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# Between bodies: (re)constructing the corps Québécois in Roch Carrier's *La guerre, yes sir!*

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BETWEEN BODIES: (RE)CONSTRUCTING THE *CORPS QUÉBÉCOIS* IN ROCH  
CARRIER'S *LA GUERRE, YES SIR!*

A Thesis  
Submitted to the Graduate Faculty of the  
Louisiana State University and  
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in partial fulfillment of the  
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in  
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by  
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For Leah,  
who has taught me about life, death, resilience, and family.

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## ABSTRACT

Published during Québec's *Révolution Tranquille*, but set during the final phase of World War II, Roch Carrier's novel *La guerre, yes sir!* (1968) chronicles how one community copes with the sober homecoming of its first "son of the village" to die in the war. The novel centers on the fallen Corriveau's repatriation to what was then considered French Canada. The body's passage from one realm, in Europe, associated with French Canada's multi-layered, quasi-colonial control, to another, in soon-to-be Quebec, associated with the province's self-definition and burgeoning sense of sovereignty, offers an allegorical commentary on the Québécois people's passage from a "colonized" to a "decolonized" people.

The introduction, "Body in Transit, Body in Transition," explores the importance of the novel's setting and its period of publication as two critical moments for the Québécois. The second chapter, "Colonizing the Body: Hurting," outlines how Carrier depicts the Québécois body as colonized, drawing on the imagery of colonial wounding evoked by writers such as Albert Memmi, Frantz Fanon, and Jean Bouthillette. It also examines the significance of Carrier's depiction of the wounded Québécois body as zombified and cannibalized, employing imagery historically associated with colonial control. Finally, the finite, linear vision of time that characterizes the initial scenes constitutes another form of wounding or "temporal trauma." The third chapter, "Decolonizing the Body: Healing," investigates how the family's reception of the repatriated body begins the healing process. Thus, the abject state of Corriveau's corpse functions not only as a source of horror, as Julia Kristeva suggests, but also epitomizes Mikhail Bakhtin's grotesque body, with all the creative potential to outgrow itself. Likewise, Corriveau's symbolic cannibalization by his community becomes a form of reappropriation, reversing the initial depiction of violent consumption. Consuming Corriveau becomes both a source of

comfort and a symbolic Eucharist that transforms Corriveau from a living-dead or zombie figure, made to labor in the service of another, to a supernatural Christ figure, capable of transcending death. The final chapter, “*Corps* and Clocks: Ticking Toward a New Time,” elaborates on the meaning of Corriveau as a “body clock” that measures the end of one era and marks the beginning of another.

## CHAPTER 1. INTRODUCTION: BODY IN TRANSIT, BODY IN TRANSITION

### 1.1 One Story, Two Historical Moments

Published in 1968, during Quebec's *Révolution Tranquille*, Roch Carrier's first and most renowned novel, *La guerre, yes sir!*, chronicles how one rural community copes with the sober homecoming of the first "son of the village" to die during World War II. On a literal level, the novel's plot centers around the transport of a character's corpse from an unspecified place of death in Europe to his place of birth in Bralington,<sup>1</sup> a fictional village in French Canada. On a symbolic level, *La guerre, yes sir!* dramatizes Quebec's struggle to regain possession of its own national body, as represented by the villagers' desire to recover physical and symbolic possession of the corpse of the fallen soldier, Corriveau. A series of metaphors concerning the body's wounding, consumption, death, and rebirth illuminate the Québécois population's crisis of consciousness concerning Quebec's status as a quasi-colonized state.

Much of the scholarship on Carrier's work has focused on his representation of the body, with particular attention devoted to Bakhtinian readings of the carnivalesque elements of the narrative. Giles Dorion (2004), for example, has written extensively about the motif of the grotesque body and the *fête populaire* at the character's wake. Ronald Bérubé (1970) has also written about the co-mingling of life and death in scenes featuring the body and the schizophrenic tendencies that result from characters' inability to exercise full control over their physical beings. Similarly, Margot Northey (1976) has examined the text's incorporation of the grotesque and concludes by reflecting on "the process of metamorphoses [ . . . ] in which the old grotesque encasements of society must be broken through, or overturned and discarded, before a

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<sup>1</sup> According to the reference book *Canadian Literary Landmarks*, the fictional town of Bralington is based on Carrier's birth village of Sainte-Justine-de-Dorchester in the Beauce region of Quebec. Carrier called it a "microcosm" that contained "all those forces which were in the French Canadian" (qtd. in Colombo 100).



new, freer being will emerge” (21). However, only Northey devotes any attention to the political implications of the images of the body. To date, little critical attention has been accorded to how images of individual bodies and the changes they undergo relate to larger historical questions about the collective Québécois body in a colonial or post-colonial context. Nevertheless, the explicit World War II backdrop for the novel’s action, and the implicit setting, in Quebec during the *Révolution Tranquille*, both mark critical, politicized periods of self-definition for the Québécois.

Although Carrier’s wartime setting is impressionistic, he provides sufficient detail to suggest a general timeframe. Canada entered World War II on September 10, 1939, following a parliamentary vote to declare war on Germany (Stacey and Hillmer 1). As the oldest dominion of the British Commonwealth at that time, Canada entered, at least nominally, as a fully independent nation one week after Great Britain’s declaration of war. This recent independence, officially granted by the Statute of Westminster in 1931, reflected a loosening of Britain’s historical colonial control of Canada, even if Canada’s “choice” to declare war remained highly circumscribed by the nation’s historical ties to Great Britain (Hillmer 1).

Carrier further narrows the time frame of *La guerre, yes sir!* to the period following the instatement of the draft in 1944, as evidenced by the character Joseph’s fear of conscription elaborated in the novel’s opening scene. The conscription issue, in this Québécois context, assumes particular importance because it divided the two Canadian populations, marking what was then referred to as “French Canada” as separate from the bloc of English-speaking Canadian provinces. When the government held a plebescite in April of 1942 soliciting popular support for the instatement of the draft, 80 percent of English Canadians voted in favor of the draft while 72.9 percent of the French Canadians opposed it, echoing a similar regional response during

World War I, at the height of the province's anti-conscription movement (Jones and Granatstein 1). Political resistance, popular opposition to the draft as reflected in the vote, and the resulting riots after the announcement of the instatement of the new conscription laws all highlighted Quebec's growing divergence from the English majority.

The second setting of *La guerre, yes sir!*, the temporal vantage point of its creation, marked a period of societal shift as well as a breaking away from the English provinces. The *Révolution Tranquille* or Quiet Revolution, was a period during the 1960s characterized by extensive modernization as well as social and political change in Quebec. A provincial ministry of education was created to reform and democratize the school system, which had formerly been under the hold of the Catholic Church. Women gained greater rights with the passing of Bill 16, which declassified married women as minors. Quebec also withdrew from several national cost-sharing programs, highlighting its position as a distinct entity (DuRocher 1). During this time, the province also sought to build its public image as culturally and linguistically separate from the rest of Canada by opening cultural centers called Maisons du Québec in London, Paris, and New York (DuRocher 1). According to a statement by the Royal Commission on Bilingualism and Biculturalism in 1965, "Canada, without being fully conscious of the fact, [was] passing through the greatest crisis in its history. The source of the crisis lies in the province of Quebec" (qtd. in DuRocher 1).

The eventual acquisition of more political and economic independence coincided with a change in appellation, as noted by Barbara Jack: "During this time, the term 'French-Canadian' which expressed a kind of double alienation, came to be replaced by the word 'Québécois,' which had formerly only been applied to citizens of Quebec City" (Jack 61). This new name effaced the timeline of historical subordination implied by "French Canadian" and the equally

problematic passage “d’une majuscule à une minuscule” in *Canadien français* (Bouthillette 18). Instead, the term “Québécois”<sup>2</sup> offered freedom from the colonial connotations that relegated French Canadians to a second-class subset of the population as well as liberation from a linguistic hierarchy that implied a similar dynamic. Writer Jean Bouthillette explains the significance of the adoption of the term “Québécois”: “[T]out a commencé dans un nom [ . . . ] un nom qui lève toute ambiguïté, un nom clair et transparent, précis et dur, un nom qui nous reconstitue concrètement dans notre souveraineté et nous réconcilie avec nous-mêmes: Québécois” (95-96). This new name articulated a heightened sense of separation from the Anglophone provinces.

The time period of Carrier’s creation also coincided with the formation of the *Parti Québécois* in 1968, a group that engaged in the sovereignty movement fueled by the Québécois’s increasing conception of themselves as a colonized people<sup>3</sup> (Jack 63). The formation of the *Parti Québécois* was also a reaction against the more extreme tactics of the *Front de Libération du Québec* (FLQ), a radical group associated with numerous acts of violence including the 1970 kidnapping of British Trade Commissioner, James Cross, and the murder of Quebec’s Labor Minister, Pierre Laporte. The FLQ’s choice of name, a clear homage to the Algerian *Front de Libération Nationale*, reflected Quebec’s growing identification with other colonized populations (Green 251). Decolonization across Africa and the publication and popular reception of works such as Frantz Fanon’s *Peau noire, masques blancs* (1952) and later *Les damnés de la terre* (1961), Aimé Césaire’s *Discours sur le colonialisme* (1956), and Albert Memmi’s *Portrait du colonisé* (1957) connected the Québécois to a larger diaspora of oppressed peoples seeking

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<sup>2</sup> Despite Bouthillette’s endorsement of the term, the indiscriminate application of “Québécois” to all French-speaking Canadians remains problematic in that it excludes and potentially marginalizes francophone Canadians who do not live in the province but who may share a similar linguistic and/or political identity.

<sup>3</sup> The post-colonial issue of *Quebec Studies* (Volume 35, 2003) offers an excellent overview of recent writing on the application of the terms “colonial” and “post-colonial” to Quebec.

political, social, and economic freedom (Jack 62). The *Parti Pris* group, affiliated with the political journal of the same name, conceived of Québécois literature within a larger, global framework of colonial writings, and “devoted entire issues to the construction of a *Portrait du colonisé québécois*, in which they adapted Memmi’s description to their own situation” (Green 251). Eventually, Québécois writers such as separatist poet Paul Chamberland, Pierre Vallières, who wrote *Nègres blancs d’Amérique* (1968), and Jean Bouthillette, who authored *Le Canadien français et son double* (1972) would produce a body of resistance literature that explicitly used the term “colonisés.”

## 1.2 Body of Work, Work on the Body: Roch Carrier’s Writing

What can we say about Roch Carrier as a writer, and specifically as a writer who dramatizes the colonial conflict? Over the course of his prolific career, Carrier has published youth literature, poetry, novels, plays, biographies, and screenplays that interrogate Québécois identity. For example, his oft-anthologized children’s story “Le chandail de hockey,” which is partially quoted on the Canadian five-dollar bill, explores the linguistic and cultural tensions between Francophone and Anglophone Canada. Originally published under the less-neutral name “Une abominable feuille d’érable sur la glace,” the story tells of the troubles that ensue when the mother of a French-Canadian boy growing up in the 1940s orders a *Montréal Canadiens* hockey jersey for her son from a large English<sup>4</sup> department store and, to the child’s horror, instead receives a hockey jersey from the rival team, the English-speaking Toronto Maple Leafs [*sic*]. Because his mother fears offending the department store owner by returning the

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<sup>4</sup> The adjective “English” often appears in Carrier’s work in reference to English-speaking Canadians who presumably descended from Quebec’s English colonizers. Sometimes, I have chosen to reproduce the language common to Carrier’s work and the writing of other Québécois authors. Other times, for clarity, I have chosen to replace “English” with the terms “English Canadian” or “Anglo Canadian” or to set it off in quotation marks.

jersey, the child must wear it to the game where he faces ostracism by his teammates and coach for his perceived turncoat behavior. While the story highlights what may be considered “universal” truths about Canadian life such as the importance of church, school, and hockey,<sup>5</sup> the crux of the story’s conflict lies in the parent and child’s subordination to a system that places them at a disadvantage and their difficulty in successfully resisting it. The fear of offending the mythical “Mr. Eaton” of Eaton’s department store prevents the mother from returning the jersey despite the store’s satisfaction-guaranteed policy. Perhaps she recognizes the return as a kind of political statement or has internalized the deference that colonial situations foster in the colonized. As a result, the child experiences deep shame and social alienation for his unwilling profession of loyalty to the oppressor’s team. This anxiety that the Québécois body will be subsumed under duress, or hidden under a veneer of “Englishness,” also becomes a clear thematic preoccupation of *La guerre, yes sir!*

Although *La guerre yes sir!* was Carrier’s first published novel, the work in many ways defies traditional assumptions about novelistic structure and stands in stark contrast to the two novels that followed it, *Floralie, ou es tu?* (1969) and *Il est par là, le soleil* (1970), which complete Carrier’s *Trilogie de l’âge sombre*. If we accept that the protagonist of a work is the character around which all action is organized or the driving force behind the plot, then the fallen soldier, Corriveau, clearly deserves this title. Yet, Corriveau dies before the novel begins. Moreover, while almost every character references him at one point, readers only directly encounter him briefly, in a flashback in the book’s final pages. Given that Carrier may be less concerned with the individual, as such, and more concerned with him as a representation or facet of the community body, this structural choice remains consistent with broader themes. Carrier

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<sup>5</sup> “Nous vivions en trois lieux: l’école, l’église et la patinoire; mais la vraie vie était sur la patinoire.” –The opening sentence of “Le Chandail de hockey” (1).

further privileges community through the narrative structure, which presents vignettes of several different families as well as a host of ancillary characters so as to create an effect of interlocking stories rather than a narrative that traces the progress of a single character. Because Corriveau signifies an absence, he becomes a *tableau* on which other characters project desires and fears, or a Rorschach test where they may read individually-important truths. Reactions to Corriveau's death also dramatize communal concerns or anxieties. One of the recurring fears he exposes is the communal anxiety that his body has been colonized or co-opted for a cause that the Québécois population vehemently rejected: first made to work in the service of a confluence of colonial and neo-colonial powers, then returned, broken and lifeless. As Dickinson affirms in *Brève Histoire Socio-Économique du Québec*, “[P]lusieurs francophones s'étaient sentis trahis par la position ambiguë de King<sup>6</sup> sur la conscription et adhérait à la rumeur publique selon laquelle les officiers anglais avaient utilisé les régiments francophones comme chair à canon” (326). Like the child in “Le chandail de hockey,” Corriveau has been ordered to wear a uniform that makes invisible his Québécois identity and defer to “English” higher-ups, but with more dire consequences.

### 1.3 Corporeal Considerations: Corriveau's Crossing

*“Si Corriveau était mort, ici, dans le village, dans son lit, cela aurait été bien triste pour un tout jeune homme. Mais il est mort dans son habit de soldat, loin du village; cela doit signifier quelque chose . . .” (La guerre, yes sir! 28)*

In the opening scenes of the novel, Carrier locates Corriveau's body in a decidedly colonial space: in Western Europe, the point of origin of all modern colonial control and the

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<sup>6</sup> William Lyon Mackenzie King was the Canadian Prime Minister who instated the draft during World War II.

geographical site of Canada's French and English colonizers. English-speaking Canadian soldiers charged with transporting the fallen soldier's corpse are in physical possession of his body. Carrier even reiterates this temporary ownership of the body when the coffin arrives at the Corriveau home covered by a British flag, as if to impose a form of loyalty to one of the historical colonizing powers and its present-day successors, English Canadians (Carrier 43). The absence of a separate name for the English Canadians also blurs the lines between past colonial powers and present neo-colonial forces. Ambiguously indiscriminate references to the Canadian soldiers as "les soldats anglais" and to the character Molly from New Brunswick as "Anglaise" linguistically conflates the two populations to suggest commonness of intent. Both the British and the English Canadians represent different incarnations of what one character terms *les gros*, or the empowered party, in the battle of "les gros et les petits" (27). This identification of multiple colonizing forces as indiscriminately *Anglais* is apparent in the following passage: "Corriveau, un petit Canadien français, fils du village, avait été tué dans une guerre que les Anglais d'Angleterre, des États-Unis, and du Canada avaient déclaré aux Allemands" (100). Presumably, *les Anglais* have been in possession of Corriveau's body from the time of his death on the battlefield in Europe, where he fought alongside Allied forces.

These French, English, and Anglophone Canadian troops each represent a separate layer of Quebec's colonial domination. *La Nouvelle France* was initially a French settler colony founded in 1603; thus, it may seem misplaced to consider the Québécois people as "colonized" considering that their ancestors originally repressed the Amerindian population. Marvin Richards explains: "Put briefly: as colonizers themselves of the 'new' world, Québécois claims to colonial victimhood are weak, even inauthentic" (134).

