etat. Les machines étaient là par centaines prêtes au nouveau travail qui commencerait bientôt: un sous-contrat pour la Steel Car, avec les salaires coupés de moitié, sauf le sien.[26]

Might Ringuet be using these personal attitudes of Garneau to show us that concerning war and the traditional aversion to the English, the attitude of the French Canadian seems to be changing because of the desire for profit:

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[24] Ringuet, Le Poids du Jour, p. 144.

[25] Ibid., p. 143.

[26] Ibid., p. 144.

> Même dans les apartés, on ne parlait plus désormais de l'"écroulement de l'Empire britannique". Les pires nationalistes renonçaient au rêve d'une république laurentienne patronnée par le Fuehrer et le Duce. . .Les hommes les plus pacifiques parlaient sérieusement de faire passer tout le peuple allemand, hommes, femmes et enfants, par les chambres à gaz.27

After his bitterness with life is alleviated, Garneau seems to adopt the outward appearance of a conventional Catholic, sends his children to religious institutions, never misses mass, never swears, deplores anti-clericalism in his manager:

> Mais, surtout, cette manie anticléricale, chez Marius Chênevert! A tout propos, il trouvait moyen de parler des "curés à gros presbytères", des "curés gras à lard", des "curés en bonnet de vison", des "curés en automobile". Tout était "la faute du clergé".28

He lashes out against:

> Les Woodsworth, les Coldwell, les Scott, les. . .Des Communistes! Des athées! Tout ce que ça veut c'est prendre l'argent des autres et tuer les prêtres.29

His wife:

> . . .était dame patronnesse de l'hôpital Notre-Dame, conseillère dans la dévote Confrérie des Dames de Sainte-Anne et lui-même vice-président de la Ligue du Sacré-Coeur.30

This plain-speaking satire is surely a post-war phenomenon,

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[27] Ringuet, Le Poids du Jour, p. 379.

[28] Ibid., p. 168.

[29] Ibid., p. 355.

[30] Ibid., p. 169.

unthinkable earlier. Garneau may be speaking ironically, however, since, behind these religious manifestations, money still maintains its strong influence. In the little village where Garneau lived as a boy, the situation is summed up this way:

> --Ben! La religion, c'est nécessaire. On n'est pas des animaux, malgré que les animaux faut pas en dire du mal. Mais il y a tout le reste.
> . . .Il y a les lois, puis il y a l'argent.31

As social conditions change, so are attitudes altered, and this can be noticed in the thoughts expressed by the characters of the story. Promiscuous relations, for example, seem to have become an ordinary fact of life.

> --Tu sais, mon vieux, elle a pas mal de parts de la Lorraine Gold et de la Freniere Metals. Elle peut dormir tranquille, avait déclaré Hermas, tout heureux de jouer les grands seigneurs et d'annoncer qu'il avait doté sa maîtresse.32

Some of the new attitudes to life are reflected in the actions of Lionel, Garneau's son, who, attracted by what is called "la fièvre aux Etats-Unis", left for the United States, married an American girl and eventually ended the union in divorce. The father, however, is rooted in the

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[31] Ringuet, Le Poids du Jour, p. 87.

[32] Ibid., p. 387.

tradition of Catholic Quebec where divorce is impossible, almost unheard-of:

> --Je ne t'ai jamais demandé, Lionel. . . Et ta femme? Qu'est-ce qu'elle est devenue?
> --Qui? Ah! Amy! Je n'en sais rien. D'ailleurs ce n'est plus ma femme. On est divorcés ça fait quatre ans.
> --Je sais, Lionel. Je sais qu'elle t'a laissé. Mais c'est toujours ta femme quand même. Le divorce, ça ne compte pas pour nous autres catholiques.
> Lionel ne dit rien. Il ne voulait pas blesser les sentiments de son père. Mais il songea: "Ça ne change guère, dans la vieille province de Québec".
> --. . .Tu le sais bien Lionel: ceux que le prêtre a mariés, c'est pour toujours.[33]

Thus we readily see that Lionel is well indoctrinated in the ways of a changing society. It is interesting to note that in the United States Lionel has a friend Jack Moisan, from White Falls, Connecticut, and that his grandfather was Ephrem Moisan of Trente Arpents.

