

# **In the Shadow of the Church: Irish and Quebec Cinema.**

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This thesis is submitted to Dublin City University for the award of PhD  
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I hereby certify that this material, which I now submit for assessment on the programme of study leading to the award of PhD, is entirely my own work and has not been taken from the work of others save and to the extent that such work has been cited and acknowledged within the text of my own work.

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# *In the Shadow of the Church: Irish and Quebec Cinema.*

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## **Abstract**

Ireland and the Canadian, largely francophone, province of Quebec share many similarities. Issues of religion, language and cultural identity have marked their history and influenced their relationship with their former English colonizer. The Catholic Church was a formidable force in both societies and shaped the public and private spheres. Quebec's 'Quiet Revolution' of the 1960s sounded the death knell of this Catholic state as rapid secularization shattered Church power. Social change and the erosion of Church influence had a more belated arrival in Ireland by comparison. It was not until the 1990s, amid unprecedented economic growth and revelations of serious and far-reaching clerical transgression, that the Church's influence receded and it became a target of sustained media critique. This thesis will examine the historical and political reasons for the growth and decline of the Catholic Church in Quebec and Ireland, and highlight important differences in religious adherence.

The cultural industries, especially film, were harnessed by both states to promote national self-expression while also attentive to the economic benefits of a film industry. However, film as it reflects national realities also problematises them, and it can be exploited to serve particular discourses. Through an analysis of key films, this thesis will track the evolving relationship of the Quebec and Irish populations with the Catholic Church. The core concerns of the thesis are the cyclical and relatively benign nature of Quebec's relationship with its Catholic heritage in contrast to Irish cinema's more troubled, and often bitter, one in films largely produced in the nineties. Ultimately, the trajectory of Quebec cinema's relationship with the Church provides an intimation of the direction Irish society and its cinema is likely to take, as the full import of the loss of this grand narrative hits home.

## Chapter 1: Introduction.

The Republic of Ireland and the Canadian province of Quebec share many parallels. In both states we find a similar ferment of Catholicism, nationalism, a vibrant cultural life and strong economic growth. In both states religion and language were key components in the formation of modern collective identity. There is also a complex and unresolved post-colonial relationship with the former dominant group. Both national cinemas, at various stages of their development, have demonstrated an interest in representing and often interrogating the position of the Catholic Church in each society. The colour and tenor of their representation of the Church and the key figure of the priest, however, indicate a contrasting historical and devotional attachment to the Church which this thesis aims to tease out.

### **Why Ireland and Quebec?**

Garth Stevenson's (2006) ground-breaking comparative work on the development of Irish and Quebec nationalism has appeared recently and Kathleen O' Sullivan See (1986) in the 1980s examined class and ethnic conflict in both Quebec and Northern Ireland. In the 90s Ronald Rudin (1992, 1994) in discussing nationalist and revisionist historiography found many interesting intersections and divergences in relation to both states, yet there has been no direct comparison of the Catholic legacy alone and there is a dearth of comparative studies on Irish and Quebec cinema and nothing, to my knowledge, on the fictional cinema. Also, little has been written in English about Catholicism in Quebec. This thesis will place a greater emphasis on Quebec cinema as it assumes a greater knowledge of the Irish context on the part of the reader, and aims to introduce a cinema produced by a state that has much in common, historically, with Ireland. References to Irish cinema will focus mainly on films produced in the nineties when the reinstatement of the Irish Film Board gave a new impetus to film production, a development which also coincided with a time of unprecedented economic growth and social change. Our analysis of Quebec cinema will take a more panoramic approach due to its lack of familiarity to Irish audiences and the volume of material that is relevant to

our study. Overall, it is intended that the comparison with Quebec will enable greater Irish self-reflexivity on its own Catholic past and a greater awareness of how its cinema has intervened in the discourse of tradition and modernity. Quebec as a model of a post-Catholic state provides compelling signposts for the future of Irish society. Its national film industry while it inspires envy is also seen to be subject to the vagaries of the globalized market consistent with Ireland's experience.

The cinemas of Canada and Quebec are scarcely familiar to Irish audiences. The converse is equally true. Although Irish cinema and television audiences have become familiar over the years with the excellent documentary and animation films of the National Film Board of Canada, Canadian and Quebec feature films are largely unknown entities where Irish audiences are concerned. Apart from more commercially successful Canadian and Québécois directors like David Cronenberg, Atom Egoyan, Patricia Rozema, Denys Arcand and Deepa Mehta, little is known about the wider preoccupations of these cinemas and little is understood about how they might relate to each other.

While easy assumptions are made about similarity with American film products given these countries' close proximity, few could realise the hostility of Canadian filmmakers to Hollywood's unrelenting dominance of its cinema screens and its desire to define itself differently. Quebec, a state with an on-going sovereignty project, has the additional problem of defining itself in relation to Canada and its cinema has often overtly contested its absorption into the *nation* of Canada. Quebec's cinema is frequently the envy of English Canada in its creation of a national audience, something which English Canadian cinema has lacked. This is due in large part to the far less urgent role of politics in English Canada. Furthermore, English Canada has to constantly cope with the enormous talent drain southwards of writers, directors, producers and technicians.

Irish cinema has also reason to envy Quebec cinema's opportunities to address the national audience in its respectable share of the domestic box-office. It too shares Quebec and Canada's concerns with the US industry's monopoly of its cinema screens. Lacking the protective shield of a widely-spoken national language other than English,

Ireland, like Canada, is especially vulnerable to the mass distribution of Hollywood films.

### **The idea of a national cinema.**

In his article, 'The Concept of National Cinema', Andrew Higson (1989, pp36-46) emphasizes the role of the state in 'determining the parameters and possibilities of a national cinema'. He also acknowledges that the state only intervenes when there is a felt threat of the ideologies and values of a foreign cinema circulating within its borders which also impacts on that nation state's economy. As we shall discuss in Chapter 4, the history of early state censorship of foreign film in Ireland and Quebec was clearly a response to such a threat.

In discussing the *national* cinemas of Quebec and Ireland, we need at the outset to consider the idea of a national cinema and to what extent the term is still pertinent to these states, only one of which is in fact a nation-state, Ireland. This is notwithstanding Ireland's incomplete project of nationhood which would involve the re-insertion of Northern Ireland into the body politic. Can we talk of the national in Quebec in the same way given that it is a province of Canada, although it has a great deal of autonomy at provincial level and its first language is French? Smith (1996, p359) tells us that nationalism is 'an ideological movement for the attainment and maintenance of [the] unity and identity of a human population sharing an historic territory'. Anderson (1991) has expressed the nation as an 'imagined community' and he sees the nation as bounded and finite. Clearly, in the case of Canada, one's idea of the nation can depend very much on one's linguistic and political allegiances. The borders are very 'leaky' to borrow Higson's (2000, p57) phrase. Marshall (2001) has commented that in Quebec, the 'national' is inescapable because of the unsettled political question. Indeed two books published on film in Canada and Quebec entitled *Canadian National Cinema* (Gittings, 2002) and Marshall's own *Quebec National Cinema* (2001) point up the very complex relationship of both Canada and Quebec to the idea of 'the national'. Marshall's book deals entirely with Quebec francophone cinema while Gittings includes major works of anglophone and Quebec francophone cinema in his selection. What constitutes being

Canadian is now hotly debated (Melnyk, 2004). There is also the matter of the public visibility of Quebec film and the virtual invisibility of Canadian film (ibid. p6). Ruth Barton (2004, p5) sees an Irish national cinema as including the diaspora:

An Irish national cinema is...defined...as a body of films made inside and outside of Ireland that addresses both the local and diasporic cultures.

My purpose here is not to adjudicate on the claims of Quebec, Canadian and Irish cinema to be 'national' especially given the contested nationhood of Quebec and the transnational funding that the cinemas, especially Ireland's, are dependent on. However, we have spoken of the huge appreciation Quebec audiences have for their own francophone cinema and for seeing their daily realities on screen. The fact that many Irish films of the nineties also reflected many Irish realities at a particular moment in time, gives credence to the idea of a national cinema. Higson (2000, p69) has spoken of the continued relevance of the idea of national cinema:

...there is no denying that at the level of policy, the concept of national cinema still has some meaning, as governments continue to develop defensive strategies designed to protect and promote both the local cultural formation and the local economy. Such developments have traditionally assumed that a strong national cinema can offer coherent images of the nation, sustaining the nation at an ideological level, exploring and celebrating what is understood to be the indigenous culture.

Barton (op.cit. p8) considers that 'crucial to the understanding of an Irish national cinema...is its dialogue with the national culture':

Irish cultural production has long reflected a post-colonial imperative to assert the validity of a distinctive Irish identity (ibid. p9).

Smith (2000, p48) says that

The artist and the writer alike have been at the heart of this project of popular national representation and renewal, clothing the ideal of the nation and its historical myths, memories and symbols in palpable, dynamic forms which are easily accessible to the mass of the 'national' membership'.

Also,

...artists help to create and reproduce the very fabric of national communities to which they belong, and thereby disseminate and perpetuate the idea of the nation itself, its history, development and destiny' (p57).

Thus, national cinema supports the ideology of the nation. According to Jameson (quoted in Bhabha, 1990), texts are 'utterances' in a collective or class discourse; the individual work is a symbolic act. He also speaks of the 'ideological and Utopian functions of the artistic text' (ibid. p98). Thus, no text is innocent of its origins or its destiny.

Higson (2000, p69) makes a comment particularly relevant to Irish Government thinking on the national film industry from the beginning:

Also at the economic level, governments may legislate to protect and promote the development of the local media industries. They may encourage long-term investment (often from overseas). They may create the conditions that might generate significant export revenue. And they may seek to maintain an appropriately skilled domestic workforce in full employment.

He goes on to note the 'contingency' or 'instability' of the national. Anderson's communities are in fact 'complex' and 'fragmented', they 'overlap with other senses of identity and belonging which have more to do with generation, gender, sexuality, class, ethnicity, politics or style than with nationality' (ibid. p66). Thus, when describing a national cinema there is 'a tendency to focus only on those films that narrate the nation as just this finite, limited space, inhabited by a tightly coherent and unified community, closed off to other identities besides national identity'.

Hayward (2000) echoing Higson, also speaks of the 'closed discursive circle' of nationalism. She quotes O'Regan (1996) who, in writing about Australian cinema, suggests that

...rather than talk about nationalism and national cinema as exclusive terms we should seek to investigate the way in which society as a national whole is problematised and the kind of nation that has been projected *through* such

problematisation. In this regard we can begin to see cinema as an effect of and as affecting that problematisation (Hayward, op.cit. p93).

The Irish and Quebec governments see a national cinema as having an important function for the reasons that Smith and Higson have advanced. Both economically and culturally, a national cinema is important – especially in the case of newer or contested nation-states. Representation in cinema festivals and competitions abroad, such as Cannes and Hollywood, helps to cement the notion of the national. But because the national is often predicated on the idea of exclusion – and in Quebec this is very relevant given the large numbers of anglophones and allophones that make up its communities – one could argue that at times the idea of the national that is projected on cinema screens is a fiction in itself. Canadian scholar, Erin Manning (2003), has sounded a warning note in her consideration of nationalism in Canada saying that in Quebec, we witness the ‘perpetuation of a myth of ethnic homogeneity as a central pillar in the quest for sovereignty’. Also,

Despite the appearance of Canadian nationalism as a benign pursuit and the popular belief that Quebec’s drive toward sovereignty is harmless, genealogical readings of both these nationalisms warn us that nationalism is a parochial investment in history and, as such, a dangerous and even potentially violent solicitation of a narrative of homogeneity. Vocabularies of nationalism are informed by staid and stagnant traditions that perpetuate racism and discrimination, languishing in a nostalgia based on fractured dreams of lost unity where the other who cannot be assimilated is posited as a threat to history and its dreams of uniformity (ibid. p123).

Of course, the whole point about Canada is that as a host nation to a variety of ethnic and linguistic communities, vocabularies of nationalism, rather than giving rise to ‘fractured dreams of lost unity’, instead assert that the investment is in the *future* and not in the past. Quebec’s robust identity exists in contrast to the much weaker sense of self that Canada enjoys as we shall discuss below, and the need to be alert to some of the myths and mystifications of nationalism shall continue to inform our discussion of Irish and Quebec cinema. Richard Collins (1990, p112) outlines the problem:

...in societies so confident in their national identity ...the identities of class, gender and ethnicity have been chosen by cultural analysts for attention rather than the 'invisible' because taken for granted, ideology of nation.

## **Chapter 2. Quebec: the social, historical and political context.**

This chapter will give a historical, social and political overview of Canada and, especially the emergence of the province we now know as Quebec. It will explore the background to many of the issues that dominate the political and social life of Quebec even today. The questions of sovereignty and the two major referenda, language and the post-colonial legacy will resonate for an Irish audience. The consistent use of the term *Québécois* or *Quebeckers/Quebecers* to delineate the inhabitants of Quebec, formerly French Canada, dates from the Quiet Revolution. Prior to this the term *Canadien-français* or *French-Canadian* was employed. In the course of this work, the term *habitants* and *Canadien* are used to refer to the population of French Canada before and after the Conquest, generally up to the time of confederation. *Habitants* designated, in particular, the farming class. Original French citations which have been translated in the text are given in Appendix B.

## **Chapter 3. The growth and decline of the Catholic Church in Quebec and Ireland.**

This chapter will examine how the states of Ireland and Quebec have been, and still are in many cases, marked indelibly by the monolith that was the Catholic Church. Historically, at every level of society – from health to education, even to government, the tentacles of the Church reached into every corner, into every mind. Quebec's social, political and cultural upheaval known as the 'Quiet Revolution' of the sixties, continued, as we shall show, the rather hasty shedding of Church influence which began almost a decade earlier. Interesting parallels can be found between de Valera's Ireland and Duplessis' Quebec of the forties and fifties and also the relationship with the Catholic Church. We will note however that the catalysts for change were quite different in each society and attitudes to this legacy were contrasting as a result.

Catholicism was, and for many people still is, a grand narrative which served to give meaning to life. It ordered the world for its adherents; it explained the beginning and end of life; above all, it provided a set of rules and regulations which governed people's lives. In so doing, it removed individuality, encouraged conformity and punished those who challenged its hegemony. As its ministers were uniquely male, it showed limited understanding of the female condition and controlled female sexuality using the impossible role model of the Virgin Mother. It allied itself with the ruling class and used its influence to permeate the corridors of power. Both Quebec and Irish societies were marked by the prevailing Catholic ideology and people were born, lived and died in the shadow of the Church. As the Church controlled the spheres of education and health, it shaped future state leaders and ensured that no practices were tolerated which contravened Church law. Those who would not, or could not, embrace all aspects of the faith for reasons of gender or sexual orientation found themselves marginalised, if not demonized, by their own societies. In our discussion of the influence of the Catholic Church over education, we will see that Tom Inglis (1987), in the case of Ireland, and René Hardy (1999) in the case of Quebec, come to similar conclusions about the relationship between Church and state.

The influence the English conquest had on religious practice in both states and their contrasting levels of devotion to the Catholic Church will be examined along with the close relationship between the Irish Free State and the Vatican. We will explore the effect of the Famine in Ireland, increased political power and especially the inauguration of a tradition of clerical political involvement. Finally, we will explore the consequences of social change in the eighties and nineties and the Irish Catholic Church's irrevocable fall from grace with the revelations of sexual activity among prominent Church figures and, above all, rampant paedophilia among certain Churchmen. There is less to be said of the latter subject in the case of Quebec. Most attention in Canada has focussed on abuse in the native residential schools not all of which were Catholic, and the much-publicised clerical abuse scandals in the archdiocese of St. John's in Newfoundland which led to the Winter Commission Report in 1990. There has also been the 'Duplessis orphans' case in Quebec whereby orphans were deliberately misdiagnosed as having psychiatric illnesses in order to attract increased federal funding, as we shall relate.

## **Chapter 4. The emergence and consolidation of the film industries in Quebec and Ireland.**

In order to situate the films under discussion in their distinct time and place, we need to examine the industrial context in which they were produced. This chapter will discuss the emergence and consolidation of the Irish and Quebec film industries, levels of production, exhibition and distribution, but also the level of appreciation of the national audience for its domestic cinema. Consideration of any nation's cinema must be taken in relation to the industrial conditions which prevail: the many enabling and inhibiting factors from government subsidy to the question of ownership of exhibition and distribution channels, and, especially in the case of Canada and Ireland, the stifling presence of Hollywood cinema. As Roddy Flynn (2007, p64) has noted, it is now routine to discuss many national audiovisual industries outside the US in terms of

...how they facilitate the operation of this new international division of cultural labour rather than focusing on their contribution to indigenous filmmaking activity.

This is pertinent to the film locations industry which is very significant economically to both Quebec and Ireland although it contributes little to the creation of a native industry.

## **Chapter 5: Quebec Cinema and its relationship to its Catholic heritage.**

This chapter will provide an introduction to Quebec cinema and trace the evolving representation of the Catholic Church. It will compare and contrast pre and post-Quiet Revolution cinema in its attitude to the Church and discuss how the secularisation of Quebec has given rise to a malaise or loss of meaning which the cinema of recent times has begun to reflect. This chapter will look at some iconic Quebec films and discuss in particular the work of Denys Arcand who has been unsparing in his criticism of the Catholic Church and its failure to follow the teachings of Jesus Christ.

## **Chapter 6: Irish Cinema and its relationship to its Catholic heritage.**

Chapter 6 will turn its attention to Irish cinema with a particular emphasis on films released in and around the nineties but many of which are set in the 1950s or slightly earlier. As there was a particular interest in exposing the cruelties of Church and state in the de Valera years, we will attempt to explain the particular grievances and suggest why they might have emerged at this moment in time.

This chapter will also confront much of the criticism of those nineties films set in the fifties which are not seen as relevant to Ireland's new prosperity, or are seen as cautionary tales about the horrors of the old social order and the dangers of not embracing the new. I hope to show their continued relevance to Ireland of today.

### **Contrasting political contexts.**

In comparing and contrasting social change in both states, one must be aware of the synergy between provincial and federal governments in Quebec especially in relation to legislation. Canadian law is based on the English Common Law whereas Quebec's Civil Law is a relic of the Napoleonic Code. Provincial governments have jurisdiction in matters of local interest – education, health, social services, property and civil rights, provincial and municipal courts etc. Schools are run by school boards or commissions elected under provincial education acts. The federal government has jurisdiction in matters that cross interprovincial and international borders – defence, foreign affairs, interprovincial and international trade and commerce, criminal law, citizenship, central banking and monetary policy.

Quebec family law is of French origin as we have seen, but because marriage and divorce are within federal jurisdiction, there is a strong common-law influence. Also, differences in family law between Quebec and the rest of Canada are not as strong as they once were due to the revision of Quebec law through legislation in the last 20 years. Thus, the Catholic Church has not enjoyed the same influence in the public sphere,

whatever about the private, as it has in Ireland where the state apparatus has laboured under a Catholic ethos.

## **Conclusion.**

Pat Brereton (2007, p163) has commented that Irish film analysis 'must...strike a balance between the uniqueness of Irish film and its integration and comparability with other national cinemas'. The comparison with Quebec will hopefully enrich our study of Irish cinema while also highlighting important distinctions between them. Through the national cinemas of Quebec and Ireland, we will show how both states were marked by their Catholic heritage and how the representation of that heritage on screen has evolved according as those societies have changed. The core concerns of this thesis are the cyclical and more benign nature of Quebec's relationship with its Catholic heritage - the move from absence to renewal - as evidenced in the films, in contrast to Irish cinema's more troubled and often bitter relationship with the Church in films largely produced in the nineties. The key question here is: Why does Irish cinema seem to rejoice while Quebec cinema laments the loss of the Catholic tradition?

Both Quebec and Irish cinema were created out of a similar coalescence of post-colonialism, Catholicism and nationalism. Similar problems were experienced by their people in dealing with religious conservatism, repression and the rights of the individual. Both cinemas share a preoccupation with tradition and its relationship to the Church, the state and the patriarchal family. There is a particular interest in the figure of the father in both cinemas, while in Quebec the figure of the orphaned child has had a considerable hold on the imagination of writers and filmmakers. While Quebec has shunted off the so-called 'dead weight' of tradition to become a modern, secular society, many of its post-Quiet Revolution films show the downside of this loss and present a morally chaotic world where the benefits of the Quiet Revolution are thrown into question. In Ireland of the nineties, as we have noted, serious interrogation of the Church proceeded with a vengeance at a time of unprecedented economic growth and revelations of widespread clerical sexual abuse.

As I trace the thread of Catholicism through a number of significant Irish and Quebec films, I will explore what kind of societies are evoked and problematised, and what challenges face them as the Catholic edifice begins to crumble. Following Hayward and Manning (op cit. p101), issues of inclusion and exclusion are pertinent, and the 'hybrid' nature of national cinema helps to expose, as we shall see, the nation's 'masquerade of unity'. However, it is worth remembering Melnyk's (op.cit. p6) comment on nationally based cultural production which 'remains a site of resistance to multinational capital and globalization', with varying degrees of success albeit, despite those who reject the 'protective mantle of nationalism' as 'reactionary'. We shall finally explore what kind of Quebec and Irish identities emerge from the films under discussion, and to what extent centuries of Catholicism have left a permanent trace.

## Chapter 2

### Quebec: the social, historical and political context.

Quebec, Canada's French-speaking province is also its largest. It has a population of 7.5 million (2006 Census), over 25% of Canada's total population. Its separatist leanings are propelled by its history of anglophone dominance politically, economically and linguistically. The history of the French in Canada is intimately bound up with the notion of survival - numerically and linguistically - in a largely English-speaking Canada. For many centuries, faith, language and culture were inextricably linked, however from the 1960s on and with the decline of the Catholic Church, Quebec, as we shall show, was defining itself in new ways. It strained in its two sovereignty referenda - both defeated (although narrowly, in the case of the most recent one in 1995) - towards autonomous nationhood, and the quality and range of its cultural products - especially theatre, music and film - attest to a vibrant, and increasingly self-confident francophone culture. However, as we shall later show in an examination of its cinema, like many modern, secular societies, a number of existential questions have returned to haunt it.

Many of Quebec's battles with the federal government relate to its concern for its unique status within Canada as a French-speaking province. The country of Canada is 21.8% francophone, the province of Quebec, 79 % according to the 2006 Census. Although Canada is supposed to be bicultural and bilingual, French has declined in every province except Quebec. The language question is especially relevant for Quebec's audio-visual industries given the dominance of the market by anglophone product.

The term *Canadien* for many francophones, designated their own distinctly francophone society, that of Quebec, while anglophones identified strongly with the British Empire. As the sense of a British identity declined it was replaced by the idea of a Canadian nationality with loyalty to the Canadian state without reference to its previous nationality as McRoberts (1997) points out. Canada's Aboriginals have not had

historically the power to assert their right to individual political representation, while the numbers of Quebec's francophones ensured that they had. The arrival of the pro-sovereignty Parti québécois to power in 1976 would ensure that separatism would stay firmly on the agenda.

The Frenchman Jacques Cartier explored the New World in 1534 but French colonisation was sluggish. Samuel de Champlain founded Quebec in 1608 and officially claimed it for France which assumed direct control of the colony in 1663. By this time there were only 1,200 settlers. Jesuit missionaries were to arrive in 1632 intent on converting the Aborigines.

The years 1663 - 1760 marked the Missionary phase of settlement. This was later succeeded by the colonial one. From then on the Church was called to play an active social role. Although subservient to royal prerogative, the bishop (of Quebec) retained a sovereign authority over his people. Chaussée (1999, p97) speaks of an organic union between Church and State. Kathleen O' Sullivan See (1986) points up the contrast with the development of the English-speaking colonies which had a population of 1,600,000 by 1759 when England conquered Canada. New France had only 55,000 settlers at this stage. The political and social structures of New France resembled that of the Motherland. As O' Sullivan See (1986) points out, authority was vested in the royal ministers and the Catholic clergy had an important political role in the colony. The English conquest of Canada on the Plains of Abraham in Quebec City in 1759 went undisputed by France given its own monetary problems. After annexation, the French political and commercial bourgeoisie, along with senior ecclesiastical figures, abandoned the colony for the metropole, and the *habitants*, or *Canadiens*, as they were variously termed, were left to their own devices. Agriculture continued to be the main staple of the faltering economy.

The history of French-British relations is marked by various failed assimilationist strategies culminating in the Quebec Act of 1774. This recognised the French social system and civil laws and granted the Catholic Church a major role in the colonial state.

Kenneth McRoberts (1997) commented that one major implication of the Act was that it laid the basis for Canadian dualism.

The Constitution Act of 1791 granted representational institutions to the British colony and divided it into two provinces: Upper Canada (Ontario) and Lower Canada (Quebec). As McRoberts (1997) says, this formalized the link between francophones and the territory of Quebec. By the early 1800s a nationalist movement was well-established in Lower Canada and there were many disputes between British and French political interests. The most important of these was the *Patriote* rebellion of 1837 which was easily quelled after eight days of sporadic fighting. It was led by Louis-Joseph Papineau, leader of the *Parti Patriote*. He decried the lack of democracy in the province and collusion between the Roman Catholic clergy and the Crown to the benefit of the mercantile classes. He called for direct election of executive officers of both Church and state. Furthermore, his party challenged the ability of the Church hierarchy to represent the long-term interests of French Canadians in their own economic development as O'Sullivan See (1986, p55) notes:

They argued that the church had simply accommodated to the Crown and that it was a protector of vested political interests.... Among the French only the church hierarchy, seigneurs, and a small urban middle class tied into English commercial interests (known collectively as the *chouayens*) mobilized, unsuccessfully, to oppose them...

Following the rebellion, Papineau and several of his lieutenants fled to the United States.

Despite the relative ease with which the rebellion was defeated, the British government led by Lord Melbourne decided to look more closely at the problem of the Canadas and commissioned John Lambton, the first Earl of Durham, to report on the British North American colonies. Durham, who arrived in Quebec in 1838, believed, according to Kenneth McNaught (1998, p91), 'that a liberal empire could evolve which would gain in real strength by an intelligent devolution of power without actually relinquishing imperial direction of trade, foreign policy and defence'. Durham's report reflected his belief in the utter superiority of British civilization:

...It will be acknowledged by everyone who has observed the progress of Anglo-Saxon colonization in America, that sooner or later the English race was sure to predominate even numerically in Lower Canada, as they predominate already by their superior knowledge, energy, enterprise, and wealth. The error, therefore, to which the present contest must be attributed, is the vain endeavour to preserve a French-Canadian nationality in the midst of Anglo-American colonies and states (ibid.).

The Durham Report, unsurprisingly, became an object of deep hatred among French-Canadians and served to strengthen the nationalist impulse. Durham proposed the uniting of both colonies - Upper and Lower Canada - and through assimilation, hoped to obliterate the nationality of French-Canadians. The 1840 Act of Union (which lasted only 25 years) created a single province in the St Lawrence-Great Lakes area with a legislature in which Upper Canada - Canada West, and Lower Canada - Canada East, were assigned equal numbers of seats. Representation by population would have given Canada East a greater number of seats. Later, when the balance of population shifted in Canada West's favour the call for representation by population was voiced. Only the English language had official status in the new legislature initially, but cultural dualism was maintained and there was, according to McRoberts (1997), a semblance of equality between the two Canadas which French-Canada would have great difficulty relinquishing down the line.

In 1867 Westminster passed the *British North America Act* (renamed *Constitution Act, 1867*, in 1982) and established a Canadian Confederation, uniting four provinces (Ontario, Quebec, New Brunswick and Nova Scotia) under a single federal government. This united Canada was created following the US civil war, and amid fears of an American invasion. The British North America Act (BNA) laid the foundation for modern Canada. Confederation meant many things to many people. As McRoberts (1997, pp11, 12) said, 'From the outset, anglophones and francophones had very different understandings of the political order that had been created'. Pro-confederation French-Canadians predicted the end of *la survivance* - French survival - without it, amid constant fears of anglicization and proximity to the American republic. McRoberts (ibid. p23) has charted the erosion of dualism in favour of federalism. The concept of two equal founding partners was not, ultimately, respected:

The terms of the BNA Act gave Quebec a government of its own, restoring what had been lost in 1840. However, to protect the interests of English-speakers, the BNA Act guaranteed the status of English in Quebec's legislature and courts. There was no comparable measure to protect French-Canadian minorities of the other provinces.

As Garth Stevenson (2006, p148) points out, it gave Quebec the sort of 'home rule' that Ireland would unsuccessfully seek for half a century. O'Sullivan See (1986, p82) saw the Act as reinforcing a 'dominant subordinate relationship' between English and French:

.....confederation did not respect the principle that the English and French constituted equal nations in Canada....Federalism ensured the collective survival of the Francophones but effectively restricted them to the province of Quebec, where they held an electoral majority (and where the linguistic rights of the English minority were protected). The clear message to French Canadians was that their ethnic integrity would be protected only within the province of Quebec. Outside that province, bilingualism was not preserved.

Interestingly though, as O'Sullivan See (ibid.) points out, confederation protected *religious* (although not *linguistic* rights) insofar as they were part of the legal tradition of the province. This state support bolstered the role of the Church among the francophone community.

The capital was permanently established in Ottawa. English Canadians, as McRoberts (1997) notes, enjoyed a numerical presence in provincial cabinets that significantly surpassed their share of the population. Thus, the new Quebec provincial government paid great deference to the principle of dualism, due to the economic and political strength of its English-Canadian minority. He points out that the division of powers in the Act was weighted heavily in favour of the federal government which could veto legislation passed by the provinces.

For French-Canadians, 'survival' meant safe-guarding their language, religion and legal system in Quebec. Two events were to shake their faith in the federal government: firstly, the 1870 execution of métis leader, Louis Riel, the French-speaking Catholic leader of the Red River rebellion, and secondly, conscription during World War 1 which

provoked huge protests in Quebec. Also, outside of Quebec, minority rights of French-Canadians were not respected as Kenneth McRoberts (1997) notes in the abolition of bilingual schools in Manitoba. The period 1923-31 saw the gradual ending of Imperial diplomatic unity and granting of autonomy to the Dominions of the Empire.

French-Canadians were similarly engaged in a struggle with the federal government over conscription for overseas service during the Second World War, feeling under no obligation to fight Britain's wars. Meanwhile, Canada was involved in nation-building and passed the Canadian Citizenship Act in 1946 which henceforth distinguished Canadian subjects from British subjects. The Canadian 'Radio Broadcasting Bill' of 1932 underlined the national social, cultural and political role of broadcasting for Canada. Its interest in promoting Canadian cultural production gave impetus to the development of a film industry with the establishing of The National Film Board (NFB) in 1939. This shall be explored more fully in Chapter 4.

In 1936, the Union Nationale party came to power in Quebec with Maurice Duplessis as *premier ministre*. He would be Prime Minister of Quebec from 1936 - 1939 and 1944 - 1959. In that province, as McNaught (1988, p250) comments

...the grievances of the Depression had been intensified by the fact that virtually all the major employers were English-speaking, while the majority of their employees spoke French.

The economic hegemony of the English merchant class in Quebec was politically maintained from the time of the conquest. Duplessis accused the Liberal Premier Taschereau of corruption and of colluding with foreign capitalists. However, corruption was to be one of the major charges levelled at Duplessis himself while he blamed most of the province's ills on 'radicals and...arrogant federal power' (ibid. p250). He aligned himself closely with the Catholic Church and enjoyed its support for a long time. Duplessis saw Quebec as essentially agricultural although as Behiels (1987) states, according to the 1931 census, 65% of the province's citizens lived in an urban setting. Duplessis' philosophy was essentially conservative and ruralist. It was vehemently anti-Communist and at one with the Catholic Church in this regard. The notorious Padlock

Law of 1937 allowed the seizure and closure of any premises suspected of being used to disseminate communism.

Duplessis lost the 1939 election which was fought mainly on the theme of military conscription - the majority of voters believing that the federal government 'constituted a better guarantee than Duplessis against the possibility of conscription for service overseas' (Behiels, 1987, p2). By 1944, he was premier once again. The Union Nationale won every election between 1944 and 1956 due to a number of factors. In opposing the war and conscription, it echoed the views of the majority of French-Canadians. Also, it defended the province's rights in the face of federal attempts at assimilation and centralization during and in the post-war years. It also had a very powerful political machine which, as Herbert F. Quinn (1972) reminds us, used the expenditure of government money for purely partisan purposes.

Duplessis resisted federal economic and welfare support on nationalist grounds arguing that 'acceptance of federal support would erode the autonomy of the province and of French Canadians' (O'Sullivan See 1986, p135). Given its low labour costs and natural resources, the province was very attractive to foreign investment. O'Sullivan See (1986, p138) concludes that '...the policies of Duplessis facilitated the control of Quebec's economy by large American and Canadian firms'.

Trade unions and members of the clergy began to turn against the U.N. because of anti-labour legislation and administrative and electoral corruption. This, coupled with the gradual growth of the Liberal party, led to an effective opposition coming into being. This would eventually topple the Union Nationale and Duplessis from power and lead the way for a new Liberal government to initiate major reforms in almost every aspect of Quebec life. The leading francophone daily, *Le Devoir*, became a major 'forum of dissent' from the Duplessis regime (Oliver 1958, p318). The intelligentsia also deserted him:

A steadily increasing number of intellectuals believe that M. Duplessis' neglect of the province's social, economic, and educational needs is sufficient reason for opposing him (ibid.).

By 1951, more than 67% of Quebecers lived in towns and cities, and between 1938 and 1947, agricultural production only averaged 12.4 % of the net value of goods produced in Quebec (Behiels 1987, p14). This massive urbanization rapidly changed the nature of existing urban institutions as Guindon (1988, p30) notes:

Urban institutions of welfare, health, and education had rapidly to increase their size, their staffs, and their budgets to meet the new demographic needs. This bureaucratic growth was being stifled by Duplessis's discretionary habit in spreading out public funds. In the process, the economic and status interests of this new middle class were not being met.

The Liberal opposition and later the new Liberal government that succeeded the Union Nationale in June 1960 often criticized Duplessis for his negative defence of provincial autonomy and blamed him for refusing federal initiatives and thus costing Quebec's taxpayers millions of dollars in lost grants (Behiels, 1987).

Duplessis had become 'a symbol of oppression, of reactionary government' (Guindon, loc.cit.). His lack of political morality was denounced and he was resented by the new middle class whose aspirations he frustrated. Duplessis died on 7 September 1959. The election of 1960 brought the Liberal government of Jean Lesage to power and the period of the Quiet Revolution (*la révolution tranquille*) was inaugurated. 'Maîtres chez nous' - masters in our own house, was the party slogan, and the new government set upon a series of educational and social reforms that were to change the face of Quebec. The new government was solidly nationalist. *La province* - the province - *du Québec* was to be replaced by *l'état* - the state - *du Québec*, and the term *québécois* for its citizens became common currency.

### **The Quiet Revolution**

As Hubert Guindon (ibid. p127) points out, 'the designation of a single event as the beginning of any social change is always arbitrary'. He goes on to assert that the strike of the asbestos miners in 1949, 'a highly symbolic event', is a logical starting point. Quebec's asbestos mines were largely American-owned. Over 5,000 workers were involved in the strike about improved working conditions. The strike 'signalled a

questioning of the whole internal political and social order of Quebec society' (ibid.). Up to this point the Catholic Church had supported Duplessis and the Union Nationale. But now, two bishops broke with the Church and allowed collections for the striking workers in the churches of their dioceses. Michael D. Behiels (1987, p1) speaks of the dialectical nature of Quebec society at this point in time:

By the 1950s, Quebec society was swept up in a struggle between those groups desperately trying to preserve a traditional Catholic social order based on a rapidly eroding agricultural way of life, and those who favoured a new, yet undefined, social order based on a secular, consumer-oriented industrial economy run by a powerful nation-state.

The writing of *Le Refus Global* by Paul-Émile Borduas in 1948 is also seen as an important milestone in the transformation of Quebec society. In this influential treatise an artist, Borduas, and fifteen other signatories, deplored the hegemony of the Catholic Church seeking freedom of expression (Guindon 1988, p128). In the same year, Quebec adopted its provincial flag.

The Quiet Revolution was essentially a bourgeois movement, 'seeking greater French participation in the managerial elites in business and government and economic growth within the province' (O'Sullivan See, 1986, p141). It designated a host of educational and health reforms whereby control of major institutions passed from the Church to the State and francophones' mastery of the developing economy of Quebec increased. Private electrical firms were nationalized under the new rubric of Hydro-Québec. There was a reform of labour practices and the right to strike was granted in the public sector for the first time in North America (McRoberts, 1997). Quebec's 'revolution' was taken seriously at federal level as the province produced at least a quarter of Canada's gross national product. This new era also saw a greater international openness and the creation of several delegations abroad plus greater co-operation with France. It also gave an impetus to cultural production, including cinema, and we shall see that many francophone filmmakers used their films to give utterance to their separatist aspirations for Quebec.

During the 1960s, federal parties attempted to accommodate Quebec nationalism especially the Liberal government of Lester Pearson. Ottawa conceded an 'opting-out' formula by which any province could refuse to take part in federal-provincial shared-cost programmes while nonetheless receiving the financial benefits. In practice, only Quebec made use of the option. As McRoberts (op. cit) says, by 1967 the idea of particular status for Quebec was commonplace. However, by the end of the 60s the effort to accommodate Quebec nationalism was over with the emergence of Canadian Premier Pierre Trudeau, a Quebec francophone, as it happened.

The separatist movement gathered momentum in the years following the death of Duplessis. Some of the *séparatistes* resorted to violence and in February 1963 several bombing incidents shook Montreal and the anglophone community in particular. In 1963 Ottawa established a Royal Commission on Bilingualism and Biculturalism to explore the extent of the inequalities between the French and the English and to explore possible changes in the confederation to bring about greater equity (O'Sullivan-See 1986, p151). The extent of economic, linguistic and cultural disadvantages was revealed to be staggering. The R.C.B.B. also endorsed the concept of two nations as the basis of the Canadian state but 'stopped short of basic constitutional changes that would make Quebec *the* nation-state of the French-Canadians' (McNaught 1988, p309). The preliminary report proclaimed a state of crisis in Canada. One of the more 'explosive' facts was that, in Quebec, francophones ranked in personal income just above the native peoples and the Italians, but below all twelve other ethnic groups':

This alarmist manifesto concluded with the urgency of defining a federal language policy for the Canadian state, its state agencies, and Crown corporations, that could become the basis for a new consensus for the two 'societies' sharing a common state (Guindon 1988, p65).

One of the major objectives of the RCBB therefore was to establish a policy that would increase the use of French in the federal civil service and increase the number of French Canadians at all levels of the institution. The RCBB also attempted to duplicate the status of French Canadians in provinces outside Quebec with that of Anglophones within Quebec who enjoyed full institutional support especially in relation to education through the medium of English. Ultimately, the amount of francophones employed at

federal level increased only slightly. Guindon (1988, p79) considers that the objectives of the RCBB should have been concerned primarily with the French majority in Quebec, not with the French minorities outside it. Also, it should have been ‘break[ing] down the unacceptable language frontiers’ which retarded the penetration by the Québécois elites of federal institutions and the private corporate sector. Its major legacy was the first Official Languages Act (1969) which established English and French as the official languages of Canada and imposed duties on federal institutions to provide services in both languages. As Conrick (2002) notes, the Act also created the post of Commissioner of Official Languages, with a remit akin to that of an ombudsperson for official languages, with powers to investigate complaints regarding the implementation of the Act.

In 1966, the Lesage government was replaced by the Union Nationale and Daniel Johnson became Premier. René Levesque left the Liberal Party after the defeat of the Lesage government in 1966 and formed a new party, the Parti Québécois, which called for Quebec’s withdrawal from confederation. French premier Charles De Gaulle on a visit to Montreal for Expo 67 was to add further fuel to the fire when he uttered his famous words ‘Vive le Québec libre!’ and undertook to support Quebec’s initiatives on the international stage creating thereby many tensions between Ottawa and Paris. Those French presidents who have succeeded De Gaulle continue their support of Quebec but have avoided any direct confrontations with the Canadian government. President Giscard D’Estaing described it as ‘A policy of non-interference and non-indifference’ (Linteau et al. 1989, p748).

1968 was to see a federal general election and the rise to prominence of the charismatic Pierre-Elliott Trudeau who led the Liberals to power. Despite his Québécois origins and perfect bilingualism, Trudeau, an avowed federalist, was staunchly resistant to Quebec nationalism. His vision of Canada and commitment to multiculturalism was to create many set-backs for Quebec’s attempts to have its unique status recognised. The 1969 Official Languages Act which declared both English and French as the official languages of all of Canada was put into effect and a new minister of state responsible for multiculturalism was established. Despite this, Quebec was working towards making

French with Bill 22 *the* official language of the province. This, as McNaught says (1988, p 316) 'reflect[ed] *Québécois* scepticism about the efficacy of the Official Languages Act and the prime-minister's hope to make all Canada the homeland of French-Canadians'.

A Quebec provincial election in the spring of 1970 brought the Liberals to power under the leadership of Robert Bourassa, a fact which, understandably, delighted English-Canada. Quebec nationalism was not going to go away however, and separatist forces, in particular the *Front de Libération du Québec* (F.L.Q.) also known as *Felquistes*, continued to win support in their bid for Quebec independence.

In 1971 Trudeau's government officially endorsed the policy of multiculturalism. Quebec was strongly opposed to multiculturalism in that it implies an equality among groups which they, as one of Canada's founding nations, would never countenance. Pierre Trudeau's 'national unity' strategy was an attempt to forge a new Canadian identity. As Mc Roberts (1997) says, with official bilingualism and the charter of rights, francophones were to be incorporated into Canada as a whole and expected to adopt a vision of the country as multicultural with the provinces having equal status. McRoberts saw this as destroying English Canadians' willingness to recognise Quebec as a distinct society. For Trudeau, he says, federalism took pride of place as the strategy for creating 'a politics of reason' (ibid. p62). He equated nationalism with emotion and his defence of language rights was based upon individual human rights. He was vehemently opposed to any enhanced recognition of Quebec as the primary base of francophones. Trudeau rejected the findings of the commission on bilingualism and biculturalism in favour of multiculturalism, separating as McRoberts says, language and culture (ibid. p65). Trudeau himself considered that federalism wouldn't work unless all the provinces were in basically the same relation to the central government. The Royal Commission on Bilingualism and Biculturalism eventually came to an end in 1977.

While Lévesque and his *Péquistes* were committed to democracy, *nationaliste* resentment continued apace. During the summer and autumn of 1970, bombings and robbery were widespread. Marc Laurendeau identified eleven terrorist networks active

between 1963 and 1970 (Linteau et al. 1989, p712). On the 16<sup>th</sup> October of 1970 at 4 a.m. Premier Pierre Trudeau introduced the War Measures Act and suspended civil liberties in Quebec following the kidnapping by two cells of the Front de la libération du Québec of two politicians, British diplomat, James Cross, and Quebec government employment minister, Pierre Laporte. The latter subsequently died. The kidnappers' demands included the release of political prisoners and safe passage to Cuba for the kidnappers. Both Canadian and Quebec governments held firm. There were massive arrests on the night of October 16<sup>th</sup>. More than 500 people were interned without trial. The stationing of Canadian soldiers in the streets of Montreal and elsewhere in Quebec was seen by many as an attempt to intimidate not just terrorists but all nationalists and separatists in Quebec. Some commentators have suggested that the Government's handling of the Crisis showed its determination to assert its federal role (McRoberts 1997). This infringement of civil liberties inspired many films, the most notable being *Les Ordres* (1974) directed by Michel Brault. That these events continue to maintain a hold on the popular imagination is seen in yet another film on the subject made in 1994 - Pierre Falardeau's *Octobre*. The excessive force used by the Canadian government on this occasion - 'using a sledge-hammer to crack a peanut' as NDP leader, T.C. Douglas pronounced - (cited in McNaught, p319) gave rise to increased sympathy for the nationalist cause and no doubt influenced the accession of the Parti Québécois to power in November 1976.

With the freeing of Cross, the members of the cell responsible were granted safe passage to Cuba. However, after the death of Laporte, the felquistes, who had enjoyed some support at the beginning of the crisis, lost it swiftly. The capture of Laporte's kidnappers and the aftermath of the crisis signalled the end of terrorism. Linteau et al (1989, p714) see the October crisis as having diverse effects including the opting for the democratic route by a number of militants who would lend support to the Parti québécois.

Under the leadership of René Levesque, the Parti québécois came to power on November 15<sup>th</sup> 1976. It was the first nationalist-sovereign party to become elected and was seen as a major setback for Trudeau's attempts at national unity. In the cultural domain, the Parti québécois attacked the language issue as a matter of urgency.

## The language question

The language question has been posed in Quebec since the Treaty of Paris of 1763 when French Canada came under British rule. The rights of French Canadians to speak their own language, to retain French civil law and to practice the Catholic religion were registered in the Quebec Act of 1774 and confirmed by the Constitutional Act of 1791. However, as we have noted, francophones were to occupy an inferior position in their own province. It was only in 1963 with the setting up of the Royal Commission on Bilingualism and Biculturalism that inequalities between Canada's two major linguistic groups were highlighted and some attempts made to address them. As we have seen, the first Official Languages Act of 1969 established English and French as the official languages of Canada. In the same year, Quebec adopted Loi 63, - *Loi pour promouvoir la langue française au Québec* (to promote the use of French in Quebec). The Quebec government's 1974 Law 22, declared French as the official language of Quebec. Since then, there has been a large number of laws protecting and promoting the position of French in the province.

The most controversial of all language laws, was the Charte de la langue française (French Language Charter), otherwise known as *Loi 101* (1977), which proclaimed the primacy of French in all domains including the integration of immigrants, the workplace and public signage. Loi 86 voted in in 1993, allowed for bilingual signage as long as French had the dominant position. Not surprisingly there was, and continues to be, great resistance, especially among anglophones, to this type of language policing. We might contrast here Quebec's robust protection of the French language with the decidedly lukewarm promotion of the Irish language by the Irish government. An Irish Language Commissioner was appointed as recently as 2003 following the Irish government's Official Languages Act of the same year. The Act obliges all public bodies to deliver its services in Irish where requested.

One of the first principles of the Charte de la langue française states:

The French language is the cement of Quebec society. In using this language above others, Quebecers feel and demonstrate their profound

sense of belonging to their family and community first and foremost; to the global society, secondly. (B.2)

Trudeau argued that the language law would further isolate Quebec:

Our Holy Mother the Church is being replaced by holy nationalism. ('Secession V. Survival', 1978)

The Lévesque government went on to hold the first referendum on Quebec sovereignty on May 20<sup>th</sup>, 1980. The Referendum question was worded thus:

The Government of Quebec has made public its proposal to negotiate a new agreement with the rest of Canada, based on the equality of nations; this agreement would enable Quebec to acquire the exclusive powers to make its laws, levy its taxes and establish relations abroad - in other words, sovereignty - and at the same time, to maintain with Canada an economic association including a common currency; no change in political status resulting from these negotiations will be effected without approval from the people through another referendum; on these terms, do you give the Government of Quebec the mandate to negotiate the proposed agreement between Quebec and Canada?

The federalists were to emphasise the economic dangers of separation or 'sovereignty-association' as it was called. In the end the federalists won out with only 40.4% voting for sovereignty, 59.6% against.

The next test for the Levesque government was the repatriation of the Canadian constitution. On the eve of the referendum, Trudeau had promised that following a 'No' victory a new constitution incorporating the Canadian Charter of Rights and Freedoms, would be adopted. As McNaught (1988) points out, ever since Canada had obtained a clause in the 1931 Statute of Westminster leaving the power to amend the British North America Act with the British parliament, there had been several attempts to secure provincial agreement on an amending formula but all had failed. In November 1981, Trudeau summoned a federal-provincial conference. All of the provinces save Quebec reached agreement and Quebec was isolated. As McNaught (ibid, p352) comments,

In removing the alleged requirement of unanimous provincial consent, however, no single province was left with a veto over general amendments and it was this, even more than the entrenched Charter of Rights and Freedoms, that René Lévesque felt unable to accept.

Lévesque also had difficulty in allowing the Supreme Court, a federal and largely anglophone institution, the sole right to interpret the Canadian Charter of Rights and Freedoms which in many instances clashed with those of his own jurisdiction. A third objection concerned the educational domain where the Charter contradicted *Loi 101*. The Charter of Rights and Freedoms protects minority education rights: it requires that provinces provide primary and secondary education for either French or English linguistic minorities 'where the number of those children so warrants'. However, Quebec's *Loi 101* denied English language education to the children of families moving to the province from other parts of Canada. Despite Quebec's resistance, Ottawa went ahead, gained London's approval and that of the supreme court of Canada and the new constitutional law was promulgated in April 1982 in the absence of representatives from Quebec. Hence, Trudeau's national strategy was successful with the wrong population and the gulf between English and French Canada was widened as a result.

As referred to previously, in 1993, Robert Bourassa's Liberal government voted in *Loi 86* which permitted bilingual signage, interior and exterior, as long as French occupied the dominant position. In 1996 the Government voted in *Loi 40* modifying the Charter and creating a commission for the protection of the French language entrusted with ensuring the current laws are respected. This commission was denounced by anglophones and Liberal spokespersons as a 'language police' (*police de la langue*) while, at the same time, appearing to separatists as a perfectly justified means of stemming a rampant anglicisation which would undermine the foundations of the Quebec state (Cassen, 1997).

There have been further federal attempts to find a constitutional formula agreeable to Quebec. Both the Meech Lake Accord of 1987 and the Charlottetown Accord of 1992 floundered although aboriginal rights were given a boost particularly in the latter Accord. In 1991 a new federal party, the Bloc québécois was formed which would be the vanguard of the separatist movement in Ottawa. Its objectives were

clear: to elect a maximum of deputies in Ottawa to eventually elect the Parti québécois and ensure a positive result in a referendum. As Manon Cornellier (2001), *Le Devoir* correspondent noted, Lucien Bouchard, its then leader, uttered a celebrated phrase which has returned to haunt him: 'We are in Ottawa on a temporary mission. Our success will be measured by the brevity of our mandate'. The party celebrated 10 years in existence in 2001 with no sign of a breakthrough. The longevity of the party is interpreted by some as a sign of failure.

The Canadian Charter of Rights and Freedoms was followed by The Official Languages Act 1988 which updated the 1969 Act. Data from the 1996 and 2006 Census showed that the vast majority of French speakers live in Quebec (86%) and that Quebec is the most bilingual province. More than three-quarters of francophones outside Quebec live in the neighbouring provinces of New Brunswick and Ontario (76%). As Conrick (2002, p143-156) notes:

Consequently, with a majority of English speakers in the rest of Canada, the situation seems to resemble that in Belgium, where speakers of the two main languages, French and Flemish, form separate communities in geographically fairly distinct areas.

Since the 1960s and the Quiet Revolution, québécois have restructured their sense of their own identity. Previously, both language and faith were their major defining markers. Since the 60s, language has been the key component of identity and, as Conrick points out, québécois have completely reversed the 'lack of prestige' associated with being francophone. Chantal Bouchard (1988, p288, cited in Conrick, *ibid.*) underlines this process:

The succession of identity crises and the reorganization that followed have gradually placed the French language as the primary element in self-definition. (B2)

We shall discuss the ramifications of this further in Chapter 3. As noted earlier, the change from describing themselves as *Québécois* as opposed to *Canadiens français* from Quiet Revolution days was an important step. Conrick (*ibid.*) comments on the 'huge symbolic weight' of this change in that 'they were defining themselves, no longer as a

minority within the Canadian context, but as a majority in their own context of Quebec'. Furthermore, Quebec's resistance to the flood of anglicisms has earned it admiration in France and it has been 'lauded for holding out against a progressive process of Americanisation on a global scale, which some commentators refer to as a form of 'coca-colonisation' (ibid.). However, when we move on to examine the Quebec film industry more closely, we shall see the temptations provided by anglophone producers and markets to make films in English rather than in French - temptations to which some québécois filmmakers have succumbed.

The Parti québécois, having lost power to the Liberals in 1985 and regained it in only 1994, set about offering québécois a second chance to vote on sovereignty in the 1995 referendum. The turnout for the election was extraordinarily high - 93.52% of the electorate. The 'Yes' vote was only marginally defeated with 49.4% voting 'Yes' and 50.58% 'No'. Nearly 60% of francophones voted 'Yes'. As McRoberts (1997) noted, a large component of Quebec's population - the Aboriginal peoples, was largely missing from the referendum results. Historically, Aboriginal leaders have been opposed to Quebec sovereignty.

In the federal election of 1997, the Liberals with Jean Chrétien at their head won narrowly. Both the Liberals and the Progressive Conservatives - who both oppose independence - won 58% of the Quebec votes. In January, 2001, Bernard Landry succeeded Lucien Bouchard as leader of the Parti québécois and Prime minister, when the former resigned from political life. Latterly, Pauline Marois has risen to the position of party leader in 2007.

The fortunes of the Parti québécois have taken a turn for the worse in recent times. Having held power for 9 years (1994 - 2003) and two consecutive provincial general elections, they were defeated by the federalist Liberals - the Parti libéral du Québec - on April 14<sup>th</sup> 2003. The PQ won a total of 45 seats, the Liberals, 76. The situation following the 2007 elections is that the Liberal party is once again in power with Jean Charest as Prime minister although its share has declined significantly with only 48 seats. The Parti québécois now holds only 36 seats. From being the main opposition party, the PQ is now

trailing in the wake of the right wing party, l'Action démocratique du Québec (ADQ), which won 41 seats. Furthermore, the percentage of francophones voting for l'Action démocratique has outstripped those voting for the Parti québécois. Pierre Drouilly (L'annuaire du Québec, 2008, pp. 24-39) commenting on the election results and the likely new realignment in Quebec politics following the drift towards the ADQ, spoke of the end of the québécois project as it has been defined and promoted by the Parti québécois for 40 years. Furthermore, Pauline Marois, while asserting the fact that the PQ is a separatist party, has put the issue of sovereignty on the back burner for the next ten years or so (Marissal, 2008). Some recent by-election gains for the party in 2008 give rise to a cautious optimism but there is no hint of a referendum anytime soon as we have noted.

While a variety of possible reasons for the defeat of the two sovereignty referenda have been advanced (ethnic votes etc.), most commentators now use the term 'post-referendum syndrome' to describe the *malaise* or national state of depression of many of its citizens following both the 1980 and 1995 referenda defeats, a situation reflected in some of its films as we shall later show. As Simon Langlois (2001, p127) notes, 'The disaffection vis à vis religious practice, marriage and natality are three tendencies... which reveal cultural changes'. This *malaise* is backed up by a host of statistics as follows:

### *Declining birth rate*

One of the main issues for Quebec has been its declining birth rate since the early 1960s. In 2006, the mortality rate was 7.0%, the birth rate was 2.9%. Although the population of Quebec continues to grow – mainly as a result of immigration, the birth rate has only recently begun to stabilize. It is now half what it was in 1961 and is just over 25% of the total Canadian population. In 1961 it was 28.8%. Young people's (0-14 yrs.) share of the population was 35.4% in 1961; it was 16.6 % in the year 2006. The share of 65 year olds is expected to be in the region of 21.15 by 2021. Half the population of Quebec will be in their mid-forties by then. Québécois are not replacing themselves in sufficient numbers and are increasingly reliant on immigration to boost their numbers. This, of course has many implications for the language question (Source: 2006 Census).

### *Abortion rate*

The abortion rate is very high: 28, 489 in 1999 in 2001 and increasing. Quebec abortion figures are the highest in Canada: 19.38 per 1,000 women in Quebec as opposed to 16.3 which is the Canadian average (*L'Annuaire du Québec* 2002, p118). Some commentators consider that it is being used increasingly as a method of contraception (*L'Annuaire du Québec* 2002, p111).

### *Marriage*

Fall in the number of marriages. One out of two births is outside marriage. Over a quarter of all Québécois couples live in 'union libre' (Source: Quebec Government statistics: [www.stat.gouv.qc.ca](http://www.stat.gouv.qc.ca)).

### *Divorce*

The divorce rate. Quebec has the highest divorce rate in Canada. There were 16,738 divorces in 2003 (Census 2006).

### *The Family*

The Family: 16.6% are single parent families. 79.7% with mother alone. No. of children per family: 1.08 (Source: *L'Annuaire du Québec* 2008).

### *Suicide rate*

Suicide rate slightly on the increase especially among 15-24 year olds. Quebec has the highest suicide rate in Canada (Source: *Statistics Canada* 2006). An article in:

*L'Annuaire du Québec* 2004 (p402) noted that mortality rates had increased in respect of cancer and suicides.

### *Unemployment rate*

Unemployment rate: 8.0 % in Quebec as opposed to 6.8% which is the average Canadian rate. This is the lowest unemployment rate for Quebec in 30 years (Source: *L'Annuaire du Québec* 2008, p463).

Denise Bombardier, writer and broadcaster, speaking at BACS/ACSI Canadian Studies conference in Belfast, Northern Ireland, (2002) stated: 'Quebec is a society in search of a new dream'. The next chapter, in focussing on the Catholic Church in Quebec and Ireland, will explore the old dreams. It will examine the exalted place of the Catholic Church, historically, in Quebec society along with its later loss of power and, ultimately,

moral authority through the increasing secularization dating from the period of the Quiet Revolution. We will trace the evolution of this fact through its on-screen representations in the chapters dealing directly with the films. Later chapters will explore through more recent Quebec cinema the effect of this loss of a Grand Narrative on the national psyche.

## Chapter 3

### The Growth and Decline of the Catholic Church in Quebec and Ireland.

Before examining how the Catholic Church and its representatives have been reflected in the national cinemas of Ireland and Quebec, we must first of all establish the origins of that heritage and its particular quality; its evolution in each state from a predominant to a subordinate position and the vestiges which linger on in the 21<sup>st</sup> century. We will also be concerned to highlight similarities and differences in the national populations' adherence to the Catholic faith and the imprint of this heritage on the national psyche in so far as it may be ascertained.

In exploring the religious heritage of Quebec and Ireland the similarities in the influence, support and control of the populations by the Catholic Church are remarkable. Indeed, the epithet 'priest-ridden' has been frequently used of both. In this chapter we will explore how the Catholic Church became the major social institution in Quebec and Ireland and the primary force in the formation of French-Canadian and Irish identities. We will also show how the relationship between the Catholic Church and the faithful in French-Canada did not proceed seamlessly from the foundation of New France to the Quiet Revolution. In both states, the Church will be seen to demonstrate great pragmatism when dealing first of all with the colonial administrations and, secondly, with its own elected legislatures. The Church's vested interests led it to move easily between a number of positions. Gaining control over education was a priority as it enabled the Church to gain greater social control and to ensure denominational separateness. The rise of nationalism also created concern in the ranks of the Catholic hierarchy as it had to deal with a new rival for the people's attention. Another key question in our discussion is the degree of religious devotion demonstrated by each population. Apart from public conformity which was necessary for social acceptance, an

insight into the depth of faith of the Irish and Québécois can be gleaned in examining the nature, extent and effect of the enormous rupture that took place in both societies – three decades apart – with the decline of the traditional faith and Church authority.

Gregory Baum (1991, p14) writing in 1991 commented that there was very little literature in English dealing with issues of church and society in Quebec. What follows will hopefully make some contribution towards redressing this in its inclusion of ideas generated by Fernand Dumont, Louis Rousseau, René Hardy, Gilles Chausée, Lucia Ferretti, Gérard Bouchard and Fernande Roy among others.

Being French-Canadian, later Québécois, and Catholic were at one time synonymous just as in Ireland religion was the pre-eminent badge of identity. However, in Ireland, it must be remembered, many of the outstanding political and literary figures came, in fact, from the Protestant tradition. In this chapter we will see how the Irish Church reacted like the Quebec Church to threats to its authority whether coming from the English conqueror or from revolutionary forces from within. The catalysts for change in the Churches' position within society were not identical, however, and it seems clear that their legacy to each state had many notable differences. These differences help to explain the contrasting cinematic treatment of the Church in both states as we hope to show.

### **Devotional differences**

The many popular forms of religious worship in post-Penal Laws Ireland testify to a people with a deep spiritual inclination. In the early and mid-nineteenth century, mass-going was not quite the marker that it would later become in terms of Catholic devotion. There was also the problem of an insufficient supply of priests to service the growing population. A popular folk-religion consisting of pilgrimages, patterns, holy wells, faith-healing and stations, all served to give utterance to an alternative, unorthodox religion of which the Church certainly disapproved. Descriptions of behaviour at Holy Wells, for example, (Ó'Giolláin, 2005) indicated a fine line between spirituality and licentiousness.

Their continued practice was seen by Church leaders as a threat to its own quest for total control of the society and chief mediator with the Divine. The Tridentine revolution following the Council of Trent (1545-1563) was to put religious worship on a more orthodox footing and, from the second half of the 18<sup>th</sup> century began to erode more popular forms of worship as Fuller (2004, pxxiv) notes:

In keeping with Tridentine Catholic practice everywhere, the bishops and clergy sought to suppress and at a minimum, control popular forms of piety, fearful of their superstitions and pagan overtones.

In the decades after the Famine, and with the demise of the rural proletariat, these practices were replaced by the internalization of new religious forms (Ó'Giollain, 2000).

The colonisation of New France, as Gilles Chausée (1999) points out, coincided with a period of renewal in the Catholic Church spurred on by the Council of Trent. Jesuit missionaries arrived in 1632 following the Franciscan Recollets, all intent on converting the Aborigines. These *robes noires* or Black Robes, as they were called by the aborigines, tried to inculcate Christianity all the while respecting native culture. They learned the native languages and acknowledged these societies' own hierarchies. This was in contrast to the prevailing missionary current which equated evangelisation with Europeanisation as Lucia Ferretti (1999, p15) reminds us. The martyrdom of a number of these early missionaries would leave a permanent impression on the collective memory. An early film, *Le festin des morts* (Dansereau, 1965) set in 1638, dealt with the relationship between the Jesuits and the Hurons and the martyrdom of Jean Brébeuf and other priests. Bill Marshall (2001, p246) comments that the 'episode of the holy martyrs became one of the foundational cornerstones of French-Canadian identity during the 19<sup>th</sup> century.' According to the Jesuit *Relations* more than sixteen thousand Amerindians, or about twice the number of French inhabitants, received baptism between 1632 and 1672 (Fay 2002). In 1639 two orders of nuns – the Ursulines and the Hospitallers of St Augustine - arrived in Quebec to take care of the sick. The Jesuits' monopoly was overturned with the arrival of the *Sulpiciens* in 1657 and the return of the Recollets in 1670.

Quebec's first bishop, Mgr. Laval, arrived in Quebec in 1658 to give a new direction to the formation of parishes, schools and hospitals, a task which the Jesuits had undertaken in the colony previously. He built a seminary in Quebec and left the Amerindian missions to the Jesuits.

By 1754, the Catholic Church in New France consisted of a diocese of 55,000 *habitants* and missions of an equal number of Amerindians. Fay (2002, p27) comments on the first Canadian bishops in New France:

[They] organized the colonial faithful into a number of geographically extensive parishes that were guided by mobile clergy from the seminary. The clergy defended the rights of the church against the encroachments of the state. They established a mystical and austere spirituality that became the norm of French Catholicism.

The Church's financial needs were catered for by the seigneur's land, royal funding, donations and tithes paid by the *habitants*. As O' Sullivan See (1986) has noted, the social structure and administration of New France reflected but did not duplicate that of the metropole. Authority rested with the royal ministers, land was distributed to settlers according to the feudal seigneurial system, and the clergy played a significant political role (with their own lobby in France).

Guindon (1988) sketches a picture of a typical parish in New France:

Typically, a village in its completed form had its priest and church, a school operated by nuns, its notary and doctor, and its small business men who rested their trade on supplying what the subsistence economy could not produce ... The rural society created its own bourgeoisie, created from the ranks of the *habitants*.....For those who failed to become priests the liberal professions were open. In either case one became part of the bourgeoisie.

Gérard Bouchard (1999, p112) casts a critical eye on French imperialism when he considers the colonial administration of New France. He enumerates the constraints it placed upon the new society denouncing its centralisation, corruption and incoherence:

...the prohibition that it placed on Protestant immigration (Huguenots), the obstacles that it put in the way of the autonomous development of the young society, the censure it imposed in the domain of ideas (notably the banning of printing), the denial of any impulse of democracy (the prohibition of public gatherings and other forms of consultation), the cavalier fashion in which it disposed of the colony in 1763. (B3)

In such a climate, it is not surprising that the habitants were so dependent on the Church and, after the Conquest, satisfied to have it represent its interests with the colonial authorities.

Louis Rousseau (1994) describes the characteristics of this 'north-American adventure' in its different phases. Initially, there was a great religious fervour and a reformist spirit in the Catholicism of the first generations. This was followed by a gradual settling in process with the formation of parishes. Finally came a devaluing of religion in the revolutionary decades.

R  n   Hardy (1999) discusses the research of Louise Dech  ne and Marie-Aim  e Clich   on the Catholic population of New France. While Dech  ne underlines the penetration of everyday life by religion, she nonetheless contradicts the image of a population of Christian zealots which has been formulated by a largely clerical historiography. If the inhabitants made a fuss in demanding Church and curate, they were nonetheless reluctant to pay for it. Dech  ne reveals a certain half-heartedness on the part of the population behind a fa  ade of conformity (ibid. p210). Clich   has documented a wide variety of religious practices at the end of the French regime which ran across the whole social strata. Although conforming to the teachings of the Church, they took place outside the framework of the Church given the lack of priests and Church buildings. In 1731, 32 out of a total of 88 parishes were without a parish priest (Hardy, 1999, p211). Thus, in contrast to the strict regulation and uniformity of religious practice at the end of the 19<sup>th</sup> century, that of New France was of a more 'spontaneous' ('quasi spontan  e') kind according to Hardy. In the same vein, Leslie Choquette (2006) in a study of 'Religious Diversity: Protestants, Jews, and Catholics' in New France in the 17<sup>th</sup> and 18<sup>th</sup> centuries, discusses the religious and moral laxity of French emigrants and considered that it would be a mistake to assume that French Canadians inherited their

Catholic fidelity from an idealized feudal past, rather than adopted it through historical circumstance. Neither lay emigrants nor the colony's leaders were particularly inclined to 'rigorist devotion', and 'outright' anticlericalism and 'untraditional ideas about gender' alarmed the Catholic Church. All of this would change after the British conquest of 1759 which gave a new impetus to the Catholic Church in Quebec. These are points we shall explore in greater detail later in the chapter.

### **Priest and parishioner**

The 17<sup>th</sup> English conquest in the form of the great plantations in Ireland, while it proscribed the Catholic religion and initiated the decline of native traditions, had the effect of strengthening the bond between the Church and the people. O'Giolláin (2000, p15) sums up the impact of colonization on native life:

The resulting divide between conqueror and conquered, settler and native, over time, normalized into the broad ethnic categories of 'Protestant' and 'Catholic', was to nuance all subsequent political and economic developments. The dispossession of the native secular and religious elite, the appropriation of its wealth and the plundering or destruction of much of its material culture, legitimated by the law and by the religious ideology of the conquerors, had a profound impact on native culture.

The Irish language began its slow decline along with Gaelic traditions. The Penal Laws were enacted between 1695 and 1745. Throughout the 18<sup>th</sup> century, the Catholic Church was outlawed, Catholics were deprived of their civil rights and could not take part in government of their own country. Furthermore, there was strong 'encouragement' to convert to Protestantism. During this time, Mass rocks and hedge schools were used to subvert the Crown edicts on religious practice and education. The central role of the priest in the above helped to cement the relationship between priest and parishioner and created a bond which would hold fast for centuries. The Catholic Relief Acts of 1782 and 1793 allowed Catholics to vote at elections and attend Trinity College (although the Catholic Church objected to the latter) but they could not sit in parliament or take most public offices because of the oath of allegiance. There was no real indigenous leadership as the archbishops in most instances supported English rule in Ireland, believing as had many Church leaders in post-conquest Quebec, as we shall discuss below, that one

should submit to one's rulers. It must be remembered that the Irish parliament was not the parliament of the Irish people. It stood for, above all, the rights and privileges of the English or the Anglo-Irish.

Fuller (2004, pxxiv) concurs that during Penal times, given the distressed state of the Church, the bond between priest and parishioner became closer than that between priest and bishop. This, she says, is 'a key factor in any assessment of how Catholicism became all-pervasive in Irish life' (ibid. xxiv). Also, the fact that the Clergy were dependent on their parishioners for their living, controversial though the payment of fees was, (the Catholic Church refused state payment) also reinforced this bond and helped create the formidable institution that the Church became.

We saw in Chapter 2, how the arrival of the British conquerors in French-Canada in 1759 and the consequent collapse of France's colonial experiment in North America, saw the departure of the French political and commercial bourgeoisie, along with the higher clergy. The *habitants* were left to fend for themselves and the economy continued on chiefly agricultural lines. By 1825 the French population was 85% rural (O' Sullivan See, 1986). In June 1760 with the demise of Bishop Henri-Marie Dubreil de Pontbriand the Church was without a leader. Bearing in mind the effects of the Penal Laws in England (and Ireland) on Catholics plus the forced removal of the Acadians who lived around the Bay of Fundy by the British in the mid 1700s, the survival of this small French-Catholic population in the face of English Protestantism seemed unlikely.

However, the Penal Laws were never applied to Quebec, and the colonial authorities in Quebec, as in Ireland to a lesser degree, saw the advantage of forging an alliance with the Catholic Church. This would culminate in the Quebec Act of 1774 which guaranteed religious freedom for the *habitants*. Because New France was left to the *habitants*, the Catholic Church became the central institution of French Canadians, the bedrock on which French-Canadian society was built. In 1765 the French Catholic population of 70, 000 included only 138 priests but those priests played a critical role. The Catholic Church ensured its own survival and sphere of influence through deference to and collaboration with the British authorities (Roy, 1993) as we shall discuss later.

Garigue (1964, p131) comments on the role of the parish priest:

As the only formal organization left after the collapse of the French regime...and because of the lack of local government, the parish priest was not only the religious head of a parish, but also the agent in each rural community of the Catholic hierarchy's political power.

O'Sullivan See (1986, pp49, 50) similarly underlines his political power:

The lack of a common law and an assembly or municipal council and the non-resident status of most of the seigneurs ensured that the influence of the curé upon social and political life was paramount.

Chausée (1999, p97) points out that the Church became 'a rampart against the absolutism of the British conqueror and a way of affirming their identity.'

Bishop Pontbriand's successor, after a six-year vacancy due to the British authorities, Bishop Jean-Olivier Briand (1766-84) proved very adept at cultivating the goodwill of the British authorities especially General James Murray, the British commander in Quebec. Fay (2002, p31) comments that Briand 'took the interest of the government to heart and professed his loyalty and that of his clergy'. He received a government stipend which was fortunate given the penury of the Church, now deprived of royal funds, but remained independent in matters of the faith. Stevenson (2006, p51), citing Lawson, comments that the appointing of Briand was a 'seminal event' and that following this step, 'a Protestant ascendancy in the province was out of the question'. Although the government allowed some of the female religious orders to maintain their congregations with a view to continued maintenance of schools and hospitals, they forbade the Recollets and the Jesuits to take in novices thus precipitating their demise. In contrast the Sulpicians continued to operate their seminaries under the tutelage of the British authorities (Fay, 2002, p33). Fay (ibid, p37) has commented on the irony that the 'close British supervision of Canadien religion' served instead to intensify 'the indigenization of the Catholic Church in Quebec'.