Yet, aspects of French neocolonial hegemonic domination persist to the present day in the form of the Québécois people's perceived linguistic and cultural inferiority in relation to their French founders. The commonly-held prejudice that Québécois French is a *patois* or bastardized form of the language often surfaces in French language textbooks, where Québécois is treated as a colorful deviation from standard French (*The Story of French* 230). In a similar, otherizing vein, it is not unusual, on French television, for speakers of Québécois French to be subtitled for French audiences<sup>7</sup> (*Sixty Million Frenchmen Can't Be Wrong* 167). The English represent another layer of colonial control that began in 1760, when France ceded the territory to Great Britain in the Treaty of Paris at the close of the Seven Years War, and continued until 1931, when Canada became independent from the Commonwealth under the Statute of Westminster.<sup>8</sup> Finally, the English Canadian soldiers signify Quebec's more contemporary position as a linguistic, religious, and cultural minority, largely outnumbered by Protestant, Anglophone Canadians. Marilyn Randall summarizes the complexities of Quebec's position in the following passage from her article "Resistance, Submission, and Oppositionality: National Identity in French Canada":

Politically, economically, and ideologically, oppositional forces to colonization, both in nineteenth and twentieth centuries, focused on British, Canadian and American domination. Culturally, however, French Canada remained a settler colony of France until well into the twentieth century. In the ongoing struggle to establish and protect a national language as central to their national identity, French Canadians have had to fight against both the assimilation forces of a dominant language and culture and the cultural inferiority complex common to settler colonies. (Randall 78)

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<sup>7</sup> To contextualize this comment, it seems important to note that it is often standard practice to subtitle any foreigner speaking French whose accent does not approximate Parisian French. Thus, this practice of subtitling may also reflect a generalized discrimination against any variety of foreign accent or of a French preoccupation with maintaining language norms.

<sup>8</sup> For additional information concerning Quebec's history, see Dickinson and Young's *Brève Histoire Socio-Économique du Québec* (2009).



Thus, while it may be problematic to consider Quebec as a colony in the strictest sense of the term, or reductive to parallel its oppression to the forms of subordination that characterized the colonial dynamic in the African colonies or the Antilles, it remains apparent that Quebec shares many similarities with countries *en situation coloniale*, including a need to defend a minority language, an internalized inferiority complex, and external pressure to assimilate into a broader culture, often as a prerequisite for material or professional success. Randall later notes that Quebec's path towards sovereignty corresponds to Frantz Fanon's three phases of revolt as outlined in *Les damnés de la terre*, including a "desire for assimilation, revalorization of indigenous culture, and active revolt" (qtd. in Randall 85). Albert Memmi, whose *Portrait du colonisé* found an enthusiastic audience among the Québécois, also defended the definition of Quebec as a colonized state. In response to the skepticism of French university students about Quebec's colonial status, Memmi underlined that the importance of the power dynamic outweighed the differences between Quebec and what might traditionally qualify as a colony, asserting: "Toute domination est relative. Toute domination est spécifique" (qtd. in Randall 78). Indeed, in the preface to the 1966 edition of *Portrait du colonisé*, Memmi notes that, in addition to its reception among the "colonisés explicites," his book has been "reconnu, revendiqué, et utilisé par d'autres hommes dominés d'une autre manière . . . les derniers en date furent les Canadiens français" (14). Marvin Richards equally defends the idea that Québec is not *less* colonized than the areas we traditionally think of as colonies, but in some ways *more* colonized insofar as it has numerous foreign forces intimately impacting its operation:

Quebec has not one but several metropolitan centers that still have enough cultural and economic capital amassed to influence the tide on the banks of the Saint Lawrence: Paris, London, Washington, and to a lesser extent today, Rome. Quebec identity was and remains unthinkable without reference to these, and constitutes, therefore, a distinctly postcolonial society, yet one with no subaltern origin to fall back on either. (136)

As Richards emphasizes, Quebec “writes back to the centre” to reference Salman Rushdie’s formula, but the center shifts from situation to situation. As a settler colony with a certain amount of economic success and with a primarily Caucasian population, Quebec upsets the easy binaries that have come to define much of the way we think about post-colonial societies.

While the posthumous protagonist of *La guerre, yes sir!* begins in the position of dominated colonial subject, he will ultimately be returned to his family home, which becomes a microcosmic site of resistance as friends and family commemorate the soldier’s life, symbolically reclaim his body, and elevate him to a more triumphal position. On a figurative level, the novel grapples with questions concerning the body’s passage from one realm, associated with colonial powers and neocolonial domination, to another, associated with self-definition and a burgeoning sense of sovereignty. Therefore, the repatriation of the body is not simply about Corriveau’s safe transit but rather about his delivery, in the broader sense of the term.

Given Carrier’s penchant for allegory, a genre that intentionally minimizes specificity of time and place in favor of archetypes and universal meaning, it is perhaps not surprising that the premise of Carrier’s novel represents a historical impossibility. The plot hinges on the repatriation of Corriveau’s body during the war. However, generally speaking, given the extraordinary expense of repatriation, immediately returning the war dead to their homelands was neither a common practice, nor an immediate one. In fact, Canada’s adherence to the British Commonwealth’s strict policy of non-repatriation, ensured that its war casualties remained on foreign soil, as explained in this passage from the official Internet site of the Commonwealth’s War Graves Commission: “[T]he Commission’s member governments agreed to ban the repatriation of remains. Apart from the logistical nightmare of returning home so many bodies,

it was felt that repatriation would conflict with the feeling of brotherhood that had developed between all ranks serving at the Front” (“History”). Surely, as the previous statement suggests, enlisted men forged bonds of brotherhood in battle that extended beyond the borders of their countries of birth. However, the Commission’s Statement promotes a strikingly colonial ideology in its emphasis on the practical effacement of origin, here coded as fraternity. While Canada’s historical affiliation with the Commonwealth complicates the notion of homeland, it is unlikely that Québécois soldiers would have considered either France or England *chez eux*.

What, then, does it mean to tell a loosely historical tale about something that never could have happened? Is Carrier’s choice to fictionally repatriate Corriveau a refusal of the “brotherhood” evoked by the War Graves Commission’s justification or of the effacement of origin implied by such a burial? Because Corriveau’s repatriation is inconsistent with historical practice, his “return home” takes on a greater symbolic significance and corrective undertone, one that allows for an optimistic imagining of another end, in which the protagonist’s body is not treated as cannon fodder, made to labor in the service of “les gros” then obliterated, ingloriously. In this alternate ending, the body, while still broken, is safely returned to the family home, imagined as whole, and symbolically reincorporated into the community body through ritual. In Carrier’s novel, the destruction and sacrifice of the individual *corps*, creates a space for the reconstruction of both the individual and community *corps*.

#### 1.4 “What means Corrlivouuw?”: Dissecting Corriveau

Given the novel’s emphasis on questions of corporality, it may first be useful to consider how the name of the fallen soldier, Corriveau, already sonically evokes the body on literal and

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<sup>9</sup> One of the soldiers transporting Corriveau’s body raises this question. The warped pronunciation of the name connotes an equally altered ability to determine the bearer’s meaning (Carrier 26).

symbolic levels. The first syllable of the soldier's name is a homonym for the word *corps*, the meanings of which are multiple. A body or *corps* is both a living body ("la partie matérielle des êtres animés") as well as a dead one ("cadavre") (*Robert Micro* 288). A *corps* can be singular ("individu, être humain") or collective ("l'ensemble de personnes appartenant à la même catégorie") (288). Finally, in a work of writing, the *corps* is the main focus ("partie principale") or the space where the meaning of a work cristallizes (288). Thus, as his name suggests, Corriveau can be understood as both a living being and a dead one, an individual and a representation of a collective identity. In the text, Corriveau's body is also the "partie principale," the privileged paper where the author inscribes and elaborates meaning.

The final syllable of Corriveau's name also lends itself to multiple readings. *Veau* is both the word for "calf" ("petit de la vache") and the name of the meat of the animal killed before reaching adulthood, emphasizing the sense of stunted growth, infantilization, and premature death inherent to the colonial situation (288). The sonic referencing of *veau* calls into question the soldier's humanity by likening him to an animal, while connoting the body's vulnerability and its potential symbolic significance as a sacrifice. As previously mentioned, *veau* can also signify the consumable bounty of the sacrificed animal, as in the Biblical story of the prodigal son<sup>10</sup> where the family welcomes home their errant child, who had "journey[ed] into a far country" and who "was dead, and is alive again," with the slaughter of a fatted calf (Luke 15: 13-

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<sup>10</sup> Luke 15:11-32. This is one of several instances where Carrier ironically establishes parallels to Biblical stories. In the Biblical parable, after a long absence, the wandering and wasteful son returns to his wealthy family after being reduced to poverty and forced to work as a servant feeding pigs (a detail which becomes relevant to Carrier's story given the continual comparisons of the villagers and Corriveau, in particular, to swine). While the son asks only to work as a servant for his father, he is welcomed with open arms and fêted for his redemption because he was "dead and is alive again; was lost and is found" (NIV Luke 15:32). While we may assume that Corriveau left because he was drafted, Carrier never confirms this detail directly. We only know that Corriveau at least expressed some desire to set off to see the world. His return, unlike the prodigal son's, is not voluntary and complicates the formula of the parable's final verse. In the most literal sense, Corriveau was alive and now is dead. In a more figurative sense, however, his death is "undone" by the villagers as they imagine him as "alive again" and, indeed, "found."

24). *Veau* also connotes the Biblical story of the golden calf<sup>11</sup> that Aaron fashioned as an idol while Moses communed with God and received the Ten Commandments on Mount Sinai. Subsequently, Moses burned the false God into a powder that he then mixed with water and forced the children of Israel to drink. In a sense, Corriveau becomes a kind of idol or “false god” because he is at times glorified in ways unbecoming to his actual character and the villagers participate in his symbolic consumption. Another iteration of the word, *se vautrer*, (“se coucher, s’étendre en prenant une position abandonnée”) also recalls the prostrate position of the dead (*Robert Micro* 1392). Finally, the name evokes two birds associated with death: the *corbeau* (crow) and *vautour* (vulture). The first foretells death, as in Poe’s “The Raven,” and the second follows it and feeds on the flesh of the dead.

Because the final syllable is also a homonym for the word *vaut*, the third-person present singular conjugation of *valoir* in the present tense, it also raises questions about the body’s value or worth: What makes up a Québécois body, individual or otherwise? What is its worth? How do we determine that worth? If the middle syllable of the soldier’s name can be understood as “y,” the French pronoun used to indicate place, Carrier offers the beginning of a response: the body’s worth often correlates to the place in which its worth is evaluated. Even if the body is not worth something *here*, it may be worth something *there*. Alternately, the perceived purpose of the body may shift from place to place (Hill et al. 2011).

The last two syllables of Corriveau’s name, when read as a pair, also offer interesting insights. Their sounds echo the words *rive* and *eau(x)*, which connote Quebec’s Saint Lawrence River and the waters of the Atlantic that Corriveau crossed to return home, as well as mythical rivers associated with “crossing over” such as the Styx. The name’s sounds also act as a reminder of water-based religious rituals such as ablution and baptism associated with death and

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<sup>11</sup> Exodus 32: 1-35

rebirth. Moreover, these “water words” accent the body’s liquidity and fluidity, which become important thematic preoccupations of the novel. The final two syllables of Corriveau’s name also contain a phonetic parallel for the word *rivaux* or rivals. While the *Anglais* and *Candiens français* of the novel battle on many fronts within the novel, they are most often body rivals (*corps rivaux*)<sup>12</sup> struggling for possession and assessment of Corriveau’s corpse as a stand-in for the Québécois body.

### 1.5 Body Drama, Body Trauma: The Wounds of Colonialism

Authors such as Césaire, Memmi, and Bouthillette repeatedly evoke the language of bodily trauma when describing the effects of colonization. In an early passage of *Discours sur le colonialisme*, Césaire details the actual physical suppression and mutilation occurring in the colonies as well as the moral *malaise* such brutality promotes in the colonizer in order to illustrate colonialism’s ravages:

[C]haque fois qu’il y a au Viêt-Nam une tête coupée et un oeil crevé et qu’en France on accepte, une fillette violée et qu’en France on accepte, un Malgache supplicié et qu’en France on accepte, il y a un acquis de la civilisation qui pèse de son poids mort, une régression universelle qui s’opère, une gangrène qui s’installe, un foyer d’infection qui s’étend . . . (11)

In examining the final lines of this passage in may be useful to think of the Corriveau household as a “foyer d’infection” where bodies come into contact and the corpse serves as a vehicle for the contagion of the colonial *malaise* his body represents (11). As Césaire suggests, physically or figuratively, colonization changes the bodies of the colonizer and the colonized, transforming each: “[L]e colonisateur [. . .] s’habitue à voir dans l’autre *la bête*, s’entraîne à le traiter *en bête*,

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<sup>12</sup> This formulation corresponds to English rather than French syntax, in which “body rivals” would be *rivaux de corps*. Yet, given the interplay of the two languages that begins with the novel’s bilingual title, it seems potentially meaningful to read the name this way.

tend objectivement à se transformer lui-même *en bête*” (18). Each is debased or “décivilisé” (11).

Memmi echoes such references to bodily wounding, in *Portrait du colonisé*, lamenting, “Ah ils ne sont pas beaux, le corps et le visage du colonisé! Ce n’est pas sans dommages que l’on subit le poids d’un tel Malheur historique” (135). At other points, Memmi likens colonization to “amputation,” arguing that it arrests development and emasculates and terming it a “maladie” (136, 161, 157). Québécois writer Jean Bouthillette employs similar language, describing Quebec’s colonial situation as a “blessure toujours ouverte” responsible for an “indicible malaise” (13). As Memmi asserts in the conclusion to *Portrait du colonisé*, “Après le diagnostic, il exige des remèdes” (155). Indeed, one of the most canonical texts of French post-colonial literature, Césaire’s *Cahier d’un retour au pays natal*, also depicts Memmi’s “diagnostic/remède” trajectory, with a descent into sickness, a form of death, and a resurgence into vitality. The interlocutor must return to his “[î]les cicatrices, to his [î]les évidences de blessures” before being assailed by a “sang neuf” and reinvigorated with “le gigantesque pouls qui bat maintenant la mesure d’un corps vivant” (56-57). Purged of “pestilences,” the narrative voice proclaims, “Nous sommes debout maintenant, mon pays et moi” (57). Carrier constructs a narrative that thematically follows a parallel path, recognizing the corporeal ravages of colonialism while also allowing for the possibility of healing or remedy.

### **1.6 Between Bodies: Getting Liminal**

What do these bodily traumas signify? More specifically, how does the movement of Corriveau’s body from its point of origin in the colonial realm to its final resting place in Quebec allow for a shifting of signification? Does Corriveau’s death also result in a rebirth? How can

we understand or “read” what happens between bodies? Carrier depicts how the colonial control of Quebec has intruded upon, maimed, dismembered or disabled the national body. Coupled with such physical wounding is colonization’s psychological damage. According to Carrier’s depiction, Quebec’s quasi-colonial situation has also objectified, infantilized, effeminized, mechanized, zombified, and consumed the Québécois body.

Yet, Carrier also demonstrates the usefulness of such wounds in the making of meaning between bodies: Corriveau’s death allows the community to confront its colonial situation, begin to decolonize the body, and ultimately use the death as a catalyst for resistance. Moreover, Carrier demonstrates how a form of death and rebirth are necessary for both the colonizer and the colonized in order for the liberation process to reach completion. Corriveau, himself, is a liminal figure, or what I will term a “between body.” On a literal level, he is passed between groups, from the English Canadians to the French Canadians. Moreover, Corriveau epitomizes “betweenness” in the sense that, while he is French Canadian, he, like the character Bérubé, lived and worked amongst *les Anglais*, and his body eventually becomes a point of contact between the two groups. Furthermore, while Corriveau is dead and in a state of physical decomposition, he has not yet been buried, and indeed, is often imagined as a living being during the wake, floating between worlds. Contact with Corriveau’s body prompts other forms of decomposition in the mourners. The numerous references to wounds and emission of bodily fluids cause the villagers’ bodies to seemingly decompose in tandem with Corriveau’s. It is as if a collective corpse must be buried in order for a new Québécois body to be unearthed.



