Quebec's Youth: The Generation of the October Crisis in Recent Historical Fiction

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In 2010, marking the fortieth anniversary of the October Crisis, Les Éditions du Boréal published three works of historical fiction that tell the story of this tumultuous period in Quebec: *La constellation du Lynx,* by journalist, literary critic, and fiction writer Louis Hamelin; *21 jours en octobre*, by educator and writer Magali Favre; and *Mesures de guerre* by novelist André Marois. Many other works of fiction having this important event as a framing theme have appeared before and since 2010,[1] often around ten-year anniversaries of the Crisis. For Quebec nationalists, the loss of New France to the British in 1763, the failed Patriot Rebellions of 1837 and 1838, and the October Crisis all represent oppression by the British and later by the Canadian Anglophone majority and threats to their Francophone and cultural identity. Given that the October Crisis is the most fresh in people's minds, it is logical that it is the topic of over 100 works, about a quarter of which are fictional accounts.

In *21 jours en octobre, Mesures de guerre*, and *La constellation du lynx,* the authors depict fictional characters in fictional situations within the context of the October Crisis. With a palette of forty characters, more

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[1] The Website of the Bibliothèque et Archives nationales du Québec contains a section dedicated to historical and fictional works on the subject of the October Crisis. See http://www.banq.qc.ca/collections/collections_patrimoniales/bibliographies/crise_octobre.html#9

than three times the number used by the other authors, Louis Hamelin chooses to place some of them in documented historical situations such as elections, kidnappings, and imprisonments between 1943 and 2008. By recasting several known figures as fictional ones in the style of a *roman à clé,* Hamelin need not explain their fame, but is able to "conjure up a feeling for [the] political culture" of the period (Watson 36). Most important to the analysis of these historical novels is that the heroes and antiheroes are fictional and placed in fictional situations. Hence, "the writers are free to exercise their imagination and offer critical descriptions of a period which might startle readers out of their assumed familiarity with the past and prompt them to reconsider their understandings of the evolving history of that period and place" (Watson 35). Because the authors focus on telling the story of someone unknown, "the attention and the expectations of the reader lie not in events, but rather in the evocation of a place or time, a cultural milieu or an alternative and different perspective on the history of a generation" (Watson 36). Favre and Marois's boy antihero and hero inspire young readers to wonder what it was like to be a youth during the October Crisis. Hamelin leads his more mature readers to wonder how aware the Québécois were of the events of October 1970 as they were unfolding and what impact they had on everyday people.

The everyday people portrayed and the target audience of the works are the Francophones of Quebec and the focus of all of the novels studied here is their alienation due to inadequate living conditions, predatory working conditions, and discrimination leading up to and during the Crisis. In each work, the author establishes a dialectic of social classes and language groups and the tension between the groups reveals his or her ideology. The narratives demonstrate the poor living and working conditions delineated in 1966 by Pierre Vallières, the intellectual leader of the Front de Libération du Québec (FLQ), in his *Nègres blancs d'Amérique,* and outlined in 1970 by the authors of the manifesto of the FLQ, the group responsible for the Crisis. The Francophone characters who work and their family members "ont conscience de leur condition . . . d'exploités, de citoyens de seconde classe" (Vallières 50). The characters echo the displeasure of the Québécois people faced with the inequality of the period as outlined in the same documents. While Favre, Marois, and Hamelin show the freedom of mostly young, working-class Francophones to struggle against the wealthier, Anglophone class in an attempt to overcome alienation, change history, and achieve a "société

libre," they also show the negative results of the assemblies and union meetings in the wake of the violent acts of the FLQ as innocent characters are jailed ("Le manifeste").