Hardy (1999, p212) comments that the Church remained attached to the doctrine of the divine right of the monarchy despite the Protestantism of the king. It continued to teach

submission to the authorities at a time when rationalism and liberalism threatened monarchies:

In this, the British administrators, the old French aristocracy and the Catholic clergy shared the same ideology. This was opposed to the liberal and democratic project of the rising French–Canadian petit-bourgeoisie who came from the liberal professions and the world of commerce. (B4)

With the advent of parliamentary politics which provided a platform for the petit-bourgeoisie, the Church was not alone in representing the nation as we shall discuss below.

Scottish and Irish Catholics arrived in Canada from 1720 – 1850, the Irish fleeing poverty and, later, the famine. The *Canadien* clergy's monopoly of the Canadian Church thus came to an end. The influence of the Quebec Act led to tolerance of Catholics elsewhere in Canada and had spread to Nova Scotia and Newfoundland by 1783-84 as Fay (2002) shows. The Scottish and Irish settlers eventually began to import their own clergy to 'supplement the pastoral care provided by the bishop of Quebec' (ibid.) which suggests that their linguistic needs were not being catered for. The British authorities cast a more favourable eye on this particular import – especially when accompanying immigrants - in contrast to its treatment of the Jesuits and Recollects. Large numbers of Irish from the south-eastern part of Ireland settled in Newfoundland to work mainly in the fisheries. Although they encountered British repression initially, they were eventually permitted a certain religious autonomy (ibid, p51). Once again, shrewd collaboration between the clergy and the colonial government proved beneficial. Scottish and Irish Vicars General ultimately resisted belonging to the diocese of Quebec and new dioceses in Kingston (1825) and Charlottetown (1829) directly under the control of Rome were created. As Ferretti (1999, p43) comments:

No bishop of British (sic) origin would depend henceforth on the Canadien hierarchy.

Henceforth, there were practically two Catholic churches in Canada. A second Quebec diocese, that of Montreal, was eventually established in 1836. Rousseau (Baillargeon,

1994) has commented that there has never been an Irish bishop in Montreal despite their large presence in Montreal and Quebec. He comments that they were handicapped by the fact that, having chosen English as their language (few made the change to French) they were in a minority from both a religious and a linguistic point of view. In 1871, the Irish represented 10.4% of the population of Quebec. However, by 1931, the number had declined to 3.8% of the total population (Linteau et al, 1989). The contribution of the Irish to the history of Montreal and Quebec society has been largely ignored in Rousseau's opinion (Baillargeon, 1994, p87).

### **Church and conqueror**

Thus, in the 18<sup>th</sup> century, there was a very close link between priest and parishioner in both Ireland and French Canada. However, the *Canadiens* found a much more useful political ally in the Church than could be the case in Ireland given the degree of religious persecution unknown in Quebec. As we noted in Chapter 2, the 1774 Quebec Act had recognised the French social system and civil laws and granted the freedom to practice the Roman Catholic religion. The Catholic Church of Quebec was the first to be officially recognised by the British Empire. The British metropole went on to make the Catholic Church a cornerstone of the colonial state as Garigue (1964, p131) notes:

The act conceded to the church the right to tax the peasantry and control schools; it restored the French civil law and protected the language rights of the habitants. In short, it established an 'aristocratic compact' which linked state and church and signalled to the habitants that the survival of the Catholic Church in Canada and the survival of French Canada were similar goals...anything which endangered the strength of the Church endangered the survival of French Canada.

As discussed in Chapter 2, the Constitution Act of 1791 divided the colony into Upper (Ontario) and Lower Canada (Quebec) granting each a legislative assembly. Efforts were made to integrate *Canadiens* into the colony's administration but the oath of allegiance, as for Irish Catholics, and the Declaration of Abjuration were major stumbling blocks. Fay (2002, 34) explains the ramifications of this:

This meant that before taking public office, Canadian officials had to become Protestant by renouncing the basic Catholic beliefs of papal primacy, transubstantiation, the cult of the saints, and the right of Catholic heirs to the English Crown.

However, this requirement was eventually ignored by the British in order to fill seats. Later, because of fears of the appeals by American rebels to the *habitants* and the threat of a Continental war, the British saw the need to forge further links with the French Canadian clergy. Although the British authorities had a mistrust of the Church – only officially recognising its bishop in 1818, yet, as Roy (1993) asserts, the Church preached loyalty towards the British monarchy and obedience to the colonial authorities. The Church leaders managed to convince the British that maintaining the Catholic religion would serve the interests of government. Gilles Chausée (cited in Fay 2002, p36) saw Mgr. Briand alienate many of his flock through an ‘ostentatious loyalty to England...and condemnations of the American democracy’. However, Briand and his successors emphasised the divine right of kings and considered that if a king ruled by God’s blessing then to rebel against him was to rebel against God. Bishop Plessis (1806-1825) was to operate in a similar vein in his condemnation of Revolution in France.

While Lower Canada (Quebec) was enjoying political representation and religious freedom by the late 18<sup>th</sup> century, the situation in Ireland in contrast, was quite desperate. If in Quebec, the clergy were the political leaders of their community, Fuller (2004, pxxiv) has stressed the role of the Irish laity in leading rather than following the priests and bishops regarding political involvement. In the absence of local leadership, the stage was set for the entry of one of Ireland’s most important political leaders, the wealthy, Catholic barrister: Daniel O’Connell. Many people were close to starvation from the 1820s. With the lack of informed public opinion and education, only someone of O’Connell’s background could hope to have any influence. Interestingly, O’Connell has been compared to prominent Patriotes, Louis-Joseph Papineau and Louis-Hippolyte LaFontaine, whose activities we shall elaborate on later. He in fact made an analogy between Ireland and [Lower] Canada at Westminster in 1837 (Stevenson, 2006, pp74, 125).

In Ireland religious and political demands were inextricably linked since the beginning of the 18<sup>th</sup> century. In 1800, the Act of Union united Great Britain and Ireland. Ireland thus lost her parliament and her representatives met in Westminster until 1921. The Crown was represented in Ireland by a Viceroy and Chief Secretary. There was little in the way of organized protest since Robert Emmet's failed rebellion of 1803 although there was much unofficial protest in the form of secret societies such as the Ribbonmen and the Molly Maguires whose activities were focussed on the unjust land system. The Irish clergy did not oppose the Act of Union and looked for a compromise with England in order to enjoy greater freedom. Daniel O'Connell called for Catholic emancipation, the removal of the main legal restrictions which affected Catholics, and in 1829, George IV removed religious discrimination from Catholics. The Catholic majority nonetheless remained second class citizens. The rhetoric of O'Connell as Connolly (1985, p29) notes, 'explicitly linked religious, political and economic grievances'.

Under British rule, the Irish Catholic bishops had seen fit to collaborate with the British authorities in order to gain concessions as had happened in Quebec. In 1799, the bishops had accepted a British government veto on Episcopal appointments in return for Catholic emancipation. Daniel O'Connell, as Fuller (2004) recounts, organised huge lay opposition to this and a synod of Dublin in 1808 saw a majority of bishops vote against any future Crown interference in Church matters. The power of the laity was not to be ignored on this and many other occasions as we shall see.

At this time, the Catholic population was largely poverty-stricken and landless – the legacy of the Plantations - and was particularly concerned with local issues such as rents and evictions. Almost half of the population in the countryside lived in one-roomed cabins with walls made of mud. Most farmers had between five and fifteen acres of land and the potato was the staple diet. Some small farmers had to rent a plot at a very high rent to grow potatoes. As Fuller (ibid.) comments, they had little in common with the Catholic merchant class which emerged in towns in the late 18<sup>th</sup> century. Despite the poverty and hardship of the peasantry, Irish exports of grain and flour to England were consistently high and landlords prospered. Fear of eviction drove the tenant-farmer to pay whatever rent was asked.

In the years 1790 – 1820 the peasantry became ‘increasingly disaffected, sectarianised, politicised and volatile’ (Bartlett, 1992). Daniel O’Connell mobilised this discontent, creating the Catholic Association with Richard Lalor Sheil in 1822 and gaining support from all sections of Catholic society, including the bishops. Its chief aims were to repeal the Penal Laws and to protect the Irish tenant farmer. The Association contested and won a seat in Waterford in the general election of 1826. O’Connell himself contested the Clare by-election of 1828 and was elected with the support of the local clergy. O’Connell did not of course take his seat as he refused to take the oath of allegiance. The clergy continued to support O’Connell and collected the Catholic Rent – a penny-a-month subscription payable by all members of the Catholic Association – at the Church door. George IV and his Prime-Minister, the Duke of Wellington (1828-29), realising how volatile the situation was in Ireland, saw the necessity of giving concessions to Catholics. The House of Commons and the House of Lords passed the Catholic relief bill in 1829 and Catholic emancipation became a reality. However, the forty-shilling freeholders who had been the backbone of the Catholic Association were disenfranchised when a new bill raised the fee to £10. The offensive oath of allegiance was removed and this paved the way for Irish Catholic entry into political life.

The bishops recognised the power of constitutional politics, and, as Fuller (2004, pxxi) notes, ‘future British governments in the 19<sup>th</sup> century, of whatever political hue, had to contend with the increasingly powerful Catholic lobby’. Thus, 1829 was a very significant date in Irish history and sounded, as we shall see, the death knell for the Protestant ascendancy class in Ireland.

The granting of Catholic demands was followed between 1830 and 1838 by a campaign for the abolition of tithes. Connolly (1985, p29) comments that ‘the methods of passive resistance advocated by the Catholic leaders frequently gave way to open violence and intimidation’. Tithes were payable by both Catholic and Protestant tillage farmers to the Church of Ireland Minister. The amount paid represented one tenth of their produce. Catholics were seriously aggrieved at this obligation to support a Church to which they did not belong and the fact that they already eked out a miserable living themselves. The tithe war began in earnest in Co. Kilkenny in 1831 and passive resistance was to cost

many Catholics their lives. O'Connell continued to call on people to 'refuse to pay' and by 1838 the government of Lord Melbourne brought the tithe war to an end with its reduction and conversion into a rent charge.

O'Connell next focussed on repealing the Act of Union. This was a largely Catholic demand which was staunchly opposed by Irish Protestants. The Catholic clergy threw its weight behind the Repeal and were later repaid in O'Connell's support for denominational education. He founded the National Repeal Association in 1840. The founding of the newspaper, *The Nation*, by the 'Young Irelanders', Thomas Davis, John Blake Dillon and Charles Gavan Duffy, gave new impetus to the repeal movement and they supported O'Connell. However, the attempted repeal failed as O'Connell's 'monster meeting' in Clontarf was cancelled to avoid bloodshed. Approaching his 70<sup>th</sup> birthday, O'Connell spent a brief spell in prison following prosecution. The approach of the Famine in the mid-eighteen hundreds meant that other imperatives intervened. O'Connell set out for Rome in 1847 but died in Genoa before reaching it. Rome, as Keogh (1995, p1) points out 'had a special standing in the Irish Catholic consciousness'. O'Connell had requested that following his death, his heart should stay in Rome when his body was returned to Ireland. It now reposes in the Irish College of Rome.

The clergy's involvement in politics was to continue into the second half of the nineteenth century. Having begun their involvement in the course of Catholic Emancipation as Connolly (1985, p37) notes, priests

...throughout the country played a crucial role as local agents and organisers for the Catholic Association: publicising the agitation from their pulpits, speaking at public meetings, organising and serving on local committees, canvassing voters, heading processions of their parishioners to the polling booth to support candidates favoured by the Association.

They continued their participation in 'a succession of political movements'. Connolly (ibid) quotes a study by O'Shea of Co. Tipperary, which concludes that 77 percent of the priests who served there over a period of almost forty years had some political involvement. Historians have disagreed, as Connolly notes, about the level of control the clergy had on Irish popular politics. They were 'prominent local figures' with a close

knowledge of their parishes and with 'regular opportunities' to address the local population. However, their strength lay in their organising ability at local level rather than a leadership of public opinion. Whyte (1960, cited in Connolly 1985, p38) notes:

...on the whole the Irish clergy could lead their people only in the direction that they wanted to go. The priests appeared all powerful so long as their views coincided with those of the electors; but their influence dropped almost to nothing if they took a line of their own.

The leadership of the Church, as Roy Foster (1988, p386) points out, often represented the strong-farmer class but the Church as institution 'generally put its faith in the values of the small farmer'. He comments on the role of the Catholic hierarchy:

In political matters, the hierarchy preferred to keep their influence in the background, except over Church-in-danger issues....One reason why the hierarchy had to tread carefully was that individual priests were passionately involved in local politics, right across the spectrum; Cardinal Cullen, who until his death in 1878 dominated Irish Catholicism, had to exercise his authority over the priesthood with great care.

Fuller (2004, pxxx) notes that a National Council of Bishops in 1854, passed legislation limiting the political activities of the clergy. Furthermore, after the 1860s, as Whyte (1960 cited in Connolly 1985, p38) notes, with the expansion of the Catholic middle class, clerical aid was less vital.

Thus, political involvement by the Church came later in Ireland than in Quebec but proved equally important in the attainment of political rights for its flock. By shrewdly working in tandem with the people it represented, it ensured that its tenets would not be sidelined as political gains were made.

### **Internal challenges to the Church**

In Lower Canada, with the advent of *Canadien* parliamentary institutions, a new generation of lay leaders emerged who would eventually challenge the Church's monopoly of political life. The Church became increasingly wary of the current of

liberal ideas emanating from the Parti canadien, later known as the Parti patriote. Many Québécois had remained in contact with the ideological currents in France and the press was of course very important in the dissemination of new ideas as Chaussée (1999, p99) comments:

The Canadien press contributed largely to the diffusion in Quebec of ideologies which influenced the emergence of a lay intelligentsia which soon became the clergy's rival'. (B5)

*La Gazette de Montréal* took on the Church and was an outspoken supporter of the French Revolution. These democratic ideas alarmed the Church who rejected the notion of sovereignty of the people. The leaders of the Assembly attempted to dilute the Church's influence in the spheres of health and education intending that they should pass to the state. This drew an angry response from the Church as Chaussée (1999) comments and from 1832 on it dissociated itself from the objectives of the Canadien and patriote parties. The bishops were very much in favour of confederation because various state institutions were open to their influence. The British made considerable efforts to recognise the ecclesiastical institution for their own purposes as Rousseau (Baillargeon, 1994, p72) notes:

They used the church as a driving belt to ensure the submission of the population. (B 6)

As the bishops had little enough room for manoeuvre given the Church's dependence on priests and the sorry state of vocations, it was necessary to compromise in order to ensure the continuity of the Church. It is important to remember also that the religious complexion of the Quebec Church was that of Gallicanism as it has existed in France. This theology espoused from 1682 on stated that all citizens should obey the legitimate power, in this case, the king. As kings were believed to derive their power directly from God, the papacy was side-lined as the Church was subordinate to the state. As we saw above, both Bishops Plessis and Briand believed in the divine right of kings and played an important role in ensuring the obedience of their flock following the conquest. The proponents of the doctrine of Ultramontanism which emphasized papal authority, papal infallibility and the centralization of the Church would later challenge Gallicanism, and the Quebec and Irish Churches would later take on an Ultramontane complexion.

Roy (1993) comments that many of those professing liberal ideas abandoned the Church, and that there was generally a decline in religious zeal in the larger population, the ratio of priests to population falling until the 1840s.

Thus, the period preceding the Rebellions of 1837-1838 was not one of clerical domination and of great religious fervour as the Church juggled its loyalism, efforts to maintain its hold on the faithful and its desire for autonomy (Hardy, 1999). The Church received permission from the colonial authorities in 1831 to create new parishes. The new bishop of Montreal, Mgr. Lartigue, took an independent stance vis à vis the authorities which, as Hardy (ibid) says, paved the way for his successor, Mgr. Bourget.

In criticising the status quo, the *Patriote* party questioned the values of the clerical authorities and stirred up the habitants who began to contest the payment of tithes to the Church and taxes to the *seigneurs* (Roy, 1993, p22). The payment of tithes was also a subject of dispute in Ireland, as we have shown, but because it was payment to the Anglican Church of Ireland! The seigneurial system would be later abolished in 1854. Although some country curates sympathised with the *patriotes*, most remained true to the values of the Ancien Régime. Bishop Lartigue emphasised that true nationalism was subordinate to religion and the Church (Roy, ibid. p22).

The petit-bourgeoisie of the Parti canadien, the elite of society, along with proposing democratic ideas also advocated the right of self-government becoming thus 'not only nationalist but anticolonialist' as well (Roy, 1993, p24). In 1827, the Parti canadien became the Parti patriote whose policies favoured the economic development of Lower Canada to the benefit of its inhabitants. Louis-Joseph Papineau was the party's leader. It was in favour of the development of commerce, but not of British capitalism, in the province. We will explore later various opinions regarding the Catholic Church's culpability in the economic retardation of French-Canada, but many examples according to Roy (1993), drawn from the Patriote press, show that a sufficient number of its members recognised the importance of economic development. Lack of capital and not an enterprising spirit appeared to be the main obstacle.

Patriote demands for reform continued and enjoyed popular support despite disapproval from the Church who supported the British. In 1834 the patriotes demanded reforms, publishing in their 92 'Résolutions' their main complaints. The situation became increasingly volatile and, as Roy (*ibid.* p27) says, 'Verbal violence soon led to armed attack'. In February 1838, a group of Patriotes published a declaration of independence. They proclaimed a republic, the abolition of the seigneurial system and the separation of Church and State among others. Following imprisonment, exile and hangings in the wake of the 1837 and 1838 rebellions, the Patriote party became extinct.

The Catholic Church, firmly opposed to the patriote's activities, had sounded many warnings. Mgr. Bourget of Montreal (1840-76) told the rebels that they would be refused absolution in the confessional. Those who died carrying weapons were deprived of religious funerals and burials. We will see similarities with this in the Irish Catholic Church's attitude to the Fenians. In Ireland the Church would sometimes refuse the sacraments to those known to have Fenian inclinations: in 1909, a group of 'Fianna' scouts, who formed a Nationalist version of the Boy Scout movement, were actually refused Holy Communion on the grounds that their movement supported the tradition of violent uprising (Kenny, 2000, p49). In contrast, seventy nine years later, in 1916, as we shall show, the Catholic Church in Ireland would lend its support to the revolutionaries, who shared its socially conservative outlook, albeit after the event.

Louis Rousseau (Baillargeon, 1994, p65), in discussing the rise of nationalism in the 1820s and 30s which climaxed in the Patriote crisis 1837 – 1838, remarked upon the sense of dejection in Quebec society following the defeat:

The depression in society was even greater than the post-referendum depression at the beginning of the nineteen eighties. One had the feeling that nothing more was possible, that one was headed for failure, it was all over. (B7)

We will next examine how the Church moved to fill the vacuum created by these events as we discuss the shift from Gallicanism to Ultramontanism in the Quebec Church. Once again, when all appeared to be lost, the Church saw its opportunity and began a fresh campaign to win the minds and hearts of the people. Hardy (1999) comments on the fall-

out from the rebellion among the British administration. Henceforth, it focussed its policies on reinforcing and demanding respect for the law but also in supporting the Church and facilitating the growth of its moral influence. The State's support for the Church was also seen in its refusal to encourage the Protestant French-Canadian Missionary Society whose objective was the conversion of French-Canadians. It was unwilling to weaken the influence of the Catholic clergy which was deemed 'indispensable in maintaining order' (ibid. p216). This was in sharp contrast, as we shall later show, to the Irish case where the Protestant Missionary Societies flourished under the encouraging eye of the government.

Hence, in the period following the Rebellion, the State interfered little in the internal affairs of the Church and allowed it scope to develop. The petit-bourgeoisie, who had opposed it prior to the Rebellion and was now a spent force, began to lend it support once again. As Hardy (1999, pp 216, 217) says, 'Its project of an independent republic and of a secular society had to be forgotten'. The priest therefore became 'an indispensable ally of the petit-bourgeoisie who counted on its support among the electorate'. In this way, 'the clergy became the principal group directing the nation' (ibid.).

At this time, Ireland's problems were less of a political nature and much more urgently concerned with the matter of survival. The Great Famine of 1845-1849 was to decimate, in particular, the Catholic population and to change the nature of Irish society. With an over-reliance on the potato crop, the arrival of potato blight in the autumn of 1845 signalled disaster for those who already lived at subsistence level. In this year more than half the potato crop failed throughout the country. Workhouses and soup kitchens were set up to alleviate starvation but disease quickly took hold. One and a half million people emigrated on board ships to the US and Canada, many dying of their diseases before they reached the coast. Another million died of starvation or disease at home.

With the demise of the subsistence economy - labourers and cottiers - after the Famine, the Irish population was more homogenous and the tenant farmer's prosperity increased.

This was, as Fuller (2004, pxxvii) shows, to the benefit of the Church as it was now 'ministering to a reduced but more prosperous population':

This Catholic population was more orthodox in its religious outlook, thus making it closer in mentality to the clergy. The ratio of priests to each Catholic, always a problem, improved enormously, and a more affluent Catholic laity was better able to support its clergy.

Similarly, Connolly (1985, p41) speaks of how the Famine, followed by high emigration, changed the social structure of Ireland and the tenant farmer 'became increasingly the dominant figure in the Irish countryside' giving rise to a closer identification between priest and parishioner. Also,

...the Catholic clergy were able to give their support or tacit approval to agitations which united the greater part of their congregations against external enemies, in the form of landlordism and the state, and whose demands for social change were of a kind which they could endorse without serious qualms.

The Great Famine marked a turning point in Irish history with a decline of population from 8 million in 1841 to just over 4 million by 1926 (Stevenson, 2006, p105). It hastened the end of the repeal movement and gave rise to a heightened nationalism. Tensions between tenant farmer and landlords continued to rise and resulted in the land war of the 1880s. As many victims of the Famine were from Irish speaking areas it hastened the decline of the Irish language. The Famine is alleged to have brought about the death of Gaelic Ireland.

A counterpart to the effects on French-Canadian society of the Patriote rebellion can be seen in Ireland in the founding of the Irish Republican Brotherhood (IRB) or, the Fenian movement as it became known, in 1858. The post-Famine years saw Ireland in a very depressed state. A new type of landlordism emerged more ruthless than its predecessor, and with the change from tillage to pasture, land was cleared resulting in mass evictions. The IRB focussed on Ireland's ills and its English oppressor. This secret society, the seeds of which were sown in America, had as its goal a national uprising. It founded a newspaper, the *Irish People*, one of whose editors, Charles Kickham, repeatedly challenged clerical influence on politics, and the maxim, 'no priest in politics' was

constantly repeated as Fuller (2004) notes. The similarities with the Canadian press are compelling here. The IRB had many critics within Ireland, most notably among Catholic Church leaders who were uncomfortable with the notion of republicanism. Cardinal Paul Cullen, whose permanent mark on the Irish Church will be discussed later, believed along with some bishops, that Ireland would never be free from English rule. Fuller (ibid. pxxi) comments that 'the movement presented a challenge to the social control exercised by the church'. In relation to the publishing of *The Communist Manifesto* in 1848, Comerford (cited in Fuller, op.cit. xxxi) noted that the terms 'communism,' and 'socialism' were often used to discredit those involved in tenants' rights:

The fact that membership of the Fenian movement held out the prospect of land for the unpropertied and dispossessed was seen as subversive of property rights...As far as the Church was concerned, popular democratic movements (especially those of a socialist hue) that threatened the status quo were a direct threat to the power and influence of the Church, which was, after all, an integral part of the establishment.

Foster (1989, p394) however comments that

Fenianism provided a sphere of anti-British, anti-establishment and anti-clerical politics, articulated by bourgeois Catholics like Kickham and [John] O'Leary who reiterated that their religious commitment was unaffected on the spiritual level.

The legacy of Fenianism was that it planted a republican spirit into Irish political life. Its influence would be felt right down to the founding of Sinn Féin in 1905, by the journalist, Arthur Griffith. While the Fenian Rising of 1867 was a failure, Fenianism nonetheless gave impetus to many other republican movements, most obviously, The Easter Rising, which we shall examine later.

The Catholic clergy in their dealings with revolutionary movements and agrarian secret societies, and later, the Fenians, used their influence at the pulpit to denounce their activities. Similar to the Quebec Church where the *patriotes* were concerned, it refused them sacraments. Cardinal Cullen, as Fuller (2004, pxxxiii) recounts, had secured, while in Rome, 'a condemnation of Fenianism, and also the excommunication of those who supported the Fenians or any other such society'. Connolly (1985, p40) discusses the

fact that the clergy's hostility towards the Fenians was shared by 'the majority of their congregations', but that later in Ireland's history the Church would be prepared to shift its position in line with its worshippers :

It was only at a much later stage, between 1919 and 1922, that bishops and priests confronted a movement committed to the use of political violence which had the support of a wide cross-section of the Catholic population. When this happened, it was the church which gave ground, in part by explicitly modifying its earlier uncompromising opposition to violent methods, in part by maintaining a discreet silence until the conflict had been won.

The land issue came to the fore again during the failed harvests of 1878-1879 when Ireland was plunged once again into a near-famine crisis. Again the cycle of bankruptcy, near starvation for tenants and evictions of tenant farmers created enormous distress. The land question was to give a huge new political impetus to Irish representation in Westminster through the persons of Michael Davitt, and especially, Charles Stewart Parnell.

Isaac Butt, son of a Church of Ireland clergyman and Member of Parliament, had founded the Home Rule Association in 1870. In the general election of 1874 his Home Rule Party won over half the Irish seats in Westminster. Charles Stewart Parnell, 'the uncrowned king of Ireland', replaced Butt as leader of the Party in 1879. Parnell was to make his mark on Irish politics through an alliance with Michael Davitt and the founding of the Land League in 1879, as it became clear that land, rather than Home Rule, was the burning issue. Davitt, son of an evicted small farmer from Mayo who had emigrated to England, had joined the Fenian movement in England in 1865 and had spent seven years in jail for his part in the Fenian raid on Chester Castle in 1867. Parnell realising the urgency of the land question became 'the leader of a combined agrarian and political movement' (Fuller 2004, pxxxiii). Joining forces with Davitt, he became the first president of the Irish National Land League. The objectives of the League were to put an end to rack-renting and evictions and to enable Irish farmers to own the land they tilled.

The Home Rule movement was not supported by Cardinal Cullen but as Fuller (ibid. p xxxiii) notes, by late 1873,

...it enjoyed wide support among priests and Archbishop MacHale of Tuam and Bishop Keane of Cloyne continued to be its most prominent supporters among the bishops. Cullen was still wary, but he made no public pronouncement.

Although supported by a substantial number of clergy, the League's 'Plan of campaign' was rejected by Rome. The bishops however sided with the League as Fuller (2004, p xxxiv) elaborates:

Fearing massive public rejection and loss of political power and influence, they followed the people rather than Rome.

The use of 'boycotting' and various methods of intimidation saw tenants standing up to their landlords. Fear of civil war in Ireland led Gladstone to ban the League and arrest Davitt and Parnell. Gladstone's Land Act of 1881 which guaranteed the Three Fs: fair rent, free sale and fixity of tenure to Irish farmers and attempted to fix rents, didn't go far enough and so the problem dragged on. The release of Parnell from prison saw Gladstone attempting to resolve the problem with Parnell's influence but the murders in the Phoenix Park of the Chief-Secretary and his Under-Secretary in May of 1882 caused things to spin further out of control. Eventually from 1885 to 1903 a number of Acts – most notably, the Ashbourne Land Act and the Wyndham Act saw the government making sufficient funds available to allow tenants to buy out their lands. Finally, the sway of the landlord was replaced by ownership of the land by Irish peasant farmers and the Land League's founders' goals were achieved. It also meant that Home Rule was firmly back on the agenda.

The value of the Land War, according to Foster (1989, p416) was that 'it created the Irish Parliamentary Party as accredited national leaders...the Parliamentary Party could now deliver'. With the triumph of the 1885 election which gave the Irish Parliamentary Party 85 MP's, Parnell was to play a critical role in British politics. From then on there was a great impetus towards self-definition with Gladstone's Home Rule Bill (1886). The bishops, recognising Parnell's power and commitment to political solutions to

Ireland's problems, decided following their October meeting as Fuller (2004, pxxxiv) relates,

...to call upon the Irish Parliamentary Party ...to urge generally upon the government the hitherto unsatisfied claims of Catholic Ireland in all branches of the education question.

This clerical-nationalist alliance – a ‘hybrid of Fenianism, the Church, constitutionalists and agrarian radicals’ (Fuller citing Boyce, 1990, p181), established a trade-off which would last well into the foundation of a new state: the bishops supported Home Rule and the land question in return for support in their quest for denominational education, a point that shall be discussed at greater length later. Foster (1989, p418) comments that the Church was always ‘suspicious’ of Home Rule’s Protestant origins, ‘though Parnell’s ill-concealed agnosticism was preferable to the wrong kind of devoutness’.

Ultimately, Protestant Ulster’s fears that ‘Home rule equalled Rome rule’ carried the day and home rule was not introduced. Although defeated, the possibility of self-government was nudging closer to a reality. This dream was, however, to come to an abrupt end. Parnell’s fall from grace and from power in 1890 in the wake of his relationship with the married Katherine O’ Shea, led to a serious split in the Parliamentary Party. Foster (ibid. p424) comments on the clerical fall-out from this:

Clerical influence against Parnell, while pronounced, was not quite monolithic (there were occasional Parnellite priests). But the general line was unequivocal. ‘You cannot remain Parnellite and remain Catholic’, a Meath priest told his flock in 1892.

Parnell himself died the following year. Gladstone’s second Home Rule Bill which would have given Ireland self-rule within a British framework was defeated in 1893. The end of the Parnell era as Kenny (2000, p18) comments is often described as ‘a period of disappointment and disillusionment’ and it ‘became common to blame the Catholic Church for Parnell’s downfall’.

Some gains had been made by the Catholic Church in this period however, as from 1871 the Church of Ireland was no longer recognized as the national church. As Connolly

(1985, p32) notes: 'From being the religious embodiment of civil society, it had become the church of a socially advantaged but numerically weak minority'.

A little earlier in the century, further political challenges were created for French-Canada and the Catholic Church with the Act of Union in 1840 as we discussed in Chapter 2. This created a single province and a single legislature in which Upper Canada ('Canada West') and Lower Canada ('Canada East') had an equal number of seats despite the greater population of the latter. This, along with other assimilationist strategies, incurred the wrath of French-Canadians. The Catholic hierarchy as O'Sullivan See (1986, p56) shows, harnessed this opposition and protested against this union:

The church hierarchy argued that the French Canadians constituted a noble ethnic group whose language and faith and traditions and customs must be preserved...legacy of farm and faith.

From the 1840s as Roy (1993, p34) notes, the Catholic Church continued to preach submission to the authorities but its loyalism towards Great Britain was less public:

It now works at forcing the French-Canadian elite to share power with it, with ambitions even to supplant it.

Roy comments that in its opposition to the Union (concerns at losing its flock through assimilation), the Church became one of the standard-bearers of nationalism. This nationalism was similar to that of the reformist francophone leader, LaFontaine, although the Church did not share his democratic ideas. However, the Church saw fit to make a deal with the reformists, later 'Les Bleus', in the course of the 1840s, fearing their more radical political adversaries 'Les Rouges'. The latter were intent on separation of Church and state and a non-confessional system of education. The Church gained major concessions from LaFontaine, in the sphere of education. Henceforth, all francophone public schools, classical colleges and universities would be Catholic. Similarly, hospitals, orphanages and other charitable institutions would be the Church's domain.

Although Ultramontane values dominated, the Church was not without its critics. The Parti Rouge, as discussed previously, was a thorn in the side of the Church. The 'Rouges' were not necessarily anticlerical – many of them as Roy (1993) emphasises were practising Catholics, but, as champions of individual liberties they could not accept the Church's privileges and the disproportionate hold the Ultramontanes had on civil society. Mgr. Bourget proved a formidable adversary and his many public condemnations of them and their organisation, L'Institut canadien-français, plus the support of Rome, damaged the party. The Parti rouge eventually became the Liberal party in Quebec in 1867 and avoided confrontation with the clergy.

The Catholic clergy also tried to dominate the conservatives as Roy (1993) notes. In 1871, a group of lay-persons, associates of Mgrs. Bourget and Laflèche, published a 'Catholic Program' delineating the requisite Catholic traits in deputies that they should vote for. The conservatives went on to 'neutralise its ultramontane wing' and division was exposed within the ranks of the hierarchy as not all bishops subscribed to the 'Programmistes' agenda. Mgr. Taschereau of Quebec moved towards creating greater harmony between Church and state while the francophone Wilfrid Laurier, leader of the Liberal party and later, Prime Minister of Canada in 1896, imposed silence on anti-clerical liberals.

### **Control of education**

Long before the Durham Report and the 1840 Act of Union, education in French-Canada, as in Ireland, was to complicate Church-State relations. In 1829, aware of a crisis in the education of the population, the Assembly voted in the 'Loi des écoles des syndics', the Schools Act, whereby any parishes wishing to set up a school would be subsidised by the legislative assembly. The running of these schools was granted to elected trustees in each parish. A victim of its own success – the number of lay schools tripled within a few years - it was eventually vetoed by the British, and the *Loi* was overturned. Ferretti (1999) comments on the tension in Church - Assembly relations during this period showing how the Catholic Church saw the Assembly in its attempts to

institute a system of lay schools, as usurping what it saw as its prerogative. Education appeared to be slipping from the hands of the Catholic Church.

Roy (1993, p64) mentions how at the end of the 19<sup>th</sup> century, the liberal Quebec government of Marchand attempted but failed to introduce a Ministry for public education partly due to pressure from federal Prime Minister, Wilfrid Laurier, who wanted to keep the peace with the Church. At one point, Marchand had to contend with opposition from both the Vatican and Ottawa (Linteau, Durocher and Robert, 1989, Vol. 1, p666). Roy (ibid.) comments that the Church was prepared to retard progress in education, blocking this measure until 1943. Thus, peace with the Church had its price.

With the cessation of government funding in 1836, few parishes retained schools. In 1841, the government instituted a new system of elementary public schools. Hardy (1999) notes the resistance of many habitants to such state interference not seeing the necessity for instruction that the elites desired for them. The clergy went on to support the state and have the schools accepted. In this way, schools became the principal institution for the catechising and the raising of moral standards of the people. The parish priest became the inspector of schools and supervised the selection of teachers. Hardy (ibid. p218) comments:

From the 1840s, public schools become the privileged platform for the clergy and the teaching of religion.

The Church already owned seven classical colleges and founded another twelve between 1841 and 1875. It therefore assumed responsibility for higher education and founded the first French-language university in 1852. Thus, the Church reserved education for itself free from the interference of the state. Hardy (ibid.) speaks of the resultant collusion between the Church and the elite:

In this way, the lay elite and clergy are educated at the same school, under the same authority, which will contribute to creating a deep complicity between the two groups (B8)

Thus, far from being on the brink of decline, the Quebec Church was in fact on the brink of renewal. It used its control over the future leaders of the province for exactly the same ends as the Irish Church would do in the Free State.

Control of education was similarly very high on the agenda of the Irish Catholic Church. Fuller (2004, pxxii) notes that access to parliamentary politics and education were ‘the twin pillars on which the power and prestige of Catholicism would be built in the course of the 19<sup>th</sup> century’. A chief priority for the bishops right through the 19<sup>th</sup> century was the provision of Catholic schooling. Connolly (1985 p28) comments that

In the later nineteenth century, the consistent demand of the Catholic Church authorities was for the consolidation of denominational education at every level from the primary school classroom to the university lecture hall.

In the 18<sup>th</sup> century a system of parish schools existed and religious orders began to establish schools in the early 19<sup>th</sup> century. Many voluntary religious groups including the Sunday School Society set up schools and were grant-aided by the government – something of which the bishops naturally disapproved as they had done in Quebec.

The so-called ‘Second Reformation’ renewed tensions between Catholics and Protestants. The Protestant evangelical movement set its missionary sights on Ireland and an array of evangelical societies arrived intent on the conversion of Catholics. The Methodists had already arrived in 1799. In 1806, the Hibernian Bible Society was founded. Other significant ones were: the Irish Society for Promoting the Education of the Native Irish through the Medium of their own Language (1818) and the Scripture Readers’ Society (1822). Connolly (ibid. p25) elaborates:

The different societies trained and supported itinerant preachers, many of them fluent speakers of Irish, distributed huge numbers of bibles and tracts and, most important of all, established schools offering an elementary education free of charge to all who were prepared to accept the religious instruction that accompanied it.

In 1811 the government founded the Kildare Place Society to set up schools which were non-denominational. This was the first attempt at national education. It taught the

Scriptures along with the usual secular subjects and had its own inspectors. Prominent Catholics sat on its board of management. Fuller (2004 pxxi) describes how Catholics who had initially supported the schools withdrew as the connection strengthened with the Bible societies.

There were various attempts in the early 19<sup>th</sup> century to serve the educational needs of the people. Edmund Rice founded the Irish Christian Brothers in 1802 which would help to revive interest in the Irish language at the time of the Gaelic Revival. The Presentation and Ursuline sisters founded similar institutions to educate Irish Catholic girls. All of the above had to rely on charity and subscriptions to do their work unlike the Kildare Place Society which was endowed by the government.

From the late 1840s and 1850s the missionary societies had largely faded away chiefly due to Catholic counter-attack driven by various missionary orders. Connolly (ibid p26) describes the effect of the Second Reformation on relations between Catholic and Protestant as ‘catastrophic’. A ‘particularly emotive issue’ was the charge that during the Famine aid had been used to induce Catholics to change their religion.

In 1831, Lord Stanley, the Chief Secretary for Ireland set up the National Education Board for the superintendence of a system of national education in Ireland which would be state-aided and multi-denominational. Its main aim was to educate the poor of Ireland with a fund of £30,000. Irish was not taught in the schools and instruction was in English with the use of English textbooks. Religious instruction was given separately by the clergy of the various denominations. Although Archbishop MacHale of Tuam condemned the system and refused to allow these schools to set up in his diocese, those who stood to gain most from the concessions were Catholics. As Fuller (2004, pxxii) notes, in organising the local applications for schools, Catholic priests were able to become managers of national schools although they were still not denominational. However, given the balance of the population in favour of Catholics, in practice, many of these schools were denominational by the mid-century. Connolly (1985, p35) comments that during the second half of the 19<sup>th</sup> century ‘this *de facto* denominationalism was confirmed and institutionalised’.

The Board remained in existence until 1922 and was considered to have done creditable work overall. The Catholic Church managed, as Connolly (ibid. p36) states, to 'subvert...a non-denominational system from within'.

With regard to third-level education, the Catholic bishops were less compromising and insisted on denominationalism. Until 1971, Dublin diocesan regulations forbade Catholics to attend the Protestant university, Trinity College. The founding of Queen's Colleges at Cork, Galway and Belfast plus the Catholic University in Dublin (1854) gave Catholics at last consistent access to university education in a similar time-frame to that of Quebec as we have noted. The latter were denied state support however. In 1908 the government finally funded the National University of Ireland. Maynooth College had been established and funded by the government in 1795 when revolution in Europe closed the continental seminaries.

Tom Inglis (1987, p57) has discussed the motivation of the Catholic Church in repelling the provision of education by any body other than itself, a motivation that has lasted up to the present day:

Control of the education system has been fundamental to the Catholic Church maintaining adherence to its rules and regulations...through the school the Church was able to reach into the home and supervise the mother in her upbringing of her children. As each new generation of Irish parents handed over their children to Catholic schools - often because of having limited choice - those who had let the reins of the Church's moral discipline slacken were forced to take them up again.

It also helped to maintain vocations and to maintain control over the future leaders of the country. Thus, it is easy to see why control of education was equally important to the Catholic Church in both Quebec and Ireland. Both managed to ensure a movement away from a system of public lay schools to Catholic ones whereby they eventually exercised full control.

The twin grand narratives of nationalism and religion were to hold sway in both states. Kenny (1997, p168) commented that

Catholicism was seen as the moral teacher in forging the new national identity of Eire (sic), since Catholicism was the crucible of the historic Irish identity.

However, the growth of nationalism in Europe as she notes (ibid. p15) was generally accompanied by a decline in religion. She cites Boyce's (1991) reference to nationalism as 'a modern substitute for religion'. Nationalists and republicans were generally anti-clerical on the Continent – as were the *Patriotes* in Quebec as we have noted. The Church had reason to fear the extremes of this new movement as huge numbers of the clergy had been put to death:

With the rising tide of nationalism, politicians were determined to wrest power away from a powerful international body like the Catholic Church – and, of course, to take it for themselves (Kenny, ibid. p31).

Of course, many of those responsible for forging a new national consciousness in Ireland came, as we commented previously, from the Protestant tradition: Robert Emmet, Wolfe Tone, Isaac Butt, and Charles Stewart Parnell among others, many of whom had little time for Catholicism. Mac Laughlin (2001, p239) considers that Anderson's (1983) view that nationalism 'sounded the death knell of tradition and the birth of modernity' is incorrect in terms of nation – building in nineteenth-century Ireland:

The clergy here gravitated towards nation-building as a strategy for ensuring their own survival by ensuring the survival of the belief systems and social systems that spawned them.

Thus nationalism in Ireland did not grow 'out of the dusk of religious modes of thought'.

[It] contributed to the growing power of the churches and boosted their political power while heightening the appeal of simple religious beliefs among ordinary people (ibid.).

The old certainties of pre-modern life such as belief in an afterlife and respect for – especially Church – authority still persisted according to Mac Laughlin who considers that nationalism was 'practically indistinguishable from religion' (ibid. p239). Radical nationalism was discouraged however and Irish citizens were expected 'to put respect for Church teachings over and above the teachings of the state'. Mac Laughlin (ibid.

p240) refers to periodicals such as *Ireland's Own* and *The Irish Sacred Heart Messenger* which mapped out this simple, patriotic, Catholic Ireland. Patriotism and nationalism combined to reinforce 'the cultural, linguistic and ethnic homogeneity of the Irish nation'. He also sees the influence of cartography in nineteenth-century Ireland as fostering a sense of place and identity which 'nurtur[ed] a geography of exclusion which insisted that Ireland belonged only to the Catholic Irish' (ibid.).

In his study of nation-building and nationalism in post-Famine Donegal, Mac Laughlin (2001, p245) applies the Gramscian model of hegemony to show how the combined interests of the new rural bourgeoisie and the Catholic Church led to the adoption of their 'ideological outlook' by the rural poor who, along with the rest of society, came to see it as 'common sense'. The local intelligentsia, including the clergy, 'were central to the consolidation of petty bourgeois nationalist hegemony at local level':

In so doing they cultivated highly deferential attitudes among the poor, fostered a sense of national identity and patriotism, and helped prevent outbreaks of class conflict by quelling social unrest and literally managing 'their people' (ibid. p 244).

Similarly, they praised the virtues of Catholic teaching in the creation of citizens of an Irish Catholic nation. Indeed the teaching of religion was seen as central to the whole project. Mac Laughlin (ibid. p258) quotes the 19<sup>th</sup> century historian Michael Harkin as saying that 'religion should be the beginning, the middle and the end of all educational systems'. His views were to be echoed by cultural nationalists and the Catholic clergy elsewhere in the country who feared the growth of secularism in Catholic Ireland. Resistance to foreign literature and the growth of Catholic publications enabled the clergy to keep a tighter hold on the minds and hearts of their people.

We remarked earlier that the clergy themselves were largely drawn from the tenant and petit-bourgeois class and therefore closely identified with this group. We shall examine later the petit-bourgeois complexion of the Irish Free State post 1922, and the virtual absence of class politics in the new legislative structures.

## **Religious revival and Nation building**

The early and mid-nineteenth century throughout Western Europe, and Quebec also as we will show, was a period of intense religious revival. In Ireland prior to this as Connolly (1985, p11) notes, there was ‘a climate of limited religious zeal’ and a ‘general laxity of ecclesiastical discipline’ which also affected the Church of Ireland. Connolly (ibid.) cites the interesting case of John Butler, Bishop of Cork, who unexpectedly inherited his family’s estates and the title Lord Dunboyne in 1786. He resigned his see and conformed to the Church of Ireland so he could marry and provide an heir. A new generation of reforming bishops in the late 18<sup>th</sup> and early 19<sup>th</sup> centuries, plus the return of Paul Cullen from Rome who became Archbishop of Armagh in 1850 (of Dublin from 1852), was to change things dramatically. Thus began a period of intense supervision and renewal. Regular monitoring of parishes, financial supervision, regular retreats and theological conferences, the adoption of a distinctive clerical dress – all testified to an evolution in how the Church was run. The 1850 Synod of Thurles, the first national gathering of the Irish Church for almost 700 years, updated ecclesiastical law and combined and strengthened the new set of reforms.

Paul Cullen dominated Church affairs for the next quarter of a century. He was rector of the Irish College in Rome from 1832 – 1849 and before becoming cardinal in 1866, had been archbishop of Armagh and Dublin as we noted. Like Mgr. Bourget in Quebec, as we will discuss, he was fiercely Ultramontane, and there began a clash between the Gallicanism of the more old-fashioned bishops, many of whom would have been trained in the seminaries of France, and his own beliefs of the supreme power of the papacy. Connolly (1985) comments on Ultramontanism: ‘distinguished by its political conservatism, its exaltation of papal authority, and its acceptance of a dogmatic, combative theology – that had by the mid-nineteenth century achieved ascendancy within European Catholicism’. Cullen essentially ‘continued the tightening of internal discipline’. His personal contacts at the upper echelons of Vatican bureaucracy ensured his influence in episcopal appointments (Connolly, ibid. pp13, 14).

Cullen's zeal in reorganizing the Irish Church, which he was to bring into total conformity with Rome, was mirrored in Quebec by that of the Montreal bishop (1840 – 1876), Ignace Bourget, under whom Montreal became a centre of Ultramontane thought. This doctrine as we have shown, viewed the state as subordinate to the Church and the Church as predominant in all social affairs. The state was not welcome to intervene in the Church's affairs. With this rather 'elastic' principle, according to Roy (1993, p36), the Ultramontanes

...gave themselves the right and the duty to supervise the actions of governments, to interfere in elections, in brief, to intervene almost everywhere in society. (B9)

They valued authority and obedience believing that religion made people more subservient. Roy mentions their unusual attitude to education which, according to them, should not change the social order and could in fact be harmful to the poorer classes (Roy, 1993, p37). They also installed paternal authority at the heart of the family:

Advocating through education a sort of social immobility, the Quebec ultramontanes favoured maintaining the hierarchical, traditional family, subject to paternal authority (Roy, 1993, p37). (B10)

Thus in Quebec, and in Ireland as we shall examine later, it has been suggested that the Catholic Church maintained the status quo and failed to remove class barriers in education and social advancement. This particular role of the Church is reflected in a number of Irish and Quebec films as we shall examine in Chapters 5 and 6.

The forties and fifties saw an increase in the emigration of French-Canadians to the United States. Conscious of this, Mgr. Bourget and other Church officials saw the importance of colonisation in 'saving' the nation (Roy, 1993, p38). Bourget travelled to France and Rome in 1841 and returned with a renewed missionary zeal. He organized Monsignor Forbin-Janson, the great French preacher now exiled in America, to do the rounds of parishes in Quebec giving retreats and inspiring the faithful. He encouraged confraternities, sodalities and various religious societies to promote devotion and charitable acts. As Fay (2002, p77) comments

Learning to master these organizations and observe their devotions fostered the development of a parish elite that set the pace for others.

Bourget welcomed a large number of religious orders from Europe to set up in Quebec, among them the Oblates, Jesuits, Redemptorists, Sisters of the Sacred Heart and Good Shepherd. Twenty two new religious communities were implanted from 1837 – 1866, and 29 others from 1867 – 1895, twenty of which were Canadian foundations (Chausée, 1999). The St. Vincent de Paul society was founded along with many clerical newspapers.

In a situation reminiscent of that in Ireland, the practice of religion became a very public affair with pilgrimages, processions, collective retreats. The Church dominated the cultural sphere censoring cultural activity, literary works, creating a list of ‘good’ books in the face of profane literature. All of the above allowed the Church once again to consolidate its position within French-Canadian society and to regain the supremacy that had been eroded. Religious practice became very regular, almost unanimous, and there was an increase in vocations. René Hardy (1999) demonstrates the increase in devotion among Montreal Catholics by examining the figures for Easter communion practices. In 1839, 70% attended while the number had stretched to 93% by 1868. Ultramontanism triumphed over liberalism and the state was marked by the influence of the Church. The public parading of the trappings of Catholicism and the creation of a more user-friendly religion (thanks to mass distribution of plenary indulgences), meant that for the faithful, salvation was more easily assured than before. Rousseau (cited in Baillargeon, 1994, pp 78, 79) comments:

This is a moment of fervour which recharges the collective batteries and religion is still, until the 1950s, the only place where the collectivity can put forth a united image of itself. (B11)

Hence, the collision of religious and nationalist sentiment is soon taken for granted. In discussing the great missions in Montreal from the 1840s, Louis Rousseau (2000) presents them as following on swiftly from the failure of the *Patriote* rebellion in an effort to put it behind them and, indeed, to obliterate the memory. Memories of such a divisive time when the Church’s authority was under threat, no doubt proved

uncomfortable for that institution. Rousseau points out that it took another 100 years for the memory to be reactivated by means of the Fête annuelle des Patriotes (annual Patriotes' festival). He talks about the mobilizing of the faithful and the clergy around the erection of a 30 metre high cross on Mount St. Hilaire in 1841 which could be seen from Montreal. This was seen as both a religious and national monument – 'un monument religieux et national' – 'national' being emphasised in the local press. In this sense, Rousseau goes on to explain elsewhere (Baillargeon, 1994, p66), this religious awakening was also a national one – 'un réveil de nous' (an awakening of us). Other attempts at national definition had failed. The great missions once again valorised religion and gave a new sense of purpose:

We will remake ourselves around religion. We will remake ourselves as a group accepting to define ourselves as a culture placing religion as its centre. (ibid. p67)

This change of mentality provoked by the Patriote crisis meant that religion moved from its marginal position in the 18<sup>th</sup> century to being at the centre of society in the 19<sup>th</sup> century. This linking of the religious and the national, therefore, showed the Church's renewed attempts to maintain control over the populace in demonstrating that faith and nation were indivisible.

The Temperance movement was also one of the great social innovations of the period. The development of temperance societies was modelled on the Irish experience and was designed to have a positive impact on the social sphere of the family, of the country, and especially of the 'peuple canadien'. It was seen as Hardy (1999) says as 'une oeuvre nationale', a national task, and led to an increase in the receiving of communion. With a variety of reforms including clerical dress, and the strength of Ultramontane principles, the Church, as Hardy (ibid. p225) states, was like 'a monarchy under the direction of the pope'. The number of priests doubled between 1840 and 1860 as vocations continued to grow. Forty to fifty percent of those with third-level qualifications entered the religious life in the course of fifty years (Hardy, ibid. p224).

Rousseau (2000) comments that in the 1840s a new identity emerged which transformed a population in crisis and full of doubt into a '*Nation*' and making its religious character a key factor in its future. His survey of the influential literature of the period shows the convergence of the religious quest and the national destiny. The mythical accounts of the origins of the nation represent the national quest as a sacred one and therefore polarize the two actors in the myth – the national '*Us*' ( '*Nous* national') and the English ( '*l'Anglais*'). As we saw in Chapter 2, the British North America Act which established a Canadian Confederation was passed in 1867. This Act which laid the foundation for modern Canada, united the provinces of Ontario, Quebec, New Brunswick and Nova Scotia under a single federal government. This saw the restoration of Quebec's government although as we noted, fears continued about the dominance of English Canada in the Confederation. Confederation's attempt to impose the model of 'one great nation' was not welcomed by the Catholic Church which was preoccupied with Quebec's national vocation. This placing of *l'Anglais* outside the national '*Nous*' is seen by Rousseau (ibid.) as the symbolic root of the current Canadian problem as two figures of the nation co-exist. The English still occupied the position of '*Dehors*' (outside) for those who saw themselves as '*Dedans*' (inside) the Nation.

While the Quebec bishops were attempting to dabble in parliamentary politics, Ireland, some years later, was to see the demise of its second Home Rule Bill in 1893 but the clerico - nationalist alliance still held. Ireland's religious revival was to be followed by a major Celtic revival. With the Parnell crisis and the split in the Parliamentary Party there was a vacuum which was soon filled by a number of groups as Fuller (2004, pxxxvi) notes:

They were concerned that the Irish had lost their cultural identity by the nineteenth century. The Plantations, the Penal Laws, the Famine and the national-school system had all contributed in their various ways to the decline of the Irish language and culture. The Catholic religion increasingly became the Irish badge of identity – Irish and Catholic had become synonymous by the end of the nineteenth-century.

Douglas Hyde, the Protestant founder of the Gaelic League and later to become the first President of Ireland, delivered a memorable address to the National Literary Society on

25<sup>th</sup> November, 1892, entitled ‘The Necessity of de-Anglicising Ireland.’ This marked a return to, or a ‘reinvention of’, a Gaelic past, and, as Ó Giolláin (2000, p114) comments, ‘set the agenda for cultural nationalism in Ireland’. It was to prove the inspiration for a host of Gaelic associations such as the Gaelic League founded in 1893. Patrick Pearse, who would later lead the Easter Rising of 1916, wrote that ‘when the Gaelic League was founded in 1893 the Irish revolution began’. Ó Giolláin (ibid.) notes that half of government ministers and senior civil servants of the first fifty years of Irish independence had been members of the league in their youth. Thus, the League educated an entire political class. He continues;

Whereas the Land League had ‘taught the tenants the simple but symbolic gesture of not doffing their caps to landlords’ (Lee, 1989) the Gaelic League undermined the automatic deference to English culture and helped to give a sense of self-respect and self-confidence in Irish culture to the Catholic young (ibid. p120).

Organizations such as the Gaelic Athletic Association (1884), the Gaelic League (1893) and the Irish Literary Revival Movement (1899), the latter culminating in the founding of the Abbey theatre by WB Yeats, Lady Gregory and Edward Martyn, all served to validate and legitimate the traditional culture. Martin McLoone (2000, p12) has provided a useful résumé of the six fundamental tenets of cultural nationalism in the early 20<sup>th</sup> century:

- Irish identity was seen to be *unique*;
- The Irish were seen to constitute an *historic* nation, one of the oldest in Europe;
- This Irish nation was seen to be essentially *Gaelic* in culture and *Irish-speaking* in language;
- This Gaelic culture was essentially *rural*;
- Irish identity was closely linked to the *Catholic* religion;
- The Irish nation, therefore, should aspire to *self-sufficiency* both economic and cultural.

Twenty-five years were to elapse between Parnell’s death in 1891 and the Easter rising of 1916, but the seeds were sown amidst this cultural revival. Although the Gaelic

League was non-sectarian and non-political, many of its members were actively involved in the movement for Irish freedom. The new blood of the Irish Republican Brotherhood: Patrick Pearse, writer and teacher; Thomas Clarke, who was active with the American wing of the IRB (later Clan na Gael), and veteran of the dynamite attacks on English power stations and public buildings, and James Connolly, leader of the Labour movement, organised an insurrection for Easter Sunday, 23 April, 1916, in conjunction with the Irish Volunteers. Sir Roger Casement, member of Sinn Féin, and Joseph Mary Plunkett, sought military and financial aid from Germany. England was, of course, distracted by the First World War begun in 1914, and the leaders of the Rising considered that 'England's difficulty was Ireland's opportunity'. Although victory was nigh impossible given the enormous military disparity between the two sides, this 'blood sacrifice' was to have a profound influence on Ireland's political future. The execution by the British of fifteen of the leaders of the Rising caused a public outcry, and opinion which had been divided on the wisdom of the actions of these 'patriots' was now firmly behind the Volunteers.

So where did the Catholic hierarchy stand in relation to the Rising? Was it once again supportive of the authority of the English government which, after all, protected its own position, or would it follow the lead set by its people to ensure that it did not alienate its flock and therefore compromise its own social control? The Church's allegiance had already begun to shift with the defeat of the 1912 Home Rule Bill introduced by Herbert Asquith. It had passed the House of Commons in January, 1913, and was set to become law the following year. However, Northern Unionist opposition was dramatic in its response: the setting up of a Provisional Government, heavy recruitment to the Ulster Volunteers and the landing of huge consignments of weapons with the knowledge of the authorities, plus an increased religious bigotry with the slogan as we noted earlier, 'Home Rule is Rome Rule'. The Church 'rowed in' behind the people in the post-Rising period, because of, as Fuller (2004, pxxxvii) points out, 'the essential Catholicity of the new political movement and leaders', who shared the church's socially conservative outlook:

Unlike revolutionary movements on the continent, these revolutionaries were neither anti-religious nor anti-clerical. Political independence was their goal –

they were not going to bring about radical social changes, which would undermine the rights of the Church and Christian values.

This was in stark contrast to the anti-clericalism of the *Patriotes* in Quebec as we have shown. Fuller (ibid. xxxvii) reminds us further that while many priests had been attracted to the afore-mentioned cultural nationalism, the vast majority of the bishops in early 1917 'still supported the Parliamentary Party and were wary of Sinn Féin'. Like the Church in Quebec, they had been active in opposing Britain's attempts to impose compulsory military service in Ireland in April 1918. The Catholic Bishops declared that the Irish people had a right to resist this unjust law by all means consistent with the law of God. This latter decision was a major turn around for the Church, as Catholic theology required the upholding of the laws of the current government. Fuller speaks of the 'political pragmatism' of the bishops whose actions depended on 'the vested interest they were pursuing' (ibid. pxxxvii).

The situation in Quebec is worth exploring here because of the long-term effects of conscription. As Canada was a dominion of the British Empire, Canadian armies fought during World War 1 on behalf of the empire. However, during the period 1916 – 1917 there was a serious recruitment problem for the Canadian army and the Conservative Canadian Prime-Minister, Robert Borden, spoke of the need for conscription faced with the paucity of volunteers. French-Canadians were already treated quite inequitably in the Canadian army and were generally sent to the front line, so, unsurprisingly, the news had an unfavourable reception in French-Canada. There were many demonstrations when the recruitment officers arrived in Quebec. French-Canadian reluctance to fight led to increased tensions with English Canada. The Catholic Church, which was openly nationalist during this period, sided with the people and spoke openly in sermons and parish bulletins of the rights of francophones within and outside of Quebec. In his opposition to conscription, as Ferretti (Champagne, 1995) recounts, the parish priest would ring the church bell to give warning when recruitment officers arrived. The newspaper of the nationalist, Henri Bourassa, *Le Devoir*, was totally opposed to conscription while *La Presse*, the other francophone daily supported Borden initially but later moved to a more neutral position (Ferretti, cited in Champagne, 1995).

When conscription was imposed in Montreal in July 1917 there were several demonstrations. The army was sent in to Quebec City in the spring of 1918 to force conscription and there were many deaths. There was a huge increase in membership of the nationalist organisation, La société Saint Jean-Baptiste, during this period. Conscription therefore played a huge role in the affirmation of nationalism in Quebec and laid bare the tensions between English and French Canada. It exposed the enormous gap in their conflicting conception of Canada as Ferretti notes (Champagne, 1995).

Ireland's General election of 1918 saw Sinn Féin win an overwhelming victory - 73 seats as against 6 for the Parliamentary Party, and 26 for Unionists. As they refused to take their seats, this was effectively the end of southern Irish participation at Westminster. In 1919 Dáil Éireann was set up as the parliament of the Irish Republic - already declared in 1916 - with Éamon de Valera who had been one of the leaders of the 1916 Rising as President. The War of Independence thus ensued and the Volunteers, now known as the Irish Republican Army, attacked the forces of the Crown. British government retaliation involved the deployment of the ruthless 'Black-and-Tans', and many atrocities were committed by both sides. A Truce followed discussions between de Valera and Lloyd George in July 1921, and the scene was set for a momentous cleavage in Irish politics. The Government of Ireland Act had been passed by Westminster in 1920 establishing two Home Rule parliaments – one for the south and one for the 6 counties. As Stevenson (2006, p205) comments, 'Having secured their Northern bastion, the British were ready to cut their losses in the south'.

Following the Treaty of December, 1921, brokered in London by Minister for Finance, Michael Collins, and Arthur Griffith, the founder of Sinn Féin, and its ratification by the Dáil on January 7, 1922, Sinn Féin fell asunder. Éamon de Valera opposed the Treaty mainly because of the oath of allegiance it required since Ireland would remain in the British Commonwealth of Nations. The bishops sided with the pro-Treaty side and issued a joint pastoral in October, 1922, asserting themselves against de Valera and his republicans. They were assuring their voice in the new Free State, confident of the gains to be made. Fuller (2004, pxxxviii) sums up the emerging symbiosis:

By the beginning of the twentieth century, the bishops had become a powerful force, destined to wield extraordinary influence in the new state. In the same way as Parnell and O'Connell before him had needed, and paid in kind for, the Church's support, so also did the fledgling Free State government.

### **Quebec: the beginnings of disaffection**

Major political gains of course were made in Quebec much earlier than in Ireland. As we saw earlier, Quebec had its own provincial government from 1867 and the Catholic Church became a formidable instrument of social control in the course of the 19<sup>th</sup> century (Hardy, 1999). This was a situation that would be shorter-lived than was the case in Ireland, however. The formation of 'a parish elite that set the pace for others' as we cited previously, ensured that people conformed publicly whatever their private beliefs (Fay, 2002). The parish was a much supervised entity in that the parish priest had to prepare an annual report on the religious, moral and material condition of his parish prior to an episcopal visit. Anti-clericalism continued to be a political liability as Guindon (1988, p17) comments:

[The Church] controlled the avenues of social promotion by its control of the educational structure.... [and it] enjoyed social consensus.....When conflicting conceptions seemed to take some hold and footing in the social structure they did not hesitate to take measures ranging from moral persuasion to economic boycott in order to eradicate the budding dissenters.....There existed a division of labour between politics, business, and religion. But the religious was the commanding institution.

Feminism had a battle on its hands in its efforts to be recognised within and outside the Church. While a Christian feminism was allowed to develop under the aegis of the Church, any notion of women's emancipation in society at large was rejected as Roy (1993, p71) explains:

...the demand for the right to vote engenders a ferocious opposition from the clergy and its partisans, as it does the majority of politicians. The church and state for once united and unanimous, defend the male fortress.

French-Canadian women eventually gained the right to vote in 1940. (In Ireland, the 1922 Constitution extended the franchise to women over the age of 21). However, as

Roy points out, if the seat of power was largely masculine, it was also largely Anglophone (ibid.).

Canon Jacques Grand'Maison, a major intellectual figure in the Quebec Church, was also very critical of 'the Church's abuse of authority and attack on the conscience in the name of unconditional obedience' (quoted in Chausée, 1999, p51). The Church, he said, had to take responsibility for its part in the infantilisation of the conscience. The Church's undermining of Catholics' moral conscience had led to a large number of people rejecting the entire Judeo-Christian tradition.

Chausée (1999, p111) points out that the Catholic Church had already lost considerable status before the 60s citing the comments of Father Élie Gaudrault, Provincial of the Dominicans, in 1946:

....a number of good Catholics, more considerable than one can imagine...in their private lives, feel surrounded, under guardianship, supervised like minors. They are gasping for air. These good Catholics, one day or another, will break out. Anti-clericalism is developing rapidly, much more rapidly than one imagines, in Montreal especially. (B12)

As we mentioned in Chapter 2, *Le Refus global* and its opposition to the Church was to follow in 1948. Various journals like *Cité libre* (1950) associated with Pierre Elliott Trudeau, and *Liberté* (1958) also called for the liberation of Quebec society from clerical influence. Hubert Guindon (1988, p24) considers the Catholic Church to have been a victim of its own success:

With the systematic maintenance of the clergy's increasingly diversified number of roles, the image of what a priest is, why he exists, becomes blurred. After having achieved complete control over the social organization, the clergy may discover, perhaps too late, that its population no longer knows what religion and its cherished symbols mean. The symbols may become hollow and meaningless for the population, and even for parts of the clergy. And not because of alien and foreign culture, but as a direct result of the clergy's own successful control of the whole society.

Fernand Dumont wrote in 1973: 'When religion becomes one custom among others, it loses its ability to pose questions' (Cantin, 2000, p143). Thus, the success of the Church

was also a major element in its downfall. We will discuss later the Church's fall from grace following the end of the Duplessis era and with the arrival of the Quiet Revolution in the 1960s. But first, we will examine the belated arrival of Ireland's new State.

### **An Irish Catholic 'Free' State**

The birth of the new Irish Free State saw the Catholic Church's rise to a pre-eminent position in Irish society. It also saw the maintenance of close ties between the Vatican and the Irish Church with the much sought-after appointment of a papal nuncio. The new State was founded in 1922 with a government led by the pro-Treaty party, Cumann na nGaedheal. The complexion of the new state was Gaelic and Catholic, with a large emphasis laid on the revival of Irish as a spoken language. Many challenges faced the new state which was still, initially, a dominion of the British Empire. Many of the new state's energies were ploughed into constructing an identity which would differentiate it from Britain. However, the link with Britain was still strong as 98% of Irish exports went to Britain in 1924 (Foster, 1988). The new state was also grateful for emigrants' remittances which were of considerable value.

The Catholic Church maintained its influence over health and welfare as it had in education and Catholic teaching was to be incorporated in Irish legislation. The emphasis was very much on agriculture as the staple of the economy – over half the working population was engaged in agriculture in 1926 (ibid.). The founding of the new state meant that the Catholic minority in the six counties were more or less cut adrift. At the conclusion of the Boundary Commission the Irish government accepted the Border. Foster (1988, p531) speaks of 'nationalist ambivalence about the unanswerable conundrum in the North' and of how the homogeneity of the state was ensured with the exclusion of Ulster Protestantism:

The removal of that intractable element helped ensure social and cultural coherence to a degree otherwise impossible, an important influence behind the Free State's much-vaunted political stability.

In the South, religious and educational rights for Protestants were guaranteed by law although many emigrated nonetheless, some because of sectarian intimidation and others because of British administration or military links.

When Eamon de Valera of the anti-Treaty side founded Fianna Fáil in 1926, there emerged a viable opposition to the government. He contested the 1927 election but did not gain power until 1932. Issues of sovereignty and neutrality preoccupied the new government. Although Roman Catholicism did not have the status of national church in the Free State constitution, the state was a strongly confessional one and depended on the support of the Church:

From its origins, the Free State government had carefully lined up the Roman Catholic hierarchy on its side, consulting bishops on constitutional matters, and receiving in return powerful support during the edgy days of the civil war, when a joint pastoral branded the IRA Irregulars as murderers (Foster 1988, p534).

The new state was to be rigidly conservative in its adherence to Catholic teaching: contraception and divorce were denied and the *Ne Temere* decree which required the children of mixed marriages to be brought up as Catholics was stringently enforced. This, and the many public utterances about the Catholic nature of the state, as Foster (1988, p534) notes, was enough to ensure that southern Protestants remained a silent and dwindling minority. When each new government took office, their first act was invariably to write to the Pope following their first cabinet meeting, and assure him of their loyalty and devotion to the Teaching of Christ. Keogh (1995, pxv) comments that ‘shared Catholic ideology bonded Dublin and ‘Rome’ in the early decades of the history of the state’, and there were many visits to Rome by Presidents and Taoisigh. Inglis (1987, p74) reminds us that ‘it was often easier for people with religious capital to accumulate political capital’.

A review of the legislation enacted by the new State gives some idea of its tenor: Censorship of Films Act 1923; Censorship of Publications Act 1929; the right to divorce (a British inheritance) was abolished by private members’ parliamentary bill in 1925. There was a constitutional ban on divorce from the 1937 Constitution. A Contraceptive Bill was enacted in 1935. Whyte (1980) and others point out that this legislation largely

reflected the conservatism of the time and not simply an Irish Catholic conservatism. McDonagh (2003, p43) reflects that in the minds of many Irish Protestants and disaffected writers and intellectuals of Catholic background, such legislation was proof of the Catholic Church's 'moral monopoly'.

Joe Lee (1989, p159) berates Cosgrave for the Censorship of Publications Act of 1929 reviewing how it censored not alone pornography 'but also serious work by major writers including Joyce, O'Casey, O'Flaherty and Clarke'. The Censorship Act confined itself to sexual immorality to the neglect of other immoralities. He further considers that 'the obsession with sex permitted a blind eye to be turned towards the social scars that disfigured the face of Ireland':

Censorship purported to protect the family, but no measures were taken to prevent the continuing dispersal of families ravaged by the cancer of emigration. Ireland continued to be characterised by a high incidence of mental disease, by hideous family living conditions in its urban slums, and by a demoralised casual working class, urban as well as rural. Few voices were raised in protest.

Lee (ibid.) castigates the Church for 'voicing the concern of their most influential constituents' instead and in a very damning statement says that the Catholic Church as an institution has rarely 'flourished by materialistic criteria, as in the Free State'.

Two major celebratory events which bound together Church and State during this era were the centenary of Catholic Emancipation in 1929 and the Eucharistic Congress in 1932. However, as McDonagh (ibid. p44) comments, the 'most powerful symbol of closeness between the new Irish State and the Catholic Church' was de Valera's new Constitution of 1937, as we shall shortly discuss.

Acknowledgement by the Vatican was so important to Ireland after years of colonization by Britain as Keogh (1995) so knowledgeably demonstrates. The undermining of language and religion, exclusion from parliamentary politics, confiscation of lands and the ravages of famine and extreme poverty had resulted in a very depressed state with an advanced inferiority complex. If Ireland had traditionally been the underdog, there was one place where it mattered and could enjoy respect: at the feet of the all-powerful Holy

See. Hence, this was a relationship that was cherished and nurtured by various Irish governments although at times taken for granted by the Vatican itself as Keogh (ibid.) demonstrates.

Following independence, diplomatic relations were 're-opened' with the Holy See in 1929. This was a significant year as it was the centenary of Catholic Emancipation and the government had hoped that the nuncio would take part in the celebrations. However, the Vatican dragged its feet in appointing a papal nuncio much to the annoyance of the then government (Keogh, op.cit). Foreign diplomats had to be accredited by the British Monarch as Ireland was still part of the British Commonwealth. This meant that British attitudes were important to the Vatican. Joseph Walshe, first ambassador to the Holy See (1946 – 1954), formed this impression of that relationship:

One very striking impression received after a very few days contact with the Vatican is that the Holy See regards the peaceful maintenance of the British Commonwealth of Nations as the most important factor in the development and well-being of the Church. Great Britain's opinion becomes, therefore, of paramount interest and the weeks of hesitation in our case were due to the absence of a clearly expressed British opinion towards the Dublin nunciature (Keogh, 1995, p40).

Thus, the Vatican's self-interest came before rewarding 'the most Catholic country in the world' (ibid. p358). One difficulty for the Vatican was that, as Keogh (ibid.) shows, 'Irish dioceses were not co-terminus with national frontiers', referring to the Catholic Church in Northern Ireland. The Vatican's preferred option of an Apostolic Delegate rather than a nuncio meant that he would not be accredited to the Irish government in that case. There was also significant opposition to a nuncio by the bishops. Hagan, Rector of the Irish College in Rome and Curran, the vice-rector (and Hagan's successor) were hostile to the Free State. Neither, according to Keogh, recognised the existence of a Legation. (ibid. p60) The Vatican was adroit in dealing with the Irish government in the question of the appointing of a Cardinal. The government had wished the appointment to go to Dublin (one of two Archbishoprics) but the Vatican decided on Armagh. As ever, the Vatican gave nothing unless it got something back, and the government, in the light of the appointment of the papal nuncio, had to allow the Vatican to get its way. The appointment of Pascal Robinson, the first appointment to any dominion, Keogh (ibid.)

reminds us, was to endure from 1929 until 1948. Episcopal dissatisfaction with its sidelining in the nuncio matter appeared to be obvious in the ceremonies at the Irish College in Rome marking the accession of Archbishop MacRory to the cardinalate. Robinson didn't attend, unsure of his welcome, and Bewley, the Irish envoy to the Vatican, was largely ignored!

