

Saving Ireland, Saving Québec: Jacques Ferron's *Le Salut de l'Irlande*

It may seem reactionary to think of a nation as a mystical entity, but this is exactly what the Québécois writer Jacques Ferron has always insisted upon.¹ This visualisation of nationhood certainly has the potential to go horribly awry and lead to a kind of manipulative demagoguery, but Ferron's work has instead been about the creation of myths that are defined by ambiguity and not clarity, by a project not of discovery but of an ongoing and always incomplete search. One of his lesser known novels, *Le Salut de l'Irlande*, is especially notable for the way that it fuses elements of both Irish and Québec nationalism, not only making these movements seem important to the future of their respective territories and diasporas, but also investing the link between these two movements with a kind of mystical importance. *Le Salut de l'Irlande* is, however, a very dualistic work, simultaneously idealistic and defeatist. It is not simply that Ferron believes Québec separatism will succeed because Ireland has liberated herself; his novel is centrally concerned with the profound melancholy that has overtaken the multinational community of anti-colonialists. This melancholy, embodied here in the figure of the aging, Irish-Quebecker CDA Haffigan, is eventually overcome and its victims redeemed, but moving beyond it in the way Ferron does hardly constitutes a passionate call for an international, anti-English revolution. Nevertheless, Ferron seems to be imagining not so much a movement as a transcendent spirit of anti-colonialism, a spirit which has its problems but which draws strength from a mixture of sincere belief and non-concrete visualisation. *Le Salut de l'Irlande* is not a simple anti-colonial missive; it is a conflicted, ambiguous and enigmatic text about the crisis of belonging in a world linked only by histories that remain unresolved.

Although *Le Salut de l'Irlande* was originally published in 1966-67 as a serial in the Québec medical journal *L'Information médicale et paramédicale*, (Ferron was a doctor, with a practice in the Montréal suburb of Longueuil,

where this novel is set) Pádraig Ó Gormaille writes that the novel "had been rushed into print to ensure that the date of publication would be 1970, therefore becoming a stark reminder of the three-month constitutional and political crisis that had rocked Québec since October... Ferron wanted his novel to be a permanent, if somewhat spontaneous, tribute to a series of events which, ironically, must have caused him little surprise" (113-4). The October Crisis (beginning with the declaration of the War Measures Act by Pierre Trudeau on 16 October 1970) was a catastrophic event in Québec history, and its scars still define a great deal of political life in the country today. *Le Salut de l'Irlande* is in many ways an attempt to make sense of these events as they were unfolding, to try to bring both some sardonic realism and some fantastical optimism to a period marked by extreme paranoia and extremist rhetoric.

Before embarking upon a discussion of the novel, it is necessary to indicate the unique place that the Irish have in Québec society. The debate surrounding Québec separatism is generally understood as a matter of language, of French speakers trying to wrestle self-determination away from an English-speaking minority. However, 19th century Irish immigrants to Québec, although most of them spoke English and few of them spoke French, often shared with the Francophone Québécois both a religious tradition and a sense of exclusion from the Protestant Anglo-Saxon power structure. This lead to a relationship that, while not always embodying the kind of solidarity imagined in *Le Salut de l'Irlande*, certainly complicated conventional ideas about nationhood and belonging. Further, during the enormous wave of immigration during the Great Famine of the late 1840s, most of the sick and dying who came ashore at Grosse Île, Québec, were tended to by Catholic, and therefore generally French, clergymen and aid societies; this experience sometimes lead to Irish families, and particularly Irish orphans whose parents had died during the trip across the Atlantic, being integrated into North American society through the French speaking community. That the Irish were for so many years the largest ethnic group in Québec besides the French and the English is an indication of just how significant they have been in the socio-ethnic evolution of that province.

Le Salut de l'Irlande incorporates a contradictory mixture of the idealistic and the pessimistic, the local and the international. Its tale of CDA Haffigan, husband of a French Canadian woman but himself of Irish ancestry, a former political agent during the corrupt Duplessis era and now a small time moonshine (*bugosse*) dealer, links the struggles of the Québécois and the Irish in a way that incorporates exactly the rhetoric of internationalist revolution that was so popular among left-wing intellectuals in the 1960s. And yet, the Longueuil and outer Montreal of *Le Salut de l'Irlande* is a repressive, closed off and spiritually exhausted place. CDA is an embittered old man who feels

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that three of his sons have betrayed both him and Ireland: they first served in the Canadian Army, and then joined the RCMP, the Escouade antisubversive de Montréal, and the Sûreté du Québec. CDA believes that the only hope for his family's honour is his youngest son Connie, whom he pushes to join the FLQ.

At the core of *Le Salut de l'Irlande* is not only the idea that the struggles of Québec and Ireland are inherently linked, but also that in order for either one of them to succeed everyone involved needs to adopt a fluid concept of what nations are. At one point, Connie Haffigan, the novel's narrator, recalls when, as a young child, he asked his father CDA "Qu'est-ce que l'Irlande?" [what is Ireland?]. The response warrants a full reproduction:

Il ne savait pas encore lui-même, du moins dans le sens où il avait voulu me parler. Les événements allaient l'instruire, en particulier ceux qui surviendront le jour où il se rendra, vêtu d'une vieille redingote, coiffé de son haut-de-forme qu'il n'avait plus guère l'occasion de porter, à la projection d'un film sur Françoise O'Sullivan, la fille du vieux John, à l'École des beaux-arts. Il n'avait jamais mis les pieds dans un lieu pareil et n'avait jamais pensé les mettre. Mais en mémoire du vieux John, que n'aurait-il pas fait? Or ce jour sera celui des bombes dans Westmount et, par entraînement politique, il en reviendra beaucoup plus frappé par la portée de la dynamite que par les sculptures de la jeune Françoise.

