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Abstract

America has generated a great deal of thought and writing in Quebec, but this commentary has never possessed the obsessiveness and anxieties that have characterized English Canadian writing on the United States. Yet both English- and French-speaking Canada share a vigorous and long-standing anti-American tradition. Indeed, from the eighteenth century to the present day, leading French Canadian writers and intellectuals have offered sweeping condemnations of American society. This apparent continuity masks a fundamental shift in the underpinnings of anti-American rhetoric in Quebec: primarily a left-wing idea today, anti-Americanism was essentially a right-wing doctrine until the postwar years. This paper explores the nature and origins of anti-Americanism in French Canada before 1945 and finds it tied to notions of anti-modernism on the part of French Canadian intellectuals.

Introduction

As a model or as a *bête noire*, America has never ceased to fascinate intellectuals. This is especially true in Canada, where the American presence looms especially large. For English-speaking Canadians, Canada's relationship with the United States possesses existential characteristics. Intellectual discourse on the nature of the Canadian experiment has long been preoccupied with the United States and the extent to which Canada should embrace or resist its neighbour to the south.

In French-speaking Canada, discourse on the United States has never been fully existential. America has generated a great deal of thought and writing in Quebec, but this commentary has never possessed the obsessiveness and anxieties that have characterized English Canadian writing on the United States. Yet both English- and French-speaking Canada share a vigorous and long-standing anti-American tradition. Indeed, from the eighteenth century to the present day, leading French Canadian writers and intellectuals have offered sweeping condemnations of American society. This apparent continuity masks a fundamental shift in the underpinnings of anti-American rhetoric in Quebec: primarily a left-wing idea today, anti-Americanism was essentially a right-wing doctrine until the postwar years. This shift occurred because America projected a different image before 1945. Intellectuals often highlighted America's revolutionary heritage and noted that the nation had embarked on a number of progressive experiments, including the New Deal. Moreover, until the advent of the Cold War, America was rarely associated with reaction or militarism, at least in Quebec.

American actions and policy have historically intensified or lessened French Canadian hostility, especially among the masses, but they have never proved fundamentally causal to elite anti-Americanism. This was particularly true after Confederation. Certainly, American expansionism did threaten Quebec before the Great War, but it had been a mitigated menace since the 1871 Treaty of Washington. Besides, American forcefulness has never upset all French Canadian thinkers – there has always been a group of continentalist intellectuals willing to forgive America for even its most serious misdeeds.

So what lies behind anti-Americanism? Before 1945, anti-American rhetoric reflected the intellectual's reading of modernity. Indeed, in early French Canadian discourse, America embodied both the promise and the dangers of the mass age. Social change in the Republic foreshadowed and fostered a status revolution in French Canadian society. For liberals, modernity and social change were not to be feared. They welcomed the mass age, and embraced America and continental integration. Theirs was an ethos of change. The French Canadian right did not share their enthusiasm, and conservative anxieties regarding modernity found a convenient outlet in anti-American rhetoric.

Modernity is a powerful and revolutionary force. It spawns new social groups and new forms of expression. In doing so, it produces a cultural and status revolution that overwhelms tradition and destroys established social relations and customs. Swept up in this

whirlwind, conservative intellectuals feared that the modern world would marginalize their ideals and their voice. Searching for order amid what they felt was anarchy, they clung to traditional values and lashed out at what they believed to be the very heart of modernity: America.

Previous scholarship on anti-Americanism in Quebec has mostly been centred on the concept of *américanité*. According to Yvan Lamonde, who initiated the historical profession to the concept in the 1980s, Quebec's history has been marked by a long struggle between those who embraced the province's *américanité* and those who rejected it. *Américanité* refers to Quebec's fundamentally American nature, to its Americanness, and should not, insists Lamonde, be confused with Americanization.¹ From the mid-nineteenth century to the postwar years, the bulk of Quebec's intellectuals would reject the province's *américanité*. 'Chez ces élites', writes Gérard Bouchard, whose work also explores Quebec's *américanité*, 'la fidélité à un passé largement imaginaire servit alors de programme pour les générations futures, la mémoire des origines se substituant à l'exaltation du rêve nord-américain'.² As a result, the bulk of Quebec's elite was out of step with both the populace and the continent's wider ethos of rupture and renewal.

The *américanité* paradigm is not without its critics. Chief among them is Joseph Yvon Thériault, who argues in a 2002 monograph that the concept impedes the understanding of Quebec's historical singularity. Moreover, he contends that Quebec's conservative and clerical elite did not reject the province's essential continentalism and were not completely out of step with its populace. These elites merely refused to accept that the American model – rupture – was endemic to the New World.³

I want to clarify this debate by showing that the concept of modernity was at the heart of intellectual discourse on the United States in late nineteenth- and early twentieth-century Quebec. In particular, this article examines the relationship, from 1891 to 1945, between anti-American rhetoric and anti-modernism in French Canadian thought and writing. During this period, Quebec experienced accelerated industrialization and urbanization, large-scale immigration, technological change and the rise of mass culture. To the province's intellectuals, many of these changes found their source and their very embodiment in the United States.

1891 is a significant year in the intellectual history of Canadian–American relations. One of the most momentous federal elections in Canadian history was held in March of that year. The election pitted the governing Conservatives and their protectionist National Policy

against the Liberals and their promises of unrestricted reciprocity with the United States. The campaign revolved around anti-Americanism and, in a pattern that would be repeated time and again in Canadian politics, anti-American rhetoric was used by the Conservatives to attack their Liberal opponents.⁴ The Tories were indeed successful at portraying the election not as a contest between free trade and protectionism, but as a mortal struggle pitting the forces of loyalty against those of treason.