The arrival of Ireland's first papal nuncio saw the government pull out all the stops and it was a moment of supreme public harmony at the level of Church and State. Joe Lee (1989) saw it as an electoral coup for the Cosgrave government at the risk of Episcopal displeasure.

Of course the Irish government was keen to have this direct relationship with the Vatican which was a way of controlling the bishops. Incredibly, the bishops, and much to their chagrin, were not aware of the government's intentions until very late in the day and were not pleased at having a Vatican supervisor. Joe Lee (1989) joked that the bishops 'did not want Home Rule to mean Rome Rule'! Charles Bewley, a convert to Catholicism was the first Irish envoy. His address to Pope Pius XI sounded an oft-repeated note in Irish-Vatican discourses:

For is there, indeed, any nation in the world whose history can show greater devotion to the cause of Christianity, or is there any other nation whose whole history has been so determined in all its phases by its attachment to the Catholic faith and to the Holy See (Keogh, 1995, p51).

Irish pride in its sacrifices for the Faith, however, demanded constant Vatican acknowledgement and gratitude. When the Vatican did not always comply, there was consternation, even anger. Predictably, at a state banquet to honour the new nuncio, the President 'declared that no nation in the world had suffered as Ireland had to keep the faith and remain in union with Rome' (ibid. p73). Once again, the government was craving recognition of its own particular role in the Catholic world. The nuncio's residence in the Phoenix Park was essentially a gift with £1 annual rent. Keogh comments:

In essence, the state ignored the terms of the lease and carried out maintenance on the nunciature as if it were a government department' (ibid. p76).

Keogh considers that the death of Hagan in 1930 helped to normalise church/state relations in that 'it removed an implacable opponent of the Free State in both secular and ecclesiastical politics' (ibid. p75).

De Valera came to power in 1932. As Lee (1989, p160) states, 'If Cosgrave had to consolidate relations with the church, de Valera had to restore them'. He faced widespread clerical hostility after 1922. The clergy threw their weight behind Cumann na nGaedheal in the March 1925 by-elections and openly attacked de Valera in election speeches. The founding of the *Irish Press* helped to redress the imbalance (Lee, 1989 p. 168) and it was to play a major part in Fianna Fáil electoral victories.

De Valera's government was to inaugurate a state of economic and cultural protectionism and 'institutionaliz[e] a powerful Catholic ethos' (Foster 1988 p537). The de Valera era could be likened to the Duplessis one in Quebec in terms of its religious authoritarianism and social conservatism. However, de Valera was unlikely to boast that the bishops ate out of his hand! Both of their terms of power came to an end in the same year, 1959, when both the Irish and Quebec economies began to take off at last.

De Valera's iconic speech on St. Patrick's Day, 1943, would resonate for many generations:

That Ireland which we dreamed of would be the home of a people who valued material wealth only as the basis of right living...It would, in a word, be the home of a people living the life that God desires that man should live (Cited in Inglis, 1987, p184.).

Foster (1988, p538) reminds us that in rural Ireland of the 30s living conditions were very basic. De Valera idealised this vision of a self-sufficient peasant society: 'industrious, Gaelicist and anti-materialist'. However, emigration was still a way of life for many Irish families and men and women were marrying late in life and having large families (ibid. p539).

Lionel Pilkington (2002, p135) comments on the array of state ceremony during the 1929 centenary of the Act of Emancipation and during the Eucharistic Congress of 1932 which graphically illustrated the Catholic Church's 'close and seamless bond' with the Irish state'. He quotes Tony Fahey (1998, p414) on the degree of partnership with the state:

...so much so that by the mid-1960s it had the highest proportion of clergy and religious to laity as any country in the Catholic world and was the country's main provider of social services.

Keogh (1995, p93) considers that de Valera assumed power as an apparent revolutionary but 'ultimately he was a lasting symbol of representative democracy' although the Holy See was initially nervous of his assumption of power. The 1932 Eucharistic congress with its incredible display of Catholic devotion - among all social strata - provided much reassurance. The *Illustrazione Vaticana* was effusive in its praise:

The Church is the whole island – the altar is the metropolis, Dublin. Here the very air one breathes is the divine breath of God, Jesus Christ Our Saviour –the vivifying oxygen of all truth. Never before perhaps have foreign pilgrims breathed such an atmosphere of faith' (ibid. p98).

Also, during the Holy Year of 1933, according to Keogh (ibid. p107), 'more members of the Irish Free State government have gone to Rome ...than that of any other government in the world'. The next, and perhaps final, outpouring of such faith would be the Papal visit of 1979.

De Valera's 1937 Constitution, much influenced by Archbishop McQuaid, enshrined Catholic teaching at the heart of legislation. The Preamble to the Constitution links together religion, the state and the nation and recognizes the 'special position' of the Catholic Church as guardian of the faith 'as professed by the great majority of the citizens':

In the name of the Most Holy Trinity, from Whom is all authority and to Whom, as our final end, all actions both of men and states must be referred, We, the people of Éire, humbly acknowledging all our obligations to our Divine Lord, Jesus Christ, who sustained our fathers through centuries of trial...

In his non-recognition of the Catholic Church as the one true church, due to sensitivity to other religions North and South, de Valera came in for criticism from the Catholic hierarchy in Rome as well as at home. Keogh (1995, p139) comments that the Vatican did not want any other churches recognised as the Catholic Church saw itself as the only true church. While the Pope was not satisfied with the term 'special position', he remained silent on the matter. Keogh (ibid.) comments:

Silence was a vote in favour of de Valera's position. It removed the ground from under a potentially awkward confessional lobby likely to have caused maximum damage to de Valera and his government.

Thus, the 'special position' didn't go far enough but the 'special relationship' held. The new Constitution – 'A document suffused with Catholic thinking and ideals' (ibid. p140) - confirmed de Valera's devotion to Catholic principles and served to reassure the Vatican on that score. Foster (1989, p547) noted the complexion of de Valera's State:

[The] Fianna Fáil Ireland was a nation set apart, by Catholicism and nationality: the interlocking relationships of church and politics helping to define a unique, god-given way of life.

There was a change of government when Fianna Fáil lost power in 1948 after sixteen years. Fianna Gael was now in inter-party government and John A. Costello became Taoiseach. The small party, Clann na Poblachta, led by Sean MacBride, would play a pivotal role in matters of public health as we shall show. The government, at its first cabinet meeting, took time to assure Pope Pius XII in a telegram, that it would be 'guided in all [its] work by the teaching of Christ, and [would] strive for the attainment of a social order in Ireland based on Christian principles' (Keogh, op.cit.). This aspirational message would be severely tested, as the next section will show, in the attempts of the new Minister for Health, Noël Browne, to introduce a free health scheme for mothers and their children.

As Robinson, the papal nuncio, was now elderly, and due to be replaced, the Irish government attempted to sway the Vatican in the direction of appointing an Irish successor. Both government and hierarchy were opposed to the proposed Italian, Felici,

and made their wishes known. They didn't specifically request an Irish national but someone of Irish origin. According to Keogh, the government was considering refusing the *agrément*. But the Vatican held firm. Montini (future Pope Paul VI) in discussions with Joseph Walshe indicated that the Vatican was none too pleased:

What your government wants to do is to take all the liberty of choice away from the Holy Father....You are the most Catholic country in the world and yet you are the only one to have turned down a Papal nominee (Keogh, 1995, p282).

It is interesting to compare this with the government's initial difficulty in obtaining a papal nuncio but now it was attempting to influence the selection of the appointee. The government once again lost. The government was clearly afraid of public opinion favouring the Vatican. Keogh (ibid. p286) quotes Frederick Boland, Secretary of the Dept. of external Affairs, who stated in a memo to the minister, MacBride, in June 1949:

[T]he Vatican are prepared to sit down to a veritable siege on the question....If a difference of opinion between the Irish government and the Vatican starts to be suspected as the cause of the delay...the fact may be exploited to the disadvantage of the Government, *in view of the natural tendency of people to assume that, in any such difference, the Holy See must naturally be in the right*'. [Italics mine]

MacBride eventually granted the *agrément*. In a memorandum to the Vatican, the opportunity was taken once again to remind the Holy See of the devoted Irish:

It is an undeniable fact that today, as in the long centuries since Saint Patrick brought the faith from Rome to Ireland, the Irish are amongst the most devoted and zealous children of the Church' (Keogh, 1995, p289).

Upon Irish submission, Montini again praised the Irish and their contribution to Christian civilization to Walshe and so harmonious relations were restored until the declaration of the republic. In 1949, the External Relations Act was repealed and the republic finally declared by the Taoiseach in Ottawa, as it happened. This was done spontaneously by Taoiseach Costello without prior government approval! The Holy See was not at all pleased by this declaration as Ireland's membership of the British Commonwealth was strategically important to the Vatican. Keogh (ibid. p252) shows

that ultimately, and thanks to Walshe's efforts, the installation of the republic on Easter Monday, 1949, 'was marked with due solemnity in Rome as elsewhere'. Keogh (ibid. p304) considers that 'The nuncio crisis of 1948/49 ended a mistaken view by Walshe and MacBride that Ireland could expect to be treated differently by the Vatican because she was a loyal Catholic country'.

The Holy Year of 1950 provided an opportunity for Irish people to demonstrate their religious devotion in person at the Vatican, and Keogh (ibid. p318) notes that the piety of most Irish pilgrims impressed Italian clerics. Both the Taoiseach and President visited Rome that year as well as large numbers of government ministers thus reinforcing the 'special relationship'. However, another storm was brewing that would test severely Church/state relations in Ireland. Although the Church came out on top for a while, the crisis was to mark the beginning of the erosion of episcopal dictatorship.

### **The end of an era**

As we have shown, the political and social life of Ireland and Quebec from the 30s to the late 50s was dominated by two towering figures - Taoiseach Éamon de Valera and Premier Maurice Duplessis. Duplessis, the conservative Quebec premier and leader of the Union Nationale party, was in power for 17 of the 23 years spanning 1936 to 1959. Éamon de Valera leader of the Fianna Fáil party in the Republic, was Taoiseach from 1932 - 1959. So both Duplessis's and de Valera's eras came to an end in the same year. Quebec's Révolution tranquille was to follow and in Ireland the Lemass-Whittaker Programme for Economic Expansion was to be initiated on the cusp of the new decade. However, real social and economic change accompanied by a decline in Church power, only came to Ireland in the nineties – thirty years later than was the case in Quebec.

In Chapter 2 we discussed the rise of Premier Maurice Duplessis and the Union Nationale party in 1944. The reactionary Duplessis with his policy of *anti-statism* maintained the support of the Roman Catholic hierarchy almost to the end. In his resistance to federal centralisation, Duplessis ensured that Quebec missed out on many important federal initiatives. Richard Desrosiers (Gougeon, 1993) states that during the

fifties Quebecers were the only Canadian citizens not to benefit from a health insurance plan. Duplessis said 'No' to everything from family allowances and unemployment benefit to federal university grants. The problem, Desrosiers points out, was that Duplessis failed to provide any initiatives in their stead. He didn't believe in these kinds of state measures.

Richard Jones (1972) has commented on the extent of co-operation between the Quebec government and the Catholic hierarchy who shared a common vision of society. The clergy endorsed Duplessis' campaign against the Communists and the Jehovah's Witnesses, a situation which was accepted within Quebec although vehemently condemned outside the province.

Duplessis, as we noted, boasted that 'the bishops eat out of my hand', underscoring his influence among the higher clergy and perhaps a certain contempt for them also. This relationship was memorably recreated in the TV film *Les Orphelins de Duplessis* (Préjent, 1997) which tells the grim but true story of the transformation of Quebec orphanages into psychiatric hospitals in order to avail of federal funding. The result was that children of normal intellect were reared with the mentally retarded, deprived of an education and eventually exploited as a source of free labour.

Baum (1991, p18) comments that because Duplessis opposed social change and was anti-union etc, he became the defender of the predominant Catholic ideology giving the Church 'a power and a presence with few historical parallels in a largely industrialized society':

Though church and state were legally separate, in actual fact the church was deeply involved in promoting and ordering social life and exercised considerable influence on government decisions, not least by being the principal source of the public ideology. In the mid-twentieth century this was an astonishing situation (ibid. p19).

Not so astonishing perhaps in the Irish context as we shall explore later. As the Church exercised almost total social control, Duplessis recognised, like many politicians before him, that he needed the support of the Church. Thus, like his contemporary de Valera, he

relied on the same values and the same social group to pursue his policies. Duplessis who was against the idea of the welfare state, was happy for the Church to continue its dominance of social affairs – education, welfare and health. Yet, as Roy (1993) notes, it was rather haphazard in the dispensing of the necessary funds.

However, the Church took an interest in labour issues and social justice which sometimes ran counter to government policy. The Church was involved in the founding of Catholic trade unions and various social groups, as we saw earlier, in order to maintain its position in the face of the secular international trade union movement. In 1921, the Confédération des travailleurs catholiques du Canada (Union of Catholic workers) was founded which accounted for almost a third of syndicated Quebec workers (Chausée, 1999).

As we saw in Chapter 2 however, at the time of the famous Asbestos strike in 1949, the bishops' actions ran counter to Duplessis' dictates when they ordered collections for the families of the striking miners. Monseigneur Charbonneau, Archbishop of Montreal, was to pay a high price for assisting the families in the parishes of his diocese. Richard Desrosiers (Gougeon, 1993) recounts how Duplessis punished him for his intervention by having him 'transferred' to British-Columbia to serve as chaplain in a hospice. Father Le Clerc in Denys Arcand's *Jésus de Montréal* (1989) makes allusion to this likely fate should he displease his episcopal authorities. Duplessis' influence even went as far as Rome. Rousseau (Baillargeon, 1994, p83) comments that already with Duplessis, political power exploited the place of religion in society, 'se sert d'elle' – it used it: 'The State under Duplessis was subverting the position of the Church'.

Desrosiers (1993) comments that the clergy were to suffer ultimately for their close association with Duplessis when Quebec embarked upon its social and economic revolution. Roy (1993) also comments that criticism of 'duplessisme' encompassed the Church especially when it alienated its reformist wing as represented by Mgr. Charbonneau.

Duplessis' violently anti-labour policy left the under-represented urban workers frustrated and hostile. McNaught (1988, p273) comments on how in the mid-fifties

Younger liberals in the professions and in the church itself launched in the mid fifties an open and vigorous assault upon the systematic corruption and Neanderthal capitalism of the Union Nationale. ...Applying contemporary ideas in economics, sociology and politics to the Quebec scene, they depicted the overwhelming need of reform in church-state relations and in education, which was still heavily dominated by classical languages and medieval philosophy. The central argument to the reform liberals was that the corrupt alliance of Duplessis, the hierarchy and American capital, far from securing *la survivance* of French Canada, was creating an illiberal industrial feudalism.

As McNaught (ibid. p274) further notes, thanks to newspapers such as *Le Devoir*, edited by André Laurendau, and the union-supported *Cité Libre*, under Pierre-Elliott Trudeau and Gérard Pelletier, 'a secular and urban-orientated liberalism took firm root' and 'the democratic state (rid of corruption), rather than the church, was to become the agent of cultural survival and of social justice'.

Guindon (1988, p31) comments that new middle-class unrest dates back to the mid and late fifties:

The post-war period saw a massive migration of French Canadians to the cities, mostly the major ones....Urban institutions of welfare, health, and education had rapidly to increase their size, their staffs, and their budgets to meet the new demographic needs. This bureaucratic growth was being stifled by Duplessis's discretionary habit in spreading out public funds. In the process, the economic and status interests of this new middle class were not being met.

With the advent of Jean Lesage's government to power in 1960 the liberals finally had their day and the period of 'la grande noirceur' – the great darkness, as the Duplessis era was known, came to an end. The Catholic Church, internationally, was also at this time being shaken out of its conservatism with the approach of Vatican II. The Quiet Revolution which followed saw control of most institutions in the sphere of education, health, and welfare pass from the Church to the new government, although education was still organized along denominational lines. The massive secularization produced by the *Révolution tranquille* emptied the churches and vast numbers of religious left their

orders. Practising Catholics became a minority in Quebec. Between 1961 and 1971, the rate of church attendance in the diocese of Montreal fell from 61% to 30%. In 1960 there were around 8,400 priests. By 1981 their number had fallen to 4,285 (Linteau et al, 1989). The Catholic Church's prestige was dealt a near-fatal blow. An examination of some of the features of the Church's control of Quebec society will provide some further clues as to its rapid secularization.

Hubert Guindon (1988, p135) has commented on the exodus of the religious from their orders:

Part of the process may be explained by ideological changes within the Catholic Church and part by the fact that the Vatican increasingly facilitated the release of individuals from their clerical vows. Equally facilitating these 'defections' in Quebec was the fact that, contrary to the situation before the Quiet Revolution, priests or nuns who left orders could now quite easily find a place for themselves within the social structure.

Thus, former clerics, especially priests, who left their orders, were no longer vilified for so doing. Many went on to 'enter the ranks of the public and semi-public bureaucracies'. Even priests who taught religion at the Université de Montréal, which holds a pontifical charter, were able, as Guindon (ibid.) shows, to retain their posts due to tenure, despite abandoning their vocation.

Guindon (ibid.) makes some very interesting points about the motivation for men and women to join religious orders in the first place, a reason which may also help to explain their rapid exodus. Entering a religious order ensured a certain social standing for men and women. The lifestyle of nuns 'certainly matched and often surpassed the conditions under which most married women from the same social backgrounds could expect to live' and they enjoyed 'the deference of the laity'. Similarly, for men, joining the clergy 'meant entering a career that could lead to important institutional positions':

A man could aspire to positions of leadership, public recognition, and gratitude as his career reached its apex (ibid. p136).

Thus, in the new social order, as the Church became increasingly marginalised, no longer providing 'full career patterns' and 'social esteem', it became a much less attractive proposition. Also, as parish priests' incomes dropped, the rewards of a salaried professional became much more compelling both financially and socially.

In concluding his overview of the secularisation of Quebec society, Guindon enumerates some of the criticisms directed at the Church. Liberals and conservatives blamed it for the economic underdevelopment of the province because under its leadership, Quebec society failed to adapt to the needs of a modern industrial society. This shall be discussed more fully below. The Marxists saw it as culpable in its 'collaboration with the Anglophone bourgeoisie in exploiting its flock, the working class'. Guindon considers that both charges are 'ideologically inspired distortions', while at the same time interrogating the Church's silence:

Is this a dignified silence, or the sign of its collapse as an institution? (ibid. p138).

Louis Rousseau (2000) charts the evolution and demise of this confessional Quebec society in referring to the national holiday, the 24<sup>th</sup> June, and the representation of St. John the Baptist, the national patron saint, on these occasions. In the 1860s he is represented as a child and by the 1940s as an adolescent. In the 1969 parade in the midst of the period of the Quiet Revolution, a huge papier-mâché figure of John the Baptist as an adult was decapitated. Rousseau comments that the act of decapitation betrayed the profound division of the nation. Henceforth, the society born from the Quiet Revolution would no longer represent itself as a Catholic nation: The Nation-Church had exhausted its symbolical power.

From the 1970s on, and until the victory of the Parti québécois, a new image of the nation is posited and the national holiday is now inclusive of all the citizens of Quebec:

New national rituals seek thus to produce a new *Us*, combining the base of a long memory with the challenges of a new collective project whose precise political model has yet to be established (ibid. p73). (B13)

This sense of euphoria and a new national pride saw a huge growth in the cultural industries. Quebecers were now providing their own cultural models whereas France was previously the standard. As Bombardier (2002) said: ‘artists were now protagonists of the langue québécoise as opposed to metropolitan French’. The possibility of Quebec autonomy was posed and, as we saw in Chapter 2, led to two referenda on sovereignty, both defeated, although the most recent one in 1995, was very narrowly so.

### **Ireland: health issues**

We discussed previously the control over education exerted by the Catholic Church in both Quebec and Ireland. In both states, religious orders were also deeply involved in the provision of health and social services. In the case of Quebec, however, the federal government’s influence, in theory, should have acted as a corrective on any healthcare provisions, or their lack, that would have compromised individual rights. Yet, as we noted under Duplessis, federal powers were kept at a distance and the scandalous abuse of the so-called ‘Duplessis orphans’ was facilitated by federal funds. Health proved to be a particularly divisive issue in Ireland when attempts were made by the state to act independently of the Church in the provision of certain health-related services and there was a major set-back in Church-state relations. It was also a pivotal moment for the Church and the Irish media when the latter criticised it publicly. The Church built and maintained an alliance with the medical profession often at the expense of the recipients of medical care. Given the strength of vocations, there was no shortage of personnel to run the Catholic voluntary hospitals and various county homes. Ruth Barrington (2003, p154) comments however, that the Church’s concerns lay more in the area of ensuring a Catholic ethos in its hospitals than in the development of social policy ‘despite the appalling living standards of so many people in rural and urban areas in the last part of the 19<sup>th</sup> century.’

The Church’s attempt to maintain control over the provision of health in the state was personified in John Charles McQuaid who became Archbishop of Dublin in December, 1940. We have already referred to his key role in the drafting of the 1937 Constitution. Barrington (ibid. p157) comments that he was profoundly suspicious of state

involvement in the social sphere. He attempted ‘to establish a Catholic health and social service that would be largely independent of the state and under the control of the diocese’. She adds that

He opposed efforts to tackle social problems where the leadership was outside his control, as demonstrated by his opposition to the anti-Tuberculosis League which had a strong Protestant involvement (ibid.).

The 1947 Health Act was opposed by the hierarchy because it saw the state as interfering in ‘matters that were best left to heads of families, the medical profession and the church to regulate’ (ibid.). Conflicting views on the provision of healthcare were to come to a head and climax in the fall of government in the late 1950s. Noël Browne was a young minister for health in the inter-party government led by John A. Costello. He attempted to introduce a scheme that would provide free ante-natal care and free medical care to children up to the age of sixteen. Keogh (1995, p325) speaks of his having been influenced by the views of the rector of the Catholic University in Milan, the Franciscan Fr Agostino Gemelli. Unfortunately for Browne, these views were not shared by the Irish bishops. The hierarchy’s opposition to the Mother-and-Child scheme was unreserved and Browne was isolated by ministerial colleagues and his party leader, McBride, ‘who “obediently” capitulated before outright Episcopal intransigence’ (ibid.).

Noël Browne wrote extensively about episcopal involvement in the failure of the Mother and Child Scheme in his autobiography *Against the Tide*. His account gives an incontrovertible insight into the ability of the Catholic hierarchy to dictate to the government of the day. Browne’s appointment as Minister of Health to the coalition government of 1948 was to ‘accelerate’ his ‘disillusion’ with his Catholic religion:

I was left with a clear impression that the Church thrived on mass illiteracy and that the welfare and care in the bodily sense of the bulk of our people was a secondary consideration to the need to maintain the religious orders in the health service (Browne, 1986, p141).

He outlines the extent of Church involvement at all levels of the health services, and in particular the towering figure of Archbishop John Charles McQuaid who

...through his control of the religious orders and in his capacity as Chairman of the Board of Directors of a number of Dublin hospitals, had indirect control of the staffing and the management in the Dublin diocese' (ibid.p142).

He concludes that there had been no native government attempt to establish an independent Department of Health until the late 1940s 'for fear of political reprisals by the church'. The result was an ill-equipped service which was in fact 'a danger or hazard to health' (ibid. p141). In his efforts to ameliorate standards of care in Dublin hospitals, Browne was to find a 'most powerful and uncompromising opponent' in Dr. John Charles McQuaid. Church authorities also ensured that class distinctions were maintained and strengthened in the provision of private hospitals for the exclusive use of upper and middle class patients. Browne highlighted the preferential treatment given to nurses who were members of religious orders in their working conditions and promotional opportunities. His attempts to introduce more egalitarian structures led to him being denounced as a Communist. Browne further irritated Dr. McQuaid by not visiting Rome during the Holy Year of 1950 as his Cabinet colleagues had done.

Browne's disinclination to submit to the Hierarchy came to a dramatic head in his attempts to introduce a 'free no-means-test' scheme for mothers and their children, following the 1947 Health Act. Although Browne's single greatest achievement as Minister for Health was the virtual eradication of tuberculosis from Ireland, it was the controversy surrounding the Mother and Child Scheme of 1951 that was to be his political nemesis, precipitating the fall of the coalition government. Two powerful personalities led the two powerful pressure groups in this debacle: Dr. Tom O'Higgins, Minister for Defence, but who represented the Irish Medical Association (IMA), and, unsurprisingly, Archbishop McQuaid. Browne felt that it was the link between the Cabinet and the IMA which led to the defeat of the Scheme. Archbishop McQuaid also had family links with the medical profession and Browne (ibid. p151) spoke of his sympathy with the doctors in their campaign against the threat of 'socialised medicine', but,

...of even greater importance was that he considered the health scheme an encroachment by the state on the church's role, which he considered to be,

among much else, ‘to determine and to control the social attitudes of the family in the Republic, especially in the delicate matters of maternity and sexuality’.

Browne is adamant, despite Lee’s (1989, p316) suggestion to the contrary, that he had full government consent for the scheme, citing the book of estimates for 1948 which had noted the sum of money agreed between Health and Finance to implement it. It transpired later that Éamon de Valera, Taoiseach at the time of the passage of the 1947 Health Act, had received a letter from the Catholic hierarchy outlining their opposition to its free no-means-test proposals. Browne quotes from the letter:

...for the State, under the Act, to empower the public authority to provide for the health of all children, and to treat their ailments, and to educate women in regard to health, and to provide them with gynaecological services, was directly and entirely contrary to Catholic social teaching, the rights of the family, the rights of the Church in education, and the rights of the medical profession, and of voluntary institutions (ibid. p152).

Browne’s department was unaware of the letter and hence the extent of the hierarchy’s opposition. The book of estimates 1950 -51 and 1951-52 made provision for the ‘mother and child scheme’. Department of Health education and information services had one message:

Under this scheme there would be no more doctor’s bills, no more chemist’s bills, no more hospital bills, no more financial fear of ill-health (ibid. p155).

Browne ruefully comments that given the public’s enthusiasm, every political party was keen to take credit for the scheme. However, once the hierarchy intervened, it was simply known as ‘the Dr. Noël Browne mother and child health scheme’.

As the medical consultants and the bishops brought increasing pressure on politicians, Browne comments that ‘Cabinet enthusiasm for the scheme was waning’ (ibid. p157). Browne was summoned to Archbishop McQuaid’s palace to attend a meeting on the scheme on October 10, 1950. Browne reflects on the fact that a government minister should be ‘ordered’ by a private citizen in this manner, but it was clearly how things were done at this time. In the letter from the Catholic hierarchy which McQuaid read to Browne, it is clear that many of their concerns focussed on the possibility of the term

‘gynaecological care’ being interpreted to include ‘provision for birth limitation and abortion’. Of course, as Fuller (2004, p75) points out, the British National Health Service had made family-planning facilities available to married women in 1949. Thus, they feared that

Doctors trained in institutions in which we have no confidence may be appointed as medical officers...and may give gynaecological care not in accordance with Catholic principles (Browne, op.cit. p158).

This was a very obvious side-swipe at the Trinity College-educated Dr. Browne, who, as a Catholic, had defied diocesan rulings about attending a Protestant university. Browne insisted that the scheme was not against Catholic ‘moral’ teaching, but Catholic ‘social’ teaching, a point that the bishops were inclined to blur. Browne was concerned by the question of who the rulers were in Ireland:

In Cabinet I decided to make a stand on two issues: the fundamental rights of the electorate, with power coming from the people to the elected government, and the right of the public to a proper health service. Under no circumstances could we concede to the bishops the right to set aside a law already passed by the Oireachtas (ibid. p166).

Browne’s high-principled and independent mind failed to take account of the extent to which cabinet colleagues, and particularly the leadership of his own Party, were cowed by the Catholic hierarchy. The bishops continued to demand a means test for the scheme. Browne (ibid. p170) quotes Archbishop Kinane of Cashel (*Irish Independent*, 2nd June, 1951), who saw him and certain graduates of TCD as publicly setting themselves up

in opposition to a fundamental part of Catholic religion, namely the teaching authority and the bishops....They should not oppose their bishop’s teaching by word or act, or by any other way, but carry out whatever is demanded by him.

Browne did the rounds of all the bishops seeking some consensus but to no avail. Finally, a letter from the Hierarchy in reply to Browne’s memorandum following the October meeting at the Archbishop’s palace was to decide Browne’s political future. Their stated opposition to the scheme prompted an emergency Cabinet meeting at which

Browne was to be isolated. Taoiseach John A. Costello, Party leader, Séan MacBride, and other Cabinet colleagues agreed that the letter meant the end of the Mother-and-Child scheme. There followed full-throttle character assassination on Browne, led by MacBride, culminating in the call for his resignation. Browne quotes Costello as stating 'As a Catholic, I obey my authorities', and MacBride, 'Those in the government who are Catholics are bound to accept the views of their church' (ibid.p177). Browne had his revenge, after a sort, in that, following his resignation he released all the confidential state correspondence relating to the scheme to the press 'to end the fiction of representative democracy in Ireland' (ibid. p185). The coalition government fell on May 7<sup>th</sup> and signalled the demise of Clann na Poblachta. The resulting general election brought Fianna Fáil and Éamon de Valera back to power. John Whyte in his book *Church and State in Modern Ireland* would later write, 'Of all the members of the inter-party government, Dr. Browne seemed to produce the most in the way of definite results' (cited in Browne, op.cit. p183).

The results of the General Election were testimony to huge public support for Browne's scheme in spite of the Hierarchy's opposition. Standing as an Independent in Dublin South-East, he doubled his first preference votes. He came second in the poll with 8, 473 votes, just behind the out-going Taoiseach John A. Costello with 9,222 votes. Browne would eventually support Fianna Fáil with Éamon de Valera as Taoiseach.

Louise Fuller (2004, p77) comments on the publishing of all the correspondence between Browne, the hierarchy and the Taoiseach in the *Irish Independent*, *The Irish Times* and the *Irish Press*, on the morning of Browne's resignation, which heralded a new era in church-state relations:

Such a move was unprecedented. For the first time in the history of the independent state, the role of the Church was under public scrutiny....The incident marked a crossroads in Irish Catholic culture. Things would never be quite the same again. What was important was that a challenge was offered to church authority, and the ins and outs of that challenge were made public, which meant that people were bound to get involved in the issues and take sides. ...It marked the widening of a sub-culture of dissent....which... had its roots in the protracted debate that now began in the newspapers and various journals on the subject of Church-state relations.

Roy Foster (1988, pp567, 568) has commented on the role of the Church in the new state, and Northern perspectives on same:

If the threats of fascism, destabilization and economic collapse had been avoided, so had the possibilities of social democracy. In this process, the Church had played a powerful part, acting as a brake on every secularizing tendency...the power of the Church to dictate to politicians was formidable. The hierarchy's assumption that this was their right and duty was probably shared by a large majority in the Republic; but this made it all the more sinister when viewed from the North.

With the return of Fianna Fáil to power, Frank Aiken was appointed minister of External Affairs. Keogh (1995, 325) comments that he was 'far less in awe of the Holy See than his predecessor', and that by the end of the short-lived Fianna Fáil government, 'Irish-Vatican relations had become less intimate':

While the 'special relationship' continued, neither de Valera nor Aiken regarded Rome as the epicentre of world power. Washington, London, Paris, Ottawa and Bonn were of far greater significance....The Holy See, although it continued to be held in great reverence and respect by the Irish government, had come to be viewed in a more realistic light (ibid. p342).

### **The Church as economic brake**

Another major criticism levelled at the Catholic Church in both Quebec and Ireland, as alluded to previously, is that it hindered economic progress. Both Falardeau (1964) and O'Sullivan See (1987) agree on this fact. O' Sullivan See considers that it was the legacy of differential patterns of colonization, which had produced French Canada's economic underdevelopment, and the political strength of the Catholic Church, which reinforced this separation. We saw in Chapter 2 how Confederation did not ultimately respect the principle of bilingualism. However, as O'Sullivan See (1987, pp82-83) points out,

[U]nder the Act of Confederation *religious* - not language - rights were maintained, insofar as these were part of the legal tradition of the provinces....This legal support for religious schools bolstered the role of the Catholic Church in the Francophone community - and reinforced the conjunction between faith and language. Preservation of Catholic schools became essential to

the survival of French language and letters in Canada. This protection may also have contributed to the enduring economic marginality of the French Canadian.

Falardeau (1964, p84) concurs that this patrimonial relationship fostered the economic under-development of the province:

Through its dominance of education, the church maintained its own power but reproduced the non-competitive position of the Francophones vis-à-vis the English. It rationalized the secondary status by adopting an ideology which stressed the religious agrarian mission of the French and by claiming that they were born to handle ideas, not money.

O'Sullivan See (1986, p90) argues that the emphasis of the Church and the political elite on the 'integral connection' between traditional values and ethnic survival helped shape 'a non-entrepreneurial value orientation' and that economic growth tended to happen within the framework of community and family relationships. Industrialization also posed a threat to the Catholic Church:

...the secular values of the industrial system fundamentally challenged the authority of the parish priest, especially in urban areas, where the parish no longer functioned as the core of the community (ibid. p91).

Garigue (1964, p21) however, disagrees that industrialization altered the composition of power:

....In the industrial society, the clergy kept all the institutional roles it had historically acquired, but it had to specialize for the successful maintenance of these roles...its institutional pyramid needed a very wide assortment of professionals. The church thus opened its own channels of social promotion. The agents of this administrative revolution are the salaried ranks of middle-class white-collar people...

He goes on to discuss how increased pay demands from the new middle-class members of its own bureaucracies allowed the Church to put more pressure on the provincial treasury to increase its subsidies.

There is still much disagreement on the role of the Church in the economic underdevelopment of the province. Linteau et al (1989) in their discussion of the

period 1896 – 1929, agree that compared to Ontario, Quebec's economy was not as advanced. Yet, they consider that there is no doubt that Quebec in the first decades of the 20<sup>th</sup> century attained the status of an industrial society where the production of manufactured goods represented the motor of the economy. The question of the economic retardation of Quebec is, Linteau et al insist, a different one to the economic inferiority of French-Canadians within Quebec. This was previously discussed in Chapter 2 where we discussed the concentration of economic power in the hands of English-Canadians. In 1930, only 4.6% of directors of large companies were French-Canadians (Linteau et al, 1989, p523). Overall, French-Canadian businessmen occupied a minority position in Quebec. Furthermore, during the period of *la grande noirceur*, Duplessis positively encouraged foreign capital, especially American, extolling Quebec's cheap labour. Thus, the benefits of Quebec's natural resources were not passing to the people.

Ronald Rudin (1992) in his wide-ranging survey of the traditional and revisionist literature assessing the Quebec past, considers that revisionists like Linteau et al fail to take account of the impact of cultural factors which worked against French-speaking businessmen. He refers to the impact of

...a wide array of church-related institutions that collectively promoted the view of Mgr Paquet that 'the vocation of the French race' was 'less to handle capital than to stimulate ideas; less to light the furnaces of factories than to maintain and spread the glowing fires of religion and thought and help them cast their light into the distance' (ibid. p40).

Rudin has commented that Quebec was 'more rural' and 'more profoundly Catholic' than revisionists have been prepared to admit (ibid. p47). He concludes that Quebec revisionists have 'appeared reluctant to admit to the unique aspects of the province's past that might conflict with its newfound image as a modern, vibrant, pluralistic society' (ibid. p60). Some of these comments will resonate for Irish commentators on the Celtic Tiger as we will discuss in later chapters.

Rousseau (Baillargeon, 1994, p85) considers that the Church cannot be blamed entirely for what was initially a situation of colonial domination followed by the political

structures of domination created by confederation. By placing economic power at the centre, in Ottawa, the Anglo-Canadian bourgeoisie was given the political apparatus to exert its hegemony. Confederation of course suited the bishops in that, as the provinces were allowed to control education, health and social welfare, it meant that in Quebec the Church had full control of these institutions and could best protect the 'nation-Église' having its centre in Quebec (ibid. p86). Rousseau considers that the parish was an important unit of social integration for people moving from the country to the city. A modern, urban, social fabric was created within the Church. The transition from the 19<sup>th</sup> to the 20<sup>th</sup> century was therefore effected within a Catholic parish space. Thus the Church facilitated the shift from a traditional to a modern society of Quebec francophones in his opinion. While this may be true, the fact remains, as Rudin (1992, p45) reminds us, that there was a much lower rate of urbanization among francophones compared to Anglophones.

Roy (1993) comments that the Church did not share lay enthusiasm for so-called progress and modernity. In an urban, industrial society where the bosses were mainly Protestant or Jew, and trade union leaders, socialist, the Church was concerned about the religious adherence of its flock. The Church's main contribution to counteract this along with the influence of international trade unions, was the creation of Catholic trade unions as mentioned earlier. Each had its own chaplain who would ensure the application of Christian social doctrine to the work situation. The Church also opposed strikes as a means of action. Roy again comments on how the Church acted as a social stabiliser to the benefit of the dominant social groups. She considers that, rather than hampering industrialisation

The Church, on the contrary furthered it by ensuring a docile workforce for employers. (ibid. p68)

Rudin (1992) has also noted the work of the Church-run *caisses populaires*, a type of credit union which, while providing important financial services for ordinary Québécois, also hoped to advance 'a particular view of the world' (ibid. p49). Promoted from the pulpit and housed often within the environs of the Church, this, for Rudin, was further evidence of the 'xenophobic message' emanating from a host of Catholic institutions

which emphasized the distinctiveness of the French-Canadian culture. Thus, while some revisionists according to Rudin, aimed to construct a Quebec 'that looked very much like the rest of the world' (ibid. p31) especially in their emphasis on class rather than linguistic differences within Quebec, there was a denial of a francophone value system instilled by the Catholic Church which impacted negatively on French-speaking businessmen.

In keeping with some of the Quebec commentators, Inglis (1987, p76) lays blame at the feet of the Irish Catholic Church for the lack of an entrepreneurial spirit in the Irish population:

[The Church] provided the basic moral discipline which was associated with the initial modernisation of Irish society in the last century. But once this basic minimum of modernisation was attained, a high level of adherence to the Church's rules and regulations prevented the type of individualism necessary for further modernisation and industrialisation.

Joe Lee (1989, p528) conversely suggests that 'a blend of economic and psychological factors helps explain the primacy and the tenacity of the possessor rather than the performer ethos'. Fahy (cited in Inglis, 1987, p253) argues that there is no necessary opposition between a society being religious and being modern and industrial. However, the Irish Church

was committed ideologically to a rural fundamentalism which was suspicious and fearful of the industrial city and it glorified the family farm and the little village as the pillars of social and economic life' (Fahy, 1992, p262).

Other analysts have pointed out that the distinctive combination of religious orthodoxy, family based production and the Church's unrivalled prestige and legitimacy, resulted in the goals of state policy being by and large those of the Church as we have examined already. A consequence of this was that the Catholic education system remained unsuited to the needs of a modern, industrial economy (Inglis, 1987 p253). A similar point about the paucity of the Church-controlled education system was made in Quebec. Overall, it is difficult to deny conclusively the Church's negative impact on economic growth in both states. The important point here is that the *perception* a society has of the

impact of the Catholic Church on its ability to flourish is reflected in the *esteem* – or lack thereof - in which it will proceed to hold the Church. This in turn, we can presume, will affect the representation of that same Church on cinema screens.

### **Gains and losses**

With the advent of the Quiet Revolution, Quebecers became ‘masters in their own house’. As Bombardier (2002) put it: ‘We abandoned the church, re-named ourselves and walked into modern times’. Pierre Bourgault (1989, p193) has commented negatively on the rapid secularization of Quebec society:

If we burn today what we worshipped a short while ago, then we worshipped without reason and now burn without distinction. (B14)

Jacques Grand'Maison offered in his *La nouvelle classe et l'avenir du Québec* (1979) a devastating critique of the new middle class that effected the Quiet Revolution and so acquired power, status and high salaries in the new Quebec. He saw that the main beneficiaries of the Quiet Revolution were public sector employees, intellectuals (professionals, journalists, artists) and labour union executives. He accused the people who have become successful in the new Quebec of forming a new elite preoccupied with its own security and increasingly indifferent to ordinary working people, the unemployed and the growing number of people on welfare. In his *Au seuil critique d'un nouvel âge* (1979), based on a series of articles published in *Le Devoir* in the summer of 1978, he engaged in vehement polemics against the left and the right in Quebec (Baum, 1991, p93). We shall revisit these ideas later in our discussion of the films of Denys Arcand.

To find new ways of serving the Catholic community the Catholic bishops created the *Commission sur les laïcs et l'Église* in 1968. The Dumont Commission, as it became known, was presided over by the lay sociologist Fernand Dumont, a socialist from a working-class background, and a devout Catholic. It was his task to report within four years on the new religious situation and make recommendations for innovative pastoral approaches. The report was called *L'Église du Québec: un héritage, un projet*. As

Chausée (1999) commented, it proposed a new path to the Church which was to serve as guide for subsequent years. Baum (1991, p160) notes:

The bishops came to respect the pluralistic character of Quebec society and recognized that they represented a minority. Still they would make their contributions to the public debate from a Catholic point of view.

The bishops strongly defended the position that Quebecers constitute a people and that as such they have the right to self-determination. Already in 1967, the pastoral statement produced by the Canadian bishops, anglophone and francophone, on the occasion of Canada's hundredth anniversary, clearly acknowledged the peoplehood of French Canadians.

In the pastoral letter 'The people of Quebec and its political future', written before the referendum, the Quebec bishops strongly defended the right of Quebecers to cultural and political self-determination, giving a highly nuanced definition of peoplehood. Baum (ibid.) notes that while the bishops never mentioned the word 'nationalism', their pastoral statements provided a set of norms to help Catholics discern what kind of nationalism is ethically acceptable:

The crucial ethical issue, according to the bishops, is not whether Quebec chooses one political option or the other, but rather whether the political project chosen will conform to the norms of social and economic justice.

We can compare this with the Conference of Religious in Ireland's concerns about 'social inclusion' and 'participative democracy' in Celtic Tiger Ireland as discussed by Pilkington (2002, p137). Instead of using the term 'nationalism', the Quebec bishops speak of Quebec's quest for political self-determination. A nationalist movement is ethically acceptable only if it is guided by a vision of a just society (Baum, ibid. p169).

Nationalism was to fill the space formerly occupied by the Church in the seventies, and Quebecers went on to place their faith in the project of political sovereignty. With the coming to power of the Parti québécois and with political autonomy firmly on the agenda, Quebec embarked on two sovereignty referenda in 1980 and 1995. As we saw in

Chapter 2, both ended in failure although the high percentage of ‘yes’ voters in the most recent one, gave cause for concern to the federal government and Anglo-Canadians in Quebec. The first referendum on sovereignty-association was to problematise that identity, that ‘Us’, once again. Rousseau (2000) commented that something died on the evening of May 1980 with the victory of the ‘No’ vote in the referendum, and the desire for self-determination remained that of a minority. The Church kept a low profile during the referenda and did not try to influence the outcome of the vote. Henceforth, the cherished notion of solidarity was at an end and Quebec proved to be a divided society.

Fernand Dumont in *Le Sort de la culture* (1987) comments that it was not just the role of the Church which collapsed in the course of the decades, but a traditional society lost its traditional sense of itself without replacing it with another. Duplessis and the period of *La grande noirceur* have been replaced by a *malaise* often referred to as ‘post-referendum syndrome’, which is reflected in the cinema from the late eighties and which will be explored in detail in Chapter 5. Quebec remains a divided society where the euphoria and potential of the Quiet Revolution have not delivered. Having found nothing to fill the void at its core since the Church ceased to organise and give meaning to life, Quebec remains a society in search of definition, a society in search of, perhaps, a new dream.

Before interrogating Quebec’s loss of faith and the ensuing ramifications, a look at Ireland in the sixties reveals that economic progress similarly ushered in a shift in the degree of religious zeal. Tom Inglis (1987, p78) summarises the position of the Catholic Church in the new state:

The first fifty years of the modern Irish state may be seen in terms of a happy marriage between it and the Catholic Church...It was not until the 1960s, when the state began to pursue rigorously a policy of industrialisation and modernisation, that the marriage began to break down. It was only in the 1970s that a formal separation was openly discussed for the first time.

The Lemass/Whittaker 1958 White Paper *First Programme for Economic Expansion* inaugurated strong economic expansion in Ireland along with increased consumerism and a greater openness to the outside world. Indeed Lemass has been referred to as a

‘Lesage-like figure’ (Rudin, 1992, p59) instigating similar changes that the Lesage’s Liberals brought to Quebec. As Martin McLoone (2000, p88) explains, the new strategy was ‘based on the abandonment of protectionist economic policies...and the embracing of free trade and foreign investment’. Popular music, literature and cinema and, above all television, began to make inroads on traditional Irish culture. New standards of conduct and norms of sexual behaviour were beginning to take hold among the younger generation.

The Second Vatican Council (1962-1965) introduced major changes in theology and in the liturgy of the Church. As Donnelly (2005, p187) recounts, many popular forms of worship – in particular the Marian cult which had an immense hold on Irish Catholics – began to decline. The family rosary, various Marian devotions and Brown Scapular and Miraculous Medal devotions plus the cult of Our Lady of Mount Carmel by the late 1960s were on the wane. Television was held responsible for the decline of the rosary. RTE, the national broadcaster, launched in 1962, was pressurised to televise the rosary but declined. Donnelly (ibid.) comments that this was one ‘in a long series of programming decisions by the national television service that angered or outraged traditionalists in the 1960s and 1970s’.

The ‘flagship institutions’ of Marianism – the Legion of Mary and Our Lady’s Sodality saw their membership decline sharply in the 60s and 70s. However, the publication, the *Sacred Heart Messenger*, was still widely circulated and read. The Public Rosary Movement (PRM) took up the slack from the decline of family rosary. A great boost to their cause was given when Pope Paul VI declared 1973 a World Rosary Year. The PRM ‘was essentially lay-inspired and promoted’, although the Dominican priest Fr. Gabriel Harty and his Rosary Mobile Unit led the public in prayer throughout Ireland, North and South (Donnelly, 2005, p200).

The Fatima cult or the Blue Army, were great believers in miracles and prophecies. The miracle of the ‘dancing sun’ on which they dwelt, perhaps pre-empted the moving statues phenomenon in Ireland of the mid 1980s. These various cults along with pilgrimages at home (Knock, Croagh Patrick, Lough Derg) and abroad (Lourdes,

Fatima) attempted to stem the tide of social change. A speech by Fr. John Power at one of the annual pilgrimages to Holy Cross Abbey sums up the mood:

Addressing a large crowd of 'Fatima pilgrims'...in August 1985, after conservatives had lost again on the sale of contraceptives and faced perhaps another political defeat over divorce, Fr. Power declared, 'strong pressure groups of every kind have used ever means at their disposal to wreck our way of life' (Donnelly, 2005, p205).

The Charismatic Renewal Movement (CRM) spread to Ireland from America in the early 1970s. It represented a striking example of 'vital, enthusiastic religion'. 'It stressed both personal and communal revitalization through so-called gifts of the Holy Spirit such as speaking in tongues, prophecy and healing' (ibid. p210). The Vatican and the hierarchy in Ireland were concerned at its threat to the institutional church. According to Donnelly, many people considered 'the liberal agenda' to be 'lurking behind charismatic renewal' and were alert to its tendency to 'phase out', against the wishes of the church the sodalities, rosary and various devotions to the Blessed Virgin. Interest in the movement fell after the mid-eighties, although as late as 1989, Donnelly notes, there were still more than 800 distinct Catholic groups practising this variation of the faith (ibid. p204).

Further cults were to infiltrate the Catholic Church during the 70s and 80s, notably, and still to this day in some cases, those of Padre Pio of San Giovanni and Medjugorje. Irish travel companies did well out of such devotion which overtook Lourdes and Fatima. Donnelly traces the link between the showing of a Padre Pio film to local school children at St. Mary's parish church in Asdee, Co. Kerry early in 1985 and the 'moving statues' phenomenon:

And not long afterward at Ballinspittle and other places where Marian statues also 'moved', numerous observers reported that they had seen the Virgin Mary's face become that of Padre Pio'. (ibid. p230)

The Virgin Mary began to 'appear' at Medjugorje in the former Yugoslavia, now Bosnia-Herzegovina, on June 24<sup>th</sup> 1981. *The Irish Catholic*, as it had done with the cult of Padre Pio, helped to embed the happenings in the Irish Catholic consciousness. It

reported that in 1987 over 11,000 Irish people had visited the scene of the apparitions (ibid. p232). A 'special message for the people of Ireland' from the Blessed Virgin via the visionaries, was relayed by their spiritual director during one of his many visits to Ireland. Film was an important medium of promotion and many of these 'holy junkets' included a week in a coastal resort. Presumably, therefore, a little self-indulgence could be sanctioned in a less-affluent pre-Celtic Tiger Ireland when the main objective was understood as a spiritual one!

On 17 July 1968 Pope Paul VI's encyclical *Humanae Vitae* banned all forms of contraception. This was a great disappointment to many Catholics who felt that in the wake of Vatican II they could look forward to a relaxation of the Church's stern position on this question. Fuller (2004, p199) comments that

Some bishops, priests and laity interpreted it as a signal that the pope was applying the brakes after the welter of change that had been taking place in the five years since the end of the Second Vatican Council. It was seen by many as a return to the old comfortable certainty and security of an era when what was right and wrong was very rigidly laid down.

In Ireland the 1929 censorship of Publications Act had prohibited the publication, distribution and selling of literature advocating birth control. In 1935 the criminal Law (Amendment) Act, section 17, prohibited the importation, manufacture and sale of contraceptives. A number of initiatives by private individuals in the early 70s challenged the constitutionalism of these Acts.

The Irish Women's Liberation movement began around 1969 and was an important force for change from then on. Its most memorable act was the taking of the 'contraceptive train' to Belfast on 22 May, 1971, for the purchase and importation of contraceptives, to which custom officials turned a blind eye – especially in the glare of television cameras. This was followed by the McGee case whereby Mrs. Mary McGee, supported by the Irish Family Planning Association, attempted to import contraceptives from England for her personal use, but which were confiscated by Irish customs officials. The final ruling by the Supreme Court in December 1973 declared the ban on the importation of contraceptives under the 1935 Act to be unconstitutional.

Fianna Fáil's Family Planning Act of July 1979, introduced by Minister for Health, Charles Haughey, allowed for the sale of contraceptives in pharmacies on presentation of a prescription for 'bona fide family planning purposes'. RTE footage from the seventies screened as part of the *Altered State* (2005) two-part documentary series, showed reporter Joe Little attempting and failing to buy contraceptives in three pharmacies in Ranelagh, Dublin. The loophole for chemists refusing to stock them was the question of conscience. Clearly, the Bill was inadequate. However, many southerners made the journey north of the border where they were legal. The Pill had been available as a 'cycle regulator' from the sixties but its actual high level of usage indicated that it was being used for family planning purposes. Thus many Irish Catholics were disobeying the Church's teaching in private while outwardly conforming. High figures of attendance at confession (54%, 'every two months') and mass (91% 'every Sunday') as detailed in a 1974 survey, did not therefore present an accurate picture of 'the faithful'. *À la carte* Catholicism was spreading to Ireland.

It was perhaps no accident that John Paul II's visit came only two months after the Haughey Bill. The Pope warned young people at the youth mass in Galway of the 'moral sickness that stalks your land'. Although more than one million people attended the papal mass in the Phoenix Park, Dublin, David Quinn, Religious and social affairs correspondent for the Irish Independent, referred to it as the 'Last hurrah of Catholicism as the...pre-dominant cultural, social and moral force in Irish society'. (*Altered State* 2005). The papal visit, as Keogh (1995, p xv) says, was 'converted by both church and state into a moment of national triumph':

The visit symbolized the victory of faith and fatherland - representing the twin forces of Catholicism and nationalism- which had motivated the centuries-long struggle for independence from Britain.

Many in Ireland look nostalgically on this visit as a time of intense national unity but also one of innocence. The eighties and the nineties were to witness the loss of that innocence and the enshrining of new priorities with reduced reference to the Church. By 1985, Barry Desmond, Minister for Health in the coalition government with Garret Fitzgerald's Fine Gael, broadened the range of outlets where contraceptives could be

sold to people over the age of eighteen in the 1985 Family Planning Bill. Unsurprisingly, the Bill was strongly criticised by the Archbishop of Dublin, Dr. Kevin McNamara and other members of the hierarchy.

Pope John Paul II also visited Quebec in 1984, some four years after the failed referendum on sovereignty which might account for his urging Québécois not to lose their religious faith in pursuit of political and cultural independence. As the visit was a state occasion attended also by the federal Governor General and Prime Minister, the pope did not forget his political correctness. That he did not have quite the same national impact as in Ireland is evidenced in the changing back two years later of the original name of Parc Jarry from the short-lived, Parc Jean-Paul II, the venue where he celebrated his open-air mass in Montreal (CBC Archives, 'The National', Sept 9<sup>th</sup> 1984). The contrasting social and economic position of Quebec and Ireland at this time may account for differences in his reception. While *l'Annuaire du Québec 2004*, an important annual publication about the state of Quebec, mentions in its catalogue of major events the visit of Charles de Gaulle in 1967, it omits to note the visit of Pope John Paul II in 1984 to Montreal and Quebec City.

Television was the major catalyst for social change in Irish society. We mentioned earlier Church fears about the influence of a 'foreign' cinema. As Fuller (2004, p234) comments:

The kind of rigorous censorship of cinema and the printed word, which had operated in Ireland in the 1950s, was rendered ineffective in the television age.

As she continues, popular media coverage of Vatican II had given it 'immediacy and relevance'. In the Irish context, the iconoclastic talk show *The Late Late Show* presented by Gay Byrne, in tandem with his Radio I programme, had unearthed and exposed much of that hidden Ireland which was living and suffering in the shadow of the Catholic Church. Coverage of the 'Granard tragedy', where a fifteen-year old gave birth alone at a Marian shrine, and died along with her baby, opened the floodgates on a hitherto taboo subject, that of unwanted pregnancy. Similarly, the media-saturated Kerry Babies Tribunal, while asking serious questions of the legal system and the Gardai, served to

point up the contradictions between Catholic teaching and the lived life. Margo Harkin's film *Hush-A-bye Baby* (1989) which we shall examine in Chapter 6 was largely inspired by these events. Inglis (1987, p93) in line with Fuller, considers that it was the media 'that broke the tradition of not criticising the Church and its teachings in public' and that forced the Church 'into giving a public account of itself':

Ireland was admitted in 1973 to membership of the European Economic Community. The seventies saw significant constitutional change which was influenced by the need to improve relations between the North and South of the island. In 1966 an all-party Dáil committee had met to review the Constitution and published their report in 1967. One blow was struck at the pedestal of the Catholic Church with a constitutional amendment following the referendum of 7 December, 1972. The Fifth Amendment of the Constitution Act, 1972, removed from Article 44 of the Constitution the 'special position' of the Catholic Church and the recognition of other named religious denominations. The hierarchy, in keeping with various Vatican II documents which served to promote ecumenism, accepted the situation, publicly at least, although many lay groups, even more conservative than the bishops, held public meetings under the slogan 'Defend 44'. The constitutional ban on divorce in Article 41 was also examined by the Dáil committee bearing in mind that divorce already existed in Northern Ireland.

Enda McDonagh (2003, p52) has commented on the new agenda:

From the mid-seventies church-state debates became almost exclusively debates about law and morality. The 'Liberal agenda' dominated discussion and prevailed with various qualifications.

The Liberal agenda was concerned with personal freedoms or individual rights, particularly in the areas of sexual morality and human reproduction. McDonagh (ibid. p52) claims that this emphasis on 'the sexual doings of our citizens' meant that many other critical matters such as domestic, criminal and 'political' violence, could be 'overlooked or marginalised by the concentration on sexual issues'. Referring to events in the 90s which we shall discuss shortly, he adds, the 'continuing disclosure of child

sexual abuse, particularly by clergy, seems certain to overshadow the corruptions of wealth and the degradations of poverty among other critical social concerns’.

The words of John Paul II at the time of his visit to Ireland in 1979 were a vain attempt to stem the tide of social change in Ireland:

Your country seems in a sense to be living the temptations of Christ: Ireland is being asked to prefer the ‘kingdoms of the world and their splendour’ to the kingdom of God... What a victory he (Satan) would gain, what a blow he would inflict on the body of Christ in the world, if he could seduce Irish men and women away from Christ. Now is the time of testing for Ireland, this generation is once more a generation of decision’ (Keogh, 1995, p366).

The eighties were in fact to see wide-ranging changes in the Catholic Church’s and Catholic traditionalists’ most deeply-held beliefs. Pro-life issues came to a head in the run-up to the June 1981 election. The decade witnessed the rise of right-wing, predominantly lay religious groups who stalked the government’s forays into constitutional change. The leader of Fine Gael, Garret FitzGerald and his ‘constitutional crusade’ proved to be a serious testing of the waters in Catholic Ireland.

The anti-abortion lay pressure group, the Pro-Life Amendment Campaign (PLAC) was launched in April 1981. The Society for the Protection of Unborn Children (SPUC) was established in January 1981. The grouping was in favour of adding a ‘pro-life’ amendment to the Constitution outlawing abortion, in 1983. There was also a growing awareness of the number of Irish women travelling to England every year for an abortion. There was much discussion on the actual wording of the amendment first mooted by Charles Haughey’s Fianna Fáil government. The poisoned chalice was quickly passed to the winner of that election, the coalition government of Garret FitzGerald who attempted to change the wording. Both the Minister for Justice and the Attorney General foresaw complications, but the bishops remained firm. The issue provoked huge passion and three bomb scares were reported at RTE during a debate on the issues on the *Today Tonight* current affairs programme. Some ministers also received threats. Prior to the vote, the bishops had statements read at all masses supporting the amendment. On 7 September, 1983, the eighth amendment to the constitution was passed by 66.45% in favour as against 32.87% against. It proved to be a very bitter campaign.

Family Solidarity was launched in 1984 in the wake of the victory on the pro-life amendment. Donnelly (2005, p243) notes that the parish was usually its 'unit of organization' and that it enjoyed the support of local clergymen:

Like SPUC, Family solidarity was fiercely opposed to contraception, abortion, and divorce, but more broadly it declared its interest in all prospective legislation that significantly affected the status of the family and 'family values'.

An interview with the then, Senator, Mary Robinson in *Altered State* (2005) reminded us how incredible it was that there had been no real political debate about the amendment at the level of the Dáil or the Senate. It was 'effectively imposed by a very well organized lobby' who knew that politicians were particularly vulnerable at this time. The imperfect wording of the amendment came to a head in 1992 during the 'X' case, when a 14 year old alleged rape victim was prevented by court injunction from travelling to Britain for an abortion. The Supreme Court ruled that abortion was permissible by law when there was a real danger of suicide by the pregnant woman. A further referendum ensued on the 25<sup>th</sup> November when the Irish people voted to amend the Constitution to secure the right to information on abortion and the right to travel. They rejected the government's proposals to defend 'the life but not the health' of the mother.

Garret Fitzgerald's failed attempt to bring in divorce in the 1986 referendum echoed the abortion defeat when 63% of those who voted rejected the government's proposal. There was a similar urban/rural divide in the results, the largely anti-divorce farming community especially fearful of the effect of divorce on land ownership. While the Church, as Fuller (2004, p246) notes, in its battle for 'the hearts and minds of Irish people in the 1980s' was seen to have been victorious,

...however, in all of the social/moral issues on which the Church held strong views, the situation had changed totally by the mid-1990s.

The nineties saw further change in the 1993 liberalisation of homosexual practices – thanks to the ruling of the European Courts – two decades after Senator David Norris had first raised the matter. The successful 1995 Divorce referendum, although carried by only a narrow margin – 50.28% in favour and 49.72% against – struck another blow for

the liberal agenda. But the shadow of the abortion fiasco still lingered. The 2002 Protection of Human Life in Pregnancy Bill which, if carried would have removed suicide as a basis for abortion, was rejected – but only by a margin of less than 1%. Fuller (ibid. p249) notes that 24 bishops' pastoral letters were issued prior to the vote urging support for the proposed change. She quotes *The Irish Times* editorial on the following day:

[The] grand alignment of Fianna Fáil, the Catholic Church and the official Pro-life campaign has, for the first time, failed to produce a majority on a sensitive moral issue in middle Ireland after a lengthy and co-ordinated campaign.

Inglis (1987, p63) considers it no coincidence that the main issues on which the hierarchy have entered the public domain and which have 'caused most division between Church and state' have been those that relate to the control of women's bodies: motherhood, divorce, contraception, abortion (1987, p199). The increased empowerment of Irish women has signalled trouble for the Church:

When, as has been happening since the 1960s, Irish women are no longer dependent on the Church for power (having gained access to political and economic power), and consequently, the Church loses its ability to control them and their sex, then one of the pillars, if not the foundation, of what has held the Church above modern Irish society begins to crumble and decay.

Perhaps the culmination of the development of women's rights in Ireland came with the election in November 1990 of the first woman as President of Ireland, Mary Robinson. This change was reinforced with the election of her successor, Mary MacAleese in 1997 who has since been elected for a second term.

Despite the good news for Irish women, one worrying fact emerged in October 2005 when it was discovered that the Mater hospital, Dublin, which has a Catholic ethos although publicly funded, had deferred approving clinical trials for the cancer drug, Tarceva, because requirements that participating patients use artificial contraception due to reproductive risks did not support their ethos. The fact was that the drug company, Roche, did not require artificial methods of contraception to be used and listed abstinence as a method of birth control in their literature. Tánaiste and Minister for

Health Mary Harney, in an echo of by-gone days, side-stepped the issue when asked about it declaring that she ‘wouldn’t want to interfere with the ethos of any institution’. (*The Irish Times*, 8<sup>th</sup> October, 2005). *The Irish Times* editorial on the same day announced that ‘the issue of the Catholic Church’s opposition to contraception, not shared by huge numbers of Catholics, has not disappeared’.

By the mid-nineties, the period concurrent with our study of Irish cinema, most rights concerning sexuality and divorce which are considered the norm in the western world, are now available in Ireland following many bitter struggles as we have noted. The Québécois, having achieved these rights so much earlier and without half the fuss, found themselves waking up and wondering about their changed world.

Fernand Dumont (Cantin 2000, p254) has expressed surprise that abandoning the faith did not result in much critical writing in Quebec:

It seems to me that its abandon should have provoked deeper analyses as was the case in France in the last century. (B15)

He begins to draw the conclusion that the crisis that the Quebec Church lived through was experienced rather superficially, as if it did not tug at the conscience sufficiently for it to produce serious analyses, confessions or public challenges. We can contrast this with the very public outcry in Ireland as various Church-related scandals were uncovered and there was huge debate in the media as we shall discuss below. It’s as if, Dumont says, ‘people were simply casting off old clothes’ (ibid.). While he admits that one should be cautious when making such a diagnosis, nonetheless, he says that one must recognise that the faith of Quebecers was not sufficiently profound to provoke great debate. This must be contrasted with our investigations into the faith of the Irish which we have noted to be both persistent and profound. If Quebecers shed their faith relatively quickly, we note however in the films under discussion in the following chapter that many vestiges remain and that there is indeed an awareness of an absence that religion formerly filled.

Dumont (Cantin, op.cit. p143) sees the abandon of religious practice as having repercussions on the quality of collective life. He considers that it is a mistake to think that the crisis is over, insisting that Quebec needs a new evangelism, proper to itself, which will be focussed on the power of faith to interrogate. In this way, religious faith provides a challenge to the world around it. The problem for faith is not one of adapting to the world but of questioning it: 'The Church must participate in the present culture while at the same time holding it up to scrutiny' (ibid. p166). (B16).

### **Clerical physical and sexual abuse**

When we move on to discuss the decline of the Catholic Church in Irish society, the many ways in which the Church 'fell from grace' will be examined. The question of sexual abuse and paedophilia which emanated from the Church is still a very difficult and live issue as compensation for victims of clerical sexual abuse is still given considerable media coverage as I write in 2008. Many feel that the Church has failed to fully answer the charges made against it or taken responsibility for its role in concealing this abuse. The role of the State in compensating victims is seen in many cases as letting the Church 'off the hook'.

In Quebec, charges of clerical emotional, physical and sexual abuse tend to focus on the Catholic native residential schools which operated from 1860 to 1960 and the orphanages of the Duplessis era. Sixty percent of the Canadian schools were run by the French-speaking Missionary Oblates of the Mary Immaculate. The purpose of the schools was to educate and evangelise the native children although the educational value of the experience was questionable. Above all they are remembered as sites of physical and sexual abuse and for the undermining of native culture. They were seriously underfunded and were eventually phased out amid the sweeping changes in the 60s and 70s. Fay (2002, p321) comments:

They were eventually given the final push in the 1980s by the sexual abuse scandals that surfaced and made their operation indefensible. The native values of culture, religion, and language soon replaced the traditional Euro-Canadian values of discipline, rules, and rote learning.

These schools may be seen as a counterpart of the Irish industrial schools, a site also of physical, emotional and sexual abuse, notably recreated in Aisling Walsh's *Song for a Raggy Boy* (2003) and Neil Jordan's *The Butcher Boy* (1998). The Canadian TV series *The Boys of St. Vincent*, (Smith, 1993), set in a Christian Brothers' school in Newfoundland, covers similar terrain. It was inspired by the Winter Commission report mentioned earlier, and was screened on Irish television. The TV film *Les Orphelins de Duplessis* (Préjont, 1997), referred to above, shows a similar range of emotional, physical and sexual abuse in a Quebec orphanage. What is different here is that the main perpetrator of the heinous acts is not a member of a religious order but in fact a former resident of the orphanage thus exonerating the religious authorities to some extent. *The Magdalene Sisters* (Mullan, 2002) detailed abuse suffered largely by 'unmarried mothers' in religious institutions known as 'Magdalene laundries'. These and other films will be explored in Chapters 5 and 6.

Irish cinema only began to question consistently the legacy of Catholicism in the nineties, at a time when it experienced its first major economic boom familiarly known as the Celtic Tiger. This also coincided with a period of intense national interrogation of both Church and State as numerous scandals involving sexual abuse and misappropriation of public funds came to public notice. Perhaps one of the most bitter pills to swallow was the revelation that Ireland's charismatic and much loved Bishop of Galway, Eamonn Casey, who fronted the third World organization Trócaire, had fathered a child and used diocesan funds to pay off the child's mother, Annie Murphy. The news broke on the RTE programme, *Morning Ireland* in May, 1992. Conor Brady (2005) then editor of *The Irish Times* has spoken about the first contact being made to his newspaper by Annie Murphy's partner and his dilemma about publishing the revelations. An expert on Canon Law advised him: 'If you're wrong, the church will destroy *The Irish Times*'. Casey had absconded to South America by the time the story broke. It was further revealed in 1995 that Fr. Michael Cleary, another media-friendly priest, who had acted as master of ceremonies with Casey at Pope John Paul's youth mass in Galway in 1979, had fathered two children with his house-keeper. Conor Brady, in excerpts from his book published in his newspaper, sums up the impact of the Casey revelations:

The fall of Bishop Casey was a monumental event in Ireland. By comparison with what was later to emerge during the 1990s about clerical sex abuse of children, his offence was perhaps a venial one, and came to be regarded as such. But in its time and circumstances it was seen as a shocking revelation of the gap between what the Catholic Church preached and what some of its leading figures practised. The dramatic fall-off in religious practice, the steep decline in vocations to the religious life and the near total loss of authority by the institutional church that took place during the 1990s can be said to have begun with the fall of Bishop Casey (*The Irish Times*, October 8th, 2005).

Other revelations involving priest paedophiles notably Fr. Brendan Smith and Fr. Sean Fortune, further dented the Church's credibility as the pre-eminent moral institution in Irish society. Even into the middle of the first decade of the new millennium, new victims continue to come forward calling for compensation. Further outrage was caused when it was discovered that certain dioceses were using Church collections to compensate victims of child sexual abuse. The media had begun to explore this legacy in documentary form from the mid-nineties: *Dear Daughter*, RTE February, 1996; *The Secret Baby Trail*, RTE 20 June 1996; *States of Fear*, Three-part series, RTE April and May 1999; *Suing the Pope*, BBC, broadcast 19 March, 2002. Irish cinema continued to explore religious institutional abuse in films such as *The Magdalene Sisters* (Mullen, 2002) and *Song for a Raggy Boy* (Walsh 2003) as we noted above.

Finally, the publishing of *The Ferns Report* on Tuesday, October 25<sup>th</sup>, 2005, sent shock waves throughout the country. The Murphy Report revealed over 100 allegations of child sexual abuse between 1962 and 2002 against 21 priests in the diocese of Ferns. Allegations concerning another five priests were not included in the report. Most of the priests investigated had attended the seminary at St. Peter's in Wexford although the existence of a paedophile ring has been unsupported. Taoiseach Bertie Ahern referred to the Report as 'a catalogue of serial abuse and gross dereliction of duty' (Source: *Irish Independent*, 26<sup>th</sup> October, 2005). Bishop Brendan Comiskey, who was Bishop of Ferns from 1984 until his resignation in 2002, was found negligent in his failure to remove priests from the diocese following revelations of child sexual abuse. The result, according to the Report, 'was that the priests remained in active ministry for months and even years after the complaints of child sexual abuse had been made against them'. Comiskey had apparently taken the lead from Canon Law in this neglect. It was

revealed that the Vatican was also aware of the allegations but failed to act on the information. The Report also raised the issue of celibacy, considering that it 'contributed to the problem of child sexual abuse'. The publishing of the Report sparked a host of revelations of clerical abuse in other dioceses. In the Dublin archdiocese there have been allegations against nearly 70 priests over the last 60 years (Source: *The Irish Times*, 29th October, 2005).

Fintan O'Toole (2005, W3) writing in *The Irish Times* in the wake of the Report stressed the culpability of the wider society:

But a collusive church and a toothless State were in turn facilitated by those among the public who were either too much in awe of their religious masters to ask questions or who actively sacrificed the safety of children to the greater goal of keeping Ireland safe from secularism.

He considered that the 'brazenness' of churchmen who felt they were 'untouchable' coupled with the 'deference of lay people' facilitated the exploitation of children. O'Toole (ibid.) is uncompromising in his terminology in keeping with the hostile public mood revealed in the print and broadcast media in the days following the publishing of the Report:

Something was stinking inside the Irish church for decades, but it took a horribly long time for the people in general to get the smell.

Louise Fuller (2004, p257) has summed up the impact of some of these pre-*Ferns Report* revelations, equally relevant in its aftermath:

A picture of a church less than honest, less than caring, whose main priority was its own institutional self-preservation, whatever the cost, has emerged in the minds of many...Recent victims of alleged abuse have professed themselves to be equally, if not more, hurt by what they saw as the insensitive attitude and response of those in authority when they reported their experiences, than they were about the actual abuse itself, and these sentiments have been echoed in public debate on the issue.

Thus, *The Ferns Report* has demonstrated that ‘the most Catholic country in the world’ has paid the highest possible price for a naïve trust in the ministry of its Church: the serial abuse of its sons and daughters by some of its pastors.