À ma question il bougonna qu'il avait déjà répondu, que l'Irlande était l'honneur de tous les humiliés du Canada. (53)

[He still didn't know himself, at least in the sense in which he wanted to speak to me about it. The events were going to teach him, especially those which will arise the day he attended, dressed in an old frock-coat and wearing the top hat he hardly had occasion to wear anymore, the projection of a film about Françoise O'Sullivan, the daughter of old John, at the École des beaux-arts. He had never set foot in such a place and had never thought about doing so. But in memory of old John, what wouldn't he have done? Yet, this day will be that of the bombs in Westmount and, because of political imperatives, he will come back much more touched by the impact of the dynamite than by the sculptures of the young Françoise.

To my question he grumbled that he had already answered, that Ireland was the honour of all the humiliated of Canada.²]

2 Except for the Hubert Aquin essay, the translations in this paper are my own, and they do not aspire to literary quality. I offer them only for those readers who have no knowledge of French or Irish. *Le Salut de l'Irlande* is not, to my knowledge, available in English translation, although Jean Coté has a very interesting article about the translation problems that the novel presents ("Les Canadianismes sous l'éclairage Bakhtinien: Quatre emplois différents de *pantoute* dans *Le Salut de l'Irlande* de Jacques Ferron," *Studies in Canadian Literature / Études en littérature canadienne* 18:1 [1993], 18-36).

I quote this passage at such length to show that even a young child's very simple question invokes associations about Ireland, Québec, and a shared history of violence, strife and confusion. The way in which CDA's grumbling links the histories of the Québécois and the Irish, embodied in a strange way by the memory of Françoise O'Sullivan, a young woman with an Irish family name and a French first name, is vague, half-remembered and missing important historical details. That Ferron follows this long ramble of memory, loyalty and dynamite with one of the novel's most important statements, that "l'Irlande était l'honneur de tous les humiliés du Canada" [Ireland was the honour of all the humiliated of Canada] is a clear illustration that for him, passion always exists alongside foginess and confusion.

For CDA Haffigan, and for Jacques Ferron, Ireland, like Québec, is more than just a place on the map. Nationhood, throughout *Le Salut de l'Irlande*, is invested with an almost spiritual importance. It is not enough for Ireland to be free, as it had been for 21 years when this novel was published (if we can understand the establishment of the Republic of Ireland in 1949 as the climax of Ireland's quest towards liberation). Ireland must, as the title of the novel suggests, be saved. In much the same way, simple Québec separatism, as we shall see, is shown by Ferron to be an inadequate goal in and of itself. He clearly understands nations to be mystical entities and liberation movements to be searches for redemption. Throughout *Le Salut de l'Irlande*, an emphasis on the ephemeral and enormous is always favoured over the concrete or essential.

Indeed, the novel's concluding sequence is a small masterpiece of magical realism; dense with vivid imagery, it mixes a kind of ethereal spiritualism with folk narrative and political agitation:

À ce moment, un grand canot de rivière, rempli d'avionneurs, obscurs, Papineau à l'avant, Rédempteur Fauché à l'arrière, l'air égaré, la tête ensanglantée, se posa doucement près de nous, suivi de toute la chasse, du corps de cavalerie et de la meute. Était-ce la chasse maudite du sieur de Gallery? Je vis le grand veneur, c'était le grand major Bellow dans son vieil uniforme de l'armée des Indes, s'approcher de CDA Haffigan, mon père, et lui tendre le bras, avec courbettes et salamalecs comme dans un menuet, selon une chorégraphie réglée depuis des siècles, et je vis mon père suivre le major Bellow qui le conduisit lentement dans le grand canot. Lorsqu'il y eut pris place, les chevaux se mirent à hennir, les chiens à aboyer. Le renard alors de s'élançant, de courir si vite qu'il se mit à s'élever dans l'air et toute la chasse à courre de partir après lui, ébranlant de nouveau l'air dans la nuit. (130)

[At this moment, a big river canoe, full of obscure rowers, Papineau in the front, Rédempteur Fauché at the back, looking bewildered, head covered with blood, placed itself next to us, followed by the entire hunt, by the cavalry and the dogs. Was this the damned hunt of the master of Gallery? I saw the great master of the hunt, the tall Major Bellow in his old Indian Army uniform,

approach CDA Haffigan, my father, and hold out his hand to him, with bows and frills like in a minuet, according to a choreography that had been regulated for centuries, and I saw my father follow Major Bellow, who lead him slowly towards the great canoe. When he took his place, the horses began to whinny, the dogs to bark. The fox then darted, ran so fast that he ascended into the air and the entire hunt ran after him, moving off anew into the night.]