1891 also saw the publication of two of the most important Canadian essays of the nineteenth century: Goldwin Smith's *Canada and the Canadian Question* and Édouard Hamon's *Les Canadiens français de la Nouvelle-Angleterre*. Smith's book argued that the Dominion was a geographic, ethnic, economic and political absurdity whose ultimate destiny lay in political union with the United States. Father Hamon reversed Smith's premise, arguing instead that America was moribund and that it was poised to dissolve into a series of nation-states, one of which would be French Canadian.

Both essays would have a notable impact in Canadian thought and writing. Smith's work generated a great deal of debate on the future of the Canadian state. Indeed, more than 60 years after its publication, Frank Underhill argued that all modern discussion of the 'Canadian question' still revolved around the points that Smith had raised in 1891.⁵ Hamon's work fed late nineteenth-century French Canadian nationalism by integrating the Franco-Americans of New England into its messianic reasoning. Previous writing on French Canadian migration to the United States had tended to denigrate Franco-Americans and to present the exodus as a dire threat to the survival of French Canada.

The period under study encompasses the heyday of conservative French Canadian nationalism. Grounded in Catholicism and tradition, this nationalism emerged as a structured movement at the turn of the twentieth century. It reached its summit of influence during the Great Depression and began to decline in the 1940s. Anti-American sentiment was already part of the nationalist world view in the 1890s, but it would intensify in the 1920s and 1930s as a new cohort of thinkers, led by abbé Lionel Groulx (1878–1967), stiffened the resistance to modernity and America that had characterized many of their precursors.

The present article is based on a comprehensive examination of French Canadian thought and writing on America. Fiction and non-fiction published between 1891 and 1945 was examined, most notably through an analysis of the era's periodical literature. Work by nationalist intellectuals was selected and, indeed, most of the era's

leading thinkers published commentary related to the United States or to Canadian–American relations.⁶

Modernity and the anti-American ethos

‘Il faut distinguer entre l’antiaméricanisme et la critique des États-Unis’, warns Jean-François Revel in an essay on *L’obsession anti-américaine*.⁷ This distinction is important, because anti-Americanism has historically implied a *systematic* hostility to American civilization, not merely a *punctual* criticism of American policy or life. By and large, anti-American thinkers were opposed to the United States on a fundamental level and rejected the notion that French Canadians shared a wider *américanité* with the people of the United States.

It should be noted, however, that the anti-American ethos was neither uniformly unsympathetic nor wholly uninformed; certainly, it was not entirely the product of bitterness and animosity. Prominent anti-American thinkers visited the United States and sometimes praised aspects of American life. Harry Bernard (1898–1979), for instance, received funding from the Rockefeller Foundation to complete a doctoral dissertation on American literature. A conservative intellectual who published several scathing critiques of the United States, he was nonetheless attracted by the vitality of its regionalist literature.

Anti-American rhetoric frequently involved inaccurate representations and irrational delusions, but irrationality was not intrinsic to anti-Americanism. French Canadian critics could, at times, prove surprisingly insightful and accurate in their assessment of American society. Besides, anti-American sentiment did not ultimately prevent these intellectuals from travelling to the United States or from interacting with Americans. Anti-Americanism was fundamentally different, in this regard, from the other major negative faiths, anti-Semitism and anti-communism, because it lacked their unconditional nature.⁸

Anti-Americanism is not an ideology per se, but a series of ideas woven into a wider system of beliefs.⁹ In pre-1945 Canada, these ideas were integral to the conservative ethos. Anti-Americanism was thus expressed most fully in the discourse of the nation’s dominant conservative families: English Canadian imperialism and French Canadian nationalism. Certainly, anti-Americanism has historically made for strange bedfellows, but more to the point, as sociologist Sylvie Lacombe has shown, nationalism and imperialism were not antithetical ideologies.¹⁰ Despite their fundamental divergence on the national

question, they both possessed an essentially anti-modern outlook, and anti-Americanism was their logical point of convergence.

French Canadian nationalism was fundamentally Catholic and was influenced by the counter-revolutionary intellectual tradition of France.¹¹ This ensured that nationalists would offer a stiffer resistance to modernity and America than their imperialist contemporaries, whose outlook was more temperate in its origins. However, since English Canada's ethnocultural proximity to its southern neighbour has historically made the United States the main focus of its nationalism, of its efforts at survival, imperialists were also more fixated on America than nationalists were.

The nationalist critique of American civilization was essentially social and cultural in nature. Nationalists saw French Canada primarily as a spiritual, ethnic and cultural entity, and consequently generated relatively little comment on American politics and government. Ultimately, the nature of political institutions mattered far less to intellectuals whose conception of *la race française en Amérique* was essentially ethnoreligious and cultural. Quebec's anti-Americans were conversely preoccupied with a number of social issues, such as the inherent materialism of American society and the immorality of American culture.

It has been written that anti-Americanism is 'a disease of the intellectuals'.¹² In the context of pre-1945 French Canadian thought, however, anti-American rhetoric was in fact the symptom of a far deeper affliction: anti-modernism. As Jackson Lears pointed out in his 1981 monograph on the anti-modern impulse in American thought, 'toward the end of the nineteenth century, many beneficiaries of modern culture began to feel they were its secret victims. Among the educated and affluent on both sides of the Atlantic, antimodern sentiment spread'.¹³ Modernity renewed the intellectual's function, yet most turn-of-the-century French Canadian thinkers were resolutely anti-modern, and a moderate traditionalism formed the core of their thought.

But why lash out at the United States? Because America, like the former Soviet Union, is more than a nation; historically it has embodied both a way of life and an ideological system with pretensions to universality.¹⁴ The American Republic is built on specific conceptions of liberty, equality, individualism and secularism, and has come to epitomize an explicitly liberal version of modernity. Moreover, as a revolutionary nation built on an ethos of rupture, America was quick to embrace the mass age and its social, cultural and technological transformations. Revealingly, in Quebec, the pre-1945 critique of the United States

was centred on a rejection of individualism, secularism, mass culture, materialism and industrialism. America was a nation where continuity, order and deference had vanished; it was the very heart of modernity.