## CHAPTER 2: COLONIZING THE BODY: HURTING

### 2.1 Broken Bodies, Broken Spirits

Bloodshed begins the book. Within the first paragraph, Joseph, one of the Québécois characters who could potentially be drafted, places his left hand on a log and, deft and decisive, chops it off with an ax. It is perhaps not entirely coincidental that Joseph inflicts damage on this particular body part given that on April 24, 1942, Canadian Prime Minister William Lyon Mackenzie King addressed the populace via radio the night before the plebescite and urged them to approve the draft and “give the government a free hand” (“Prime Minister King”). In the context of the impending draft and with his new knowledge of Corriveau’s death, self-mutilation becomes a protective act, a signifier of self-determination as well as a parodic refusal of King’s request. Joseph’s self-mutilation is an anticipatory form of violence predicated on the assumption that, like Corriveau’s, his own body will be more seriously mutilated in the absence of his own intervention. In the scene of his self-mutilation, Joseph is subject and object, executioner and witness, emphasizing the extent to which the colonial situation contributes to a kind of disconnect from the body. As Carrier reiterates, Joseph, like many colonial subjects, recognizes that, in a colonial dynamic, one’s body is never entirely one’s own:

Joseph étendit les cinq doigts de sa main gauche sur la bûche.  
Il entendit une respiration derrière lui. Il se retourna. C’était la sienne [ . . . ] Quand la hache trancha l’os, Joseph ne ressentit qu’une caresse chaude [ . . . ] Joseph éclata d’un grand rire qu’il entendit monter très haut, dans l’espace, au-dessus de la neige. Il ne s’était jamais autant amusé depuis le début de la guerre. (Carrier 10)

As the description of Joseph hearing his own breathing suggests, this vision of himself as a victim, unable to exercise agency over his body, causes an inner schism, making him seem disconnected from his body even before he performs the mutilation. His infliction of bodily trauma, while bringing him some form of questionable pleasure as revealed by his laughter and

the mention of a “caresse chaude,” also literalizes the bodily schism through the severing of his hand from his body. Of course, this implausible depiction of trauma also fits into Carrier’s broader tendency towards hyperbole and the absurd. Joseph sees his body as already potentially co-opted by the Canadian government and by extension the British Commonwealth, thus already metaphorically *handicapped* or limited in ability. He simply actualizes this feeling.

As a result of this wounding process associated with Quebec’s colonial situation, the body suffers additional devaluation and objectification: Joseph leaves the severed hand in the snow, where it will be later claimed as a hockey puck for a group of children. Like Joseph’s abandoned hand, Quebec is a stray part of the larger Anglo-Canadian body, in many ways already detached and devalued. Carrier presents additional confirmation of this image of the devalued colonial body when Joseph’s wife tosses the battered hand to the dog to presumably gobble it up.<sup>13</sup>

Joseph also recognizes the self-wounding as a form of self-inflicted castration, situating him within a larger understanding of colonial practices as emasculating. During a tirade against the Germans in a conversation with his wife shortly after the opening scene, Joseph fantasizes about subjecting the Germans to a comparable but more explicit emasculation: “Je leur couperai le zizou, s’ils en ont un. Je le leur couperai comme j’ai coupé ma main” (33). In addition to being one of the Allies’ World War II adversaries, Germany represents another face of “les gros,<sup>14</sup>” a former colonial power that still shared much with its wartime opponents, each capable of crushing the Québécois *petits* and engaging the Québécois populace in a war against their will.

Madame Joseph confirms this image of the shattered, impotent Québécois body when she

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<sup>13</sup> See Matthew 15: 21-29

<sup>14</sup> This telescoping of “les gros,” is a formula used again in the final stanzas of Michèle LaLonde’s political poem-poster “Speak White,” (1974) where the poet evokes a range of oppressors and their victims to suggest that whether in Vietnam or Little Rock or Algiers or Nazi Germany, oppression anywhere has a kind of sameness.

learns of Joseph's self-inflicted wound, berating her husband for what *he* perceives as an exercise of agency and interpreting it instead as a show of cowardice, saying, "Un homme qui n'a pas le courage d'aller faire la guerre pour protéger son pays, ce n'est pas un homme. Toi, tu te laisserais écraser par la botte des Allemands. Tu n'es pas un homme. Je me demande avec quoi je couche" (34). In her final criticism, Madame Joseph seems to suggest that Joseph's resistance to involvement has reduced him to an animal (*veau*) or object, making him worthless or subhuman. In another scene, Madame Joseph once more depicts the bodily wounding as translating into a kind of impotence, despite the fact that no biological connection exists between Joseph's virility and his missing hand. Nevertheless, the mutilated hand becomes a stand-in for a non-functioning phallus in the final line of the passage:

Madame Joseph revenait chez elle. Elle ne pouvait plus supporter seule la douleur d'être devenue l'épouse d'un homme qui avait coupé lui-même sa propre main, d'un coup de hache. Elle était allée raconter ce malheur à ses voisines. "La vie est pénible," avait-elle dit, les larmes aux yeux, "vous mariez un homme et vous vous apercevez que vous couchez avec un infirme. Dans mon lit, qu'est-ce que mon Joseph va faire avec son moignon?" (30)

Part of her discontent may stem from the fact that his identity (or perceived identity) partially circumscribes hers. Dubbed simply "Madame Joseph," and fearful of her status as "l'épouse d'un homme qui avait coupé lui-même la main," she understands her own body as an extension of his body, colonized in some sense by patriarchy (30). Thus, from her perspective, Joseph's choice mutually wounds them, as if her body's meaning is contingent on his in the same way that his body's meaning is contingent on the English Canadian body. Other villagers also see the wound as more defining than the rest of Joseph's (able) body and reduce his identity to his injury during the wake. They call him "Joseph-la-main-coupée" and "la-main-coupée," as if the injured member surpassed in importance the otherwise intact body (106). Joseph's body thus becomes an example of Bouthillette's "blessure toujours ouverte" (13).

As established in the previous passages, the wounded body is often perceived as an emasculated or effeminized body. Joshua Goldstein writes in his extensive study of war and gender that castration is a common wartime practice and falls along a larger spectrum of activities designed to feminize the enemy's body including anal rape, imposed cross-dressing, and insults implying "softness" (357-358). Carrier also plays on this dichotomy of soft and hard bodies by continually calling attention to the vulnerability of the French-Canadian body through scenes of injury, even if few injuries approach the severity of Joseph's. Philibert and Arsène suffer physical humiliation at the hands of other characters; Bérubé, Arthur, Arsène, and almost all of the villagers who participate in the final uprising bleed profusely; and Anthyme, Bérubé, and Philibert cry publicly. Indeed, Bérubé's description of his own tears reveals that they signify a castration of the spirit. After the English sergeant corrects him in front of the other villagers at the moment when Bérubé is attempting to reassert his virility by "disciplining" his wife via physical abuse, Bérubé "pleurait d'impuissance" (53).

Goldstein affirms the notion that, because a long and thorough socialization process usually "corrects" Western men who cry in response to physical or emotional pain, the act often marks a moment of great trauma. Moreover, because of the act's gendered connotations, it can destabilize the identity of the man shedding tears, causing him to perceive himself as weak or "soft":

Crying seems to be a central taboo for hardened men [ . . . ] For a grown man to cry implies [n]ot only the pain of all he endured becoming in one moment no longer endurable, but the shattering, at the same moment, of a sheltering, encircling notion of who he was, a strong man, a protector. (Goldstein 268)

As Goldstein reiterates, crying is unthinkable for "hardened men," an assertion corroborated in the novel by the fact the English soldiers never shed tears, even for their own fallen soldier. At Corriveau's funeral, the Québécois continue to be characterized by their profusion of tears and a

general sense of bodily liquidity whereas the English remain solidly stoic: “Seuls les soldats avaient les yeux secs” (123). These contrary depictions humanize the French Canadian males in contrast to the somewhat robotic English Canadian soldiers. Nonetheless, the descriptions of soft bodies also function to emphasize the Québécois body’s sensitivity to wounding. While potentially evoking sympathy, this vulnerability also highlights the body’s ability to be perceived as weak, childlike, and feminine.

If descriptions of “softness” enfeeble, infantilize, and effeminize the French Canadian male bodies, contrary descriptions of “hardness” render the “English” soldiers strong, adult, hyper-virile counterparts<sup>15</sup>. They remain armed and at attention for the entire night, their bodily rigidity implying perpetual erection, as insinuated by the village women who desirously admire them: “Qu’ils étaient beaux, ces Anglais [ . . . ] Il n’était pas humain de rester toute la nuit figés, raides, immobiles” (60). In contrast, the villager Amélie’s mention of Corriveau in an intimate scene with Arthur, results in a “sexe pacifique” (19). The earlier description of the English also likens Corriveau’s “figé, raide, immobile” body to the English soldiers’ bodies because, as one woman remarks of the soldiers’ stiff stance, “Ce n’est pas une position quand on est vivant” (60). In a sense, it is as if Corriveau’s dead body has infected the bodies of the soldiers, deadening them as well. Although Corriveau may be a “hard body” in his post-rigor mortis, pre-decomposition state, and in his assumed war glory,<sup>16</sup> as one man reiterates, Corriveau’s bodily transformation is also accompanied by emasculation. When reflecting on Corriveau’s sizable sum of sexual conquests, one man concludes, “Mais il ne se lèvera plus,” in a double entendre

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<sup>15</sup> Neither Goldstein nor Carrier explores how questions of sexuality can complicate perceptions of virility. One of Carrier’s characters does, however, make a passing reference to seeing two “hommes sessuels” walking together in town with a baby carriage in the context of a discussion of how working in town instead of in the fields makes one soft (57). The villager’s comment seems to illustrate how perceptions of “softness” or “hardness” are sometimes generalized into potentially-erroneous assumptions about sexuality.

<sup>16</sup> A scene in the final pages clarifies that Corriveau died while relieving himself on his first day at the front when a landmine exploded (120-121).

that equates Corriveau's death with impotence, and adds him to the list of other Québécois characters such as Henri, Arthur, Joseph, and Bérubé who are at one point depicted as symbolically or actually impotent.

The wounds inflicted on the Québécois body through Corriveau's death are both physical and spiritual and have collective repercussions. Corriveau's father, Anthyme, articulates his feeling of injury by comparing himself to an amputee, saying, "Avoir perdu mon garçon me fait autant souffrir que si l'on m'avait arraché les deux bras" (100). He then proceeds to emphasize that the wound he suffers in losing his son implicates the entire community: "Nous nous connaissons tous. Nous avons la même vie; nous élevons nos enfants ensemble. Mon fils est aussi le fils de tout le village" (103). The fact that "Corriveau" is the only last name mentioned in the novel aside from "Bérubé"<sup>17</sup> paired with the fact that the bulk of the action occurs in the Corriveau home contributes to this vision of the village as a large, extended family. This image of the collective body also has liturgical connotations insofar as members of the Church become part of the many-membered "body of Christ." In either case, an injury to the individual body is an attack on the collective body. Thus, when the English soldiers determine that the Québécois mourners have grown too unruly and expel them from the Corriveau household, the Québécois experience this external control over their bodies as if it were a physical injury: "L'humiliation leur faisait mal comme une blessure physique" (93).

The characters of Henri, and to a lesser extent, Arthur, offer other examples of the emasculated Québécois body. Upon returning home on leave, Henri learns that his wife has taken in a deserter who usurps his position in the bedroom, impregnates his wife with twins, then after their birth, impregnates her once more. Arthur has supplanted Henri's role as father of

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<sup>17</sup> Given that Bérubé has left the village and is somewhat otherized by his assimilation into the Anglo-Canadian body, it seems appropriate that Carrier would distinguish him from the others in this way. This appellation by last name also helps to establish Corriveau as a doppelgänger for Bérubé.

Henri's children, making Henri an intruder in his own home. Relegated to living in the attic, Henri must take turns with Arthur to have the privilege of sleeping with his own wife, who claims that she and their children had all begun to forget him. Henri becomes superfluous and effaceable, as Amélie suggests when she asserts that she "ne peu[t] pas toujours savoir de qui c'est le tour [ . . . ] si hier c'était Henri avec [elle] ou si c'était Arthur" (15). Amélie's ability to forget Henri and her nonchalance about keeping track of her bedmates reinforce Henri's fears of anonymity and substitutability. In his own home, in his bedroom, he is no more individualized than on the battlefield, where men kill and are killed indiscriminately (23). The prostitute from Newfoundland, Molly, who has slept with presumably many more men than Amélie, describes her short-term companions as similarly indeterminate: "Plusieurs revenaient dans son lit. Parfois elle les reconnaissait" (82). This substitutability kills off Henri's identity, making his body disposable because it is replaceable.

Deprived of his ability to uniquely command his wife's desire and reduced to a sort of concubine, Henri's home and his wife become an occupied space, just another battle where he is losing ground, as elaborated in his reflections: "Toutes les nuits, il était torturé par cette même idée: sa femme n'était plus la sienne, sa maison n'était plus la sienne, ni ses animaux, ni ses enfants qui tous appelaient Arthur: papa" (96). As Henri's perpetual return to the language of possession suggests, much of his identity as a man has been constructed around assumptions of ownership and the belief that he is the head of his household. Henri's situation now shares some commonalities with the fate of a prisoner of war: he resides in the drafty and physically confined space of the attic, afraid to leave the house for fear of discovery as a deserter, and pressured to respond to his wife's orders to have sex at her whim, even when Henri protests he is not "toujours prêt" (42). Although Henri directly attributes some of his household woes to Arthur, it

is perhaps a fairer assessment to see both men as victims of the Canadian government's co-opting of their bodies in a draft French Canada opposed. Henri's homelife also functions as another variation on the colonial occupation of the Corriveau home that occurs when the soldiers deliver Corriveau's coffin, then remain on duty throughout the wake as "peace keeping forces," microcosmically and at times hyperbolically reproducing the colonial power dynamic in Quebec. The presence of the soldiers literalizes the hierarchy of colonial control and the government's intrusive supervision of the most private moments. As Fanon writes, "Aux colonies, l'interlocuteur valable et institutionnel du colonisé, le porte-parole du colon et du régime d'oppression est le gendarme ou le soldat" (*Les damnés de la terre* 41). Of course Henri's home occupations differs in that Arthur is also Québécois. Nevertheless, because both men must hide from *les Anglais* who can return at any moment to reclaim Arthur and Henri's bodies, each man is enfeebled.

The soldiers' entry into the Corriveau home acts as another form of wounding, a symbolic collective rape effected by the soldiers during which Corriveau's coffin becomes an appropriated extension of the masculinized English Canadian body. The soldiers arrive carrying the coffin and try to force entry through the narrow doorway, even though Corriveau's parents loudly protest and see the clumsy shoving as a violation of their son's body and, implicitly, their own. Yet, in entering the Corriveau home in a way that disturbs its owners, who reproach the soldiers "de balancer [Corriveau] comme ça," *les Anglais* symbolically claim the space as their own (45). The description of the soldiers' entry underlines both the tactical calculation of colonial control paired with a more visceral brand of brute domination.

La porte était étroite. Il ne fut pas facile d'introduire le cercueil dans la maison [ . . . ] la porte de la petite maison Corriveau n'était pas faite pour qu'y passe un cercueil. Les porteurs le déposèrent dans la neige, calculèrent dans quel angle il pourrait passer, étudièrent de quelle manière ils devaient se placer autour, discutèrent, finalement le



Sergent donna un ordre, ils reprirent le cercueil, c'était lourd, ils s'inclinèrent, ils se placèrent presque sur le cant, ils se firent le plus mince possible et ils réussirent à entrer, hors d'haleine, épuisés. (44-45)

As Betty Reardon explains, rape, the “‘ultimate metaphor for the war system’ [ . . . ] genders the victor as male and the vanquished as female and humiliates males by despoiling their valued property [and] establishing jurisdiction and conquest” (qtd. in Goldstein 371, 262). It seems clear that rape also serves as the ultimate metaphor for the colonial system as well, in which the colonized and the colonized land, itself, are often feminized. Ann Stoler elaborates on how the same metaphor of sexual domination has been used in Edward Said’s work to describe colonial power dynamics:

In colonial scholarship [ . . . ] sexual domination has figured as a social metaphor of European supremacy. Thus, in Edward Said’s treatment of orientalist discourse, the sexual submission and possession of Oriental women by European men “stands for the pattern of relative strength between East and West” (1976:6). In this “male power fantasy,” the Orient is penetrated, silenced and possessed (ibid: 207). Sexuality illustrates the iconography of rule, not in pragmatics; sexual assemtries are tropes to depict other centers of power.” (635)

While the East/West geographical binary does not apply to the situation in Quebec, the gendered associations of colonial control, and the depiction of the disempowered party as “penetrated, silenced, and possessed” find a useful parallel in the occupation of the Corriveau home.

Although it may seem strange to think of the boisterous villagers as “silenced,” Carrier does depict them as unheard when the soldiers do not respond to the parents’ requests until Molly intercedes as an interpreter.

The brutal entry becomes more disturbing because Corriveau functions as the violating force. He becomes an extension of the “English” body, capable of harming his own people and apt to feel foreign in his own land, as Mère Corriveau suggests when she instructs the soldiers to lay the coffin at his place at the dining room table with the logic, “Comme cela, il se sentira

moins dépaysé” (45). Bérubé will later become a living equivalent of Corriveau as violating force in the final battle in which Bérubé fights on the side of the English.