This is all an invocation of the Québec legend of *La Chasse Galerie*, which is about a magical canoe that takes brave lumberjacks away from the woods and back to the lights and excitement of Montréal. The reference is clearly to this tale, but Ferron re-writes the narrative in important ways. The original is about a corps of brave French-Canadian men facing the temptation of leaving their true calling; here the *chasse galerie* offers to take a tired old Irish-Québécois away from his futile struggles. The national myth is invoked, but melancholy and the hope of redemption are substituted for the way that the lumberjacks of the folktale are in danger of losing their French-Canadian souls to the mystical boat-driver.

Further, the impurity that in the original serves as a cautionary tale is still present, but here these cautionary elements also have an optimistic function. Redemption is indeed achieved by CDA Haffigan, although the picture on the ground beneath the clouds to which he ascends is less rosy, as Connie is, shortly after the departure of the hunting party, arrested by his three brothers who also descend from the clouds, this time in a helicopter (in a much more sardonic usage of the *chasse galerie* image and a clear echo of the roundups of "suspected terrorists" that marked the October Crisis). And yet, it is at this moment that the linkage between Ireland and Québec is completed. "Je souris à mes frères, à leur stupide hélicoptère, je souris à mon pays, au delà de la nuit" [I smiled at my brothers, at their stupid helicopter, I smiled at my country, beyond the night] says Connie (132), in much the same way that the tempted lumberjacks smiled as they looked upon their beloved, frozen Québec from the heights of the floating boat (they smiled to express their happiness; if they spoke then the boat-driver would claim their souls). It is a perfect reversal of the tale; rather than looking down at the country from the sky, Connie is looking up at it from the ground. His country, of course, is now neither Québec nor Ireland, but that floating canoe that has gone in celestial pursuit of the fox. The closing moments of the book mark the completion of Connie's unification of Québec and Ireland, a unification that is, for him, finalised by his father's communion not with an imaginary community of purity and simplicity, as in the original *chasse galerie* tale, but with a chunky, amalgamated group of histories that move through the sky.

This amalgamation is made explicit by the combined presence of CDA Haffigan's old rival, the colonial officer Major Bellow, and the leader of the failed 1837 Lower-Canada rebellion Louis-Joseph Papineau. CDA finds his

redemption, then, with the historically and politically contradictory combination of a Québécois/*Patriote* icon and an English military man dressed "dans son vieil uniforme de l'armée des Indes." The fox seems to be there in order to mediate between and lead along these opposites, and his presence is especially important given that this fox is part of the Haffigan family coat of arms and serves throughout the novel, through his occasional and metaphorically loaded appearances, as a symbol of CDA's connection to his homeland. The novel's visualisation of Québec is summarised in this passage: it is not simply a homogeneous, Francophone culture with an unambiguous historical past. The final chariot ride serves as an acknowledgement of the way that conflicting parts of Québec society come together to form a distinctive but deeply fragmented culture.

Indeed, this kind of fragmentation has long been at the heart of Ferron's work, both in his subject matter and in his formal choices. Ferron is famous for his anglicisms and linguistic games, and these certainly pop up in *Le Salut de l'Irlande*. A particularly interesting example of this comes during the ceremony in which CDA Haffigan inducts young Connie into the FLQ (when he becomes *effelquois*, a word that appears throughout *Le Salut de l'Irlande* and that exists between English and French). CDA wears robes and carries a Celtic cross, and during the ceremony Connie calls him *father* in English:

CDA Haffigan était en robe de chambre. Il tenait dans ses mains une croix...

- Le Crist est tombé trois fois, Connie, et la quatrième fois on l'a allongé sur la croix pour l'y clouer.
 - Oui, *father*, je sais.
 - Il l'a fait par amour
 - Je sais, *father*.
 - Connie...
 - Oui, *father* ?
- (118)

[CDA Haffigan was in a bathrobe. He held in his hands a cross...

- "Christ fell three times, Connie, and the fourth time they spread him out on the cross to nail him there."
- "Yes, *father*, I know."
- "He did it out of love."
- "I know, *father*"

This play on the word "father" – calling attention to the essentially Anglophone nature of the Haffigan clan by inserting an anglicism (this is how Connie refers to CDA throughout the novel) in this case also calls attention to the family's Catholic identity (and to the semi-religious nature of the induction ceremony in which CDA is a primary participant), thereby separating them from the Anglo-Protestant elite of Canada and bringing them

a bit closer to the Francophone Québécois with whom they identify. Betty Bednarski has written about translating Ferron's novel *Les Roses sauvages*, noting that "[c]ette voix était anglaise, sans parler anglais. Elle parlait français, mais exprimait une attraction, des affinités, la nostalgie d'un ton, d'un style, d'une atmosphère, que, faute d'un meilleur terme, j'ai dû qualifier d'anglais" ["This voice was English, without speaking English. It spoke French, but expressed an attraction, affinities, nostalgia for a tone, a style, an atmosphere, that, lacking a better term, I had to call English"] (61). This linguistic duality is present in a slightly different form in *Le Salut de l'Irlande*. The voices in the narrative are unmistakably English, but Ferron often chooses to make manifest their (linguistic) Englishness in ways that end up bringing them closer to the non-English aspects of Irish identity, such as connection to the Québec nationalist struggle (*effelquois*) or to Catholicism (odd use of the word *father*).