The Marxist critic Georg Lukács, according to Titus Stahl, defines "alienation" as "the socially induced incapacity of individuals to participate in . . . the social totality" ("Georg"). Lukács also claims that the overcoming of alienation requires social change (Stahl n.p.). Most of the characters, though not necessarily the heroes and antiheros of *21 jours en octobre, Mesures de guerre*, and *La constellation du lynx,* acknowledge their insufficient housing, desire the right to work in French for better wages and in better conditions, and pursue equal rights during the October Crisis to no avail. Slum conditions, poverty, work as "cheap labor" or unemployment, and the accompanying misery and mockery are sources of the alienation that many characters experience and which compel some of them to violent action as part of the FLQ (Favre 105). Others are briefly jailed, without due process, by association, which constitutes oppression. Neither the innocent upon their release nor the guilty from their prison cells are able to change the system which oppresses them. The characters arrested during the implementation of the War Measures Act are subordinated and thwarted from achieving "their full human dignity" (Eagleton 29). The purpose of the present study is, therefore, to show that in spite of the efforts of this largely young group of characters to overcome alienation caused by poor living conditions, egregious work environments, and discrimination, they do not achieve the social change that they desire.

Before looking further at these three works themselves, it is helpful to situate their plots during Quebec's sovereignty movement and, in turn, to place its beginnings in a global context. While Algerians were fighting the French for their independence (1954-1962), the Civil Rights Movement was underway in the United States (1954-1968), Britain was beginning to campaign for the eradication of apartheid (1960-98), and Catholics were protesting in demand of equal rights in Northern Ireland (1967-1972), French Canada was going through its own awakening, emerging from the period known as the "Great Darkness" when Maurice Duplessis was Premier, from 1936 to 1939 and from 1944 to 1959. Under his conservative leadership, which was closely allied with the Catholic Church, the Quebec economy was focused on agriculture, labor unions were suppressed, and social services went underfunded. The population was barely literate and there were more churches than libraries ("Maurice Duplessis – Quebec"). Quebec's natural resources were sold off to and

developed by foreign investors. The focus on traditional values during the eighteen years of Duplessis' leadership delayed Quebec's social and economic development to such a degree, that when the premier died, "le pays s'est réveillé," in the words of singer songwriter, Raymond Lévesque ("Bozo les Culottes").[2] In *Une douce anarchie,* his essay on the student movements of the 1960s, sociologist Jean-Philippe Warren reinforces this notion of awakening by citing Louis Côté, the Secretary General of the Board of the Association générale des étudiants de l'Université de Montréal (AGEUM) between 1963 and 1964, who confirmed: "My generation has experienced neither war nor economic crisis. It has not lived through Duplessism, but rather it was present for its death. Politically, we were born in 1960 . . . The 'Quiet Revolution' appears to us as a starting point rather than a finishing line" (Warren 50).

So French Canadians began to take back control of their institutions during this period which had been ushered in by Jean Lesage's Liberal Party of Quebec in 1960 with the slogan "C'est le temps que ça change." The party won reelection in 1962 with the slogan "Maîtres chez nous" (Thompson 84). Francophones demanded better working and living conditions, more educational opportunities and autonomy from Anglophone Canada. The slogans "Le Québec aux travailleurs" and "Le Québec aux Québécois" began to

> sum up the two main tendencies that characterized the movement . . . These slogans became the rallying cry for hundreds of thousands of workers, young people and women. They organized to demand an end to national oppression, for the right to speak French at work and for an end to chauvinism, discrimination and the privileges of the English-Canadian nation.
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> The national movement dovetailed with the growth in labour struggles against capitalist exploitation and for union rights. It also intersected with student struggles for the freedom of expression and against an educational system designed to produce unemployed people and docile workers. (*Quebec National Movement*)

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[2] Magali Favre includes half of the lyrics of this song as an epigraph at the beginning of chapter "Samedi 24 octobre" yet does not include the portion which recount how Bozo, like the young *felquistes* Lévesque intends to honor, is moved to blow up a monument to the British conquerors (70). It may be interpreted that her choice of omission rather than inclusion of those lyrics better suits her young readership.

Although this period was marked by the secularization of society, the creation of a welfare state, the new self-identification as *Québécois,* and the creation of federalist and separatist factions in provincial government, some groups were still not satisfied. Workers were unhappy with wages and working conditions. Illegal strikes in 1963 led to increased unionization (Rouillard). Also in 1963, new community groups that emerged in working class areas demanded improved living conditions and better services (such as leisure space and schools) for specific neighborhoods and criticized the way the city governments operated (Linteau 400). Conditions improved due to advances in medical care; however, some working-class neighborhoods continued to be made up of homes in a poor state of repair until continuing urbanization and modernization resulted in their razing, displacing many and leaving the former occupants in an even more precarious situation.