Little is said in the text about education, but we do find a paragraph where mention is made of the schooling young girls receive in the convent. Apparently the system is behind the times and does little to help citizens to face the complexities of our modern society:

> Il lui restait un souvenir indifférent de ces deux années où on lui avait imposé, comme à ses compagnes, la vie quasi monacale des religieuses au lieu de les entraîner logiquement à la vie mondaine et familiale qui plus tard serait la leur. On s'y levait à six heures pour entendre la messe avant le café matinal.

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[33] Ringuet, Le Poids du Jour, p. 406.

> Si bien qu'une fois le foyer réintégré toutes goûteraient avec un délice de chatte paresseuse la joie rare des longues matinées au lit. Elles garderaient longtemps l'horreur des levers d'hiver avant l'aube, à la lueur des lampes mesquines.34

One is inclined to wonder what this type of education contributes to a French Canadian girl's preparation for adult society.

On reading Ringuet, we easily come to realize some of the changing ideas in the province of Quebec, change brought about by the influence of younger generations and their desire for a freer life. Young people with new ideas are fanning the breezes of change. Garneau's son-in-law, Adrien Léger is planning to found a newspaper or a magazine, but it will not follow traditional lines.

> En tout cas quelque chose de neuf et de différent. Il y aura de la littérature, de la vraie. Pas de Conquête du sol, de l'abbé Grandin, ou de roman pour petites filles, comme le Jardin désert de ce pauvre Edouard Crevier. Non, je te le garantis. Et pas de terroir ni de Bon Fridolin. Mais des contes, des essais, des poèmes, des articles sérieux, quelque chose qui remue et même qui fasse hurler un peu. J'ai en tête une série de papiers sur notre système d'éducation. Et sur nos gouvernements. Il y a tant à dire et tant à faire.35

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[34] Ringuet, Le Poids du Jour, p. 248.

[35] Ibid., p. 328.

However, Adrien has his problems, not only because his father-in-law disagrees with his politics, but also because of the Quebec reluctance to accept change:

> Adrien présent, Garneau put se livrer occasionnellement à des discussions masculines sur la politique, les affaires, les gens. Il eût parfois voulu son gendre plus respectueux de ses opinions d'homme mûr; mais il ne lui déplaisait pas d'argumenter. Jadis, pendant la fréquentation des fiancés, leurs points de vue étaient généralement trop opposés pour qu'il n'y eût parfois danger de choc. Garneau était libéral, Léger plutôt nationaliste. Garneau lisait la Presse; Léger, le Devoir. Jocelyne néanmoins savait intervenir. Elle faisait à son fiancé des signes opportuns, discrets, mais suppliants. Il le fallait. Adrien n'était-il pas allé jusqu'à plaider pour le patri de la C.C.F!
>
> --Il y a quelque chose, là-dedans, avait-il affirmé.
>
> --Tâche, Adrien! avait protesté Robert. Tes C.C.F., c'est une bande de fous. . .
>
> Dans un autre milieu, les idées de Léger eussent passé pour modérées; à peine du socialisme chrétien. Mais avec sa soif de réformes et de "lois sociales", il se trouvait alors à l'extrême gauche de ce monde québécois où toute nouveauté est facilement tenue pour suspecte.[36]

Then too, there is Lionel, Garneau's son, who leaves for the United States, in the first place in order to escape from the police in Quebec. At the time of this incident, we find the father, good citizen that he is, reprimanding his son for having made a confession to the police, and becoming an accomplice in his son's flight:

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[36]Ringuet, Le Poids du Jour, p. 355.