This is, of course, a resistant, insurgent use of language, a tendency in Ferron's work that Ginette Michaud finds to be a particularly Irish part of his style. Discussing Ferron in a Joycean context, she writes that "la figure de Joyce l'Irlandais devenu le plus grand écrivain de la modernité et prenant sa revanche en affirmant dans la langue de l'opresseur la souveraineté esthétique inaliénable de l'Irlande, restera une forte leçon, à la fois politique et littéraire, dont Ferron saura inspirer" ["the figure of Joyce the Irishman becoming the most important writer of the modern period and taking his revenge in affirming in the language of the oppressor the inalienable aesthetic sovereignty of Ireland, remained a powerful lesson, both political and literary, which would inspire Ferron"] (177). Throughout *Le Salut de l'Irlande*, Ferron is indeed showing how Irish selfhood can be made manifest through the use of English. That use, though, only becomes insurgent when it is placed within the context of a second language. Joyce is re-writing English, but in *Le Salut de l'Irlande* Ferron is replacing it altogether, leaving only those traces which allow his characters to move closer to what is an essentially French community. English, in *Le Salut de l'Irlande*, often ends up becoming a way to move further away from the colonizing effects of language.

This deeply conflicted folk and religious imagery still signifies, however, that serious and perhaps violent political action is in the offing. Before being hauled off by his brothers, Connie asserts that "[j]e comprenais très bien... que l'Irlande était en péril, que l'Irlande était aux abois et qu'il faut la défendre au prix de son sang" [I understood very well... that Ireland was in peril, that Ireland was at bay and it's necessary to defend her at the price of one's blood] (132), although he remains ambivalent about having joined the FLQ. Indeed, Ferron throughout the novel represents the reality of armed insurrection in a way that avoids simple advocacy of such violent means, showing such fierce action to be the result of conditions in some ways beyond clear understanding. Writing on Connie's evolution from reluctant schoolboy to *effelquois*, Ó

Gormaille writes that "[h]is transformation into a québécois patriot, which cannot be explained by ordinary psychology, is a product of the world of fantasy in which the events of the novel unfold" (118-9). Indeed, considering Connie's Anglophonic identity and his imperfect command of French, his allegiance to the FLQ requires something of a leap of faith that is not totally dissimilar to his father's ascent into the heavens at the end of the book. And yet, he clearly understands the assumption of the Québec and Irish struggle as an inseparable part of growing up, as he muses that "j'étais devenu ce qu'on appelle un adulte, un être responsable et de qui, de quoi responsable ? Du salut de l'Irlande" [I became that which one calls an adult, a responsible being, and for what was I responsible? For the salvation of Ireland] (131). Further, Ferron makes the argument that certain aspects of the Québec experience lead towards the separatist struggle; this path is embodied by Le collège de Longueuil, where Connie is eventually initiated into the FLQ by his father and some of his teachers, including a Christian Brother named Frère Thaddeus. At one point, Connie recalls that

Le collège de Longueuil ne m'a donc pas traumatisé. M'man n'était pas fâchée de m'y voir, dans sa langue et sous la protection des révérends frères des Écoles chrétiennes. Je n'y ai rien étudié mais j'y ai beaucoup appris. CDA Haffigan savait peut-être ce qu'il voulait. Si j'étais demeuré au Catholic High School de Saint-Lambert, comment aurait-il pu me demander de devenir effelquois ? (70)

[So the College of Longueuil didn't traumatize me. Mama was not displeased to see me there, in her language and under the protection of the reverend brothers of the Christian schools. I didn't study anything, but I learned a lot there. CDA Haffigan maybe knew what he wanted. If I had stayed at the Catholic High School of Saint-Lambert, how could he have asked me to become a member of the FLQ?]

By drawing on images of education, idealism and magic, then, Ferron chooses to accentuate the fragmented, unstable part of the Québec/Ireland connection, insisting most of all on a willingness to *believe*. But by also utilising a clear, straightforward narrative voice to evoke the necessity of these mystical links – to grow up and become educated is to accept responsibility for both Québec and Ireland – *Le Salut de l'Irlande* becomes a lament for a generation of anti-colonial fighters seeking to understand a very confusing struggle.

Following this spirit of duality, it is clear that even though Ferron evokes an essentially *imaginary* link between Ireland and Québec, it is not much of a stretch to understand such a link as part of a more concrete analysis of a larger struggle against colonialism. Ó Gormaille points out that the formation of the Rassemblement pour l'Indépendance Nationale (RIN), a militant wing of the Québec separatist movement that was not quite as devoted

to armed insurrection as the FLQ, "was influenced by a world wide process of decolonisation... National liberation movements were active in Vietnam, Cuba and the Basque Country, while the IRA, having ended its 1950s border campaign with a truce in 1962, rapidly became involved in armed violence following the 1969 civil disturbances in Northern Ireland." He also points out that the FLQ's publication *La Cognition* "aligned the actions of the FLQ to those of resistance fighters elsewhere, including Irish Republicans" (both quotes 119). Indeed, just such a link to a worldwide anti-colonial struggle is all but explicit in *Le Salut de l'Irlande*. However, understanding this link only in terms of a simple, binary struggle against global domination would be both incomplete and a bit too pious for a writer as cryptic and enigmatic as Ferron. Echoing this sentiment, Ó Gormaille writes that "the light-hearted fantasy elements in the novel avoid the possible extremist reactions by declaring, implicitly, that the events of October 1970 were more precisely the enactment of a revolution that never happened" (124). Less than a naive celebration of how English colonisers all over the world would soon be overthrown, *Le Salut de l'Irlande* is a novel that vividly invokes images of such misguided idealism only to complicate them with mystical implications and illustrations of how this romanticism fell short.