Undoubtedly, modernity's multiple dimensions make it a difficult concept to grasp. According to historian Philip Massolin it all boils down to 'the replacement of Victorian society – agrarian, religious, adhering to a rigid set of philosophical and moral codes – with the modern age: industrial, secular, and anti-philosophical'. 'From an economic standpoint', he continues, 'it pertained to the arrival of an urban and industrial society that replaced a hoary agrarian-merchant system. Closely related to the process of urban-industrialisation, modernisation also involved the rise of a consumer, scientific-materialist, and technological society'.¹⁵

'Arquée sur le présent tout en visant constamment son propre dépassement, sa propre négation', writes philosopher Alexis Nouss, 'la modernité n'a rien à apprendre du passé'.¹⁶ The modern ethos is thus obsessed with change and newness. As a result, it invariably leads to a penchant for rupture and, in some cases, to unabashed revolutionism. Unlike traditionalism, which impedes 'l'affirmation de l'homme, du sujet', and reduces 'à la portion secondaire un espace terrestre, profane, matériel'.¹⁷ Modernity is anthropocentric, utilitarian and, in its moderate form, libertarian. Politically, it can lean towards either democracy or totalitarianism, but in both cases it will invariably corrode the power of traditional elites. In Canada, the penetration of modern ideas and practices was a slow and steady process that began in the late eighteenth century and reached its logical conclusion in the postwar era.

At the turn of the twentieth century, the attitude of many French Canadian intellectuals towards American civilization was not unlike the current outlook of countless thinkers in the developing world. In both instances, the dynamic nature of American society is viewed as a threat by elites intent on preserving existing institutions, values, practices and social relationships.¹⁸ In this sense, anti-American rhetoric is tied to the wider denunciation of the status revolution that inevitably follows the rise of modernity. Indeed, as Richard Hofstadter noted, late nineteenth-century industrialization 'transformed the old society and revolutionized the distribution of power and prestige'.¹⁹ Intellectuals anxiously observed that a new plutocracy of grandiosely wealthy men was emerging and stamping out traditional notions of status and deference.

Intellectual concerns regarding the ill-effects of the status revolution were tied to the more general middle-class anxieties that invariably follow rapid social change. These apprehensions were by

no means confined to Quebec; they could be found throughout Western Europe and North America. 'In both Europe and America, the antimodern impulse was rooted in what can aptly be called a crisis of cultural authority', writes Jackson Lears.²⁰ The power and prestige of intellectuals has always rested on their role as arbiters of culture. As a result, many French Canadian thinkers felt dispossessed by mass, or as they saw it, American culture, which was completely out of their control. Their sense of alienation was compounded by the Protestant and English-speaking nature of American society, and by the weight of America's cultural and economic presence in Quebec.

French Canadian intellectuals were aware that the United States was undergoing – indeed exporting – a status revolution, and nationalist critics were appalled by its implications. One of Quebec's leading interwar women writers, Ernestine Pineault-Léveillé (1892–1980), worried about the status of refined French Canadian women in the face of Americanization. The status revolution, she feared, would marginalize women of talent and standing and, in turn, would neutralize their influence over society. In America, she warned the readers of the *Revue dominicaine* in 1936:

la femme du monde n'est plus la femme d'un rang social élevé, d'une éducation soignée, d'une culture plus poussée. L'intérêt et l'argent ont tout nivelé avec quelques degrés dans l'égalité suivant la capacité de réception et d'adaptation des uns et des autres. On n'est plus bien souvent qu'une femme riche, ou simplement un membre anonyme, falot, sans influence dans la société.²¹

Nationalist writers were dismayed not only by the status granted by American society to millionaires, but also to sports stars and entertainers, those adulated heroes of mass culture. Indeed, while industrial capitalism produced a new plutocracy and a growing urban proletariat, mass culture spawned the modern superstar. Like many interwar *nationalistes*, the dean of the Université de Montréal's Faculty of Philosophy, Father Ceslas Forest (1885–1970), was horrified by the rise of the superstar and its implications for the status of the traditional elite. America's scale of values, he reasoned, was upside down:

Quels sont ceux que les jeunes Américains connaissent, admirent et envient? Les littérateurs, les savants, les artistes? Nullement. Ce sont les étoiles de l'écran, pour leur beauté; les étoiles du sport, pour leur force ou leur adresse ... Certains d'entre eux sont de

véritables gloires nationales. Ils jouissent d'une célébrité qu'aucun homme public, qu'aucun savant, qu'aucun artiste n'oserait ambitionner. Leurs traits que les journaux ne se lassent pas de reproduire sont souvent plus familiers aux jeunes américains que ceux du Président des États-Unis. Lors du Congrès eucharistique de Chicago, un journal reproduisit une photo où l'on voyait Babe Ruth donnant la main au Cardinal Légeat. Il n'est pas douteux que pour un grand nombre d'Américains, tout l'honneur était pour le Légeat du Saint-Siège.²²

Catholic clergymen were among the most zealous exponents of anti-Americanism. Their anti-modernism was often well-honed – rising secularism threatened to eradicate their moral and intellectual leadership. Yet anti-modern rhetoric was hardly confined to the presbytery. Modernity worried more than a few French Canadian intellectuals, and anti-modernism dominated French Canadian discourse from the late nineteenth century to the Second World War.