In another scene, Carrier also reiterates that gaining control over territory almost always implies exerting more violent control over the female body in the form of rape. In one father-son conversation about the horrors of war, Arsène evokes sexual violation as one way that men dominate the women of invaded territory and by extension assert dominance over the land and all of its inhabitants:

Les Allemands mettent des femmes sur des croix. [ . . . ] Les femmes sont des femmes mais les croix ne sont pas des croix. Les croix, ce sont des lits. [ . . . ] Les Allemands passent l’un après l’autre sur la femme attachée au lit et abusent d’elle jusqu’à ce qu’elle meure. (23)

In this vision of rape, as in the soldiers’ collective forcing of the coffin through the narrow passage of the doorway, a group of men engage in the violation and use it as a way to establish dominance over a people. The equation, in the previous passage, of death as the eventual consequence of the body being under someone else’s control, through rape or colonial invasion, returns in a comment Mère Corriveau makes to the soldiers as they attempt to leave the house with the coffin: “C’est notre mort à nous” (46). Her comment reinforces the sense that the two camps are struggling for control over Corriveau’s body (“He’s our dead person.”) while also associating the invasion with the deprivation of life (“It’s our death.”)

## 2.2 Consumable Bodies: Swallowed Up

“I’m dead hungry” English soldier, as he carries Corriveau (*La guerre, yes sir!* 35)

The opening scene with Joseph introduces another aspect of the wounding of the Québécois body: the fear that the body will be consumed by Anglo-Canadians. Joseph fears

consumption by an outside force, commonly called “exocannibalism,” or “warfare cannibalism.” Anthropologist Beth Conklin defines exocannibalism as “eating social outsiders” and specifies that predatory tendencies, hostility, and hatred for the prey mark such practices (Conklin xxvi). Thus, in this form of cannibalism, the act serves as a way to establish dominance over or defile the dead body of an enemy. According to Katherine Biber, who writes on the intersection of cannibalism and colonialism in the law, “Cannibal discourse discloses the enduring sensation of corporeal vulnerability that accompanied colonial encounters” (637). Often, in such encounters, accusations of cannibalism have been a way to “otherize” the native population and use its supposed savagery as a justification for the imposition of a *mission civilatrice*.<sup>18</sup> As Ashcroft, Griffiths, and Tiffen have written, the concept of cannibalism and the term, itself, is of particular importance to post-colonial studies and has been crucial in maintaining the “separation of the ‘civilized’ and the ‘savage’, and [ . . . ] in cementing this distinction” (*Post-Colonial Studies* 26).

Carrier reverses these categories of “civilized” and “savage” in the initial scenes, when Carrier depicts the Anglo-Canadians as the cannibalizing force. As an explanation of his self-mutilation, Joseph offers a justification that emphasizes this fear of consumption: “Leurs Christ d’obus auraient fait de la confiture avec moi . . . Avec leur maudite guerre, ils ont fait de la confiture avec Corriveau . . . Ils ne m’auront pas . . . la confiture, c’est moi qui la ferai, l’automne prochain: des fraises, des bleuets, des groseilles, des pommes rouges, des framboises” (10). Rather than being physically annihilated, reduced to *confiture* and consumed, Joseph will instead create *confiture* that *he* can consume. In another scene, Bérubé also references the likening of a crushed body to berries, describing a wounded face as a “fraise des champs écrasée,” again

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<sup>18</sup> Jeff Berglund’s *Cannibal Fictions: American Explorations of Colonialism, Race, Gender, and Sexuality* (2006) provides an excellent analysis of how the origin of the word “cannibal” is linked to Columbus’s questionable application of it to the Carib Indians in the first act of European colonialism in the New World.

underlining the anxiety not only about wounding but about the victor feeding on the vanquished or profiting from his *déconfiture* (79). Joseph evokes similarly cannibalistic imagery when his wife retrieves the hand from a group of rambunctious village youths, and Joseph dismisses her finding with the words “Que veux-tu faire de ma main? De la soupe?” (33) As previously mentioned, the dog ultimately consumes Joseph’s hand, reiterating the idea of the consumable, devalued Québécois body.

Joseph’s fear that Corriveau has been turned into implicitly edible *confiture* appears justified in a later scene when the soldier’s coffin is transported via train with primarily Anglophone alimentation including “Eaton's Klark's Beans [and] William Scotch” (26). This authorial choice emphasizes that the fear is not only one of being consumed but of being consumed and incorporated into a foreign, Anglo-Canadian body. Partnering Corriveau’s body with objects likens it to a consumable good lost amidst other food products. From an Anglo-Canadian perspective, Carrier suggests, Corriveau is essentially “dead meat,” of no more value than the cans and bottles that surround him.

Imagining one’s enemies as desecrators and consumers of the body is a common practice in the context of war. In one dinnertime explanation of good and evil, us and them, the character Arthur applies a parallel depiction to the Germans, who, according to his story, use the dismembered bodies of children for dog food: “[Les Allemands] découpaient les petits enfants en morceaux pour nourrir leurs chiens” (14). Our voracious enemies, the ones who, like the English soldiers, are “dead hungry,” consume the innocent bodies of their prey, the story implies. In the act of warfare cannibalism as in the act of rape (attributed to the Germans in an earlier scene), the body is not inherently sacred or worthy of respect, but rather a means to an end, a way for another to fill a physical need, indiscriminately. Although Corriveau is fighting the Germans

alongside the Anglophone Canadians, both are depicted as foreign forces, *les gros* who seek to destroy or defile the vulnerable bodies of *les petits*.

### 2.3 Zombified Bodies: Relinquished Agency

“Un soldat ne fait rien, ne pète même pas sans un ordre.” *La guerre, yes sir!* (24)

While mentions of cannibalism attest to Québécois fears of consumption by the “English,” or *les gros* more generally, what is perhaps more frightening than the consumption of the body is the figurative consumption of the brain. A “good” colonial subject must be deprived of agency, rendering him a kind of zombie: that is, someone who appears to be a living, thinking being but who has fully internalized this subservient role in the colonial power structure. Often associated with the rise of capitalism and colonial control, the figure of the zombie haunts post-colonial literature. He or she is a mute subject, suitable for exploitative labor in “the industrial age in which the ecological conditions of production, its consuming passions, ate up the bodies of producers” (Comaroff and Comaroff 780). Dr. Kyle Bishop, who writes about the zombie figure in film and popular culture, emphasizes that the zombie figure is a creation often geographically tied to the Americas and inextricably linked to exploitative labor practices. For Bishop, the zombie is “born from imperialism [and] slavery” (39). One definition of zombies, offered by South Africa’s Commission of Inquiry into Witchcraft Violence and Ritual Murders in 1995 highlights this critical characteristic of zombies as subjugated, non-thinking beings: “[A zombie is] a person believed to have died but because of the power of a witch . . . is resurrected . . . [and] works for the person who has turned him into a zombie” (qtd. in Comaroff and Comaroff 787). While the death mentioned in the Commission’s Inquiry can be read as a literal

one (and is perceived as such in areas where voodoo is practiced), the death can also be symbolic: a dying off of the subject's desires and identity.

In fact, Jean-Paul Sartre's preface to Frantz Fanon's *Les damnés de la terre* evokes a more metaphorical image of the zombie to describe how the colonial structure dehumanizes both the colonizer and colonized. In a passage addressed to the French colonizer, Sartre describes how, in the course of a generation, the colonized have begun to shrug off the old colonial yoke that deadened them and reverse the power dynamic:

[L]es pères, créatures de l'ombre, vos créatures, c'étaient des âmes mortes, vous leur dispensiez la lumière, ils ne s'adressaient qu'à vous, et vous ne preniez pas la peine de répondre à ces zombies. Les fils vous ignorent: un feu les éclaire et les réchauffe, qui n'est pas le vôtre. Vous, à distance respectueuse, vous vous sentirez furtifs, nocturnes, transis: chacun son tour; dans ces ténèbres d'où va surgir une autre aurore, les zombies, c'est vous. (22)

In Sartre's reading, the colonial ownership and dependence implied by "vos créatures" transformed the colonial subjects into "âmes mortes" or "zombies" presumed incapable of independent thought. Yet, as the first stirrings of decolonization swept across the globe, a new generation of colonial subjects began to reject this role of submission and the colonizers confronted how their role had also "decivilized" them, as Césaire wrote, or zombified them, as Sartre suggests. The interplay of heat and cold in Sartre's image aligns with Carrier's descriptions of the kitchen-centered Corriveau home, heated by the oven and emanating emotional warmth as well, juxtaposed with the presence of the soldiers who remain coldly composed and distanced the mourners as they eat, drink, and reminisce (22).

In the Canadian context, the word "zombie" not only connotes the living-dead figure or colonized body, but also the World War II conscript. According to the *Oxford English Dictionary*, "zombie" was Canadian military slang, as noted in the following entry for the word: "in the war of 1935-1944, an opprobrious nickname applied to men conscripted for home

defense”<sup>19</sup> (“Zombie”). The dictionary’s subsequent entries detailing the word’s pejorative usage over time reiterate that these “zombie” soldiers were reluctant participants perceived as “impotent spirits,” and an underclass of soldiers when compared with volunteer forces. Although Carrier never explicitly states whether or not either Corriveau or Bérubé were conscripted, each seems to be an undervalued member of the military and at least partially stripped of selfhood.

Indeed, Corriveau’s community may fear that their fallen *filz du village* has been deprived of agency before his actual death in part because Bérubé provides a living example of this loss of agency or zombification. Due to Bérubé’s rank, he must submit to the commanding officer while in the Corriveau home, and externally, little differentiates Bérubé from *les Anglais*. He wears the same uniform, travels with them as they deliver the coffin, speaks English, marries an English Canadian woman, and even fights on their side in the revolt that breaks out between the villagers and the soldiers in the final scenes. The villagers confirm this image of Bérubé as a “living dead” figure, fully Anglicized and lacking the will to resist, claiming, “Bérubé était devenu pour eux un Anglais. Il n’avait pas le droit de prier pour Corriveau” (110). However, as Homi K. Bhabha writes, the principle around which colonial mimicry is organized is ambivalence, a sense of “almost the same, but not quite” that always allows for enough slippage

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<sup>19</sup> 3. *Canad. Mil. slang*. In the war of 1939–45, an opprobrious nickname applied to men conscripted for home defence. 1943 *Daily Express* 16 Sept. 4/1 The Canadian Government is reducing its ‘Home Guard’ army... These troops were jocularly dubbed ‘Zombies’, after the Voodoo cult which insists that dead men can be made to walk and act as if they were alive. 1946 R. Allen *Home Made Banners* xiii. 163 My old man says Quebec or no Quebec they’ll have to send the Zombies over. 1953 D. M. Le Bourdais *Nation of North* 245 The first men were drafted for service. Contemptuously referred to as ‘zombies’, they were never taken seriously by the military authorities. 1963, W. L. Morton *Kingdom of Canada* 481 A nasty distinction arose between the volunteers for service overseas and the conscripts for home defence, who were given the pungent nickname of ‘zombie’, a West Indian word for impotent spirits. 1978 *Daily Colonist* (Victoria, Brit. Columbia) 1 July (Mag. section) 12/1 When the Canadian Army was struggling on the Western Front in the early winter of 1944 and there was an urgent call for reinforcements, yet, in the military camps in Vernon and Terrace the Zombies mutinied when orders came for their movement overseas.

to distinguish the colonized body from the colonizer's (*The Location of Culture* 86). Therefore, when Bérubé begins verbally and physically attacking his wife, Molly, during the wake, one of the officers interrupts the marital dispute, clarifying that Bérubé is not equal to the other soldiers, but instead subject to orders. The instinctual nature of Bérubé's response reflects the extent to which his body has been colonized or "zombified":

Atten . . . tion !!! tonna la voix gutturale du Sergent.  
Bérubé se mit au garde-à-vous. Ses deux talons étaient collés l'un contre l'autre en claquant; Bérubé n'était plus qu'une pelote de muscles obéissants. Le Sergent qui avait aboyé marcha vers Bérubé, lui enfonçant un regard d'acier dans les yeux. Bérubé attendait les coups. Le Sergent, à deux pas de Bérubé, lui envoyait sa respiration dans le visage. Bérubé avait l'impression que ses yeux fondaient et dégoulaient sur ses joues. En réalité, il pleurait. (53)

The sergeant zombifies Bérubé by "pulling rank" and rendering him unable to make choices (albeit dubious ones) about how to conduct himself in what would normally be considered a private relationship. While Bérubé's violence toward Molly begs correction, the sergeant's intervention does not simply protect Molly, it also clarifies that a French Canadian body does not have the right to exercise control over an English Canadian body, especially publically. The scene also serves to emasculate Bérubé by disempowering him in front of his wife, which is significant in that, according to that analysis of in the figure of the zombie in Comaroff and Comaroff, "Victims are neutered by being reduced to pure labor power" (788). In the zombification of a colonial subject, the body must be fully transformed into a tool rather than a site or source for pleasure.

The feeling of not being able to control his own body seems to push Bérubé to engage in another form of mimicry and inflict a parallel humiliation on the character Arsène. After hearing Arsène disparage the soldiers who, according to him, "lancent des petits coups de fusil" after which they "se cachent aussitôt" and then "pissent dans leurs culottes de peur," Bérubé subjects



Arsène to a parodic version of basic training in front of all of the mourners (77).

Je vais faire un homme de toi. En avant, marche!  
Bérubé le poussa, le bouscula vers le miroir accroché au mur de la cuisine [ . . . ]  
Bérubé aplatit la figure d'Arsène contre le miroir:  
-On s'amuse à la guerre, n'est-ce pas? C'est drôle un homme qui a le visage en sang,  
[ . . . ] Ris! il n'y a rien de plus drôle que la guerre! (79)

In a scene that ventures into the realm of the absurd, Bérubé continues to command Arsène to laugh about the war, essentially asking him to ignore or repress an instinctive understanding that war prompts no humor until his trainee is able to produce a satisfactorily convincing chuckle. Bérubé then asks Arsène to look in the mirror and say what he sees: the trainee's initial response is "Je me vois," indicating that he recognizes the image reflected back to him as his own. Bérubé rejects Arsène's neutral self-assessment with the words: "Tu vois un gros tas de merde. Regarde bien" (79). After more verbal and physical aggression, Arsène still does not submit, simply stating, "Je vois Arsène," and later "Je me vois." It is not until Bérubé pulls back his fist, aimed at Arsène, whose face is still pressed against the mirror that Arsène succumbs and rather than seeing his own face offers that he instead sees reflected back to him "un tas de merde"<sup>20</sup> (79-80). Bérubé congratulates him with the words, "Tu es un bon soldat déjà" (80). As this scene reveals, the conditions of being "un bon soldat" mirror the conditions of being a good, zombie-like colonial subject. Each must be stripped of selfhood, denying instincts when they conflict with orders, and willing to accept whatever vision of self the colonizer imposes.

The resulting image of self is a funhouse mirror reflection, malformed by what African American writer W.E.B. DuBois termed "double consciousness," a "second sight [that] yields [ . . . ] no true self-consciousness [ . . . ] always looking at one's self through the eyes of others, of measuring one's soul by the tape of a world that looks on in amused contempt and pity" (2).

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<sup>20</sup> Both Bérubé and Corriveau are associated with excrement as a result of their military involvement: Bérubé's job is to clean toilets, and Corriveau dies near the toilets.

Although DuBois wrote about race, his ideas of double consciousness could be easily applied to the colonized. As LaLonde's "Speak White" and Vallière's *Nègres Blancs de l'Amérique* attest, Québécois authors of the period often paralleled racial and colonial oppression in their writing. Bérubé's situation as a soldier who takes orders from *les Anglais* and experiences the residual humiliation of viewing himself through the eyes of those who may simply see "un tas de merde" serves as a reflection in miniature of Quebec's colonial situation.