### **Religion and enculturation**

As Ireland was coming to terms with the unsavoury side of its religious past, some Québécois were starting to wonder what had happened to theirs. In his article ‘Un catholicisme identitaire’, Gilles Chausée (1999, p114) following his overview of the place occupied historically by religion in the lives of Québécois, ponders the question – what remains of this religious heritage today? Can one conclude, he asks, that the French-Canadian God is dead? Or proclaim of the end of religion? Will Quebec become according to the Jesuit Julien Harvey, ‘un désert spirituel (a spiritual desert)?’ Chausée sees one important fact remaining: although the Quiet Revolution signalled ‘the end of a culture impregnated with Christianity, the interest in the spiritual dimension of life has not changed’. He cites many statistics from a 1987 survey of religious practice in Quebec undertaken by Reginald W. Bibby (1988). After 30 years of the Quiet Revolution, less than 7% of Quebecers consider themselves non-believers although Sunday mass-going had fallen from 85% in 1966 to 17% in 1987. Bibby considers that Quebecers now practice *à la carte* religion, calling on the clergy only to mark those major rites of passage such as birth, marriage and death. Although New Age religions have become widespread in Quebec, according to Bibby only 0.5% adhere consistently to them (Chausée, op.cit. p73).

Both Fernand Dumont and Louis Rousseau have written extensively on Quebec society and the religious fact. Both consider that religion is still relevant in the Quebec of today and the findings of Bibby are echoed in some of their writings. Rousseau (1994, p146) has made the point that the striving towards transcendence is a constant universal process. Dumont (1964, cited in Cantin, 2000, p135) has commented that ‘Man today, can be as religious as the man of yesterday but he can no longer be so in the same way’. He notes the persistence of faith albeit in a rather different form. He notes that, while

institutional religion is a thing of the past, there nonetheless exists a Christianity outside of the Church, and a faith beyond the institution (Cantin, op.cit. p169).

The modern separation of the public and the private spheres has led to the spilling over of a private ethics into the public sphere. Dumont is thinking here of new developments in medicine and science, social exclusion, the rights of immigrants, unemployment etc. This provides a new opportunity for Christians to bring the weight of their heritage to bear on important debates (Cantin, p169). Thus, Dumont continues to see the relevance of religious faith in the Quebec of today. In his *Gènese de la société québécoise* (1993, p321) he quotes Alexis de Tocqueville:

Nations always reflect their origins. The circumstances which accompanied their birth and which aided their development influence them through the course of their existence. (B17)

Similarly, Louis Rousseau (2000, p75), whose arguments are summarized below, comments that Quebec is now at the stage of not only inventing a new Object for a collective quest but also a new definition of the Subject of this quest:

The years of neo-nationalism had sufficiently succeeded in removing the Catholic ethno-religious trait from the list of traits of a nationality defined increasingly by a sense of linguistic belonging.

Rousseau (1994, p224) has interestingly used the term ‘noirceur’, ‘darkness’, a term as we have seen, associated with the repression of the Duplessis period, to describe Quebec:

There is so much darkness in the present and the immediate future.  
(Il y a tant de noirceur dans le présent et l’avenir immédiat.)

The majority religion had provided a cultural totality for its adherents. In the sixties, new ways of interpreting the world gained currency. Rousseau (ibid.) traces the interest in phenomenology, psychoanalysis and structuralism, among others, seeing it as indicative of a passion to understand the world without recourse to external sources. Earthly happiness became the new goal and with the sexual revolution of the sixties and the

greater role of the state, old servitudes gave way to create a more egalitarian society, enabled too, it must be acknowledged, by various religious actors. With this total cultural displacement, there is however a loss of signifiers for the exploration of the limits of human experience. While everything is not down to words, Rousseau says, without them there is no access to the religious domain ('sans mots il n'y a pas d'accès au domaine religieux'). Catholics traditionally did not make use of the biblical text as did the Protestant church so there was no easy passage from the profane to the sacred. However, the seventies saw an increase in new religious forms which for him were 'irrefutable signs of religion'.

For twenty years now, a profusion of currents, movements, sects or churches have given rise to a reversal of the image one had of the fate of religion in contemporary culture. Rousseau (ibid.) speaks of these movements as a 'bouillon de culture particulièrement révélateur de la situation actuelle de notre société' – 'a cultural ferment particularly revealing of the actual state of our society'. Although the numbers of those directly involved might only be in the region of 10%, one cannot deny, he says, that the actual number of the population who has come under their influence is much greater. This protest or refusal of rationality flies in the face of the reductionism of intellectuals and technocrats who have dominated discourse for so long. They are now being forced to confront this cultural resurgence of transcendence, even among members of their own group! This new pragmatism which is seen to mock the requirements of critical reasoning is considered by some as a new trait of religiosity. However, Rousseau sees in this a continuum from the main preoccupation of all popular religions: the need for assistance in times of crisis. It is this need therefore which is reappearing and which links the present society to former demands on religion including the cult of the saints and other practices which were liquidated in Quebec of the sixties.

This return of the religious as evoked by Rousseau, forces a questioning of the normative models of modernity. This re-emergence of the non-rational, he says, must be seen as an essential dimension of the post-modern era. Remnants of the traditional religion also endure and still constitute the symbolic network of the majority of Quebec culture. The most astonishing paradox as Rousseau sees it is *the increasingly*

*incomprehensible contrast between the fall-off in religious practice and the remarkable persistence of gestures and voluntary decisions which betray the strength of the personal link to the old religion* (italics mine). The clues are in the very strong demand for the religious rites of passage (baptism, first communion, marriage, funerals) and in the almost unanimous choice of a Catholic education by parents of young children at a time when it was optional in Quebec. We will explore below recent changes in the public schools' system in Quebec.

Rousseau comments on Quebec's international notoriety in the collapsing of religious practice in the sixties. Today, only a third of Catholic Quebecers practice regularly. In Montreal the figure is closer to 10%. There has been no change in this despite John-Paul II's visit in 1984. There is therefore a lack of correspondence between the systematic laicisation of institutions and the privatisation of religious decisions, and the behaviour of the masses that negotiate the past differently in their current demands for the religious rites of passage and enculturation of future generations.

Rousseau points to the results of Micheline Milot's (1991) research in this area which explains how the generation born at the beginning of the Quiet Revolution, betrays an astonishing mixture of traditionalism and rupture which gives it its religious character. 'A deep layer of actual Quebec culture, much more complex and fluid than one could have imagined', is discovered when parents are questioned as to why they wish their children to be enrolled in religious classes in Catholic schools. These parents are concerned with the link to family tradition and wish their children to have access to what they themselves value and which was transmitted to them via the school system. To interrupt or discontinue this chain of tradition would give rise to a feeling of *guilt*. Their children might reproach them later for not having given them access to religious matters. Rousseau points out the lack of reference here to the prescriptions of the Church or any regard for public opinion. Instead, there is a confident evocation of that which was considered dead: the carrying-on of family traditions with the imperative of assuming responsibility for the transmission of tradition. Parents therefore see themselves as the filter of tradition – 'le filtre de la tradition'.

He outlines the different functions of religion for these parents – support during the many trials of life, distinction between good and evil etc. Under the imperative of tradition felt by these young parents who are largely non-practising, is revealed a sort of personal verification of the crucial importance, at certain moments of existence, of the support that religion alone can offer and which should be part of the cultural heritage. Religion therefore is part of the basic conception of an identity which nonetheless has areas of difference. Through the gesture of sending their children to Catholic schools the parents are participating in the religious register of Quebec culture without having recourse to the Church as site. Teachers and the school therefore receive this cultural mandate rather than the parish, the school being considered the most appropriate institution to ensure the enculturation of the next generation. This, then, is living proof of Dumont's reference to the faith which exists outside the institution of the Church. However, since Rousseau wrote the above, schools in Quebec have become organised on linguistic rather than religious lines as we discuss in Chapter 7. Yet, given the popularity of heavily state-subsidised private schools in Quebec, which has the highest proportion of children attending private schools in North America, parents are still in a position to make some of the choices referred to by Rousseau above. Thus, new uses are found for religion which testify to the endurance of a tradition divested of its former organs of control and reduced to a thin layer of believers, but which continues to be called upon to affirm the almost invisible 'thread of culture' (ibid. p244).

If the religious question is being posed again on the Quebec political scene, Rousseau considers that the main task lies in the integration of religious difference within a new emerging image of collective identity. The arrival of groups of immigrants from outside Europe and America poses problems which are far more wide-ranging than that of linguistic integration. The fear unleashed by the stereotype of 'Arab fanaticism' ('fanatisme arabe') should serve as a catalyst for a collective debate that up to now has been avoided. Rousseau's solution to the problem of incorporating all this cultural difference from the original inhabitants, the First Nations, to the Catholic heritage of the majority group, to the various waves of immigrants, is in the creation of common schools. He considers that a system which promotes the continuity of difference leads to an increasing fragmentation. Ultimately, he considers the term 'citizen' to be the kernel

of a common religion (ibid. p250). With the deconfessionnalisation of Quebec's school's system and the creation in 1998 of the schools' language boards, many of Rousseau's ideas have come to fruition.

Gérard Bouchard (1999) sees language as the single unifying factor in Quebec society today given the diversity of the various elements of which it is now composed. Until recently, he says, the traditional elites, in accord with the paradigm of survival, projected and perpetuated an image of a homogenous society which was not at all reflected in reality (ibid.p65). He considers Quebec to be at a crossroads and needing a new definition which is inclusive of its cultural diversity. He reminds us that Quebec's immigrants have their own notion of *survivance* (survival). Bouchard also questions some of Dumont's opinions about Quebec's rejection of the past.

Recent debates in Quebec have focused on the problem of 'Reasonable accommodation' ('Accommodements raisonnables') in Quebec's Charter of Human rights and Freedoms with reference to religion in particular. The secularization of Quebec's institutions, educational in particular, has led to challenges in relation to the wearing of religious symbols or dress and charges of discrimination – 'undue hardship'. The Bouchard-Taylor Commission was set up in 2007 by Quebec's premier to examine the issues involved in 'reasonable accommodation' and will report back in the summer of 2008. Just when Quebec had banished the Catholic religion from the public sphere, Muslims, Hindus and Jews are forcing a reconsideration of religious rights in that same sphere. The irony is surely not lost on the Catholic Church.

Author and *Le Devoir* journalist Denise Bombardier in an interview with Robert Chartrand (*Le Devoir*, Édition du samedi 15 et du dimanche 16 juin 2002) spoke of certain Quebecers' disinclination to remember their religious heritage:

It sometimes happens that in my columns for *Le Devoir* I use expressions borrowed from the Scriptures, and readers write to me in reproach as if we were supposed to tear out the memory, root out what has made us for better or worse. No and no! The Catholic religion has weighed heavily on us, it is true. Its rigorism even broke some of us. But it remains in our memory, and I find it wrong to wish to erase its traces. (B18)

Thus, while it is considered a given that Quebec is a secular, post-Catholic society, the Catholic religion has never really gone away and now exists in increasingly non-traditional forms. According to our commentators above, religion has not lost its relevance in today's Quebec and the Catholic religion has retained its kinship with French-speaking Quebecers at a practical, if not necessarily, transcendent, level. However, when in subsequent chapters we move on to examine Quebec's francophone cinema, we shall note this resurgence of interest in the mystical and symbolical attributes of religion. We shall reveal a hunger for the transcendent, for a new narrative to fill the void created when the ties of tradition were rapidly sundered.

If in Ireland, the Church's fall from grace coincided with revelations of sexual immorality and paedophilia on the part of its clerics, this was not the catalyst in Quebec as we have shown. However, there continue to be periodic rumblings of discontent from the remaining victims and supporters of the Duplessis orphans amid some state offers of compensation and, perhaps also, because of the absence of an apology from the Catholic Church. The high-profile 'Canadian Report of the Archdiocesan Commission of enquiry into the Sexual Abuse of Children by Members of the Clergy 1990' known as the 'Winter Commission Report' which detailed clerical sexual abuse at the Archdiocese of St. John's, Newfoundland, Canada, also contributed to the negative discourse around the Catholic Church in North America as elsewhere.

As we have shown above, a number of factors coalesced to topple the Quebec Church from its pre-eminent position in society. While one of these was dissatisfaction on the part of the people with the degree of social control exercised by the Church among others, there is nothing to suggest the kind of 'shock and awe' that the Irish people felt when they realised that prominent Churchmen, whom they had trusted and taken to their hearts, had been living a lie. While this alone does not account for the fall-off in Church attendance, it served to expose a major weakness in the Church which the liberalising forces of the media seized upon with relish. With the discrediting of the Church as an institution, it seems that Irish society is heading in the direction of Quebec in retaining the Church mainly for those rites of passage discussed above. However, the question of the loss of the transcendent has yet to be posed in Irish society as we shall later discuss.

Why did Ireland take so long to disengage from the Church and give the nod to secularism? In 1922 with the birth of the Irish state and, given the fact that its complexion was a very strongly Catholic one, there was a sense that enough had been achieved - the English had been banished, and a Catholic identity now had a free rein. The state was busy with nation-building with its close ally, the Catholic Church, and new priorities were the healing of the wounds of the Civil War and the revival of the Irish language. It was only with economic expansion in the 1960s and the end of economic protectionism, the arrival of television, the relaxation of censorship and the influence of popular culture that the influence of the Church began to abate. The women's movement, as we have noted, was also very publicly resistant to the Church's control of their sexuality.

Through the 80s and 90s while Quebec was busy with its referenda on independence and sovereignty association, Ireland was still preoccupied with matters of sexual morality and divorce. Ireland had no 'Quiet Revolution' to usher in change and the huge departures in personal freedoms instigated in the USA and Europe since the 60s took another three decades to come to term in Ireland. Every birth pang, every change in the social and moral fabric of its society, was accompanied by loud admonishment from the Church hierarchy and a vociferous Catholic lay lobby. Changes were won by 'the skin of their teeth' as evidenced by the very narrow margins in the most significant referenda. Even as late as 2005 following the death of Pope John Paul II, a national day of mourning was called begging questions about the separation of Church and State. As Hugh Linehan (2005) commented:

The precipitous decline in the power and influence of the Catholic Church in Ireland since Pope John Paul II's visit in 1979 has left an ethical void which has been much remarked upon. But it's the way that power washed away so easily and so quickly that has left us feeling slightly bereft of a compass.

While I believe I have shown that this power did *not* and *has not* at all washed away easily or quickly, nonetheless, this 'ethical void' that we are only beginning to stumble upon, was evident in government dilly-dallying about the desirability of a national day of mourning for the late pope. Almost seven months later, the Catholic Church had to bear the full brunt of *The Ferns Report*, and there was a distinct chill in the air. While

questions of personal conscience will always be with us, questions of public accountability and calls for a national audit on clerical child sexual abuse would appear to have swept the high moral ground from under the Irish Catholic Church for good. Thus, Irish cinema of the late 80s and 90s which is critical of the Church, must be understood in relation to this backdrop of social and cultural change and, in particular, to the excavation of the Catholic Church's dark secrets.

While in the case of Quebec cinema we take a more panoramic approach and plot the decline of religion in post-Quiet Revolution cinema, our survey of films from the late nineties on will show instead of the *end* of religion, rather a resurgence of religious symbolism, often at a subliminal level, in a wide selection of films. The re-emergence of religious paradigms in Quebec cinema is a natural consequence of many of the ideas articulated by Yves Rousseau and Fernand Dumont explored above, and provides proof that cultural Catholicism is a very persistent force despite the weakening of the institution.

## Chapter 4

### The Emergence and Consolidation of the Film Industries in Quebec and Ireland.

Before we move to an examination of the films which are central to our study, it is important to understand the industrial context in which they were produced. Film production in Quebec, as we shall show, has a much longer and largely, more successful, history than is the case in Ireland. Although there were tentative attempts at indigenous feature film production in Ireland as early as 1936, nearly all Irish film production originated overseas up to 1981 (Flynn, 2007, p63). There was no sustained development until the early to mid-nineties. Government subsidy and, in particular, tax incentives, were to serve as a vital catalyst to the industry. It is the films produced in this decade which are largely relevant to our study. The idea of narrating the nation: building our own cinema in order to ‘tell our own stories’, was a key phrase used by filmmakers and culture ministers alike. The inference was that we would recover power over our own image previously provided by foreign filmmakers, but the reality was that not everyone was in agreement as to what constituted ‘Ireland’ or ‘the Irish’. When in the nineties, Irish filmmaking began to ‘take off’, a substantial body of films was produced which was deeply critical of the state’s institutions, in particular the Catholic Church. However, on closer examination, we note that some of these films served a particular liberal agenda which was suspicious of Ireland’s traditional culture and their narratives of progress invariably involved throwing out the baby with the bathwater. In Chapter 5 we shall develop these points more fully.

In the case of Quebec, the representation of Catholicism in film has a much longer history and appears across a wide variety of genres. As the film industries developed in both states, their imperatives were somewhat different. The cultural component, namely preservation of the French language, was a priority for Quebec, and the production of an indigenous cinema was seen as a bulwark against the encroachments of Hollywood. In

Ireland of the nineties, emerging from a period of high emigration and unemployment, the economic benefits of establishing a film industry were to the fore despite much lip-service being paid to the cultural benefits by state departments and ministers alike.

### **Church attitudes to cinema**

The Quebec Catholic Church initially saw the cinema as a corrupting and denationalizing force - 'corrupteur' and 'dénationalisateur' whose main threat was that of acculturation. It referred to it as 'école du soir tenue par le diable' – a night school held by the devil (Coulombe and Jean, 1991, p172). Coulombe and Jean also suggest that the Church's opposition stemmed from the fact that most of the film studios were in Jewish hands. The cinema opened up 'un champ de l'imaginaire', a field of the imagination, which escaped the Church's control. The Church demanded Sunday closure and that under 16s be banned from entering cinemas. This was in addition to censorship of film material, naturally. The Church failed as regards Sunday closure as Coulombe and Jean (ibid.) point out. Until the 50s, Quebec was the only Canadian province where cinemas were in fact open on Sunday.

Following the papal encyclical of Pope Pius XI in 1936 where he stated that cinema was neither good nor bad in itself but that it depended on the use to which it was put, the Quebec Church was 'converted' to cinema and recognized its propaganda value. The Church was involved in the 'ciné-club' movement and the creation of film courses and film journals. It was involved also in commercial film production from 1944-1953. The work of the documentary-makers, Abbés Tessier and Proulx, shows that the Church had begun to see cinema's value in the preservation of language and culture. Censorship was at provincial, not federal level, and the banning and cutting of films was widespread. Bill Marshall (2001, p54) comments that it is not surprising that 'a relaxation and indeed disappearance of censorship, other than the establishment of age categories, was part of the Quiet Revolution'.

The Irish Catholic Church during the silent cinema period was equally distrustful of filmmakers. Kevin Rockett (1987, p10) discusses the arrival of Sidney Olcott of the

American Kalem films in Ireland in 1910. Making strongly nationalist films, he obviously had to be wary of the British authorities:

From his arrival in Killarney his movements were also monitored by one of the most powerful figures in the community, the priest.

Ireland's first sound film was in fact a record of the Catholic Emancipation Centenary celebrations of 1929. With the steady stream of American and English sound films into Ireland, the Catholic Church in keeping with its attitude in Quebec and elsewhere, stepped up its anti-cinema campaign. Rockett (ibid. p53) speaks of the 'increasingly virulent anti-cinema (and anti-dancing) campaign being mounted by the Catholic hierarchy during the 1920s'. He continues

American cinema was perceived mainly as an immoral influence, bringing into Catholic Ireland alien images and ideas...leading to the destruction of the nuclear family.

As mentioned previously, the new Free - Catholic - State had enacted one of its first laws, the Censorship of Films Act in 1923 and appointed a film censor in 1924. The severity of Irish film censorship is demonstrated by Rockett (1980) - 3,000 films banned and 8,000 cut since 1924. As Rockett (1991, p19) points out, in the absence of state aid for an Irish national cinema as a counter-measure to Hollywood, 'prohibition of the imported cinema remained the primary state policy for film for many decades'. While one of the main policies of the new state was the restoration of the Irish language to vernacular status - an important objective of state broadcasting in 1926 - indigenous film activity, as Martin McLoone (2000, p15) points out, 'is overwhelmingly an Anglophone cinema'. Thus, one might have expected the furore about foreign cinema to be about the threat to the national language as was the case in Quebec, but the reality was that the main focus was on the 'immoral' content of this cinema. Although the state-financed Irish language television station, TG4 was launched in 1996, McLoone (ibid. p15) comments

However, film-making in the Irish language remains a marginal activity and the debate about film being an expression of 'national culture' as well as an 'industry' has done little to change the situation.

This is a point we shall explore shortly in our discussion of the Irish film industry.

## **Filmmaking in Quebec**

The mass-media are frequently seen as nation-building tools and in a country with such an immense but sparsely-populated land mass as Canada, there was clearly a need to develop a sense of Canadian unity. Film was one medium enthusiastically embraced by the federal government as a major tool in the promotion of national unity. However, we shall see in the history of the National Film Board of Canada (NFB) a rather restricted notion of what constituted the nation.

The evolution of Quebec cinema is inseparable from the NFB and most prominent Quebec filmmakers have worked for it at some stage. However, in the early years, francophone filmmakers had great difficulty in making films in their own language. Not long after the arrival of film in the country in 1896, a number of state organisations were created to produce films which responded to the needs of the government. The most important of these was the National Film Board. In 1938, the federal government commissioned the 'Report on the filmmaking activities of the Canadian Government' from John Grierson who was director of the General Post Office Film unit of London from 1934-1937. Following this report and a new Film Act, the NFB was created in 1939 with Grierson appointed in Ottawa as its first commissioner. Its famous mandate was to 'introduce Canadians to each other and to the world' and to foster national unity but it proved instead to be a divisive force.

The NFB initially coordinated and distributed government films internationally, but it quickly grew to become one of the world's largest film studios and employed 787 people in 1945. It was prolific in its production of documentaries and animation films plus the war-time series *The World in Action* and *Canada Carries On*. The NFB gained international recognition when *Churchill's Island* won Canada's first Oscar in 1941. However, as a state agency, it was especially vulnerable to attacks from the opposition and it suffered problems with censorship and distribution of its films.

A number of films from the *World in Action* series, which was distributed widely abroad, were attacked for 'being variously pro-fascist and pro-Communist' as Handling (1984, pp195-204) has shown. The 'Red Scare' controversy culminated in an article in *The Financial Post* (Nov. 19th, 1949) which suggested that the Film Board was 'a leftist propagandist machine' (ibid, pp182-193).

Quebec's suspicion of the political leanings of the NFB concurred with the mainstream. Maurice Duplessis considered the NFB to be a 'nest of communists'. He also considered it a federalist centralisation tool and restricted the distribution of NFB films in the province (Jean, 1991, p29).

An article in the *Ottawa Evening Citizen* on February 4, 1950 (Handling, 1980) suggested that the various attacks on the Board were initiated by 'other, more sinister, interests: rival film producers and Hollywood studios'. At this point, Grierson had been replaced by Ross McLean.

The National Film Board initially created to promote national unity proved to have quite the opposite effect. As Piers Handling (1984, p202) has shown, 'the interests of the government, Hollywood, and Canada's private producers all coincided and the Board had to suffer'. McLean was fired in 1949. A new Film Act replacing the 1939 Act which created the NFB became law on June 30, 1950. The new mandate of the NFB was to 'interpret Canada to Canadians and other countries'. In 1956 the Board was moved to Montreal which removed it further from political influence and also highlighted the under-participation of francophones in the NFB's output.

Although the majority of films made by the NFB during these years were in English there was a significant history of documentary filmmaking in the Quebec province before the francophones at the NFB got their opportunity. A substantial body of work was produced by the afore-mentioned pioneering filmmakers, the *abbés* Albert Tessier and Maurice Proulx, from the late twenties to the early sixties. There was also a number of pioneering commercial filmmakers whose decline coincided with Hollywood's expansion in the region. Films distributed and later produced by Joseph-Alexandre DeSève with first of all, *France Film* (1934) and later, *Renaissance films* (1945), were to

establish the early canon with films like *Le Père Chopin* (Ozep, 1944) *La Petite Aurore*, *l'enfant martyre* (Bigras, 1951) and *Tit-Coq* (Gélinas, 1952). We will take a closer look at the films of Bigras and Gélinas in our consideration of the social impact of the Catholic Church in Chapter 5.

### **The Francophone Experience at the NFB**

Prior to the NFB's move to Montreal, French-speaking filmmakers worked generally as assistants and technicians on films made by their anglophone colleagues or on French versions of these same films. When they did direct films themselves it was very much within the framework of English production.

Pierre Véronneau (cited in Jean, 1991, p30) has pointed out that Grierson's initial government report failed to recognise Quebec's particular constitutional status. Grierson saw NFB films as serving the entire population and thought that subtitles eliminated the need to make films in French. No francophones were employed among production staff until 1941. The NFB had its first French *équipe* or 'team', studio 10, in 1943 but this was dismantled a couple of years later under Ross McLean.

Most films made by francophone filmmakers at the NFB during the years 1950-52 were in English. Many francophone filmmakers left the NFB because of this. The history of the film *L'Homme aux oiseaux* made in 1952 by Bernard Devlin, demonstrated NFB attitudes. Originally the film was considered too expensive for a French-speaking audience alone. Marcel Jean (1991, p31) considers the controversy over the film's cost as a telling illustration of the contempt in which Quebec culture was held at the NFB. Studio E which made French films for television, and Studio F which was devoted to the production of films in French, were created in 1953 but, the NFB still resisted calls from the French lobby for an autonomous unit.

But francophone demands gathered momentum after the move to Montreal. The situation eventually flared up in the pages of the francophone daily, *Le Devoir* in 1957 when francophone grievances were cited including the lack of original production in

French; many film crews sent to Quebec were English speaking and needed interpreters; French scripts had to be translated as the management were predominantly unilingual. Journalist Pierre Vigeant pointed out that of 72 civil servants and technicians receiving an annual salary of more than \$7000, only 6 were French-Canadian, two of whom had been educated through English. Furthermore, out of the NFB production total of 1109 films from 1952-1956 only 69 were in French (cited in Jean 1991, p31).

A federal election and a new Conservative government under John Diefenbaker in 1957 proved to be more favourable to Quebec's needs. Increasing demand for NFB product had been created with the arrival of television which served as a catalyst to French production and the French filmmakers were soon to make their mark with the development of their own version of *cinéma vérité*, *Cinéma direct. Les Raquetteurs* (Brault, Groulx, 1958) is the landmark work here. A national television service was formed with the CBC/Radio Canada providing separate anglophone and francophone channels from 1952. Following this increased demand for films in French more francophone personnel were recruited.

A French *équipe* was created in 1959 with a new generation of francophone filmmakers, prominent among whom were Claude Jutra, Michel Brault and Gilles Groulx. Also, the appointing of a French commissioner, Guy Roberge, who was a former member of the Quebec provincial legislature, ensured a more francophone-friendly environment. New structures were proposed by Roberge in 1963 to permit the NFB to be more representative of Canada's biculturalism. Increased nationalist demands with the advent of the 'Quiet Revolution' were undoubtedly making themselves heard also.

Autonomous French production was eventually begun in 1964 and production at the Board was divided along linguistic lines. The new structures enabled a consistent French output which reached 38% of the NFB's production credits by the late eighties. The new French production unit continued to make documentary and animation films in the tradition of the NFB but also, as Marcel Jean (1991) points out, the output reflects the highs and lows of Quebec feature film from the middle of the sixties. The NFB management eventually permitted feature filmmaking in French in 1964. Gilles Groulx's

seminal *Le Chat dans le sac* (1964) combined *cinéma direct* with more traditional methods of filmmaking. It explored the identity crisis of its young protagonist, Claude, whose malaise is seen by many critics as typifying the uncertainty of Quebec in the midst of its Quiet Revolution. Most filmmakers involved in the French unit went on to direct their own feature films and establish Quebec's *auteur* cinema which developed in the mid to late sixties. It is this largely auteur cinema and its representation of Quebec society's changing relationship with the Catholic Church which is central to the present study.

At the beginning of the 70s, the NFB was to produce one of the most famous Quebec films, *Mon oncle Antoine* directed by Claude Jutra. It was judged best *Canadian* film of all time in 1984. Many critics consider that Quebec cinema was the most important in Canada between 1963 and 1973 (Euvrard and Véronneau, op. cit). Hence, Québécois cinema developed in symbiosis with the documentary form and under the aegis of a federal agency dominated by anglophones.

Between these years, directors such as Arthur Lamothe, Denys Arcand, Gilles Groulx and Michel Brault engaged with a more political cinema interrogating Québec's social and political history. Many of them were to fall foul of the NFB because of the nature of their subjects and they had difficulty getting their films made and screened. Michel Brault, a dominant figure of *cinéma direct* and still active today, made the controversial *Les Ordres* dealing with the 'October Crisis' of 1970, independently. The film deals with the introduction of the War Measures Act and the suspension of civil liberties in Quebec on the night of October 16<sup>th</sup> by Premier Trudeau. This followed the kidnapping of two politicians by the Front de la libération du Québec (FLQ) as noted in Chapter 2. The NFB turned the film down fearing Ottawa's wrath according to Euvrard and Véronneau (1980).

Censorship was to continue at the NFB which was unwilling to deal with topics that were deemed to be politically sensitive. It vetoed the release of *On est au coton* (*We're fed up*) made in 1970 by Denys Arcand, until 1976. It was unhappy with the picture of working conditions and salaries of textile workers in Quebec presented in the film.

Commenting on the banning of Arcand's film, the Commissioner was to declare that the NFB must protect capitalism and the national unity of Canada (Euvrard and Véronneau, op.cit.).

Denys Arcand, in an interview for *The Globe and Mail* newspaper in December 1972, following the banning of *On est au coton*, spoke for many filmmakers when he said:

The Film Board makes thousands of films to say that all goes well in Canada, that the Western wheat fields are very beautiful, that Glenn Gould plays the piano well and that Paul Anka is an extraordinary star. So, I think it is just normal that there should now and then be a film which says that everything is rotten and that we live in a country that is corrupt from top to bottom (Handling, 1984, p196).

Christopher Gittings (2002, p88) comments that early québécois filmmakers like Pierre Perrault, Michel Brault and Claude Jutra saw filmmaking as a 'nation-building project, in this case the construction of the contested nation or the imagined community of Québec'. They therefore saw the NFB's role in Quebec as a colonial one that conflicted with their aspirations for self-determination and viewed its refusal to permit feature production as restricting their freedom of expression.

From the mid-seventies on Quebec governments were aware of the value of developing a film industry as a way of fostering cultural identity. The infrastructure – artistic, industrial and commercial of a cinema – would be established which would reflect the cultural specificity of québécois. With the advent of the Parti québécois to power in 1976, as Poirier (2004, p88) notes, 'politics, economics and culture were part of a single reality in government discourse'. From the 1980s on there was an increase in the number of state organizations and autonomous companies linked to culture. The American Majors however were unhappy with the new cinema law, *Loi sur le cinéma*, loi 109, of June 23<sup>rd</sup> 1983, which attempted to curtail the American distributors' power and they threatened to withdraw film distribution from Quebec. An agreement was eventually reached by Bourassa's Liberal government with the Majors on 22 October, 1986. As Poirier (ibid. p116) summarises, privileges of distribution were accorded to members of the MPEAA (Motion Picture Export Association of America). The Majors all possess

several distribution subsidiaries in Quebec and dominate, as we shall see, not just the cinemas' network but also the video/DVD rental market. The agreement allowed the Majors to exclude themselves from the distribution of films in French or foreign language (other than English). Thus, the number of non-English films distributed by the Majors is very small. Other requirements of the law like obligatory re-investment in Quebec films were suspended. Poirier (ibid. p118) refers to the 'anti-compétitif' (anti-competitive) result and states that with this agreement, the government institutionalises in the law itself, the presence of American distributors on Quebec territory. This agreement was subsequently renewed in 1992 and 2002. Pierre Barrette (2007) considers that the Hollywood lobby is still very powerful today and doesn't hesitate to threaten boycotts when its hold over the Quebec market is threatened.

### **The Quebec Film Industry today**

Les québécois aiment le cinéma! The québécois love cinema and it represents their most frequent cultural outing. Quebec has one of the highest cinema attendances in the Western world – behind the USA and Australia. Ireland, as we shall show, has one of the highest in the European Union. In 2004, 75.5% of québécois aged 15 and over went at least once to the cinema. This represents an increase of 3.5% compared to 1999, although a fall of 5.6% was registered in 2006 (*Statistiques sur l'industrie du film*. Éditions 2005, 2007).

Quebec, like Ireland, as we shall show, is an extremely popular location for foreign, especially American films, with Montreal (and indeed, Toronto) frequently doubling for many American cities. The tax breaks plus the local expertise make it particularly attractive. According to a report on the economic impact of foreign productions published in November 2004, *Impact économique des tournages étrangers au Québec*, for every \$10m spent in the making of a foreign film in Quebec, the net revenue to the Quebec government is \$1.171m. The *Institut de la statistique du Québec* publishes an extremely comprehensive report on the film industry every year. There is a particular interest in gauging Quebec's share of the home market, the number of films produced in the French language and in comparing similarly sized foreign industries with Quebec's.

The contribution of film to the national culture is considered very important. In contrast, figures for the Irish film industry have to be gleaned from a variety of sources and the emphasis remains on the economic advantages to the industry.

## **Production**

With regard to production, Quebec now produces an average of 30 films per annum destined for theatrical release. Tables 1-8 Appendix A, give a breakdown of some key industry statistics.

- (Table 1) shows that in 2006 (the most recent figures for the industry), 33 features were produced for theatrical release and the total number of features produced in that year was 98. This figure includes co-productions.
- (Table 2) Of these 98 films, 53 were fiction films and 45 documentary.

The average film budget in 2006-2007 was \$4.4m. The budget for co-productions was approx. \$5.6m in 2006-2007 and for films considered 'enti rement qu b cois' (entirely Quebec) it was \$3.4m. The biggest commercial success in all Quebec cinema to date, *Bon Cop, Bad Cop* ( ric Canuel, 2006), which gives an amusing portrait of Anglo and French-Canadian rivalries, had a huge budget of \$8m. Interestingly enough, as we shall discuss below, it had an unusually large marketing budget of \$ 2.8m. France continues to be the biggest co-production partner with 5 co-productions in 2007.

The annual production of feature films in Quebec is one of the highest ratios per million inhabitants in the world after the US. But, as we shall see, the share of cinema exhibition and box-office receipts is not commensurate with this. The main problem with Quebec cinema, according to many commentators, is the emphasis on production to the detriment of distribution and exhibition although there has been some improvement latterly as we shall see (Poirier, op.cit). As Quebec cinema becomes more commercial, this has led to a new critical focus on film content as we shall explore below.

## **Finance**

There are four main types of finance:

- Revenues from the various markets
- Public finance
- Foreign finance
- Private Canadian finance.

Pre-sales are the main source of finance representing 32% of total finance. These would include the acquisition of broadcasting rights – national or foreign – and guarantee of distribution rights by distributors or exporters.

Provincial government funding is provided by SODEC, the Société de développement des entreprises culturelles. SODEC investments are mainly geared at fiction features destined for cinema release. It provided 8% of the funding of cinema and televisual productions in 2006-2007. Federal government funding is provided by Téléfilm Canada. Various funds including Le Fonds canadien de télévision and Fonds du long métrage (television and feature funds) are available. Tax Credits are available at both federal and provincial level. The majority of the films referred to here received tax breaks except NFB/ONF production which isn't eligible. The federal contribution to Quebec film is as important as the provincial one. In 2006 - 2007, the provincial government invested a total of \$34,893,372m and the federal government invested \$35,607,927m in feature films.

Tax credits are a very important source of funding. Thirty five percent of the financing for film and televisual products in 2006-2007 came from Quebec tax credits. Twenty three percent came from Canadian tax credits. The recognition of film as 'québécois' is vital in obtaining tax breaks. A number of strictures are laid down concerning domicile in Quebec, and the percentage of production and post-production spend in Quebec. A points system is used which covers directors, screenwriters, principal actors, directors of photography etc. to determine the Quebec input at the creative level.

### **Exhibition/Distribution**

Two cinema chains: Famous Players and Cineplex-Odeon dominate the exhibition market in Canada. Viacom and Universal are the parent corporations for each of them respectively. Both have ‘connections’ with the major distributors. Famous Players is linked with Buena Vista, MGM, Warner Bros. and Paramount. Cineplex Odeon has links with Columbia, Fox and Universal. Some estimates claim that Famous Players and Cineplex Odeon account for as much as 80% of the theatrical grosses of a film. By 1999, Famous Players held an enormous 47% share of the Canadian market (Acland, 2002, p5). Even the smaller provincial chains at times strike arrangements with the majors.

We will look now at what happens on the ground in Quebec over an approximate six year period. When we look at the origins of the films on release, the dominance of American product is compelling. The most recent figures available for the industry - 2006 - (Table 3) show that out of a total of 617 films screened, 316 came from the US (51%), 43 (7.0%) from Quebec. France achieved 94 (15.2%) and Great Britain, 41 (6.6%). Table 4 shows the breakdown of films according to country of origin in terms of attendance, box-office receipts and number of projections. With regard to the number of projections, the US gained ground here (6.3%) compared to 2005 figures. Quebec’s results were disappointing compared to its highest share of projections - 15.8 % - in 2005. The share of box-office receipts for Quebec cinema has also dropped by 40.4% compared to 2005 figures. The attendance figures for US and Quebec cinema were close to the figures for receipts. Overall, in the period 2000 – 2004 there had been a decline in the US share which would now seem to have ‘corrected’ itself. The rest of Canada’s share is particularly poor with less than 0.9% for all of the above categories.

Cinema admissions in Quebec for the period 1985 – 2004 (figures in brackets show their ranking in a list of 50 films) showed that six Quebec films - *Les invasions barbares* (18) (Cannes: Best screenplay and Best Actress 2003; Academy Award: Best Foreign Film -2004), *La grande seduction* (12), *Un homme et son péché* (8), *Les Boys I* (13), *II* (15) and *III* (19) were among the top19 best attended films in Quebec. *Titanic* (Cameron, 1997) still holds the record – not just in Quebec of course, but at the World Wide Box-office (Eurostat, 2004). Statistics for Cinema attendance for the period 2002 –

2004 showed Quebec cinema in the 4<sup>th</sup>, 7<sup>th</sup>, 19<sup>th</sup>, 29<sup>th</sup>, 32<sup>nd</sup> and 47<sup>th</sup> positions. (Source: *Statistiques sur L'industrie du film*, Edition 2005).

Figures for the most successful films in the 2004 - 2006 period according to projections, attendance and receipts, show *Bon Cop, Bad Cop* in first position followed by the US produced, *SpiderMan 2*. *C.R.A.Z.Y.* came 9<sup>th</sup>, *Aurore*, 7<sup>th</sup> and *Le survenant*, 35<sup>th</sup> out of the top 50 films. The success of the most relevant of the above Quebec films will be discussed more fully in context in Chapter 5. *Bon Cop, Bad Cop* as we mentioned above has had the biggest commercial success in Quebec cinema to date. Its receipts of \$8,969,702 exceeded the previous front-runner, *Un homme et son péché*, which had receipts of \$8,121,715.

These statistics would seem to imply that Québécois are enthusiastic about Quebec films when they get a chance to see them. There was good news in 2004 regarding the number of prints of québécois films struck. The largest number of prints circulated is of course those of American product – an average of 40.6; the figure for Quebec in 2004 was 24.3. For example, most of the Harry Potter films had over 200 prints in circulation. The notable Quebec films were *Les invasions barbares* (145); *Un homme et son péché* (124); *Les Boys III* (121) and *Mambo italiano* (109). The most recent figures for 2006 were not quite as reassuring however as the number of copies of Quebec films fell by 33.4%. This represented 8.1% of total copies compared to the US share of 77.3%.

Table 5 allows us to compare a number of national cinemas' share of their home market box-office to that of Quebec in 2006. Unsurprisingly, the US with a staggering 90.7% is the frontrunner. Quebec at 11.4% is quite respectable when compared to quite a few of the European countries listed. No figures were provided for Ireland here but it was in the region of 4% in 1996 (Eurostat). Table 6 shows the number of features produced according to language and includes figures for co-production. We note that the number of features made in English in Quebec has dropped considerably from the year 2000 although it is healthier than in 2004, while French language features have gained considerably.

However, while this may be reasonably reassuring from the francophone perspective, when we compare these figures with the number of films certified for home viewing (video/DVD) according to language, we find from the 2006 figures that 74.1% of films were in English; 4.4% in French; 21.3% in a foreign language and 0.2% were bilingual. (Source: *Statistiques sur l'industrie du film*, Édition 2007). Thus, the home viewing market is flooded with anglophone, predominantly US, product. There is no quota regarding Canadian content for cinema exhibition unlike TV where there is a Canadian quota of 60%. Furthermore, broadcasters with revenues in excess of \$10m must invest in production.

2003 and 2004 were strong years for Quebec cinema although they have since been surpassed in production numbers by 2006 which had the best production rate since 1998's 37 features. Brendan Kelly (2003) in *The Montreal Gazette* writing about the summer of 2003, quoted Guy Gagnon, president of Alliance Atlantis Vivafilm, who attempts to explain the increase in popularity of Quebec films:

'One explanation for the explosion at the box office is the variety of styles of Quebec films being made', according to Gagnon. Now filmmakers are producing everything from horror flicks to cop movies. "The films are getting better," Gagnon said. "We've stopped doing just comedies and those auteur films that were painful to watch. Now people come out of the theatres and they're happy. People are even asking for more Quebec films."

An increase in marketing budgets must be considered as exerting an important influence here. 'The newfound popularity of Quebec films isn't just about quality', as Kelly notes,

...it's also about marketing muscle. Local distributors like Alliance and Christal Films now launch aggressive Hollywood-style marketing campaigns to support their major releases, and it isn't unusual for these companies to spend in the region of \$1 million to market a high-profile film. These campaigns can include everything from highway billboards to ads on the sides of buses'.

This barrage of advertising has been commented upon by critic Pierre Barrette (2007) among others. In his article on the subject of the media being at the service of the market, he expresses reservations about the effect this media bombardment has on the quality of the films and on the national culture. While recognizing complaints about the

over-emphasis on auteur cinema in the 80s to the detriment of more commercial production which attracts larger audiences, he considers that the battle with Hollywood is not so much polarized on national lines now but in terms of ability to reach audiences in marketing terms. 'If you can't beat them, join them' is the philosophy which dominates a section of the filmmaking milieu from certain producers to employees of Téléfilm Canada, along with a number of film directors themselves. The problem here, as Barrette explains, is that the concept of the marketing of films is not independent of the film product itself. It is a feature of the marketing machine to take on films which, from the outset, are seen as having commercial potential. Therefore, the very content of the films themselves is imbued with the need to fill seats: the content submits to the market.

Barrette (ibid.) also notes that through the press screenings, and embargos (with datelines) on journalists to write 'subjectively' about a film, plus the exclusion of 'undesirable' journalists from these screenings, marketing directors try to preserve a one-way discourse around the film, a position that they legitimize by evoking the small size of the Quebec market and the necessity for all the players in the market to mediate with the public to the same end. Ultimately then, the measure of a film's success is its popularity. Barrette sees a real danger in the confusion of the idea of the democratization of culture with an 'idiotic populism' and of the reducing of a population to the status of a market and offering the lowest common denominator in place of an 'element' which unites and defines [them]. His article is accompanied by stills from *Aurore* and *Le survenant* – films whose reception at the box-office we will comment upon in Chapter 5. The populist thrust of these 'successful' films, along with a certain cynicism and opportunism on the part of their producers have been commented upon by a number of critics including Martin Bilodeau and Marie-Claude Loiselle (cited in Bédard, 2007).

Gérard Grugeau (2006-2007, pp29-31) disgruntled about what he calls the 'peopolisation' of the media which serves to determine the reception of films, speaks of the 'dictatorship of the majority' and how it is above all the demands of the market and advertising which prevail. Cynically, he comments that *Bon, Cop, Bad Cop* and *Séraphin – Un homme et son péché*, given their box-office records could only be 'good

films'. In other words, the market is becoming 'the supreme judge of aesthetic value'. There has been an 'abduction' of the critical function as serious criticism is replaced by the rolling out of actors, singers and comedians on the electronic media to give their views on the latest book or film:

At the end of the day, one has the unpleasant feeling that nobody is the spokesperson for the work, that nobody will dare risk an aesthetic judgement in order to play the noble role of an intermediary between the work and the public (ibid. p30). (B19)

The over-arching point then is that one cannot simply rely on box-office or admission figures to gauge the aesthetic value of a film or its contribution to indigenous culture.

### **The Language Question**

The question of language continues to be the *bête noire* of industry commentators and other problems besides production and distribution are discernible. The Quebec government demands that a film may not be exhibited on Quebec territory solely in the English language. American films are released simultaneously on American and Quebec soil, Quebec being considered as part of the domestic market. Quebec's dubbing industry employs more than 700 people and is worth in the region of \$20m annually. As we have seen, more than 50% of films projected in Quebec cinemas are American but nearly half of them are dubbed in France. Even Canadian films like David Cronenberg's *Crash* was screened in Quebec with dialogue dubbed in Paris. Paule des Rivieres' editorial in *Le Devoir* (2001) considered this a 'double imperialism'. After losing 20 to 30 per cent of its business to France in 2000, the Union des artistes launched a campaign entitled 'On veut s'entendre', 'We want to hear ourselves', designed to bring the Majors to book and also to demand a similar law to that of France's protectionist Law 47. This obliges the Majors to dub all films destined for its cinemas in French studios. Films dubbed in Quebec are not permitted. The Quebec Union des artistes has taken to awarding 'prizes' known as *Les prix Orange et Citron du doublage*, ('Oranges' and 'Lemons' dubbing prizes) to the Majors according to the quantity of films they dub in Quebec and in France with a view to exposing their practice. The website of the dubbing industry,

[www.doublage.qc.ca](http://www.doublage.qc.ca). also undertook an online survey in 2006 looking for a similar law to that of France.

Although the issue is largely about money, it is also about cultural pride. The French have traditionally refused Quebec dubs of English films because they claim they are unable to understand Quebec French. Pierre Curzi, (Attard, 2004) President of the Union des artistes and a familiar face from the films of Denys Arcand, has spoken of the need to have access to foreign cultures in one's own language considering it to be a cultural right and one which respects the specificity of language. Furthermore, he noted, referring to pressure brought to bear by the Union des artistes and his own discussions with some of the Majors:

If we allow one of the Majors not to dub their films in Quebec, the others will follow suit; therefore we must maintain a certain pressure on their brand image about which they are very sensitive. Hollywood and Toronto (where the Majors have agents) responded very rapidly and we are continuing our discussions with them (ibid.). (B20)

Other commentators on Quebec film have expressed dismay at a trend among certain francophone filmmakers to make films in English in order to aim at the international market. This was perhaps more discernible around the year 2000 as we have noted an improvement since then. Odile Tremblay (2000) writing in the francophone daily newspaper, *Le Devoir*, rehearsed the names of prominent Quebec filmmakers who had recently made films in the English language:

Denys Arcand, Robert Lepage, Léa Pool, Claude Fournier, Bernar Hébert, Richard Roy...What do they have in common? They have all recently made or are about to make a film in English. They will all tell you that they have a French project in the bag. And yet...the huge international market speaks the language of [Clint] Eastwood...Shimmering before their eyes are real possibilities of co-finance and foreign sales in a global universe where Hollywood reigns supreme.

Filmmakers Robert Lepage and Denys Arcand confirm that funding for their films made in English was much more easily found. Lepage, quoted in Tremblay, above, said that in English one doesn't meet the same resistance and that not to say these things would be lying to themselves. Denys Arcand, following the release of *Stardom* (2000),

explained his rationale in very simple terms when he stated that the production company offered him \$5m. to make it in French, \$10-12m. to make it in English! (ibid.).

However, Arcand's *Stardom* and Lepage's *Possible Worlds* performed poorly at the box office in the last months of the year 2000, the former achieving quite a lambasting from the critics. No doubt many of them already disapproved of his 'treachery' in using English. However, as we have seen, Arcand's return to French with *Les invasions barbares* was to provide him with a local and international hit. The director of the even more popular, *C.R.A.Z.Y.* (2005), Jean-Marc Vallée, admitted that he had intended making it in English, but had been dissuaded by Michel Côté, one of the main actors and a veteran of Quebec cinema (Carrière, 2006).

Quebec's markets are certainly few enough. France has become as impenetrable as the US according to filmmaker Claude Fournier (2000). France has become one of Quebec's poorer markets, mainly because of problems with the Quebec accent, in particular, the Quebec dialect, 'Joual'. In general, they have been better received in Belgium and Switzerland. However, a 2008 report: *Focus 2008, World Film Market Trends* drawn up by the European Audiovisual Observatory ([www.obs.coe.int](http://www.obs.coe.int).) dealing with the period 2002 - 2006 showed that Canada of the 'ten leading third countries' (which excludes the US) had the highest share (0.55%) of the EU market, ahead of Australia and Japan. 1996 - 2002 figures showed that Canada's share of EU market was highest in France at 34%. No separate figures were provided for Quebec but Denys Arcand's *Les invasions barbares*, which we shall discuss in Chapter 5, is mentioned as one of the small number of films that such success is often dependent on (Lange, 2003). While Quebec has not yet produced figures for the industry for 2007, *Focus 2008* (ibid.) noted that Quebec co-productions with France had increased from 5 projects in 2006 to 9 by March 2007. There is a suggestion that Canadian anglophone producers may not be too happy either with this tendency of francophone filmmakers to make films in English as they are all dipping into the same funding pool. SODEC, the provincial funder, reserves 20% of its tax credits for English language films. Ironically, Quebec filmmakers making films in English who easily find finance abroad may encounter difficulties with regard to accessing domestic funding. This is because of the many conditions laid down by

SODEC, referred to earlier, including use of Québécois actors, not enough of whom, in this case, speak English. English Canadian actors, unsurprisingly, are not enthusiastic about the use of Quebec actors in English-speaking parts.

In the period from April 2004 to March 2005, Téléfilm gave production funding of \$19.5m to French language films and \$27m to English language films. The vast majority of francophone films came from Quebec. With regard to development funding, in the same period in Quebec alone, 53 films gained development funding, 40 of these were French-language productions while 13 were English language. Thus Quebec filmmakers are also gnawing away at the English-language budget of the federal agency. Téléfilm spent almost \$10.5m in the same period marketing films in French whereas about \$6m was spent on marketing films for the other regions: Ontario, West and Atlantic. Téléfilm's confidence in gaining a return for its investment in French-language cinema is obvious. As finding a market is the greatest problem for French-language cinema, it consequently helps it significantly more than films from the rest of Canada. With regard to production, Téléfilm does not require a minimum box-office threshold for French-language films as it does for English language due to the superior box-office performance of Quebec cinema.

It is worth exploring a little further, the relationship between Quebec cinema and the French film market. France's love affair with Quebec cinema and *cinéma direct* in the sixties was to be a brief one. In *L'aventure du cinéma québécois en France* (1996), Michel Larouche discusses the fact that Quebec has traditionally seen its relationship with France as an essential factor in the preservation of its language and culture. However, that relationship has changed over the years and Quebec is confronted increasingly by its difference from France. It has consequently to re-evaluate this traditional centre/periphery relationship. Studies of the critical reception of the films of Denys Arcand in France where most of his films have been screened – undertaken by Michèle Garneau and Pierre Véronneau (Larouche, *ibid.*) – have shown French critics emphasizing Arcand's 'Americanness' rather than his 'Frenchness', if you will. The films of Arcand 'modified' the perception of Quebec formed by the earlier films of Perrault and Carle, of a 'golden age', a mythologised people and culture. Such

'readings' of Quebec culture will strike a very familiar note with students of Irish film, especially those films which equated a kind of wild romanticism with the Irish Celt. French critics seized on the generic tendencies of Arcand's early films seeing his use of genre as indicative of his North-Americanness and evidence that Quebec as a society is closer to the United States than Europe because it has 'Americanised'. Although his later films – some of which form part of the object of our study in Chapter 5 - resisted this generic interpretation, and were well-received critically, Garneau and Véronneau (ibid.) speak of a re-mythologising of Quebec taking the place of the old myths, and of this new French re-investment in an image of a Quebec no longer French-Canadian but American. This new imagining of Quebec is of course as flawed as the old.

Ten Quebec films (out of a total of 225) crossed the threshold of one million spectators in the years 1960 – 1989 in France. A figure in the region of 100,000 was more frequent (Marshall, 2000, p85). Only two of these ten were wholly financed in Quebec. Arcand's *Le déclin de l'empire américain* which reached 1.2 million spectators, was one of these two and the only one in the French language. As Bérubé (Larouche, op.cit. pp73-84) notes, the critical reception that Quebec film enjoys does not translate into commercial success. The number of Québécois films distributed in France fell sharply in the eighties, and Bérubé comments that a Quebec film made in English rather than in French had a greater chance of being distributed in France. He considers that the Quebec accent remains an obstacle for many distributors, and when it comes to co-productions with France, it is metropolitan French which dominates. Although the Americans were interested in a remake of *Le déclin*, Arcand commented in an interview with Michel Coulombe (2003, p99), that he never received an offer from the French despite the success of the film in that country :

There persists at a certain level of Parisien society a certain disdain for the Québécois, the type one reserves for the little country cousin. We will never conquer this resistance. (B21)

However, language is not the only problem encountered in the distribution of Quebec films. Even Canadian films in English, as we have seen, have difficulty finding a home, let alone an international market. Lorraine Richard (Tremblay, op.cit.), the producer of

Léa Pool's *Lost and Delirious* (2001), considers that in relation to Canadian distribution from shore to shore, the film's language does not really impact on a feature film's exposure and commented that even the films of Atom Egoyan have difficulty finding space on the nation's screens. This, also points to the problem of the dominance of cinema screens by the US majors as discussed above but also, undoubtedly, minds accustomed to the genres and pleasures of Hollywood films, a common problem for most national cinemas, including Ireland.

In conclusion, the film production statistics for Quebec in the years noted above are quite heartening for industry practitioners. We have also noted Quebecers' positive reception of domestic product and seeing their own local realities represented on screen. In this sense, the national cinema really is speaking to the national audience. We must remember nonetheless that there can be a danger in assuming that cinema attendance or box-office success are the measure of the quality of a film or of its contribution to the national culture as we have explained above. Indeed, some of the more successful national films are those which import American genres. Greater access to local product does not necessarily build an audience for national cinema.

## **The Irish Film Industry**

We move on now to an overview of the Irish film industry and its rather different imperatives from that of Quebec's. We will remark that Irish cinema-goers do not relish their national cinema to the extent of their Quebec counterparts, although when screened on television, audience figures can be quite high for Irish film. Given that the most frequent cinema-goer in Ireland is between the ages of 15 and 24, it seems likely that – at least in the past – Irish cinema has been telling stories of interest to an older age group. This is particularly true of the nineties films which are the main focus of our study. However, films like *Accelerator* (Murphy, 1999), *Intermission* (Crowley, 2003), *Adam and Paul* (Abrahamson, 2004) and *In Bruges* (McDonagh, 2007) which had a more youthful appeal, have done surprisingly well at the Irish box-office.

Historically, state involvement in the Irish film industry has been spasmodic. Films had been made in Ireland since the early 1900s by both native and foreign film-makers. The mid-thirties produced what is generally considered to be the first Irish feature-length film, Tom Cooper's *The Dawn* (1936) and the internationally acclaimed documentary *Man of Aran* (1934). Similarities between the latter and the Quebec documentary, *Pour la suite du monde* (Perrault, P. and Brault, M., 1963) have been noted. However, English and American films dominated Irish cinemas during this period as we will discuss in Chapter 6.

As in Canada, the Irish state began to see the value of film for educational/informational purposes. The state is recorded to have given a grant of £200 for the production of an Irish language short to accompany the main feature in the cinemas in 1935, but in the mid-forties and fifties, its main interest in film was for informational purposes. The National Film Institute (NFI), established in 1943 to encourage the use of the motion picture in the national and cultural interests of the Irish people, was the main producer of Government-sponsored films in the 1940s and 50s. Gael-Linn, the state-sponsored body established in 1953 to promote the Irish language and Irish culture, produced Irish language newsreels which were distributed throughout Ireland for cinema exhibition. It also provided financial assistance to Irish film-makers to enable them to make Irish documentaries and compilation films. Gael-Linn was concerned to offer Irish people alternative cinematic views of life to that represented in British and American films which dominated the exhibition circuit. Hence, at this point, we can see similarities with the Quebec case.

Dáil debates of the fifties show that the then coalition government was exploring the feasibility of establishing a film industry in Ireland. Clann na Poblachta, one of the coalition partners who had produced a highly controversial campaign film *Our Country* for the 1948 election, had promised to establish an Irish film industry in its election manifesto. A Cultural Relations committee was set up under the Ministry of External Affairs and a number of state-sponsored documentaries were produced during this period.

With the advent of television in 1961, the Government looked increasingly to the national television service, RTE, to provide its information service and the number of government-sponsored information films declined. However, tourist and industrial promotion films for distribution abroad continued to be made though the government ran into distribution problems due to the British distribution duopoly of Rank and ABC, and it became necessary to employ these companies to make films about Ireland, rather than employing Irish film-makers, as Kevin Rockett (1987, p84) has related.

Since the 1930s there had been much interest in the prospect of a national film studio but it wasn't until 1958 through a combination of private investment and state loans and subsidies that Ireland's first film studio, Ardmore studios, was founded. The new studio was considered to be the basis of an Irish film industry along the lines of the American and British studio model :

The rationale was that Ardmore would attract American and British producers who would come in and pass on their knowledge to the Irish crews, thereby enabling the indigenous industry to develop. Furthermore, the management of Ardmore envisaged that the Abbey theatre players and their productions could be used to create the backbone of the Ardmore studios and, ultimately, a national film industry (Coopers and Lybrand, 1992, 5:34).

Ultimately, Ardmore Studios proved to be both a huge drain on government finances and quite irrelevant to the needs of an indigenous industry. It existed primarily to attract foreign producers to the country and failed to nurture Irish film-makers or even to ensure the employment of Irish personnel. The vast majority of the sixty films made at Ardmore between 1958 and 1972 were produced, directed and serviced by foreigners. As Coopers and Lybrand point out, there was no provision made to train Irish film technicians to run the studio and no strategy in place by which to integrate the indigenous film business into the Ardmore model. In effect, therefore, Ardmore operated in isolation to indigenous film activity.

Ardmore also proved to be the site of much industrial unrest. The Electrical Trade Union of Ireland (ETUI) protested in 1962 at the employment of British electricians on British productions. The British union reserved the right to employ British personnel counter-

claiming that British Government money was subsidising film production at Ardmore (British productions at Ardmore could avail of the Eady levy on cinema tickets so Ardmore was effectively regarded as a UK studio). In support of their electricians, the British Federation of Film Unions threatened to stop all further production at Ardmore. An agreement was eventually agreed between the unions but industrial unrest continued for a further two years. As the impact of this unrest took its toll on the levels of production, Ardmore ran into financial difficulties and a receiver was appointed in 1964. In the subsequent years the ownership of Ardmore changed hands many times until in 1973, the state through the national broadcaster, RTE, bought the studios and in 1975, they were re-christened the National Film Studios of Ireland (NFSI). However, the NFSI's financial difficulties continued, despite turning over in the region of \$12 million dollars in foreign earnings during 1975 to 1979. By 1982 the studios were in receivership again and continued to change hands until 1991.

Thus, the Irish state's first attempt at major film production proved to be a disaster for Irish employment and indigenous film activity. As Kevin Rockett (1987, p101) points out, there was a major irony in the fact that Irish Government money through the Irish Film Finance Corporation (IFFC) - a subsidiary of the Industrial Credit Company - was being used to finance British films made in Ireland from which Irish personnel were virtually excluded. Ardmore studios were financially totally out of reach of Irish producers. The IFFC only granted funding if a distribution guarantee was already in place, so Irish producers had to try to raise finance privately. Also, as the Rank and ABC duopoly dominated the English exhibition circuit, unknown Irish film-makers were severely disadvantaged. Thus, Irish filmmakers like their Quebec counterparts, found many obstacles in the way in the way of national self-expression.

Along with its failure to benefit indigenous film, Ardmore proved a very costly exercise for the state. By the end of 1979, £1.3 million had been given to the NFSI in the form of grants and it also had an overdraft of £850,000. The highly-respected documentary maker, Louis Marcus (cited in Rockett, 1987, p102), reckoned that state losses at Ardmore since 1958 had amounted to £10 million or more at 1980 prices.

Throughout the sixties, as the state grew increasingly inert in the provision of policy for the development of the industry, it was up to indigenous film-makers to ensure that the cause was kept alive in the public consciousness. A series of articles on the Irish film industry in *The Irish Times* in 1967 by Louis Marcus, helped highlight the failure of Ardmore. In the same year a visit by Taoiseach Jack Lynch to the set of John Huston's film, *Sinful Davey*, in County Wicklow, proved auspicious. In an address to the Taoiseach, Huston recommended the establishment of an Irish film industry. In November 1967, the Minister for Industry and Commerce set up the Film Industry Committee under John Huston to investigate the problems associated with the establishment of an Irish film industry and to advise on their solution.

### **The Huston Report**

The Report of the Film Industry Committee (The Huston Report) was published in July, 1968, and made a number of important recommendations. Among these were the setting up of a state sponsored film board which would distribute grants and loans to Irish film-makers. It suggested that 'art-house' films with production budgets of up to £50,000 be fully financed while international commercial films with budgets up to £200,000 be partly assisted with a ceiling of £10,000. Short film production should also receive assistance; a national film archive should be established, and the production of television commercials encouraged. At that point, more than 50% of the TV commercials screened on RTE were produced abroad. A Film Bill was drawn up in 1970 but a government crisis and a change of minister meant that it was not enacted until a decade later when in 1980 the Irish Film Board was eventually established.

Despite the by now familiar government lethargy throughout the seventies as regards the fostering of indigenous production, Irish independent film-makers had begun to organise themselves into an active lobby. The Association of Independent Producers (AIP), later known as the Association of Independent Film Makers (AIFM), co-campaigned with the Irish Film and Television guild and the Film section of the Irish Transport and General Workers Union (ITGWU) for the development of indigenous fiction film on artistic and cultural grounds. Much criticism was focussed on the efforts of the NFSI (Ardmore) to

attract big budget foreign productions which generated high wages to the absolute detriment of the small budgeted indigenous film. The Arts Council (established 1951) aided by the 1973 Arts Act, which expanded the former's power and funds, proved to be an important institutional and artistic ally. Its 1973 Film Script Award, was the first ever state funding for film production.

### **The First Irish Film Board**

In 1977, the Minister for Industry and Commerce commissioned an independent analysis of the NFSI and the resulting report recommended the establishment of an independent Film Board which should be allocated funds of £4.1 million. On November 25th, 1979, the Government published the Irish Film Board Bill. After its publication, a joint submission was made by the Association of Independent Producers of Ireland, the Irish Film and Television Guild and the Film Section of the ITGWU, requesting that the new Board should allocate at least 80% of all Film Board funds to Irish film-makers. They argued that the NFSI should operate as a hireable facility and that foreign productions should not be given production finance. Their demand was rejected by the Minister who failed to recognise the imperative of protectionist policies for the indigenous industry. Minister O'Malley's speeches show, as Kevin Rockett (1987, p117) indicates, 'that the Government had no intention of acceding to a specific indigenous film production policy [which] collided with the general thrust of Government economic policy'.

The Irish Film Board Act states :

4. (1) the Board shall assist and encourage by any means it considers appropriate the making of films in the State and the development of an industry in the State for the making of films, and may engage in any other activity (including the establishment of a national film archive) which it is empowered by the Act to engage in.

When the Bill was introduced in the Senate, O'Malley, in a concession to the independents, included a phrase from the Broadcasting Authority Act (1960) :

(2) In so far as it considers it appropriate, the Board shall have regard to the need for the expression of national culture through the medium of film-making.

Vague though it was, it was nonetheless some gesture towards the demands of Irish film-makers though the absence of any specific provision of monies for indigenous film-making was to be regretted. Thus, the making of films and the development of a film industry were of primary importance, and the 'expression of national culture', secondary.

Unfortunately, the first Board only operated actively for six years. During that period it part-funded 10 full-length feature films, 20 short fiction films and documentaries for television, and 15 experimental 'shorts'. The IFB also provided development loans and grants to approximately 60 projects. In almost all cases, the Board's finance was provided by way of loan rather than grant, the criterion being the potential for financial return.

The Board was closed by the Government in 1987 because of its perceived lack of commercial success. However, there are diverse opinions about its overall impact. Coopers and Lybrand (1994, 5.67) point out that 8 out of the 10 features in which the Board invested succeeded in obtaining foreign investment to the tune of £3.295 million, three times the Board investment, and the vast majority of this funding was subsequently spent within the Irish economy. The Board may have been a 'commercial failure' but many people consider that it made a very positive contribution to the promotion of Irish film abroad. Many of the films won awards at international film festivals and two were nominated for British Academy Awards. Some of those early film-makers, notably Neil Jordan, went on to become some of Ireland's most important *auteurs* today. The Board also made recommendations to the Government for the implementation of a tax-based scheme to encourage private sector investment in film production, an initiative so important to the industry today. On the basis of its involvement in a wide range of film-related activities, it is difficult to see how the Board could be written off as a 'failure'. Kevin Rockett (1991, p21) claims that the state's reasons for abolishing the Board were even more insidious and that Government disapproval of the 'socially and formally critical films' which Irish film-makers were producing with the aid of state funds,

‘played an important part’ in the decision to close the Board. We can recall here the National Film Board of Canada’s censorship of films critical of the federal government. The years following the demise of the Board saw a substantial decline in the level of film activity. One of the great ironies of the period is that six months before the closing of the Board, the first Government White Paper on Cultural Policy in Ireland, ‘Access and Opportunity’, was published. While the two previous and major Government initiatives, Ardmore Film Studios and the Irish Film Board, had been taken with a view to promoting the Irish film industry, the Government’s eye had been firmly on the economic benefits of such a sector – cultural benefits were afterthoughts. The White Paper, and especially the section ‘Film Policy and Bord Scannán na hEireann’ (IFB), is especially interesting because it articulates many important issues which previous Government initiatives had failed to adequately address, and anticipates significant issues and developments in the following decade. Paragraph 2.13 states :

Central to the development of a national policy on film is the necessity to understand and grasp the difference between *Irish films* and *films made in Ireland*.

It cites John Ford’s, *The Quiet Man* (1952) and David Lean’s *Ryans Daughter* (1970), discussed later in this work, as films which ‘may have contributed to a certain image of Ireland, but they are not Irish films’. Section 2.15 focusses on the Irish Film Board Act of 1980 :

The Government recognises the predominance of film today as a national cultural medium. The Act requires the Board to ‘have regard to the need for the expression of national culture’. The Government is committed to the development of an Irish film industry, both as a form of cultural expression and as a form of promoting and expressing the cultural identity of Ireland abroad.

The paragraph concludes that ‘a vibrant Irish film industry reflecting Irish cultural values could influence the perception of Ireland overseas, as well as re-affirming Irish national identity’. Concerns were also expressed regarding film exhibition :

The Government is anxious that the cinema-going public should have an opportunity of viewing Irish-made films, particularly in the light of the wide choice of film from the Anglo/American market. (2.16)

The work of the film Board in the development of the Irish film industry and in acting as a catalyst in the establishing of 'new structures and new production companies' was recognised and the desire to increase its funding expressed, though 'the current economic situation does not allow such an increase' (2.23). The support of the UK Channel 4's investment in Irish film was also acknowledged but a key factor in the growth of an Irish film industry was seen to be 'its ability to attract financial backing from Irish investors' (2.26). The White Paper also supported the Irish film Institute's proposal for an Irish Film Centre, the establishment of a National film Archive, and the training needs of the industry. The section concludes with some key intentions regarding future government policy towards the Irish film industry :

- a) To establish an environment which will allow for a proper balance between the cultural and commercial roles in film production.
- b) To provide a situation in which the private sector can be attracted to invest in Irish film production.

The closure of the Irish Film Board six months after the White Paper was published would appear to illustrate the enormous chasm between Government pronouncement and Government practice. However, in the Government's defence it must be stated that in the same year Section 35 of the Finance Act provided tax relief for corporate investment in film production up to £100,000. Two years later, the relief was doubled and investments of up to £600,000 were permitted provided the investment was in a single qualifying production company for the making of one film only. By improving this piece of legislation in 1993, the Government provided a major stimulus to the industry. The Report of the special Working Group on the Film Production Industry of 1992, would later point up the connection between this piece of legislation and the closure of the Board :

...the Board was specifically de-activated on the grounds that the Government had conceded Section 35 tax relief and that it was appropriate to assess the effectiveness of this alternative mechanism over a number of years (1992, p29).

It also adds:

...had the criteria of employment generation and value-added to the economy – highlighted so strongly in the Coopers and Lybrand report – been applied to an objective assessment of the Irish Film Board's performance, the conclusion of the industry practitioners is that the Board was a reasonable success overall (ibid.).

Despite the Government's questionable appraisal of the Film Board's performance, many of the White Paper's suggestions were implemented in the following decade as we shall see. In many instances, however, this was once again as a result of the Government's realisation of the economic rather than the cultural benefits of the industry.

With the closure of the Irish Film Board and the termination of state subsidy, apart from the modest sums the Arts Council furnished, Irish film-makers were deprived of seed funding. Consequently, there was a decline in the industry's momentum. There were nonetheless a number of successes during the following years – *My Left Foot* (Sheridan, 1989) won two Academy Awards, and *The Field* (Sheridan, 1990) and *December Bride* (O'Sullivan, 1990) won major European awards. Possibly because of international recognition of these and other Irish-theme films, mainly funded by UK broadcasters, and continued lobbying by the film community which had intensified after the closure of the Board, the years 1991 -1992 saw a renewed emphasis by the state on the audio-visual sector with the commissioning of two major reports on the industry.

In May 1992, Coopers and Lybrand published the report – alluded to earlier - on the *Indigenous Audio-visual Production Industry*. It was commissioned in 1991 at the request of the semi-state body, Temple Bar Properties Ltd., who financed it with the Industrial Development Authority (IDA). The purpose of the Report was to address the means by which the indigenous film production industry could be developed, with particular emphasis on job creation, both in the industry as a whole, and specifically in the Temple Bar area of Dublin where the Irish Film Centre (later renamed The Irish Film Institute) was to be situated. The Huston Report of 1968 was the only previous occasion on which there had been a substantial analysis of the Irish film industry, but this was the first time that the employment and economic significance of the sector was measured. The 1990 value of the five sectors of the industry – feature film, TV productions,

animation, corporate video and TV commercials – was estimated to be over £62 million. The Report also established that for every £1 million spent on feature film production, the equivalent of 50 full-time jobs for one year are created. The Report predicted that as the industry developed over time, the value added to the economy would increase. The Report suggested expanding existing state support schemes and enhancing the role of state agencies such as the Arts Council and the IDA. It also highlighted the need to ameliorate existing fiscal incentives – the previously mentioned Section 35 tax-relief scheme and also the Business Expansion Scheme (BES).