America through French Canadian eyes

For the nationalist right, various aspects of socio-political debate, including issues related to gender, identity or the economy, could be discussed through the prism of the United States. American society offered an unsettling glimpse into the not-so-distant future. The United States, as viewed through nationalist prose, was a dark and foreboding place: revolution had destabilized the nation's long-term political and social order; secularism and materialism were corroding the Republic's moral integrity and its culture; and massive industrialization was creating both a disaffected and unstable proletariat and a dangerous plutocracy of obscenely wealthy capitalists.

For Quebec's nationalist intellectuals, the core principles of the American experience – which they supposed were revolutionism, materialism, freedom, individualism and equality – were viewed as the underpinnings of an undesirable social order. They reflected a fundamental imbalance, a lack of order, which affected every aspect of American society.

American materialism was frequently denounced in French Canada, principally because Catholicism played such a major role in the formulation of nationalist discourse. 'Le matériel accapare la portion la plus considérable de l'énergie américaine', warned the

Université de Montréal's professor of American literature, Hermas Bastien (1897–1977), in 1936. America, he continued, was a 'civilisation d'essence économique' that embodied 'le libéralisme à l'état pur, oublieux des personnes et des distinctions ethniques'.²³ Others went further still. Drawing on the work of French intellectuals Jacques Maritain and Lucien Romier, Lionel Groulx offered a searing indictment of American materialism to a Catholic student association in 1928:

Bref, il semble que ce peuple vise plus bas que Dieu, ce qui, pour une civilisation chrétienne, est le commencement de tout désordre. 'Toutes nos valeurs dépendent de la nature de notre Dieu'. On aura beau faire, 'civiliser c'est spiritualiser'. Le progrès matériel peut y concourir dans la mesure où il permet à l'homme le loisir de l'âme. Mais s'il n'est employé qu'à servir la volonté de puissance et à combler une cupidité qui ouvre une gueule infinie, *concupiscentia est infinita*, il ramène le monde au chaos avec une vitesse accélérée. Lucien Romier peut écrire, s'il le veut, que ces conceptions de la vie ont cours chez le peuple 'le plus moralisant de la terre'. Il ne saurait se cacher néanmoins que les États-Unis sont déjà 'le pays où le principe de la famille semble le plus atteint'. Et quel fragile spiritualisme que celui qui n'a d'autre loi, d'autre inspiration que le *make money*, moralisme pragmatiste plutôt que religion, ne visant au surplus qu'à procurer la plus haute efficacité du travailleur, les conditions les plus favorables à la grande production!²⁴

Most nationalist observers were also reasonably critical of American liberty. It was generally assumed that freedom and order were out of balance in America, and that licentiousness was the result of American liberty. While serving as a chaplain in turn-of-the-twentieth-century Mississippi, Antonio Huot (1877–1929) warned the readers of *La Revue canadienne* in 1908 that 'le plus grand problème moral dont la solution s'impose, aujourd'hui, au peuple américain est celui-ci: où mettre les bornes entre la liberté et la licence?'²⁵ American society, he argued, was too permissive, relativistic and secular. Quebec's leading late nineteenth-century nationalist editor, Jules-Paul Tardivel (1851–1905), agreed:

En Angleterre on a quelques notions de liberté. Aux États-Unis on parle beaucoup de liberté. La langue anglaise a même deux mots pour exprimer la chose: liberty et freedom; deux beaux mots,

certes, qui arrondissent admirablement une phrase et qui font toujours éclater des applaudissements pourvu qu'on les prononce avec un peu d'emphase. Mais la Land of freedom n'a réellement pas la moindre idée de ce que c'est que la vraie liberté. La liberté qui existe aux États-Unis, est la liberté libérale ou maçonnique. Et cette liberté là – une fausse liberté – est très nuisible à l'Église, en ce sens qu'elle lui enlève de nombreux enfants et affaibli l'esprit de foi chez beaucoup de ceux qu'elle ne lui arrache pas entièrement.²⁶

Tardivel drew a great deal of inspiration from France's counter-revolutionary tradition and correspondingly held the idea of equality in low regard. He viewed American egalitarianism, like its French counterpart, as a radical attempt at class levelling:

Les hommes sont créés égaux dans ce sens que tous sont composés d'une âme et d'un corps, que tous sont mortels, que tous ont la même fin surnaturelle à laquelle ils ne peuvent parvenir que par la même aide d'En-Haut, la pratique des mêmes vertus, l'éloignement des mêmes péchés. Mais ce n'est pas dans ce sens métaphysique que les Révolutionnaires, tant Américains que Français, entendent l'égalité. Ils parlent de l'égalité sociale et politique. Or cette égalité n'a jamais existé, n'existera jamais, ne peut pas exister. Il n'y a peut-être pas deux hommes 'créés égaux' dans ce sens; il n'y a pas deux hommes qui possèdent exactement les mêmes qualités intellectuelles, les mêmes aptitudes, les mêmes dons physiques. Tous ne sont pas appelés aux mêmes rôles dans la société. Le fils est-il 'créé égal' à son père? L'imbécile, le *minus habens*, est-il l'égal, socialement, et politiquement parlant, de l'homme d'étude et de génie?²⁷

American political institutions generated little commentary among Quebec's nationalist intellectuals. American culture and education, by contrast, produced a great deal of writing. In the United States, argued nationalists, culture had become commodified and debased. America's intellectual elite had lost all cultural influence and culture was designed to appeal to the lowest common denominator. Moreover, as America's cultural influence grew after the Great War, its French Canadian detractors became more vocal.