## 2.4 Mechanized Bodies: Temporal Trauma

A final form of wounding that the Québécois body undergoes relates to time. Modernization and a shift towards a life organized around industry rather than agriculture characterized the period between World War II and the *Révolution Tranquille*. As historian Claude Bélanger's summary of the changes of the Quiet Revolution accentuates, people often conceptualized these societal shifts in terms of time. This period of flux, as characterized by Bélanger, marked the passage from a more "outdated" mode of life characterized by tradition, rurality, Catholic beliefs, and the centrality of the family to a more "updated" lockstep clock in which "values associated with the past" were "rapidly reversed" ("Quiet Revolution"). Bélanger writes:

Quebec entered resolutely into a phase of modernisation: its outlook became more secular (as opposed to religious), much of the traditionalism that characterised the past was replaced by increasingly liberal attitudes; long standing demographic tendencies, associated with a traditional rural way of life (high marriage, birth, and fertility rates), were rapidly reversed. In fact, of all of the values associated with the past, only nationalism continued with any vigour. ("Quiet Revolution")

Bélanger continues to portray the societal changes in language dominated by temporal imagery in subsequent descriptions: developments occurred "in such a short and concentrated period of time [with] a sense of urgency," permitting the province to "belong to the sense of the time," and

allowing the “national time clock of Quebec [to be] reset from its traditional magnet to be resolutely in step” (“Quiet Revolution”). While Bélanger cheerily characterizes the resetting of the national clock as progress, Carrier often depicts this shift from a more cyclical notion of time to a linear one as another form of wounding to the national body: as if the perpetual slicing of time into quantifiable and ever smaller segments dismembers it and has a similarly fragmentary effect on the body.

Carrier first locates Corriveau’s body in modern time or what Julia Kristeva terms the “Time of History,” implicitly masculine and summarized as “time as project, teleology, linear and prospective unfolding: time as departure, progression, and arrival” (192). Philosopher Henri Bergson, one of Kristeva’s influences, lays out a similar vision of time that he terms *le temps abstrait* “que mesurent les horloges et qui contredit l’idée de création, puisque, selon le principe du déterminisme, il ne saura rien apporter de nouveau” (LaGarde and Michard 80). In both cases, The Time of History and *le temps abstrait* characterize the past as dead, immobile, and quantifiable. In defining modernity and reflecting on its relationship to loss, critical theorist Jonathan Flatley echoes a similarly fatalistic demarcation of modern time: “This was a new time consciousness, one not oriented towards repeating cycles or the promises of divine eternity, but a temporality that was linear, sequential, irreversible, and measurable in discrete units, what would become clock time” (Flatley 28). For Kristeva, Bergson, and Flatley, modern time means accepting that once lived, a moment is “irreversible,” a past point on the fast train to death.

It is thus appropriate that the scene in which Corriveau’s corpse initially appears is set in a train station. The train, itself, epitomizes the high-speed, mechanical, regimented movement of modernity,<sup>21</sup> with its ability to cross distances at heretofore unknown velocities and its reliance

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<sup>21</sup> The correlation between modernity, the mercilessness of clock time, the train, the military, and death recall the final image of the driverless train careening towards disaster in Zola’s *La Bête Humaine*: “Qu’importaient les

on precisely-timed stops. Indeed, the Québécois conductor also embodies this preoccupation with time, as revealed in the following description: “Il tenait dans sa main une montre rattachée à son ventre par une chaînette et il la regardait battre comme si elle avait été son coeur” (26). In addition to contributing to the sense of urgency associated with modern time, the passage also highlights the disconnect between modernity’s fast pace and the less measurable time of emotions. The clock, Carrier suggests, has replaced the heart as the tool by which we measure worth. Moreover, the fact that the conductor holds the clock-heart outside of himself implies that the symbolic emotional center has become a foreign object of contemplation, estranged from the body, as opposed to a part of an integrated whole. Like a zombie figure, the mechanized conductor also seems divorced from self. The image of the clock-heart as separate from the body emphasizes corporeal mortality as an important aspect of both Bergson and Kristeva’s thinking about time. A body cannot function without a heart: separated from the body, the heartbeat will stop, reaching its terminus in the Time of History.

References to a mercilessly, forward-marching version of time dominate the remainder of the scene, often thwarting human exchanges. The conductor bemoans the snowy weather, which has slowed them by “deux heures, dix-sept minutes, et quarante-quatre secondes” (26). He then interrupts the train stationmaster’s story about his stint in the marines because “il n’avait pas le temps d’entendre un autre fragment de l’autobiographie du chef de gare” (26). The conductor justifies his rudeness with what he imagines will be a mutually-acceptable reason that reflects a shared investment in the value of time: “Nous sommes en retard . . . À chaque gare, il faut travailler plus vite: le temps que le train perd, les hommes doivent le regagner” (26). Even the

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victimes que la machine écrasait en chemin! N’allait-elle pas quand même à l’avenir, insoucieuse du sang répandu? Sans conducteur, au milieu des ténèbres, en bête aveugle et sourde qu’on aurait lâchée parmi la mort, elle roulait, elle roulait, chargée de cette chair à canon, de ces soldats, déjà hébétés de fatigue, et ivres, qui chantaient” (Project Gutenberg).

first words of the scene, “Bralington station” mark a stylistic change that echoes the staccato tempo of *le temps abstrait*. This two-word, terse phrase, which is the shortest opening sentence of any scene in the book, suppresses all extraneous information. It could also be read as an implicit announcement of their arrival (and imminent departure) at the station and a reminder that each stop must be shortened to “regagner le temps” (26). In a later scene with a similar tempo, the sergeant yells at the pallbearers “pour les presser d’avancer,” upset that it was “déjà plus tard que ce qui avait été prévu” (34).

In this context, in which punching the clock trumps all, Corriveau is reduced to an object, his humanity or soul erased because he has “clocked out.” To reference Césaire’s famed formula in *Discours sur le colonialisme*, “colonization = ‘chosification,’” and the process of *chosification* deprives the colonized of human dignity (Césaire 19). No longer able to labor, his body chewed up by clock time, the *chosifié* Corriveau has little meaning for the soldiers, who use his coffin as a bench while they take a smoke break (28). In fact, when the stationmaster evokes Corriveau in this scene, he imagines the dead man as laboring for “the English”: “On voit par là que les maudits Anglais ont l’habitude d’avoir des nègres ou des Canadiens français pour fermer leurs portes. C’est ce qu’il devait faire, Corriveau: ouvrir et fermer les portes des Anglais” (28). The use of the term *nègre* and its equation with *Canadiens français* is significant in that it draws on the same analogy used in Pierre Vallières’s *Nègres blancs d’Amérique*, which begins “Être un ‘nègre,’ ce n’est pas être un homme en Amérique, mais être l’esclave de quelqu’un,” thus drawing a parallel between the plight of the Québécois and those who suffer racial oppression (38).<sup>22</sup>

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<sup>22</sup> The treatment of racial oppression and the forms of discrimination directed at the Québécois and other Canadians of French extraction as somehow synonymous remains highly problematic because it entirely erases white privilege. Nevertheless, the use of this analogy was one of the ways that select Québécois writers attempted to identify with

Corriveau's "chosification" continues throughout the scene. When the *chef de gare* asks, "Qu'est-ce que Corriveau?" another character responds by equating Corriveau with the object in which he was transported: "Corriveau, c'est un cercueil" (27). Even the question, in its use of "Qu'est-ce que" as opposed to "Qui" implies objectification because the train station worker assumes that Corriveau is just another product being transported by train. Later in the scene, when questioned about the coffin, the railway worker replies that all of the English "baggage"<sup>23</sup> has been unloaded, making no distinction between the soldier's remains and the suitcases and treating Corriveau's body as a possession of the English Canadians. The Québécois conductor partially corrects this impression of English ownership, referencing the bodily tug-of-war, with the words "Corriveau est à nous" (27). But, even after emphasizing the importance of the delivery and Corriveau's significance as the first casualty of war from the village, he returns to the language of "chosification" by referring to Corriveau as "ce colis-là" (27). For the soldiers, Corriveau's corpse remains "dead weight" that slows their attempts to effect a speedy delivery of his remains and return to their highly-scripted, double-time routine.

Carrier tacitly attributes Corriveau's death to his full embodiment of *le temps abstrait*, as evidenced by the soldier's last words to his supper-mate. To explain why he does not want to use the toilet stalls, and will instead ultimately wander off to find an outdoor place to relieve himself, Corriveau says: "Il faut faire la queue, attendre son tour. Je ne peux pas" (121). While

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other oppressed populations, even if, insodoing, they participated in a form of oppression, themselves, by leveling differences and simplifying the issue.

<sup>23</sup> *Taking Chance* (2009, Dir. Ross Katz) an HBO film based on the journals of the Desert Storm veteran who escorted the repatriated remains of Lance Corporal Chance Phelps after his death in Anbar Province, Iraq, offers an interesting point of comparison to *La guerre, yes sir!* Katz's film details the scrupulous preparation of the soldier's body and personal effects and the respectful protocol associated with every aspect of the soldier's transport and delivery. At one point, for example, the escort, Lieutenant Colonel Michael Strobl, requests that the body not be indiscriminately placed with the suitcases on the passenger plane used to deliver the body, saying "I'd like to keep him separate from the luggage if that's possible." Not only is this request honored, the pilot of the aircraft also personally speaks with Strobl and asks the soldier's name, stating, "I've known the name of every KIA I've ever carried."

responding to a biological urge, Corriveau is also devaluing safety in favor of speed, and this overvaluation of speed causes his death when he steps on a landmine because of his unwillingness to wait.

This temporal trauma extends to the most intimate moments of characters' lives, often reducing sex to quick, transactional bodily exchanges. The narrowing of the definition of heterosexual sex to reproductive sex can, as Henry Abelove argues, correlate to a rise in other forms of production or the onset of a more industrial period:

The rise in production (the privileging of production) and the rise in popularity of the sexual act that uniquely makes for reproduction (the privileging of intercourse so-called) may be aspects of the same phenomenon . . . While production increased significantly, it also became central in ways that it never had before. Behaviors, customs, usages that were judged to be non-productive came under extraordinary and ever intensifying negative pressure . . . We should expect to find that sexual intercourse so-called becomes at this time and in this place discursively and phenomenologically central in ways that it never had before, that nonreproductive sexual behaviors came under extraordinary negative pressure and that both developments happen in ways that testify to their relatedness, even to their unity. (26-27)

While Abelove is writing specifically about England in the Industrial Revolution, his arguments can potentially extend to other periods of capitalistic (or colonial) development in which the body is reduced to a tool for labor rather than a source or site for pleasure. Before the rise of industrialism, Abelove argues, the range of what could be considered heterosexual sex included a broader range of physical activities organized around pleasure as leisure as opposed to reproductive "cross-genital intercourse" (23). Michel Foucault presages this argument in *Histoire de la sexualité, volume 1* when he questions, "À l'époque où on exploite systématiquement la force de travail, pouvait-on tolérer qu'elle aille s'égailler dans les plaisirs, sauf dans ceux, réduits au minimum, qui lui permettent de se reproduire?" (12-13)

Two early scenes of physical intimacy in the novel reflect the sexual paradigm shift Foucault and Abelove describe. The first scene occurs between Amélie and Henri. Prior to the

exchange, Carrier associates Amélie with reproductive sex because, while her husband is off at war, she takes in a deserter, sleeps with him the first night, and shortly thereafter gives birth to twins, adding to her already large family. After the birth of the twins, she immediately becomes pregnant again. In one of the first sex scenes described in any detail, Amélie opts for quick partner sex over slow auto-eroticism, in a move that epitomizes the modern understanding of how sex and time intersect. Overcome with desire during the preparation of dinner, she appears to be on the verge of engaging in some form of masturbation or fantasy: “En une longue caresse, elle glissa ses mains sur sa poitrine et lentement sur son ventre et ses cuisses” (40). Her sexual pleasure first operates in a slower temporal context, as indicated by the words “longue” and “lentement.” Her self-pleasure also “looks back” to an earlier time insofar as Amélie seeks sexual stimulation in a way that Freud associates with an earlier stage of psychosexual development and Abelove argues was more valued in a pre-industrial, pre-modern period and (Carrier 40, Abelove 23). Then, as if catching herself in an “anachronistic” act, Amélie calls to Henri to join her downstairs, repeating the words “Dépêche-toi” four times in the span of a page, and hastening towards the bed to wait impatiently, though the hurried Henri protests that he is not “toujours prêt” (42-43).

Corriveau, whose body, when delivered to Quebec, represents a return to a slower time, interrupts the rapid progression towards Abelove’s “sexual intercourse, so-called” (26). When Henri sees the soldiers approaching, he calls his wife to the window so that they can watch the sluggish approach. However, what first appears as an interruption, ultimately results in a pause that creates space for greater meaning in the physical act that follows, as Henri and Amélie engage in a more life-affirming exchange: “Leur étreinte fut de plus en plus violente, et un



instant, sans qu'ils osent se l'avouer, ils s'aimèrent" (44). As this scene indicates, Corriveau calls a kind of "time out" that causes characters to rewind and rethink.

The second scene that typifies an exaggerated form of Abelove's fast-tempoed "sexual intercourse, so called" occurs between Molly and Bérubé after their initial meeting in a hotel bar. Molly's first words to Bérubé, an invitation to her room, also condense sex to the moment of male orgasm via double entendre: "Come with me, darling. Darling? Come..." (36). This reduction corroborates Abelove's argument about the change from slow-time, process-preoccupied sex to product-oriented heterosexual sex in which the male orgasm and the potential for reproduction validate the act. The pace of the scene set by the directness of Molly's invitation and the rapidity of events once the couple arrives in the bedroom is also reflected in Bérubé's internal monologue:

Dans sa tête, il entendait un tic-tac comme des coups de tambour. 'Toujours, jamais', répétait cette monstrueuse horloge, qui avait marqué les heures de son enfance [ . . . ]  
"Toujours, jamais" scandait l'horloge de son enfance, l'horloge de la damnation éternelle dont souffrent ceux qui se mettaient nus et ceux qui touchaient à des femmes nues,  
'Toujours, jamais' sonnait l'horloge et Bérubé ne put s'empêcher de supplier:  
-Do you want to marry me?  
-Yes, répondit la fille à qui on n'avait jamais posé cette question.  
-What's your name? (38)

Although guilt and the aggressive *tic-tac* of time prod Bérubé into an awkward proposal, the introduction of the Catholic sacrament reframes the bedroom scene as the consummation of a marriage, the purpose of which is reproduction, instead of a tryst with a prostitute who requested a five-dollar payment a few minutes prior. The metronomic "tic-tac" and the mention of the "monstrueuse horloge" also create a hellish temporal context in which the clock's countdown supplants the heart's rhythms.

Perhaps a final way to conceptualize Corriveau as a body clock that, in its movement across space, becomes demagnetized and must eventually be reset to reflect a new conception of

time, is through the lens of Bhabha's writing on temporality and nation. In the following passage, Bhabha reflects on how "pedagogical" time (chronological and traceable) must come up against "performative" time (perpetually renewing) to open a space where a nation's narrative can be composed:

The people are not simply historical events or parts of a patriotic body politic . . . [T]he people must be thought in a double-time; the people are the historical 'objects' of a national pedagogy, giving the discourse an authority that is based on the pre-given or constituted historical origin or event; the people are also the 'subjects' of a process of signification that must erase any prior or originary presence of a nation people to demonstrate the prodigious, living principle of the people as that continual process by which the national life is redeemed and signified as a repeating and reproductive process. . . . [T]he very act of the narrative performance interpellates a growing circle of national subjects. In the production of the nation as narration there is a split between the continuous, accumulative temporality of the pedagogical, and the repetitious, recursive strategy of the performative. It is through this process of splitting that the conceptual ambivalence of a modern society becomes the site of writing the nation. (297)

Bhabha's writing on time can be a useful way of understanding Corriveau's role as a changing timepiece. In the beginning, Corriveau, and the larger Québécois body he represents, remains a "historical object" with a fixed, "dead" meaning to the English Canadian soldiers transporting him. When he arrives at the Corriveau home, the erasure of this first reading of his body and additional reflection about Corriveau's place in time begins as his mother orders the removal of the British flag, a symbol of a "prior or originary presence of the nation people" (297). The Québécois body, epitomized until this point by Corriveau, becomes more multifaceted as we encounter the rest of his community, implicating "a growing circle of national subjects" who participate in the meaning-making process (297). This confrontation between the English Canadians and the French Canadians and their struggle over the meaning and possession of Corriveau's body forces a crisis between the two camps, allowing Corriveau's community to move out of pedagogical time and into "the continual process by which national life is redeemed and signified" (297). Indeed, Carrier also participates in this process by telling an anachronistic

tale in which he rewrites what would have been the common fate (non-return and symbolic appropriation on foreign fields) of so many Québécois soldiers. In this sense, Corriveau's blood becomes the ink; his body, the paper on which a separate, self-told story for the Québécois can be composed.

## CHAPTER 3: DECOLONIZING THE BODY: HEALING

### 3.1 From Object to Subject: Rethinking the Broken Body

In the early scenes of the novel, when Corriveau is in the colonial realm and the “English” have possession of his body, he appears to be the model colonial subject. Having worked in the service of France, Great Britain, and Anglophone Canada and sacrificed his life for the dominant powers’ cause, his body is reduced to a tool. Corriveau is consumable, zombified, a cog in the clock of Bhabha’s pedagogical time. However, when Corriveau returns home, his body eludes such facile readings as a simple historical object. Through stories and individual imaginings, Corriveau becomes revived, and his wounds not only signify the ravages of the colonial situation and death, but the potential for the healing and rebirth.