Additionally, in 1963, the Front de libération du Québec was created by former members of the Rassemblement pour l'Indépendance Nationale, or RIN, who wanted to accelerate efforts to separate from Canada. The RIN had attracted many young members and developed radically left-wing ideas. The independence movement was gaining ground, especially among young people (Fournier). The FLQ was made up of a small group of young workers, writers, students, and unemployed persons. It quickly became violent, and, between 1963 and 1970, committed over 160 aggressive acts, culminating in the October Crisis. First, the FLQ kidnapped James Cross, a British diplomat, on October 5th, and then Pierre Laporte, Minister of Labour of Quebec under Robert Bourassa on October 10th. On October 16th, Bourassa, with the support of Montreal Mayor Jean Drapeau, requested that Canadian Prime Minister Pierre Trudeau invoke the War Measures Act for the first time in the country's history during a period of peace. The Chenier cell of the FLQ strangled Laporte and left his body in the trunk of a car at the St. Hubert airport on October 17th.

Although the War Measures Act was in effect throughout Canada, 465 Quebec citizens were arrested and held without charge for up to twenty-one days, which, according to those outside the government, constituted a violation of civil liberties. Officials claimed that it was the right of the legitimately elected government to defend itself; however, in the words of Tommy Douglas, member of the Canadian parliament from the National Democratic Party who voted against the act, "The Government . . . [was] using a sledgehammer to crack a peanut" (quoted in Gray). The majority of those arrested were released on November 5th.

The push and pull of these changes and setbacks is reflected, to different extents, in the selections of historical fiction to be studied here. Two show specifically young people who are moved to a "prise de conscience" as a result of feeling the alienation associated with living and working in poor conditions and suffering from oppression (Lévesque and Leselbaum 10). In Favre's *21 jours en octobre,* the protagonist, Gaétan Simard, has left school at age fifteen to go to work at the Old Dominion Textile Factory to help support his family. His father was laid off following a work-related accident at the Port of Montreal and, ever since, the family "tire le diable par la queue" (Favre 19). Gaétan lives in the working-class neighborhood of Faubourg à la mélasse or Faubourg m'lasse, as the characters say. The mayor declares that this "quartier de pouilleux" is destined to be demolished to make room for urban renewal projects, which adds extra stress to the family's existence since the narrator implies that they will soon be displaced (19). Gaétan's slightly older friend, Luc Maheu, son of a longshoreman killed on the job, also has left school to work at Old Dominion. Luc's mother has struggled to raise her son alone and explains to Gaétan that she, along with other mothers of the neighborhood, used to make ends meet by collecting molasses left by a crane operator at the port (49). Favre incorporates into her text this account of people growing up in this part of southern Montreal in the 1950s, 60s, and 70s in order to stress their poverty.[3] When Luc is jailed during the implementation of the War Measures Act, Gaétan visits Mme. Maheu to let her know of news that he learns about Luc. On one such occasion, Gaétan walks with her to the Bain Laviolette where she bathes once a week as she has no bathroom in her home. Favre's inclusion of this aspect of Montreal history adds further verisimilitude to her work.[4] This lack of sanitation in the working-class neighborhoods of Francophone Montreal of the period is echoed in Hamelin's *La constellation du Lynx.*

Many of Hamelin's characters are from similarly impoverished areas of Montreal. He introduces three of his antiheroes, Jacques "Coco" Cardinal, Richard Godefroid, and Jean-Paul Lafleur, as children or

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[3] See *Spacing* magazine's article about the Faubourg à m'lasse and the recollections of its readers who lived there at http://spacing.ca/montreal/2009/07/26/le-faubourg-a-mlasse-les-origines-dune-legende-urbaine/.