> Lionel savait déjà: un inspecteur de la gendarmerie s'était présenté dans l'après-midi et l'avait longuement interrogé. Il avait tout avoué.
>
> --A quoi as-tu pensé, Lionel! Es-tu fou?
>
> Mais le fils ne répondait rien, anéanti, écrasé dans son fauteuil, terrifié à l'idée du tribunal et de la prison, rongeant, comme un prisonnier déjà, ses doigts jaunis de nicotine.
>
> --En tout cas, il faut trouver une solution. Qu'est-ce que tu veux faire?. . .
>
> --Ecoute, Lionel! Un de mes amis, René Bussières, part demain pour la Floride. Il y passera l'hiver. Il a besoin d'un chauffeur.
>
> Lionel fit signe de la tête et se redressa. Décidément, les choses s'arrangeaient.37

Later, Lionel fights in Europe in the American army during the Second World War, and, upon his return, he never considers settling anywhere but in the United States where the social attitudes have relaxed.

> "Ça ne change guère, dans la vieille province de Québec".
>
> --. . .Tu le sais bien Lionel: ceux que le prêtre a mariés, c'est pour toujours.
>
> --Bien!. . .Je ne vous l'avais jamais dit. Mais je ne me suis pas marié devant le prêtre. Je me suis marié devant un juge, comme on fait dans les Etats. Amy était protestante.
>
> . . .--Alors, Lionel, tu vas rester toute la vie tout seul?
>
> --Moi? Mais non, papa. Je vais me remarier un de ces jours et ce jour-là, ça sera pour tout de bon.
>
> --Te remarier?
>
> --Oui. Cette fois-là, devant un prêtre. Ça va peut-être m'apporter la <u>luck</u>.
>
> . . .Il eut un soupir de soulagement.

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[37] Ringuet, <u>Le Poids du Jour</u>, pp. 229-230.

> Ainsi, Lionel pourrait recommencer sa vie. S'il décidait de rester au Canada comme cela semblait possible, il épouserait une jeune fille de Montréal, agréable, jolie, riche.
>
> . . .--And this time, compléta-t-il en anglais, this time, I am going to marry into money.
>
> . . .--Tu sais, Dad. Il faut que je m'en retourne.
>
> . . .--Je vais avoir [en Floride] une agence de Ford, le taxi et un garage. Avec ce que je vais recevoir de l'armée: mes arrérages de deux ans et mon argent de démobilisation, ça va faire de quoi me lancer en affaires.
>
> . . .--Tu aimes ça? Alors pourquoi est-ce que tu ne restes pas avec nous?
>
> --Ici? Au Canada, c'est trop tranquille. . . .
>
> --. . .Il n'y a rien à batailler pour, ici. Quand j'aurai ton âge, peut-être. Mais pour le moment je veux autre chose, je veux faire plus.
>
> --Gagner de l'argent?
>
> --Sure! Dans vingt ans je veux mon million. N'importe quel Américain peut être millionnaire à cinquante ans. En tout cas je vais essayer.[38]

Here, quite clearly expressed, is one of the outstanding themes of the novel. Money has become an aim in itself. The search for wealth, liberty and freedom to pursue an independent life encourages French Canadians to emigrate to the United States. Young people spurn the traditional Quebec atmosphere.

As in the days of Le Poids du Jour, when young people wanted to get away from the traditional atmosphere of Quebec which they were no longer willing to tolerate, so to-day, some two decades later, people are still rebelling. However,

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[38] Ringuet, Le Poids du Jour, pp. 406-409.

since they are afraid of submergence and of the draft in the United States, the movement to the United States has all but ceased; now people in Quebec want more rights for their province, as well as for themselves as individuals.

In Trente Arpents we first noticed rumblings of discontent over the restrictions imposed by the family, the Church and the rural environment. In the beginning, this dissatisfaction was expressed by just a few individuals, but as we studied on through Fausse Monnaie and Le Poids du Jour, the feeling of unrest developed in ever-increasing proportions. Consequently, the forces of change now have expression in the current state of great upheaval in Quebec.