Corriveau’s body corresponds in many ways to Kristeva’s definition of the “abject.” The soldier’s bodily mutilation has left his cadaver, already necessarily abject in its state of decomposition, even more subject to break-down, through multiple gaping wounds. Terming a body “abject,” however, goes beyond describing the physical state of the body and is often more closely associated with the ability to evade classification. Kristeva explains: “Ce n’est donc pas l’absence de propreté ou de santé qui rend abject, mais ce qui perturbe une identité, un système, un ordre. Ce qui ne respecte pas les limites, les places, les règles. L’entre-deux. L’ambigu, le mixte” (12). Even in life, Corriveau embodied this ambiguity in many ways. He is French Canadian, yet at times seems to be an appendage of the English body. In death, he becomes doubly abject in his physical decomposition and through his continual perturbation of systems. Although his body has been almost entirely obliterated, the mourners continually reanimate him in memory, imagining his reactions to various events at the wake as if he were living and whole. Corriveau’s body can also be associated with “l’entre-deux” because it acts as a catalyst for the

mixing of the two communities, when everything else in the novel confirms the village's linguistic and cultural isolation. The system his body perturbs is the English Canadian domination of the Québécois, and the identity it calls into question is the "French Canadian" one, as subservient, secondary to, and contingent upon "English Canadian."

Two scenes depict characters confronting Corriveau in nightmares and changing as a result, dramatizing Kristeva's statement that "l'objet bouleverse l'identité de celui qui s'y confronte," as well as reiterating Césaire's association of contamination and colonialism (11). In the first scene, Henri has an apocalyptic dream in which he imagines all of the people and beasts of the village entering Corriveau's enormous coffin. At first, the story appears to mirror some aspects of the Biblical tale of Noah,<sup>24</sup> with the casket as ark. The coffin "se gonflait comme un estomac," swallowing beasts, the sea, and the horizon, and evoking the destruction of the *déluge* without its dove-and-rainbow delivery (98). Then, Henri imagines the casket in his attic room, "juste assez grand pour contenir un seul homme: Corriveau ou lui" (99). This *cauchmardesque* confrontation with death in the form of Corriveau forces Henri out of the dark, attic refuge where he is hiding for fear of discovery as a deserter. By imagining himself as substitutable for Corriveau, Henri realizes how claustrophobic his own confinement feels: his attic is really only a more comfortable coffin.

The slogan for the Québécois government during the 1960s was "Maîtres chez nous," a phrase that recognized that French Canadians had not, for many years, been masters of their own home, even though Quebec had long been considered the "foyer national . . . du Canada français" (qtd. in Dickinson and Young 328). Henri personifies this conflict: he is neither the master of his house, nor is he able to feel "at home" in his village and participate in community events such as the wake. Because he fears his body will be recalled to war, he cannot be considered master of it

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<sup>24</sup> Genesis 6-9

either. The fear that his body has been completely colonized, like Corriveau's, forces him out of the house where he joins the villagers who have begun to revolt.

The second nightmare scene in which Corriveau perturbs an identity occurs between the dead man and Mireille, a child of the village whose older brother is similar in age to Corriveau. The sleeping child imagines that Corriveau has taken the place of her young brother in the adjacent bed. Corriveau awakes to light Mireille's toes on fire, which she then realizes are made of wax. Like Joseph at the moment before he severs his hand, Mireille does not feel that her body belongs to her, looking at her foot "comme s'il n'avait pas été son pied" (101).

Although Mireille remains paralyzed before Corriveau, transfixed as her votive toes burn, she recognizes him as an emissary of death. He, the dead man, has arrived to take the place of her brother (presumably eligible for the draft). In a similar vein, contact with Corriveau's body in the nightmare also destroys hers. Like Henri before the moment of his flight, Mireille suffers from a kind of paralysis, as described in the following passage: "Elle ne bougeait pas. Elle n'aurait pas pu remuer. Ses membres auraient refusé" (101). Although Mireille does not flee her confinement the way Henri does, she recognizes that remaining in the *huis clos* with the colonized body that Corriveau represents can only result in suffocation and eventual death. Given Carrier's sometimes overt criticisms and ridicule of religion and the general movement away from the province's Catholic roots during the Quiet Revolution, it may also be possible to read this pairing of the melting body and the religious symbolism of the votives as an abject vision of the liturgical body.

Mikhail Bakhtin's writing on the grotesque body, especially his characterization of it as an open body, offers another useful way to understand the meaning of the French-Canadian wounded bodies. The grotesque body, like the abject body, is characterized by the points at

which it transgresses limits. As Bakhtin writes, “[The grotesque] is looking for that which protrudes from the body, all that seeks to go out beyond the body’s confines” (316). The grotesque body is also a penetrable space, in which oozing orifices blur boundaries between inner and outer, and in which bodily fluids such as tears, saliva, semen, mucus, urine, and blood remind others of the body’s permeability. This characterization of French-Canadian bodies as grotesque, open, and penetrable serves as another distinction between them and the Anglo-Canadian bodies, defined, in contrast, by the logic of their “closed, smooth, and impenetrable surface” (Bakhtin 317). The soldiers, usually mentioned as a unit, only share any element of the grotesque body when they are in the closest contact with Corriveau’s corpse: as they carry his coffin towards the house, they sweat profusely, seemingly infected by contact with this open body (35).

What, then, is the purpose of depicting the French Canadian body as a grotesque one? The inability or unwillingness to respect the limits of the body associated with the French Canadians sometimes appears to infantilize them, as in the scenes where adults, such as Zeldina, lose control of their bodily functions, prompting the soldiers to conclude that in their soiled state, the French Canadians are “des porcs” (78, 91). Scenes of excessive crying and bleeding also infantilize the villagers, recalling Bouthillette’s analogy likening Quebec to a child prematurely forced to part with its mother: “Coupé trop tôt, et brutalement, le cordon ombilique qui nous reliait à la mère patrie” (51). Nevertheless, these visual reminders of the body’s interior also act as proof that the French-Canadian body is *not* dead, as the centrality of the entombed Corriveau might suggest, but rather hyperbolically alive, as the following description from the wake emphasizes: “Les villageois vivaient, ils priaient pour se rappeler, pour se souvenir qu’ils n’étaient pas avec Corriveau, que leur vie n’était pas terminée, et tout en croyant prier pour le

salut de Corriveau, c'est leur joie de vivre qu'ils proclamaient en de tristes prières" (55). Thus, the perpetual proof that the body cannot contain itself becomes an indicator of vitality and *jouissance*.

If Carrier's depiction of the Québécois body as childlike connotes infantilization, it equally connotes the possibility and promise of infant beginnings. While the colonized French-Canadian body, symbolized by "Corriveau sous son drapeau britannique" is dying off, the decolonized Québécois body labors to be born (55). The images of the grotesque body also act as reminders that, as a vital body, the *corps québécois* is in continuous flux. Bakhtin clarifies: "The grotesque body, as we have often stressed, is a body in the act of becoming. It is never finished, never completed; it is continually built, created, and builds, creates another body" (317). Thus, what may first read as only slovenliness, epitomized by the soldiers' reductive characterization of the villagers as "porcs, indociles, indisciplinés, et fous," eventually becomes more of a testament to the messy and erratic process of growth, in which a body *must* continually transgress its own limits because the body within which it is contained is too cramped (91). Bakhtin also emphasizes the potential to read the individual bodies as a shared, transforming body, writing, "[I]f we consider the grotesque image in its extreme aspect, it never presents an individual body" (318). Given the association between the grotesque body and carnivalesque gatherings, it seems appropriate that Carrier's work centers on how bodies commune.

Carrier subtitled his three novels on the village the *Trilogie de l'âge sombre*. By treating his writings as a triptych of the "Dark Ages of Quebec," Carrier strengthens the connection between his novel and Bakhtin's writing on Rabelais's work from the same period (qtd. in Northey 21). As Northey notes, Carrier's alignment of his trilogy with the Dark Ages "reinforces the notion of change rather than doom as his central theme" (21). While Northey



focuses more on the changing role of the church in both periods and concludes that “society did not collapse at the end of the Dark Ages, but was infused with a new life,” it seems apparent that Carrier’s work chronicles a period preceding a Renaissance of sorts, during which a new vision of the Québécois would emerge (Northey 21).

### **3.2 Body Banquet: Corriveau as Comfort Food**

The communal meal or banquet features heavily in both Bakhtin’s writing and Carrier’s depiction of the wake, where Carrier resignifies the act of eating from an act of conquest and violence to one of coping and victory. Bakhtin emphasizes that the mouth is the most important feature of the grotesque body because, through the act of eating, it “transgresses [ . . . ] its own limits [ . . . ] rends the world apart, is enriched and grows at the world’s expense” (281). The previous description highlights that the banquet serves to strengthen those who participate, allowing them to remake themselves by transgressing bodily limits and remake the world even as they “rend [it] apart” (281).

Bakhtin also stresses that the banquet, even following death, is ultimately infused with a sense of rebirth and triumph:

This element of victory and triumph is inherent in banquet images. No meal can be sad. Sadness and food are incompatible (while death and food are perfectly compatible). The banquet always celebrates a victory and that is part of its very nature. Furthermore, the triumphal banquet is always universal. It is the triumph of life over death. In this respect, it is equivalent to conception and birth. The victorious body receives the defeated world and is renewed. (282-283)

Carrier also reiterates the notion that the banquet celebrates life even as it commemorates death. Mère Corriveau asserts, as she cooks, “Quand il y a un mort dans la maison, il ne faut pas que la maison sente la mort,” affirming that the communal meal has the power to drive out some of the sadness of death (56). The mourners even recognize the restorative nature of their prayers as

they remark, “Il semblait que Corriveau allait se lever” (55). Though Corriveau is unable to rise, the gathering and the breaking of bread after his death reinforces the idea that the villagers will support one another in hardship, and that this commitment to sharing burdens will allow *them* to rise, “renewed” as a “victorious body” (Bakhtin 283).

The overturning of the initial images of Corriveau as a consumed body, incorporated by *les Anglais*, or as an all-consuming body, devouring his own people as he does in Henri’s dream, is crucial to the resignification of Corriveau’s consumption and the triumph of life over death. The cannibalistic motif established earlier in the novel persists, but exocannibalistic scenes, where the body is preyed upon, give way to endocannibalistic scenes, where the body nourishes Corriveau’s community. Consumed by grief, the villagers consume, through a series of symbolic substitutions, the object of their grief, Corriveau, metaphorically allowing them to reincorporate a lost part.

Endocannibalism, or funerary cannibalism, is defined as “eating members of one’s own group” and differs in connotation and purpose from exocannibalism (Conklin xxvi).

Endocannibalistic practices traditionally honor and show respect for the dead, and very specific rules govern the treatment of the body during its preparation and consumption. In the following passage, one man, a member of the Amazonian Wari tribe that formerly practiced funerary cannibalism, explains its function of soothing grief in an interview with the anthropologist Beth A. Conklin:

For a parent, when your child dies, it’s a sad thing to put his body in the earth . . . it’s cold in the earth. We keep remembering our child lying there, cold. We remember and we are sad . . . It was better in the old days, when the others ate the body. Then we did not think of our child’s body so much. (Conklin xv)

Corriveau’s gravedigger echoes a similar sentiment about the sadness of placing a body in the icy earth when he remarks, “Cette terre est si froide que Corriveau s’y conservera tout frais

jusque tard au printemps” (120). Eating the bones or flesh of a loved one effaces the evidence of death and the sensation that death severs one from the family or community body. Thus, while consumption by outsiders violates the sanctity of the corpse, consumption by our own community reintegrates us into a larger body from which we have been estranged by death. Although Conklin specifies that groups diverge in their beliefs about whether or not this ritual should be carried out strictly by family members or extend to community members as well, she makes it clear that, in the case of the Wari tribe, everyone expected to partake, does, out of respect for the family:

They did not eat the dead because they liked the taste of human flesh, nor because they needed the meat. Rather they ate out of a sense of respect and compassion for the dead person and for the dead person’s family [ . . . ] At funerals, the people who ate the corpse did so at the insistence of the dead person’s close relatives, who urged the others to eat. (xvi-xvii)

This participation in figurative funerary cannibalism changes consumption into a comforting, community-building act, allowing Corriveau to be symbolically merged with the family and community body, at the continual prompting of his parents.

The framing of Corriveau as nourishment begins as soon as he enters the family home. Upon arrival, Corriveau’s family instructs the soldiers to place Corriveau on the kitchen table, where he will remain as Mère Corriveau cooks the tourtières: "Mettez-le là, dit la mère Corriveau, sur la table. Et mettez-lui la tête ici, à ce bout-ci de la table. C’est sa place” (45). This command is then thrice repeated by the family and echoed in English by Molly, accumulating urgency as the parents of the deceased attempt to communicate with the foreigners in their home: “Sur la table, répéta le bonhomme Corriveau [ . . . ] Sur la table ordonnait la mère Corriveau. [ . . . ] Sur la table: on le veut sur la table. [ . . . ] Put it on the table” (45-46). The repetition and the presence of two languages lend the commands a quasi-religious air,

functioning as a reminder of the novel's Catholic context. When the food is ready, Mère Corriveau orders that Corriveau be moved from the kitchen to the living room, alongside the pork pies: "Enlevez mon fils de la cuisine et transportez-le dans le salon. Nous allons manger. J'ai fait vingt-et-une tourtières de porc . . . Anthyme, va me déterrer cinq ou six bouteilles de cidre" (50). The paralleling, through placement, of Corriveau's body to the food suggests its symbolic substitutability, just as the mention of disinterring the cider acts as a reminder that Corriveau will soon be placed in the ground. Later, Corriveau's coffin, itself, becomes a make-shift table, as described in the following passage: "Le drapeau qui recouvrait le cercueil de Corriveau était devenu une nappe sur laquelle on avait laissé des assiettes vides, des verres, et renversé du cidre" (65). Thus, Corriveau is placed on the table as if he is the main dish and presented to the mourners alongside the mortuary meal. Later, the litter of empty dishes, cups, and mealtime debris suggests his ingestion.

Carrier strengthens the impression that Corriveau has been consumed by imagistically transposing the body of the deceased on the funeral fare. This *rapprochement* between the pig's body and the soldier's, first surfaces when Philibert slaughters the animal. The animal's open body, described as "déshabillé de sa peau," parallels the final image of Corriveau's body, where only "quelques lambeaux de peau" remain (20, 121). The slaughtered pig later becomes the filling for the *tourtières* (pork pies) that the community members eat as the on-looking English soldiers disparage them with the pejorative pronouncement that these "French-Canadians étaient des porcs," a comparison elaborated at length in the soldiers' interior monologues: "Quelles sortes d'animaux étaient donc ces French Canadians? Ils avaient des manières de pourceaux dans la porcherie. D'ailleurs, à bien les observer, à les regarder objectivement, les French Canadians ressemblaient à des pourceaux . . . ce Corriveau était aussi un porc" (90-91). Carrier

further enhances the metaphor of Corriveau's cannibalization when Corriveau's mother pairs each serving of *tourtière* with a sauce composed of the fruits mentioned in Joseph's earlier lament, seemingly the *confiture à la Corriveau*: "La mère Corriveau les accueillait avec une assiette dans laquelle elle avait placé un quart de tourtière sous une sauce faite de pommes, de fraises, de myrtilles, de groseilles mélangés" (56). At other points, the villagers imagine Corriveau "roasting" in purgatory, likening his flesh to a meat in the process of cooking and conjuring images of the way the pig was potentially prepared (60, 66).

The description of the mealtime drink also plays on similar imagistic substitutions. Corriveau's father, for example, notes that the ripening of the cider they drink throughout the wake requires a lengthy aging process, which he compares to the maturation of his children:

Depuis des années, il fabriquait son cidre au moment de l'automne où, disait-il, "le vent va égratigner les pommes" puis, il enterrait ses bouteilles au sous-sol. Elles restaient enfouies longtemps, longtemps. Ses fils devenaient des hommes; et les bouteilles demeuraient sous la terre. (56)

Anthyme's cider ages in tandem with his sons, and as he unearths the cider, he buries his son, who, as the gravedigger's earlier statement affirms, will be preserved in the cool ground until spring.

Conklin writes that the family of the deceased urged participation in mortuary cannibalism, a statement that describes Corriveau's parents' preoccupation with feeding everyone continuously. Mère Corriveau continues to cook until "[t]oute la maison était un four qui sentait la tourtière au lard grasse et dorée" (59). Anthyme also urges the symbolic consumption of his son, perpetually refilling glasses of cider (58).