[4] Historian Paul Labonne describes the history of the use of public baths in working-class Montreal in his article "Soin du corps, santé publique et moralité: Les bains publics de Montréal." Maude Dufour-Gauthier provides history of the Bain Laviolette in her article "Saucette de Montréal."

adolescents, and paints a picture of the social determinants to which they are exposed and then follows them to adulthood to show how they react to those conditions. In spite of the spiral of disadvantage at play in their lives, they struggle to break free from the poor conditions which bind them. At age fourteen, Jacques "Coco" Cardinal and his family lived in a semi-urban slum, the inhabitants of which

> ignoraient encore les bienfaits de l'eau courante. Ceux qui possédaient un puits partageaient avec les voisins, les autres remplissaient leurs bidons où ils le pouvaient, dans les toilettes des stations-service. Le frère de Coco, industrieux et débrouillard, chargeait un baril de fer sur une voiturette à bras et allait mettre à contribution les bornes fontaines des quartiers mieux nantis comme Longueuil-la-bourgeoise. Son associé et lui revenaient en tirant et poussant la voiturette le long des rues non pavées. Dix cents le seau. (Hamelin 61-62)

The brothers' effort to improve their living conditions does not end in success as they are attacked by richer youth, which shows that class boundaries may not be transgressed. As with any area, the poor are disproportionately affected by living in inadequate housing and neighborhoods. The quality of the environment in which young people grow has serious implications for their behavioral and emotional welfare as well as economic opportunity, affecting them directly and indirectly through its impact on the adults in their lives. From his teenage years onward, Coco is a drug-taking thug, wife-beating crooked cop, and murderer. Once he marries and has a family of his own, their housing situation does not seem much better as "[i]ls vivaient dans un bloc derrière le centre commercial. Des rats bien nourris filaient parmi les parpaings . . . Lorsque le nombre de créanciers dépassa celui des bouches à nourrir, Cardinal recommença à traîner en quête d'une combine ou deux" (Hamelin 76). The disparate nature of Montreal's housing keeps poor places poor and its residents as well.

Hamelin also mentions the lack of adequate plumbing in the case of Richard Godefroid, who comes from a milieu as humble as that of Coco Cardinal and of Favre's young characters. Hamelin's narrator explains:

> Léo Godefroid, le père de Gode, avait fait partie des hordes de chômeurs . . . que la crise du logement avait chassés de la ville et qui traversaient le pont Jacques-Cartier avec leurs trâlées d'enfants pour

> s'établir sur la rive du fleuve et dans la campagne environnante, aux portes de Montréal . . . [I]ls se bâtissaient des cahutes avec tout le bois qu'ils pouvaient trouver . . . La nuit, ils allaient débâtir les wagons de chemin de fer . . . et avec ce "bois de char", ils élevaient leurs maisonnettes au bout des champs.
>
> C'étaient souvent de simples cambuses sans fondations ni eau courante, en bois recouvert de papier goudron. Sentinelles de fond de cour, les bécosses montaient la garde. Devant la maison, là où aurait dû se trouver le trottoir, passait l'égout à ciel ouvert qu'on enjambait en marchant sur deux ou trois planches jetées en travers du fossé. (Hamelin 181-82)

Léo Godefroid works to improve his living conditions with a hammer and nails, but his resources are severely limited. Godefroid the son, known as Gode, comments on some improvements that are made to the neighborhood over time alerting the reader that "la compagnie Weston avait arrêté de distribuer des pains tranchés gratuits au coin des rues comme si on était en Afrique . . . Oui, il y avait des égouts, mais . . . ils ne se rendaient pas encore jusqu'aux bureaux du maire et du député" (190). From this description, it is clear that the upper class had indoor plumbing while the working class did not, even after a period of improvements. This class disparity is another reflection of the alienation of the Francophone working-class characters.

André Marois's *Mesures de guerre*, perhaps because of its shorter length than that of Favre and Hamelin's texts and its younger intended audience, does not show such detailed living conditions other than Gabriel's "minuscule chambre" (97). The action takes place closer to the Plateau Mont Royal than to the port or south shore; however, the reader can determine from the vocation of the young protagonist's father and from what is served at meals that they are not wealthy. A printer in a factory, Gabriel's father comes home to a dinner of pea soup, mashed potatoes, and ground beef, reminiscent of the Shepherd's pie served in Favre's novel. "Pudding chômeur" is served as dessert (Marois 37, 40, 42). These meals indicate the level of food security of the family. They are a social determinant similar to that of housing and reveal that this working-class family has an amount of security comparable to that of Favre's characters and more than that of Hamelin's.