In the same year, another report undertaken by Film Makers Ireland, a representative organisation of independent film and television directors and producers, and also funded by state agencies, analysed the current state of the independent television production sector and made recommendations for its development. The overall value of the independent television production sector was put at £8 million providing 257 full-time jobs and contract employment to some 600 skilled freelance technicians. Thus, both reports reassured the Government about the employment and economic benefits of the audio-visual industries and, when the Irish Film Centre was opened in 1992, Taoiseach Albert Reynolds announced the establishment of the Special Working Group on the Film Production Industry to examine the recommendations of the two key 1992 reports. Some of the submissions to the Group suggested that state subsidy was a pre-requisite for the development of the industry. The Department of Finance was unconvinced. Section 2.9 of the Report outlines its reservations. While conceding that the film industry should not be disadvantaged vis à vis other industries, the Department cautions :

By the same token, the film industry should not be treated as an industry which, because of ill-defined cultural or artistic characteristics, should be given significantly more generous State aid than other sectors of the economy, which could yield as many, if not more sustainable jobs for the same level of State expenditure. (2.9)

Section 4 of the Report – ‘The Substantive Issues to be addressed by the Group and Recommendations of the Group’, especially paragraph 4.2, indicates that many other members of the group did *not* consider that the film industry was an industry like any other. Commenting on various European initiatives to off-set the dominance by the US

of the European film and television production industry, and national incentives ‘centred on film production funds’ in almost all European countries, the Report adds

...that such national initiatives have been taken both in recognition of the employment and income creation potential of the film production industry in these countries and of the key role which the industry can play in portraying national culture and in combatting adverse cultural influences from abroad.

Finally, the Group recommended a four-pronged approach to the Government for the development of the industry : (1) additional measures by certain state agencies which are already involved in assisting the state’s film and television production industry; (2) amendment of the Broadcasting Acts; (3) amendments to the tax regime as it affects the film and television production industry; (4) the provision of an annual subvention and a dedicated agency for the film and television production industry. The Department of Finance representative once again proved niggardly with regard to the last recommendation believing that the creation of a new state body was not justified, and that ‘uncommercial, purely cultural projects’, should ‘properly be dealt with by the Arts Council’.

The Report was scarcely completed when the Fianna Fáil/Progressive Democrats (PDs) coalition government collapsed. January 1993 saw the formation of a new coalition with the Labour Party replacing the PDs. The new Ministry of Arts, Culture and the Gaeltacht was established under Michael D. Higgins, a man with a long history of commitment to the arts, and whose appointment was greeted with much rejoicing by the film community. The new department was given responsibility by the Taoiseach for the implementing of the Report of the Special Working Group. On the night of the awarding of Irish film-maker Neil Jordan’s Oscar for the largely UK funded *The Crying Game*, the new minister announced the reactivation of the Irish Film Board.

### **Kick-starting the industry**

I mentioned previously that Section 35 of the Finance Act, 1987, had allowed tax relief for corporate investment in film. In the early years it was not availed of to any great

extent, investors considering film investment as high risk, and the legal and financial sectors not having engaged to any extent with film. In 1993, the new Minister amended the Act to include individuals. Under Section 35, up to 60% of the cost of production of a qualifying film could be raised from corporate and individual investors within the Irish tax system. A qualifying film was certified as such by the Minister subject to three broad criteria – employment creation, value added to the economy, and the enhancement of the national culture. A number of further criteria, reminiscent of the Quebec case, were taken into account in the awarding of a certificate, especially, the number of Irish personnel employed on the film project, the provision for trainees in the development, pre-production, production and post-production stages, and the amount of the film's budget actually spent on facilities available in the state. It was also a condition of the issuing of a certificate that each qualifying company must lodge data with the Irish Business and Employers Confederation's (IBEC) economic database of film and independent TV productions.

The level of interest in the scheme was enormous and aroused the interest of various parties at home and abroad. On January 17th, 1995, Minister Higgins (1995) addressed the British National Heritage Parliamentary Committee and in his speech underlined the cultural but principally, economic, criteria of the scheme :

While I will continue to promote my policy initiatives in the Film area as primarily of cultural importance....the significant range of direct and indirect State incentives which have been put in place for the industry must result in a transparent and tangible return to the Irish economy in terms of employment and value added.

In May 1994 the Department of Arts, Culture and the Gaeltacht took over responsibility for certification and was inundated with applications. IBEC measured the impact of 16 feature films, major TV dramas and animation projects commencing in 1993. The return to the Exchequer as a result of these productions was estimated as £7.7 million. The cost to the Exchequer amounted to £6.1 million, £5.4 million of this being tax foregone under S. 35 relief and the funding of £0.7m, provided by the Board. The final impact of the £30.5 million 'spend' in the Irish economy was estimated at £26.9. The Report estimated that 1,228 full-time jobs were supported by this 'injection', or 40.3 jobs per £1 million

spent. Section 35 investment was the largest single source of Irish funding representing 23% of total funding and 85% of Irish funding, at £11.17 million.

One might ask then of the benefits of all this to indigenous production? In fact in the mid-nineties the big-budget productions – largely foreign – were benefitting most. Other sources of funding – the Irish Film Board and the broadcasters (although RTE, the national broadcaster had not been very pro-active in this regard in the past), as we discuss below, were as important as ever for the independent producer. Of these 16 films evaluated by IBEC, of the total funding, 6.8% came from non-Irish broadcasters, 5.1% from other UK sources and 38% from the US. The Arts Council's Film and Video awards were reduced to £50,000 per annum from 1984 onwards, ironically because of the new 'film friendly' environment!

So, to what extent did cultural considerations influence the kind of films being certified in the nineties? In the 'Guidelines for certification of film projects laid down by the Minister for Arts, Culture and the Gaeltacht', of the 15th June, 1994, paragraph 1 states :

For the purposes of certification, the Minister...must be satisfied that projects make a significant contribution to the national economy and Exchequer and/or act as an effective stimulus to the creation of an indigenous industry in the State. The Minister will, in particular bear in mind the importance of the promotion, development and enhancement of the national culture through the medium of film in the certification process.

By 2005, as we shall show, the cultural emphasis was even more dilute in the transfer of the responsibility for certification to the Office of the Revenue Commissioners.

Ireland's size and flexibility continues to be a key factor in its attractiveness to foreign producers along with the high degree of government co-operation. Ardmore Studios' proximity to a wide variety of urban and rural landscapes has also made it a very attractive facility. Ireland plays host to at least 10 major incoming motion pictures annually. Ireland is attractive because of its financial incentives, variety of locations, experienced cast and crews, and production infrastructure which includes excellent studio facilities. Thus, while the various developments in the industry in the nineties have provided a catalyst for the indigenous industry, they have also attracted major

Hollywood ‘blockbusters’. *King Arthur* shot in 2003 cost the state a maximum of €3.5 million but the overall Irish spend was a staggering €50 million. James Flynn of Octagon Films and Chair of the Audiovisual Federation Film Financing Committee commenting on the figures said ‘it will provide Ireland with an international platform which makes Ireland one of the top six preferred locations in the world for international film production’ (‘Film in Focus’ seminar, Galway Film Fleadh 11<sup>th</sup> July 2003). However, as Roddy Flynn (2007, p75) points out the fluctuation of exchange rates, especially the dollar to the euro and sterling, has a big impact on determining the levels of off-shore production that Ireland attracts. The UK has also become a more aggressive competitor in the wooing of Hollywood productions to its shores (ibid. p76).

## **Funding**

Today, there are two main sources of film funding in Ireland – that provided by the Irish Film Board and the tax incentive Section 481 (formerly section 35). Tables 7 - 9 (Appendix A) show some key figures for the sector. Other important sources of financing are broadcasters such as RTE, TG4, TV3, The Arts Council, the Northern Irish Film and Television Commission and EU initiatives such as Eurimages and MEDIA. We will first examine the up-dated Section 481 which has been extended to 31st December 2008.

## **Section 481**

The maximum proportion of a film production cost which can be met by tax relieved investments is, from 2006, 80%, regardless of the size of the film budget. The overall ceiling on tax relieved investment in any one film is €35m. The cumulation of State Aid must not exceed 50% of the production budget of the film. State Aid includes direct aid from any EU state and any input from any state-funded agency including the Irish Film Board. The following criteria are listed on the website of the Revenue Commissioners ([www.revenue.ie](http://www.revenue.ie)):

The Minister, in considering whether to give the Revenue Commissioners an authorisation in relation to a film, will have regard to:

- The categories of film eligible for certification; and

- The contribution a film will make to either or both the development of the film industry in the State and the promotion and expression of Irish culture.

Accordingly, the Minister will:

- Consider the case made by the promoter in relation to the contribution the project will make to, for example, the promotion and expression of Irish culture;
- Examine the professional capability (creative and technical) of the promoters/producers and creative collaborators;
- Examine the anticipated net contribution that the Section 481 Scheme and other State aid schemes will make to the project;
- Examine the contribution to be made by the project to the expression of creativity and culture in the State through the development of production capability and skills in the media of film and television;
- Give special consideration to Irish language productions; and
- Consider those opportunities provided by the project for quality employment and training.

## **Production**

The successor to Arts, Culture and the Gaeltacht : the Department of Arts, Sport and Tourism, published statistics relating to the period 1994 – 2007 on its website ([www.arts-sport-tourism.gov.ie](http://www.arts-sport-tourism.gov.ie) – accessed 20/05/2008). These are outlined in *Table 7*. A total of 368 projects were certified for Section 481 in this period. From 2002 – 2007 there has been an average of 21 per year. 1995 still continues to be the most successful year to date for Irish cinema with a total of 48 projects certified for Section 481. Overall, the production figures were higher in the nineties than they have been so far in the following decade. According to the 2007 Audiovisual Federation Review (AVFR), 2006 figures showed that film had an Irish spend of €29.8 million, which is an increase on ‘the lull of €17.5 million in 2005’. Generally, 2005 was a very poor year. It notes that there has been an overall downward trend since 2003 – an excellent year for film production - and it is estimated that the Irish spend will reduce further to €11 million in 2007. Films produced in 2006 included *Once* (Carney, 2007), *Becoming Jane* (Jarrold, 2007), *PS I love you* (LaGravenese, 2007) and *How about you* (Byrne, 2007). *Once* of

course, achieved international fame when its theme song 'Falling slowly' was awarded an Oscar in 2008.

There was a total spend of over €161 million in 2006 on Irish goods and services arising from the audiovisual productions which is an increase of over 66% on the 2005 spend of €96.9 million. This was largely due to the impact of major Independent TV productions such as *The Tudors*. The Irish audiovisual sector contributed €19.5m (net) to the Irish economy in 2006. Total Irish Employment in terms of placement increased significantly from 9,299 in 2005 to 17,476, the highest employment numbers in six years. Clearly, the fiscal benefits of film production add up. 2003 was in fact the most successful year in Irish film industry history with total audiovisual expenditure at €320.2m. (Flynn, 2007, p75).

As previously noted, from 1st January 2005, all applications for certification of film projects must be submitted to the Office of the Revenue Commissioners. The aforementioned website mentions that 'The Department of Arts, Sport and Tourism will continue to have an input in all applications in validating the cultural content of film projects submitted for certification', but no further indication is given as to how this is achieved. Kevin Moriarty, Chief Executive of Armore Studios commented in *The Irish Audiovisual Federation Review 2004* (IBEC, 2004, p13) that the health of the industry is primarily determined by the attractiveness of Section 481 'in the context of ever changing international competition from other markets and the relevant Government support in those countries'. Northern Ireland, the Isle of Man and the UK in general have been enticing filmmakers of late. The poor euro-dollar exchange rate has also been a factor in lessening the attraction of Ireland to Hollywood producers although we might expect this to improve in the new economic climate.

The other key funder of film in Ireland is the Irish Film Board (IFB). Its 2008 budget for development, production and distribution is €17m. The mission statement of the Irish Film Board states :

We are keen to support an Irish cinema which tells stories, both contemporary and historical, that engage specifically, though not exclusively, with the cultures and communities indigenous with this island ([www.irishfilmboard.ie](http://www.irishfilmboard.ie)).

Its website states: 'BSÉ/IFB's funding programmes are guided by some fundamental principles which form the basis of its decision-making criteria. The principles are:

- Additionality
- Cultural Priorities, Industrial Priorities
- Making Cinema
- Originality'

'Additionality' refers to the creation of activity which would not occur without such public funding. The Irish Film Board provides non-equity development loans (up to a maximum of €40,000 at a given time and €75,000 cumulatively for any one project) and production finance for feature length fiction films. It no longer allots specific amounts of development and production funding per project but instead 'invites' producers to discussions whereby an 'in-principle commitment of support is reached'. This will

...start a process of discussion between the producer and BSÉ/IFB as to the assembly of the film's creative package and overall financing, with BSÉ/IFB executives ready to provide assistance in the film's preparation to the extent appropriate and useful. In the best cases, where the film becomes fully financed and can be put into production, this process will have led to negotiation and confirmation of the amount and terms of BSÉ/IFB's investment (ibid.).

Additional assessment criteria of projects are as follows :

- The track record of the producer
- Irish employment
- Spend in the Irish economy
- Sales and distribution
- Financial structure

On average, the IFB recoups 10% of production feature loans. As regards funding decisions, a 'Project Group' has now replaced the previous 'Production Panel' and includes the 'Business and Legal Affairs' teams. One cannot avoid the feeling that it is

the financial viability of a project that wins the day. However, there is no denying the success of some recent Irish films. Former Chief Executive Mark Woods (cited in *The Irish Audiovisual Federation Review 2004*, p11) has spoken of Irish audience's embracing of 'local content' in 2004 when a record 11 IFB-backed films were released in Irish cinemas

...from the critically acclaimed *Adam & Paul* to the box-office topping success of *Man About Dog* while on video *Intermission* became Xtravision's top grossing title of all time in a six week period and *Song for a Raggy Boy* and *Spin the Bottle* topped the Xtravision charts in their opening months.

*Man About Dog* (Breathnach, 2004) grossed over €2 million in Irish cinemas on a 45 print release while *Adam & Paul* (Abrahamson, 2004) grossed in the region of €500,000 from a 15 print release (Source : Audiovisual Federation Review 2004, p9).

However, as Flynn (2007, p78) points out, there has been a shift in Film Board practice whereby it increasingly facilitates incoming productions more than indigenous ones with the new category of international production loans introduced in 2005-2006. In 2008, €2m. has been allocated to international productions out of the IFB budget. TV drama, if it has an Irish director, is also included here. The successful TV series, *The Tudors*, filmed in Ireland with a largely Irish cast received €500,000 in 2006. *The Wind that Shakes the Barley* directed by British director Ken Loach set during the Irish Civil War, is the highest grossing independent 'Irish' film of all time taking €3.5m. at the Irish box-office in 2006. Of the top ten films at the Irish box-office in 2006, it was ranked third. (Source : [www.irishfilmboard.ie](http://www.irishfilmboard.ie). Accessed 19 May, 2008). In *Focus 2007* ([www.obs.coe.int](http://www.obs.coe.int)), it is listed as having five countries of origin.

We can see from the above successes that it is the synergy between Irish and foreign filmmaking activity that in many ways defines the success of the Irish film industry. According to Flynn (ibid.) the current structure of the Irish audiovisual sector continues to be 'precarious' and there is 'need for constant vigilance in the face of competing incentives elsewhere'. In fact, changes in UK tax relief for film production in 2006 have had implications for Ireland. Previously a high volume of Irish made or located films were structured as Ireland-UK co-productions which combined both countries'

incentives. Given the changes in UK tax relief, 'Ireland now has to compete on a stand alone basis with other jurisdictions as they compete for the business' (Irish Audiovisual Federation Review, 2007, p18). The IAFV now considers that Ireland's Section 481 is 'uncompetitive' (ibid.). As Flynn (op.cit. p74) notes, the debates around Section 481, especially in 2003, took place without reference to the cultural arguments which characterized such debates in the early 1990s. It seems certain that further discussion of its likely continuance will be mainly confined to commercial arguments.

### **Irish audiences**

In general, Irish films have a short shelf-life at the box-office and, as mentioned earlier, Irish audiences most often get to watch them on the small rather than the large screen. This is not to imply that the Irish are less enthusiastic about cinema than their Quebec counterparts. In the Top 10 world admissions per capita in 2002, Ireland came in 6th position, after New Zealand and ahead of Canada, with 4.5 admissions (4.33 in 2006) per capita and was the highest among EU member states (Source: Eurostat, 2004). A report on 'Cinema in smaller European countries' published by the European Audiovisual Observatory in 2006, commented that Ireland was 25th in terms of size of population but 11th in terms of ticket sales. The highest cinema annual attendance to date for Ireland was 17.85m. admissions recorded in 2006. (Source : European Audiovisual Observatory, [www.obs.coe.int](http://www.obs.coe.int)., accessed 20 May, 2008). With regard to the cinema audience profile in Ireland, nearly half the audience were in the 15-24 age group. The highest spending within the EU -15 was recorded in Ireland with 21.7 euro per capita, followed by the UK with 17.3 euro per capita. Irish cinema screens, unsurprisingly, were dominated by US product, US productions accounting for more than 80% of box office receipts. National films therefore played a very minor role. Figures provided by Cineuropa show that the Republic of Ireland and Northern Ireland's share of box-office receipts was 4.38% in 2006 ([www.cineuropa.org/countryprofiles](http://www.cineuropa.org/countryprofiles)). We can compare this unfavourably to Quebec's 11.4%, France's 44.7% and the UK figures of 19% in Table 5.

With the emphasis on the fiscal benefits of an Irish film industry and the wooing of international capital, the cultural context of Irish film has shifted since the nineties and many Irish films such as *About Adam* (Stembridge, 1999) and *When Brendan Met Trudy* (Walsh, 2000) have tended towards a cosmopolitan or international emphasis. However, films like *Song for a Raggy Boy* (Walsh, 2003) and Ken Loach's *The Wind that Shakes the Barley* (2006) indicate that there is still a trend towards excavating the past although more recently the documentary, rather than the fiction film, has been shining light into unsavoury corners of the nation's past as we shall discuss later.

We can see from our discussion of both the Irish and Quebec film industries that the dominance of their markets by US audiovisual product poses a huge problem as it does for the European market in general. Europe's deficit in the balance of audiovisual trade with North America was quoted as \$ 8.2 billion in the year 2000 (European Audiovisual Observatory, Press release, 9th April, 2002). Our analysis of cinema industry statistics for Ireland in particular, problematises the notion of a 'national' industry as we see its dependence on co-productions and international productions to keep it afloat. However, a healthy domestic industry in a wider international context still permits the fostering of something resembling an indigenous cinema although there is a host of challenges due to the nature of these one-off projects. The domestic box-office success of *The Wind that Shakes the Barley* provides indubitable proof of the hunger of Irish cinema-goers for seeing representations of their own past and present on screen.

In Chapter 6 we shall examine a body of films produced in and around the nineties to see how they reflect not just an Ireland of the past but also the Ireland in which they were produced when the Catholic Church was toppled from its pre-eminent position in Irish society. In the following chapter, Chapter 5, we shall return to Quebec to examine that society's relationship with its Catholic heritage as reflected in its extensive canon of films.

## Chapter 5

### Quebec Cinema and its relationship to its Catholic heritage

#### Introduction

In this chapter, I will be looking at how Quebec cinema interacts with its Catholic tradition. Firstly, when Church influence was widespread and seen as 'natural' - prior to the 60s; secondly, when both the Quiet Revolution and the sexual revolution were ushered in together in the 60s and the cinema, from that point on, relished the tackling of subjects which were previously taboo; thirdly, in the mid-70s and 80s, while overt reference to the Catholic religion disappears, its influence is still registered in many films, sometimes to show its irrelevance to daily life, the prayers that go unanswered etc., or to comment on contemporary trends. In other films of the late eighties, especially the films of Denys Arcand, the kind of moral markers previously provided by the Catholic Church are noteworthy by their absence and Arcand in his films expresses dismay at the cynicism, materialism and individualism that have replaced them. These are seen as rampant among the middle classes following the Quiet Revolution, having replaced a previous sense of the common good and a common purpose.

Lastly, I will show how the contemporary cinema which emerges in a post-Catholic, post-modern Quebec showing signs of melancholia or malaise, post-referendum syndrome, as it is often termed, foregrounds not so much a nostalgia for past certainties, although this is still pertinent - but a re-kindling of interest at a symbolical level in the Christian trajectories of sin and redemption or, 'death', and resurrection. Gender relations, especially within the cinematic family, appear to reflect the state of the nation in both Irish and Quebec cinemas. The weak father is a long-established trope in Quebec cinema. Also, many key characters in Quebec cinema are orphans or have lost at least one parent. The family as microcosm of the nation is seen in the many domestic fictions emanating from both Ireland and Quebec. Barton (2004, p127) speaks of the 'elision of

family and nation' in Irish cinema. The trope of the incomplete family has been seen as mirroring Quebec's incomplete project of nationhood (Marshall, 2000, p63). The nation's problem of self-definition is reflected in the individual and especially in the family unit. In contemporary films the male is not so much weak as almost completely supplanted in the single-parent family of the lone mother, a real-life situation backed up by statistics as we have explored in Chapter 2. In contemporary Quebec film, then, the model of the nuclear family is frequently absent and the mother exists with her child in a fatherless world. The theme of survival common to many Canadian and Quebec literary works - and usefully delineated by Margaret Atwood (1996) in her 1972 study of Canadian literature: *Survival: A Thematic Guide to Canadian Literature* - is an important one also in early Quebec cinema. We will see it re-emerge in later films.

### **The Early Period**

Three famous Quebec films of the forties and fifties show us the central role of the priest in the lives of his parishioners. *Le Curé de village* ([The Village Priest] Gury, 1949), *La Petite Aurore, l'enfant martyre* ([Little Aurore, the child-martyr] Bigras, 1951) and *Tit-Coq* (Gélinas, 1952) underline his pastoral role in the community. *Le Curé de village* shows how he infiltrates parish life at every level, touches every age group, and guides his people in both the spiritual and material worlds. In conversation with his housekeeper, he comments on his role: 'The parish priest is the spiritual granary where everyone comes to take a little courage, hope and trust'. (B22)

The film is a homage to the work of the parish priest. Quebec society will never again seem so unproblematic. A film of this era does not ask awkward questions about the rights of the individual. In this film, the curé deliberately keeps a daughter ignorant of her real paternity (an escaped convict) and makes her father deny his, because it would compromise the girl's social aspirations. Both the spiritual and the bourgeois demands of the text are satisfied in the concealing of the father's identity. It is interesting that in a cinema where the father, generally, is weak or absent, the Church removes him deliberately here, in fact it, itself, fills up (or at least believes that it can) the void that he has left. The point would seem to be that the daughter, Juliette, doesn't need her real

father because she has a much better one in the curé. This is in keeping with what we have learnt about the role of the Church within the Catholic home in previous chapters.

*La Petite Aurore, l'enfant martyre* adapted from the very successful stage play of the same name which was first produced in 1920 and was based on a true story, was a landmark film because of its enormous success at the Quebec box office and also, in terms of introducing the archetypal ineffectual Quebec father, who was to feature in a host of Quebec films. Interestingly, a remake was released in 2005. The film delineates the torture that a young girl Aurore is subjected to by her wicked stepmother, Marie-Louise, while the father remains oblivious to her cruelty. A neighbour discloses her suspicions to the curé who goes to visit Aurore. He refers to her as a 'martyre', a martyr. Quebec of course has a long tradition of martyrs, particularly the early Jesuit priests who came to convert the Aborigines as we mentioned in Chapter 2. The curé, who clearly sees suffering as a virtue, tells Aurore: 'Le bon Dieu t'aidera', 'the Good Lord will help you'. There are overtones of the sufferings of Jesus in the Crown of thorns analogy as Marie Louise rubs Aurore's head on the briars. The Good Lord doesn't get there in time, however, and the little girl eventually expires.

Aurore's father, the neighbours and the priest all had their suspicions but no-one intervened in time. The priest who has a privileged position in the parish - as demonstrated in *Le Curé de village* - as he is the centre of parish intelligence, as it were, should have been able to do something about it. Although the film shows his negligence, it is seen as a fault that many in the parish shared including the girl's own father, who should have been her closest protector. Above all, it is the woman Marie-Louise who is presented as the demon, the source of all the evil in the film. Her condemning to death provides the audience with the necessary catharsis without having to interrogate the flaws in the institutions of the Church and the family in whose midst a little girl was so brutally tortured. The doctor says: 'L'enfant meurt épuisé par la souffrance' (The child died exhausted by suffering) and Marie Louise is condemned to death by hanging.

Another famous stage adaptation, *Tit-Coq*, shows the illegitimate hero's search for a family and love. An army private, he belongs to a family of sorts but the hero's future

seems to hold out great promise when he becomes engaged to Marie-Ange, the sister of his army best friend. His spiritual adviser, the army chaplain, or *Padre*, as he is called, advises him every step of the way. The padre appears at all the significant parts of Tit-Coq's life and is a constant source of compassion and encouragement. Tit-Coq and Marie Ange become engaged. However, Tit-Coq is posted abroad, and, after a year or so, Marie-Ange's letters stop arriving and he eventually hears news of her marriage. When Tit-Coq eventually catches up with Marie-Ange and their love is rekindled, the padre arrives at the last minute to protect the hero from himself, becoming in effect, his mobile conscience. Tit-Coq recognises the truth of his admonitions and walks off alone at the film's close.

Critics such as Heinz Weinmann (1990) see in *La Petite Aurore* and *Tit-Coq* allegories of Quebec's political situation. Aurore is like Quebec, in thrall to its wicked stepmother, English Canada, pining for its real mother, France. He sees Tit-Coq as the first positive Quebec hero in that he walks away totally independent at the end of the film, owing nothing to his past, familial or otherwise, master of his own destiny. Quebec, at the end of the fifties, is similarly moving away from its collective and historical past and beginning to entertain ideas of independence. Despite his so-called independence, Tit-Coq still submits to the power of the Church and we note that the padre reverses all the decisions that he makes throughout the film. Tit Coq never ceases to recognise the padre's authority in the double-whammy, as it were, of his clerical collar and army uniform. The combination of ecclesiastical and military power is very potent in the film, and, Tit-Coq, for all his apparent independence, is still very much in thrall to the Church at the film's end. It will take Claude Jutra's *Mon oncle Antoine* in the early seventies to dismiss this patriarchal authority.

Michel Houle (1980, p165) commented on these characters from Quebec cinema of the 40s and 50s:

A certain version of the history of Quebec as seen by the clerical and the petty bourgeois *élites* is condensed into these individual destinies: although conquered, dominated politically and economically, the people of Quebec remain unfailing defenders of their language and their faith'.

As we discussed in Chapter 2, the 1960s ushered in enormous social change in the form of Quebec's Quiet Revolution, 'La Révolution tranquille'. The period prior to the sixties was presided over by Maurice Duplessis of the Union Nationale party - and has been referred to as 'La grande noirceur', the great darkness. This very conservative period, marked by political patronage, instanced a very strong bond between government and Church. Quebec's révolution boosted the self-confidence of Québécois who would become, in the words of Liberal government leader, Jean LeSage, 'Maîtres chez nous' - masters in our own house. Quebec's economic life was controlled by anglophones up to this point, as we have discussed. Throughout the province, the 7% of the labor force that was anglophone held 30% of all management and 80% of all top managerial positions and francophone income was 40% below the provincial average (O'Sullivan See, 1986, pp138-139). Filmmaker Jean-Pierre Lefebvre (Donohue, 1991, p80) summed up this pre-Revolutionary period:

...the images...all the Québécois absorbed until 1956 were under the direct control of a number of 'gods,' each more inaccessible and paternalistic than the next: the god of Hollywood, the god of the Catholic Church, and the god of Canadian federalism whose official voice was the National Film Board..... [but] the clergy and the politicians could no longer keep out the rest of the world. Not even Maurice Duplessis, Quebec's little premier-dictator, who held the laws of God and man in his hands over a period of twenty years, (between 1936 and 1959), could keep our minds imprisoned forever.

Two landmark films which have had successful remakes were *Maria Chapdelaine* (Duvivier, 1934 and Carle, 1983 [Allégret, 1949, *The Naked Heart*]) and *Un Homme et son péché* ([A man and his sin] Gury, 1948 and Binamé, 2002). *Maria Chapdelaine* provided a major foundational myth for Quebec showing Quebecers' attachment to language, land and faith. Despite the horrors of a Quebec winter, the sense of isolation and sheer misery, the determination of this devout little French colony is illustrated in Maria's final words in Carle's film: 'Je reste' ('I'm staying'). Duvivier's film, which was faithful to Breton Louis Hémon's original novel of 1914, was a critical and box-office success in Quebec. As Marshall (2001, p95) notes, there were very few cinematic images of Quebec available to the Québécois at this time. Speaking of the novel, he comments:

In Quebec, *Maria Chapdelaine* was co-opted by the clerical-nationalist elites in the 1920s, particularly for the project of internal colonization, the creation and settlement of new agricultural land in Abitibi and elsewhere which would perpetuate Quebec's rural, traditional, and Catholic vocation and obviate the need for urbanization or emigration to industrial jobs in the United States ( ibid. p91).

Duvivier's film with a French producer and French stars (Jean Gabin and Madelaine Renaud) and the use of metropolitan French was nonetheless, as Marshall comments, 'seized upon by those of a clerical-nationalist bent to appropriate the film as part of their hegemonic project' (ibid. p95). The final words in the film are spoken by a priest in the form of a sermon which underscores the importance of their heritage and their traditions: 'In the land of Quebec, nothing must die, nothing must change'. ('Au pays de Québec, rien ne doit mourir, rien ne doit changer'). Following this, Maria chooses a local suitor, Eutrope, over Lorenzo from the city who is tainted by the English language, and makes the decision to stay.

Carle's film while still emphasising Maria's devotion to God, gives greater cinematic space to the Other, the native peoples, and as Marshall (2001) notes, identity here is more fluid than in the earlier film. After all it was created in the post-Quiet Revolution period when the Québécois identity was undergoing enormous change. He considers the Indians are 'used to represent a line of flight away from Catholicism and sedentarism and to embody a pagan relationship to nature which Carle even connects with Hémon's native Brittany' (ibid. p101). The fact that the film was a French-Quebec co-production similarly problematises for Marshall 'any stable notions of national authenticity' (ibid. p102). Carle's own ethnic origins plus the use of actress Carole Laure, a highly sexualised figure in other of his works, inevitably overlays the director's own concerns on the earlier works. We shall examine Carle's use of the cult of nature and Christian symbolism in our later discussion of *La Vraie nature de Bernadette* (1972).

*Un Homme et son péché* introduced the avaricious figure of Séraphin who personifies the perversions of capitalism and sexuality. Paul Gury was responsible for a trilogy comprising *Un homme et son péché*, *Le curé de village* and *Séraphin*. Melnyk (2004) quotes Quebec film historian, Pierre Véronneau, who described these films as 'cowboys

in cassocks'. The priest's authority and standing in his community is constantly underlined in films of this era. Although the priest may at times be seen as ineffectual (in *Aurore*, for example), he is never overtly criticised. The novel by Claude-Henri Grignon, published in 1933, gave rise to a radioplay in 1939, Gury's adaptation in 1949 and a famous TV series, *Les belles histoires des pays d'en haut* in 1956. Charles Binamé was to reintroduce *Séraphin. Un homme et son péché* to the cinema in 2002. This modern version of the film of the miserly Séraphin and his young sacrificial bride, Donalda, became on release, the biggest box-office success in the history of Quebec cinema. Binamé's film, like its antecedents, emphasises Donalda's sense of duty and subservience to paternal authority, sacrificing herself in marriage to Séraphin in order to cancel her father's debts. Chantale Gingras and Georges Desmeules (2003, pp 98-100) see Donalda as a symbol of Quebec society at the beginning of the 20<sup>th</sup> century, still subservient to the authorities at large and not daring to question the status quo. Interestingly though, the abbé Raudin who tells Donalda to listen to her conscience, is himself engaged in a sexual relationship with the local schoolteacher. In fact, most figures of authority are seen to renege on their responsibilities and are seen to contribute to the death of Donalda. Hence, the later versions of *Maria Chapdelaine* and *Séraphin* inject a more modern perspective on questions of duty, identity and faith.

Prominent filmmaker, Denys Arcand (1964, p92) wrote about the earlier incarnations of *Aurore* and Donalda:

Aurore remains silent...so as not to make trouble for her family, and moreover, because the priest, her aunt and neighbours, because her *entire society* tells her that her place is with her father....Aurore is like Donalda, who remains with Séraphin because he is her husband in the eyes of the priest and the village. The immutable laws of god and society forbid her to leave her husband.

Arcand goes on to speak of the figure of the 'eternal French-Canadian father: stupid, coarse, a good Catholic, honest, quarrelsome, sentimental':

...he simply does not exist compared to the all-powerful mothers. As for the parish priest, the father's perennial substitute, [*Aurore*] unwittingly makes him more dangerous: it is he who....thrusts [the girl] into the arms of the stepmother-torturer (ibid.).

Arcand says that the film's authors wanted to 'make the priest a sympathetic and humane character, but unconsciously...they make him perform actions that could not be more unfortunate for Aurore'. Similarly, in *Séraphin*, he comments that the characters 'talk of nothing but the great and good Curé Labelle, while embroiled in a gigantic historical error that will cost them their lives (the establishment of colonists in the north of Montreal), instigated and directed by the blundering Curé himself'. Arcand's comments are interesting because they underline the enormous trust that the ordinary Catholic placed in members of the Church in Quebec, but also very true of the Irish context as we shall examine later. It is of course easier with the gift of hindsight to read in this an implied criticism of the agents of the Church, a reading possibly not intended by the films' makers.

The remake of *Aurore* (Dionne, 2005) is interesting for the way in which it directly attacks the *curé* in contrast to its antecedent. Indeed the role of the priest is greatly expanded and he is culpabilised for his neglect of Aurore. His own priestly ambitions – he had expected to be posted to the Vatican in line with his intellectual aspirations rather than to the village of St. Philomène – have been seriously thwarted and he shows himself to be anything but a man of the people. It is suggested also that he is in league in some way with Marie-Anne Houde, the wicked stepmother, who seems to be able to quote scripture as successfully as he does. The depiction of the priest, played by well-known actor Yves Jacques, who had played the gay character in Arcand's *Le déclin* and *Les invasions barbares*, amounts to little more than caricature. His response to the demise of Aurore amid revelations about her torture, by blowing himself up, is so extreme that it is risible. It is also worth noting that the larger share of the blame is projected onto the priest here rather than the stepmother as was the case in the earlier versions.

So, why does a remake of this emblematic Quebec play and film wage war on a representative of the Catholic Church at a time when the Church has limited relevance for most Quebecers? Similar to the more lascivious representation of the *curé* in the remake of *Un homme et son péché*, there appears to be a certain settling of scores at work on the part of these baby-boomer filmmakers who themselves had lived – and

perhaps suffered - under the yoke of the Catholic Church. The film *Le survenant* (Canuel, 2005) provides another example of a conservative Catholic society. All three films - remakes and literary adaptation - were producers' rather than directors' films as Éric Bédard (2007, p2) has pointed out:

These three films aren't about artists who have a message to deliver to us, a vision of the world that they want to share, but a production machine who sensed a good opportunity and who put together a team to deliver it. (B23)

The box-office success of all three - aided by the avalanche of publicity before and after the release of the films as we discussed in the previous chapter - vindicated the producers' pragmatic decisions to make them. We will return to our discussion of these renderings of Quebec classics a little later when we see that they have something in common with a number of Irish films under discussion.

To recap on the late thirties, forties and fifties, never again in Quebec cinema would the Catholic Church enjoy such status and such devotion. With the onset of la Révolution tranquille, and as the Church was toppled from its pre-eminent position in society, so too was its previously hallowed image tarnished in its cinematic representation.

### **After the Révolution**

Following the Quiet Revolution, the Catholic Church as we saw in Chapter 3, lost control of health, education and welfare and vast numbers of religious left their orders. The massive secularization produced by the Quiet Revolution emptied the churches and made practising Catholics into a minority in Quebec. As we noted in Chapter 3, between 1961 and 1971, the rate of Church attendance in the diocese of Montreal fell from 61% to 30%. From 1960 to 1981 the number of priests had halved. (Lineal et al, 1989). Furthermore, the number of worshippers attending Sunday mass had fallen to 17% in 1987 (Bibby, 1988).

One film which shows us a society in transition, and the resulting *malaise*, is Michel Brault's *Entre la mer et l'eau douce* (1967). The singer Claude Gauthier stars in this

film which is loosely based on his own life. It recounts the hero's progress from humble beginnings working on a boat transporting logs up the St. Lawrence River to his success as a singer/songwriter at Montreal's famous Place des Arts.

The boat bringing Claude to Montreal stops off at the port of Trois-rivières and Claude has an encounter with a prostitute. However, his awareness of his transgression leads him to confession shortly afterwards and to his penance: the Stations of the Cross. However, by the film's close, Claude has betrayed his girlfriend with a married woman, and at his brother, Roger's Christmas gathering, he parodies the hymn 'Silent Night' and the ringing of the church bells at midnight mass in St. Irenée. Like Quebec, he has moved on.

A slightly earlier and commercially successful film, *Trouble-fête* (Pierre Patry, 1964) set in a Catholic 'collège classique' follows the efforts of a young student, Lucien, to stand up to his religious superiors. His mature, reasoned approach contrasts with that of his peers who rebel openly against their superiors. In a classroom scene that would have been shocking a decade earlier, it is clear that the teacher/priest has completely lost his authority and the respect of his students as they launch paper planes into his face and interrupt him repeatedly with their shouting and brawling. It is clear that the religious are losing the battle for the hearts and minds of their young Catholic students.

Various figures of paternal authority are presented as weak or predatory on the young students. From Lucien's inadequate father who sides with the collège authorities, to the man who makes sexual advances towards Lucien which ultimately provokes his own death. Lucien is finally punished with expulsion for his rebellion and especially the article he wrote entitled 'Le temps de compromis est fini' (The time for compromise is over). Although he is shown to be morally superior to his classmates and is a born leader, none of his potential is tapped and the final scene of the film shows Lucien, who has returned to the scene of the accident involving the predatory homosexual, roaring out in frustration as the uncomprehending crowd descends on him.

Claude and Lucien – two figures at opposite ends of the economic scale register the changing face of Quebec society and the collapse of the traditional reverence for the Church and its precepts. Gilles Groulx's seminal *Un Chat dans le sac* (1964) (produced by Patry) and one of *cinéma direct*'s most famous offerings, presents another Claude, a politically more advanced young man than Brault's Claude or Lucien. Claude, like Lucien, wants to transform his milieu and, at a time when the old familiar ideologies have been discarded, he searches for something to give new meaning to his life. Like Lucien, he is critical of the education he has received:

I grew up in schools under the supervision of hypocrite priests. I received an education which teaches us faith rather than how to think.

He goes on to speak of mediocrity and alienation and of the French-Canadian minority status in Canada. Jean-Claude Jaubert (1978, p16) reflects on the absence of the hallmarks of the previous era:

Contrary to what we saw in the previous period, there is no longer the presence of an omnipotent power: no representative of the clergy, no representative of political power...The profound reason for the crisis which Claude is living through is of having rejected an old ideology without having found another to take its place. (B24).

Interestingly, Claude's position as we shall later show is very similar to that of the young protagonists in a host of Quebec films in the nineties and 2000 where a spiritual void is even more marked due to the collapse of this grand narrative. The gains of the Quiet Revolution - money, and power of sorts - have not achieved their desired result. The absence of the father, of any moral authority and of any political power, leaves Claude according to Jaubert, confronting an ideological void.

Yves Lever (1991, p638) sums up this period considering that Claude, who is in his twenties, in fact represents the experience of Groulx's older generation of filmmakers (in their thirties) who lived through the angst, indecision and repression of a society in transition:

It is their own youth, lived in the more or less suffocating context of the end of the 40s and during the 50s that they show on the screen: sterile and often aborted revolts, repressed audacity, fear of women, repression of the imagination etc.

### **Comedies and ‘maple-syrup porn’**

The films from the 60s through to the 80s show us an overt rejection of Quebec’s traditional values, in particular its religious heritage. Genre films from the sixties on such as comedies and a certain ‘maple-syrup porn’ as it was dubbed, did not feel the need to tiptoe round previously hallowed subjects and deliberately set out to shock, amuse and titillate. The wounded Catholic Church, although a soft target, was still a novelty, and the fact that one could attack with relative impunity made it all the more attractive.

In 1968 appeared Denis Héroux’s *Valérie* which marked a new departure in Quebec cinema and produced its first ‘skin-flick’. The term ‘désahabiller la québécoise’ (‘undressing the Quebec girl’) was used to show the erotic intentions of this cinema. *Valérie* tells the story of a sexually precocious convent girl, Valérie, an orphan, whom the nuns are having difficulty containing. Her escape from the convent on the back of her boyfriend’s motorbike signals the start of a new career involving topless dancing and prostitution.

The film contains gratuitous nudity as Valérie’s breasts are bared at every opportunity, irrespective of any narrative demands. The film reflects the ‘swinging sixties’ and there is even a homage to Godard’s *Breathless* (*À bout de souffle*, 1960) when Valérie is shown selling newspapers in the street.

Her first job as a topless dancer provides further voyeuristic opportunities. While she dances, the image of her Mother superior is seen in a vortex swirling menacingly towards her and damning her: ‘Some of your companions saw you walking almost naked in the dormitory’ (‘presque nue dans le dortoir’). The nun appears for a second time repeating the phrase ‘nearly naked in the corridor’, but this time she is smiling lasciviously denoting lesbian tendencies.

The more lucrative and ‘less exhausting’ career of prostitution coincides with her meeting and falling in love with an artist, the very respectable, Patrick, who has a son. It is here that the narrative takes a new turn and we realize that for all the sexual titillation the film has provided, it is in fact a cautionary tale! Subsequent episodes will reveal exactly what Valérie has reaped from her immoral ways. As Patrick learn from a friend that Valérie is ‘the prettiest whore in town’ all appears lost. However, and luckily for Valérie, Patrick’s love is stronger than her misdemeanours and marriage is proposed. She will now gain respectability through marriage and motherhood and is finally saved for the Catholic Church. Hence, despite the semi-nudity, titillation and the plethora of voyeuristic opportunity that the film has provided, we are to see it ultimately as a moral film. Michel Houle (Véronneau etc, 1980, p165) sums up this feeling:

...our first ‘skin flick’, tells us a very moral story where Christian virtues are present: a lost sheep (Valérie) straying from the path of virtue (prostitution), is brought back to the fold (marriage and family life), by a good shepherd (her husband, the painter), big-hearted, understanding and forgiving. Amen!

The film’s hairstylists’ and couturiers’ credits show that there were other motives also in releasing this type of film as it is clearly also a showcase for fashion and points to a new type of consumerism. *Valérie* was the most successful film of the decade in box-office revenues and marked the beginning of a Quebec popular cinema as Marshall (2001, p65) notes. He sees *Valérie* as ‘about the new shocks and stimuli of modernity which serve to reconstruct the self, its perception and pleasures’ (ibid. p67). He also sees it as establishing a new hegemony which is non-religious and consumerist.

A film released a few years earlier, Giles Carle’s *La vie heureuse de Léopold Z* (1965), fuses the religious and the consumerist for comic effect. Léopold Tremblay living in the east of Montreal, is a snow-plough operator, one of Quebec cinema’s ‘little men’. The film is replete with gags as when Léopold applies for a bank loan (to buy his wife Catherine’s fur coat) and he replies ruefully to the question: ‘Married? Divorced?’ with ‘Catholique’. Temptation is provided by the arrival of his sister-in-law, Josette, and he and his boss and friend, Théophile, are lost in sexual fantasy while watching her sing and dance in a local bar. The men stay too long in the bar however, and on exiting find that the snow has fallen heavily and there is a lot of work to be done. Fortunately,

Léopold's fear that he will have to miss midnight mass for the first time ever is not realised.

The mass provides the film's climax as Léopold climbs up the steps of the famous Montreal church, Oratoire de St. Joseph, with the fur coat in his hands for Catherine, the choir providing an appropriate soundtrack. As he gives Catherine the fur coat their hands are joined. The frame fills with her hand on the fur coat - establishing her materialism and his desire to satisfy her. We note the incongruity of giving her a luxury present in the church, and at mass, while ostensibly attending to the spiritual. The film shows how both the spiritual and the material are now competing for Québécois attention while also pointing at the increasing intersection of Roman Catholicism and capitalist consumerism.

Another comedy which was hugely successful in Quebec was *Deux femmes en or* (Fournier, 1970). We see a similar matrix of interests – the Church, materialism and sex – as in the films just discussed but here it is modern suburban life which is under the microscope. At the start of the film, the densely packed suburban housing of Montreal is fore-grounded. Fernande Turcot and Violette Lamoureux are two bored suburban housewives with every material comfort whose husbands, Bob and Yvon T., are frequently absent from home. Violette is unaware that her husband, Bob, is unfaithful. Both women decide to alleviate their boredom by having sex with strangers and there follows a number of highly exaggerated sequences where the women attempt to seduce the various tradesmen who call to their homes. Fernande does not stop at strangers either as she also beds Violette's husband.

The film takes advantage of the kind of sexual freedom initiated by *Valérie* but for purely comic effect without any of the moralising. It also can't resist numerous side-swipes at Anglo-Canadians and gentle humour at the Church. When Violette and Bob's home is chosen as Suburban House of the Year - 'La maison de la banlieue de l'année', both the mayor and the curé preside over the ceremony. The presence of the priest as in some other films, acts to underscore the transgressive nature of the women's behaviour and to increase its titillation. This is hammed up in the curé's speech: 'Que l'étranger y

soit bien accueilli.’ (‘May the stranger be welcome here.’) at the moment of its blessing. Of course, the stranger has been welcomed here to a degree that he would never have suspected. During the champagne reception, in a scene that recalls a similar moment in *Valérie*, all goes well until Violette recognises a former paramour in the carpet cleaner. The blessing of the house however has no effect on the women’s future sexual escapades.

Many of these sex-comedies have taken advantage of the Church’s fall from grace to allow themselves the pleasure of a number of jokes at its expense. The breaking of sexual taboos with reference to the Church provides titillating scenarios which are unsubtle but not malicious. A much more recent film, George Mihalka’s *La Florida* (1993), which won the Golden Reel award for highest-grossing Quebec film of that year, calls upon saints and clerics to add humour to the script, underscoring the Québécois’ Catholic tradition which they take with them even to Florida, the preferred escape from Quebec’s freezing winters.

As bus driver, Léo Lespérance packs up to leave home and retire to Florida, he is seen throwing out a life-sized statue of St. Jude. His elderly father - Pépère - protests at this sacrilege, saying that just because he hasn’t been to mass for 20 years doesn’t mean that he’s not religious: ‘We were more Catholic when we understood nothing’. (‘C’était plus catholique quand on ne comprenait rien’.) He wins out and the statue comes too. There is a striking visual gag as the statue is later seen emerging from a tunnel lashed to the top of their van like an enormous battering ram: the ‘saintly’ québécois go into battle with the American heathen!

The local Catholic priest makes a number of appearances and is seen to be more interested in golf than in saving souls. Religion’s failure to respond directly to human dilemmas is given an amusing twist when Léo feeling abandoned by his family, his business in ruins, sits down to have a drink with his buddy St. Jude. When he fails to respond to Léo’s need, he throws the life-size statue of the saint out the window.

One of the greatest jibes at the Church is saved for the final scenes of the film when Pèpère, the grandfather, nearly drowns trying to recover St. Jude from the swimming pool. He is next pictured on his 'death bed', lying on the sofa, with the family around him. The priest arrives with neither candles nor holy oil. Pèpère is disgusted with these make-shift Last Rites and sits up to lambaste the Church for its neglect of tradition – 'the mass has become a video-clip', he claims. He tells the priest he doesn't know how to give Extreme Unction with: 'I don't want to be expedited into the next life like a golf ball...It's not surprising that the churches are empty'.

Of course, Pèpère himself had long ceased going to mass. He exemplifies the québécois who, although he has tossed off the over-bearing Church, nonetheless wants the Church to step in when he needs it and then, to fulfil its role properly. This is in keeping with our discussion of contemporary attitudes to the Church in Chapter 3. In contrast, Léo of the next generation has learnt that the québécois must do it for himself. His various problems are solved by wielding a gun in true American fashion rather than with reference to Quebec's traditional recourse to religion. This working-class drama exploits class differences and religious allusion for facile jokes but at the same time, succeeds in being very funny as evidenced in its appreciation at the box-office.

Films like *Valérie* (1968), *Deux femmes en or* (1970) and *La Florida* (1993) show an exhilaration in their flouting of the rules. Scenes where Catholic priests (or nuns) appear are notable for their comic excess and the luxury of disobedience without fear of chastisement. It is perhaps surprising that a film as late as the very secular mid-nineties would still use religious reference for the purposes of being transgressive. This evidence that Catholicism can still be a potent force in the Québécois psyche despite decades of secularism will be more fully discussed later in this chapter.

### **Breaking new ground: Masterworks of the post-Révolution**

Michel Houle (Véronneau and Handling, 1980, pp169-177) in discussing seventies film, says that it has French-Canadians ask themselves about the place that they occupy in society. Filmmakers of that period, he says, will 'emphasize, in the definition of their

characters, the economic and social position of their protagonists'. The main goal of Quebec cinema in this period is to 'consolidate the togetherness, the identity of the people of Quebec, to depict them through these *ordinary people*'. The nationalist ideology of the Parti québécois was becoming dominant at this time and there was the aforementioned October Crisis. He continues :

The cinema of the sixties and the first years of the seventies, was always searching for *identity*...it was trying to assert the specificity of the québécois people...[and] the economic and political exploitation of these people by *others*, the *others* being the *federal* political power, *Anglo-Saxon* capitalism, and *American* imperialism. About the middle of the seventies, this growing awareness of belonging to a people, of being a people, caused no further problems anymore; it is an established fact.

Claude Jutra's much fêted *Mon Oncle Antoine* (1971) explores many of the important debates alluded to above and is worth exploring in some detail. Although set before the Quiet Revolution, it underscores the urgent need for a re-making of Quebec. The film is set in the 1940s in the small town of Black Lake, in the asbestos mining region of Estrie. The setting recalls the key strike at Asbestos in 1949, as discussed in Chapter 2. As Marshall (2001, p141) reminds us it became

...a cause célèbre for modernizing intellectuals against the Duplessis regime and has been inserted into a whole linear and teleological history of Quebec culminating in the Quiet Revolution.

Two stories run parallel and eventually intersect. The adolescent and orphaned Benoît lives with his uncle Antoine and aunt Cécile who run a shop-cum-funeral parlour, the *magasin général*. Most of the events of the film are seen from his point-of-view. The other story concerns Jos Poulin who works in the mine for an English boss. We see him arguing with him at the start of the film and then resigning in disgust and going off to work at a lumber camp to be 'free'. The figure of the 'coureur de bois', the fur-trapper, or 'bûcheron', lumber-jack, is an iconic one in Quebec cinema defining the largely absent father from the Quebec family. Poulin thus abandons his family and leaves his wife to deal with their fifteen-year old son's illness and eventual death. Jos later returns from the lumber camp to find his son's coffin abandoned in the snow by the drunken Antoine.

Benoît observes the depravity of the adult world which includes his uncle's drunkenness and his aunt's adultery. His irreverence towards the Catholic Church is shown when, as altar boy, but in the sacristy, he eats the Host, drinks altar wine and later falls asleep at mass. However, the priest is also observed by Benoît drinking altar wine in the sacristy. Religious worship is further undermined when The Nativity scene, unveiled ceremoniously in Uncle Antoine's shop window, is damaged when the baby Jesus is dropped.

The climax of adult irresponsibility is seen when Benoît accompanies the increasingly drunken Uncle Antoine to collect the body of young Marcel Poulain. Antoine falls asleep on the return journey with Marcel's coffin on the back of his sleigh. Benoît takes the reins but is rather too enthusiastic in his encouragement of the horse and the coffin falls off. Antoine is unable to help him, uttering a phrase that summarises the ineptitude of many of the adults in the film: 'I am not able' ('Je suis pas capable'). Benoît is already handicapped with a bandaged hand. He accurately refers to his uncle as 'ivrogne' (drunkard). Fernand and Cécile are discovered making love on Benoît's return so the adolescent alone is the responsible one and summons help for the runaway coffin. Jos, himself, ends up rescuing the remains of his son providing a most harsh reproach for his desertion. An ironic inversion of the Nativity scene is witnessed by Benoît as the grief-stricken family kneels to pray at the coffin of the dead son. No priest officiates here. The Catholic family as emblematic of the ideal family is seriously undermined.

*Mon oncle Antoine* challenges, as Gittings (2002, pp115-116) notes, all the power structures of the period: the Catholic Church, Duplessis and anglophone dominance of labour. Jos returns to his friends, proclaiming that he will not be another victim of the mine, 'naming and indicting the social structures that work to oppress and alienate him': 'the hell with them, the English...the undertaker, the priest, the boss, the whole bunch...I'm getting the hell out.'

Thus, *Mon oncle Antoine* is a very serious appraisal of the political and religious forces at work in Quebec on the threshold of the Quiet Revolution. However, it also shows the potential for liberation through acknowledgement and rejection of the old order. For Ian

Lockerbie (1988), Benoît is the 'precursor of the Quiet Revolution and of modern Quebec nationalism' (cited in Marshall, 2001, p141).

Two films by major Québécois filmmaker, Gilles Carle, *La vraie nature de Bernadette* (1972) and *La Mort d'un bûcheron* (1973) make use of Catholic narratives and iconography for comic effect but also to provide the kind of sexual titillation we saw in *Valérie* and *Deux femmes en or*. A pleasure in the breaking of sexual and religious taboos and the use of farce and buffoonery are common in his films which take advantage of the post Quiet Revolution climate in which it is safe to poke fun at the newly deserted institution of the Church.

Carle is also noted for the erotic nature of his work, particularly the objectification of women and quite a gratuitous use of nudity. His earlier work, *Les Mâles* (1971) dealt also with a return to nature but its intentions are less serious than that of *Bernadette*. *Bernadette* has a serious political message and although it showcases some of Carle's predilections as noted earlier, the struggle between Bernadette, the idealist and Thomas, the realist, is what gives the film its particular interest.

This film tells the story of Bernadette Brown who leaves her husband and, with her young son, moves from the city to the country to live, as she thinks, a rural idyll. Carle here plays with the story of Bernadette Soubirous to whom the Blessed Virgin Mary appeared at Lourdes. He uses the hagiographic material not simply to make fun of the Catholic Church and religious beliefs, although there is plenty of parody and satire here, but to highlight the ways in which people deceive themselves and the compromises we all make. While the story is deliberately irreverent at times, it nonetheless tackles some serious subjects in its representation of the abuse of political and police power. This is post-October Crisis after all. It also picks up many of the themes from Quebec cinema of the early period plus the 70s and 80s, with its proliferation of orphans, mute persons and absent fathers.

The dominant colour of the film is blue - 'Virgin Mary blue'. After Bernadette's first 'miracle' - the water gushing into a formerly dry well, and the abandoned boy, Napoléon,

(whose mother is called Marie-Madeleine) walking and talking for the first time, she places the blue shawl over her head Madonna-like. Carle through this colour and this gesture gently mocks the similarity between Bernadette and her name-sake. In Bernadette's tussles with the farmer, Thomas, Carle opposes tradition to modernity. Bernadette wants to maintain the old traditional ways of farming - free-range hens and bringing the bull to the cow. Thomas' battery hens and surreptitious use of the 'AI man' show his more modernising impulse. The plot serves to undermine Bernadette's beliefs in that the hens she 'rescues' are killed when left to roam, and the bull and cow refuse to oblige when they are brought together to mate. Thomas' way may be unnatural but it is the more successful of the two options.

Bernadette strives to exist in a state of nature and extends her message of free love to the various men - young and old - who come her way. A trio of old men which includes Thomas' father, comes like the Three Wise Men bearing gifts. Of course, Bernadette's own sexual generosity to the men in return is firmly outside of any religious doctrine. Thomas is presumably so named because he is indeed 'Doubting Thomas' in his attitude to Bernadette's actions and his scepticism is upheld in the film's dénouement.

The two hoodlums who arrive at Bernadette's to fix the roof and end up staying like the 'three wise men', call themselves St. Mark and St. Luke. Carle once again parodies the idea of 'sainthood' as both turn out to be thieves. St. Mark eventually shoots and kills the lame youth, Rock, who had tried to sabotage their car. When Thomas' father shoots after the men as they attempt to flee, he accidentally shoots off the head of a statue of Jesus foreshadowing the ill-treatment of St. Jude's statue in *La Florida*. On both occasions, it provides a commentary on the ineffectiveness of religion in times of real need.

The cinematography, especially the panoramic landscape shots showing distant figures on a hillside, recalls the Biblical epic films of the Old Testament. There is a timelessness about these scenes which is contradicted in the political events in the film and the erosion of farmers' rights and Thomas' modernising impulse. Bernadette's rural idyll eventually flounders. Following the 'miracles', crowds including journalists, gather

around Bernadette's house and she is quite disconcerted. As Rock tells her to talk to them, she replies: 'To say what? That the Holy Virgin has appeared to me...that she is launching a universal appeal?' Bernadette clearly rejects any religious or spiritual dimension to her activities. She eventually joins Thomas and the farmers' protest dumping agricultural produce on the motorway. As Bernadette shoots her shotgun into the crowd who are looting the food, it is clear that the countryside is no longer a locus of peace and tranquillity for her. What is happening at provincial and federal level impacts on everyone. Bernadette Devlin, the Northern Irish political activist, is heard on the radio at the moment of the violent demonstration when Bernadette takes up the gun. Thus, her militancy recalls that of another highly politicised woman.

Lieve Spaas (2000, p88) comments of the main character:

[Bernadette's] seeking a new identity and lifestyle is based on the vague ideologies of the late 1960s and early 1970s, which advocated free, communal living and exalted the value of close contact with the earth. But the new life Bernadette chooses is based more on an emotional rejection of her bourgeois life than on a well-defined choice.

She considers that the most 'striking aspect of Québécois identity' in the film is 'the inescapable religious foundation upon which both individual and collective identity rests' (ibid.p89). Overall, Carle's film delights in its use of farce and erotic excess but, ultimately, is guilty of a certain ideological confusion.

In another film by Carle, *La Mort d'un bûcheron* (1973) Maria Chapdelaine - recalling her important literary and cinematic antecedent as discussed previously - moves to the city, Montreal, in search of her father. She starts work as a topless Country and Western singer in a seedy bar. The influence of *Valérie* is seen here in the gratuitous nudity and the pseudo-moral drama in the reclaiming of the heroine for more moral purposes by the drama's end. Maria's father was a 'bûcheron', a lumberjack, who has not been seen for many years. Francois Paradis, whom Maria loves in Louis Hémon's famous novel, is a journalist who becomes her boyfriend. Under the guise of saving her from degradation, he becomes her pimp, securing her services for a host of male clients. When she refuses to fuel the sexual fantasies of an old man who observes her on the street from his car,

François becomes very annoyed: 'Do you take yourself for the Virgin Mary, the Queen of Heaven?' - recalling the familiar virgin-whore dichotomy seen in *Valérie*.

Maria, via Armand St. Amour, her former employer, gets to meet Blanche Belle-feuille (Denise Filiatrault), her father's former mistress who delights in mocking the Catholic Church. With Maria's neighbour, Charlotte, all four head off to the woods in search of Maria's father (and Blanche's husband). En route, Blanche tells a story against her husband who had her dress up as a nun when they made love so he could get an erection. Fun is again poked at the Church as she jokes about being adorned with holy medals, scapulars and rosary beads during the act.

There is a strong criticism of the Church at one point when Maria finds a manuscript written by her father. It tells of how a Monsignor came at Christmas to celebrate midnight mass in the camp and feasted with the company boss. This was greatly resented by the men who saw it as a betrayal of them. When they got drunk, one of the men, Baptiste, set fire to the cabin and was later killed. The men, who were tired of being 'humiliated' beings, took matters into their own hands to revenge the death of their friend. This is of course, the message in the film for Maria and for Quebec. We hear her speak to her parents at the end: 'I want neither your humiliation nor your heroism anymore. No!' ('Je ne veux plus de votre humiliation ni de votre héroïsme. Non!') So, she speaks for Quebec which is learning to be independent of both its English bosses and the Catholic Church.

Francis Mankiewicz's *Les Bons débarras* (1980), like *Mon oncle Antoine*, is an important member of the Quebec, and indeed Canadian film canon. Weinmann (1990) notes that the film was released two months before the May, 1980 referendum on sovereignty-association and gives it a strong political reading. Single mothers and absent or ineffectual fathers are once again to the fore. In the Laurentians north of Montreal, a young girl, Manon, lives with her mother, Michelle, and uncle, Ti-Guy, on the fringes of society in another fatherless family. Manon, called 'Boss' by her mother, has an obsessive relationship with her mother eventually disposing of everyone – mother's

brother and policeman lover - who takes her away from Manon. Weinmann (1990, p93) comments:

One could be tempted to see *Les bons débarras* as the revenge of Aurore, an Aurore which is no longer intimidated by parental authority, who ceases to be long-suffering, a martyr, no longer taking blows silently, giving them rather.

Manon refuses the ideal of the nuclear family comprising father, mother, and child. When a friend of Michelle's, Gaétan, questions her about her father and mother she replies: 'You can get along without that' ('On peut se débrouiller sans ça'). He responds in a comment that evokes the new secular state that Quebec had become: 'We no longer have the working of the Holy spirit that we had, no longer the bosses that we had' (B25). The 'bosses' presumably also refers to both the English-Canadians and the Church.

Bill Marshall (2001, p109) references Lockerbie (1988) on the allegorical meaning of the film:

[Michèle, the mother] is the conquered self, brave but ultimately defeated, a fact symbolized by the scenes in which she is immobilized by a tire puncture or falls into mud...Manon, however, represents the Quiet Revolution generation which is assertive and self-confident, combining imagination, creativity, and aggressivity: "the aggressivity which will be necessary for Quebec to overcome its historical handicaps and to launch a social dynamic".

That other great symbol of patriarchal authority, the Catholic Church, is almost completely absent from the film. The only reference to the Church was in the previously quoted comment by the character Gaétan. By the 1980s the Catholic Church was no longer considered relevant to society at large. As we have noted, concern with Quebec's political standing and the type of society that was evolving was much more imperative and accounts in part for the many allegorical readings of *Les bons débarras*.

Two films from the late eighties and early nineties from the director Jean-Claude Lauzon underscore the irrelevance of religion to daily life and, in contrast to Mankiewicz's film, show us images of an over-bearing paternal authority. In *Un Zoo la nuit* (1987) and *Léolo* (1992), Christian imagery is used strikingly. In *Un Zoo la nuit*, the father, absent

and unworthy in so many Québécois films is not only reinstated but elevated to a near Christ-like status. The father is present to the point of tyranny in *Léolo* controlling his family's lives down to their bowel function.

Set in Montreal's Italian community, *Un Zoo la nuit*, deals mainly with the relationship between Marcel Brisebois, known as 'Poignard', who spent two years in prison for drug-dealing (sold by corrupt policemen), and his father, Albert. His father had found some of the drugs at home and hidden them in a statue of Christ. On Marcel's release from prison, we see the strengthening of the father/son bond, especially during their fishing expedition. The proposed hunting trip has to be postponed following Albert's heart-attack but Marcel finds an alternative in taking Albert to the zoo at night to shoot a captive elephant, from where the film gets its title. He photographs him with the elephant as though he was a big-game hunter, also evoking the iconography of the *coureur de bois*. On their return to the hospital, the sacramental quality of the father/son relationship is evoked as Marcel washes Albert, lays him out on the bed, and wraps him in a sheet. This scene's striking use of Christian imagery recalls the laying out of Christ's dead body when taken from the cross.

The real love affair in the film is between the son and the father in spite of the brief re-appearance of Marcel's ex-girlfriend. Marcel and his father are fully reconciled in his last moments. Marcel had told him: 'I am your son, you are my father and that still means something to me'.

Weinmann (1990, p111) shows how he resembles all the fathers of the French-Canadian imaginary: weak, he remains an underdog for the mother. As a citizen he has lost his autonomy since he lives as a parasite on the Italians who own the restaurant. The Québécois 'pure-laine's' ('dyed in the wool') dream of autonomy, has been diluted by the presence of immigrants. The closely-knit Quebec community has become a mosaic, as Weinmann says. The father is objectively a failure. He has failed his marriage, his profession, if he ever had one. He is dependant on the hospitality of the 'Other' because he has lost his 'chez-soi'. Weinmann asks, 'What son would want to identify with such a father. What son, in order to affirm himself wouldn't want to deny him?' When Albert

had gone to fetch him from the prison and waited all day not knowing he had already been released, a prison guard asks him if he is his father and he replies: 'Sometimes, I ask myself the same question'.

Yet, Lieve Spaas (2000, p105) sees another father figure emerging here - the one who secretly rescued the drug money after his son was arrested and who was able to admit that he used to listen to this son's answer-phone just for the pleasure of hearing his voice. Towards the 80s according to Weinmann (loc.cit), the Québécois become re-acquainted with the absent and despised father. He considers that the positive image of a 'good father' inspired by René Lévesque, contributed greatly to gilding the image of the Québécois father.

As the patriarchal authority of the Catholic Church - which had usurped that of the natural father - had subsided, we saw a reinstatement of the father and a brief reconciliation between father and son which Lauzon's next film, *Léolo*, once again problematises. *Léolo* (1992) was a Canada-France co-production with some NFB input also. Réjean Ducharme's novel, *L'Avalée des avalées* (*The swallower swallowed/The Valley of the Vanquished*) inspired this text as it did *Les bons débarras*. The 12 years old Léolo is the youngest child in a shockingly dysfunctional family. It is hard not to be reminded of Francie Brady's *Butcher Boy* (Jordan, 1998) here as we will discuss in the following chapter. Léolo, in a conscious rejection of his French-Canadian heritage, thinks of himself as Italian - perhaps in order to distinguish himself from the other members of his family who are regular visitors to the local mental asylum - 'when their lunacies harmonised'. He comes up with an outlandish explanation for his Italian parentage which involves his mother falling backwards into a crate of Italian tomatoes over which an Italian packer had ejaculated prior to their export. Melnyk (2004) terms this a 'semi-immaculate' conception and it sets the tone for a number of religious parodies.

Léolo is a writer - constantly scribbling away despite the lack of encouragement from his school. He is very observant and we assume, like him, that he can escape his destiny, but he eventually ends up in the asylum too. He talks of being a spectator in his own life.

The elder lunatic is his grandfather who tried to drown him at one point. Léolo, in an extraordinarily complex sequence, tries to hang him believing that he was responsible for all the ills of the family. He also hates his father who treats all the children very cruelly. The father monitors their bowel movements on a daily basis in a parody of the Church's supervision of the family. As the children line up for their weekly laxative, the pill is dispensed directly on the tongue in a lampoon of the administration of Holy Communion at the Catholic mass. Léolo, however, in defiance of his father's authority fails to swallow it. Similarly, when Léolo gives his mad sister, 'La Reine Rita' (Queen Rita) who has hidden in the attic, one pill that he had not swallowed, she places it flat on a mirror first, recalling the paten of the communion rite. He further circumvents his father's authority by keeping some faeces (Rita's?) in reserve for when he fails to perform. His mother is seen to support his father's dominance although she shows great love for Léolo which he returns.

Additional references to religion are provided by shots of a crucifix on the wall of his home. At one stage when he tells a lie, it falls from the wall. Similarly, there is a shot of the crucifix when a cat is being sodomised in the presence of Léolo by some local boys. Hence, icons of Catholicism remain but are used to underline the transgressive nature of what is occurring before them. This juxtaposing of the sacred and the profane is a tendency we have already noted in previous Quebec films. None of the institutions of the Church or state can, or do, help Léolo. The only response to the family's mental problems is incarceration in a mental asylum. The crucifix is a silent witness to the degradation of Léolo's existence. Like the God who never answers, it observes but gives no comfort. This is a use of religious emblems we have also noted earlier.

Katherine Monk (2001, p156) comments on Léolo's identity crisis:

The child in this film isn't even a real orphan. Leo Lauzon (sic) has a mother and a father, but he can't accept his birthright. He doesn't even accept his French-Canadian identity.

Melnyk (2004, pp203, 204) comments that Lauzon's Quebec 'is a place of unredeemed psychopathological angst'. He furthermore sees the films as critiquing 'Quebec's uni-

lingual and uni-cultural francophone goals' and as an allegory of a national identity crisis'. Hence, the film problematises the idea of a homogenous national identity, a point we shall return to later.

While Quebec society may have retained some of the trappings of its religious traditions, their lack of utility or even comfort, in the face of modern dilemmas is frequently underscored in these films. If institutional religion, or even 'God', had become redundant in the eyes of the Québécois, then there was a new emphasis on the individual's own power to shape his/her destiny which was what the Quiet Revolution involved on both a public and private level.

### **Queering the Church**

The topic of clerical physical and sexual abuse has been given much less cinematic attention in Quebec as opposed to Irish cinema. Child abuse scandals in the Canadian context have generally focussed on the Native residential schools, Mount Cashel orphanage in Newfoundland, and the Duplessis orphans as we discussed. These last two have received televisual treatment in the form of docu-dramas.

One important evocation of sexual identity within the Catholic Church is seen in two films that explore the priest as homosexual. The Catholic Church's role in the suppression of homosexuality is explored in Robert Lepage's *Le Confessionnal* (1995), and John Greyson's *Lilies* (1996), both of which are set in the fifties of Maurice Duplessis' Quebec. They are presented partly in flashback, and partly in the present time. These films are no doubt partly inspired by the revelations about sexual abuse in the Catholic Church which emerged in both Ireland and Canada in the mid-nineties, and by the concerns of their homosexual directors. The television series, *The Boys of St. Vincent* (Smith, 1992), a docu-drama set in Mount Cashel orphanage in St. John's, Newfoundland, details the sexual abuse suffered by one of the orphans at the hands of a paedophile priest. *Les orphelins de Duplessis* (Prégent, 1997), based also on the testimony of an abused orphan, would be important antecedents for Greyson's work and possibly Lepage's also, although neither film deals with clerically perpetrated sexual

abuse but rather with the consequences of the suppression of homosexuality. I am not suggesting that there is a link between homosexuality and the sexual deviancy of paedophiles but perhaps the 'outing', if you will, of the Catholic Church has allowed films like these which attack the Church, to be made.

*Lilies* was shot in English, although a French version also exists. It was adapted from a Quebec play, *Les Feluettes* (1987) by Michel-Marc Bouchard and a number of Quebec actors feature in it. Because of the Quebec setting, the origins of the play and the presence of Quebec actors, I feel it is important to include it here. Both films point to the untenable position of homosexual priests. Robert Lepage's *Le Confessionnal* released in 1995, is set in Quebec City of the early 1950s while Duplessis was in power. Pierre Lamontagne, the film's chief protagonist, talks about the year of his birth and the film goes on to show how the young priest, Fr. Massicotte, was defrocked because he was assumed, wrongly, to be the father of a young parishioner's baby, Pierre's aunt. To disclose the truth of the matter and admit his homosexuality was not an option for him. When the film catches up with him in later life, he is using the services of a rent boy who turns out to be the son of that same parishioner who has since committed suicide.

In *Lilies*, Bishop Bilodeau entered the Church knowing that he was attracted to men. He carries a dark secret with him which the film will disclose. In a reversal of the usual confessional role, it will be the Bishop who will confess and reveal how he saved the life of the man he loved while allowing his lover to die. In order to save his own skin, he lets the same man suffer life imprisonment. It is the latter who, with the help of his fellow inmates, will eventually extract a confession from the Bishop.