Many French Canadian intellectuals were educators and, in their eyes, American schools and colleges embodied a distinctly new form of learning. American education was viewed as secular, egalitarian

and utilitarian. This, of course, could only draw the ire of conservative nationalists, who held these values in low regard. Education, they believed, was a moral and spiritual endeavour whose main purpose was to separate the wheat from the chaff and, ultimately, to prepare an elite for the challenges of leadership. It was also, insisted Jules-Paul Tardivel, a private endeavour. In his 1900 essay on *La situation religieuse aux États-Unis*, he fustigated 'le principe radicalement faux et souverainement funeste qui fait de l'éducation de l'enfance une fonction de l'État, une œuvre politique'.²⁸

Issues related to race and ethnicity in the United States also generated a fair degree of criticism in Quebec. However, many nationalist intellectuals suffered from an essential dilemma: how could they criticize America's mistreatment of its racial minorities without actually appealing for racial equality? Most resolved this quandary with a healthy dose of paternalism. Indigenous people and African Americans deserved protection, but not necessarily equality.

For some turn-of-the-twentieth-century nationalists, both the Republic's treatment of its black population and the African American himself were viewed as blemishes on American society. Indeed, though segregation and racial violence were denounced in nationalist writing, Black Americans were seldom treated as intellectual and moral equals. For instance, in 1902, abbé Antonio Huot condemned 'l'infranchissable *color line*, comme on dit en ce pays, qui empêche les blancs et les noirs de voyager en chemin de fer, dans le même wagon, et de dîner au restaurant à la même table, dans les anciens États esclavagistes'. Yet, in the same breath, he insisted that 'la race noire est une race inférieure, et il serait absolument chimérique de croire qu'il soit possible au nègre, placé dans les mêmes conditions que le blanc, d'atteindre le niveau intellectuel de celui-ci'.²⁹ Commentary on immigration generated a similar dilemma. Given the presence of a large French Canadian immigrant population in New England, many nationalists were inclined to welcome the rise of multiculturalism in the United States. But these same observers also tended to be critical of large-scale immigration in Canada, so they often confined their critical remarks on immigration in the United States to specific groups, most notably to the Irish and to Jews.

In Quebec, elite hostility to the Irish frequently revolved around ethnic tensions within the Roman Catholic Church. Many French Canadian intellectuals accused the Irish-American episcopate of dominating the American Church and of trying to assimilate Franco-Americans. For their part, American Jews occasionally embodied the

contradictory stereotypes of capitalist greed and revolutionary agitation in nationalist writing. For instance, in 1924, Harry Bernard argued that the American movie industry was controlled by Jews – ‘les pellicules qu’on nous montre sont, à de rares exceptions près, de provenance américaine, ou, pour mieux dire, judéo-américaine’ – and that Jewish movie moguls were enriching themselves by promoting immorality and subversion:

Les Juifs, outre le but de déchristianisation qu’on leur prête, ont pour principal objet de réaliser de l’argent et de mettre la main sur les finances du monde. En s’emparant du cinéma, ils ne songent pas tant à faire de l’art qu’à s’accaparer la richesse. Pour arriver à leurs fins, rien ne sera négligeable ni trop bas; ils exploiteront les passions sous toutes les formes, flatteront les instincts. Ils n’ont aucun souci de la morale ni de l’ordre, et le merveilleux moyen d’éducation qu’est le cinéma deviendra entre leurs mains, à cause de leur soif d’or et de leur rage de domination, un outil de dépravation, une école de corruption et de révolution. S’ils y voient une raison d’attirer les foules, et d’emplir la caisse, ils propageront les idées anti-sociales, se feront les champions du divorce ou de l’amour libre, à l’occasion des pratiques malthusiennes. Naturellement ennemis de l’ordre, ils accorderont un appui bienveillant au socialisme le plus destructeur. Pour eux, il n’y a d’important que ce qui fait recette.³⁰

Anti-American rhetoric also contained powerful gendered messages.³¹ Many nationalists were concerned by what they saw as rising gender equality in the United States, which they believed was as an affront to traditional notions of the complementarity of the sexes. American women were abandoning their established role as wives and mothers; they were invading the public sphere and, worse still, were given to promiscuity. The implication was clear: modernity was corrosive to traditional gender relations; it was turning women into men.

Nationalists placed a great deal of importance on the role of women in *la survivance*, and perceived American attitudes towards gender equality were viewed as a threat to the nation. On occasion, the issue would surface in French Canadian literature. In *La campagne canadienne* (1925), for instance, Jesuit Adélarde Dugré (1881–1970) contrasted gender relations in the United States and Canada and warned his readers against emigration and mixed marriages. During a trip to rural Quebec, the novel’s protagonist, Franco-American

physician François Barré, is awakened to the harsh reality of his family's degeneracy:

Devant ces hommes si simplement maîtres chez eux, qui avaient une idée si nette et si ferme de ce que doit être la famille, le docteur américain se sentait humilié de l'anarchie qui régnait à son foyer. Vraiment sa femme y prenait trop de place. Qu'elle eût une voix prépondérante quand il s'agissait des choses de son ressort, passe. Quelle s'occupât seule de meubler la maison, de choisir ou de renvoyer les servantes, qu'elle allât même jusqu'à déterminer l'emploi des soirées libres, le but et l'itinéraire de leurs voyages, passe encore; mais qu'elle se chargeât d'orienter la carrière de son mari, de choisir sa clientèle et de lui indiquer son gagne-pain, c'était trop fort. En cela c'est lui, François, qui devait être juge suprême et maître souverain. Il était temps que Fanny l'apprît et l'acceptât. Il y a des cas majeurs où la femme doit obéir et se taire, si elle ne peut pas approuver et se réjouir.³²

In Dugré's novel, François Barré's son is out of control and his wife is disobedient, domineering, irreligious and immodest. The Barrés were, it seemed, a typical American family.

French Canadian nationalists were also quick to identify America with the evils of *machinisme* and the unregulated market. Indeed, though they were very much in favour of free enterprise, nationalists regularly denounced industrial gigantism and monopolistic capitalism, preferring instead a system where industry was more decentralized, both in terms of its ownership and of its location. American investment in Canadian industry was furthering the economic marginalization of French Canadians. It was upsetting the balance between urban and rural society, and was producing both obscene wealth and a restless and underprivileged working class.