While the working-class Francophone mothers of these novels serve low-cost meals in cramped homes with sometimes inadequate plumbing,

the working conditions in the narratives also prove to be inadequate. In *21 jours en octobre,* after three weeks on the job at the textile mill, Gaétan is upset to watch a woman, who could be his mother, lose her job due to her child's illness. She has had no warning and cannot negotiate even a lesser-paying job. The sight makes him think of what his friend, Luc, spoke about when he started going to union meetings before his arrest, a state of affairs that Gaétan is just beginning to contest. The narrator insists:

> Il se souvient des mots de Luc: "Du *cheap labor.* On est juste du *cheap labor*" . . . Combien d'années devra-t-il passer devant cette machine? Trente, quarante? Il en a la nausée.
>
> Brusquement, sa machine s'emballe, et plusieurs fils se cassent . . . Le foreman accourt.
>
> — Maudit verrat… Faudrait pas que ça t'arrive trop souvent, mon gars, sinon, crois-moi, tu resteras pas longtemps ici. Repartir cette machine-là, ça prend trois heures.
>
> — . . . Dans trois heures, ton shift sera fini. Mais je retiens une demi-journée sur ta paye. (Favre 78)

This egregious treatment of both the woman and Gaétan prompts workers like them to unionize. Because Gaétan wants a better life for his neighbors and coworkers but does not become an activist or initiate any change in the alienating system, he remains an antihero.

Even among Hamelin's many characters who do become activists, all remain antiheroes, as they do not succeed in improving any conditions for their people. Gode, as a boy, was a talented student who renounced a promising future out of frustration with the system. Having been exploited as a child laborer in a jam factory, he reminisces:

> L'équeutage se faisait dans une espèce de grand hangar appartenant à la conserverie Val-Pie. Ils embauchaient surtout des femmes et des enfants. Quatorze heures par jour, six jours par semaine . . . Une demi-cenne du casseau. C'est pour dire.
>
> . . . Je me souviendrai toujours du grand gars de quatorze ans qui nous a regardés d'une drôle de manière . . . Il a dit:
>
> Une demi-cenne du casseau, c'est pas assez…
>
> T'as raison, mais qu'est-ce qu'on peut faire? a demandé une femme en s'approchant.
>
> La grève, a répondu tranquillement le gars de quatorze ans . . .

> Il parlait maintenant assez fort pour que les autres entendent autour de lui.
>
> Il va arriver quoi, vous pensez, si tout le monde s'en retourne chez eux cet après-midi? Ils vont vendre leur confiture avec les queues? . . . Qui c'est qui va les remplir, leurs casseaux?
>
> Suivez-moi, qu'il a dit, et il s'est levé et il est sorti, personne n'avait jamais vu ça: une marche d'équeuteurs écœurés en plein faubourg ouvrier. Des enfants de huit ans et des mères de dix enfants qui agitaient trois ou quatre pancartes de fortune.
>
> Le patron . . . a plié quand Jean-Paul Lafleur (c'était lui) a eu l'idée d'alerter les médias de la grande ville et que les reporters des journaux et de la radio ont commencé à débarquer. Il était déjà question d'une enquête publique sur l'exploitation des enfants par l'industrie agroalimentaire.
>
> On a obtenu une cenne du casseau. (Hamelin 180-81)

As a fourteen-year-old, Jean-Paul succeeds in leading a strike that benefits his coworkers. This is the last successful, positive change that the reader sees him instigate, however. After leaving school and the jam factory, Gode becomes an electrician at Canadian National Railway but grows tired of the bureaucracy and the hierarchy. The narrator summarizes the working conditions by asking, "Ça prend combien de personnes pour changer une ampoule au CN? Neuf. Un travailleur canadien-français et huit patrons anglophones pour lui dire quoi faire" (187). Gode's last employment before joining the FLQ along with Jean-Paul is as a hotdog vendor. While the narrator reveals no details about this position, it is clear that it is not a life-changing job for anyone. Incapable of participating in the social totality of the economy or politics, Gode and Jean-Paul join the FLQ.