The film opens with devotional singing which turns out to be sung by a prisoner and not a choir of priests or monks as we might have imagined. It is set in a prison in Quebec in 1952 'in the thick of the Duplessis regime' (Ramsay, p197). From the outset there is an equivalence suggested between the Catholic Church and a prison. Shots of the prison where most of the action will unfold are interspersed with shots of a church outside the prison walls, and finally, the small prison church inside the walls.

The narrative is set in motion by the visit of Bishop Bilodeau to, apparently, give the last rites to a dying prisoner. He is ushered into the confessional box and promptly locked in. The prison chaplain had set up the meeting between inmate, Simon, and his former persecutor, Bilodeau. The latter speaks to the confessant: 'Your chaplain said you had an important confession to make. He spoke of peace, of forgiveness'. By the end of the film, we learn that it is the Bishop who is expected to confess and that he has been the victim of a ruse which, through a drama enacted by a group of homosexual prisoners, will figuratively and literally 'out' him. The confessional box becomes the vehicle for a type of peep-show, linking, as in Lepage, the confessional with past sin. D'Annunzio's drama, *The Martyrdom of Saint Sebastian*, a gay icon, is enacted by two prisoners playing the part of two younger men, Simon and Vallier. The chaplain, the play's director, comments: 'I want them to see that a man can reject established rules and assert his right to subjectivity'. This, of course, is the type of subjectivity which the Church has suppressed. So, in the film, we have a 'good' priest and a 'bad' priest. If Bilodeau is seen as a monster then this image of the Church is 'corrected' by the presence of the sympathetic chaplain. Similarly, in a scene in Pierre Falardeau's *Le Party* (1990) set in a prison, a visiting journalist is disgusted by the prisoners' behaviour during the performance of a stage show. However, the prison chaplain does not share her disapproval and shows himself to be on the side of the prisoners understanding their needs.

The paraphernalia of the church is used as stage and props for the unfolding drama. The film moves between the confines of the prison church to the scenic beauty of Roberval (Lac St. Jean) as all the male prisoners continue to play all the roles, male and female, the latter in drag. Vallier is clearly in love with Simon, but the latter has difficulty admitting the attraction although they become lovers. The film shows that the boy-bishop, Bilodeau, had also been in love with Simon. When the attic where the lovers were hiding is set alight by Bilodeau, he changes heart and saves Simon but Vallier perishes in the fire. Bilodeau then pins the murder on Simon who is tried and sentenced to life imprisonment. The drama shows Bilodeau's role and Simon alludes to the lies he had told at the trial. He eventually exacts a confession from the bishop. Bilodeau is

doubly despised because as a member of the Church hierarchy and potent symbol of orthodoxy, he had betrayed the man he loved in order to conceal his own homosexuality.

When Simon and Bilodeau are eventually alone, Simon puts a knife to the latter's throat in response to his declaration of love. Instead of cutting, he kisses him, but, so hard that he draws blood. Despite Bilodeau's request, he refuses to kill him but places the knife in the bishop's own hand. The camera pulls back exposing the grid-shaped wire fence, reminding us of the steel lattice of the confessional and the prison of Bilodeau's own false vocation. Masculinity is also seen to be a prison in *Lilies*, especially for those who are unable to conform to their socially prescribed role. The film furthermore, as Christine Ramsay points out (Beard and White, 2002, pp192-205), allows space for the consideration of women's role under patriarchy in the very sensitive portrayal of Vallier's mother, deserted by his father and, to a lesser extent, Lydie-Anne, Simon's betrothed.

Ramsay (2002, pp193-196) comments that Greyson rather than outright "rejecting" his elders or the cultural institutions and conventions he wishes to challenge, 'achieves a profound dialogic engagement with them.' In *Lilies* he challenges

...the surveillance and regulation of desire by religion and the state... and [uses] the forms and conventions of the "women's picture" to stage a gay love story that questions patriarchal authority by exposing the sexual hypocrisies of the Catholic church in 1950s Québec while simultaneously exploding current homophobic norms of acceptable gender behaviour.

Golfman (quoted in Ramsay, p197) comments that – 1952 - the work's present, in Duplessis Québec, forces an uncomfortable analogy between then and now,

...a frighteningly judgmental and intolerant time in which religious fundamentalism marries right-wing individualism in the service of homophobia.

It is the prison of masculinity, Greyson suggest, that has caused such suffering, as male religious authorities hide behind their institutional masks and gilded cloaks, and homosocial desire is pathologized. Bilodeau has to confront the fact that his life as a man of God, in the closet of the confessional, has been a complete sham.

Greyson succeeds as Christopher Faulkner notes (Ramsay, 2002, p200) in ‘the production of a difference which exceeds the difference “permitted” by the dominant order’. The advantage of the confessional box from the priest’s point of view is that, while he extracts the most intimate details of the confessant’s private life, he himself remains completely anonymous. His own sins, failings and shortcomings are safely hidden. So, the confessional is at once a place of revelation and concealment; a place of deception and of truth. Greyson’s film inverts this by having the priest himself confess: Bilodeau must both ‘come clean’ and tell the truth, and also ‘come out’ as a gay man, a gay bishop, in fact.

Robert Lepage’s *Le Confessionnal* (1995) opens in Quebec in 1989 but re-visits a family history set in Quebec City in 1952. The narrator, Pierre Lamontagne tells us of three significant events in Quebec in 1952, the year of his birth: Maurice Duplessis had just been re-elected Premier of Quebec, Alfred Hitchcock was filming *I Confess*, and television had arrived. Lepage interweaves themes and images from a number of Hitchcock films and his scenario and mise-en-scene are informed by his knowledge of Hitchcock’s Catholicism and, possibly, anecdotes about Montgomery Clift’s extra-curricular homosexual activities while making the film.

In present day Quebec City, Pierre Lamontagne, has returned from studying art in China for his father’s funeral. He is concerned that his ‘adopted’ brother, Marc, has not made an appearance. It becomes clear when he eventually catches up with Marc that he is at a stage in his life when he must find answers to the riddle of his own origins and discover who his father was. Scenes from *I Confess* are interwoven with Pierre and Marc’s family history. Montgomery Clift’s Fr. Logan hears the confession of the murderer and is sworn to the secret of the confessional. Quebec of 1952 is evoked when we are introduced to Pierre’s parents and his aunt, Rachel, who lives with them but works in the presbytery. We see her confessing to the young priest, Massicotte, that she is pregnant by her sister’s husband. Thus, Rachel is in fact Marc’s mother and Pierre and Marc are half-brothers, but this mystery at the centre of the film is only revealed obliquely at the film’s close when we learn that three generations of the Lamontagne family are afflicted with diabetes. Just as in *I Confess*, when Clift’s Irish priest is wrongly accused of murder,

Father Massicotte, Rachel's confessor, is thought to be the father of her baby and is dismissed from the parish. Rachel, a young girl of 16 is understandably unable to clear his name and betray her sister. After the birth of Marc she commits suicide.

Massicotte, similarly bound by the secret of the confessional, cannot clear his own name because it would mean admitting his homosexuality. This 'lie', if you will, later exacts a terrible vengeance on Rachel's son, Marc, through the person of the ex-priest and homosexual, Massicotte. Leading a new life as a diplomat, he goes on to purchase the services of the rent boy, Marc. Although Massicotte knows the truth about Marc's paternity, he still considers himself bound by the secret of the confessional. If Hitchcock's Fr. Logan is seen as an innocent victim, Massicotte is his evil alter ego and he exploits the knowledge gained from the confessional to exert power over Marc and Pierre. Why Massicotte should feel bound by the secret of the confessional given that the sexual practices he engages in contravene Church law anyway, is unclear. One of the most disturbing aspects of the film for the audience is that we do not know Massicotte's real identity until late in the film and are forced to contemplate the possibility that he could be Marc's father.

Lepage shows vividly the inability of the present to hide the past. Pierre who comes to live in his father's house following his death makes constant efforts to paint over the marks left on the walls by the family photographs which hung there. But the red paint will not cover the yellow walls and the images of the past continue to make their presence felt. Just as the cracks in the family history cannot be papered over, the past surges into the present and the father's death as we have seen, acts as the catalyst for Pierre's brother's quest. Pierre, notably, wears a yellow shirt at the film's close as if to imply that the past has been addressed.

Scenes set in the confessional are central to this film, which recalls a similar search for the father in the Irish film *This is My Father* (Quinn, 1998) and underlines both Irish and Quebec societies' dependence on their religious pastors to guide and direct them through a maze of moral choices. Sex was pre-eminently the domain of the Church. Foucault (1977, p61) has commented on the transformation of sex into discourse in the Christian

church and on how the Catholic confession is 'a ritual that unfolds within a power relationship'.

Tom Inglis (1987, p145) has written of the place of confession in the Catholic Church's moral monopoly and we could just as easily substitute 'Quebec' for 'Irish' here:

The modern Irish Catholic soul became constituted through a discipline of the body created and maintained by a rigorous system of examination, supervision and punishment...A sense of private guilt and public shame was inculcated through a thorough investigation of the penitent's sexual practices.

The Church's obsession with the carnal is emphasised in both films. One scene in *Le Confessionnal*, shows the authority of the priest on matters of the flesh and, perhaps, obstetrics! Pierre's mother, Mme. Lamontagne, who has suffered a number of miscarriages, speaks in the confessional of her difficulties in bringing a baby to full term. Her confessor advises her to pray to the Holy Ghost, and not the Blessed Virgin, because it was the former who impregnated the latter! She is also told to ignore the faith healer who is enjoying some success locally as it is obviously a threat to the Church's authority.

In describing the confessional, Inglis (ibid.) speaks of 'small dark spaces in which the penitent was confined and interrogated.' Hence the effectiveness of the place of imprisonment of Bilodeau in Greyson's film. Lepage registers this oppressive atmosphere of restraint and denial in his consistent use of the lattice or grid image: the grille of the confession box, obviously, but also the girders of the bridge which open and close the film; Massicotte's sunroof which reflects the girders of the bridge and especially the scenes set in the gay sauna where Pierre searches for Marc which are shot from overhead through a wire mesh. Thus images of enclosure and entrapment abound as if to remind us that the illicit is still with us even if the locus of disclosure or display has changed. At the strip club at the Charny motel where Manon, the mother of Marc's child works, the booths for private sex shows are called 'confessionnals' pointing at Quebec's more ironic relationship - than that of Ireland - with its Catholic past.

The Catholic congregation is betrayed in its pastors' failure to appreciate the human suffering at the heart of these moral dilemmas. The confessional scenes tacitly accuse them in their celibacy of failing to acknowledge the 'temptations of the flesh' and expose the vulnerability of women and gay people to patriarchal law. Lepage himself has stated in the film's press kit that he sometimes has the feeling that he is 'the son of a bitter generation, of a generation - my parents' as much as my teachers' - that felt betrayed by its era'. This sense of betrayal is common in both Quebec and Irish films that deal directly with the relationship between pastor and people, as we shall discuss.

*Le Confessionnal* opens and closes with Pierre's voice-over: 'In the city where I was born, the past carries the present like a child on its shoulders'. The present is founded on the past, Pierre's opening voice-over seems to announce, and the past never goes away but is embedded in the present at every turn. He utters this line while carrying Marc's son on his shoulders. Manon, the child's mother had complained to Pierre of Marc's neglect of his son: 'He doesn't understand, a kid needs a father... to know where you're going in life, you have to know where you're from'. The diabetes, inherited from Pierre and Marc's father who went blind has also been transmitted to Marc's son. This is at once a metaphor for the sins of the father visited on every generation but also the emotional void due to the father's lack of responsibility, his moral 'blindness', in fact.

*Le Confessionnal*, given the sexual orientation of its filmmaker, shows a particular interest in the implications of homosexuality for a Catholic priest. However, due to its interest in confusion about paternity and the absent father, it is in line with many concerns of Quebec film in general. Both it and *Lilies*, explore the dilemmas of people – and gay men in particular – who were marginalised in a society presided over by a repressive and patriarchal church. With later Quebec cinema, they similarly share an interest in uncovering the past and purging one's demons as we shall later explore. The fusion of the homoerotic and the religious which we have noted in *Lilies* is less evident in *Le Confessionnal* which perhaps caters for a more mainstream audience.

## The vision of Denys Arcand

Denys Arcand is one of Quebec's most important auteurs, and given the degree to which he has turned his lens on Quebec society and his interest in the Catholic Church, I will devote attention to three major films of his. Two of these films: *Le déclin de l'empire Américain* (1986) and *Jésus de Montréal* (1989) cast a very cold eye on the benefits of the Quiet Revolution in exposing the self-interest of the middle classes and their indifference to a collective, national project in the defeat of the 1980 referendum. These two films were considered to be the two best Québécois films according to a 1993 survey in which the public participated (Coulombe, 1993). His more recently fêted film, *Les invasions barbares* (2003), is a sequel to *Le déclin* as it picks up the story of the main characters, one of whom is now dying of cancer, and needs to be reconciled with his son. Arcand is one of the few contemporary Québécois directors whose films still feature representatives of the Church, and who still has an interest in and an appetite for attacking the Church. One could argue that it is because he cares about what has been lost even while he mocks the institution that failed to live up to its model, Jesus Christ.

*Le déclin* is set in Rémy's cottage in an area of scenic beauty in Quebec. Four male (Rémy, Pierre, Claude, Alain) and four female (Diane, Dominique, Louise, Danielle) members of academia, most of whom are involved in the teaching of history, discuss life and, principally, sex. Louise and Rémy are married but unknown to his wife, Rémy engages in a large number of extra-marital affairs. He has also slept with two of the women of the group, Dominique and Diane. Hence, we are presented with a society where former taboos have been cast aside and there is huge self-deception. While the men cook a meal in Rémy's cottage, the women exercise in the university gym. Each group spends their time discussing their sexual conquests and their opinion of the opposite sex. Arcand's film exposes their cynicism, their hedonism, and their disinterest in almost everything except sexual gratification.

The film opens with Diane's media interview of Dominique Saint-Arnaud, author of the recently published *Variances de l'idée du bonheur* (*Variations on the idea of happiness*). The ideas which she enunciates form the kernel of ideas which the film elaborates.

Essentially, she sees a correlation between the pursuit of individual happiness and the decline of a nation, a civilization. As Bill Marshall (2001, p290) notes:

The protagonists are the baby-boomers who benefited from the educational reforms of the Quiet Revolution and who loved through the political effervescence of the 1960s and 1970s in Quebec.... The history book that Mario rather incongruously presents to his lover, Diane, Michel Brunet's *Notre passé, le présent et nous*, published in 1976, makes the point: 'When a collectivity chooses to ignore its past, it means it is refusing to confront the challenges of the present and lacks the courage to build a future'

In keeping with Quebec's declining birth-rate, these academics are neither reproducing themselves biologically nor academically. Pierre doesn't see the point in publishing or in having children. Only Claude, the homosexual, states the value of children: 'It seems to me that a child is life. The affirmation of life' ('Il me semble qu'un enfant, c'est la vie. L'affirmation de la vie').

One of the targets of their cynicism is the Church. Dominique says that the Pope should only be allowed to speak on subjects he knows about: that is, masturbation and prostate problems. Rémy and Pierre suggest banks and the CIA also. Hubert Guindon (1988, p36) discusses the effects of this lack of cultural continuity in post-Quiet Revolution Quebec:

What have not been provided for by the cultural traditions are the role models for the new-middle-class occupations. For this reason, the traditional culture is something far from sacred and useful, very often the object of contempt and ridicule within new-middle-class circles. Part of the anxiety and anguish of the new-middle-class psyche may be traced to this lack of cultural continuity.

This anxiety and anguish are shown in the men's dependence on pharmaceutical drugs and, perhaps also Diane's addiction to sado-masochistic sex. Although the world of academia could not be considered a 'new' profession, Guindon's (ibid.) comment about the lack of cultural continuity would seem to be valid here. That most of the group are involved in the teaching of history – a subject Arcand is passionate about – adds a further irony. Bart Testa (1995, p107) comments that the state of these professors

is really exemplary of the end of the political capability of Quebec intellectuals. The film is not as particular or individual as it might suggest, for this group represents ideological leadership, the conscience, of a powerful political ethos.

Bill Marshall (2001, p290) observes that the narrative of the film: 'has contained no structure of *bildung*, no teleology of emerging consciousness or truth'. The only truth as such to be revealed is from the point of view of Louise, Rémy's wife who learns that as well as sundry other women, Rémy has also slept with her two friends, Diane and Dominique. Her sense of betrayal is palpable at the film's close. However, both Louise and Rémy had participated in some wife-swapping as we saw in flashback, so it seems to be mainly the question of loyalty that troubles her here. Overall, the portrait of the Quebec middle-classes who had reaped the benefits of the Quiet Revolution is a very bleak one in *Le Déclin*. These characters may have gleefully dumped one belief system but they are urgently in need of another. The film sounds alarm bells at the death of the nationalist project. The emphasis is now on the pursuit of individual happiness to the detriment of the Quebec collectivity. Their behaviour is also in direct contrast to the fundamental Christian tenet whereby one puts others before oneself. Arcand, in an interview with Bill Pannifer (1990, p27) commented: 'In our personal lives, unless we are saints and mystics, we no longer have rules to live by'. This reference to a lack of rules foretells the director's preoccupations in *Jésus de Montréal* but also sounds a warning note taken up by a number of filmmakers from the nineties on.

As Denise Pérusse (1995, p86) notes, the film is not just about the decline of Quebec society but the decline of the family as most of the characters search for sexual satisfaction outside of marriage:

The intellectual community has become a substitute for the traditional Quebec family. If the time of the 'revanche des berceaux' (revenge of the cradles) is over, the question of the survival of a francophone Quebec in North America remains; it is a question of numbers, to which Arcand alludes at the beginning of the film, using the character of Rémy.

The phrase 'revanche des berceaux' refers to the French-Canadians' hopes of becoming dominant in Quebec through the sheer force of numbers. However, the baby-boomer generation of North America put paid to this hope as it boosted numbers in the

anglophone community. With regard to the lack of children, we previously referred to Pierre's indifference to fatherhood – an ironic fact when we see how his character has developed in Arcand's sequel. *Les Invasions barbares* especially shows us the emotional fallout among the children of Rémy and Diane when the family is relegated to a minor level. In an interview with Marcel Jean (1989, p50), Arcand stated: 'On the evening of the referendum, a collective project no longer existed in my eyes'. ('Le soir du référendum, il n'existait plus à mes yeux de lutte collective').

*Jésus de Montréal* (1989) was Denys Arcand's very successful follow-up to *Le Déclin de l'empire Américain*. Arcand was following in the footsteps of many famous directors (Pasolini, Ray, Godard, Scorsese) who had attempted to present Christ as a living, breathing man. It won the Jury Prize in Cannes and was nominated for an Academy Award for best foreign language film of 1989. It also won the Cannes special Ecumenical prize from the World Council of Churches. Arcand said that he had 'wanted to make an anti-clerical but somehow religious film' (Pannifer, 1990, p27). In the introduction to the published script of *Jésus de Montréal*, Arcand (1989, pp7-8) stated that he always feels a certain nostalgia for this period of his life when religion provided comforting answers to life's problems (B26). He is nonetheless aware of what these false solutions contained of 'obscurantism and demagogy' (ibid.). Some critics were surprised that, given his mockery of religion in his previous films and documentaries, he would tackle such a subject in a sincere manner (Testa, 1995). However, one of his main aims was to explore the contradictions in society as he states in the afore-mentioned introduction. Arcand was raised by very religious parents – 'God justified all their actions', and spent nine years in a Jesuit school but at the age of fifteen he cut all ties with organised religion (Coulombe, 2003, p119). He is not a practising Catholic and in an interview with François Ramasse (1989) he described himself as 'a-religieux'. In spite of that, he tells Michel Coulombe (1993, p119)

The words of Jesus are part of me, inhabit my thought. I know the Gospel by heart. This heritage is very heavy and I cannot change that. So I wanted to reconcile the agnostic that I have become, made famous by a film about sexuality, with his childhood.

He speaks of exploring in his film

the tension between an ideal, religious or artistic, and the reality by research on Christ. I feel the same tension between the voice of Jesus of Nazareth and that of the Church, very distant one from the other (ibid.).

The film tells the story of a group of actors who are putting on a passion play at the well-known religious site, Oratoire St. Joseph. The central character, Daniel Coulombe, (the name Daniel no doubt recalling the biblical prophet of the same name), who will play Jesus, is engaged by Father Leclerc to update the text which has already served for many years. However, Coulombe takes his task very seriously and researches the life of Christ inserting new developments in scholarship and archaeological discoveries to create a radical new text which offends Leclerc and his superiors. Arcand questions a series of religious myths, among them: the virginity of Mary and the Immaculate Conception, the nature (human or divine) and identity (Roman or Jewish?) of Jesus (Marsolais, 1989). The film becomes increasingly allegorical as we see Daniel live out the life of Christ himself, from recruiting his actors for the play as Christ called his apostles, to an assault on the advertising industry which recalls the attack on the moneylenders in the temple, to a resurrection of sorts when he dies following a fall from the cross during the final and prohibited performance of the play, and his organs are later donated and 'reborn' in others.

The film opens with a scene from a dramatisation of Dostoyevsky's *The Brothers Karamazov* where the character Smerdiakov is about to commit suicide. He utters the words: 'Il faut détruire l'idée de Dieu dans l'esprit de l'homme!' (We must destroy the idea of God in the mind of man). Arcand goes on to depict a society saturated with materialism and media images – a world to which he will oppose the spirituality and moral integrity of Daniel. The recruitment of the actor René who is in the act of doing a voice-over for a film exploring the Big Bang theory of the origins of the universe, provides another opportunity for Arcand to contemplate a godless universe:

In five billion years, our sun will have exhausted its nuclear fuel. Our earth will return to the galactic gas of which it was formed...The world began without humanity and it will end without it.

The film also explores the idea of artistic integrity, particularly in contrasting the artistic choices of Daniel Coulombe and his actor friend, Pascal Berger, who plays Smerdiakov.

The latter ends up as the poster-boy of an advertising campaign – a world Arcand knows very well and which he satirises mercilessly in the film. Some critics (Marsolais, 1989, Testa, 1995) tend to foreground the discourse around artistic integrity in the film, seeing it as more dominant than the Christian one:

The implicit message of the film is a lay one concerning the position of the artist and Art in society. (Marsolais, 1989, p43)

Similarly, Testa (1995, p106):

...Arcand executes a crucial displacement in the allegory away from the religious towards the artistic.....The play's Passion is the film's miracle of art, and this Passion in art is allegorized as the climax of the ministry and decidedly not of Christ's Passion.

However, given the various prizes inside and outside of Canada that the film picked up, including the Ecumenical prize awarded by the World Council of Churches, it is clear that the revisiting of Jesus Christ's message in modern Quebec had huge resonance for a large number of people. Arcand chooses to use the figure of Daniel/Jesus to attack the exploitative nature of the media industries and the debasement of the individual for profit. Yes, Daniel considers the work of some of his friends – Martin's dubbing of porn films, Mireille's body undressed for a TV advert, René doing voiceovers, as beneath them but it is not simply the lack of artistic merit in their work that bothers Daniel, it is more the idea of selling your soul. His protestation seems to be more on moral than on artistic grounds. While there is artistic debasement, more fundamentally, there is debasement of the individual. The scene where Mireille auditions for a commercial and is asked to undress as she has forgotten to bring a bikini sees Daniel's abrupt intervention. He tells her not to do it saying that she is worth more than that. Amid the mockery of the industry moguls, Daniel tears the place apart recalling Jesus attack on the moneylenders in the temple. The commodification of women in particular in the media industries is underlined further in this scene as two young women – a soprano and a contralto who were singing *Stabat Mater* in the sanctuary when Daniel went to see Fr Leclerc, also audition for the beer advert. Dressed in bikinis they dance and mime to the music despite their classically trained voices.

The film takes to task the Catholic Church for its inability to breathe new life into the passion of Christ and for its concern with protecting its own institutional position to the detriment of its relationship with its followers, or its fidelity to the life of Christ. Arcand delights in satirising many facets of modern life, particularly the media and advertising industries which he shows as exploitative, superficial and immoral. He shows a world, where, effectively, God is dead. Advertising executives, TV critics, presenters and media lawyers are all the butt of his very sharp humour.

It is in the person of Fr. Leclerc however that he shows the hypocrisy of the Church and how far removed it is from the life of Christ. Leclerc is in fact the very antithesis of Daniel/Jesus. He no longer adheres to his vow of celibacy, having a sexual relationship with Constance, the actress who ironically plays the Virgin Mary, but will not leave the priesthood. His embarrassment in front of Daniel is obvious although Daniel does not appear to judge him. He considers himself to be a 'bad priest'. He speaks of his own humble origins, his love of the theatre, his broken dreams. Like many of the other people that Daniel has encountered, Leclerc has compromised by joining the priesthood. Now, he is afraid to resign because he would leave the priesthood empty handed. Thus, the material rewards of the priesthood ('a comfortable bed' and 'nuns to make his breakfast' as Constance comments) and the fear of poverty, are the reasons why he remains a priest. As Lever (1989) comments, it is because he decides to stay within the Church that he cannot follow Jesus. Neither will he risk offending his superiors in allowing Daniel's new take on the Passion of Christ. He has, as Heinz Weinmann (1990, p200) points out, lost Jesus as a living model.

Overall, it is the loss of the spiritual values in modern Quebec that Jesus stood for that engages Arcand as he outlines the exploitation and debasement of the individual, the lack of integrity and the lack of love in contemporary society. Arcand's criticism of the Church is also evident in an early scene where Daniel, in updating his text, interviews a theologian who wishes to remain anonymous, fearing his Church superiors.

In his final exchange with an enraged Leclerc following the performance of the revamped passion play, Daniel takes him to task for his exploitation of human misery. Leclerc defends his selling plastic statues of Jesus and bottles of St. Joseph's oil to

immigrants for \$15, as offering comfort. He tries to convince Daniel and indeed, himself, that what he is doing has relevance:

They come here to be told: Go in peace, your sins are forgiven. That does them good. Some. It is that at the very least. It is here that one touches the bottom: loneliness, illness, madness. (B27)

Leclerc equates happiness with material comfort and admits his fear of being nominated chaplain in a retirement home in Winnipeg. He says that his father's sacrifices did not serve any purpose, a comment which Daniel contradicts insisting that his father had faith. As Constance once again tries to encourage Leclerc to leave the priesthood, he speaks about those who have left whose lives are even more pathetic ('minable') than his:

Even a bad priest is still a priest. If I am no longer that, I am nothing.

Thus, it is Daniel who shows himself to have more in common with Jesus than Leclerc. His simplicity, lack of worldliness and sincerity highlights this deficit in the people he encounters. Arcand's interest in the Catholic Church is illustrated in this preoccupation with Leclerc's falseness and indeed his reappearance in *Les invasions barbares* where the same actor reprises his role as we shall shortly discuss. Arcand has said:

One must differentiate between what I call the heart of the message from all the panoply of religious imagery which has existed for two thousand years and which crushes us' (Ramasse, 1989, p14). (B28)

Despite Daniel's death, the film is seen to end on a note of optimism. Daniel has indeed touched many lives and saved others through the donation of his organs. Like Jesus, he is resurrected and lives again. He has opposed the materialism and human exploitation that is all around him and has in particular upbraided the Church for its hypocrisy. He has pointed a new way forward: that of living a life of integrity. Arcand has said of the film that it is about 'the tension between the echo of Jesus' voice – when he says "Where your treasure lies, there also is your heart" – and the business of our daily lives'. 'The last value', he says, 'is to love one another' – 'it's what's in the Gospel, at the origin of religious faith' (Pannifer, 1990, p28).

Arcand unfortunately does not enter the priestly celibacy debate or of the rights of Leclerc as a man. It is the fact that he is not true to his profession – his vows – that bothers Arcand. Leclerc does not live a *pure* life. It is the reprise of the character Constance as Soeur Constance in *Les Invasions barbares*, which will illustrate the life of integrity.

Marshall (2001, p294) however considers that the end of the film ‘is a reworking of an old myth, not an exploration of new cultural hybridities or ways of being’. Yet, I feel that the fact that the director should choose an anglophone (perhaps an English-Canadian) and an Italian woman (a member of Montreal’s then largest immigrant community) to receive new life from Daniel’s body, seems to point again to the Christian message of loving one’s fellow man, and for the Québécois to love his other, his enemy. This message of inclusivity and the importance of connecting with other human beings will be taken up later in a number of films in the nineties as we will show.

Arcand’s follow-up to *Le Déclin*, *Les Invasions barbares* (2003), fêted like its antecedents at Cannes as well as at home, reunites the main characters once again. Although billed as a sequel to *Le Déclin*, it resonates with many of the ideas articulated in *Jésus de Montréal*. It presents the day of reckoning for the irresponsible characters of *Le Déclin*, in particular, Rémy and Diane. Rémy is now dying of cancer and his friends congregate to say their farewells. However, the main interest in the film lies in the son of Rémy and daughter of Diane. The children they have produced provide a sad indictment of the hedonistic, self-serving lives of their parents. Sébastien is the archetypal businessman for whom time is money. Though not having enjoyed a good relationship with his father, and principally for his mother’s sake, he is now prepared to do everything that money can buy to get his father the best care. Arcand uses the film, as he did in *Jésus*, to comment on Montreal’s appalling healthcare system. Through bribery and threats, Sébastien rents out an entire floor of the hospital and goes on to procure heroin from Diane’s drug-addict daughter, Nathalie, to ease Rémy’s pain. Yet everything Sébastien does is perfunctory and soulless. While we admire his devotion to his mother - for whom he is really doing it all anyway - we are horrified at his utilitarian

view of those around him. Rémy, delirious at one point, refers to his son as the ‘prince’ of the barbarians.

Ultimately, and unsurprisingly, the film moves towards the reconciliation of father and son. Sébastien’s sister is at sea so there is no dilution or distraction from the male bond. Thus, Arcand’s film adds to one important discourse of Quebec film as we saw in *Lauzon* – the reinstatement of the previously absent father, and the renewal of the family.

Despite the obvious link to *Le Déclin*, the film also recalls *Jésus de Montréal* in a number of ways. One, is in the casting of some of the actors from that film – including Rémy Girard who plays Rémy here. Two key actors from that film Johanne-Marie Tremblay, who played the Virgin Mary and was the priest’s lover, and now plays a religious sister who is also the hospital chaplain – Soeur Constance (the same name that she had in *Jésus*), and Gilles Pelletier who played the priest Leclerc, reappears as a priest here with the same name, and shows a similar cynicism as in his earlier role. This time, on behalf of the Montreal archdiocese, he is attempting to sell off religious artefacts to Sébastien’s art-dealer girlfriend, Gaëlle. As he shows her around the piles of statues, crucifixes, portraits of saints and various sacred objects stored in a warehouse, he questions her as to their value:

The authorities would like to know if anything has any value.

It is of course their monetary value that he means but she, in underlining their cultural value to the Quebec collectivity - ‘All of this certainly has a great value for people here, on the level of collective memory’ (B29) - casts judgement on the Church’s mercenary attitude which shows an indifference to the loss of its heritage to its people, especially as they were targeting the international market, more lucrative than the home one. We learn also that the best of the goods have already been sold off to the Americans anyway. Arcand casts a particularly cynical eye on the Church here and in both *Les invasions* and *Jésus* it is the figure of a priest, standing in for the Catholic Church, at whom he vents his ire. We have come a very long way from the harmless, saintly image of the priest of *Le Curé de village*. The theme of the spiritual decline of the Catholic Church illustrates,

according to Jean-Phillipe Chartré (2003, p29), the death of Catholicism and even of the memory of Quebec's Catholic past: 'Tout cela ne valait absolument rien' ('All of that was worth absolutely nothing'). Once again it is the institution that Arcand particularly takes to task. In contrast, soeur Constance is a very benign representation of women's religious vocation. Her love of God's children extends to 'sinners' like Rémy, and it is clear that he is impressed by her faith even while he mocks it. One humorous exchange between them has her telling him that he will burn in hell while he, in a reply tinged with racism, says he wouldn't change places with her:

Condemned to play the harp on a cloud for eternity, sitting between John-Paul II, a sinister Pole, and Mother Teresa, a slimy Albanian. (B30)

Elsewhere in the film the Church's influence on the medical profession - which will resonate for us later in our discussion of Ireland - is recalled in an exchange between Sébastien and a former school friend, Maxim, who is now a doctor. While discussing pain relief for Rémy, Maxim suggests heroin but tells him to avoid Catholic doctors:

They love patients who suffer. You know: the pain which expiates sin. Try to spare him that if you can.

Soeur Constance's presence is sometimes used to increase the sense of shock or titillation when sex is openly discussed. For example, Louise, Rémy's ex-wife, mentions oral sex in her presence and one of his former conquests mentions ejaculation just as the nun enters the room. Fun is also made of various Jesuit schools showing an edifying film of the life of St. Maria Goretti to young boys whose main memory of the film was of the thighs of the actress wading in the sea. Thus, the fusion of the erotic and the religious is deliberately employed again for comic effect. The same was noted in our discussion of *Jésus de Montréal* where the priest and the 'Virgin Mary' share a bed. There is undoubtedly a certain schoolboy humour in this enjoyment of the formerly transgressive. Arcand's generation born in the forties might still feel a certain *frisson* in mocking their former tormentors - just as we noted in some of the films of Gilles Carle - but a younger generation of filmmakers must surely wonder what all the fuss was about. The remakes of the heritage films such as *Un homme et son péché* and *Aurore* as we have previously

noted, are also seen as getting one's back on the Church by Arcand's generation at a time when it might be expected to have no particular resonance or relevance.

The irresponsibility of the baby-boomer generation is underscored in the poor relationship that both Rémy and Diane have with their children, Sébastien and Nathalie. Both have been affected by their parents' promiscuity and negligence. The sexual revolution of the 60s may have liberated a generation but the film insists that the price was paid by their children. Gaëlle, Sébastien's fiancée, whose parents had divorced when she was aged three, is concerned to found a family herself, and is seen to have a much more conservative view of marriage and parenthood than her own parents' generation. In a conversation with Rémy, she reveals some shocking information about her own family whereby her mother gave her a tube of sexual lubricant at the age of twelve and put her on the pill 6 months before her first menstruation. At the age of 15, with her father's knowledge, she was seduced by his friend. This critique of the abdication of parental responsibility – in France and Quebec alike – points to a certain nostalgia on Arcand's part for a more responsible if not quite puritanical society as Quebec was in the past.

The structure of *bildung* whose absence Marshall (2001) noted in *Le Déclin* is compensated for here by the growing closeness between father and son – and later, mother and daughter, although the latter is given minimal attention in comparison. The death-bed reconciliation of Marcel and his son in *Un Zoo la nuit* is recalled here. A new understanding emerges between the generations, even if the older generation doesn't fully assume responsibility for the sins of the past. Rémy experiences no moment of deep insight, no Shakespearean 'I have ta'en too little care of this' (*King Lear*, Act 3, scene 4), yet presumably he knows why his son despises him, and he shows a quiet respect for Soeur Constance's faith although he does not share it. The closest he comes to insight is when he talks to Nathalie of his fear of dying and comments: 'I am as helpless as the day of my birth. I have not succeeded in finding meaning...it's that one must look for'.

Arcand in his films attacks those members of the Church who fail to live up to Jesus' message and his example. Religious faith is not seen to be a bad thing at all in itself; it is rather the misuse of it – particularly at institutional level – that he can't countenance. Arcand continues to provide a commentary on Quebec society and to offer a balance sheet of what has been lost and gained. Born in the forties, brought up a Catholic and educated by the Jesuits, he has witnessed Quebec's transition from a repressive, puritanical, deeply Catholic society to a secular, post-Catholic one. He has measured the changes and transformations brought about by the Quiet Revolution and, more than most, is in a position to evaluate the kind of society Quebec has become.

So, what does the Quebec Church think of its portrayal in Quebec cinema from the period of the post-Quiet Revolution? An article in the francophone daily, *La Presse* (15th April, 2006) by historian and parish priest, Donald Tremblay, gives us some insight into this. Tremblay surveys cinema, television and literature in his article and offers a portrait of contemporary Quebec which mirrors that which we discussed in Chapter 3. While 83% of the population still declare themselves to be Catholic, only 10% attend Sunday mass. There is a serious problem, he contends, with the younger population who don't even have an elementary knowledge of the Catholic faith. He concludes that 'Belonging to the Church of Rome has become in Quebec a cultural habit'. He states that there is a serious rupture now between baptised Catholics and their institutional Church and goes on to speak of modern Quebec's mass culture as 'peddling' ('colporte') a strong anti-Catholic prejudice. He cites the portrait of curé Labelle (sic) in Claude-Henri Grignon's original novel, *Un homme et son péché* as being 'balanced' (pondéré) compared to the 2002 film by Binamé which created in his place the curé Raudin who is incapable of celibacy and abandons his ministry for a woman. He also cites the afore-mentioned curé Leclerc in *Jésus de Montréal* who is 'pathetic' and lacks both faith and chastity. These along with other Quebec films (*Aurore*, *Nouvelle France*) he says illustrate this phenomenon of the disparagement of priests. He admits that he is incapable of naming a single Quebec film of recent production where a main religious personage is presented positively.

Tremblay wonders if one can attribute this ‘quasi’ defamatory image of the Church and its ministers to the Quebec cultural and intellectual elites who see the Church as the author of the ‘mythical’ *Grande Noirceur* (‘Great Darkness’) in which Quebec lived prior to 1960. Tremblay regrets that the work the Church does with the destitute and the socially excluded, and at the level of social justice, is never represented. This anti-Catholic culture, he states, is never questioned and has sown the belief in the collective imagination that the Catholic Church is an institution which abused the Quebec people, which prevented the development of Quebec and which today remains out of step with a post-modern society. Given that the Church hasn’t had the same social or political influence in Quebec for two generations, it is time, he says, to pass to a more authentic representation which conforms to the new reality.

We have already noted some of Tremblay’s criticisms in our appraisal of a number of Quebec films. In many instances the endurance of these themes has more to do with the age of the filmmakers than the actual beliefs of québécois, most of whom are quite indifferent to the Church today. There is of course also the question of opportunistic producers as noted. If we compare the Quebec with the Irish experience, we find a much tougher criticism of the Church in Irish film - Quebec’s is positively benign in comparison. Yes, the Quebec Church is still ‘good for a laugh’ among a certain section of the community, but the question of celibacy is still baffling for a modern, secular population. One criticism to level at Arcand and other filmmakers who portray the breaking of the vow of chastity, is that they never interrogate this vow. This interestingly is in keeping with a Church who refuses to discuss the very real difficulties it presents for many of its ministers, or to consider the question of married priests or women priests. Indeed, Soeur Constance as hospital chaplain in *Invasions*, inhabits a role formerly reserved for male priests. If filmmakers wished to be genuinely radical in their presentation of the Catholic Church today, they would not shy away from tapping into this rich discursive vein. We shall explore later where some Irish filmmakers have taken up the challenge.

## Recent Cinema

While Quebec's historical links with Catholicism have largely ceased to find direct cinematic representation, there is considerable evidence to suggest that Christian narrative veins are still being mined by Quebec filmmakers from the nineties into the following decade whether at an overt or subliminal level. Joseph I. Donohue (1991, p165) has commented that, despite all the signs that Quebec's citizens are content to break with Quebec's traditional past, 'more than two hundred years of sustained effort and sacrifice to retain a national identity constitute a heritage not easily set aside'.

While some filmic texts continue gleefully to attack the soft target of a moribund Church, others overload their protagonists with a sense of guilt or worthlessness which seeks release. Elsewhere the desire for acknowledgement, retribution and forgiveness propels the narratives. Alienated characters lurk in streets and buildings of an anonymous urban - often nocturnal – landscape, their lives starved of purpose. A host of Quebec protagonists are in need of redemption. In a post-Catholic society where the obvious Saviour is absent, where and how can the 'lost sheep' find solace? In a world where traditional Catholic morality has broken down and there are no rules anymore, to paraphrase one character, where lies meaning? Many of these films seek answers to these questions.

Two films by Denis Villeneuve, *Un 32 août sur terre* (1998) and *Maelström* (2000), Charles Binamé's *Eldorado* (1995), Jean Beaudin's *Souvenirs intimes* (1999) and Louis Bélanger's *Post-Mortem* (1999) share a similar paradigm of guilt, forgiveness and redemption. All were released in the same five year period. Their key characters share an aimlessness and sense of alienation from their society. They are all wounded souls in one form or another and live in a society no longer shaped by any external norms of behaviour. Most of the characters lives lack meaning. The chief protagonists are generally female and there is a maternal sub-theme in a number of these films. Many are representative of the so-called, Generation X, born between the mid-sixties and the mid-seventies. These are the children of the baby boomers, whose hedonistic lifestyle was so memorably portrayed in Arcand's *Le Déclin de l'empire américain* (1986). There has been an abdication of parental responsibility, which comes home to roost, as we have

seen, in Arcand's sequel, *Les Invasions barbares* (2003). With the jettisoning of traditional values there are no strong role-models for a disaffected youth who have to live without the traditional corrals of Catholic Church and society. These films set in the latter years of the last millennium and on the cusp of the new, explore the effects on this generation of the loss of a compass. While exploring the void at the core of these characters' lives, the films also point the way forward. George Melnyk (2004, p210) has talked about how these characters echo the same 'undercurrent of anxiety' found in films of the 60s, the most obvious example being Groulx's *Le Chat dans le sac* (1964):

The identity which the previous generation had fought to create as the new Québécois is precisely the identity that this new generation [of filmmakers] is deconstructing.

Now that the usual material rewards have failed to deliver, the resultant void is sometimes explained in terms of an event from the past that has not been acknowledged. Many filmmakers have used this trope to explain away the pain of living in a world without moral coordinates. Many of these films are urban, hard-edged with a variety of atomised individuals who largely exist outside of any regular family structure. The nuclear family is replaced by an assortment of characters who are mutually dependent, creating, in many cases, an alternative family structure. Frequently, the main female protagonist is emotionally frozen and the film will create an opportunity for her to 'thaw'. Generally, characters experience or re-live a past trauma and seek forgiveness from another person whom they have harmed in some way.

Many of these films show their protagonists at a desperate moment in their lives suddenly being given a second chance. Despite the absence of religious iconography or any direct reference to the Catholic Church, many of these scenarios are infused with a very Catholic sensibility especially in their play with guilt, redemption and resurrection. This is consistent with Tom Inglis' (1987, p244) writings on the Irish Catholic Church:

The residues of orthodoxy and devotionism remain deep with[in] the system. They have been embodied from a young age. They linger in the individual personality *as well as the social system* and can be reactivated at short notice (italics mine).

*Eldorado* (Binamé, 1995) a film with an ironic title given the largely dystopic universe of the film, presents a very tough image of modern society where sex is cheap and many characters live life on the edge. The lives of the six main characters interconnect at various stages of the narrative and their outward toughness hides a fragile inner core. Rita (Pascale Bussières) traverses the city on her roller-blades, intimate with no-one, self-destructive, dealing in drugs and stolen goods, assuming responsibility for nothing and no-one. As she breaks into a swimming pool one night, her friend Lloyd comments that she thinks there are no rules. She stays with Roxan, a modern day missionary from a privileged background, who takes an interest in the homeless but gets a rude awakening when some homeless men try to molest her. Her home is also ransacked by Rita's drug-dealers so her charitable acts backfire once again. Rita had asked her if she was feeling guilty about something given her good works. It is clear later in the film that Roxan is burying her grief at her boyfriend's betrayal.

We learn that Rita had survived a suicide pact with her 15 year-old boyfriend, as she says, she 'missed the train' that ran over him, and her grief has left her unable to feel. Speaking to Lloyd (James Hyndman), another grieving friend of the dead boy who conceals his own pain in his verbally aggressive and sexually provocative radio show entitled 'Extérieur nuit', she says that she can't talk to anyone anymore, can't touch anyone, no-one touches her, her hands are numb.

Many of the characters verbalise their problems, their loneliness and feelings of disconnection. The highly dysfunctional Henriette who is in therapy, the modern equivalent of the confessional, says to her psychiatrist – 'Tout ce que je veux c'est apprendre à me rapprocher d'un autre être humain' ('All I want is to learn how to get close to another human being'). Similarly, Loulou, friend of Roxan and in an unsatisfactory relationship, tells her dead mother that she no-longer knows how to live and feels all alone. Overall, this is a morally murky world evidenced in Lloyd's sexually aggressive radio commentary and his rough sexual encounter with Loulou. There is also Roxan's revelation about her boyfriend's paedophilia in Thailand and Rita's connection with a host of unsavoury characters through her illegal activities.

This very hostile and aggressive urban environment is finally redeemed when we see Lloyd crying in relief that a dead woman in a morgue isn't Rita. In a supreme moment of tenderness we see Lloyd finally forgive Rita for the death of their friend and she also forgives herself. Bill Marshall (2001, p303) has commented:

....it is clear that, while this urban society lacks roadmaps, the characters, bereft of 'love', are still looking back for some, in particular those that lead to heterosexual couple formation. The frequent shots of aerial telephone lines connote these attempts to connect, to remap the film sentimentally.

The connecting of Rita and Lloyd at the end points on the one hand to the formation of a new couple. The revisiting of the past trauma has led to an unblocking of emotions, of release. Lloyd at the microphone had earlier summed up the ambiance when he describes those coming to celebrate at night in the city as 'lost souls who mistake their loneliness for freedom'. Even those in relationships are not exempt from this modern disease of loneliness as we witness the break-down of Loulou, now pregnant, and Marc's relationship. Hence, the pain in these young people's lives is 'explained' in terms of an unacknowledged past event. Yet, the film lays bare the modern malaise of lives lacking definition or meaning which had been previously furnished by organized religion.

Jean Beaudin's *Souvenirs intimes* (1999) once again unites Pascale Bussi res (Lucie) and James Hyndman (Max) in the main roles. Bussi res' Lucie in many ways recalls the emotional and psychological construction of the character of Rita. An artist, Max (Hyndman) suffered paralysis of the legs following a road accident and is in a wheelchair. His circle, his 'family', is composed of a number of marginalised characters – Julien who has Down syndrome, Maggie, a young nude model, his insecure sculptor friend, Mortimer (Yves Jacques), Pauline and her adopted son, Laurel. This happy, harmonious and loving group for whom Max always has an open door, is disrupted by the arrival of Lucie (Bussi res) who accuses Max, Mortimer and various friends of theirs of having gang raped her when they were all in their teens. This revelation sheds a whole new light on the character of Max with whom Lucie had a relationship previously, and whom she now implies is the father of her son, Laurel. The film thus provides an interesting take on the familiar orphan theme and absent or ineffectual father of Quebec

cinema. Before revealing her identity to Max, Lucie taunts Max's incapacitated manhood by telephone reminding him of the sexual pleasures he can no longer enjoy, pretending that she doesn't know about his physical disability. Thus, Lucie's main goal here is retribution: Max, and Mortimer, must pay for their crimes.

In using Laurel against Max, with whom he has a quasi-paternal relationship, and in alienating him from his adoptive mother, Pauline, Lucie causes a serious disruption in this close-knit group. She will also exact a cruel vengeance from Mortimer who continues to prey on young women, by building up and then dashing his hopes of love and artistic success in New York.

This psychological thriller focuses on the emotionally frozen state of Lucie, who has never recovered psychologically from the rape. Her fractured mental state is implied in close-ups of her mouth and eyes as she talks to Max on the phone. The *mise-en-scène* employs elements of *film noir* as Lucie is photographed at night in the apartment she has rented opposite Max's. Max, although he had not forgotten the rape which is described as an incident when 'things got out of hand' at an alcohol-fuelled party, had apologized to Lucie but clearly did not appreciate the gravity of the event and the trauma involved for her. However, he clearly does feel guilt. It is clear that the man Lucie had been trying to wreak revenge on no longer exists as Max is a changed man since his accident. As he asks for Lucie's pardon, there are a number of reconciliations including that of Laurel and Pauline, who had been sidelined with Lucie's return.

*Souvenirs intimes*, like *Eldorado*, explores a similar pattern of guilt, punishment and retribution; acknowledgement of past sins and their expiation. Forgiveness, just as in *Eldorado*, is vital for the wounded soul to move on. Closure is achieved for all these wounded characters once the past is confronted. The re-constituted 'family' of *Souvenirs intimes* now includes Lucie and the importance of connectivity is reinstated. Indeed the possibility of the reinstatement of the nuclear family – Max and Lucie with their son, Laurel is posited in the final frames. The film's maternal discourse links it with the two Villeneuve films discussed below. The biological mother and the adoptive mother both have their claims but the film ultimately privileges that of the natural one as I have

discussed. The finding of a father for Laurel is also important here. It is not proven conclusively that Max is Laurel's father but there is a strong possibility. Hence, this film removes the familiar orphan trope of Quebec cinema by giving Laurel a father and ensuring that the latter faces up to his responsibilities. As in *Eldorado*, the confronting of a past which had been buried or unacknowledged, leads to both expiation and renewal. By explaining modern-day angst and malaise as a problem left over from the past, these filmmakers, however, fail to interrogate the very flawed *present* that Quebecers are living in. They omit to take a real audit of the problems of contemporary living when consumerism and materialism fail to deliver on their promises. Despite the absence of a link to a specific Catholic past, these films do ensure that moral debts are paid and consciences are eased as a result.

Thus, Quebec cinema in the period of late modernity was charting new forms of malaise. The decline of tradition and former certainties along with the defeat of two referenda, gave rise to a sense of defeat or failure as these films seemed to be reckoning the price of 'progress'. A modern, comfortable Quebec was no longer interested in the questions that preoccupied its parents but the result was a loss of stability and moral certainty. These and some later films appear to pose the question: 'What happens when you take away all the old certainties, the grand narratives? What happens when you put nothing in their place?' Some films of Denis Villeneuve and Louis Bélanger reflect upon this loss of meaning when, to borrow a phrase 'the baby is thrown out with the bath water'.

In Villeneuve's *Un 32 août sur terre* (1998), Pascale Bussières is Simone Prévost, 26 years old and a model. She has a life-changing experience when she survives a car crash at the beginning of the film. This forces her to reappraise her life and to pursue other dreams which had been put on hold or abandoned, namely, to have a child.

The title of the film, *The 32<sup>nd</sup> of August*, and subsequent titles which go up to the 36<sup>th</sup> of August, until normal time resumes on the 5<sup>th</sup> September, suggest the dream world which Simone inhabits in the days following her accident. There is a sense of entrapment and claustrophobia as she tries to get out of her upturned car. After a lift to the local hospital, we see her walking along the road in a very inhuman landscape. Power lines scratch the

sky a reminder of that connectivity she is outside of now following a failed attempt to phone her mother. The silence of the soundtrack and the dead animals and insects around her are a reminder of her vulnerability and proximity to death. As she returns to the city in her rented car, the pace of the film accelerates and the intrusive cacophony of modern life returns.

From Simone's near-death experience comes the desire to act in the face of death: namely, to conceive a child. Simone has a renewed sense of purpose and perhaps guilt that she has been wasting her life. She visits her ex-boyfriend, Philippe, a medical student, who is in a committed relationship, and reminds him that they had previously talked about having a baby, if they were both single in their thirties. This now becomes an obsession with her. Her quite clinical attitude to the matter is amusingly counter-pointed by Philippe's utter perplexity and inability to put her off the course she has set.

Following a number of failed attempts to find the right place to conceive the child including Salt Lake City, Philippe retreats from the project. His life is marked by indecision as we see by his haphazard career path. He is currently studying to be a doctor but doesn't feel like spending all of his life in a hospital. A comment which is highly ironic given that he ends up in a coma by the film's end. Although we have learnt that he is in love with Simone, he is afraid to declare his love and make love to her.

Philippe's indecision will result in a near fatal encounter with some passing joy-riders who beat him up and leave him for dead. Simone visits him in hospital calling him 'mon amour', and prepares to make love to his inert body. Simone will take her second chance at life and motherhood, with or without Philippe's consent. The film contrasts Philippe's lost opportunity and Simone's determination. The ineffectual Québécois male of much Quebec cinema is now asleep and will even be 'absent' at his own child's conception.

There are many striking images of death in the film: the sarcophagus-shaped tanning table of her employer, Monica, and the space hotel where Simone and Philippe spend a few hours. The city and modern life are presented as a kind of living death. The motif of

coma and near death experiences points at the blindness of characters who live their lives in a fog of denial and indecision. Villeneuve is critical of his characters' lives and forces them to face up to their emptiness and to grasp the challenge of living a meaningful life. In speaking of *Un 32 août sur terre*, Villeneuve said 'This film was my chance to say something and it was my comment on the Quebec neurosis. Why can't we make a decision?' (Monk, 2001, p179).

*Maelström* (2000), also directed by Denis Villeneuve, is a film spiked with black humour in its use of a narrator-fish, and shows the chaos, the maelstrom of modern life recalling his earlier film. The film's title is an accurate description of the life of the main character, Bibiane (Bibi) Champagne, unlike the more ironic title of Binamé's *Eldorado*. Bibi, suffering from an acute sense of failure, wrestles with her mother's successful legacy and the authoritarianism of her brother. When the film opens, she is undergoing an abortion which, soon after, plunges her into depression and guilt. Her crisis of conscience is contrasted sharply with that of her more liberal and hardened Scandinavian friend who has had three abortions. Bibi's life goes from bad to worse as she is kicked out of the family firm for failing to perform. Recalling Rita's strategies to forget in *Eldorado*, she tries to drown her misery in alcohol and drug abuse and, in a moment of exhaustion and disorientation at the wheel of her car, knocks a man down, killing him, and drives off. Most of the remainder of the film will show the effects of her acute guilt, this time at the termination of two 'lives'. However, she will be presented with a second chance through the cleansing, healing power of a baptismal-type immersion in the waters of the Saint Lawrence.

Obsessed by the fatal accident, and following her emergence from the St. Lawrence river having driven her car off the pier, she proceeds to have a relationship with the son of the man she killed. Irony is piled upon irony here as he falls in love with his 'angel'. At the film's close as they scatter the father's ashes overboard, the cyclical nature of the film, and life, it is implied, is underscored. We previously witnessed the incineration of the foetal matter in a cardboard box. Now, the father's ashes in a similar box are scattered in the ocean. A correlation between the incineration of the foetus and the cremation of the father seems to be implied in that Bibiane's guilt at both 'deaths', is assuaged in the

acknowledgement of her crime and in receiving forgiveness from her victim's son. She had earlier saved the latter's life when she dissuaded him from taking a plane which later crashed. The film, replete with repellent images and an atmosphere awash with guilt and self-hatred, ends on a buoyant note. Despite the very upbeat soundtrack ('Good Morning Starshine') during the abortion and the scattering of the ashes, *Maelström*, in its use of Christian paradigms, is a very moral film.

The film is ultimately life-affirming in its offer to its central character of a second chance, a re-birth. The symbolic use of water as a conduit of redemption plus a 're-birth' (resurrection), is once again a reminder of Quebec's Catholic past. Leo Braudy (1998, p301) echoing Inglis and Donohue (op.cit.), has spoken of how vital questions in the life of a society or culture rarely vanish entirely:

When no one cares about them with the old emotional intensity, they go underground, only to emerge, sometimes decades later, in different forms.

Louis Bélanger's *Post-mortem* (1999), like *Maelström* uses a non-linear narrative, to tell the story of Linda, an escort, who knocks her clients out and robs them. She is a single parent with a daughter, Charlotte, and a fundamentalist Catholic mother. Living on social welfare, she has turned to crime in order to buy a house in the country for herself and Charlotte. Early in the film, we see Linda looking at some pictures of apes and explaining to her daughter in Darwinian fashion, where mankind has come from. Charlotte hotly disputes this telling her of the story of Adam and Eve as her grandmother has taught her. Linda, enraged, upbraids her mother for dragging religion into things. A realist, Linda has no time for supernatural explanations. She sings a song mocking the Catholic Church: 'Le curé de village' punning on 'cul' meaning 'arse', to counteract her mother's influence.

When she eventually meets her match in a brash American who strangles her, we believe her to be dead when an ambulance transports her to a mortuary. The mortuary attendant, Ghislain O' Brien, photographs Linda's body and, seemingly lovingly, removes all personal effects and fondles a tattoo on her body. Soon after, he lays her inert body on the ground and attempts sexual intercourse. For him, it is an act of love as he later

explains. The act causes Linda to awake from 'death' and she is eventually restored to full health.

Different perspectives on the event are taken by Linda, O'Brien and Linda's mother. The latter is unusually forgiving admitting that if he hadn't committed the outrage, Linda would not be alive. Her religious faith sees it as the work of God as she says to O'Brien:

In the eyes of men, what you have done is criminal - but the only true judge is God. That is why I don't want you to be judged by men if you have been chosen by God.

Similar to Villeneuve's two films, the idea of a 'second chance' is underscored as Linda finally confesses her double life to her mother and is grateful to be able to start afresh. The film goes on to reveal that Ghislain O'Brien was as dead to life as she was. In a letter to Linda who now lives in the country with Charlotte as she had dreamed, he credits Linda with having *returned* him to life. He now has a new job and has found a new group of friends. He says: 'I am less often alone, am less troubled. I have the impression that you woke me up. Without you, I would still be asleep'.

Thus, each of the main characters is given a second chance, and for each character there has been redemption, freedom from guilt and sin followed by renewal. Both were guilty of terrible crimes but their 'joining' has brought about a re-birth, a literal resurrection in Linda's case, and a spiritual one in Ghislain's. If in *Un 32 août sur terre*, Philippe is doomed to remain in a coma all his life due to his own vacillation, Ghislain, in contrast, is reawakened to the fullness of life. Linda, likewise, through her resurrection and redemption has abandoned her criminal activity and lives a rural idyll with her daughter. Thus, Linda's dismissal of her mother's deep faith is corrected by the narrative.

Concerns with maternity, falling birth rates and masculinity are voiced in many of the above films. Along with the much-discussed trope of failed masculinity reflecting the failed national project, a number of films from the mid-nineties on contain scenes of miscarriage and abortion, further reinforcing a sense of failure or incompleteness in the nation, and perhaps also concerns about Quebec's low birth-rate. In *Le confessionnal*,

Pierre's mother, Mme. Lamontagne suffers a miscarriage on-screen. Robert Lepage's film *Nô* (1998) has a scene with a miscarriage (Sophie's) during the October Crisis of 1970 and as the FLQ cell's failed revolutionary activity climaxes in the death of Pierre Laporte. Interestingly as the film closes with the failure of the 1980 referendum, the main characters, Michel and Sophie, watching the results on TV, discuss their own lack of a project for the future and decide to have a child. Erin Manning (2003, p128) comments:

This final dialogue in Lepage's *Nô* situates the quest for sovereignty as a project that takes place both inside and outside the home. The politics of sovereignty as outlined by Lepage is about the desire for a common identity, a desire that is propelled as much out of a need for attachment on a personal level as it is for cohesion on a collective level.

Many of these narratives are infused with a renewed sense of responsibility towards the next generation. The breakdown of the nuclear family is noted again and again in the play around absent or unknown fathers and lone parent families where the mother is generally the principal carer. Susan Hayward (2000, p99) comments that 'the display of the woman's maternal body functions as a *mise-en-scène* for the nation's concern about demographic decline'. This is very pertinent to many Quebec films discussed as noted earlier.

As the set of values based on religion which formed the core of Quebec society for so long, was eroded under the impact of social advance, Ian Lockerbie (1988, p305) suggests that the 'collective imaginary' has undertaken the work of rebuilding the sense of community in looser and more secular configurations.':

A re-working of the experience of family is at the centre of this process, for the family is the social unit most affected by Quebec's rapid evolution to a secular society. The tensions involved in the re-definition of relationships provoke conflict and agony, but lead eventually to a hard-won personal renewal. The father-son relationship is the one most beset by difficulties, reflecting the particular strain imposed on the paternal role by social change....the death of the father seems almost obligatory.

The father/son relationship has also exercised Irish filmmakers as we shall explore in the next chapter and Lockerbie's comments are very relevant. Arcand's *Les invasions barbares* provides us with a striking illustration of Lockerbie's points above. In some ways it had seemed to me to be the last word on this very persistent theme of Quebec cinema appearing as it did in 2003. However, in 2005 appeared the fascinating *C.R.A.Z.Y.* by Jean-Marc Vallée which is set in the 60s, 70s and 80s although, as the director said, it is really a contemporary film (*Cinébulles*, 2005). Its fascination lies not just with its interest in the father-son relationship but in its revisiting of a host of Quebec themes we highlighted earlier. It also provides the most recent, concrete example of Quebec cinema's inability or disinclination to divest itself of its Catholic trappings. It provides further evidence of the continued fascination with suffering and redemption, second chances and resurrections, while it restores the Quebec father to that of a responsible family figurehead as it teaches him some hard lessons on the way.

The initials of the film's title are the initials of the names of the five boys of the Beaulieu family, sons of Gervais and Laureanne. 'Crazy' is also the name of the Patsy Cline song beloved of Gervais and the fallout from the accidental breaking of the record by Zac is a recurrent note in the film. Zachariah's ('Zac') story of the repression of his homosexuality because it would involve loss of his father's love recalls a sub-theme in *Lilies* and other difficulties in Quebec cinematic fathers and sons - *Un zoo la nuit*, *Léolo*, *Les invasions barbares*. The quasi-religious theme is threaded through the scenario from the very beginning. Zac is born on the December 25<sup>th</sup> and is referred to by his mother as 'mon petit Jésus' ('My little Jesus'). The fact that he has some discolouration of the hair at the nape of his neck is seen as a sign that he has been marked by God in some way. His mother brings him to visit Madame Chose, a spiritual 'oddball' of a woman who has 'walked in Christ's footsteps' as we see from the many images of the Holy Land in her home. She tells Zac the story of 'Footprints', known to most Catholics, which affirms Jesus' support in our lives despite his apparent absence, and this motif of footprints returns in the film.

Madame Chose convinces Laureanne that Zac has the gift of healing. Laureanne tells her husband that if she counts her three miscarriages – and assuming that they were all male

– then Zac would be a significant ‘seventh son’ with a special ‘gift’. Interestingly, Zac was dropped just after his birth recalling the accident of Baby Jesus in *Mon oncle Antoine*. His survival of this potential calamity plus his ‘resurrection’ having been clinically dead following a motorcycle accident, provide his mother with further proof of his miraculous status. Zac disavows his mother’s belief yet the film upholds this spiritual imprint on Zac’s character and life. We see him in a dream-like sequence at midnight mass on Christmas Eve ‘ascend’ into heaven, albeit with the imaginary applause of a rock-star on stage! While this, along with another sequence where he imagines the priest deferring a boring sermon - also on Christmas Eve - and sending the children home to open their presents, serves on the one hand to gently mock Québécois’ historical faith, yet Zac’s journey does eventually takes him to ‘walk in the steps of Christ’ in Jerusalem. Once again, he is ostensibly fulfilling a desire of his mother’s to visit the Holy Land but it also occasions his first major homosexual encounter with a Jesus look-alike. The trauma of this encounter (Zac is an asthmatic and is seen to use his inhaler at moments when he has to confront his own sexuality) sends him into the desert recalling Christ’s forty days and nights there. The story of ‘Footprints’ and the familiar accompanying illustration of footprints in the sand are evoked here. Zac should have died in the desert without his inhaler or water, and any cover for his head, but is rescued by a Bedouin: his third miraculous escape from death.

His fascination with the androgynous David Bowie as Ziggy Stardust, is a recurrent theme and the film’s soundtrack powerfully recreates the different eras of Zac’s life all the time punctuated by his father doubts about his heterosexuality. The term ‘fif’ meaning a ‘fag’ is constantly used by the men in the house, expressing the father’s fears for Zac, and his brother Raymond’s disgust. Zac’s constant denial of his homosexuality knowing that it would be abhorrent to his father, occasions some of the more painful moments in the film. Moments of humour are provided by Gervais’ denial of what is staring him in the face. His wife has discussed matters with the priest leading to an outburst from her husband: ‘I wonder sometimes what we are doing praying to a guy with long hair who surrounds himself with guys...who walk around in robes (‘jacquette’)’. As he muses on the fact that there are no female priests, there is an implication that the Catholic Church is a gay institution. Above all, Gervais’ concerns

about Zac point to his own insecure masculinity as he says he can't have fathered a 'fairy' ('une tapette').

An overtly religious reading of the film is undermined by the fact that Zac goes to Jerusalem in search of a lover rather than in search of God. The implication is that he finds both in his Jesus-look-alike lover. He writes a postcard to his mother - 'Your God is watching over me'. He spoke elsewhere of wanting God to answer his prayers. A prayer is answered in that he finds a copy of the Patsy Cline record so coveted by his father that he had broken as a youngster. Incongruously, a Jerusalem street-seller comes to the rescue and the intact record will help to heal the broken relationship.

Whether Zac likes it or not, his personal trajectory mirrors that of Jesus in many ways - through the timing of his birth, his various resurrections, his struggles with the flesh, his suffering at the hands of those who mock his person, his close spiritual relationship with his mother, his time in the Holy Land, his period in the desert and finally his prodigal son's return to the Father. As in *Les invasions barbares*, the key relationship in the film is that of father and son. As Gervais hugs his gay son at last, Zac finds acceptance in the bosom of his family and is finally redeemed.

Vallée admits to having been inspired by Scorsese for the redemptive side of the film (*Cinébulles*, 23, 2, Printemps 2005). That a film with such strong religious themes should reappear within the Quebec cinematic stronghold in 2005 is indeed indicative of the continuing importance of the Catholic heritage even for young filmmakers. While religious subjects have not lost their appeal for filmmakers like Scorsese, Coppola, Gibson etc. there is a difference here. Quebec's films are not explicitly *about* religious subjects but its films are *informed* by the Catholic tradition and filmmakers use this tradition sometimes consciously but more frequently, unconsciously. Their narratives *reflect* the cultural fact that the religious heritage is embedded in the language and the fabric of Quebec society. Quebec's cultural Catholicism remains in spite of its secularisation.

I referred earlier to a number of remakes of classic Quebec films or screen adaptations of literary classics which had considerable success at the box-office and of their more modern take on the subject of the Church. We discussed *Un homme et son péché*, *Aurore* and *Le Survenant*. Éric Bédard (2007, p5) considers that what they have in common is an extremely dark vision of the role played by the Catholic Church and its clergy in French Canada of the 'Grande noirceur'. He considers that this negative vision attests to a troubled relationship with the religious heritage which shows that the Québécois of French-Canadian origin haven't finished settling their scores with the Catholic Church and that this resentment towards the Church remains keen despite the secularisation of the society. However, as these films were very much producer, rather than director or screenwriter, driven, and given the huge publicity they were accorded long before their release, they are very likely tapping into a new negative discourse around the Catholic Church following the revelations of clerical sexual abuse in North America and especially the situation in New Foundland as discussed earlier. We cannot claim that small Irish films had effected any great influence on the Quebec market although a filmmaker of the stature of Neil Jordan has a large international following and *The Magdalene Sisters* won the Golden Lion at the 2002 Venice Film Festival.

In a comment very familiar from critiques of Irish film of the nineties, Bédard (ibid. p3) mentions that the (desired?) after effect of watching these films is to rejoice that one has emerged from this period of 'intolerance, austerity, narrow-mindedness, sacrifice and misery'. He mentions that *Le Survenant*, the least successful of the three films at the Quebec box-office, is in fact the least critical of the Church. The scape-goating of the priest in Luc Dionne's *Aurore*, is seen by many critics as reducing in the most clichéd manner, the Quebec collectivity of the past to the figure of a loathsome priest. Others attack the cynicism and opportunism of film entrepreneurs 'who look for Klondike in the repertoire of the 'Grande Noirceur' (ibid. p10). If attacking the Church was like mining a goldmine for some producers, then, according to Marie-Claire Loiselle (cited in Bédard), these media entrepreneurs are the new 'obscurantists' more pernicious than the clergy in their very populist nod to the public's baser instincts, something which she says diminishes all Québécois. What is implied in these films, according to Bédard, is that the Québécois can congratulate themselves for emerging from the dark era that

preceded the Quiet Revolution and that *le Mal* – evil – has been consigned to an unenlightened past. In this way, as we shall discuss in relation to Irish film of the nineties, they can continue to celebrate the so-called progressive values of today secure in the knowledge that such times are gone. However, as we have noted, ‘progress’ is a very slippery term.

## Conclusion

Narratives of sin, punishment, redemption and ‘resurrection’ recur in varying guises in a number of Quebec films in the past decade. Christian symbolism is present in some more than others but the filmmakers’ very moral stance on the responsibilities of this generation is quite clear. The search for immediate gratification, a symptom of an über-consumerist culture, is directly opposed to the traditional Catholic one where rewards are deferred. The loss of the transcendent has meant that the search for meaning is to be conducted in the here and now. These later films depict a secular, post-Catholic Quebec where the absence of moral co-ordinates and the ideas that gave meaning to the lives of the previous generation are absent. If the baby has been thrown out with the bathwater, and the secularizing of the province has led to the loss of a ‘roadmap’, then the interest in maternity and in creating the next generation displays many Quebecers’ concerns about the future of the province. The desire for continuity, to create and protect the next generation is a driving force in many of these films. Concerns about Quebec’s falling birth-rate possibly accounts for the emphasis on the maternal as referred to earlier in our quotation from Susan Hayward.

The prevailing indecision and lack of resolution in the wake of the second failed referendum in 1995, plus the ‘end of world’ atmosphere around the turn of the new millennium may account for much of the gloom also. These events form the backdrop to the lives of these ‘lost’ individuals. Lucie commented to Max in *Souvenirs intimes*: ‘There’s no way to forget the past, Baby, no fucking way’. By the late nineties, when nobody seemed to be preoccupied by religion anymore and many films presented a harsh, urban, dystopian environment in need of redemption, new truths began to emerge for an audience on the brink of the millennium, or, some might say, for a nation on the

brink of extinction. A modern, comfortable Quebec is no longer interested in the questions that preoccupied its parents but the result is a loss of stability and moral certainty. These films pose the question: 'What happens when you take away all the old certainties, the grand narratives? What happens when you put nothing in their place?'

While echoing a similar sense of confusion found in films of the 60s, these filmmakers expose the hollowness of the lives of these atomized individuals and reassert the importance of personal and social accountability. Denial gives way to avowal paving the way for forgiveness and renewal. More rounded, responsible characters finally emerge from these films and there is a reinstatement of the inter-dependency of human lives. This sense of the renewed importance of community (albeit a white, francophone one), has also been expressed in other popular Quebec films - *Gaz bar Blues* (Bélanger, 2003) and *La Grande séduction* (Pouliot, 2003).

In contrast to Bill Marshall's comment, quoted earlier, about the lack of growth or development in the characters of *Le Déclin*, there is a sense of emergent truth in these latter films where the main characters acknowledge their internal demons and defeat them. Salvation for them has lain, largely, in connecting with other people and in providing for the next generation.

To return to the question of the national broached in Chapter 1, we can see that in the case of the majority of the films under discussion, the 'myth of ethnic homogeneity' (Manning, 2003) continues to be perpetuated although the problematics of gender, class and sexuality are also registered by this cinema. Given that the Catholic legacy, the subject of our deliberations, derives from a white, francophone group of early colonists, it is hardly surprising that the films of the descendants of this homogenous group resonate with such Catholic narratives.