The Great Depression confirmed nationalist apprehensions regarding massive industrialization and laissez-faire capitalism. Paul-Henri Guimont (1906–2000), for instance, blamed the crisis on American industrial gigantism. A rising star at Montreal's hotbed of Catholic economic thought, the *École des Hautes Études commerciales*, Guimont argued in 1935 that America had broken the natural equilibrium between agriculture and industry. Indeed, an over-reliance on massive and heavily standardized industrial production had been its undoing:

Dans la formation de son économie, elle avait fondé sur la formule nouvelle et vulgaire de la standardisation industrielle

d'extravagantes et insatiables ambitions. Elle avait méprisé le génie créateur et conservateur de la vieille Europe. L'originalité dans la conception lui était inconnue. Elle s'était gratifiée d'une superstructure industrielle excessive à laquelle correspondait une population trop peu nombreuse.³³

French Canada and the United States

Negative assessments of American society served a higher purpose. They helped French Canadian intellectuals define their national experience, most notably by presenting Quebec as a fundamentally conservative, anti-American entity. Unlike the United States, Quebec was founded on the bedrock of tradition and continuity. For Father Adélarde Dugré, the contrast between these two entities was evident: French Canadian society was 'simple, patriarcale, essentiellement catholique et conservatrice', while American society was 'éblouissante et tapageuse, protestante et matérialiste'. Quebec, as the inheritor of pre-revolutionary France, was the embodiment of Catholic tradition, while America was the quintessence of both Protestantism and modernity. Accordingly, Dugré began *La Campagne canadienne* with the following preface:

Il existe actuellement, dans l'Amérique du Nord, deux civilisations fort différentes: l'une est représentée par cent millions d'Anglo-Saxons, l'autre par trois ou quatre millions de Canadiens d'origine française. Ce qui distingue ces deux groupes inégaux, ce n'est pas seulement la langue qu'ils parlent et la foi religieuse de la grande majorité de ceux qui les composent, c'est aussi la diversité dans les manières d'agir, la divergence de vues dans la façon d'envisager la vie, ses jouissances et ses devoirs. On a hérité, au Canada français, du tempérament et des traditions de la France catholique du dix-septième siècle; on a hérité, chez les Américains anglo-saxons, du libre examen et de l'esprit utilitaire des Anglais du règne d'Élisabeth ... Cette opposition dans le caractère des deux groupes ethniques se trahit constamment dans la pratique de la vie: l'exercice du culte divin, les coutumes familiales, l'éducation, la littérature, le commerce et la réclame, les procédés électoraux, les fêtes populaires, tout traduit à l'observateur le moins attentif les profondes différences qui distinguent le Canadien resté français de l'Américain-type.³⁴

But French Canadian distinctiveness was not only based on Catholicism and French language and culture, it was also racial. Americans, it was argued, were Anglo-Saxons, and French Canadians, as Latins, were their racial antipodes. The two races, indeed, possessed fundamentally different characteristics. As Father Édouard Hamon (1891–1904) noted in *Les Canadiens-Français de la Nouvelle-Angleterre* (1891), ‘le caractère français est juste aux antipodes du caractère anglo-saxon-américain. Autant l’un est gai, expansif, sans souci, compatissant avec les misères des autres, prêt aux sacrifices les plus généreux, autant l’autre est froid, concentré, calculateur et égoïste’.³⁵ These racial differences would inevitably spawn two fundamentally distinct societies.

Nationalist intellectuals believed that French Canadian distinctiveness was threatened by the United States, and Americanization was a major issue of concern in Quebec. This was particularly true during the interwar years, when nationalists were alarmed by the rapid spread of American popular culture. Americanization, it was argued, was a sly form of assimilation precisely because it relied on seemingly benign (i.e. cultural) means of propagation. Indeed, as journalist and literary critic Victor Barbeau (1894–1994) noted in 1922, while Britain’s attempts to assimilate French Canada through violence and legislation had failed, American efforts to weaken French Canadian *survivance* with movies, jazz, chewing gum, comics, soft drinks, chorus girls and baseball were succeeding:

Ce sont eux, en tout cas, que les Américains y emploient. Le pays en est infesté d’une rive à l’autre. Vassal économique des États-Unis, le Canada est en passe de devenir également son vassal spirituel. Canadiens-anglais et Canadiens-français ne pensent, ne vivent, ne jugent que par leurs voisins. Dans tous les étages de la société leur influence pénètre et se développe. On ne va au cinéma que pour voir glorifier leurs prouesses, admirer leur ingéniosité, applaudir leur drapeau. On ne lit leurs journaux, leurs revues que pour apprendre les derniers de leurs exploits, les plus beaux de leurs accomplissements politiques ou sportifs. Ils nous écrasent de leur vie nationale. Nous ne semblons exister que pour nous féliciter de les avoir comme voisins et nous appliquer à leur ressembler le plus possible.³⁶

But Americanization did not only rely on cultural means to propagate itself. Emigration and American investment were also cited as vectors of Canadian–American convergence. Even women were occasionally

accused of contributing to Quebec's Americanization. 'La femme est l'un des grands facteurs responsables de l'américanisme au Canada', wrote Ernestine Pineault-Léveillé in 1936. 'L'américanisme', she continued, 'a désaxé la femme. En lui proposant toutes les libertés, en la sortant du foyer dont elle est la reine et maîtresse naturelle, en obnubilant sa conscience et troublant sa foi, il brisa du même coup la famille, aggrava le problème économique et disqualifia la société'.³⁷