According to the historians, K. A. MacKirdy, J. S. Moir, and Y. F. Zoltvany, the basic cause of this upheaval has been the emergence of a new French Canadian society that is the product of the industrial forces, technological advances, and intellectual currents of the twentieth century. This new French Canada feels thwarted and frustrated since it considers that it is being denied its share of the good life. Why, many people are asking, do the French Canadians feel this way? Is it because the federal government has the powers and the revenues which the government of Quebec requires to build a better society? If this is the case, Confederation is the principal villain, and the British North America Act would

have to be substantially altered or even replaced to sweep away the grievances. Or is it because the new generation is living in a province whose way of life was shaped in an earlier age when the Church and the farm were the dominant institutions? If this is so, what is taking place to-day is a French-Canadian family quarrel, "a conflict between the generation of the college-bred technocrat and that of the village notable".[39]

To-day the so-called Quiet Revolution is not yet a completed process. According to the same historians,[40] the people of Quebec are not united in their will to change the face of their province. While some wish to move swiftly forward with their tradition-breaking reforms, others want to slow down the tempo of change, and yet a third segment of the population, chiefly that of the remote countryside, regards the Quiet Revolution with distrust and probably looks back wistfully to the "good old days". However, there are voices in Quebec expressing optimism for the future. Consider the following words of Maurice Lebel:

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[39] MacKirdy, Moir, Zoltvany, Changing Perspectives in Canadian History, (Toronto: Dent, 1967), pp. 343-344.

[40] Ibid., p. 344.

> Durer, c'est beaucoup; survivre, c'est énorme; vivre, c'est infiniment mieux. Or, nous commençons à peine de vivre notre vie authentique, parce que, sortis d'un long sommeil, nous commençons à nous connaître et à nous aimer, à prendre conscience de la richesse de notre héritage et à repenser nos forces, nos valeurs et notre destin. Nous commençons à montrer une pointe de maturité et de sagesse. Pour nous, l'âge d'or n'est pas dans le passé; il est dans l'avenir.41

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[41] Hickman, Mentha, Moreau, Le Québec Tradition et Evolution, vol. 2, (Toronto: Gage, 1967), p. 192.

CONCLUSION

In this study of the three novels of Ringuet, I have found indication of a number of changes imposed on the traditional rural way of life in Quebec by the prosperity of modern industrial and urban living. Novelists, as a rule, depict accurately the society of which they are a part; consequently, we would expect our impressions from reading Ringuet to be exact. As Dostaler O'Leary expresses it, "La littérature reflète l'âme d'un peuple".[1] Nevertheless the difficulty involved is understood, for perhaps we lack perspective to judge the opinions and accuracy of the sociological aspects

A theme of solitude seems to dominate the stories. This, perhaps, is normal following the social changes which have modified the thinking of French Canada and done away with a set of values which sufficed, but which no longer serve, the rural people who cleared and colonized the land. It is the record of people in transition--a society searching for a new equilibrium. A complex picture is presented of a society of new dimensions, where the people are marked as much by the civilization of the United States as they are by

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[1]Dostaler O'Leary, Le Roman Canadien-français, (Ottawa: Le Cercle du Livre de France, 1954), p. 195.

their French culture. According to Guy Sylvestre,[2] what we have is American literature written in French in a British nation about people who have America under their feet, but, as René Garneau says, "la France dans le sang et dans la peau". Now, in this complex picture the general movement seems to be a growing faith in the power of money in an age of increasing prosperity. People are looking for happiness and they are trying to find it through money.

Traditionally, the basic element of French Canadian life has been the family under the authority and influence of parents who must remain French and Roman Catholic. These views are found in the life and thoughts of Euchariste Moisan. The author shows that from a family whose parents are of different background, true French Canadians cannot come into being. This is demonstrated in the life of Ephrem Moisan. Older parents, Euchariste Moisan, for example, are rural people, faithful to their church, and concerned about teaching their children to love and fear God and about perpetuating the old traditions.