I spoke in Chapter 3 of the continuing kinship of the Québécois and the Catholic Church at a practical if not always a transcendental level given the sharp decline in attendance at religious services. However, many of these later films reveal a hunger for the transcendent, for a new narrative to fill the void created when the ties of tradition were

quickly sundered. With the restoration, or continuation, of a Catholic sensibility in the cinema, there is a return to Quebec's collective identity and collective memory - the religious foundation on which French Canada was built. Many films map the spiritual distance Quebec has travelled since its Quiet Revolution and the results are not presented as very encouraging. Perhaps, then, it is time for Quebec to resurrect its national, collective project but in a more inclusive way which avoids the dangerous 'narrative of homogeneity' Manning (2003). Rousseau and Bouchard, as discussed in Chapter 3, have advanced new ideas of the nation and the national. Implicit in many of the later films is the perception that the bugbears of the past may not have been quite so bad because they at least helped to shape and orient the individual life, something reflected in the films of Arcand. When the old narratives have been largely dispensed with, it may just be time to re-write them but with a new twist. The emphasis on personal integrity and responsibility to others in narratives of atonement and redemption, suggests that the spiritual is to be regarded now as a centrifugal, rather than a centripetal force, operating outside the walls of institutional religion but still a desirable force in many Quebecers' lives.

## Chapter 6

### Irish Cinema and its relationship to its Catholic heritage

#### Introduction

Frederic Jameson speaking of national allegory has said that

...the telling of the individual story and the individual experience cannot but ultimately involve the whole laborious telling of the collectivity itself' (Quoted in Homi Bhabha, 1990, p.292).

Our analysis of the films produced in Ireland, as of the films of Quebec, will examine what they both denote and connote about the nation and its evolving relationship to the Catholic Church. We saw in our discussion of Quebec cinema – especially that of the seventies and eighties – that cinema in its telling of the individual story was speaking of and for the collectivity. Its emphasis on orphans and the weak or absent father connoted the political emasculation of Quebec adrift from its mother, France, and under the yoke of the British colonial power. We quoted Marshall (2000, p63) who saw the incomplete family of Quebec cinema as mirroring the incomplete project of nationhood. Thus, the family is the nation in microcosm. As society changes and previous roadmaps become redundant, the fault lines of (post)-modernity are often registered in familial relations or their lack.

Our discussion of the Catholic Church in Ireland in Chapter 3 noted, with reference to Tom Inglis (1987), that it was through the family and an alliance with the mother in particular, that the Church could supervise the family's adherence to Catholic practices and precepts. The spheres of health and education similarly allowed the Church full rein in its policing of citizen's private practices. As the nuclear family falls asunder and society is increasingly secularized, the Church's hold is weakened. New paradigms of family emerge without reference to the Church. This is the situation we discussed in reference to the lone-parent family of Quebec cinema from the eighties on and which is

perhaps only beginning to be represented in contemporary Irish cinema. In many of the Irish films under discussion, the representation of the family will be seen to comment on the collectivity at large and also to explore the degree of power that the Church exercised over this essentially private sphere. Essentially, these films pit tradition against modernity and present the grasp of Catholicism on society as impeding the move towards modernity. We shall examine the basis for this belief and the particular discourses into which it feeds.

The current chapter will examine the prevalence of certain types of settings and narratives in films produced in the nineties which revisit and recreate events long past. Although this tendency to excavate the recent past was by no means the only narrative thrust in the nineties and other commentators (Díog O'Connell, 2005, p218) talk of the 'second wave' of Irish cinema as concerned with a 'contemporary, secular and urban Ireland', I feel that those films which were created i.e. produced, directed or written by established writers and filmmakers – Jordan, Sheridan, Black, O'Sullivan, O'Connor, for example, and/or adapted from important literary works e.g. *Angela's Ashes*, *Dancing at Lughnasa*, *The Field*, made a much greater impact nationally than those by first-time filmmakers in many cases. When we consider the international funding at their disposal, the international cast of actors, the degree of audience exposure, media coverage and media debate about a number of the issues raised, *Angela's Ashes* (1999) and *Michael Collins* (1996) being cases in point, then it is easy to account for this perception. In the period 1993-2000, out of the 15 films with the highest audience figures for theatrical release, 8 are set in the 50s or earlier. RTE viewing figures show that these films gained almost a 50% share of the viewing audience. *A Love Divided* had the highest audience share of 57% (Barton, 1994, pp191-192). The majority of Irish films seen by Irish people in and around the decade to which this chapter refers, were therefore the group noted above which already wore the mantle of familiarity and were largely prestige productions given the pedigree of those attached to them in many cases. They have also had a number of TV outings on many British channels beamed into Irish homes. But first, we will look at some important antecedents for a cinema which latterly began to ask testing questions of its institutions and of the Catholic Church in particular.

## Emblematic films

Films have been made in Ireland since the early 1900s by both native and foreign film-makers as we noted in our discussion of the Irish film industry in Chapter 4. The first indigenous feature-length film, Tom Cooper's *The Dawn*, was released in 1936, and the influential and internationally celebrated documentary *Man of Aran* by Robert Flaherty in 1934. However, as previously noted, English and American films dominated Irish cinemas in the silent era and the bulk of films made in Ireland then were 'off-shore' productions. A number of historical films made in the early 1900s - many made by Sidney Olcott, director of the American company, Kalem films - contributed towards the development of a nationalist consciousness (Rockett, Gibbons and Hill, 1987). The actions of Catholic priests in these films according to Rockett et al (ibid. p11) '[have] the effect of maintaining the status quo in Ireland', though they cite examples of cunning priestly intervention which saves the lives of the heroes. One indigenous historical film, *Irish Destiny* (1925), set during the War of Independence and released during the tenth anniversary of the Easter Rising was enthusiastically received by Dublin audiences.

However, the new Free State was not to take an interest in this political, indigenous cinema. We saw previously that its first film-related act, and in fact one of the first acts of the Free State Government, was the Censorship of Films Act of 1923 which was indicative of government and Church fears about the undermining of the nationalist project through foreign popular culture and, especially, an increasingly popular foreign cinema. Ninety percent of films at this time originated in Hollywood. The Catholic Church, in both Quebec and Ireland, as noted, was particularly anti-cinema. (Rockett, 1987, p40) comment ruefully on the state's disinterest:

Thus, for a Free State government with its support amongst big farmers, the professions, business and the institutionalised Catholic Church such experimentation would have been seen as detrimental to the social stability which was the main priority in the post-Treaty years.

It would not be until the eighties that the government would take a serious interest in a national cinema although, as discussed in Chapter 4, the chief impetus would be economic rather than cultural.

Two of the best-known films made in and of Ireland, though not directed by indigenous talent are undoubtedly *The Quiet Man* (Ford, 1952) and *Ryan's Daughter* (Lean, 1970). These films are responsible for a particular strain of cinematic Irish romanticism - of landscape and of character - which has been replicated again and again in cinematic and touristic images of Ireland. Made largely for an international audience, they disseminated particular images of Ireland without contributing to an indigenous film culture. Many Irish films either consciously or unconsciously reference them, *The Quiet Man* in particular. Some filmmakers are consciously working against perceived stereotypes or the 'unreality' in the earlier film and are at pains to present what they consider to be a more truthful representation of Irish realities. The very benign portrait of the clergy in the film recalls that of early Quebec cinema. Side by side with their parishioners, they socialise, fish and enjoy the sight of a good 'donnybrook'. Ford enjoys a gentle humour at the expense of the Protestant clergyman and his wife who prefer the more sedate game of tiddlywinks to some of the more robust activities of their Catholic counterparts! The ancient rivalry between the Catholic and Protestant faiths is given an amusing respite when the Catholics 'boost' the numbers of the dwindling Protestant congregation to ensure the visiting Protestant bishop doesn't remove the local clergyman.

Despite often-voiced concerns about the proliferation of Irish stereotypes in the film, Luke Gibbons has provided a more radical reading. He speaks of John Wayne's character, Sean Thornton's 'cultural sympathy and his willingness to participate in other ways of relating to land, sexuality and violence' than that promulgated by the locals (2002, p104). Thus, despite the film's rather patchy engagement with reality, the central character and his marriage to Mary Kate (Maureen O'Hara), posits a new type of relationship which is not beholden to tradition. However, less radical are the various humiliations that the assertive Mary Kate endures and it is difficult to ignore the misogynistic overtones of the script. The submission of Mary Kate is an important feature of narrative closure.

The use of a graveyard complete with Celtic crosses as a setting for a passionate embrace is particularly striking. The juxtaposition of sexual passion and religious

symbols has a sacrilegious dimension to it and underscores the breaking of a social taboo on Mary Kate's part as she and Sean gave their chaperone, Michaelleen, the slip. The forces of nature are unleashed in thunder and lightning as a cosmic rebuke to the lovers but also to heighten the erotic force of the scene as the rain-drenched lovers kiss. This juxtaposition of the sacred and the profane was noted in our discussion of a number of Quebec films, notably those of Carle and Arcand, and served there, as here in Ford, to add an additional sexual frisson to the scene.

Gibbons (1987, p198) has contrasted the more idyllic form of 'soft primitivism' in Ford's film with the darker and bleaker 'hard primitivism' of *Ryan's Daughter*, quoting Erwin Panofsky's division of the pastoral genre. Far from the relatively benign portrait of the Innisfree community of *The Quiet Man*, Lean's film presents an ugly image of a harsh, vindictive and ignorant peasant society. In many ways the priest, Father Collins (Trevor Howard), is the one beacon of light in this fallen world. The heart and moral conscience of his people, Fr. Collins tries to protect Michael, the village idiot, from their constant taunts, and, in particular, Rosy Shaughnessy (Sarah Miles), the wife of Charles, the schoolmaster (Robert Mitchum), who has been having an affair with the English Major Doryan (Christopher Jones) and is wrongly accused of being an informer. Fr. Collins' courage and compassion are evident as he accompanies Rosy and her husband on their final walk through the village, daring the villagers, who had earlier stripped Rosy and shorn her hair, to attack them again.

The priest is the main authority figure in the village and the chief organiser of the villagers most notably during the IRA's landing of guns and explosives from a German ship during a violent storm. He is the only person who can command respect from this wayward community. At times he is reminiscent of a circus master in a freak show trying to put manners on his dissolute community. He has an unusual role also as Rosy's confidant providing a strong, quasi-paternal figure in contrast to her weak and cowardly father who is in fact the informer. This is a familiar role for the priest in Irish society as we noted earlier.

Of the two priests in these two productions which originated outside Ireland, the priest in *Ryan's Daughter* - although the film provides the least sympathetic portrait of the Irish - is the more credible creation. He shares both the economic hardship and republican ideals of his parishioners, in a portrait of the Catholic priest that recalls that explored in Chapter 3. He is not seen to enjoy any particular privileges though and the villagers pay him attention more out of fear than deference. However, his forbearance in the face of Rosy's fantasies and eventual infidelity are rather implausible for a man of his religious beliefs. *Ryan's Daughter's* depiction of a harsh, unforgiving society provides an important antecedent for the kind of parochial, bigoted and begrudging society we encounter in those nineties' films set in the 50s, although Lean's film was set in 1916. As Pettitt (2000, p99) points out, Lean's fascination with Ireland's pre-modern state is 'informed by a particular colonial and aesthetic outlook'. However, the tendency to look back with horror at a society which predates modernisation permeates later indigenous films and is intended to induce a similar sense of relief, justified or not, that this time is past.

### **Indigenous filmmaking and its 'take' on the Church**

The fortunes and misfortunes of Ireland's first film studio, Ardmore Studios, were outlined in Chapter 4 where we saw it proved to be a drain on government finances and in fact aided foreign productions more than indigenous ones. The Huston Report (1968) which followed led to the setting up of an Irish Film Board. In the interim however, a number of independent filmmakers were to produce important works which at the level of subject matter and aesthetics made an important contribution to the creation of alternative images of Ireland in their confronting of both the clerico-nationalist view of the country and also the more romanticised elements familiar from 'off-shore' productions.

The Arts Council's film script awards, initiated in 1977, facilitated film production before and after the advent and demise of the Irish Film Board. A number of the recipients of these awards were to make films which challenged previous representations of people and place. Some were particularly transgressive in their depiction of the sacred

cows of Irish life. Bob Quinn's Irish-language film *Poitín* (1978), funded among others by the Arts Council, RTE and Roinn na Gaeltachta, dispelled many myths about the rural idyll of the West of Ireland in its depiction of makers of the illicit brew, poteen, and the lengths some were prepared to go to get their hands on it. There is a moment in it - unique to Irish film at this point - when the poteen-maker's former partners, in the midst of a skirmish, knock the Sacred Heart picture from the wall and one of them impotently attempts to molest his daughter. Rockett et al (1987, p130) note here 'the transgression of social and sexual codes'. The film is, as Luke Gibbons citing Quinn (1987, p270) notes, 'a rejoinder to *The Quiet Man*', presenting, in critic Ciaran Carty's (1978) words, 'a West with Warts'.

Two important films produced in the eighties deal with issues of clerical brutality, sexual abuse and the breaking of the vow of celibacy. Cathal Black's courageous film *Our Boys* (1981), funded by the Arts Councils, North and South, including RTE and the Irish Film Board, casts a critical eye on the Christian Brothers' education of young boys in the 1950s. This docu-drama provides a snapshot of the educational system run by the Brothers focussing in particular on their liberal use of corporal punishment. On the one hand the Brothers' educational system is seen as a repository of Irish cultural values. The intermingling of the Irish language in prayer and song, the teaching of ancient Irish history and the Catholic faith, provides a portrait of the cultural climate of 'de Valera's Ireland'. Dissenting voices have difficulty being heard we note as the parents of a beaten boy attempt to make a complaint. An older brother swiftly defuses the situation through a charm offensive. Black in the 1980s gives voice to the now adult males who endured clerical brutality as they speak directly to camera. The film finally shows however the demise of such religious institutions as they make way for community schools. It ends with a dazed group of brothers leaving the institution and carrying off religious statues. The empty classrooms with their broken windows and the word 'fuck' written on the blackboard bear witness to the institution's fall from grace and perhaps pre-empt the more savage attacks that religious authorities will endure in the nineties. Kevin Rockett in *Cinema and Ireland* (1987, p136) commenting on the film also points to themes which will interest filmmakers in the resurgence of indigenous filmmaking in the 90s:

... [*Our Boys*] is the only independent film to focus on an educational institution as such and indeed no recent independent film has dealt directly with the Catholic Church itself. *Perhaps the nature and structures of institutions of power have yet to be fully recognised as subjects for Irish films.* (Italics mine)

This examination or attack, if you will, on the institutional power of Church and State, would become a subject for many Irish films from the mid-nineties. In fact, *Our Boys* was not screened by RTE, one of the funding agents, until 1991, ten years after its production, when the backlash against the Church had already begun.

Bob Quinn's short film *Budawanny* (1987) based on Padraig Standún's 1983 novel, *Súil le Breith*, broke new ground in its exploration of the repression of sexuality which is at the heart of the Catholic priesthood. It was funded by the Irish Film Board and Channel 4. It was later released in 1994 as the core of the feature, *The Bishop's Story*, which also received funding from the Irish Film Board along with RTE, The Arts Council and Eurimages. Quinn extended the story and framed the original, which is already a story within a story, within a new narrative. The love affair between a priest (Donal McCann) and his housekeeper (Maggie Fegan) on Clare Island, results in the conception of a child. The islanders gradually become uneasy at the bond between the man and the woman, a bond the priest does not try to hide, although they show a surprising tolerance for a long period. The suicide of the devout sacristan is an extreme reproach to the representative of the Church that he had revered. The priest in the later film is now a bishop, and residing in a retreat house, or 'a drying-out house for tired clerics' as Quinn (*Film Ireland*, Feb/March 1994, issue 39, p12) termed it, relates his tale to another religious inmate who we learn is 'in for' interfering with altar boys and a fondness for alcohol.

The tone of Quinn's film is ironic throughout and he infuses Donal McCann's priest/bishop with a humorous perspective on the events he lived through and reflects on. The memorable scene at the pulpit when he tells the congregation that soon they will have another reason to call him 'Father' pre-empted the revelations about the children of Bishop Eamonn Casey and Fr. Michael Cleary. As he strolls on the beach with the housekeeper and a young simple girl, one of his parishioners comments to another: 'That's a quare Holy Family!' Yet, Quinn also shows compassion for the priest's

predicament when, seeing a dog weighed down by his collar, the priest remarks to his housekeeper: 'Sometimes my collar feels like that'. The older bishop comments ruefully to his younger interlocutor when he enquires as to how he became a bishop: 'When they can't fire you, they promote you', and we learn that he was sent to the missions. This comment is informed by the nineties' revelations about the transfer of priests within different parishes in Ireland and abroad when they were found to have been abusing children or broken their vows of celibacy. Bishop Eamonn Casey was sent to the missions in South America after the discovery of his misdemeanours.

Both Quinn's and Cathal Black's films were extraordinarily prescient in their time. Of course, the undercurrents were obviously there already and there was a considerable degree of local knowledge of priestly misdemeanours which it was difficult to make public until a decade later. However, we must remember that the original film, *Budawanny*, was based on Pádraig Standún's novel published long before these revelations. It does seem clear though that the Casey revelations gave a new impetus to the later film (Quinn, 1994) and prompted Quinn to rework *Budawanny* - although with reference to Standún's later novel, *2016 AD*, which shows the bishop thirty years later with a 'pragmatic, hypocritical attitude to religion' as opposed to the 'brave, sincere priest in *Súil le Breith*' (ibid).

The work of the first Irish Film Board (1981 – 1987), often referred to as the 'First Wave', is important for a number of reasons, not least because of the iconoclastic nature of much of the cinema produced. Irish identity bereft of the traditional markers of land and faith is increasingly problematised in the works of Bob Quinn and Cathal Black as noted above, but also in the films of Joe Comerford (*Traveller, Reefer and the Model*), Kieran Hickey (*Exposure*, 1978), Pat Murphy (*Maeve, Anne Devlin*), Neil Jordan (*Angel*), Peter Ormrod (*Eat the Peach*). We quoted Kevin Rockett (1991, p21) in Chapter 4 where he spoke of the 'socially and formally critical films' of this period which incurred government disapproval. As Lance Pettitt (2000, p103) commented, this new Irish cinema scrutinised rather than revered its traditional institutions like the Catholic Church, marriage and the family:

The latter institutions were seen less as bulwarks of Irish social stability and more as arenas for conflict and questioning.....By putting Travellers, unemployed people, homelessness, homosexuality and urban lives on screen, the fault-lines of modernity in Ireland were exposed.

The Board may not have been a commercial success but the films tackled head on many Irish taboos and laid a foundation for an indigenous cinema. Their main difficulty was that they were ahead of their time and Irish society was still very much in thrall to Church and state-sponsored nationalism. We shall see whether the work of the resurrected Film Board in the nineties consolidated the earlier work of the Board and continued its fostering of indigenous talent or whether other priorities began to prevail.

Given the small audiences for these films they have not been able to enter into or influence the discourse around the Church, celibacy and clerical sexual abuse in any practical way. These filmmakers' voices were always marginal to the dominant orthodoxy. However, *The Bishop's Story* was released in the wake of the Casey revelations and some media commentators wondered if Quinn was 'cashing in on Casey' (*Film West*, Winter 1992, No.14:17). Quebec films generally are in a stronger position to have an impact on their society because of their large audiences. Yet, as we noted, Denys Arcand, a filmmaker with an international profile, and a sizeable national audience, made little attempt in *Jésus de Montréal* to enter into the discourse around priestly celibacy in the way that Bob Quinn's small film did.

One important film in this period made in Northern Ireland but set in a Catholic republican milieu, was Margo Harkin's *Hush-a-bye-Baby* (1989). This film which concentrates on the effect of an unwanted pregnancy on a teenage girl's life is set against the background of Northern republicanism and the 1983 abortion referendum in the South. It not only touched upon, but interrogated, many myths in Irish society North and South. In its wide frame of reference, it provides a compendium of many of the battles between the conservative and secularising forces of the Irish republic in the eighties as enumerated in Chapter 3. An important moment in the film, set in the Gaeltacht, juxtaposes the young girl's increasing anxiety and attempted concealment of her pregnancy with a radio discussion programme where the pros and cons of the abortion referendum are debated – a programme she listens to in English when the *Bean an tí*

leaves the room. It is obvious that abortion isn't an option for Goretti and we are left in little doubt about the marginalisation of this young girl from all the vested interests of Republicanism and the Catholic Church. Her family, likewise, shows itself to be ineffectual in helping her deal with the traumatic events of her life. In contrast, the model of the 'Holy Family' is embedded in her Catholic consciousness.

There is a gentle satire directed at representatives of the Church – the young priest discussing the 'facts of life' with a classroom of girls less naïve about sexual matters than he, and the sequence which shows the same priest on his way to visit her sister's house while, simultaneously, the babysitter, Goretti, and her boyfriend Ciaran begin to make love. Following her pregnancy, her nightmares are filled with images of the Blessed Virgin which mock her 'fallen' state. The death of Ann Lovett, a young teenager who died after giving birth in a grotto in the open air in 1984, is recalled here. Similarly, there are references to the moving statues phenomenon of the 80s and even the 'Kerry Babies' case of 1984, as we have discussed in Chapter 3. Harkin's film is extremely condemnatory of this oppressive, patriarchal Irish culture. Even the Irish language gets a gentle mocking as Goretti and her friend go to language classes to meet boys rather than to brush up on their gaeilge. Thus, Goretti's subjective life is lived at a remove from official versions of 'Irishness' which include Catholic female chastity, devotion to the Irish language and republicanism. In this way, the prevailing myths are exploded in their irrelevance to lived experience.

It must seem more than surprising to outside commentators that, given the degree of controversy the subject of abortion has produced in Ireland as noted in our discussion of the referenda in Chapter 3, it has rarely featured on screen. This is in contrast to filmmakers elsewhere. Canadian filmmaker, Atom Egoyan in *Felicia's Journey* (1999) adapted from Irish writer William Trevor's novel, displays the after effects of an abortion. As we saw in our discussion of Quebec cinema, Quebec filmmaker, Denis Villeneuve graphically depicts an abortion in *Maelström* (2000). Harkin's film was produced by the Derry Film and Video Workshop and the British Channel Four which were no strangers to controversial subjects. It is unlikely that southern filmmakers could have tackled such a subject so openly in the aftermath of the bitter campaigns waged by

both sides in the referenda debates. However, in the nineties with the shift in power away from the Church, and greater freedom enjoyed by the media in general, there was a still a disinclination to tackle issues of this nature. This points at the lack of resolution around this most sensitive of issues. These films of the first Board seemed to provide a template for a radical indigenous cinema, yet one perhaps difficult to achieve if, as is the case for most national cinemas, there is a reliance on government subsidy, and increasingly, commercial imperatives.

## **Irish Film Board #2**

The relaunch of the Irish Film Board in March 1993 after a lapse of six years heralded a new era in filmmaking with greater confidence among filmmakers and increased state support in the form of tax incentives. It was the first time in the history of Irish filmmaking that there had been any sustained development. The Oscars garnered by the largely internationally funded *My Left Foot* (Sheridan, 1989) and *The Crying Game* (Jordan, 1992) had seemed to concretize this dream of an indigenous Irish cinema and the decade was to prove an exceptionally prolific one for Irish filmmaking. As discussed in Chapter 4, greater access to international funding and the support of British and Northern Irish broadcasters, and RTE, the national broadcaster, to a lesser extent, meant that many of the problems that had previously inhibited filmmakers at levels of production and distribution were finally finding a remedy.

Lacking a strong indigenous film tradition, Irish cinema in discovering a new voice in the nineties, found itself not alone shuffling for a space in the market-place and sending out its own stories for international consumption, but, in fact opening up its own national 'Pandora's Box' to a combination of national edification, mortification and disgruntlement.

The complexion of the films produced in and around this decade is varied. There is a combination of big-budgeted Hollywood star vehicles, some of which have been termed 'heritage cinema', (Pettit, 2000, p115) like *My Left Foot* (Sheridan, 1989), *The Field* (Sheridan, 1990), *All Things Bright and Beautiful* (1994), *Circle of Friends* (O' Connor,

1995), *Korea* (Black, 1995), *Michael Collins* (Jordan, 1996), *Dancing at Lughnasa* (O'Connor, 1998), *Angela's Ashes* (Parker, 1999), *Agnes Brown* (Huston, 1999); coming-of-age dramas, which also include some of the above, like *The Last of the High Kings* (Keating, 1996); films dealing with the Northern conflict like *In the Name of the Father* (Sheridan, 1994) and *Some Mother's Son* (George, 1996). Some films are set in a recognisable contemporary Ireland like *Guiltrip* (Stembridge, 1995), *I Went Down* (Breathnach, 1998), *Accelerator* (Murphy, 1998) and *The General* (Boorman, 1998). *About Adam* (Stembridge, 1999) was a new departure in its depiction of a totally amoral Irish Don Juan in a 'cool' contemporary Dublin. Like *Circle of Friends* it relied on a number of international stars to secure funding and audiences alike. Yet, the overall thrust of the decade was to excavate the recent past, and the preferred period was that prior to 1959 and the state's great modernising project of Lemass and Whittaker (1). This is the period often referred to as 'de Valera's Ireland' on which we shall elaborate shortly. Many of the 'heritage' films are also set in this period. However, the term 'heritage cinema' familiar from period-set British films which celebrate Englishness in particular and tend to be uncontroversial (Pettitt, *ibid*, p116), seems to me to be rather redundant here as a term to describe Irish films set in the 50s or earlier. The kind of visual pleasures (except perhaps of landscape) associated with the high cultural values of British heritage cinema are distinctly lacking.

The obsession of many Irish screenwriters and filmmakers in this period with generational conflict, dysfunctional families and Church and state oppression is hard to ignore. Ireland in the late years of the 20<sup>th</sup> century and the early 21<sup>st</sup> had begun to use its young cinema as a long stick to beat the forces of authority who kept it in the dark about its own unsavoury activities. This settling of scores is familiar from some recent Quebec films as discussed in the previous chapter, although the desire for accountability in the present day was not so urgent. Yet, rumblings about compensation for the Duplessis orphans did continue into the late nineties (Leduc, 1999).

Different strands of tradition are explored in these films, but above all it is the twin hegemonic discourses of nationalism and Catholicism in their rigid suppression of all other voices, that are laid bare. An interrogation of patriarchy and women's inferior

position within it completes the picture of a society where Church-sanctioned tradition is presented as a strait-jacket, an impediment to modernity, and the loss of tradition is unequivocally viewed as progressive. Only in more idealised portrayals such as *Into the West* (Newell, 1992) and *The Secret of Roan Inish* (Sayles, 1994), is the loss of tradition seen as being bad for the soul, but this also feeds into familiar discourses of the city and the country where the rural is valued over the urban as we shall discuss. Some of the above films like *Circle of Friends* and *All things Bright and Beautiful* also emphasise the nostalgic elements in the recreation of the past and present a largely harmonious society sealed off from the variety of social ills experienced in the 50s.

### **De Valera and Ireland's 'Grande noirceur'.**

As we noted in Chapter 3, Eamon de Valera came to power in 1932. On the 'wrong' side of the Treaty he had faced great clerical hostility after 1922 but was restored to good favour in the eyes of the Church and the Vatican with his clerically influenced constitution of 1937 and his general support of the Holy See. The complexion of 'de Valera's Ireland' was strongly Catholic, conservative, nationalist and protectionist. As Joe Cleary (2007, p7) noted, critics agree that this post-independence society was 'overwhelmingly disappointing and unattractive' and that it was commonplace in intellectual circles to regard Catholicism 'as an impediment to social or economic progress'. This latter point was discussed in Chapter 3 where, in common with the Quebec case, we noted some disagreement among social commentators and historians in this regard. Cleary's summary of the inherited set of beliefs regarding 'de Valera's Ireland' is useful:

In that iconic version, the whole post-independence epoch before the Lemassian turn has become practically a byword for a soul-killing Catholic nationalist traditionalism and in the parlance of much contemporary cultural debate 'de Valera's Ireland' now serves as a reflex shorthand for everything from economic austerity to sexual Puritanism, from cultural philistinism to the abuse of women and children (ibid. p7).

Paul Durcan's poem *Making Love outside Áras an Uachtaráin* as Diarmuid Ferriter ((b)2007) reminds us, encapsulates the kill-joy image of a sexually puritanical 'Dev' that has been handed down to us:

I see him now in the heat-haze of the day  
Blindly stalking us down;  
And, levelling an ancient rifle, he says 'Stop  
Making love outside *Áras an Uachtaráin*.

The social and cultural landscape of de Valera's Ireland forms an important backdrop to many Irish films of the nineties which had a tendency to look back rather than forward in the midst of economic upheaval. Cleary's discussion of the aesthetic mode of naturalism in Irish fiction and drama is equally instructive in relation to Irish cinema of the nineties. This post-sixties Irish naturalism

is really an aesthetic that expresses the moment when the old rural Ireland dies and disappears but when the new urban Ireland...has not yet found any other identity except the negative one of repudiating the rural world it has displaced. The thematic preoccupation with adolescence and coming-of-age in these novels might thus be read as a symptom of this wider societal transition' (ibid. p157).

Although Cleary is talking of artistic output in the 60s, 70s and 80s, clearly a similar sense of disorientation or cultural crisis in a rapidly changing Ireland, is seen on the part of cinematic artists in the following decade given the very rapid economic growth and societal change associated with the Celtic Tiger. This may account in some part for the return to familiar themes and coming-of-age dramas once again although they must also be seen as a reaction to revelations of clerical and governmental misconduct in the nineties and a new sense of security on the part of media practitioners in discussing formerly taboo subjects. Although we may lament the failure of imagination in directly tackling contemporary issues, there is no doubt that cinema played its part in a national catharsis. The revisiting of the past has allowed for previously silent voices to be heard as Debbie Ging (2002, p189) has noted.

John Horgan (2003) has noted this disinclination on the part of the media to take Church and state to task in the 60s and early 70s when two damning reports were published. 'The Commission on Itinerancy' (1966) and the 'Committee on Reformatory and Industrial Schools' (*The Kennedy Report* (1970) delineated serious neglect, discrimination and abuse of a very vulnerable sector of society. Horgan comments that each report only evoked a 'brief flurry of interest' which quickly died. The

preoccupations of the media who were predominantly male and middle class mirrored that of the middle classes in general:

Travellers, or children locked up in institutions, remained for the most part out of sight and therefore out of mind, along with other vulnerable groups (ibid. p233).

The post 1968 eruption of nationalist conflict in the North also eclipsed concerns with social justice in the South on the part of Church and media in Horgan's opinion. However, there is another quite insidious reason for Church and state disinterest in the findings of *The Kennedy Report*: both had a vested interest in not exposing the injustice due to the financial implications of the Report's recommendations. The creation and maintenance of these institutions, Horgan argues, were an economically significant part of the Church's infrastructure. Also, the state was gaining institutional services at knock-down prices. The ferocity of the revisiting of these issues by the media in the nineties – which we outlined in Chapter 3 - Horgan (ibid, p236) sees as being 'related to a subliminal sense of guilt that the signposts of the 1970s had been ignored or forgotten'. The shift in power relationships in the late twentieth century which facilitated the reopening of this dormant discourse began, Horgan (ibid) suggests, with Ann Lovett's death in Granard. To this I would add the fiasco of the Kerry Babies' tribunal (1984) in the same year, which exposed corruption and misogyny in the legal system, a tribunal which attracted huge public interest and media debate, not to mention media intrusion. The Church has moved therefore from being the 'self-appointed moral guardian of the community' to the subject of a new scrutiny by the media who have become the 'moral policemen' of the Church (ibid. p238).

### **Filmmaking in the Nineties: therapeutic narratives or the settling of scores?**

Many Irish filmmakers in the 90s in common with other media commentators referred to above, re-visit the 'dark ages' or 'grande noirceur' - to borrow a phrase associated with the Duplessis era - of 'de Valera's Ireland' - and occasionally earlier - to explore the oppressiveness of Church, state and the patriarchal family at a time of economic stagnation and post-independence disillusionment. Very often the battle between tradition and modernity is played out in generational conflict where the son is pitted

against oppressive, patriarchal authority as represented by his father. Most of these films see tradition as stifling and its representatives are frequently one-dimensional stock characters. In this way, a certain settling of accounts by a voiceless generation takes place.

The 90s as we saw were very much a decade of ‘telling’, a time when no stone was unturned in recounting the sins visited on the people by those – churchmen and politicians - they had most trusted. Many critics have discussed the increased scepticism in Ireland of the 1990s with increasingly violent and drug-related crime and the uncovering of fraud at levels of industry and government. Lance Pettitt (2000, p.274) comments on drug-related crime, the killing of Veronica Guerin and the Beef tribunal which brought down the Fianna Fáil government, a time when ‘Distinctions between governors and gangsters became blurred’. All of this confirmed, he asserts, ‘Popular doubts about certain Irish politicians, the process of government itself, and increased scepticism about the probity of corporate business activities’ (ibid). To this one could add, as discussed in Chapter 3, the increased scepticism towards the Church in the light of the Bishop Casey and Fr. Michael Cleary scandals, the Brendan Smith paedophile case, and the ‘X’ case. This loss of authority by the Catholic Church and the state in the 90s has seen filmmakers, and the media in general, confidently seize the opportunity to condemn them.

A review by Ruth Barton (1999, p36) of the film *A Love Divided* in *Film Ireland* comments on this tendency: ‘There’s no stopping post-Catholic Ireland, not a corner unswept, not a holy cow un milked’. The release of *A Love Divided* in 1998, rekindled in the electronic and print media the controversy surrounding the Fethard boycott, and the voices of some of the surviving actors in that tragedy were heard once again. One strain of Irish cinema had become a national purgative. Film critic Hugh Linehan has been critical of this staple of Nineties film mocking the constant re-appearance of what he calls, ‘the paper tigers of church and family’ (Linehan, 1999, p48). However, I would agree with Martin McLoone that considering the trauma that Church/state relationships went through so recently in Ireland with countless revelations about ‘abuse and misdemeanours of all kinds that have been the stuff of news and current affairs in the

1990s', it is hardly surprising that it continued to preoccupy film-makers (McLoone, 2000, p167).

This generational conflict which plays mid-wife to the country's passage from the so-called 'dark ages' of tradition to the 'bright future' of modern Ireland is played out again and again in a number of films, many, although not all, dealing with rural Ireland in the 1950s and 60s. These include: *The Field* (Sheridan, 1990), *The Playboys* (MacKinnon, 1992), *In the Name of the Father* (Sheridan, 1993), *Broken Harvest* (O'Callaghan, 1994), *The Run of the Country* (Yates, 1995), *This is my Father* (Quinn, 1998), *A Love Divided* (1999), *Country* (Liddy, 2000). Other films like *Korea* (Black, 1995), *Last of the High Kings* (Keating, 1996), and even *Into the West* (Newell, 1992) and *The Butcher Boy* (Jordan, 1998) place centre stage this oedipal conflict fleshing out major national ideological battles between the individual, the Church and state, tradition and modernity.

All of the films under discussion with the exception of *The General* (Boorman, 1998), are set in rural Ireland and many of them engage with and interrogate the pastoral myths of Ireland beloved of foreign, especially Hollywood, representation as noted earlier. They also expose the myths of cultural nationalism and the ugly reality which sometimes lurked behind them. They show an obsession with dysfunctional or incomplete families and interweave themes of oedipal anxiety, sexual abuse, mental instability and incest. *The Butcher Boy* is undoubtedly the most complex example. Other films located in more modern times, like *The General*, raise issues of the disaffected individual in an urban environment, but in a discourse that recalls films set in earlier times. As Pettitt (2000, p271) has suggested, the collapse of tradition, the old certainties is often expressed in 'the effect it has on the losers and victims, the criminalised or the insane ...the subaltern'. These groups have no vested interest in maintaining the status quo and their disaffection is shown in their attacks on those who repress them. The old certainties of traditionalist rural Ireland have given way to a new condition, that undoubtedly of late modernity, where, to quote one screen character (ironically, Martin Cahill, 'The General'), 'no-one believes in anything anymore'. This comment will resonate from our discussion of Quebec cinema.

## **Fathers and Sons: Tradition VS Modernity**

The Ireland of both *Korea* (Black, 1995) and *The Field* (Sheridan, 1990), delineates the flight from modernity of Irish cultural nationalism. The protectionist policies of the deValera era had led to a self-sufficient, but frugal and insular society as we related in Chapter 3. In *Korea* adapted from John McGahern's short story of the same name, a Romeo and Juliet romance is played out against the background of old civil war animosities, emigration, rural poverty, and the rural electrification scheme.

The title of the film is a reference to the killing of a local youth, Luke Moran, in the Korean War. He was conscripted following his emigration to the U.S. John Doyle, a widower and veteran of the Irish Civil War, lives alone with his son Eamon. They earn their livelihood through fishing on a local lake. There is no love lost between himself and his old civil war enemy, Free Stater Ben Moran, who has prospered more than Doyle in the new state. Despite Doyle's resistance, the world is changing around him. His licence to fish the lake is about to be revoked in the interests of tourism; oil lamps and rechargeable batteries will be supplanted by the imminent arrival of electricity. Doyle comments ruefully to the postman who brings the dreaded letter: 'There was a time when all I wanted to see was a harp on an envelope instead of a crown'. Worse of all is the burgeoning romance between his son and Una Moran, the daughter of his old rival whom he blames for the loss of his licence.

Eamon has great difficulty in opposing his domineering father. In one exchange Una asks Eamon why he never stands up to him. 'I do, but he never notices', Eamon replies. The son is literally trapped in his father's past. His voice-over announces at one point in the film, 'Sometimes, sometimes, I feel so old like I've lived too long in my father's world. His past goes with me in my dreams'. Doyle's resistance to emigration is mentioned on a number of occasions. He says that 'we didn't fight for our country to have our sons sent to Korea to fight'. Later, as he remembers the execution of a youth in Mountjoy jail by the Free Staters, he comments 'That boy didn't give his life that day for us all to go and quit the country...that boy gave his life that day for this...for this', as he repeatedly bangs the table. The spectator cannot miss the irony as we survey the poverty

of Doyle's home. Doyle's mind is changed promptly and profoundly when he gets wind of Eamon and Una Moran's relationship. Some critics (Barry, 1995) have suggested that it is the thought of the money that Eamon might earn in the States, or indeed the compensation that he would get, like Moran for the killing of Luke, that pushes him. However, the film, although not the short story, clearly shows that it is this fear of an alliance with Moran through their children that he most dreads. Moran may have got everything but he will not get his son.

The arrival of electricity - supreme symbol of modernisation - signals literally and metaphorically the country's emergence from the dark ages of the Civil War as it does the son's emergence from the shadow of his father. After a short prayer service marking this new dawn, the assembled crowd sings 'A Soldier's Song'. The twin satellites of Church and State are seen to be united in the modernising of Ireland. Ben Moran, who is presumably a local councillor, is linked to state and Church influence as he sits on the stage while the lights are switched on. In contrast, Doyle, on the periphery of the group is literally 'out in the cold'.

There are those who have lost and those who have gained from the Civil War. Doyle feels that he has been betrayed by his country with the revoking of his licence and the loss of his livelihood. The new Republic hasn't lived up to the ideals of its founders as is seen in the contrast in living standards of Doyle and Moran. Cathal Black's earlier film, *Pigs* (1984) showed him to be firmly on the side of the marginalised and there is strong sympathy for Doyle here. The figure of Doyle encapsulates the difficulties a country like Ireland experiences in moving on and embracing change and progress. Doyle's perspective is typical of a cultural protectionist one where, now that the battle for independence has been won, there is no need for further change. The defeat of Doyle looks forward to the state's great modernisation project in 1959.

The film unequivocally supports the notion that the move from tradition to modernity is progressive. The nationalism that Doyle stands for in the film is shown to be atavistic and authoritarian, and it is clear that it must go. Some of the difficulties embedded in the film are resolved in the uniting of father and son with the help of Doyle's old Civil War pistol brandished by his son. But we see no reconciliation of Doyle and Moran. This lies

with the next generation who, it is hoped, will fulfil its own destiny unhampered by the legacy of its parents and, even more importantly, its refusal to emigrate. This is in fact consistent with an actual drop in emigration figures in Ireland after 1961 when it fell from an annual rate of 14.8 to 3.7% (2). The film's extra-textual relevance to the Northern Ireland peace process (3), which was not lost on the contemporary audience of the mid-nineties, is made explicit in Doyle's eventual greeting of Una Moran.

This beautifully photographed film is keen to show the beauty of the natural landscape even as it displays the rural wretchedness associated with poverty. Both *The Field* and *Korea* allow for the traditional pleasures associated with landscape while they go on to interrogate the rural way of life. Most of the shots of the landscape and the lake portray a sense of timelessness, ironically at a moment when everything is about to change forever. The Doyle's damp and poorly furnished cottage suggests the impoverishment of their lives in contrast to the fine house of Ben Moran who embraces change. While the film does not explicitly interrogate the Catholic Church, the underlying assumption is that the prosperity from which Doyle is excluded is associated with the clerico-nationalist state that Ireland had become. The Church's alliance with the wealthy is a recurrent trope in a number of Irish films of the nineties: *The Field*, *Angela's Ashes*, *The General*, and *This is my Father*.

John B. Keane's play *The Field*, was written in 1965 and set in North Kerry in the late 1950s but Jim Sheridan relocated it to Connemara of the 1930s. Conor McCarthy (2000, p171) has noted that Sheridan's screenplay excised 'an array of references to the accoutrements of modern life and to modern technology from the play, which made explicit the play's context in a modernising society'. The play, with its emphasis on social conflict and change, is thus transformed, in the film, into a contest of human will and conscience. Keane's setting, on the eve of the Lemass modernisation, and the fact that his returned emigrant was coming back from England, and not America, gave his play - as McCarthy points out - a much sharper socio-political edge than Sheridan's film. The complexity of the film's historical resonances is simplified in order to polarise the agents of tradition and modernity.

The familiar touchstones of cultural nationalism inform the opening scenes of the film and introduce us to Mother land, Mother church and soon after, Mother tongue, providing ready markers of identification for both an Irish and international audience. Scenes showing Bull and Tadhg McCabe gathering seaweed and cutting turf against a backdrop of untamed landscape and Celtic ruins, remind us that we are in a primitive, pre-modern land.

Tadhg McCabe, like Eamon Doyle has difficulties with his domineering father. Bull, himself, is all too aware of his son's inadequacies. The competition between father and son is also hinted at in the opening scenes as Tadhg, who has not inherited his father's strength and stamina, cannot overtake Bull as they carry creels of seaweed up a hill to pray at an ancient ruined church. This church interestingly enough recalls the ecclesiastical ruins which provided the setting for Sean and Mary Kate's passionate encounter in *The Quiet Man*. It is an ironical referent however given the anti-romantic thrust of the film's narrative. This scene also hints at Bull's adherence to pre-institutionalised religion, the reasons for which become clear later on in the film when we understand his disregard for the local clergy. However on the descent, Tadhg rushes to overtake Bull and races ahead onto the road. Bull smiles knowingly at his son, all too aware that the son will never measure up to the father. The generational conflict will come to a head later in the film when Tadhg, having once again failed his father in 'the test' - the fight with 'the yank' - flies in the face of his father's will and joins forces with a Traveller girl. The ultimate insult for Bull is when Tadhg tells him of his indifference to the land.

His fight for the field is like his tribe's last stand. His grasp on the land is an act of keeping faith with all the generations before him who died for it. It is this link with his forebears and the tradition of passing on the land from father to son that furthermore gives him the link with authority. Bull's keeping faith with the land has conferred on him then, so he thinks, a moral authority and a superior claim to the field than that of the 'outsider' who plans to concrete it over. Others, like the Travellers, who 'lost their footing' on the land, and emigrants who abandoned it, are consequently held in disdain

by Bull. The fact that he murders a man in the process does not trouble his conscience over much.

In *The Field*, Bull McCabe's authority is absolute and supersedes that of the Church and the Law as exemplified by the local priest and garda. As he emerges from Flanagan's pub with the knowledge that 'his' field is going to be sold, the Travellers gather outside believing erroneously that it was Bull and not Tadhg who killed their donkey. As they become aggressive, Bull says to the sergeant: 'Will I take care of it, or will you?' Both the priest and the sergeant appear in the frame and both fail to exert any authority over the Traveller mob. A later exchange between the priest and Bull which takes place in the presence of the American, shows their different attitudes to authority. When the priest questions Bull's right to the field, reminding him that in common law, the field is the Widow's, Bull replies that 'There is another law: the law of the land'. He adds defiantly at the end of the scene that 'No collar, uniform or weapon will protect the man that steals my field', asserting his indifference to Church and state authority. These are of course the institutions that will ultimately prosper while Bull's kind will die out.

With the killing of Tadhg and the final scenes showing Bull McCabe fighting the waves, like the Cuchulainn of Yeats's *On Baile's Strand* who learns that he has just killed his son, old Gaelic Ireland - Bull's 'kind' is finished. Although Bull rails constantly against 'outsiders', ultimately his grievances are shown to be against his own people - the priests and indeed his parents who passed on the tradition of enslavement - disguised as devotion - to the land. In one memorable scene, Bull remembers with horror how he had suggested to his father that they bring in the hay before seeking a priest for his dying mother. Later, in a key recognition scene he damns both his father and mother for 'slaving him to the famine field.' His attachment to tradition and the passing on of the land from father to son is evidence of the strangle-hold of one generation on the next, just as in *Korea*. Thus, Bull's attachment to tradition, like that of John Doyle's, is undermined in the film and is seen to be out of place in a developing society.

Conor McCarthy (op cit. p171) has commented on how the change of setting in the film allows a more comfortable distance between its 'primitive, almost elemental characters,

and its audience in modern Ireland' which is thus spared the trauma of recognising its own recent past. This is in contrast to Black's film, and exposes a difference between commercial and independent filmmaking in Ireland which contrasts the propensity of indigenous film to tackle head on issues that still resonate for its audience with the more 'escapist' tendencies of films like *The Field*, *My Left Foot* and *Circle of Friends* which target an international audience and are heavily backed by foreign investment. Curley (1996, p7) has also noted the change of setting from 1971 to the 1950's of *The Ballroom of Romance* (O'Connor, 1982) and that Trevor's bleak story of rural Ireland was set 'perilously close to the period in which the film was made'. It was thus easier to 'offload the problems it examined onto a more distant past' than to have to admit that contemporary Ireland 'was still afflicted by serious social ills' (ibid.). This is a point we shall return to later in our discussion of the Celtic Tiger economy.

In many ways, *The Field* invites a modern audience to peer into the 'quirkiness' of the past and its atavistic attachments to the local which have little place in the Ireland of a Europe without frontiers, where territory is more of mind than of place. Bull's fighting of the waves is a clear metaphor for the futility of attempting to stop the tide of progress, but in its evocation of Cuchulainn it also consigns Bull's claims to the safe place of myth and legend. Luke Gibbons speaks of the film's 'tragic rejection of modernity' (2002, p98) contrasting it with *The Quiet Man* where Sean Thornton and Mary Kate 'repudiate' one aspect of tradition: the dowry, in the end. However, while *Korea* and *The Field* condemn the position of traditionalists like Doyle and McCabe, they still re-visit sympathetically the enormous trauma of their loss. Thus, voices of the marginalised of history rhyme with those of a more recent past, allowing for a degree of empathy and solidarity with the contemporary audience.

Not all battles are as easily won as that by the son in *Korea*. Other films like *This is My Father* probe deeply the wretchedness of lives blotched by emotional repression, alcoholism, violence and the tyranny of a society regulated by Catholic precepts. The mother, whose influence might provide a foil to the father's oppression is strikingly absent in the majority of these films. Eamon Doyle's mother is dead, Tadhg McCabe's is engaged in a cold war with Bull, and the mother in *This is My Father* has been paralysed

by a stroke. Luke Gibbons (2002, p97) has commented that ‘the sacrificial death of the mother is required for progress, as if modernization can only take place over her dead body’. Yet, women were often the driving force of modernity, influenced by films and fashions - the character of Fiona in *This is My Father*, discussed below, is an obvious example. Their virtual invisibility makes the transition all the more brutal and painful for father and son and polarizes the battle between tradition and modernity in the absence of an important mediator.

Declan Quinn’s film *This is my Father* (1998), is framed as a search for a father the son has never known. The film, told largely in flashback, recounts the ill-fated love affair of the son’s parents back in Ireland in 1939, seven years after de Valera came to power. Kieran O’Day (Aidan Quinn), a poor-house orphan, had never known his own father. His illegitimate son, Kieran Junior, shares the same fate until he returns as a middle-aged man to Ireland and discovers his past. A history teacher in Chicago, Kieran’s life is empty; he fails to interest his students and is simply drifting. The opening scenes in the classroom show a female student relating her family history while Kieran daydreams. He has set his students a task that he has not, as yet, accomplished himself.

His mother, who lives with his sister, has suffered a stroke and is unable to tell him anything about his origins. His fatherless nephew, Jack, is starting to get into trouble and his mother persuades Kieran to take him to Ireland with him. The message here is overwhelmingly that sons need their fathers, they need to have a sense of who they are if they are to find any direction in life. The search for the father is fundamental. Kieran is second generation Irish-American so is doubly divorced from his roots. Once he has unlocked the key to the past and found his father’s grave, he returns to the classroom a committed teacher and begins to share his own family history with his students. Healing is only possible once you know who you are.

The film employs flashbacks to revisit the love affair of Fiona (Moya Farrelly), his mother, and Kieran Senior. The obstacles the couple encounters are rooted in class divisions. Kieran, a ‘poorhouse bastard’ who never knew his own parents, lives with the Maneyes who are tenants of the wealthy Widow Flynn, Fiona’s mother. Not owning their

own land, they are, like Bull McCabe, at the mercy of the owner who threatens them with eviction once Kieran and Fiona become involved. Kieran has even fewer rights and the theme of dispossession is raised here when the Maney's ask him to leave to protect themselves. The Church is allied with the wealthy widow in keeping Kieran and Fiona apart.

The Ireland of the late thirties is a very oppressive place. The people are reduced to a state of infantilism by the Church which regulates their sexuality. Set pieces like the dance, where young men 'spike' people's drinks once the priest's back is turned, and the hellfire and brimstone sermon of Stephen Rea's Mission priest, show a distrust, even a disgust of the flesh and a constant emphasis on man's sinful state. A similar scene in *The Field* shows the men pouring whiskey into their tea at the American wake once the priest departs. The gentle and very Catholic Kieran, extremely susceptible to the admonitions of the Church, attempts to terminate the relationship with Fiona such is his conscience bothering him. The confessional scene - a staple of nineties film, along with the sermon from the pulpit - is a pivotal one here. It gives voice to Kieran's interior struggle but also in its emphasis on shame and guilt - 'That's a child, you're a grown man' - copperfastens his subjection to the supreme authority of a vengeful Church. Once Kieran has flouted the rules of propriety - crossing the class divide and being sexually active as a single man, the forces of law - of man and of God - are quick to act. When Fiona becomes pregnant, the priest tells her she must go to a convent - the 'crime' must be hidden at all costs. Because Kieran is very much a product of his own narrow society, he is unable to withstand the psychological battering from the priest and the law. The more sympathetic guards suggest to Kieran that he abscond but instead he commits suicide.

Kieran and Fiona represent two sides of the tradition/modernity coin. Kieran is a naïf, god-fearing, hard working man. To date, nothing has disturbed his quiet and simple beliefs. Fiona is presented as the rather wild, sexually adventurous young woman influenced by American popular culture, especially the Hollywood movies and her heroine, Greta Garbo. In a characterization that sometimes recalls *Valérie*, she has been expelled from her boarding school by the nuns and is extremely forward in her dealings

with Kieran. She is the drinking, smoking, car-driving 'thoroughly modern' woman who, yet, despite her outward sophistication, and here decidedly unlike Valérie, is found to be as sexually innocent as Kieran.

The notion of dispossession is also raised by the presence of Travellers in the film. Like Kieran, they are on the margins of society, enjoying little security or respect. When Mrs. Kearney and her son, Seamus, reappear in the present they are now settled and are able to relate the story of Kieran's origins. The Travellers inhabit a kind of provisional world. Sandwiched between two cultures, the nomadic and the settled, they are the conduit for Kieran's similar state of 'in-betweenness' to one of greater certainty when the past is uncovered. The Travellers' house is only plastered to the front suggesting that they have not fully embraced the settled life, and a caravan is parked around the back - presumably ready for flight at any moment. Thus, the Travellers for all their trappings of the settled life and their modern conveniences with their Bed & Breakfast business have not fully embraced 'modern' life. Their home also suggests a metonym for a country similarly in transition.

The film is at pains to show the many paradoxes in modern Ireland and to dispel many of the emigrant's myths about this quaint, pre-modern society familiar from some of the earlier foreign productions. As in *The Quiet Man*, there is a desire to debunk many of the pastoral myths about Ireland. One notable moment is when, Kieran's nephew, Jack, newly arrived in Ireland, pulls back the curtains in his bedroom to see the huge chimney of a power station and, mystified, announces 'Chernobyl'!

In common with other national cinemas, many of these films see America as the chief locus of progress and modernity. Its appeal as an escape from a restrictive culture is underscored when, in a near fantasy sequence in *This is My Father*, an American aerial photographer (John Cusack) drops in on Fiona and Kieran, literally, from the sky. In *Le Confessionnal*, Alfred Hitchcock brings with him the whole Hollywood apparatus to Quebec City and hordes of people queue up to be in his *I Confess*. The censorship by the Duplessis government of Hitchcock's film is invoked as his PA reassures him that 'this version' was just for 'these people' and that 'there wouldn't be a problem anywhere

else'. Luke Gibbons (2002, p102) refers to the 'therapeutic narrative' of the Irish film which bears many striking similarities to that of Robert Le Page's *Le Confessionnal* discussed in the previous chapter, and which too has the search for a father at its core. In discussing the narrative's resolution, Gibbons comments:

Such resolution as there is comes from a recognition that what presented itself to Kieran O'Day as a source of despair – the array of class, religious and social prejudices which passed for custom – is amenable to change, albeit over several decades, and this lesson is not lost on his son when he returns to his teaching post in America.

Both *Le confessionnal* and *This is My Father* cast a jaundiced eye on institutionalised religion and a sense of betrayal is common to both films. We recall here Lepage's comment that he sometimes has the feeling that he's the son of a bitter generation that felt betrayed by its era'. They demonise both Marc and Kieran Jr.'s very vulnerable mothers for having sexual relations outside of marriage. The contrast in the confessional scenes in both films shows Lepage's lighter touch. Lepage can poke fun at the insularity and religious conservatism of the past because modern Quebec is so far removed from it. This is in contrast to Irish film where quite the same distance hasn't yet been achieved. It was only in the nineties as we have discussed that, to borrow Foucault's phrase, Ireland became a singularly confessing society and the many skeletons in the national closet were uncovered.

The societies of the present day show that the Church-sanctioned nuclear family has broken down, but that fathers still have a very important role to play. This crisis of paternity and the search for closure drives the narratives of both films. Both Kieran Jr.'s and Marc's identities are provisional until the father's true identity is known. Both films are concerned primarily with male destinies. Identity is seen as a uniquely male quest tied up with the states Ireland and Quebec were becoming. The orphan is of course, a familiar trope from Quebec film and literature as we have shown. Absent or 'shadowy' fathers have also featured in Irish films especially those that have maternal narratives at their core. The absent father in Quinn's film also stands for the absent 'homeland' for the offspring of emigrants. It is the emigrant's dream to return 'home' and make himself complete. If Quebec has often been seen as an orphan exiled from its parent, then the

child of Irish-American emigrants, similarly displaced, suffers too an indeterminate identity.

These narratives are multi-vocal in their evocation of loss: the loss of self-determination of a colonized state; the loss of the homeland for the emigrant; the loss of the father and thus a personal identity for the son. Trauma at a national level is seen to have huge personal ramifications.

### **Gangsters and Travellers: winners and losers in a Catholic Free State**

Is tradition always presented negatively and modernisation as progressive? John Boorman's *The General* (1998) based on the life of crime boss Martin Cahill (Brendan Gleeson), who was assassinated in August, 1994, shares some similarities with the previous films. Although set in the nineties, it is informed by a number of elements of the discourse of tradition already noted, and I feel it useful to include it here.

Martin Cahill's working-class origins are well-documented in the film and his criminal activities are seen as a symptom of social disadvantage. There is a similar sense in *The General*, as in the earlier films discussed, that the ideals of the Free State have been betrayed. Early in the film when Cahill raises the tricolour outside his caravan, refusing to move from Hollyfield, he is implying that he is the descendent of the old Ireland that has been forgotten in the slide towards 'progress'. He berates the priest, the lawyer and the civil servant who come to persuade him to move by saying that they do nothing for the disadvantaged like him. Although this is by way of justifying his own criminal activities, the film does in part support his position. It cuts from a scene of police brutality when young Martin gets caught stealing, to Church brutality as a priest 'leathers' the boys in the reformatory school to which he has been sent. Why Martin escapes a beating becomes clear when the priest returns that night for a sexual reward. However, his own ménage à trois with his wife and her sister lies firmly outside any legal or religious framework and ultimately Cahill makes up his own rules. His castigation of Church and state provides him with an excuse for his own hedonism.

*The General's* narrative is motivated by Cahill's battle with the forces of law and order and his success at outwitting them. His main adversary is John Voigt's Inspector Ned Kenny. Kenny stands for the old values of decency and respect. He is a country man, a typical repository of old rural Catholic values. He believes in the status quo and can't quite fathom someone who lives as Cahill does. The representatives of the state in the film have largely rural or educated accents referencing the bourgeois state that Ireland has largely become. Old, conservative Ireland can't accommodate Cahill's urban gangster. Cahill takes grim satisfaction when, after a beating from Kenny, he observes that he has now brought him down to his 'level'. He once again takes the high moral ground with Kenny when he says:

You used to be a straight cop, a good culchie boy from Kerry, always did what the priest told you, knew right from wrong. Now look at you? Did the Church let you down? Did it? Nobody believes in anything anymore, except me.

Cahill laments today's rampant individualism while also suggesting that he is one of the few who still believes in the old values. On a number of occasions, he highlights what he sees as a general criminality in society. His solicitor, he says, 'breaks in through his letter box', and the police who have a job - 'unlike him' - throw women and children onto the street. Thus, if the old authority figures of Church and state are found wanting, he has licence to behave as he does.

Cahill has a strong sense of class-consciousness and a very individualist morality. When he refers to the forces of the State as 'oppressors of the poor', Boorman is seen to tap into the new discourse of the marginalised prevalent in the nineties. In many cases, Cahill's fight with the police is presented as a class war. On one notable occasion, he says to his wife, Frances, 'It's you and me against the world'. Boorman has also said that he was attracted to Cahill, feeling that he 'represented the pagan characteristics of a Celtic chieftain' in modern-day Ireland (Dwyer, 1998). The parallels with Bull McCabe are evident here, and the latter is similarly endowed with a rather dubious moral sensibility. Although Boorman has spoken of Cahill as an iconoclast, (Dwyer, 1998), it is clear that Cahill uses the discourse of traditionalist Ireland to prove that he is 'better', a better Irishman, in fact than those who inherited the new society after Independence.

Unlike them, he hasn't forgotten loyalty to his own, his family, his community, and the poor.

The theme of sexual abuse is raised a number of times in the film but is treated surprisingly lightly. While Cahill's side-kick, Gary, is berated by all for the sexual abuse of his daughter, another scene shows Cahill helping him to concoct a story for the guards whereby he will say he was abused by priests himself. Ned admits that he was, but, to the disgust of Cahill, himself a former victim, he admits that he enjoyed it. Cahill inflicts a 'punishment style' shooting on Gary in one of the few acts of violence in which we see him directly involved in the film. Anxious to protect his gang from any of Gary's daughter's revelations, he tries to silence her by telling her grandmother that he will set the girl up in a house of her own. The scene takes place in the garden while the grandmother is hanging newly hand-washed sheets on the line. Cahill smells them ruefully and comments, 'We've a washer-dryer now'. Cahill, the traditionalist, regrets this so-called 'progress'. Enjoying the 'fresh-air' scent of sheets dried in the open air, he simultaneously consigns a young girl's terror to the dark closet of family shame.

All of the above films show an alliance between the Church, the state and capitalism. In Sheridan's film, the priest visits the field with 'the Yank' and they are on first-name terms. The sergeant acts as messenger boy for the American when he makes an offer for the field to the Widow on his behalf. Following the slashing of the foreigner's car tyres by Bird, Bull's sidekick, in an action more appropriate to *The General* than a small farmer, the sergeant removes Bull's cattle from the field after a request from the Widow written on presbytery paper. While the Catholic Church may be associated with modernity and progress in *Korea* and *The Field*, this can also be read as an alliance with capitalism which will ensure its own survival. We noted this intersection of the Church and capitalism in Quebec cinema from the seventies.

The landless Kieran O'Day and the Maney's are utterly vulnerable to the machinations of the Widow in cahoots with the Church and the police. This alliance against the 'true' inheritors of the land is also decried by Bull McCabe and Martin Cahill. Bird in *The Field*, refers to the priests as 'the Judases of this nation' and the theme of betrayal is

common to both films. The new state has failed to fulfil the aspirations of the people. These films present the disgruntlement of the 'losers' in the new status quo. In *Korea*, the father's disaffection is given clear political origins as he was on the losing side of the Civil war. Bull McCabe's disgruntlement harks back to events of a century earlier - the Famine and dispossession. Cahill's background shows him to belong to Ireland's underclass, those who have not benefited from Ireland's economic growth.

*The Field*, revisits many accusations made against the Church, historically - they locked the people out during the Famine; no priest died during the Famine; they forbade suicides, like Bull's son, Shamie, to lie in consecrated ground. This exclusion is something that neither Bull nor his wife can forgive. Similarly in *This is My Father*, the suicide, Kieran O'Day cannot be buried in consecrated ground. In Kieran's case, the Church says that this is what 'the people' would want. When Kieran finds his father's grave, he says to him: 'I'm sorry the world was so harsh.....' Thus, many of these films resonate with the prevailing reproaches to the Catholic Church in contemporary Ireland and share in the general mood of disapprobation as clerical misconduct is revealed.

Social exclusion is also one of the themes of *Into the West* (Newell, 1992). Here, the battle between tradition and modernity is played out once again in generational conflict and the collision of two lifestyles - that of the nomadic Traveller and the settled one represented, respectively, by father and son. Gabriel Byrne's Papa Reilly has exchanged the Traveller way of life for a dubious existence with his two motherless sons, Ossie and Tato, in a tower block of a very recognisable urban black-spot of Ballymun. Cut off from his roots and still grieving for Mary, his dead wife, Papa Reilly finds solace in alcohol. A scene early in the film shows him confronting his father who still travels the road. The father looks askance at the impoverished lifestyle his son and grandsons lead, and tries to persuade him to return to the road. Here, modernity is seen as disabling. Papa lives off social welfare and is debased by the experience. He neglects his sons and is despised by settled people and the police. The Travellers he has turned his back on, similarly show contempt for his abandonment of the 'old ways'. In order to recover from his alcoholism and his grief, Papa must re-connect with his Traveller past and burn the caravan of his dead wife to 'release her spirit'. Redemption is possible with a return to

the past. The modern world of urban Ireland destroys the soul and must be abandoned. Re-united with his Traveller family and a potential romance with a Traveller woman, Papa is saved.

Hence, within the Travelling community, tradition is shown to be a positive thing. The loss of tradition, just like the loss of the father who is the primary connector, has led to a decentring of the individual and a debasement of his life. While *Into the West* presents an idealistic picture of the Traveller lifestyle and, in a rather simplistic manner, presents the majority of the settled people, especially the Guards, as villains, it must be remembered that it is essentially a children's film and its reliance on stereotype a familiar feature of the genre. Lance Pettitt (2000, p128) sees the film as presenting Ireland at the 'intersection of tradition and modernity' and many commentators have drawn attention to the scene where Grandpa's horse-drawn caravan is projected with a very noisy jet flying overhead. However, the film may be making a point less about Ireland here, than about Travellers. On one level, this shot invites us to consider the anachronistic nature of Grandpa's lifestyle but the film goes on to reassure us of the value of this lifestyle and to interrogate any notion of modernity as progressive. Another equally compelling shot shows the Travellers engaging in uninhibited dancing around their campfire reminiscent of Indians. However, a television, clearly obvious in the foreground offers a silent commentary on the competitive 'pull' of both native, 'traditional', and popular, 'modern' culture.

Lance Pettitt(2000, p129) has discussed some of the ideological confusions within the film:

The film seems to present the Travellers as being outlaw cowboys, but blurs this into attributes of Native Americans. The film repeatedly and explicitly portrays the Travellers as contemporary Irish 'Indians' in the way that they are marginalised, treated by the Gardai (cavalry?) and small townsfolk....

The film never resolves the issue of racial status and cultural identity. In responding to Tato's question about whether Travellers are cowboys or Indians, Papa says that there's 'a bit of a Traveller in everybody' and that 'few of us know where we're going'. Pettitt (ibid. p129) shows that Papa's comment 'evades the issue of the Travellers'

displacement within Ireland, elevating it to a more universal sense of disorientation in the modern world'. Hence, the film never gets to grips with the live issues for Travellers in Ireland and is content to idealise and romanticise their way of life. Narrative closure is achieved through the reuniting of Papa Reilly with his own father and his sons, re-connecting to Traveller culture and indubitably completing his family with a 'new' mother, Kathleen. No effort is made to recuperate the Travellers for society or to broach the thorny issue of Traveller integration or co-existence with modern society.

Escape to the West is a feature of many films, both Hollywood and Irish. It provided a welcome release from an increasingly claustrophobic and gang-ridden Dublin in the closing scenes of *Flick* (Connolly, 1999). It is above all, the source of an authentic *Celtic* experience, and this informs films as diverse as *Man of Aran* (Flaherty, 1934) and *The Quiet Man* (Ford, 1952).

Representation of the West in *Into the West* can be seen to be associated with the discourse of nature prevalent in many films released in the nineties and which re-energized the Western genre. The conception of nature according to Leo Baudry (1998, 287) has two main aspects: nature as a physical place and nature as an ideal human setting:

Nature as an ideal setting accents the harmony with nature of particular "natural" peoples: Native Americans facing an encroaching European frontier; or more contemporary ethnic families, their traditional values threatened by urban variety and assimilation'.

Baudry (ibid.) furthermore speaks of 'clashes of language and discourse' such as - 'primitivism versus progress, commercialism versus humanitarianism' in this mode of nature. The nature mode is associated in the US with recognising the need to 'retain older values that are eroding or vanishing'. Older questions like 'Where are we going and how do we get there' have given way to a nervous 'How can we stop from going where we don't want to go?' (ibid. p293). This urge to nature in a time of 'moral and cultural disarray' could be considered appropriate to nineties Ireland. *Into the West* can be inserted into this discourse of nature in its invitation to its Irish audience to contemplate not just its treatment of the marginalised but also to reflect on the so-called

ideologies of progress and modernity that inform the Celtic Tiger. Speaking of John Sayles' *The Secret of Roan Inish* (1995) and *Into the West*, McLoone (2000, p.211) comments that as 'metaphors for the nation, these two films offer exceptionally traditional remedies to an old problem and mobilise the ancient myths of Ireland for an essentially regressive ideology'. While there is undoubtedly truth in this, the very fact of their appearance at a time of social upheaval allows the posing of many important questions that might otherwise have remained unasked. The absence of any representation of the Church in the film helps to underscore the marginalised status of the Travellers who are removed from all of the centres of power in Irish society.

### **Female voices and the challenge to religious orthodoxy**

Other nineties films such as *December Bride* (O' Sullivan, 1990), *The Playboys* (McKinnon, 1992) and *A Love Divided* (Macartney, 1998), place women at the centre of their narratives. They are interesting in terms of their treatment of generational conflict but in particular their feminist discourse in their female protagonists' opposition to patriarchy.

O'Sullivan and McCartney's films deal with the experiences of the 'other' tradition, that of the Protestant community in Ireland. The weight of patriarchal tradition is challenged by women who reserve the right to chart their own destinies independently of church-sanctioned tradition, whether Protestant or Catholic. Their actions are doubly oppositional in terms of their rejection of religious conformity and of the pre-ordained role of women within the patriarchal family. Their actions have major ramifications for the status of the men who share their lives within existing traditions of fatherhood and masculinity.

*December Bride* adapted from Sam Hanna Bell's 1951 novel of the same name, is set in the landscape around Strangford Lough in County Down at the turn of the century. It is the story of Sarah Gomartin's involvement with the Echlin family in a relationship that is anything but conventional.

Sarah and her mother, Martha, are employed as servants in the Echlin household which consists of the father, Andrew and his adult sons, Frank and Hamilton. Following Andrew's death and her mother's departure, Sarah continues to keep house for the brothers. Her consciousness of her insecure social position, and the material advantage that could accrue from an alliance with the Echlins, spurs her on to have a relationship with both brothers and to consolidate it in the children she has with them. All three live in a largely harmonious ménage à trois outside of any church or state sanctioned laws.

Early scenes in the film are punctuated by the beating of the lambeg drum announcing the claims of tribe and kinship. Andrew Echlin embodied non-sectarian, dissenter ideals and does not hold with either the Established church or the Orange Order. He also breaks with the class divisions of his community when he invites Martha and Sarah to share the Echlin pew in church. Hamilton's independence from the Presbyterian tradition is seen in the joke that he tells Sarah which shows that 'the Presbyterians of Ulster think that they have all of heaven to themselves'.

Sarah's feminism is largely unarticulated in the film yet many of the close ups privilege her point of view and we are left in little doubt as to her feelings. Sarah does not see the need to have her relationship with her child's father (if she knows who it is) sanctioned by a marriage ceremony and determines to give her child her name alone. Although her mother departed the Echlin home in disgust at the lifestyle the brothers and Sarah were leading, the key battle in the film is that between Sarah and the Reverend Sorleyson. It is in their conversations that we get a sense of Sarah's resistance to patriarchy. His emphasis on a woman's 'good name' draws the response 'What ails my name?' Of course, it is through the male line and the tradition of giving a child its father's name that patriarchy is maintained, and this is the one matter on which Sarah will not budge. She speaks to Sorleyson of the hypocrisy of religion:

Here's how our farm is husbanded...there's more than one recipe for making a house....That's all you want, you clergy, to bend and contrive any matter 'til it's smooth to the eye. All botched inside but outwards smooth to the eye. Like lazy work!

Her use of the word 'husbanded' is significant in its *double entendre*, in that Sarah, the woman, determines what kind of husbanding takes place, and not the men. Sorleyson's sexual overture is quickly rebuffed. She is in fact, asserting a superior morality here, one based on genuineness and honesty. Maintaining the patriarchal and religious traditions of Sorleyson would be like living a lie. As McLoone (2000, p42) says:

She attempts to reimagine and reinvent the family unit and through this, to construct 'community' beyond the hypocritical norms of her Presbyterian environment.

Frank, perhaps weary of not having the monopoly of Sarah's affections, and perhaps also tired of the social ostracism that the family endures, eventually goes in search of community and tries to court a local girl, but his attentions are not appreciated by her brothers. At the Orange rally in his dark suit and bowler-hat, Frank attempts to re-insert himself in the clan. However, having paired off with a woman - in a scene reminiscent of *The Quiet Man* (McLoone, 2000, pp. 209-210), he is punished for his transgression and badly beaten on his way home. Left infirm, he makes no further attempt to join in the community he had earlier abandoned. As Sorleyson had earlier implied, the community does not forgive. The social ostracism suffered by the Echlins is typical of the treatment of those non-conformists within close-knit Catholic circles as we have shown.