What does not succeed in *Le Salut de l'Irlande* is just as important as what does; a focus on failure hints at an assessment of the state of separatism that is very much part of the cultural moment of Québec in the late 60s and early 70s. Novelist and essayist Hubert Aquin, a writer closely linked to the FLQ (in the early 60s he was jailed for possessing arms, apparently on their behalf), evoked just this sense of pessimism and defeatism in his 1965 essay "L'art de la défaite," advancing an argument that seems especially well suited to *Le Salut de l'Irlande* given its focus on the 1837 rebellion. Indeed, that uprising starts out in "L'art de la défaite" having some happy historical associations, as Aquin seems enamoured of the willingness of the *Patriotes* to fight the impossible fight and come out to an early lead. The radical, underdog potential of the rebellion is never realised, though, and the *Patriotes*, in a way not so unlike Ferron's latter-day Irish patriots, are eventually lead to their doom. The image Aquin uses to explain this eventuality is that the *Patriotes* couldn't act because their script never included their victory. He writes that:

Le chœur, figé de stupeur, ne peut pas enchaîner si l'action dramatique qui vient se dérouler n'était pas dans le texte; les Patriotes n'ont pas eu un blanc de mémoire à Saint-Denis, mais ils étaient bouleversés par un événement qui n'était pas dans le texte : leur victoire ! Ils étaient sûrs de mourir glorieusement sous le tir des vrais soldats; voilà qu'ils triomphent et ils ne savent plus quoi faire, surpris par l'inraisemblable, paralysés par un victoire nullement prophétisée; ils sont muets de terreur, car la logique désormais veut qu'ils continuent la guerre. (116)

[The chorus, dumbstruck, cannot say its lines if what has just happened on stage was not in the script; the *Patriotes* did not forget their lines at St. Denis, but were thrown by an event which was not part of the play: their own victory! They had been convinced that theirs would be a glorious death under the fire of real soldiers; then, when they found themselves carrying the day, they did not know what to do next; surprised by an unlikely turn of events, paralysed by a totally unforeseen victory, they were struck dumb, terrified because now they would have to go on with the war]³

This is an important passage in Aquin's essay because it suggests that the stories of Québec are always pre-written; when the opportunity to change the tale presents itself, the *Patriotes* don't quite know what to do.

This link between Aquin and Ferron, a link embodied by the spirit of Papineau and by a sense of fatalism, is illustrative of just how much the struggle for Québec sovereignty is caught up in ideas about its impossibility. Explaining this melancholy dualism, Aquin writes in "L'Art de la défaite" that the *Patriotes* "ont pris les armes avec une joie profonde et avec la certitude d'en finir avec une longue agonie" [they took up arms with a profound joy and with the certitude of finishing a long agony] (118). Despite CDA's attachment to a *successful* (or, as some would argue, an unfinished) independence movement in his own "homeland," what we see throughout *Le Salut de l'Irlande* is how hard on him and his family his sympathy for Québec independence has been. His feelings leave him estranged from three of his sons, and lead his last hope, Connie, to a fate of imprisonment carried out by his own brothers. Given that *Le Salut de l'Irlande* was published in novel form at the very end of the 1970 crisis, when anxiety about the fate of Québec and paranoia about the consequences of rebellion were at a since unequalled high, a grim assessment of the possibility of actual separatism is hardly surprising. A link between the semi-martyred *Patriotes* of 1837 and the separatists and suspected separatists rounded up in the October Crisis hardly seems like much of a leap. Ó Gormaille, I think, clearly sums up the sense of defeatism that plagues the novel when he writes that "Ferron's purpose in *Le Salut de l'Irlande* is to propose, in what was a prophetic view, that only a certain form of radicalism, including a somewhat fatalistic acceptance of partial failure, is capable of saving the unique identity of Québec" (121).

Much the same could be said about Ireland, and this is perhaps the most easily identifiable link to the Québec struggle. Praising the vision of former Irish president Eamon de Valera, Martin Mansergh has pointed out

3 The translation is Anthony Purdy's, from his collection *Writing Québec: Selected Essays of Hubert Aquin* (69-70), which is mostly comprised of essays from Aquin's collection *Blocs erratiques*.

that "[h]e said what remains true today: that there was no clear way that would inevitably end partition. He did not think force would be successful, and even if it were 'we would have left an abiding sore that would have ruined our national life for generations'" (53).⁴ Despite the existence of a Republic, there is a still-unresolved situation in the six counties of Northern Ireland. The enormous gains of the past few years have certainly made that situation much less violent, but they have not made it any less ambiguous from the perspective of political or national identity, and, for better or for worse, that is not likely to change any time soon. Ireland shares with Québec the status of a place where both the past and future of the colonial project remain permanently unresolved arguments. They are both deeply hybridised places, and the sectarianism that defines the modern incarnations of their respective liberation movements (the FLQ and the IRA) has done little to address this basic reality. The kind of closure demanded by such movements is permanently unavailable, ensuring the presence of *une longue agonie* in both Ireland and Québec.