Later, as in Le Poids du Jour, we see families where life is more worldly and it seems the ordinary thing to hear about divorce, promiscuity, suicide and a waning religious faith. Family life appears in danger of collapsing as adultery follows the dissatisfaction of couples who search for happiness outside their homes. Then, too, we hear about those who limit the size of their families; this causes concern

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[2] Guy Sylvestre, Panorama des Lettres canadienne-françaises, (Québec: Affaires Culturelles, 1964), p. 74.

among older people who have been accustomed to the large family. These are certainly drastic changes; the family, as a unit, has altered to the point where it has lost some of its rôle as educator. Former values have yielded under the growing pressure of a society where the individual is constantly searching for happiness and satisfaction through wealth. A cynical realism has replaced the Christian charity spoken of in Trente Arpents. Restlessness and anxieties brought about by the disappearance of a basic purpose to life lead to the dissatisfaction expressed in the form of divorce and suicide.

With the alteration of moral standards, the rôle of the priest seems to be gradually changing. The clergy, formerly appreciated and respected, evidently is losing some of its former influence, especially with young people, as illustrated in Fausse Monnaie. In place of a strong bond between the clergy and parishioner, we notice a certain uneasiness or "malaise". Consequently the clergy must find new answers for souls in distress in an age of prosperity. As was pointed out in Le Poids du Jour, the education received by girls in convents is not considered adequate because it does not provide a good preparation for life in the modern world. To-day, there is a desire for non-denominational schools--quite a revolutionary idea when one recalls the fact that confessional schools were traditionally considered a bulwark of French Canadian survival. Some people

of Quebec are now pressing for the exclusion of religion from the classroom.[3] It is interesting to note the change in Quebec from an ideology with strong religious overtones into one that is essentially secular in character.

Another source of confusion, in the minds of older people in particular, is the difficulty in adapting themselves to a situation quite new for them, in which the Americans and the English must be considered as friends to the French Canadians, and conscription must be accepted even though it takes young people to war.

> . . .le bruit se mit à courir d'une conscription prochaine. . .Il fallut la visite du député pour calmer les inquiétudes.4

With young people, the change appears as a liberation and the war seems profitable as in the case of young Lionel in Le Poids du Jour. This is in sharp contrast with the attitude of a bygone day when one consented to go to war only as a defender of the faith, or of the parish.

Further changes in the conditions of French Canadian life are shown in the types of characters in the novels. Traditionally only rural life and tillers of the soil were described. French Canadian thought was imbued with the idea that the rural way of life contained something noble, sublime

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[3] MacKirdy, Moir, Zoltvany, Changing Perspectives in Canadian History, pp. 354-355.

[4] Ringuet, Trente Arpents, p. 170.

and divine because of its contribution to the work of creation. In Trente Arpents the working-class man of the city appears, although the idea is still clear that the French Canadian ought not to turn his back on the soil. We see the old "habitant" who does not look with favour on his son working in industry even though the son is finding rewarding success there. With the arrival of the crisis of the depression days, neither the government nor the church is able to provide a solution to the distress of those working class people who find themselves unemployed. Ringuet's treatment of this problem seems to show war as the only answer; witness young Lionel who looks upon war as a liberation from an intolerable situation and who finds war profitable because of the opportunities to earn money.

The cause of all this change illustrated in the novels of Ringuet seems to be the preoccupation with money and prosperity. Perhaps it is the inevitable result of the economic prosperity which has spread through Quebec, especially since the war. Change has become a necessity because of the changing world conditions of the modern urban industrialized society. As the years go by, it would appear that things traditional are gradually losing ground under the growning influence of wealth. The influence of money has upset the old values of Quebec. The new wealth has brought into being a rich middle class which is effectively

exploiting the industrial and financial world. This is a new element in French Canadian life and it is reflected in Ringuet's novels.

According to O'Leary[5] we can establish a parallel between the exile to the United States of Garneau's son in Le Poids du Jour and of Moisan's son in Trente Arpents--to underline the attraction of the south for Canadians. The American mirage exerts such a hold--a hold instigated by an inferiority complex concerning economic matters. This, he says, is the main cause of the emigration of so many young French Canadians. However, the movement is attenuated to-day. In Le Poids du Jour, Ringuet shows that the French Canadian can "arriver" when he is "audacieux". This illustrates the successful entry of the French Canadian into the business world.