McLoone (ibid. p41) has pointed out how the film breaks with traditions of representation in Ireland's dominant cinematic tradition whereby landscape, thatched cottages and rural communities are associated with Catholic, nationalist Ireland. But 'the community inhabiting this landscape is a Presbyterian, Unionist one making an important break with this tradition'. He summarises the impact of *December Bride*:

Like the tentative but daring nature of Sarah's reimagined community, *December Bride* pushes beyond convention and custom and attempts to reimagine the cultural map of Ireland and the Irish differently. In peopling a recognizably Irish landscape with a Northern Protestant community, ultimately the film challenges sedimented assumptions about both' (ibid. p.53).

The film thus presents a leap forward for Irish cinema in its departure from more classical representations of Ireland and the Irish. The search for the father articulated in a number of Irish films is also given a new twist here. Sarah's children have two fathers and they clearly lack for nothing. The Echlins do not cling to any conventional church or state sanctioned union. Sarah's own lack of a father is not directly referred to in the film but presumably has determined the penury of her and her mother's lives. However, Sarah ultimately bows to tradition but it is, ironically, at the behest of her daughter and not her rector. Her antipathy to convention is reiterated when she remarks to her daughter: 'Youse young ones are all for marrying now....all for convention', and she initially refuses to 'make all smooth to the eye'. When she relents, the camera maintains suspense in that we do not know until the end of the ceremony that she has married Hamilton. However, she looks for a long time at Frank implying that she has not chosen between them. When mother and daughter embrace at the end, there is irony when Sarah says 'Our young must live....things move on'. But, in fact, there has not been any progress, but a reinstatement of patriarchy and tradition. Yet, at the film's close, Sarah is framed alone in the landscape looking out towards the ocean, implying her independence from society's traditions and her claim on the land irrespective of male traditions of inheritance.

Many of Sam Hanna Bell's novels hark back to the rebellion of 1798 and the shared interests of Catholics and Protestants which have since been eroded and opportunities lost. Richard Mills (2000, p118), speaking of Bell's work says

It was one long struggle to perpetuate the notion of a shared Ulster history and a shared cultural background, the dearth of which is lamented in his first novel *December Bride*.

The film, however, unlike the novel, chooses to concentrate on the private sphere and takes little pains to treat the subject of shared interests. In fact, in highlighting Sarah's resistance to the Catholic, Bridie Dineen, it somewhat skews Hanna Bell's intentions.

*December Bride* invites us to imagine a different way of living outside of tradition, especially a tradition that is both sectarian and patriarchal. Although Sarah's verbal

attacks are specifically on the Protestant Church, her criticisms are very familiar from the nineties' discourse around the Catholic Church in the South that we have been exploring. Given the turn-of-the-century setting, Sarah's actions are even more subversive than those of heroines from films with a later setting. The film enters a similar discourse around patriarchal religion and sectarian politics as *Hush-a-bye-Baby*. Sarah, however, is spared the intense suffering of Goretti who is tormented by the impossible model of the Blessed Virgin so venerated by the Catholic, although not the Protestant, Church.

*The Playboys* (1992) directed by a Scot, Gilles McKinnon, and written by Irish writer Shane Connaughton who also wrote the screenplay for *My Left Foot*, has a heroine who displays a similar independence of spirit to Sarah Gomartin. Tara Maguire (Robin Wright) is an unmarried mother who refuses to name the father of her child or to bow to convention and marry despite the local sergeant's (Albert Finney) insistent offer. Like Sarah with the Rev. Sorleyson, Tara locks horns with the village priest, Father Malone (Alan Devlin). She is something of a *femme fatale*, having caused the suicide of one of her suitors and driven the sergeant to distraction in his pursuit of her. However, it is the 'playboy', Tom (Aidan Quinn) a member of an itinerant theatrical troupe who wins her love and, in true bohemian spirit, they ride off to Dublin on his motorbike shunning the conventions of her parochial community. As Lance Pettitt (2000, p119) notes, the central conflict of the film is that between tradition and modernity. The film is set in 1957 in a border town, when Ireland was on the brink of economic and social change:

Tara's defiant challenge to the authority of police, priest and parishioners is significant since unmarried mothers at the time were often forced by their families into harsh institutions run by religious orders, to give up the child for adoption or emigration to Britain for an abortion'.

These, we remember, were the 'choices' available to Fiona in *This is My Father*. There is perhaps a certain unreality even utopianism about Tara's independence. There is no meddling father or mother to be taken into account, whose sensibilities might be offended by their daughter's sexual exuberance. Tara is economically independent and lives with her sister who wholeheartedly supports her position and who, herself, is none too coy in her relationship with her own suitor (Lorcan Cranitch). *December Bride*, in

contrast, gives us a real sense of the harshness of Sarah's life, and of the price the family pays in its social ostracisation and the crippling of Frank. Pamela Dolan (1999, p147) comments that the Church in *The Playboys* 'lacks all the positive elements of religion – creativity, passion, and even magic – that are so abundantly alive in the world around them'. The acting troupe eclipses the attractions of religion for the villagers and when a blind woman regains her sight during one of their magic acts, they are seen to 'trespass on the church's traditional territory of miraculous healing' (ibid). The threat to the Church's monopoly of the supernatural is obvious and Father Malone's explanation risible:

There is a rational explanation for everything – unless God and the Church declare otherwise...The artist has a kind of power for good or ill, but God's power is paramount!

Another comic rebuke to the Church is made when some of the villagers are out working in the field and espy Tom leading a donkey upon which sit Tara and her baby. The comment of one of the villagers – 'Jesus, Mary and Joseph!' recalls the lines in *The Bishop's Story* – 'That's a quare Holy Family' – to similarly describe the conjuncture of unlikely elements in a religious tableau.

Pamela Dolan (1999, p140) has posed the question: 'Is it fair or accurate to reduce religion in Ireland to a kind of caricature of a colonizing force of oppression?' She argues that 'both the oppressive and the liberating power of religion' is evident in *The Dead* (Huston, 1987), *My Left Foot* and *The Playboys* (ibid, p142). She sees *The Dead* as bringing to the fore the conflict between women and the Church for control of the domestic sphere, and indicates the 'measure of insecurity that the church exhibits toward women by excluding them from all but the most passive and silent participation in the Mass' (ibid. p144). This is consistent with our previous comments on the role of women in the Church's monopoly of society and, especially, the family. However, the liberating power of religion of which she speaks, is largely absent from the selection of films which form the core of our study.

Gilles McKinnon, has said that largely American funded, *The Playboys*, 'is not an Irish film' but 'an international film set in Ireland' (Kermode, 1992, p29). With well-known

British and American actors, *The Playboys* is not as interested in telling an Irish story as in exploring the universal love triangle. Its common authorship with *My Left Foot* shows it, like that film, to have an eye on an international, especially American, audience. It relies heavily on stereotype in its representation of the village sergeant and other quirky village inhabitants although its sexual politics recall that of *December Bride*. It is similarly underscored that economic independence makes women less subservient to the patriarchal laws of the Church. Tara's work and Sarah's alliance with the Echlins ensure that they can determine the kind of family they will preside over.

The contribution of film and television to the modernising enterprise is noted in *The Playboys*. With the popularity of *Gone With the Wind* (Fleming etc., 1939) and the locals' fascination with 'foreign' television - the national station was not founded until 1961 - the future of travelling troupes such as Tom's is clearly doomed. While there is a certain nostalgia for the old ways in the demise of the troupe, the ideals of the sergeant, the priest and the parishioners are seen as narrow and anti-modern and the film upholds the forward-looking couple of Tara and Tom and their snub to the community in their departure. Kevin Rockett (1992, p28) has commented on the final frame of the film which freezes on the image of a young boy looking after the departing players, and which shows that the next generation 'is already looking beyond the limited horizons of the village'. Thus, both *The Playboys* and *December Bride* thumb their noses at the kind of circumscribed existence ordained for women by patriarchal religious institutions.

### **The 'Other' tradition: Protestant voices in a 'Free' State.**

An important film set in 1957, *A Love Divided* (Macartney, 1998) provides the most direct and sustained attack on the Catholic Church of the films under discussion. Like *December Bride*, it places a strong female character at its narrative core. It is based on a real-life incident in Fethard-on-Sea in County Wexford where the local Protestant community was boycotted by Catholics following a directive from their bishop which was taken up with gusto by the local parish priest. The film investigates the infringement of individual rights by a patriarchal, Catholic society. Sheila Cloney's voice-over at the beginning of the film announces that she, a Protestant, and her husband, Sean, a

Catholic, had got married three times to satisfy all the vested interests in their marriage. Sheila clearly believes that she and Sean can determine how they live their lives without any reference to Church-sanctioned tradition. When she tells him, 'We mustn't let anything come between us....you and me against the world', she is asserting individual rights against traditional or communal values. This cult of individualism recalls that of *The General*, when Martin Cahill uses the same phrase to Frances. But here, he is asserting a working class defiance to a traditional society based on middle-class values.

A triumvirate of traditional authority structures - local government, the Church and the law - conspire to interfere in the decisions of Sheila and Sean Cloney regarding the education of their children. Sheila had taken the 'Ne temere' pledge at the time of her marriage, promising to bring her children up as Catholics. However, when the time comes for her first daughter, Eileen, to attend primary school, she defies the local priest, Fr. Stafford, and sends her to the local Protestant school. As Sean is unable to stand up to Stafford and is susceptible to the claims of his own community, Sheila absconds with their two children. The Catholic response is swift and the local Protestant community, who had lived in harmony with their Catholic neighbours for so long, finds itself charged with conspiracy to kidnap the children and is shunned. Eventually, all Protestant businesses are boycotted and Sheila's family, among others, is seriously intimidated.

Like the Rev. Sorleyson for Sarah in *December Bride*, and Father Malone for Tara, Sheila's main adversary is Fr. Stafford. He is in fact a composite figure as a number of priests were in reality involved in the boycott. His religious intolerance and misogyny are apparent on a number of occasions. The celibate priest presumes to tell Sean how he must 'handle' his wife and encourages him to defy Sheila as she needs a 'firm hand'. One memorable scene takes place at a G.A.A. match at which Sean plays, when the twin discourses of Catholicism and nationalism are evoked as one seamless garment. Stafford adverts to the girls' education and tells Sean: 'We want the best school....and the girls playing for the right team'. Stafford's priest is a formidable enemy, implacable in his beliefs and his bigotry. He prays from the pulpit that Sean's family will be reunited and 'his little ones back in the bosom of the Holy Church'. He utterly refuses to

acknowledge the rights of Sheila as mother or individual with her own belief system and conscience. For Stafford, the couple has no reality outside of a Catholic framework and Canon Law utterly supersedes individual rights.

Sheila's actions expose Sean's weakness and subservience to the priest. Her strength clearly threatens his masculinity and her frequent association in the film with the horse that she trains, is emblematic of her power and perseverance. When Sean finds Sheila and persuades her to return home, they witness her father's humiliation on arrival. In a scene reminiscent of the Salem witch trials, he is humiliated before the community expressing remorse for his 'sins'. When Sean heads off Stafford telling him that they are 'our daughters' and accuses him of religious bigotry, Stafford repeatedly invokes his superior authority: 'You have no authority to criticise the actions of your Church... You've no authority'. Authority is, of course, the central theme here. Until Sheila's refusal, Church, state, tradition and authority had gone hand in hand in de Valera's Ireland.

Andy Brady, the local publican and self-confessed atheist, is the lone dissenting voice in the village. A veteran of the war of independence, he is pluralist in outlook and a sympathetic observer of Sheila and Sean's trauma. He continually asserts the rights of the individual over the community. When he fails to implement the boycott, his community is as unforgiving as that in *December Bride*. In one exchange with his tormentors, he ruefully comments on the society he now finds himself in:

I fought for this country and I look at you sacks of shite and I wonder if it was all worthwhile.

As in *Korea*, the gun with which he had fought is debased by the vigilantism that he has to defend himself against. His disillusionment, although not his pluralism, recalls John Doyle who feels a similar sense of betrayal by this 'modern' Ireland that he fought for. For all its apparent progress, Ireland has been unable to think for itself and receives its value system at second hand from its priests. At one point, a voice on the radio in Andy's pub asserts 'The Catholic faith is greater than any individual' underscoring the contrast with Andy's philosophy.

Jim Mac Laughlin (2001, p240) has commented on the influence of the Church on the infant Irish nation:

Irish citizens were clearly commended for giving unto the nation that which rightly belonged to the nation - love of country and love of its Catholic patriots - but they were also commanded to put respect for the teachings of the church over and above the teachings of the state whenever, and wherever, there was a divergence between the two.

The Fethard case was to prove an important breaking point however as it was the intervention of the de Valera government that put an end definitively to the boycott. A scene near the end of the film with the Papal Nuncio, the Bishop and Fr. Stafford, dramatises that pivotal moment in Church-state affairs. When the bishop tells Stafford to end the boycott following a letter from the government, Stafford replies 'The Government has no right to dictate to the church'. But de Valera has protested to the Vatican and indicated his embarrassment at this 'petty little pogrom in County Wexford' at a time when it is the Communists who are supposed to be the 'bad guys'. Ultimately, it is Stafford who is humiliated and he has to show example to his flock in renewing his custom at a local Protestant shop.

A footnote to the film credits when screened on RTE, shows the power of a cultural product to intervene in the public sphere as we learn that the Catholic Church latterly acknowledged its shameful part in the boycott and apologised in 1998. (4)

*December Bride*, *The Playboys* and *A Love Divided* provide new and radical utterances in the discourse around institutionalised religion. They provide a new gendered voice which dares to challenge the religious orthodoxy of the day. In the case of *A Love Divided*, the marginalised voices of Protestants living in a post-independence Catholic, bordering on fascist, state, are heard, and open up the cracks in the supposedly homogenous clerico-nationalist state presided over by de Valera. To de Valera's credit as we have shown, he was instrumental in ending the boycott and the Protestant community in the South was overall represented sympathetically. Although it was the priest who led the boycott, his Catholic parishioners, in an ugly portrait, were seen to enthusiastically embrace it. The women in all three films assert their supremacy in the

management of the family unit, a unit the Church, Catholic and Protestant, presumed to oversee.

### **What lies beneath: *The Butcher Boy* as touchstone of the Nineties**

We will conclude our discussion of a group of films produced in the nineties which are critical of the Catholic Church with Neil Jordan's *The Butcher Boy* (1998) which, like *C.R.A.Z.Y.* in Quebec cinema, encapsulates many themes and issues of the earlier cinema but renders them in a new form. Adapted by Pat McCabe and Neil Jordan from McCabe's novel, the film is presented from the point-of-view of Francie Brady, a twelve-year old boy living in a small town in Monaghan, and documents his descent into madness. Two major domains of Irish society – the family and the Church-dominated social sphere and its institutions are interrogated. This portrait of a parochial and sanctimonious small-town Ireland is both derisive and comical. All the markers of de Valera's Ireland familiar from our earlier sample of films are there. We have the contrast in social class between the economic winners and the losers in the new, oppressively Catholic state; the dysfunctional family prey to alcoholism and poverty; a difficult father/son relationship; an 'absent' or incapacitated mother and the influence of popular culture – American in particular – which provides an escape from the more repressive aspects of society. If Harkin's *Hush-a-bye Baby* was a touchstone of the eighties, then *The Butcher Boy* carries the hallmarks of the nineties in touching upon many of the decade's key revelations about the Church and its institutions.

The cycle of familial dysfunction is repeated from generation to generation in the Brady family as we learn that Francie's father and brother were brought up in an orphanage, of which the former's alcoholism is undoubtedly a symptom. McCabe's novel gives a deeper insight into the emotional damage suffered by Benny and Alo in the Home and the interminable wait for a father who never shows up. Francie himself, following the attack on the home of his arch-rival, Mrs. Nugent, will be sent to an industrial school.

The late eighties and nineties saw the publishing of a number of searing personal testimonials about the clerical physical and sexual abuse of children in these homes.

Paddy Doyle's *The God Squad* (1988) was one notorious example. Jordan in his film dramatises the abuse of Francie by a priest, 'Fr. Tiddly', and the attempted cover-up by 'Fr. Bubbles'. The Cuban missile crisis and the Communist threat form the backdrop to the lead up to, and eventual murder of Mrs. Nugent, by Francie. Mrs. Nugent encapsulates all the insular, Catholic conservative and bourgeois yearnings of small-town Ireland. Her labelling of Francie and his family as 'pigs' leads to his behaving 'like a pig' and defecating on her carpet – an incursion into the Nugent home which presages the murder. Sweeney (2004, p82) notes the implications of the term:

In her speech act, Mrs Nugent calls on a history of domination and invalidation of the underclass that is incorporated in the name 'pig', which had once been used by the English colonizers to legitimate their subjugation of the native Irish, but is now appropriated by the post-Independence native middle class to support its own social agenda and to distance themselves from Ireland's seedy underside.

Francie's slaughtering of Mrs. Nugent at a time when the townspeople were mobilised for an apparition of the Virgin is the ultimate revenge on a community who had condemned a child for his lowly and difficult origins. Their gossiping and contemptuous treatment of his parents along with their mockery of Francie's aberrant behaviour shows them too to be culpable in the fate of Mrs. Nugent. It was perhaps typical of the cultural protectionist character of the de Valera state that the enemies of this pure, Catholic country were seen to be external, yet Jordan's film shows the most destructive force of all to be bred within its own community.

The parish priest makes a number of cameo appearances in the film. His brief chats with Francie at the town fountain are more to elicit information for the purposes of gossip than concern for his welfare. The priest appears to be no stranger to the madness of the Brady household but is as ineffectual as the priest in *La Petite Aurore, l'enfant martyre* who knows that the young girl is being mistreated but fails to intervene. Yet Aurore's abuse took place forty years earlier in a rural Quebec which could not benefit from the relative ease of communication in a Monaghan small town in the fifties.

Once Francie is removed to the religious-run industrial school he is now completely under the control of the Church and every aspect of his life is regulated by the priests.

He suffers brutality at the hands of ‘Fr. Bubbles’ (Brendan Gleeson) for his insolence and, in a desire to be ‘good’, he elects to be an altar boy. This leads to Francie encountering two well documented features of the religious fabric of Irish life in the 80s and 90s – clerical sexual abuse and an apparition of the Blessed Virgin Mary (BVM) recalling the ‘moving statues’ phenomenon discussed in Chapter 3.

The religious hysteria of 80s Ireland first rendered cinematically in *Hush-a-bye-Baby* now runs amok in Francie’s imagination and he has his first apparition of the BVM while out in the bog working alongside boys from the school. Soon, Francie sees the face of the BVM superimposed on that of an Irish colleen at her spinning wheel in front of a thatched cottage – the souvenir that Francie had bought for his mother when he ran away for the first time. Thus two iconic images of Catholic nationalist Ireland – the ‘comely maidens’ of de Valera’s St. Patrick’s Day speech, and the most venerated female of the Catholic Church - are collapsed here into one image. The cottage also bears the words ‘A Mother’s Love’s a Blessing’ to complicate the relationship further between the visceral and the spiritual encapsulated in the Catholic idea of ‘mother’. This superimposition is an ironic commentary on the regulation of the sexuality of Irish women by the Catholic Church, and displays the impossible role model of the Virgin Mother to which all women were expected to aspire.

The fact that it is the iconoclastic singer Sinéad O’Connor, in Ireland a very public referent for sexual freedom, who plays the Virgin Mary and who had publicly torn up a picture of the pope, makes it a particularly subversive commentary on Irish Catholicism. Jordan may also be referencing Harkin’s *Hush-a-bye-Baby*, a film replete with images of the Virgin, and where a saintly young girl also played by Sinead O’Connor dresses up as the Virgin. The film can also be seen as a riposte to the rather idyllic portrait of the life of a young boy also given to visions of the BVM in another film set in the fifties, *All Things Bright and Beautiful* (Devlin, 1994). In one sequence the ten-year old boy, Barry O’Neill (Ciaran Fitzgerald) sees his own mother’s face superimposed on that of the Virgin Mary. This and other films such as *My Left Foot* which ignore two major social concerns of the time: contraception and unemployment, operate in a similar nostalgic

mode which ‘desocializes and de-historicizes our society’ (Rockett, quoted in Curley 1996, p26). Hence, in contrast to this mode, Jordan’s film is searingly direct.

*The Butcher Boy* weaves together themes and events which resonate across a number of decades in Ireland right up to the present day. The combination of caricature and black humour, allows for a story to be told which is as dark as that encountered in *This is My Father*, yet, due to its maniacally energetic voiceover and a post-modern playfulness, it does not collapse into the kind of misery familiar from other films set in the 50s. In fact, in its parody, it at times recalls the tone of Quebec cinema when evoking its Catholic past. *The Butcher Boy*, in exploring what lies beneath the facile, religious, superstitious and god-fearing surface of Irish rural life, offers the most compelling and devastating portrait of all. Religious faith, most notably in the sequence where the townspeople await the appearance of the Blessed Virgin, is seen to distract from and conceal many of the hideous injustices and abuses perpetrated in their midst. The townspeople may have been awaiting ‘the end of the world show’ as Francie terms the expected message from the BVM, but Francie himself, in the killing of Mrs. Nugent, put on ‘the best show that ‘ol town had ever seen’.

The portrait of Francie and his descent into madness in a number of ways recalls that of the eponymous Léolo in Lauzon’s film discussed in the previous chapter. The societies they inhabit are equally hostile and the father figure is similarly problematic. Both Francie and Léolo escape via their imagination from the inhospitable worlds they inhabit. Léolo’s hatred for his grandfather whom he tried to hang, recalls Francie’s for Mrs. Nugent. Both boys are incarcerated in mental institutions for their misdemeanours and are subjected to electric-shock therapy. Religion is seen as oppressive in both films although it is through the agency of the father in Léolo that its tyranny is more clearly expressed. There is scarcely one act of kindness shown towards Francie and Léolo in the films to counteract the emotional and psychological blows they encounter on a daily basis. The character of Francie remains unbowed however on his release from the mental hospital and his madness continues to provide a vital respite. He triumphs too in remaining untouched by society’s flawed institution that claims to cure him and the presence of the snowdrop in his hand – given to him by the ‘statue’ of the BVM, -

asserts that there is more than one reality. Léolo's fate is not as kind, however, and the film ends with distressing images of the boy encased in an ice-filled bath.

Thus, Jordan's film, although it peers into the abyss, manages to salvage Francie's subjectivity, and his subversion of official government and Church-sanctioned Ireland carries the day. *The Butcher Boy* is the supreme example of the return of the repressed in Irish society and in its portrait of the staggering revenge of the victim, it shows that we ignore those on the margins of society at our peril.

## Conclusion

The negative critical reception of many of these films set in the 50s, and earlier, ignores their relevance to contemporary Ireland. Many of the above films are about healing the wounds of the past. They revisit their characters' experience of an extremely repressive period in Ireland's history and explore the ramifications of this for the next generation. In this sense, their narratives can be seen as therapeutic, or cathartic, as the victims of a narrow, Catholic mindset are heard at last.

Luke Gibbons (2002a, p96) has spoken of cinema's 'special aptitude for engaging with the underlying anxieties or desires of an era'. He considers that what is most 'notable' about these films is that, though set in the past, 'many things they say could only be uttered in the present', a point we discussed earlier. For Gibbons, these films

...capture many of these muted voices, but the point is that the cultural spaces from which they are retrieved have as much to do with now as then.

These films are therefore a genuine working through of the past and not simply an attempt to close it off or to erase painful events from memory. Furthermore, the public sphere - and Gibbons (ibid. p99) here discusses the public debates around Neil Jordan's *Michael Collins* (1996) - along with the cinema, has 'endless[ly] revisited the decades following the 1950s'. Gibbons (ibid. p105) sees the 'reclaiming [of] those lost narratives of the past' as a way to 'generate new solidarities in the present'.

As we saw earlier, the collapse of tradition and the old certainties is often articulated in its effect on the losers and victims. Many of the chief protagonists in these films - Bull McCabe, John Doyle, Kieran O'Day, Sarah Gomartin and the Echlin brothers, Sheila Cloney, Tara Maguire, the Travellers and Martin Cahill, inhabit a marginal space in a culturally, ethnically and linguistically homogenous society. To adapt our quotation from Jameson at the outset: it is through the telling of its individual stories that we encounter a repressive, unforgiving collectivity that either denies or attempts to destroy what it cannot contain or understand. It is also through the telling of these stories that we can attempt to assess the distance, if any, that we have come.

The loss of tradition has many implications for the patriarchal family and masculinity in particular. When the father is absent or weak, male authority is provisional at best. As we mentioned in the previous chapter, the figure of the weak father is a recurrent trope in Quebec cinema, mirroring Quebec's political emasculation, although he has begun to be redeemed latterly as discussed. In Irish cinema, the father is often 'de trop', excessive, and portrays a destructive masculinity in those films where his position is ultimately seen as untenable e.g. *The Field*. One of the most powerful male figures in Irish society was the priest, so male authority – as exemplified by the father of the family, for example – was always subjugate to the Church and therefore lacked real authority. The priest's alliance with the mother was further indicative of the father's emasculation. The father figure was displaced by that of the uncle in *This is My Father* and *Le Confessional*. A new model of paternity is mooted in both films and, it is implied, the nuclear family is not the only place where the child can blossom as newer forms of connectivity can prove to be more affirming than the old ones. In both cases, the uncle, the surrogate father, provides the safe passage towards the future. Thus, it is not necessarily the biological father who matters but a caring father-figure, the type the Church had failed to provide, perhaps. The breakdown of the nuclear family has meant that the role of the father is not as central as previously, and thus, modernity involves a new role for the male as it does for the female. Old patriarchal traditions which served to circumscribe the lives of women are seen to be redundant in a modern society and both genders benefit from their reassessment.

These films also articulate anxieties about notions of progress and modernity typical in times of great social change. *Into the West* provides one such example. As Ireland is distancing itself from its rural past and embracing modernity, they provide cautionary tales about the dangers of disconnection as much as railing against the authority figures of the past. In this way, there is a link with contemporary Quebec cinema as discussed, which begins to take stock of what has been lost. The investigation of one's 'roots' whether social, cultural or ideological must be seen as an important function of self-knowledge.

*A Love Divided* like *December Bride* attempts to imagine another type of life, another type of community, where individual will is not constantly subservient to tradition. Indeed, many of the strongest portraits of those who challenge tradition in nineties film are female although each woman is partially reclaimed for patriarchy at the films' close. However, this partial defeat serves to confirm the monolith of institutional religion and to impress upon the spectator that there must be a better alternative.

The majority of these films uphold the right of the individual to determine his/her private life and look forward to an increasing separation of the public and private spheres. However, while pointing to a new, secular, pluralist society they also chart the dangers of non-conformity and the lives bruised by religious and social intolerance. Fintan O' Toole (1994, p206) has written of the need to record history by writing it down lest we forget it. His words are equally appropriate to newer forms of representation like film:

How can we know that we are changing for the better if not by marking where we are coming from and feeling free to say in truth: "At least we know that sort of thing will not happen again?"

The problem here, as many commentators have noted, is that 'that sort of thing' meaning presumably social exclusion, intolerance and abuse, was not unique to de Valera's Ireland, and the danger in a selective reading of the past is that we fail to recognise that much of this is still with us. Modernity brings with it its own range of problems. Denigrating all the traditional aspects of society can leave a society spiritually bankrupt as we noted in the case of Quebec.

The term ‘Celtic Tiger’ was first coined in the early nineties to describe Ireland’s rapid economic growth. The ‘dominant hegemonic interpretation of the Celtic Tiger’ according to Kirby, Gibbons and Cronin (2002, p4) ‘rests on the benign individualist and utilitarian assumptions which inform neo-classical economics’. These assume that economic growth results in positive social outcomes. They speak of the ‘adulatory and uncritical tone’ of the dominant proponents of this ‘new culture’

which often fails to trace the new culture’s historical development or to identify the forces which have shaped it. Instead, it is seen as marking a break with the past and the coming-of-age of an enlightened, tolerant and liberal Ireland’ (ibid. p2).

In this vein, David Mc Williams in *The Pope’s Children* (2005, p227) provided an upbeat analysis of Irish society where he jubilantly stated ‘The overwhelmingly suffocating inferiority complex – the handmaiden of economic under-achievement – has lifted’. Such an analysis fails to explore the cracks and fissures in the new globalised Ireland and to note that the apparent undoing of tradition has left a significant number of people disenfranchised. Ireland’s present is thus pitted against Ireland’s past to the continued detriment of both.

Kirby et al (ibid. p7) conclude that

The combined effect of the economic, historical and aesthetic readings of the Irish past has been to construct a narrative of contemporary Irish society in which the country is presented as a modern, vibrant economy and society which has successfully abandoned its reactionary, nationalist past.

History is used as ‘a bogeyman’ to terrify: ‘Either you accept the deregulated ruthlessness of the market or you will be cast back into the eternal night of emigration and high unemployment. Better dead than Dev’ (ibid.). Consequently, there is no place in this Celtic utopia for the non-secular beliefs consistent with Ireland’s clerico-nationalist past.

A number of these films serve to interrogate this consensus about the equal benefits of Ireland’s rapid economic growth and the jettisoning of the past. Jim Mac Laughlin (Crowley and MacLaughlin, 1997, p6) takes stock of the new order:

In Ireland the upwardly mobile, entrepreneurial and ambitious new elites have abandoned many of the nation-building objectives of their predecessors. They have dissociated themselves from a gentler Ireland nursing the values of nationhood, parish and community.

Themes of dispossession, social difference and marginalisation are highlighted by many of these films, and they cannot simply be viewed as an apologia for the 'new' Ireland or as cultural artefacts harnessed to the economy given their degree of relevance to contemporary Ireland. Hence, they do not only serve neo-liberal capitalist discourses as discussed, but also invite us to enter sympathetically into the world of the marginalised. With Ireland's booming 'tiger' economy of the nineties, there has been a concomitant awareness that given the acute problem of homelessness and the neglect of Travellers, not all have benefited from this boom. The increased politicisation of this latter group - particularly with the increased multiculturalism of Irish society - and their increasing skirmishes with the forces of law, show that they will no longer take their marginalisation 'lying down'.

*The General* may be a flawed film and its more than sympathetic presentation of a violent thug highly questionable, but in some ways in its heterogeneity of discourses it gets to the root of the paradox of the Celtic Tiger and the co-existence of million-pound (now euro) homes and cardboard boxes.

In Joe Cleary's (2007) discussion of the use of the term 'de Valera's Ireland', he has noted that while it began as a 'tool of critique that enabled a break with the past', in contemporary Ireland it is now being used to 'muffle critiques of the post-1960s social and political order'. Consistent with our discussion above, he underlines that fact that the same inequalities across class and gender lines are as operative in present-day Ireland as they were in de Valera's. Similarly, Diarmuid Ferriter (2007b, p9) reassesses the 'Man behind the Myths' and considers that 'deconstruction of much of the negative symbolism associated with de Valera is long overdue'. Equated with 'backwardness, stagnation, and isolationism' this conclusion fails to take into account the 'inhibiting' factors between the 1930s and the 1950s and 'ignore his unique electoral success'.

If there is a tendency to deny the strengths of the society presided over by Eamon de Valera and an unnuanced condemnation of religious authority in a group of Irish films of the nineties, there has also been a denial of the continued relevance today of the Catholic faith to significant numbers of Irish people. The 2001 Irish tour of the relics of St. Thérèse of Lisieux which drew devotees of approximately 2 million people is indicative of a continued hunger for the transcendent in the Irish population. Lionel Pilkington (2002, p138) has discussed some commentators' dismissal of this and other indices of religious devotion in contemporary Ireland and their view that Catholicism impedes modernisation which he says 'is closely connected to the idea that the material practices of Catholic religious belief...conveys (sic) a threat to the full and proper working of the state'. The nexus of liturgical and devotional practices which are a by-product of Catholic beliefs and exist outside the state and 'the norms of marketplace Celtic Tiger nationalism'

...trouble the ethical and intellectual authority of the state because they testify to a disjunction between the state and the people, and in so doing, confirm the existence of an intense utopian hunger (Pilkington, 2002, p138).

While the cover up of clerical child abuse by the Catholic Church and its reluctance to behave responsibly towards the victims, intent as it was on defending its own position and its own interests, has been covered widely in the media, there are other widespread abuses such as child sexual abuse within the family that have not received the same attention. Horgan (2003, p239) notes that the media's eager pursuit of the Church on the above issue was motivated less by concerns for the victims than a desire to criticise the Church. He considers also that the silence of the state – which bears a huge share of the responsibility for what happened – is in fact an expression of relief that it is not being culpabilised in the same way. He concludes:

Even in an age which has largely abandoned the practice of confession, a collective examination of conscience might be in order (ibid. p239).

While many elements of the Catholic Church have been exposed as exploitative of the people they presumed to lead, there is a tendency to negate all traditional and non-secular aspects of Irish society. If in Quebec the move from a denominational to a

secular society has resulted in the loss of meaningful and cohesive elements for that same society, then Ireland should see Quebec's experience as sounding a warning note. The new emphasis on social justice familiar from our discussion of the Quebec and Irish Churches in Chapter 3 shows the Church now to be the voice of the homeless and the marginalised and to have a new role to play in Irish society. If secularisation, modernisation and progress tend to be equated in the cultural products under discussion, then we need to challenge this dismissal of all traditional aspects of Irish society as regressive. We also need to recognise the new, positive role that the Church currently plays in our society.

These films problematize the idea of the nation as homogenous and unitary by their emphasis on marginal figures which disrupt the traditional voices of authority. They show us the 'slippage' between traditional orthodoxies of Church and state and the lived life, or, to quote Homi Bhabha (1990), between the pedagogical and the performative. They provide examples of the intervention of the marginal into the traditional totalizing discourse of the nation. Official Ireland - and Quebec - of the past have failed to acknowledge the marginal and sometimes transgressive voices of illegitimacy, homosexuality, failed priests, incest, adultery, suicide, as well as the culture of the Travelling community in the case of southern Ireland - all voices which are sounded in these films.

Homi Bhabha (ibid. p297) could have been speaking of the cinemas of Ireland and Quebec when he stated:

The scraps, patches, and rags of daily life must be repeatedly turned into the signs of a national culture while the very act of the narrative performance interpellates a growing circle of national subjects.

Irish cinema of the nineties largely avoided a host of topics (and national subjects) familiar from Quebec cinema – some of which we have alluded to above. While it did begin to criticise the structures of authority, it has not yet found a way to integrate authority figures into contemporary narratives other than to present them as bearers of a regressive ideology. There has been a new interest however in putting subjects which

were formerly taboo on screen. The sexually explicit *Nora* (Murphy, 2000), for example, or the lesbian love-affair in *Goldfish Memory* (Gill, 2003), show Irish cinema beginning to explore subjects that Quebec cinema has been dealing with consistently from the sixties.

The following decade has seen filmmakers point their lens away from the domestic sphere and inside the walls of Church-run institutions like the industrial schools and the Magdalene laundries in *The Magdalene Sisters* (Mullen, 2001), *Borstal Boy* (Peter Sheridan, 2000) and *Song for a Raggy Boy* (Walsh, 2003) amid the publishing of reports on clerical sexual abuse, especially the Ferns Report of 2005, and the broadcasting of the many documentaries we enumerated in Chapter 3. Our previously quoted observation of Rockett's (1988, p136) that 'the nature and structures of institutions of power have yet to be fully recognised as subjects for Irish films' is no longer the case. The fact that some of these films including the documentary *At Home with the Clearys* broadcast by RTE in 2007, showing the covert family life of Fr. Michael Cleary, have continued to explore the darker side of Irish life, indicates that the subject of Church power and abuse continues to engage filmmakers and broadcasters along with the public at large. While the earlier films may have assisted in the airing of the voices of the voiceless, the continued documenting of institutional abuse has begun to border on the voyeuristic and it may be time for Irish cinema and television to adopt a more nuanced stance and gain some distance from these subjects.

Pat Brereton (2007, p165) has commented on how the two professions/vocations which were central to defining Irish identity - farmers and the religious - have now lost their 'iconic status within contemporary culture.' Joe Cleary (op.cit. p12) considers that the Irish cultural response to a changing Ireland has been inadequate:

To date, very little Irish writing, Irish film, or Irish art generally, can be said to have contemplated with much distinction the vagaries or vicissitudes of the new global order of which Ireland is a constituent part.

This does not take into account the fact that many of the dramas discussed above *do* in fact intervene in the discourse around contemporary Irish society and forge that link

between past and present – ‘new solidarities’ - in the way that Luke Gibbons (2002b, p105) has suggested. The revisiting of such traumas has re-sensitised us to the betrayals that continue. There have been some important cultural interventions in the present decade. *Pavee Lackeen* (2005), a semi-improvised drama about a ten-year old Traveller girl directed and co-written by British director, Perry Ogden, is one important voice in the discourse of marginalisation in Irish society. In its depiction of an existence more typical of that in a developing country, particularly the Travellers’ daily search for clean water, it critiques the idea of economic progress and a homogenous Irish identity, the sort of Ireland about which David McWilliams (2005) has been waxing lyrical.

The recent work of writer/director duo Mark O’Halloran and Lenny Abrahamson gives cause for further optimism. With their critically acclaimed films *Adam and Paul* (2004) and *Garage* (2007) and the ironically named four-part TV series, *Prosperity*, they have sketched a searing portrait of those lives untouched by the ‘prosperity’ of the Celtic Tiger. Their work belies the platitude that ‘a rising tide lifts all boats’ as they show the descent into unemployment, poverty, addiction and prostitution of their urban protagonists, native and immigrant, filmed against the backdrop of Dublin’s shiny new civic and commercial amenities.

Finally, there are complex reasons for the persistence of a certain type of narrative film in Celtic Tiger Ireland which appears to relish the dismantling of the Catholic, nationalist tradition: a focus on the marginalized and the healing of wounds; a sense of relief that this time is ‘past’; the settling of scores with a repressive and tyrannical Church on the part of writers and filmmakers who lived through the fifties; public outrage at the hypocrisy of prominent religious men and clerical sexual abuse; unease at the persistence of supernatural beliefs and various devotional practices which conflict with Ireland’s new image of a booming, modern, progressive economy.

Some Quebec films – of the nineties too, like *Eldorado* – show a bleaker side of Quebec life in its exploration of homelessness and minor criminality. However, its white, francophone cast of characters is hardly representative of the ethnic plurality of modern Quebec. Likewise, issues of what constitutes the nation in terms of inclusion and

exclusion in relation to 'Ireland's economic miracle' clearly does not include the marginalised of *Pavee Lackeen* or *Adam and Paul*, for example. Furthermore, in *Adam and Paul*, (as in *Prosperity*, almost a companion piece to the film), a new voice begins to be heard: that of Ireland's new immigrant community who are looking for their place in the sun.

## Notes

1. *First Programme for Economic Expansion*. The appointment of Sean Lemass as Taoiseach in 1959 is considered a defining moment in the modernising of Ireland as the First Programme of Economic Expansion got underway. Joe Lee (1989, pp344 - 360) elaborates:

'*Economic Development* (1958 report by T.K. Whitaker) became the basis for the White Paper published on 12 November 1958, *Programme for Economic Expansion*. The Programme, now usually referred to as the First Programme....owed its inspiration to *Economic Development* which was published on 22 November. It signalled a shift from protection towards free trade, and from discouragement to encouragement of foreign investment in Ireland, involved a dramatic reversal of the rhetoric, and to a large extent of the practice, of all policy, but especially Fianna Fail policy, since 1932. It shifted public expenditure from 'social' to 'productive' investment, initially by reducing expenditure on housing...Lemass...fostered conditions which would entice foreign firms to Ireland but only on condition that they produced primarily for export. They would therefore enhance the country's export capacity without competing directly with protected firms producing mainly for the home market. The hope was that in due course the models of managerial efficiency presumed to be provided by foreign firms could inspire imitation in the protected sectors....[There was a ] surge in growth rates from a 1 per cent annual average between 1950 - 1958 to a 4 per cent annual average between 1959 and 1973'.

2. *The Irish Times* stated that "the success or failure" of the Programme "will be measured by emigration figures". Average net emigration fell from 43,000 per annum between 1956 and 1961 to 16,000 between 1961 and 1966, and to 11,000 between

1966 and 1971, or from an annual rate of 14.8 to 3.7....[They] reversed the trend of more than a century' (Lee, 1989, pp. 344 - 360).

3. Some key dates of the Northern Ireland peace process in the nineties are: 1) The IRA announced a 'complete cessation of violence' on August 31st 1994. 2) Sinn Fein's Gerry Adams and Martin McGuinness met Prime Minister Tony Blair for the first time at Stormont Castle on October 13<sup>th</sup>, 1997. 3) Adams and McGuinness made a historic first visit to Downing Street on December 9<sup>th</sup> 1997. 4) The 'Good Friday' Agreement which instituted changes in British legislation and the Constitution of the Irish Republic along with the setting up of the Northern Irish Assembly and various cross-border bodies, was signed on 10<sup>th</sup> April 1998. Above all, the agreement recognised the consent principle: that change in the status of Northern Ireland can only come about with the consent of a majority of its people.

4. 'On June 2<sup>nd</sup>, 1998, forty one years after the events portrayed in this film, Bishop Brendan Comiskey formally apologised for the role played by the Catholic Church in Fethard-on-Sea'.

## Chapter 7: Conclusion

Why does Irish cinema appear to rejoice while Quebec cinema laments the loss of the Catholic tradition? The reasons are manifold as we have discussed. Our comparison of the national cinemas Of Ireland and Quebec has found contrasting treatments of the Catholic Church which have a host of historical, political, social and even economic origins. Our examination of the place of the Catholic Church in both Irish and Quebec society has found striking similarities. The extent of social control exercised by the Church and its infiltration of a host of institutions was similar, but Québécois withdrawal from the Church was begun much earlier than in Ireland and the end of Church dominance came about without the kind of painful rupture that we have experienced in Ireland. The erosion of the Irish Catholic Church's power was initiated much earlier than the nineties of course and, as in Quebec, the fault lines became evident from the sixties on. But Irish society where Catholic lay lobbies were powerful was very slow to relinquish its attachment to Church and Faith, an alliance that had served it well through centuries of colonial oppression.

### **Historical differences**

The Quebec Catholic Church was never in danger to the degree experienced by the Irish Catholic Church in the wake of the British conquest. This perhaps accounts for the less rigorist piety towards it on the part of the Québécois whose devotion waxed and waned depending on external influences as we have shown. Having never suffered direct religious persecution like their Irish counterparts, and been spared the Penal Laws, plus the fact of the early arrival of their own legislature after the conquest, their dependence on the Church was lessened. The fact that the secularization of the province occurred easily and swiftly following the Quiet Revolution exposed the irrelevance of the Church in the eyes of many Québécois. However, as we have shown, there is evidence that religion itself and especially those Catholic rites of passage discussed in Chapter 3 have not lost their potency for contemporary Québécois. There is also an acute awareness of the void created by the departure of a world-view which helped to order and regulate

existence. A hunger for a new narrative which will give meaning to life is especially evident in the later films under discussion.

### **Devotional differences**

Our study of Quebec society has not discovered anything like the degree of devotion on the part of populace or state to the Catholic Church as we have encountered in our examination of the Irish case. This may help to explain the contrasting cinematic treatment of the Church. The deep faith of the Irish has been underscored by many commentators including those of the Vatican as we have reported. While there are obvious historical reasons for the binding together of a people and its Church in the face of bitter persecution, the fact that the laity often led the Church rather than the other way around indicates the degree of ownership that the ordinary Catholic felt for the Church. In Quebec following the Conquest, fears regarding survival – especially of language and French-Canadian identity – were articulated through the Church and it increasingly, as we have shown, became a bulwark against the homogenizing tendencies of the colonizer. Periods of devotion gave way to religious laxity and then, with the arrival of Mgr Bourget and the religious revival there was once again a resurgence of the faith. However, Fernand Dumont's (2000, p254) metaphor of the 'casting off of old clothes' to describe the Québécois' shedding of the faith at the time of the Quiet Revolution, illustrates for him a certain superficiality in their devotion. He also observed that the Québécois' faith was not profound enough for the severance from the Church in the sixties to provoke great debate. As we have seen, the Church's dominance of a host of institutions and the degree of social control that it exercised, gave way to huge resentments as Quebec embarked on its major modernizing project. This resentment makes a reappearance in the works of some 'baby-boomer' filmmakers and may also account for the 'new' slant on the Church in a number of remakes of 'the Classics' as we have discussed. However, interesting facts about Quebec Catholicism persist. The 2001 Census of Canada (most recent statistics on religion) showed that only 5.6% of people in Quebec declared themselves to be 'without religion' while 83.2% declared themselves to be Roman Catholic despite the very low levels of religious practice. (*L'annuaire du*

*Québec 2004*: Éditions Fides, 2003, p 283). The culture of Catholicism persists although without direct reference to the institution as site, as we have discussed.

We saw in our discussion of the Quebec Church in Chapter 3 that the ‘enculturation’ of young Québécois had been occurring through the confessional schools’ system and the various religious rites of passage. From the year 2000 confessional schooling has been abolished and education is now organised on linguistic rather than denominational lines. As of September 2008, Québec schools will be teaching an Ethics and Religious Culture program to elementary and secondary students in place of the teaching of their religion to Catholic and Protestant schoolchildren. This has been well received by most interested groups apart from a small group which calls itself, The Association of Catholic Parents. The reorganization of schooling will indeed have implications for the future enculturation of Québécois into their Catholic culture. Whether Rousseau’s ‘invisible thread of culture’ will prevail in quite the same way is questionable now. Centuries of Catholicism have undoubtedly left their mark on the culture. But, today, the referent ‘Catholic’ is only a pointer of identity and no longer a domain of regulation and control. However, the influx of Catholic immigrants into Quebec (and indeed, Ireland) is bolstering the number of adherents as we remarked in Chapter 3 and may yet play a role in the revitalization of a moribund Church.

In Ireland the activity of lay Catholics in resisting legislative change in the areas of contraception, divorce and abortion in recent decades is testimony to the personal stake that Irish Catholics had in their Church. The acute sense of betrayal experienced in the wake of revelations of clerical sexual hypocrisy and sexual abuse of children ensured that the Catholic Church’s claim to be the moral leader of its flock was undermined for good. This serious rupture in Irish society following 30 years on from that of Quebec, while having similar effects had very different origins. Irish film of the late eighties and nineties resonates with this deep sense of betrayal.

### **Ireland: the end of a culture of deference**

If the Québécois had stopped deferring to the Church for over three decades, Ireland was

only waking up to this real possibility in the 1990s when for a while it seemed to be open season on the clergy given the proliferation of articles, reports, film and documentary coverage of its shortcomings and misdemeanours. As Horgan noted, the Church had moved from being the 'self-appointed moral guardian of the community' to the subject of a new scrutiny by the media who have become the 'moral policemen' of the Church (Horgan, 2003, p238). Foster (2007, p 62) notes that from the mid 1990s the kind of 'interrogation' to which senior churchmen were subjected by RTE would have been unthinkable twenty or even ten years before. This pointed to 'the end of a culture of deference. The television set [and cinema screen] had become the confessional box'. The reactivation of the Irish Film Board in March 1993 allowed, in tandem with a host of tax incentives, most notably *Section 35* (later: *Section 481*), for a critical mass of films to be made. Coinciding with a time of great national 'excavation' of conscience and event, some filmmakers did not have to look too far for a subject.

### **Narrative threads**

Quebec cinema through its fusion of the erotic and the religious found a way to delight in the breaking of taboos around sexual morality as prescribed in Church doctrine. What is notable is the fact that this was a more gentle criticism than the Church encountered in Irish cinema. Humour and gentle mockery, the juxtaposing of the sacred and the profane, were the tools used by filmmakers to have some fun at the Church's expense. Yet, there was no particular need here to discredit the Church which had quietly receded from its previously prominent position in the course of the Quiet Revolution. When, in the case of the remakes and screen adaptations discussed above, there is a certain 'settling of accounts' at work on the part of some baby-boomer filmmakers, the representatives of the Church are generally caricatured and difficult to take seriously. It is difficult to see them as having their origins in the kind of betrayal that Irish filmmakers voiced in their works.

The work of Denys Arcand provides the most sustained critique of the Catholic Church and shows a genuine interest in the life of Christ and the foundations of religious faith. In this case, it is the institution of the Church that is attacked for failing to live up to

Jesus' message. However, unlike Irish filmmaker Bob Quinn, Arcand as he criticizes, fails to address towering questions for the contemporary Church such as priestly celibacy and women priests – both linked to the fall off in religious vocations and mass attendance. Hence, one is left with the feeling that Arcand is more interested in punishing a Church that he felt had repressed him, rather than in attempting an honest appraisal of the institution or indeed signaling an alternative direction.

The settling of scores with the repressive regime that was either Duplessis' Quebec or de Valera's Ireland is another narrative impulse that unites both cinemas as we commented above. While this is principally the case in Irish film of the nineties, it made a brief appearance in a small number of remakes or screen adaptations of Quebec classics as we noted previously. This is a puzzling development in many ways because its motivation is quite unlike that in the Irish case. As many of these Quebec films were producer rather than director driven, as we discussed in Chapter 4, we might suggest that they were 'cashing in' on a climate of disapprobation towards the Church in North America following highly publicized sexual abuse scandals. Although Éric Bédard (2007, p11) sees their reappearance as proof that the Québécois are still not reconciled to the faith of their ancestors and are ashamed of their past, the use of the priest as a scapegoat for the ills of this period indicates other forces at work here on an ideological level. The later films' tampering with the representation of the priest from the earlier texts is indicative of a desire to create the simplistic binaries of good and evil - heroes and villains - familiar from Hollywood cinema. But also, as in Irish nineties' films, the revisiting of a 'dark' period of history is possibly being used to promote and celebrate the values of today without having to interrogate them. A number of Quebec critics have, as we noted, commented on this 'opportunistic' trend among certain film producers which they see as 'diminishing' all Québécois (Bédard, op.cit. p10).

We find therapeutic narratives in both Quebec and Irish cinema whose characters are in search of healing or redemption. The telling of stories, the focus on victims and the expiation of sin and guilt, have allowed for vindication and release. A number of these have the father/son relationship at the core of their narrative concerns. New models of paternity are mooted now that the patriarchal Church has been undermined. The

emasculated father supplanted by the Church through its alliance with the mother, gives way to new constructions of the family in both cinemas, and new father figures are advanced now that the Church has failed to provide one. The voices in many of these films disrupt the traditional voices of authority and allow for the sounding of voices previously considered transgressive: that of the illegitimate, the homosexual, the suicide, the Irish Traveller. Much which was covert and hidden has now been exposed to the light. The revisiting of these narratives has re-sensitized us to be more circumspect in the present. They have facilitated the creation of new bonds and new connections on a human level.

### **Economic prosperity and human fallout**

Economist David McWilliams' in his irreverent and influential commentary on the new Irish society that emerged following the economic renewal of the nineties, *The Pope's Children* (2005, p227) which also spawned a television series, sees many of Ireland's past ills as resulting from our poor economic status. Thus, a rise in our fortunes, literally, must lead to richer and happier people in McWilliams' analysis:

According to survey after survey, the country is now more middle-class, better educated and happier than ever. This means we can now discriminate in a variety of areas. For the first time ever, the Irish are rich enough to stand on our own feet and take a look at not just our culture but that of others as well. We can pick and choose what suits us.

Although McWilliams considers that there is a blurring of the social classes - 'we are now a middle-class nation' and 'wealthy, aspirant and materialistic' - his up-beat analysis of Irish society fails to consider in any real terms the plight of those excluded from the apparent feast that Irish society is enjoying. (ibid. pp15-16)

Many of the Irish films under discussion were set during 'de Valera's Ireland'. This iconic term, as Joe Cleary (2007, p7) has pointed out, became 'a byword for a soul-killing Catholic nationalist traditionalism'. It now serves as a 'reflex shorthand for everything from economic austerity to sexual puritanism, from cultural philistinism to the abuse of women and children'. The most disquieting aspect of the prevalence of the

term as a critical tool today therefore is that it stifles debate about the social inequalities of contemporary Ireland (ibid. p8). Indeed the question of social inequality is becoming a consistent theme in the writings of social commentators on (post) Celtic Tiger Ireland as we have discussed above. These are themes that the Irish Catholic Church with its commitment to social justice has been focussing on for some time. Could the Church and some of its former critics now be singing from the same hymn sheet?

Some of the recent cinematic and televisual offerings from the O'Halloran/Abrahamson stable allow us to contemplate the enormous shortcomings of those who hold political power and to pose questions as to how the bleak situations of economic misery shown in the TV series, *Prosperity*, could arise in a time of plenty. It is also interesting to note that the broadcasting of *Prosperity* coincided with the Mahon tribunal's interviewing of Taoiseach Bertie Ahern about certain financial gifts when he was Minister for Finance.

While the problematics of gender, class and sexuality have been registered more often in Quebec than in Irish cinema, we can see in the work of O'Halloran and Abrahamson a commitment to dissecting some of the prevailing ills in Irish society. Rather than attacking the 'paper tigers' beloved of nineties' filmmakers, their lens is firmly fixed on the fallout in contemporary Ireland, a linchpin of global capitalism. In his analysis of international reports on social inequality and poverty, Roy Foster (2007, p12), reminds us that Ireland currently has the highest proportion of its population living in 'relative poverty' in the EU, and ruefully comments that 'The Tiger does not devote much care to its more puny cubs' (ibid. p15).

### **Closing the circle?**

Existential angst resulting from the loss of tradition is explored in greater detail in Quebec cinema. While Quebec cinema is looking into the abyss created by the collapse of grand narratives, Irish cinema has been looking away or continuing to slay the 'shrivelled dragons of de Valera's Ireland' in Cleary's (2007) memorable phrase.

In Ireland, the focus on the marginalised in some new cinema and TV is one of the first real attempts to examine the human cost of our apparent progress. Still riding high on the tailwinds of our economic boom, the deeper philosophical questions of what it all means, or 'what has in fact been achieved?' are only beginning to be posed by the intelligentsia. It will probably take another generation before a new consciousness, akin to that in Quebec, takes root in the population which can then be reflected on screen.

Ó Giolláin (2000, p9) has commented:

Christians are constantly put in touch with their origins through ritual, with the creation of the world on the Sabbath, with the passion and death of Christ every Easter. But what if the link is broken? How then can people go back to reorient themselves, to renew their purpose?

This is perhaps the most pertinent question in the context of Quebec - what happens when the chain comes undone? - a question Ireland hasn't yet had to pose let alone grasp. However, as one of the last bastions of Church control in Ireland - the management of primary schools - begins to crumble as I write in 2008, it seems likely that the questions which have recently preoccupied the Québécois regarding education and enculturation will be asked here in the decades to come.

### **Cinema as a tool of social comment and change**

Kieran Scott (2007, p17) writing in *The Furrow*, 'A journal for the contemporary church', in an article entitled 'The Cinema as Cathedral' makes some useful comments on the role of cinema as a touchstone of culture:

One of the important aspects of postmodern culture is that our spiritual journeying and religious formation takes place as much, if not more so, in secular culture as in explicitly religious spaces. Part of that secular culture is the world of the arts. The arts of each age, in their own unique way, capture the 'cries and whispers' of each era. Contemporary film, in its own unique way, projects the pertinent questions, issues and sensibilities of our time.

Cinema is therefore a most useful tool for reading social change in its representation and testing of prevailing attitudes in society. It can provide an opportunity for endorsing or

attacking the status quo. When we consider cinema censorship, especially as it was practiced in the early years of the Irish Free State, it is not surprising that the most popular art form of the 20<sup>th</sup>/21<sup>st</sup> century should be exploited for critiquing Irish society, past and present.

There is a generational gap between the cinemas of Ireland and Quebec. Irish cinema is an adolescent pushing the boundaries of the prevailing authorities, testing its new found powers with scant respect for what had been achieved previously. In contrast, Quebec cinema is hoary and middle-aged, looking back over its long life it takes stock of what has been lost and gained and wishes perhaps that it had done some things differently.

Despite having a brief flirtation with the 'score-settling' strain of Irish cinema, the cinema of Quebec serves as an example that the removal of apparently 'regressive' elements in society does not necessarily equal progress and in fact opens up a whole new range of problems for a society bereft of a compass. It invites the Irish viewer to peer into a secular future where individual material gains are made at the expense of community, and loss of faith induces a national malaise. The 'utopian hunger' of which Pilkington (2002) spoke, we have documented in our discussion of contemporary Quebec cinema. We might expect this to be an emergent theme across the next decades of Irish cinema. If some Irish films of the 90s seemed to rejoice in the toppling of our former 'gods', then the trajectory of Quebec cinema has shown that 'you don't know what you've got 'til it's gone', to quote Joni Mitchell. While the demise of the institutional force of the Church does not necessarily involve the dismantling of faith, the increasing secularisation of a society dilutes the public practice of faith leading inevitably to a sharp decline in the numbers of 'the faithful'. It can also lead to disorientation and loss of meaning. As Ireland heads in the direction of a post-Catholic state, perhaps the lid of another Pandora's Box is beginning to loosen.

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*C.R.A.Z.Y.* (Jean-Marc Vallée, 2005)

*Curé de village, Le* (Gury, 1949)

*Déclin de l'empire Américain, Le* (Arcand, 1986 )

*Deux femmes en or* (Fournier, 1970)

*Eldorado* (Binamé, 1995)

*Entre la mer et l'eau douce* (Brault, 1967)

*Festin des morts, Le* (Fernand Dansereau, 1965)

*Florida, La* (Mihalka, 1993)

*Gaz bar Blues* (Bélanger, 2003)

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*Jésus de Montréal* (Arcand, 1989)

*Léolo* (Lauzon, 1992)

*Lilies* (Greyson, 1996)

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*Mâles, Les* (Carle, 1971)

*Maria Chapdelaine* (Duvivier, 1934 and Carle, 1983 [Allégret, 1949, *The Naked Heart*])

*Mon Oncle Antoine* (Jutra, 1971)

*Mort d'un bûcheron, La* (Carle, 1973)

*Nô* (Lepage, 1998)

*Nouvelle France* (Beaudin, 2004)

*Orphelins de Duplessis, Les* (Préjont, 1997)

*Party, Le* (Falardeau, 1990)

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*Trouble-fête* (Patry, 1964)  
*Valérie* (Héroux, 1968)  
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## Filmography – Ireland

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*Altered State*. (RTE 1, October 4, 11, 18, 2005)  
*Angel* (Jordan, 1982)  
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*Ballroom of Romance, The* (O'Connor, 1982)  
*Bishop's Story, The* (Quinn, 1994)  
*Borstal Boy* (Sheridan, 2000)  
*Budawanny* (Quinn, 1987)  
*Butcher Boy, The* (Jordan, 1998)  
*Crying Game, The* (Jordan, 1992)  
*Dancing at Lughnasa* (O'Connor, 1998)  
*Dawn, The* (Cooper, 1936)  
*Dead, The* (Huston, 1987)  
*Dear Daughter*, (RTE February, 1996)  
*December Bride* (O'Sullivan, 1990)  
*Eat the Peach* (Ormrod, 1986)  
*Field, The* (Sheridan, 1990)  
*Flick* (Connolly, 1999)  
*Garage* (Abrahamson, 2007)  
*General, The* (Boorman, 1998)  
*Goldfish Memory* (Gill, 2003)  
*Hush-a-Bye Baby* (Harkin, 1989)  
*In Bruges* (McDonagh, 2007)  
*Irish Destiny* (Dewhurst, 1925)  
*Late Late Show, The* (RTE 1962 - )  
*Love Divided, A* (Macartney, 1998)  
*Maeve* (Murphy, 1981)  
*Magdalen Sisters, The* (Mullen, 2002)  
*Man of Aran* (Flaherty, 1934)  
*Michael Collins* (Jordan, 1996)  
*Morning Ireland* (RTE 1984 - )  
*My Left Foot* (Sheridan, 1989)  
*Nora* (Murphy, 2000)  
*Our Boys* (Black, 1981)  
*Pavee Lackeen* (Ogden, 2005)  
*Poitín* (Quinn, 1978)  
*Prosperity*, (RTE 2 September 3<sup>rd</sup> - 24<sup>th</sup> 2007)

*Quiet Man, The* (Ford, 1952)  
*Reefer and the Model* (Comerford, 1988)  
*Ryan's Daughter* (Lean, 1970)  
*Secret Baby Trail, The* (RTE June 20, 1996)  
*Song for a Raggy Boy* (Walsh, 2003)  
*States of Fear*, (Three-part series, RTE April and May 1999)  
*Suing the Pope*, (BBC, March 19, 2002)  
*This is my Father* (Quinn, 1998)  
*Today Tonight* (RTE)  
*Traveller* (Comerford, 1982)

# Appendices

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## Appendix A

Table 1. *No. of Features (60 mins. +) produced acc. to principal market, Quebec* (All genres and formats)

Year	Cinema	TV	Other	Total
2000	25	27	8	60
2004	27	21	17	65
2006	33	19	46	98

Table 2. *Film Production Quebec, 2006*

Fiction	Documentary	Total
53	45	98

Table 3. *Exhibition of films according to country of origin, Quebec, 2006*

USA	316 (51.2%)
France	94 (15.2%)
G.B.	41 (6.6%)
Québec	43 (7%)
Canada*	33 (5.3%)
Italy	2 (0.3%)
Others	88 (14.3%)
Total	617

\*Excluding Quebec

Table 4. *Admissions, box-office receipts and screenings according to country of origin, Quebec, 2006*

<b><u>Country</u></b>	<b><u>Admissions</u></b>	<b><u>Receipts</u></b>	<b><u>Screenings</u></b>
<b>US</b>	18, 985,774 ( <b>76.7%</b> )	126,983,630 ( <b>77.2%</b> )	763,884 ( <b>76.5%</b> )
<b>France</b>	957,581 ( <b>3.9%</b> )	6,005,869 ( <b>3.7%</b> )	50,145,000 ( <b>5%</b> )
<b>Quebec</b>	2,893,923 ( <b>11.7%</b> )	18,805,840 ( <b>11.4%</b> )	99,524,000 ( <b>10%</b> )
<b>Canada *</b>	178,932 ( <b>0.7%</b> )	1,208,984 ( <b>0.7%</b> )	9,064,000 ( <b>0.9%</b> )
<b>Others</b>	1,725,040 ( <b>7%</b> )	11,507,331 ( <b>7%</b> )	76,543,000 ( <b>7.7%</b> )

\* Excluding Quebec

Table 5. *National cinemas' share of box-office receipts: home market, 2006*

<b>Quebec</b>	<b>11.4</b>
<b>Canada*</b>	<b>4.2</b>
<b>Australia</b>	<b>4.6</b>
<b>Belgium</b>	<b>6.0</b>
<b>Denmark</b>	<b>25.0</b>
<b>USA</b>	<b>90.7</b>
<b>France</b>	<b>44.7</b>
<b>Netherlands</b>	<b>11.1</b>
<b>UK</b>	<b>19</b>
<b>Sweden</b>	<b>20.1</b>

\*Including Quebec

Table 6. *No. of Features produced in Quebec (60 mins. +) according to Language (All genres and formats) 2000 - 2006*

<b>Year</b>	<b>French</b>	<b>English</b>	<b>Other</b>	<b>Total</b>
<b>2000</b>	<b>35</b>	<b>28</b>	<b>1</b>	<b>64</b>
<b>2001</b>	<b>36</b>	<b>8</b>	<b>5</b>	<b>49</b>
<b>2002</b>	<b>49</b>	<b>20</b>	<b>14</b>	<b>83</b>
<b>2003</b>	<b>43</b>	<b>18</b>	<b>5</b>	<b>66</b>
<b>2004</b>	<b>46</b>	<b>9</b>	<b>10</b>	<b>65</b>
<b>2005</b>	<b>52</b>	<b>21</b>	<b>15</b>	<b>88</b>
<b>2006</b>	<b>60</b>	<b>17</b>	<b>21</b>	<b>98</b>

(Source of all above figures: *Statistiques sur l'industrie du film*, Éditions 2005, 2007)

Table 7. *Irish Film Industry Key Statistics. Certification of projects under Section 481, 1994 – 2007*

<b>Year</b>	<b>Total of projects certified</b>	<b>Total spend €m</b>	<b>Irish spend €m</b>	<b>Section 481 Amount €m</b>
1994-2001	240	1,294.1	697.5	581.8
2002	22	142.9	87.9	62.2
2003	25	282.7	135.6	84.8
2004	22	119.6	66.5	58.1
2005	11	56.2	33.2	28.6
2006	39	205.5	115.9	110.8
2007	9	33.5	24.8	22.2
<b>Total</b>	<b>368</b>	<b>2,131.5</b>	<b>1,161.4</b>	<b>948.5</b>

(Source: Dept. of Arts, Sports & Tourism: [www.arts-sports-tourism.gov.ie](http://www.arts-sports-tourism.gov.ie))

Table 8. *Overview of Irish Audiovisual sector 2006.* € million

Overall Output	279.9
Feature Film	84.8
Independent TV (incl. major TV drama)	143.7
Animation	51.4

Table 9. *Origins of total funding for the Irish Audiovisual sector, 2006*

Section 481	32%
Irish Film Board	3%
Other Irish Funding	30%
Non-Irish Funding	35%

(Source: IBEC, Audiovisual Federation Review, 2007)

## Appendix B

### *Original French citations*

1. '[L]a langue française est le ciment de la société québécoise. En utilisant cette langue plutôt qu'une autre, les Québécoises et les Québécois ressentent et manifestent leur profond sentiment d'appartenance à leur milieu familial et communautaire d'abord, à la société globale ensuite'.
2. 'La succession des crises identitaires et les restructurations qu'elles ont entraînées ont placé peu à peu la langue française en première position parmi les éléments d'autodéfinition des Québécois'.
3. '...l'interdit qu'elle a jeté sur l'immigration protestante (Huguenots), les obstacles qu'elle a dressés au développement autonome de la jeune société, la censure qu'elle lui a imposé dans le domaine de la pensée (notamment l'interdiction d'imprimer), le déni qu'elle a opposé à toute velléité de démocratisation (interdiction des assemblées publiques et autres formes de consultation), la façon cavalière dont elle a disposé de la colonie en 1763'.
4. 'En cela, les administrateurs britanniques, la vieille aristocratie française et le clergé catholique partagent la même idéologie, qu'ils opposent au projet libéral et démocratique de la nouvelle classe montante, la petite bourgeoisie canadienne- française issue du commerce et des professions libérales'.
5. '...la presse canadienne contribua largement à la diffusion, au Québec, d'idéologies qui ne sont pas étrangères à l'émergence d'une intelligentsia laïque qui se posa rapidement en rival du clergé'.
6. 'Ils ont dû utiliser l'Église comme une courroie de transmission pour s'assurer l'obéissance de la population'.
7. '...il y a une déprime totale de la société plus forte sans doute que la déprime postréférendaire au début des années quatre-vingt de notre siècle: on a le sentiment que plus rien n'est possible, qu'on s'en va vers l'échec, que tout est fini'.
8. 'Ainsi, élites laïques et clergé seront formés à la même école, sous la même autorité, ce qui contribuera à créer une 'complicité profonde' entre les deux groupes'.
9. '...se donnent le droit et le devoir de surveiller l'action des gouvernements, de se mêler des élections, bref d'intervenir un peu partout dans la société.'

10. 'Préconisant à travers l' éducation une sorte d'immobilisme social, les ultramontains québécois favorisent le maintien de la famille traditionnelle, hiérarchisée, elle aussi, et soumise à l'autorité paternelle'.
11. 'Il y a un moment de ferveur qui recharge les batteries collectives et la religion est encore, jusqu'aux années cinquante, le seul lieu où la collectivité peut se donner d'elle-même une image unitaire'.
12. '...un nombre beaucoup plus considérable qu'on ne le croit de bons catholiques....dans leur propre domaine, se sentent encerclés, en tutelle, conduits comme des mineurs. Ils manquent d'air. Ces bons catholiques, un jour ou l'autre, éclateront....L'anticléricalisme se développe rapidement, beaucoup plus rapidement qu'on ne le croit, dans Montréal surtout'.
13. 'Une nouvelle ritualité nationale cherche ainsi à produire un nouveau *Nous* combinant le fondement d'une longue mémoire aux défis d'un nouveau projet collectif dont le modèle politique précis reste encore à venir'.
14. 'Si nous brûlons aujourd'hui ce que nous avons adoré il y a peu, c'est que nous adorions sans raison et que nous brûlons sans discernement'.
15. '...il me semble que son abandon aurait dû provoquer des analyses plus profondes'.
16. 'L'Église doit participer à la culture actuelle tout en la remettant en cause'.
17. 'Les peuples se ressentent toujours de leur origine. Les circonstances qui ont accompagné leur naissance et servi à leur développement influent sur tout le reste de leur carrière'.
18. 'Il m'arrive, dans les chroniques que je fais pour *Le Devoir* d'employer des expressions empruntées aux Écritures, et des lecteurs m'écrivent pour me le reprocher, comme s'il fallait s'arracher la mémoire, extirper de soi ce qui nous a construits pour le meilleur ou pour le pire. Non et non ! La religion catholique a pesé lourd sur nous, il est vrai. Son rigorisme a même brisé certains. Mais elle demeure dans notre mémoire, et je trouve qu'on a tort de vouloir en gommer les traces'.
19. 'Au bout du compte, on a le désagréable sentiment que plus personne n'ose risquer de jugement esthétique pour jouer le noble rôle de passeur entre l'oeuvre et le public'.
20. '... si on laisse un de ces majors commencer à ne plus doubler au Québec les autres suivront ; donc il faut maintenir une certaine pression sur leur image de marque, à laquelle ils sont très sensibles. Hollywood et Toronto (où les majors

ont des représentants) ont eu une réaction très rapide et nous continuons nos discussions avec eux’.

21. ‘À un certain niveau de la société parisienne subsiste ce regard hautain sur les Québécois, celui que l’on réserve au petit cousin paysan. On ne vaincra jamais cette résistance’.
22. ‘Le curé, on peut dire, c’est le grenier de la paroisse, le grenier spirituel, où chacun vient puiser un peu de courage, d’espérance, de confiance’.
23. ‘Dans ces trois films, nous n’avons pas affaire à des artistes qui ont un message à nous livrer, une vision du monde à partager, mais à des machines de production qui ont flairé un bon coup et qui montent une équipe pour le réaliser’.
24. ‘Contrairement à ce que nous avons vu dans l’époque précédente, il n’y a plus de présence d’un pouvoir omniprésent : plus de représentant du clergé, plus de représentant du pouvoir politique.....La raison profonde de la crise que traverse Claude est d’avoir rejeté une vieille idéologie sans en avoir trouvé une autre pour prendre sa place’.
25. ‘On n’a plus les opérations du Saint-Esprit qu’on avait. On n’a plus les chefs qu’on avait’
26. ‘J’aurai toujours la nostalgie de cette époque de ma vie où la religion fournissait une réponse apaisante aux problèmes les plus insolubles’.
27. ‘Alors ils viennent ici se faire dire: allez en paix, vos péchés vous sont remis. Ça leur fait du bien. Un peu. C’est au moins ça. C’est ici qu’on touche le fond: la solitude, la maladie, la folie’.
28. ‘Il faut différencier ce que j’appelle le cœur du message de toute la panoplie de l’imagerie religieuse qui existe depuis deux mille ans et qui nous écrase’.
29. ‘... tout ça a certainement une grande valeur pour les gens d’ici, sur le plan de la mémoire collective’.
30. ‘Condamné à jouer de la harpe sur un nuage pendant l’éternité, assise entre Jean-Paul II, un Polonais sinistre, et mère Teresa, une Albanaise gluante’.