The growth of international unionism also angered many on the nationalist right. Quebec's Roman Catholic clergy viewed American unions as dangerous agents of secularism and assimilation, and saw itself as engaged in a life and death struggle with international unionism for the soul of Quebec's proletariat. Indeed, as far as the Catholic Church was concerned, issues related to labour and industry were inseparable from religion. As a result, theological arguments dominated nationalist criticism of international unionism. The editor of *Le Devoir*, Henri Bourassa (1868–1952), summed up the nationalist position in a 1919 pamphlet:

Le syndicalisme international et neutre est pernicieux en soi et dans tous les pays, parce qu'il ne tient aucun compte, dans la recherche des avantages qu'il propose à ses adhérents, de Dieu, de la famille et de la patrie, ces trois assises fondamentales de l'ordre social chrétien. Le péril est incomparablement plus grand ici que partout ailleurs, à cause de l'unique voisinage des États-Unis. Le syndicalisme international veut dire, au Canada, le complet assujettissement des travailleurs canadiens aux caprices et à la domination du travail américain syndiqué. C'est l'une des manifestations les plus complètes et les plus prenantes de la conquête morale et économique du Canada par les États-Unis.³⁸

Nationalist intellectuals refused to accept the notion that class solidarity could transcend borders and religious denominations, and they were fervently opposed to the establishment of a secular, American space within Quebec's proletariat. Secularism, indeed, was a veritable Pandora's box. 'La neutralité a fait du syndicalisme américain un champ propice à la contagion des erreurs (révolutionnaires, socialistes)', wrote Catholic labour leader Alfred Charpentier (1888–1982) in 1920, 'il n'aspire sans cesse qu'à des réformes de plus en plus égalitaires; il se fait de la sorte, plus ou moins à son insu, le précurseur du socialisme'.³⁹ International unions, it was argued, had a penchant for strikes, violence and, ultimately, for subversion. Indeed, in nationalist prose, America itself was often viewed as a *terreau fertile* for radicalism.

Conclusion

The rise of modernity invariably produces two basic sensibilities. In pre-1945 Quebec, however, the essential dichotomy between modern and anti-modern thought was expressed, in part, by a debate centred on the province's *américanité*. The thrust of anti-Americanism in Quebec was undeniably anti-modern. During the period under study, French Canada was a traditional society undergoing rapid change and the disintegration of premodern social relations. American society came to embody these changes to the French Canadian intellectual. As a result, most French Canadian writing on America contained an encrypted commentary on the mass age.

In early twentieth-century Quebec, where political institutions were not generally viewed as vital elements of national distinctiveness, social and cultural affairs dominated writing on the United States. Anti-American rhetoric was present in nationalist writing before the Great War, but it intensified in the 1920s and 1930s, as the American presence in the province increased and fears related to cultural Americanization and the economic marginalization of French Canadians grew. With the weakening of imperialist sentiment in postwar English-speaking Canada, many intellectuals began to regard the United States as the chief threat to French Canadian *survivance*. By the 1940s, however, anti-Americanism had begun to decline as nationalist rhetoric became less intensely Catholic and conservative. This would not result in its disappearance from French Canadian discourse, however, and the anti-American torch would be passed on to Quebec's nascent left during the Quiet Revolution. Indeed, despite its many ups and downs, anti-Americanism has remained present in French Canadian discourse since the late eighteenth century. America's symbolic significance, coupled with its economic and cultural presence in Quebec, has ensured this continuity.

Notes

- 1 Yvan Lamonde, *Ni avec eux ni sans eux: le Québec et les États-Unis* (Montreal: Nuit Blanche, 1996), 11.
- 2 Gérard Bouchard, 'Le Québec comme collectivité neuve. Le refus de l'américanité dans le discours de la survivance', in *Québécois et Américains: la culture québécoise aux XIX^e et XX^e siècles*, eds. Gérard Bouchard and Yvan Lamonde (Montreal: Fides, 1995), 16.
- 3 Joseph Yvon Thériault, *Critique de l'américanité. Mémoire et démocratie au Québec* (Montreal: Québec-Amérique, 2002), *passim*.
- 4 Patricia K. Wood, 'Defining "Canadian": Anti-Americanism and Identity in Sir John A. Macdonald's Nationalism', *Journal of Canadian Studies* 36 (2001): 49–50.
- 5 Frank Underhill, 'Canada and the Canadian Question, 1954', in his *In*