It has been suggested[6] that it does not follow necessarily that the passion for money which has gripped Quebec, with its consequent changing way of life, is going to continue indefinitely. This idea may conceivably have been in the back of Ringuet's mind when he quoted in the preface to Le Poids du Jour the twelfth verse of the twentieth chapter of Saint Matthew:

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[5] O'Leary, Le Roman Canadien-français, p. 100.

[6] Gérard Baschert, L'élément religieux dans le roman canadien-français: étude de son évolution dans les romans de 1900 à 1950, (Québec: Université Laval, 1954), pp. 441-442.

> Ces derniers n'ont travaillé qu'une heure, et tu les as traités comme nous, qui avons porté le poids du jour et la chaleur.

Ringuet says there are many other people like Garneau who find satisfaction and contentment only when the wheel has turned full cycle to a true sense of values found in a way of life enjoyed years before. One is inclined to wonder, however, whether this is a realistic conclusion. In every day experience, would the life of a man like Garneau work out like this? Would it not be more plausible to expect his old age to be fraught with such things as loneliness, family dejection, financial crises, or even mental anguish culminating in suicide? Nevertheless, one feels that Ringuet knows his people, and Garneau's eventual happiness may be partly due to the fact that the cult of the past has been so strong in Quebec. Wade says that the Quebec motto, "Je me souviens", is no empty formula and that the present spirit of nationalism is actually an intense provincialism.

Despite whatever may be said, one of the basic changes to be noted is the alteration in attitude to the traditional way of rural life. Although it is inaccurate to say that the old way has lost is charm--witness the present fad for pioneer villages--it is accurate to say that people no longer wish to lead this type of life. This changed attitude is pointed out in Trente Arpents where the land was originally significant--it meant something. Later,

however, this significance disappears as illustrated when Moisan tries unsuccessfully to interest his grandchildren in a vegetable garden. The attitude is why bother to plant seeds in a garden when money is the only thing needed to live.

Since the days when Louis Hémon wrote his Maria Chapdelaine, French Canada has undergone a profound social revolution. The move to the towns, stimulated by two world wars which did much to industrialize the country, transformed a largely rural population into city-dwellers. Changing world conditions thus necessitated a changing way of life and people found themselves caught up in a new society which was not without its problems and dilemmas. This transformation has had far-reaching effects which can be seen both in individuals and institutions, and consequently also in literary production. Although two world wars and a long and cruel depression aided its acceleration, this evolution has continued with comparative smoothness. It is natural that literature should have experienced a similar evolution. French Canadian literature has evolved parallel with the society of which it is a reasonably faithful reflection. Consequently, there appears to be no longer merely a generation separating young people from their elders, but an abyss separating two worlds quite foreign to each other. Traditional patterns have been broken up by the pressure of events. Both new and old ideas, the most recent aspirations and the most firmly established traditions--all

these are to be found in the works of writers who are interpreting a society in transition.

May I conclude by returning to the oft-quoted phrase from Maria Chapdelaine, "Au pays be Québec, rien ne doit mourir et rien ne doit changer"? One critic makes the following observation:

> C'est vrai et c'est beau. Mais les choses, heureusement, tout en restant les mêmes, ont changé au Québec. . .La Province a conservé son charme, son pittoresque, sa force et sa richesse. Mais ces qualités, elle sait, aujourd'hui, les apprécier et les utiliser; les mettre en valeur, mieux que par le passé. Le Québec, aujourd'hui, est bien vivant; le Québec, en vérité, va de l'avant.7

This comment, made in 1967, confirms what Ringuet had written some twenty years earlier. He shows us that the pace of change in French Canada has greatly accelerated since the period depcited in Trente Arpents. Traditional moral and social values have been modified to such an extent that to-day, when militant groups are speaking out for the whole world to hear, one is inclined to think that change is being sought simply for the sake of change. At this critical moment in the relationships between Quebec and English-speaking Canada, the study of Ringuet's works helps to provide a better understanding of the forces behind the process of evolution.

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[7]Hickman, Mentha, Moreau, Le Québec Tradition et Evolution, vol. 2, p. 219.

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