Even more than the 1837 rebellion, though, the historical events that haunt the narrative of *Le Salut de l'Irlande* are the Fenian raids of 1866/77. These raids, launched from the United States into what was then part of the British Empire and what is now Canada, were meant to damage the authority of the Crown and hopefully lead to a weakening of Imperial power. The raids were, like the rebellion of 1837, basically unsuccessful, and a number of Fenians of American citizenship wound up on trial in Canada. The trials were the subject of enormous publicity and people throughout both Canada and Québec called for the militants to be hanged. The editorial of *Le Journal du Québec* of 30 October 1866 read that

Nous espérons que le gouvernement de Sa Majesté se montrera dans les circonstances à la hauteur de ses droits, de sa dignité et de son honneur, et que quelles que soient les suites, s'il se laisse fléchir par la prière, il ne cédera jamais devant la menace. (Cited in Neidhardt, 29)

[We hope that Her Majesty's government will, in these circumstances, rise to the loftiness of its rights, of its dignity and of its honour, and that regardless of

the consequences, if it allows itself to be swayed by prayer, it will never yield to menace.]

Indeed, it was, as W.S. Neidhardt notes in his essay on the Fenian trials, the English-language newspapers, the Québec *Gazette* and the Québec *Morning Chronicle*, that called for leniency (30). This reality, that Québec and Ireland have not, in the past, been proper allies, informs a great deal of the novel. I would suggest that through the redemption of CDA Haffigan, Ferron also heals the old rifts between Québec's national project and Ireland's quest for liberation from the British, two potentially sympathetic but still very different struggles that did not, in historical reality, very often coincide. Consider, for example, a passage where CDA refuses to forgive his sons, who he feels have betrayed both Québec and Ireland. "Ce sont vos fils, ce sont mes frères," Connie tells him. "Nous les aimons, M' man les aimait" [They are your sons, they are my brothers. We love them, Mama loved them]. CDA snaps back: "Tais-toi, petit imbécile ! Oublierai-tu que je t'ai déclaré effelquois et qu'il t'incombe désormais de sauver l'Irlande ?" [Shut up, you little fool! Have you forgotten that I declared you a member of the FLQ, and that from now on it's incumbent upon you to save Ireland?]. Connie, in a passage that insists on the hybridity also visible in the final chariot ride, tells his father that "[l]'Irlande, c'est vous, c'est moi, c'est tout le monde. C'est aussi mes frères" [Ireland, it's you, it's me, it's everyone. It's also my brothers] (all quotes 129). For Connie, the linkage between Québec and Ireland is not a simple matter of two sets of national passions and hatreds that happen to come into contact; Ireland is not just Québec, not just the humiliated of Canada, Ireland is *tout le monde*. It is, for Connie, less the embodiment of English cruelty than the promised land where he can finally feel at home, in a culture he understands and as part of a family whose members do not hate each other. This linkage between Ireland and Québec is finally meaningful not because it adds to an anti-English rage, but because it seems (perhaps illusorily) to be the place where people understand why young Irish-Québécois join the Sûreté du Québec, or why most of Francophone Québec was happy to stand by as a group of Fenian militants were almost hung for their assault against the British Empire. Less based in romantic misconceptions about a tradition of Québec/Irish co-operation, *Le Salut de l'Irlande* seeks to create, almost from scratch, such co-operation.

However, the historical events that hang over Ferron's narrative, the October Crisis, the 1837 Rebellion, and the Fenian raids, all have in common with Irish republicanism an emphasis on violent national creation as opposed to Republicanism proper. Recent attempts in Ireland to re-define and reclaim the idealism that once defined Republicanism can shed a great deal of light on the plight of the alienated, fragmented Haffigan clan. Indeed, that

4 Mansergh is head of research for Fianna Fáil, the Republic of Ireland's most powerful political party, which identifies itself as "The Republican Party." The party was formed by de Valera, the only surviving leader of the 1916 rebellion (he was spared because of his American citizenship) and either Taoiseach / Prime Minister or Uachtarán / President of the Republic of Ireland between 1932 and 1973. He and the party he founded have, arguably, been a primary influence in defining modern Irish Republicanism along very conservative lines. Despite its partisanship, though, Mansergh's essay, part of an invaluable anthology about re-defining republicanism, goes a long way towards recovering the radical, populist and enlightenment roots of that oft-misused term; that recovery will be discussed later in the paper.