Like *21 jours en octobre*, the action of *Mesures de guerre* begins the first day of the enforcement of the War Measures Act, October 16th, with the warrantless search and arrest of hundreds of Francophone union members and suspected FLQ sympathizers. This choice of timing in the historical setting of the October Crisis serves to introduce the working conditions with which the characters have a grievance. Gabriel's father points out the irony of the quantity of arrests saying, "S'ils arrêtent tous les gars du syndicat, il y aura plus personne à la shop. Le boss va être obligé de fermer l'usine" (Marois 42-43). This declaration on the part of

the of the father echoes claims made by the FLQ in their manifesto.[5] While the FLQ suggests that an absence of workers yields an absence of work and thus profit loss for bosses, perhaps what the father does not acknowledge is that it is likely that there are many unemployed workers ready to take the place of those jailed. The narrator gives no details about the actual work conditions, but it is clear that the employer does not try to protect the workers against the government's arrests.

Along with the alienation occasioned by inadequate housing and unstable working conditions, the Francophone characters in Favre, Hamelin, and Marois's texts experience discrimination and oppression. In *21 jours en octobre*, Gaétan's growing awareness of the social and economic plight of Francophone families like his, along with his potential activism, symbolize the awakening and move to action of the Québécois people. Gaétan does not seem, at first, to question the living conditions in his community; however, following the arrest of his friend Luc, and after meeting Louise, a politically engaged CÉGEP student (Collège d'enseignement général et professionnel), he begins to take notice of, and issue with, the discrimination and oppression that he and his friends, family, and coworkers experience because they speak French and live in a working-class part of the city.

When the foreman scolds Gaétan for allowing his machine to go out of control, the former uses the unnecessarily cruel slur "maudit verrat," which suggests that, as a "wretched boar," Gaétan is, first of all, "poor in quality or ability" (*Merriam-Webster*) and, second of all, a wild pig who procreates prolifically, which makes one think of the aforementioned "trâlées d'enfants" of the poor Francophone families in Hamelin's *La constellation du Lynx* (182).[6] In the eyes of the foreman, Gaétan has little worth as an individual, and his race, as a whole, is inferior and undesirable. The choice of the insult "verrat" even implies that the foreman finds that there are too many of Gabriel's kind for his taste. This man does not consider, as does Gabriel's father in *Mesures de guerre*, that without the

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[5] The authors of the FLQ manifesto claim, "Et vous, les travailleurs de la General Electric, c'est vous qui faites fonctionner vos usines; vous seuls êtes capables de produire; sans vous, General Electric n'est rien" ("Le manifeste").

[6] Until the Quiet Revolution of 1960, the families of Quebec practiced the "revenge of the cradle" as a demographic threat against Anglophone oppression. According to *The Economist*, "The province was legendary for its families of 15 or more children. Its population more than tripled between 1900 and 1960" ("The cradle's costly revenge" n.p.)

workers that he might dismiss, "[l]e boss va être obligé de fermer l'usine" (Marois 43). The foreman thus thinks of the uneducated Francophones as dispensable. There will always be more of them to hire at a low wage. Like Marois, Favre alludes to the FLQ manifesto where the authors claim that the only way to make the Anglophone bosses speak French is to have them repeat "cheap labor, main-d'oeuvre à bon marché" ("Le manifeste").

In another incident where Gaétan is exposed to discrimination and oppression, an Irish policeman and his partner ask Louise and him to leave a park in Westmount "for security reasons" (Favre 68). Louise quickly compares the condition of the Francophones in Quebec to that of other victims of discrimination, exclaiming, "On se penserait dans un township d'Afrique du Sud ou bien sur une réserve indienne. Faudrait pas piler sur leur maudit gazon avec nos souliers crottés de pauvres pis de sauvages" (69). That one of the policemen lives in the same district as Gaétan provides no comfort because he is "du côté des Britanniques, du côté des plus forts"; as an Anglophone, he has more rights and privileges than do Louise and Gaétan (69). The term "crottés" implies that these Anglophones might consider the French speakers to be but dirt and of a lower class without the right to enter parts of the city where they live. Both Francophones are angry: "Gaétan n'en revient pas. Mais il contient sa colère. Au contraire de Louise, qui est très énervée" (68). Lacking education, Gaétan does not know how to combat this alienation. Louise, as a student, is preparing to use words to her advantage. She already has an edge in that she understands the English that the policemen speak. Her resistance to discrimination lies in the fact that she insists on answering them in French.