The ceremony also serves to distinguish the French-Canadian body from the English-Canadian body: those who do not see themselves as part of the French-Canadian community do not partake of the body, much in the way non-Catholics would refrain from taking communion at

a mass. While the villagers gorge themselves on Mère Corriveau's pork pies and Anthyme's cider, the soldiers abstain from the ritual of reclamation, despite their hosts' insistence:

“Pourquoi ne boirez-vous un petit verre de cidre? demandait Anthyme. Prenez donc un petit morceau de ma tourtière au lard, minaudait la mère Corriveau. Les Anglais ne bougeaient pas, ne répondaient même pas non au bout des lèvres” (60). Likewise, when Mother Corriveau offers Molly some pork pie, she merely takes “une bouchée par politesse” (83).

The metaphor of physical incorporation, when considered from a religious perspective, has a natural equivalent in the taking of the Eucharist. Believers renew their vows to Christ by metaphorically (or literally in the Catholic doctrine of transubstantiation) consuming the body and blood of the sacrificed savior. The fact that readers' final view of Corriveau at mealtime is his “last supper” takes on a greater significance considering that Christ's final meal with his community of disciples was the breaking and eating of his “body” and the drinking of his “blood” given for them (Luke 22:19). Corriveau partakes of a last supper with a newfound companion before stepping on a landmine, just as Christ breaks bread with his disciples before being seized in the garden of Gethsemane. After Corriveau's death, the wake becomes an extended meal, just as Christ, in each of the Biblical accounts, gathers with the apostles for a second meal when they reunite. Thus, Corriveau's final meal, the one he consumes before the explosion reduces him to “miettes,”<sup>25</sup> is quickly replaced by another last supper, in which he is symbolically consumed (121). Although bread is not mentioned as part of the food consumed at the wake, the association between Corriveau's body and breadcrumbs or “miettes” once again links it to Christ's body and the communion meal.

The prayers recited over the body even mix food with religious fervor and transpose the

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<sup>25</sup> “Du nouveau, il restait quelque lambeaux de peau et quelques miettes de vêtements sanglants, un portefeuille” (121).

ceremony of praying onto the ceremony of eating, once again clarifying that the consumption at the wake is not simply a mortuary meal but a form of restorative religious ritual: “A travers ce parfum [de tourtières] flottaient des ‘salut pleine et grasse’ des ‘entrailles ébénies’ des ‘pour nous pauvres pêcheurs’ et des ‘repas éternels’” (59). Instead of *grâce*, Mary is full of *grasse*; instead of with bread and wine, the mourners commune with *tourtières* and *cidre*.

### 3.3 Body Out of Time: Transcending Time Heals All Wounds

If Corriveau’s community consumes him, metaphorically, in a ritual resembling the Eucharist, to what extent can we read his body as Christlike? Corriveau progresses from a body that is, in the simplest sense of the term, “out of time,” to one that is metaphorically able to exist “out of time.” Therefore, while Corriveau initially appears to be a zombie, one of the restless dead who haunts from the beyond, he eventually begins to resemble a figure of salvation who transcends death and who becomes a unifying sacrificial figure. While Corriveau is more sinner than saint in all of his crudeness, womanizing, and hellraising, Corriveau *is*, in another sense, Christlike. Corriveau, like Christ, suffered bodily; and Corriveau, like Christ, is perceived as having offered up his body for the protection of his loved ones. That said, given that Corriveau’s death was arbitrary and accidental as opposed to the willing fulfillment of a divine vision, such parallels may seem highly ironic. Nonetheless, intense moments of religious reverence continually resurface in what is most often a text characterized by irreverence. Mère Corriveau speaks of kissing the flag covering her son’s coffin “comme elle baisait chaque soir ses reliques de la tunique de Jésus Christ à vingt-trois ans” (46). Although the members of Corriveau’s community might not all attribute a similar value to the soldier’s death, and at times a dark humor underlies the remaking of the soldier as a hero, for some, like Philibert, he is a

model to follow.

Indeed, when Philibert slaughters the pig for the *tourtières*, he remarks that the animal's body reminds him of Christ's, stating, "Chaque fois que je vois un cochon ainsi installé, je ne peux pas m'empêcher de penser au Christ sur le Calvaire" (20). The comparison between the pig and Christ, each of whom is killed and consumed (figuratively or literally), also implicitly links Corriveau and Christ as sacrificial victims. The villagers' manner of speaking about Corriveau further intensifies the sense that Corriveau, like Christ, is risen. The villagers continually revivify Corriveau by picturing his actions and reactions as if he were still living, and referring to him in the present tense. When Corriveau's mother instructs the soldiers to remove the flag, she explains, "Il va avoir trop chaud" and later requests quiet with the following justification: "Vous allez me réveiller mon fils" (46, 60). In a bedroom scene between Molly and Bérubé, Bérubé evokes Corriveau in the present tense and imagines his reactions to their borrowing of his bedroom, saying, "Corriveau ne doit pas aimer que nous nous amusions à faire l'amour dans son lit" (54). Pages later, another instance of temporal slippage challenges the truth of Corriveau's death, as two funeral attendees speculate about Corriveau's reaction to the wake: "Ce sacré Corriveau, j'aimerais savoir à quoi il pense dans son cercueil, avec toutes ces femmes qui rôdent autour de lui" (67). At another point during the wake, Corriveau's father remembers that he received a letter from his son that the family has not yet opened, and the reading aloud of the correspondence gives a voice to the dead man, as indicated when the villagers reflect, "Ce n'était pas vrai qu'il était mort parce qu'il écrivait. Cette lettre corrigeait la vie" (64). It is as if the characters repeatedly forget which realm Corriveau occupies. Such storytelling and evocation of the dead is a practice common to funerals, as is forgetting momentarily to relegate the deceased to the past tense or imagining what they would do in a given circumstance. Yet, the effect of



these conversational conjurings and memory mistakes is a blurring of the border between life and death.

Carrier also emphasizes Corriveau's potential for life beyond death through the figure of Esmalda, the deceased's sister who left the family to take religious orders. Her eerie semi-sermon before the mourners reinforces the rethinking of the terms "living" and "dead" in a religious context and evokes one of the oft-cited consolations of Christianity: the promise of eternal life. Esmalda sermonizes: "Qui est mort? Qui est vivant? Le mort peut-être vivant. Le vivant peut-être mort. Le péché peut avoir tué celui qui vit. Qui est sans péché? La grâce, don de Dieu, peut avoir ressuscité celui qui est mort" (73). These meditations once again unsettle the finality of Corriveau's death and offer a reminder that any form of enslavement (to sin or another "master") can deaden the living.

Corriveau's otherworldly quality as a figure capable of transcending death is perhaps clearest in the final pages of the novel when, in the scene just before his burial, Carrier uses flashback to introduce us to the actual Corriveau, moments before his demise. Although Carrier offers glimpses of Corriveau in stories, imaginings, and characters' dreams, this is the only scene in which a living, non-mythical Corriveau appears. From a narrative standpoint, this choice marks a departure from the rest of the novel. It is the sole instance of extended flashback; therefore, it immediately creates disorientation. The fact that the second speaker of the overheard, dinnertime dialogue is not revealed until the end of the scene also heightens this temporal confusion. When Harami, the soldier's brief companion, finds the dead man's identity papers after the explosion, we learn that we have just met Corriveau (121). Unlike the other characters, Corriveau is able to transcend the temporal boundaries otherwise respected in the novel. Thus, it appears he has briefly risen from the dead, Christ-like, and that we, the

unsuspecting readers who have also internalized the “Time of History,” or “Pedagogical Time,” fail to recognize him immediately.

In the Biblical account of when Christ raises from the dead after three days of entombment, his lifetime disciples exhibit a similar inability to know him or identify his body. In the gospel of Luke, the disciples do not recognize the roadside companion who joins them on their way to Emmaus as Jesus until the savior blesses the bread they are about to eat at the end of the evening (Luke 24: 13-31). Similarly, in the gospel of John, Mary Magdalene fails to recognize Christ when he first appears to her (John 20:14). In the gospel of John, it is not until Christ reveals the stigmata to Thomas that the former becomes recognizable, just as Corriveau, whose phantom presence dominates the novel, may not be recognizable to readers until Harami verifies the soldier’s identity with his official papers (John: 20:24-28). Out of the context of his coffin, Corriveau, like Christ, untombed, is rendered unfamiliar.

While this final scene reiterates Corriveau’s death, it also allows for his “rebirth” by rewinding time to return to a moment when Corriveau was living. The scene further clarifies that, like Christ, whose body cannot ultimately be located in the cave, nor can Corriveau’s body be located in the coffin. As foreshadowed in the scene of Corriveau’s arrival, when the soldiers prevent Mère Corriveau from prying off the lid of the coffin to gaze upon her son, the coffin, like the cave, is likely to be empty (47).

### 3.4 *Les Gros Sont Éternels: Grosing Up*

*“Les petits meurent; les gros sont éternels.” -La guerre, yes sir! (29)*

Part of the wounding of Corriveau’s body relates to the community’s impression that he has been incorporated into the mechanized and linear Time of History, his death unable to be undone or resignified. His life cut short, Corriveau will remain forever *petit*. The sense, though, that Corriveau disrupts the workings of time and acts as a hindrance to the fast-paced progression towards time’s end begins early in the novel. For example, when the soldiers stop at Bralington station, Corriveau slows the schedule, which endows him with an otherworldly quality that permits him to control time from the beyond. When the soldiers cannot find his coffin, they even imagine his delay as intentional and corroborate the image of the dead man as a supernatural being by imagining his post-death perigrinations: “Il n’est pas là. Il doit être descendu dégourdir les jambes” (27). Then, they remark that transporting the dead always poses schedule problems, a sentiment that lends credence to Dana Luciano’s idea that mourning is “an experience outside of ordinary time” (referenced in Freeman 33).

Once Corriveau has been delivered to his home, the clock seems to stop. The earlier, finite sense of linear time that diminishes the importance of Corriveau’s death changes to reflect a more cyclical, older form of measuring moments that Kristeva dubs “Women’s Time.” Kristeva characterizes Women’s Time by both “repetition” and “eternity” (191). She explains: “There are cycles, gestation, the eternal recurrence of a biological rhythm which conforms to that of nature” accompanied by “the massive presence of a monumental temporality, without cleavage or escape, [ . . . ] all-encompassing and infinite” (191). She adds that this feminine form of time is often associated with religion, especially with regards to myths of resurrection

and religious figures' ability to pass from one sphere to another without experiencing death. Kristeva specifically cites "the Virgin Mother [who] does not die but moves from one spatiality to another within the same time via dormition (according to the Orthodox faith) or via assumption (the Catholic faith)" (191). The Virgin Mary, which Kristeva evokes as an example of a divine figure that transcends space and time, hovers over the household scenes. Corriveau's mother leads the group in prayer to the Virgin until "La bonne Sainte Vierge avait fait comprendre à son coeur de mère que son fils était au ciel" (49). Participants in the wake also repeatedly call on the Virgin in a more sacrilegious way, as a sort of all-purpose swear word. Thus, she permeates all experiences, even those that are not religious in connotation, as another reminder that the wake takes place in "Women's Time" (62, 69, 113). This cyclical vision of time softens Corriveau's death by making it simply part of a natural, repeating process, in which beginnings always follow ends. In contrast to the Bralington station scene, where the conductor lacks the time to hear a new installment of the train station manager's life story and interrupts others in the name of efficiency, communication in the Corriveau household hinges on repetition. The scene of the soldiers' arrival begins with the repetition of words that the French Canadian characters cycle through again and again as they try to communicate with English soldiers, instructing them to place the coffin on the table. The characters also repeat speech acts when basic communication does not require it, as they return to their recitation of "Hail Marys" throughout the scene and move through the same acts: "L'on mangeait, l'on priait, l'on avait soif, l'on avait faim, l'on priait, l'on fumait, l'on fumait, l'on buvait" (57). Corriveau's inscription in Women's Time, contributes to his potential as a mythical figure for the village, who becomes "all encompassing and infinite" (Kristeva 191).

Bergson's explanation of *la durée* offers another way to imagine the creative work associated with Corriveau's rebirth in a "new time." In explaining the creative force associated with *la durée* as opposed to *le temps abstrait*, Bergson specifies that, in the former, "le portrait ressemblera sûrement au modèle et sûrement aussi à l'artiste; mais la solution concrète apportée avec elle cet imprévisible rien qui est le tout de l'œuvre de l'art. Et c'est ce rien qui prend du temps" (80). In *le temps abstrait*, on the contrary, "il suffit d'un travail de recomposition et de rearrangement," and what follows can only be composed of what came before, offering no space for creative change (80). Therefore, if Corriveau had remained trapped in *le temps abstrait*, the community could reconstitute him, like children assembling a puzzle (the metaphor Bergson uses to define *le temps abstrait*) but they could never conjure into being an image other than the one the separate pieces are designed to form. As clarified by Corriveau's death scene, Corriveau is profoundly human, fumbling, and flawed. His splintered figure perhaps cannot or should not be put back together again as is, like a human Humpty Dumpty with all of his cracks magnified. If anything, the potentially empty coffin or alternately, the coffin filled with a composite of bodies,<sup>26</sup> offers the space for the contemplation of a new meaning for Corriveau, one that has a collective message born of collaborative labor. In his end, exists the possibility for a response to Bouthillette's question: "Comment renaître à soi-même sans ressusciter ce qui ne demande plus à vivre?" (13)

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<sup>26</sup> The following passage from Christina Jarvis's *The Male Body at War* emphasizes the unlikelihood that Corriveau's body was whole or recognizable enough to guarantee its placement in the coffin. The coffin could have contained another soldier's body, parts from several bodies, or might have been vacant: "You would expect front-line soldiers to be struck and hurt by bullets and shell fragments, but such is the popular insulation from the facts that you would not expect them to be hurt, or sometimes killed, by being struck by parts of their friends' bodies violently detached. With the additional terror of corpses being booby trapped by the enemy, dead bodies in wartime could hardly be counted on to be whole or safe" (158).

#### CHAPTER 4. Conclusion: *Corps* and Clocks, Ticking Towards a New Time

“Nous partageons le malheur, alors il est moins gros” Anthyme, *La guerre, yes sir!*

If we accept that Carrier’s story functions as an allegory that speaks to larger concerns about the Anglophone-Canadian usurpation of the Francophone Québécois body and anxieties about “changing times,” what does Corriveau’s corpse mean as a “body-clock?” What kind of time does he keep and towards what is he ticking? To begin by answering the second question, I would argue that in the world of the novel, Corriveau becomes a time bomb, counting down toward a conflict that culminates in the villagers’ battle final with the English. Corriveau’s own body becomes contested terrain as the villagers struggle in the snow, perhaps remembering that when the remains arrived they had already been claimed with a *drapeau anglais*. From a broader perspective, we could read Corriveau’s volatile body as a communal *corps*, neither “whole [n]or safe,” the flickering fuse of Quebec prior to the *Révolution Tranquille* (Jarvis 158). In response to the second question, I would suggest that Corriveau is perhaps less of a clock and more of a compass, allowing his community members to use grief as a resource to “take their bearings and find their way” (Butler 23).

As Judith Butler writes, grief halts time to return us to “a sense of human vulnerability, to our collective responsibility for the physical lives of one another” (23). She continues:

To grieve and to make grief a resource for politics, is not to be reassigned to a simple passivity or powerlessness. It is, rather, to allow oneself to extrapolate from this experience of vulnerability to the vulnerability that others suffer through military incursions, occupations, suddenly declared wars, and police brutality. That our very survival can be determined by those who we do not know and over whom there is no final control means that life is precarious, and that politics must consider what forms of social and political organization seek best to sustain lives across the globe. (23)

In Butler's assessment of grief, personal pain always has the potential to reconfigure our thoughts on political suffering and often jars us from inertia. In the absence left by loss lies an opening where we may rethink our relationships to one another, both personally and politically. In the final scenes, the struggle between the French Canadians and the English Canadians in which one "English" soldier is killed allows the two communities to align briefly as each community grieves its losses together and perhaps calls into question the politics that contribute to the circumstances that result in two equally arbitrary deaths. The death of the English Canadian soldier during the battle has the palliative property of partially collapsing the boundaries between the two camps. Carrier equates the two bodies when the soldiers bring *le soldat anglais* into the house and place him on the kitchen table, across from Corriveau's coffin. Carrier presages this synthesis when, towards the end of the night, Corriveau's parents feed the English "comme s'ils avaient été des fils du village" (102). Through the parallel tragedy, and the soldiers' eventual willingness to affirm their partial appartenance to the Québécois home by participating in the ritual of eating, they briefly become honorary sons of the village. Although the English and the French Canadians grieve in different languages, Anthyme remarks, "ces maudits protestants savent prier aussi bien que les Canadiens français" (112). Moreover, just as the English watch over the dead Corriveau, Henri, one of the remaining Québécois soldiers, stays with the dead English soldier as the others attend Corriveau's funeral. The ending, with the emphasis on the equalizing effect of death, gestures toward the possibility of understanding. That said, it also serves as a reminder of the casualties of war and any colonial situation, emphasizing, once more, that colonialism dually wounds. Indeed, as Mair Vautier notes, more recent writings in post-colonial theory have tended away from the classic, dichotomous oppositionality, to investigate, instead "new kinds of side-by-sideness [which] leads to the

possibility of sharing cultural experience” (15). Nowhere is the idea of such side-by-sideness more literalized than in the image of the two coffins on the kitchen table of the Corriveau home.