concluding sequence with Major Bellow and Papineau seems to anticipate this present-day Irish political thought, making *Le Salut de l'Irlande* a prophetic novel, as Ó Gormailé passionately argues, although a novel that looks forward to a different set of conditions than those the University College Galway French professor chooses to discuss. Imagery of fragmentation, compromise and ambiguity about national belonging defines the conclusion of CDA's quest for independence. This kind of imagery enunciates a vision of sovereignty that sounds very much like Richard Kearney's statement that in the context of Ireland, "[a] new republic would surely only be 'representative' in a genuine sense if it acknowledged that the name of Irishman includes diverse groups both within the frontiers of the island (subnational communities) and in the wider world (international communities)" (38). This mixture of internationalism, pluralism and ultimately fragmentation is crucial to the definition of republicanism that Kearney lays out in his groundbreaking text *Postnationalist Ireland*, and it is also central to the final imagery of redemption that brings *Le Salut de l'Irlande* to a semi-triumphant close. What CDA embodies before this moment, though, is close to the world-view of the martyrs of the 1916 Easter Rising and their latter day imitators, Provisional Sinn Féin / IRA. Describing this mind-set as embodied by one of that rising's most famous leaders, Pádraig Pearse, Mansergh has written that Pearse "laid relatively little emphasis on republicanism *per se*. What mattered to him was the spirit of nationality and the separatist ideal" (34). Much the same could be said of the FLQ, and this is a perspective that Ferron shows, by virtue of the aging, alienated figure of CDA Haffigan, a man haunted by memories of impotent violence, to be sorely lacking what it will take to "save" either Ireland or Québec. Further, the idealism of classical republicanism, with its emphasis on radical democracy, is shown to be of little interest to CDA, a lack emphasised by his history as a small-time political agent during the Duplessis era, not exactly a time in Québec's history marked by a concern for self-rule or equality.

Indeed, modern Irish Republicanism could be said to have been born during the rising of the United Irishmen in 1798, a moment that was notable for its combination of both Catholics and Protestants (mostly Presbyterians) joining together to try to form a republic. Their primary influence was the French Revolution, and this French example is too often forgotten by the sectarian nationalists who masquerade as either Irish or Québec republicans. Attempting to capture this tumultuous moment of Irish internationalism, Thomas Bartlett has wondered

Cén fáth a raibh suim ag muintir na hÉireann... in imeachtaí sa Fhrainc sna 1790í?... I súile na ndaoine seo, ba í an Fhrainc "réalt maidine na saoirse," agus ba mhian leo na smaointe nua faoi ionadaíocht, faoin daonlathas, agus faoi chearta daonna a thabhairt go hÉireann. (43)

[Why were the Irish people interested... in the events in France in 1790? In their eyes, France was the "morning star of freedom," and they liked the new thinking about representation, about democracy, and about human rights being brought to Ireland]

Bartlett is trying to enunciate a moment of radical potential, one that has very little to do with separatism or even nationalism, a moment that has been for all practical purposes conscribed to the junk heap of official celebrations that suck that potential out of the moment. In Québec, as in Ireland, that *réalt maidine na saoirse*, and other romanticized points of reference like it, tend to be remembered in ways which, as the alienated CDA Haffigan begins to discover, offer very little in the way of real autonomy or liberation.

What Ferron is showing throughout the narrative is that CDA, because he is trapped in a simple, violent nationalism, is alienated from *both* of his countries. He is not lacking in a historical context, but his only access to that context tends to weigh him down more than it makes his situation clear. Ferron summarises this situation by recounting the *fosterage*, another use of an English word which, when used in French, links the characters to a specifically Irish tradition:

Le fosterage, vieille coutume irlandaise, consistait à confier l'enfant mâle sur qui on fondait plus d'espérance que sur un autre, soit à son oncle maternel, soit à quelque personnage auprès duquel il faisait son apprentissage de la vie, apprenait les règles de la tribu, s'initiait aux métiers et plus particulièrement à celui des armes. Le major Bellow avait pu obtenir ce rôle traditionnel parce que l'honorable O'Sullivan et CDA Haffigan, comme tous les Irlandais de la deuxième ou de la troisième génération québécoise, avaient quelque confusion dans la tête, en particulier sur le sens de la tribu et de l'appartenance. *Le fosterage* se pratiquait dans le sens du Sin-Féin [sic]. Il ne s'agissait pas de confier son garçon à un étranger, voire à un ennemi. (39)

[The fosterage, an old Irish custom, consisted of the entrusting of the male child in which one had the most hope, either to his maternal uncle or to some character with whom he would do an apprenticeship of life, learn the rules of the tribe, initiate himself to trades and more specifically to the use of weapons. Major Bellow obtained this traditional role because the honourable O'Sullivan and CDA Haffigan, like all the second or third generation Irishmen in Québec, were a little mixed up in their heads, particularly about the meaning of the tribe and belonging. The fosterage was carried out in the manner of Sinn Féin. It didn't do to entrust one's boy to a foreigner, let alone to an enemy.]

For the Haffigans, the fosterage is perpetually present and absent; it defines their life, but not in a way that is meaningful or organic to its actual origins (which are, in this novel, hazily remembered) in any but the most superficial and exclusionary ways. Being practised "dans le sens du Sin-Féin" seems to be

most distinct aspect, a potent combination of hope and impossibility. He visualises this combination partially through the use of Papineau and Major Bellow in the hallucinatory conclusion. He also does this through an amalgamation of the Québec and Irish struggle, an amalgamation that offers his characters as much through solidarity as its costs through fragmentation, an amalgamation that seems to be natural but which history has shown requires a great deal of imagination and sometimes fantasy. Ferron's novel, like so much about both Québec and Ireland, presents a series of unresolvable contradictions, and makes it clear that it is unwise to imagine the situation any other way.