- Search of Canadian Liberalism* (Toronto: Macmillan, 1960), 214.
- 6 Pascal Ory's definition of the intellectual has been applied to this study. 'L'intellectuel', Ory argues, 'est un homme du culturel mis en situation d'homme du politique, producteur et consommateur d'idéologie'. (Pascal Ory and Jean-François Sirinelli, *Les intellectuels en France, de l'Affaire Dreyfus à nos jours* [Paris: Armand Colin, 1986], 10). On the whole, the intellectuals examined in this study were essentially cultural figures – journalists, clergymen, etc. – who became involved in socio-political debate without directly entering the world of partisan politics.
 - 7 Jean-François Revel, *L'obsession anti-américaine: son fonctionnement, ses causes, ses conséquences* (Paris: Plon, 2002), 247.
 - 8 Pascal Ory, 'From Baudelaire to Duhamel: An Unlikely Antipathy', in *The Rise and Fall of French Anti-Americanism: A Century of French Perception*, eds. Denis Lacorne et al. (New York: St. Martin's Press, 1990), 42.
 - 9 Indeed, as historian Réal Bélanger notes, 'l'antiaméricanisme et le proaméricanisme n'ont de signification que dans leur rapport avec un plus grand ensemble idéologique qui leur sert de référent'. (Bélanger, 'Le spectre de l'américanisation: commentaire', in *Les rapports culturels entre le Québec et les États-Unis*, ed. Claude Savary [Quebec: IQRC, 1984], 168).
 - 10 Sylvie Lacombe, *La rencontre de deux peuples élus. Comparaison des ambitions nationale et impériale au Canada entre 1896 et 1920* (Quebec: Presses de l'Université Laval, 2002), passim.
 - 11 Nevertheless, as Pierre Trépanier notes, 'l'ultramontanisme, comme le conservatisme modéré, avait pour tradition de référence non seulement la contre-révolution française, mais surtout une synthèse proprement canadienne-française intégrant partiellement le traditionalisme britannique, avec sa singularité: le parlementarisme. L'ultracisme canadien-français ne coïncidera jamais parfaitement avec son homologue français. Joseph de Maistre, oui, mais aussi Edmund Burke et Louis-Hippolyte La Fontaine, dont la conquête de la responsabilité ministérielle a été saluée comme une victoire nationale, nationaliste même'. (Trépanier, 'Notes pour une histoire des droites intellectuelles canadiennes-françaises à travers leurs principaux représentants (1770–1970)', *Cahiers des Dix* 48 [1993]: 122.)
 - 12 J. Van Houten quoted in J.L. Granatstein, *Yankee Go Home: Canadians and Anti-Americanism* (Toronto: HarperCollins, 1996), 6.
 - 13 Jackson Lears, *No Place of Grace: Antimodernism and the Transformation of American Culture, 1880–1920* (New York: Pantheon Books, 1981), xiii.
 - 14 Guy Sorman, 'United States: Model or Bête Noire', in *The Rise and Fall of French Anti-Americanism*, ed. Lacorne et al., 213. According to Stephen Brooks, 'America as a "city upon a hill" and America as an "evening land" are two sides of the same coin. The coin involves the utopian expectations associated with America, or what [I call] the mythic meaning of America. Most of the millions of people who have left their native countries for America, to live or visit, have come in search of something far less grand than utopia. But foreign observers of the American scene ... have understood that America represented an important new chapter in human history and that its potential for greatness lay not in economic brawn or military prowess, not in its engineering marvels or its ability to assimilate millions of immigrants from countless nationalities, but in the ideals embodied in its social structures and political institutions'. (Brooks, *America Through Foreign Eyes: Classical Interpretations of American Political Life* [Don Mills, Ontario: Oxford University Press, 2002], 150).
 - 15 Philip Massolin, *Canadian Intellectuals, the Tory Tradition, and the Challenge of Modernity, 1939–1970* (Toronto: University of Toronto Press, 2001), 3.
 - 16 Alexis Nouss, *La modernité* (Paris: Presses universitaires de France, 1995), 15, 19.
 - 17 Yvan Lamonde, 'La modernité au Québec: pour une histoire des brèches (1895–1950)', in *L'avènement de la modernité culturelle au Québec*, eds. Yvan Lamonde and Esther Trépanier (Quebec: Presses de l'Université Laval, 1986), 307.
 - 18 Alvin Z. Rubinstein and D.E. Smith, 'Anti-Americanism: Anatomy of a Phenomenon', in *Anti-Americanism in the Third World: Implications for U.S. Foreign*

- Policy*, eds. A.Z. Rubinstein and D.E. Smith (New York: Praeger, 1985), 17.
- 19 Richard Hofstadter, *The Age of Reform from Bryan to FDR* (New York: Vintage Books, 1955), 136
 - 20 Lears, *No Place of Grace*, 5.
 - 21 Ernestine Pineault-Léveillé, 'Notre américanisation par la femme', *Revue dominicaine* XLII (1936): 146.
 - 22 Ceslas Forest, 'Notre américanisation par les sports', *Revue dominicaine* XLII (1936): 350–1.
 - 23 Hermas Bastien, 'L'américanisation par la philosophie', *Revue dominicaine* XLII (1936): 201.
 - 24 Lionel Groulx, *Nos responsabilités intellectuelles* (Montreal: L'Action française, 1928), 28.
 - 25 Antonio Huot, 'Aux États-Unis: Les universités', *La Revue canadienne*, New Series, II (1908): 554.
 - 26 Jules-Paul Tardivel, *La situation religieuse aux États-Unis. Illusions et réalités* (Quebec: Cadieux et Derome, 1900), 38, 195–6.
 - 27 Tardivel, *La situation religieuse aux États-Unis*, 128.
 - 28 Tardivel, *La situation religieuse aux États-Unis*, 153.
 - 29 Antonio Huot, 'Mœurs américaines. Blancs et noirs', *La Nouvelle-France* I (1902): 370, 376.
 - 30 Harry Bernard, 'L'ennemi dans la place: Théâtre et cinéma', *L'Action française* XII (1924): 70, 71–2.
 - 31 Wood, 'Defining "Canadian"', 53.
 - 32 Adélarde Dugré, *La campagne canadienne. Croquis et leçons* (Montreal: Le Messager, 1925), 202.
 - 33 Paul-Henri Guimont, 'Coup d'œil sur l'Amérique contemporaine', *L'Actualité économique* XI (1935): 55.
 - 34 Dugré, *La campagne canadienne*, 5–6, 234.
 - 35 Édouard Hamon, *Les Canadiens-Français de la Nouvelle-Angleterre* (Quebec: N.S. Hardy, 1891), 120.
 - 36 [Victor Barbeau], 'La politique: La méthode américaine', *Les Cahiers de Turc* V (1922): 31, 34.
 - 37 Ernestine Pineault-Léveillé, 'Notre américanisation par la femme', 132.
 - 38 Henri Bourassa, *Syndicats nationaux ou internationaux?* (Montreal: Le Devoir, 1919), 3.
 - 39 Alfred Charpentier, *De l'internationalisme au nationalisme* (Montreal: L'Action française, 1920), 13.

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