Yet if the eye-for-an-eye violence equalizes, one death does not erase another, just as Corriveau’s “Christ-like” presence does not wash away the sins of colonial control. Isaiah 1:18 reads: “Though your sins be as scarlet, they shall be as white as snow” (*King James Bible*). The novel’s recurring images of blood-stained snow and the final line “La guerre avait sali la neige” affirms that the two soldiers’ deaths leave the souvenir of a stain but offer the hope to move beyond it (123).

Clearly, though, this process of “moving beyond” remains incomplete, and changes in perspective must be matched by changes in politics. The battle scene in the final pages of the novel dramatizes the fear that, even in death, even when it seems that the body has been returned and reclaimed, Corriveau’s body could still be usurped by the English. As they struggle in the snow in a tug-of-war over the coffin, the villagers yell, “Vous ne prendrez pas notre Corriveau” and “Vous n’aurez pas notre Corriveau,” then “Nous aurons notre Corriveau,” and “Corriveau est à nous” (106-109). Victor-Laurent Tremblay writes of this scene:

Aussi, les villageois perçoivent-ils le vol par les ‘maudits Anglais’ du cadavre de Corriveau lui est considéré comme ‘le fils de tout le village’ comme un désir de la part de ces derniers de s’approprier la valeur sacrificielle de mort qui les avait réunis, mort déjà paradoxale étant donné que Corriveau s’est fait tué à une guerre qui n’était pas la leur et que le cercueil est probablement vide puisque le corps de celui-ci a été déchiqueté par une mine.” (Tremblay 63-64)

As Tremblay asserts, the struggle is not only over the physical body; it is also a struggle over what the body means and over who has the power to decide how to remember and commemorate it. During the struggle, Bérubé represents the usurped living body that parallels the usurped dead body because he fervently fights on the side of the English: “Le soldat sans grade obéit comme il savait le faire. Il frappa sur les villageois comme si sa vie avait été en danger. Il devait frapper



plus fort que les gens du village et plus fort que les Anglais s'il voulait que quelqu'un le respectât" (108). Even knowing that Corriveau's fate may foreshadow his own, Bérubé still embodies what Memmi describes as "l'amour du colonisateur et la haine de soi" (136). As a result, he relinquishes all possibility of respect from his own community by bending to the English will, as confirmed by the villagers' disgusted evaluation of Bérubé as a traitor afterwards. This transformation is again confirmed when Bérubé replaces the fallen English soldier as one of the pallbearers, a reminder that all societal change occurs in fits and starts.

As Robin Wood writes, "Otherness represents what bourgeois ideology cannot recognize or accept but must deal with (as Barthes suggests in *Mythologies*) in one of two ways: either by rejecting it and if possible annihilating it, or by rendering it safe and assimilating it (27). Confronted with the now foreign, otherized body of Corriveau, the identity of which seems partially annihilated, the community strives to assimilate it. Feeling dismembered, they remember. Craving kinship, they symbolically consume the body. Experiencing the loss of a "fils du village," they seek solace in their remaining family members and affirm their common values through their participation in the wake and service. These revisions to the initial reading of Corriveau's corpse as infantilized, cannibalized, zombified, and relegated to the past allow the villagers to move past the wounds of colonial control, reclaim the soldier's broken body, and reaffirm Corriveau's membership in the clan. They transform grief into a ritual that heals rather than simply haunts and offer themselves a way to begin to overcome the communal trauma. Returned to a time that may resemble the past, and using grief for good, the villagers contemplate, with Corriveau as a compass, how best to envision the future.

What, then, will be the future of this novel? Although *La guerre, yes sir!* is a canonical work of Québécois literature, it remains understudied perhaps for reasons of accessibility to the

work and relevant literary criticism on it outside of Canada. My intention in undertaking this project has been to devote attention to a work of literature that deserves further consideration both as a novel that dramatizes the specificity of Quebec's colonial situation and as one that could also be studied as a part of a larger corpus of post-colonial literature. To date, I am unaware of any scholarly work on how the changing representations of the Québécois body coincides with Corriveau's transport out of a colonial realm, or how the novel traces the movement from a colonial to post-colonial society through its focus on the body. Quebec conforms to the definition of post-colonial offered in *The Empire Writes Back* in that its citizens "asserted themselves by foregrounding the tension with the imperial power, and by emphasizing their differences from the assumptions of the imperial centre" (2). But, its cultural specificity, complex layers of metropolitan and local control, and relative economic success undermine the easy and often reductive binaries so often used to understand colonial and neo-colonial power dynamics. I hope that additional work on *La guerre, yes sir!* will focus greater attention on the novel's potential to illuminate the past wounds of Quebec's colonial situation while also continuing to illuminate the kinds of personal and collective resilience that have allowed the province to define itself as a vital part of the Francophone literary world.

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## SUMMARY OF THE NOVEL

*La Guerre, yes sir!* (1968), the first work in Roch Carrier's *Trilogie de l'Age Sombre*, tells the story of the posthumous homecoming of a World War II soldier identified simply by his surname, Corriveau. The young man is the first member of his Québécois community to be killed in the war, and his death rattles the entire village. Carrier relates the story in a series of vignettes that depict both the transport of Corriveau's coffin by English Canadian soldiers (via train, then on foot through the snow) as well as the grieving family's reception of the body and the community's commemoration of Corriveau at the wake.

The novel begins with a scene that characterizes the book's bizarre blend of violence and dark humor: Joseph, a character who fears the draft, cuts off his hand with an ax to render his body unusable by the Canadian government, then laughs hysterically. In the next scene, Carrier introduces Amélie, a woman who lives with her husband and her lover. She shares her house with her original spouse, Henri, who is on leave from the war, and Arthur, a deserter she took in when he was fleeing authorities. She has since conceived children with Arthur, who has in many ways taken the place of her original husband. The men take turns sharing her bed and sleeping in the attic on their nights off.

The next scene begins with the image of the open body of a slaughtered pig, which has been killed by the character Arsène and his eldest son, Philibert. Carrier accords significant attention to the physical state of the animal, described as "déshabillé de sa peau" and reduced to "une immense blessure rouge" (20). Philibert compares the bloody animal to "Christ sur le Calvaire." This comparison angers the father, who subsequently beats his son for blasphemy (20). Shortly thereafter, the wounded Joseph relays to Arsène and Philibert that Corriveau will be delivered by seven "Anglais."



The narrative then shifts to a scene in Bralington Station, where the train delivering Corriveau has briefly stopped, despite delays caused by the excessive snow. The conductor verbalizes his worry about the delays as the English-Canadian soldiers step off of the train for a smoke break during which they sit on Corriveau's coffin. Before its removal, the casket was in a car stocked with primarily Anglophone alimentary products. The stationmaster reflects on the importance of the safe delivery of Corriveau and the significance of his death far from home, rather than "ici, dans le village, dans son lit" (29). An unnamed train station employee who is picking his nose fatalistically comments on the power struggle between *les gros et les petits* in which *les gros* always triumph, pronouncing "Les gros grosissent et les petits crèvent" (29).

Meanwhile, Madame Joseph returns home from a visit with neighbors during which she complains of her husband's new infirmity. En route, she finds a group of children playing hockey with her husband's severed hand. Madame Joseph and the children mutually insult each other until Madame Joseph intercepts the hand, which she returns to her husband, who is completely uninterested in reclaiming the lost part.

The narration then returns to the seven soldiers, who struggle to carry the heavy coffin from the train station to the Corriveau family home along the snow-covered road. The Québécois soldier Bérubé and his wife from New Brunswick, Molly, get off of the train at the same time as the soldiers. We learn that the newly-married couple met at a hotel bar where Molly, a prostitute, propositioned Bérubé. In the bedroom scene that follows, Bérubé remembers his religious upbringing and the ominous sound of a clock ticking, "toujours, jamais," reminding him of the eternal punishment for sin. Bérubé then proposes and asks Molly's name. She accepts, and they consummate the marriage. A short time afterwards, Molly, who is still wearing her wedding dress, allows Bérubé to carry her on his back through the snow. He drops her, in his

fatigue, and the two struggle on the ground. Molly reacts in indignation when Bérubé forcibly attempts to kiss her. Then, she leaves him to join the soldiers carrying Corriveau.

Back in the village, Amélie calls to Henri to join her in bed, but he remains at the window, watching the slow approach of Corriveau. A discussion of Corriveau and the sight, through the window, of the soldiers carrying his coffin interrupts the couple's potential physical intimacy. They realize that Corriveau was younger than they are and return to the bed to make love.

The soldiers arrive at the family home where they strategize and struggle to force the casket through the door. The family requests that Corriveau be placed on the table, but the parents and the soldiers cannot understand each other until Molly translates. Mother Corriveau requests that the English flag, referred to as simply "une couverture," be removed from her son's coffin. Corriveau's mother urgently demands that the soldiers be driven from the house, but the father, Anthyme Corriveau, only smokes his pipe. Mother Corriveau leads the mourners in several rounds of a comically-flubbed version of the "Hail Mary" before the soldiers move Corriveau from the kitchen to the living room and the villagers begin to eat.

In the following scene, Bérubé beats Molly when she walks downstairs in a sheer nightgown until one of the English soldiers intervenes and commands Bérubé to stop. The couple then goes upstairs to Corriveau's room to have sex. Downstairs, Corriveau's parents express their despair but seemingly find solace in continually feeding their guests. "Quand on a un mort dans la maison, il ne faut pas qu ça sente la mort," Mère Corriveau insists as she returns to the kitchen to bake more *tourtières* (pork pies) (56). Everyone reflects on the senselessness of the young Corriveau's death. To cheer Anthyme, one villager tells a mildly off-color joke that Corriveau once related to him. Anthyme then remembers that he received a letter from

Corriveau that he has not yet opened. Mère Corriveau reads the letter aloud, and the mourners learn that Corriveau has been awarded a medal. The letter “reverses time,” in a sense, by allowing the dead son to communicate with his parents and friends from beyond the grave, as indicated by the following phrase: “Ce n’était pas vrai qu’il était mort parce qu’il écrivait. Cette lettre corrigeait la vie” (64). Led by Amélie, the villagers lift up a profusion of prayers for the soldier’s soul, staring at the flickering votives and imagining the flames of hell. The Anglo-Canadian soldiers, “au garde-à-vous,” remain impassible and statuesque during these scenes. They are described as wooden and appear not to react to the sight of the mourning villagers, but their common internal monologue reveals that they see the French Canadians as “pigs.” The villagers discuss Corriveau’s sexual prowess, and enumerate the list of his conquests, the husband of one of whom is in attendance. The husband punches Pit, the villager who announced the conquests, in the teeth. Pit falls over backwards onto Corriveau’s coffin, and the soldiers briefly intervene to grab the two men, throw them outdoors into the snow, and return to their posts. The men continue fighting for a few minutes as the others pray. Then, they return to the house, bloodied and missing teeth. Upstairs, Molly awakes Bérubé, who smells of “Scotch et la saucisse pourrie,” so that they can make love again (69). They do so, violently.

A few taps at the window alert the villagers to the arrival of Esmalda, the dead man’s sister, who has taken religious orders that forbid her to enter into her father’s house. They manage to pull open the frozen-shut window, chilling the home, and Esmalda gives an eerie speech about how the living can be dead and the dead, living, in the Christian faith because Christ resuscitates the dead. She prays silently, then leaves.

While gesturing to indicate the size of the pig he killed, Arsène breaks a glass and wounds Arthur’s cheek, which bleeds profusely. Arsène compares Arthur to the slaughtered pig,

and Amélie says he looks like a wounded soldier. Mère Corriveau cries at the thought of her son. Arsène says he wishes he had gone to war to bloody up some Germans but says that their own soldiers probably do not see much blood but instead hide and “piss[ent] dans leur culotte de peur d’avoir attrapé un Allemand” (77). Bérubé overhears this disparagement and screams for Arsène to shut up.

A half-naked Bérubé with his fly open appears on the stairs and angrily bellows at Arsène. Zeldina wets her pants in fear. Bérubé subjects Arsène to a parody of basic training in which he insults and physically assaults his victim while commanding him to laugh because “[o]n s’amuse à la guerre” (79). Bérubé bullies Arsène into admitting he is “un tas de merde” then proclaims the trainee a good soldier (80). The commotion wakens Molly. When she walks downstairs, the men, all of whom have erections, admire her body through the sheer nightgown. She sits at the coffin to receive a small portion of *tourtière*. The soldiers refuse food. Afterwards, Bérubé engages Molly in his persecution of Arsène, ordering her to sit on the trainee’s shoulders while he marches and dances. A continuation of the soldiers’ internal monologue reaffirms their prior musings that the French Canadians are pigs. They wonder why the French Canadians will not accept the privilege of becoming English and speak “une langue civilisée” (92). The Sergent then gestures for the soldiers to throw the villagers out of the house.

Back at Amélie’s house, Henri has a nightmare. He has stayed at home to avoid being discovered by the soldiers. He imagines an enormous version of Corriveau’s coffin swallowing up everything in the village until only the coffin remains. He then imagines that the coffin is with him in the attic and that a hand is pushing his back toward it. He rushes out of the room wearing Arthur’s clothes and carrying his own shotgun.

Back at the Corriveau home, the expelled villagers grow angry, led by Joseph, who yells, “Les maudits Anglais nous ont tous pris, mais ils n’auront pas notre Corriveau” (101). Mireille, another child of the village with a brother similar in age to Corriveau, dreams that Corriveau in his coffin has taken the place of her brother in the adjacent bed and that he rises to light all ten of her toes, now candles, on fire. Corriveau’s parents feed the English soldiers and reflect on the arbitrary nature of their son’s death. Mère Corriveau goes out into the field to curse. The expelled villagers storm the house, led by Joseph. Soon, the English Canadians are all fighting the French Canadians, with the exception of Bérubé, who fights on the side of the soldiers. As Henri approaches the house, an “English” soldier comes toward him. Panicked that the soldier has come to take him back to the war, Henri shoots him. The dead soldier is taken inside and placed on the kitchen table. The two camps pray in their respective languages. Bérubé begins in French but finishes in English when the other mourners regard him as a traitor. Henri watches over the dead English-Canadian soldier. After hearing a noise in the walls, he shoots the Corriveau family’s cat.

At the funeral of the soldier, the priest delivers a hellfire sermon that echoes Esmalda’s words on life in death, asserting, that “nous vivons pour mourir et que nous mourons pour vivre” (115). Arsène and Philibert dig Corriveau’s grave in the frozen ground. Philibert reflects that he wants to go to war like Corriveau. The following scene, which takes place “ailleurs dans le monde” depicts Harami remembering the new soldier he had seen die on his first day at the front. After a brief, awkward exchange, the soldier, whom we later learn is Corriveau, wanders off to relieve himself and steps on a landmine, obliterating his body.

Back in the village, the soldiers lower Corriveau into the ground. At the last minute, the Sergent jumps into the grave to remove the flag. The soldiers place the fallen Anglo-Canadian in

a crudely-made coffin and cover it with the British flag that they removed from Corriveau's coffin. Bérubé helps the soldiers to carry the soldier, and Molly trails them, disappearing into the snowscape in her white dress. Carrier concludes, "La guerre avait sali la neige" (124).

## VITA

Tara Beth Smithson graduated from the University of North Carolina at Chapel Hill in 2001, with a Bachelor of Arts in English and Romance Studies. Prior to graduating, she participated in a year-long exchange with the Université Paul Valéry in Montpellier, France. In 2003, she obtained a Master of Arts in Teaching with a concentration in Secondary English Education from the University of North Carolina at Chapel Hill. She has taught English, American, and World Literature, French, Art History, and Creative Writing in the public schools in Chapel Hill and Misenheimer, North Carolina. During the summers of 2007-2009, she developed curricula for and instructed a multi-level French and Francophone culture course for gifted rising seniors at the North Carolina Governor's School. She also worked as an English Language Assistant in the cities of Lunel and Lattes, France, in 2001-2002 and 2007-2008, respectively. After completing her Master of Arts in French Literature, she will pursue doctoral studies at LSU.