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playing off of "Sinn Féin" s popular translation as "Ourselves Alone" (seulement nous-mêmes?),⁵ and this "sens," it is safe to assume, is far from a vision of harmony or pluralism that could be reasonably expected in a republic.

The fosterage (which is a *medieval* Irish tradition), is, I believe, indicative of just how much CDA has allowed his world view to become touristic, an undercurrent of much *Irish* writing that Seamus Deane has discussed in a way that seems especially relevant here. In an essay entitled "Apocalypse and Boredom," he writes that "[o]ne of the most enduring characteristics of a postcolonial state is the presence within it of remaindered communities, formations which cannot be incorporated politically and must therefore be sustained by the life-support machine of the truistic" (164). This describes CDA's position in a sovereignty-minded Québec perfectly, he being an Anglo struggling to fit into Francophone culture and only able to do so through a half-forgotten, misunderstood and now basically touristic vision of Ireland. Despite its promises to the contrary, these little narratives, like the fosterage (which is itself a component of the narrative of violent national struggle) will never lead to a condition of sovereignty or autonomy; alienation is their logical, inevitable outcome. Further, the melancholy that the distortion of the fosterage produces seems to create a kind of tension between the old and the new, tradition and modernity, innocence and corruption. Deane cautions readers against reading the crisis of Irish modernity in such terms, however; he is aware of the pacifying use to which such a reading can be put. He writes that "there is a great deal of shadow-boxing carried on in these staged displays... it is not sufficient to call this specious combat boring; it is a combat that has boredom at its centre. Boredom is the only interesting issue that is raised by it" (165). The profound boredom that defines CDA's life, the dissatisfaction with his remaindered condition in a Québec struggling to become postcolonial, forms the core of this novel. The image of the fosterage, a leftover of a place and a period that Haffigan has no real contact with, is interesting only in the way that shows how, because of his "confusion dans la tête," all too endemic to "les Irlandais de la deuxième ou de la troisième génération québécoise," he seems to be deeply and terminally bored by the simple nationalist options (both from Ireland and Québec) available to him.

Nevertheless, it would be too simple to argue that Ferron is wallowing in the defeatist self-pity that too many Francophobic Canadian commentators believe define Québec politics. Instead, he is keenly aware of the perhaps insurmountable complexities of the separatist project, and in attempting to do justice to a movement in which he was himself central, he focuses on its

5 As many commentators have pointed out, a more exact translation of the Irish Gaelic "sinn féin" is "we ourselves" or simply "ourselves." Its common translation as "ourselves alone" has served a more polemical and exclusionary end than a linguistic one.

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La remise en question de l'autorité paternelle: Père et filles dans Shakespeare: *King Lear*, Balzac: *Le père Goriot* et Smiley: *A Thousand Acres*

Les parallèles entre le roi Lear et le père Goriot ont été remarqués tout de suite après la parution du roman de Balzac¹ et ont depuis été mentionnés et analysés fréquemment.² La différence la plus apparente entre les deux histoires est que Goriot n'a pas de troisième fille, qui ait autant d'attention pour lui que Cordelia³ pour son père, différence importante, puisque dans le drame de Shakespeare la relation Lear-Cordelia est au centre d'intérêt tandis que Gonerill et Regan jouent un rôle plutôt secondaire.

Les parallèles entre *King Lear* et *A Thousand Acres* sont encore beaucoup plus manifestes, l'œuvre de Smiley étant clairement conçue comme réécriture

1 P.e. *Le Courrier français* 15 avril 1835, cité d'après Castex, Introduction de l'édition Classiques Garnier du *Père Goriot*, 1966, XIV.

2 Entre autres Herbert J. Hunt. *Balzac's Comédie humaine* (London: Publisher, 1959); Jean A. Ducourneau. «Balzac et la paternité.» *Europe*, Janvier-février 1965, 190-202; Castex, op.cit.; P.-J. Tremewan. «Balzac et Shakespeare», *L'Année balzacienne* 1967, 259-303; Gretchen K. Besser, «Lear et Goriot: A Re-evaluation», *Orbis Litterarum* XXVII (1972), 28-36; Alexander Welch, «King Lear, Père Goriot and Nell's Grandfather», *Literary Theory and Criticism: Festschrift presented to René Wellek in Honor of his Eightieth Birthday* Part II: Criticism, Joseph P. Strelka, ed. (New York, 1984, 1405-1425); Anne-Marie Baron, «La double lignée du père Goriot ou les composantes balzaciennes de l'image paternelle», *L'année balzacienne* Nouvelle série 6 (1985), 298-311; Jeannine Guichardet. *Honoré de Balzac, Le père Goriot*, coll. Foliothèque (Paris: Gallimard, 1993); Jochen Heymann, «L'Auare IV, 7 and Goriot's Stereomorphology. Anmerkungen zur Interpretation der Figur Goriot», *Literaturwissenschaftliches Jahrbuch* 35 (1994), 215-231. D'autres articles sur l'amour paternel de Goriot: Klaus Heitmann. «Glanz und Elend des Vaters bei Balzac», Hubertus Tellenbach, ed. *Das Vaterbild im Abendland II* (Stuttgart: Publisher, 1978), 142-157; Nicole Mozet, «Goriot, pélican ou vampire?» *Magazine Littéraire* 267-268 (juillet - août 1989), 27-30.

3 Voir note 4.