The irony is that the couple is walking just below Pierre Trudeau's home at the moment of their expulsion on October 23rd. In explaining that the home that they see is that of the Premier Ministre, Louise has to specify, "Non, pas Robert Bourassa. L'autre, celui qui prend les décisions (65). As Trudeau has implemented the War Measures Act, he is responsible for the arrest of Luc, whom Gaétan does not even realize is actually a political prisoner. Both the expulsion of the couple and the arrests of Francophone activists represent the oppression of the Québécois.

Gaétan begins to learn about ways to combat discrimination only when he goes to political rallies and is exposed to important literary works of the Quiet Revolution, such as Michelle Lalonde's poem "Speak White," Pierre Vallière's *Nègres blancs d'Amérique*, and Gaston Miron's *L'homme rapaillé* on the status of the French language and on the Quebec

political position. He does not do anything to change the system, however, and only claims, “Je voudrais juste que les gens de mon quartier soient respectés, qu’ils puissent vivre correctement, qu’ils puissent gagner leur vie dans leur langue” (Favre 138). When he is arrested, he becomes upset and cries, and another prisoner has to remind him to not bend to the oppression saying, “donne-leur pas la chance de t’humilier” (115).

Hamelin’s Coco has a different approach to fighting humiliation. As a young adult in a bar in Longueuil, he returns the beating that the Longueuil-la-bourgeoise youth gave his brother and him while claiming that water in their neighborhood was not for “crottés” (62). Such description by the petty bourgeoisie serves to underline the disparity between the disadvantaged, working-class poor of Montreal and the city’s wealthier inhabitants and to show the prejudice associated with the various neighborhoods. Being subject to such alienation by discrimination again provokes anger in the characters. Pierre Vallières uses the same term, “crottés,” to refer to Francophone workers in order to incite them to action, but the only action that Coco knows is force.[7]

As is evident in Favre’s text, characters who speak English to Francophones alienate them. In Hamelin’s text, Coco’s wife takes an immediate dislike to the draft-dodging, arms-smuggling drug dealer from Michigan who arrives at her door. The narrator explains the politics of the visitor’s language and one of its roles in Franco-Anglo business affairs, noting that, “[d]e toute évidence, il considérait son anglais rural du Haut-Midwest comme un idiome supérieur dont les indigènes devaient se montrer dignes dans le meilleur intérêt des bonnes relations entre peuples civilisés” (78). Hence, Coco must speak English to work with the dealer. Interested in some cocaine that the American has brought, Coco inquires “How…How good is it?” Kimball, the dealer, “le dévisagea comme s’il n’avait jamais vraiment pris la peine de le regarder avant. Il sourit. *Too good for you.*” In the esteem of the American, Coco is not even worthy to try or buy the illegal substance that the foreigner has brought into his home, which represents multiple layers of alienation.

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[7] Vallières urges: “[e]t c’est par la force que nous . . . les crottés, les porteurs d’eau, les scieurs de bois, les cireurs de bottes, les manoeuvres, les gratte-papier anonymes et mal payés, les serveuses de restaurant, les mineurs, les cheap workers du textile, de la chaussure, des conserveries, des industries du vêtement, des grands magasins, des compagines de chemin de fer . . . c’est par la force, et non par la résignation, la passivité et la peur, que nous deviendrons libres” (353).

In *Mesures de Guerre,* the father of Gabriel's friend Jean-Paul, a worker in a textile factory in north Montreal, is arrested, as is a classmate's brother, Robert, who campaigns for Quebec's independence and has participated in political rallies and protests. Because Gabriel's mother is not interested in politics, and, as the narrator observers, "À dix ans, on n'a pas l'âge d'avoir une opinion politique," commentary about the disenfranchisement taking place in Montreal is left to Gabriel's older twin sisters, who are diametrically opposed on the question of the FLQ and the War Measures Act (Marois 42). Jocelyne protests the search and seizures, insisting, "Ils ont pas le droit de faire ça! . . . Tout ça, c'est pour nous empêcher d'exister. Pour exploiter encore plus les Canadiens français" (39). She further asserts, "Si le FLQ a enlevé les deux hommes, c'est justement parce que personne nous écoute . . . D'après moi . . . [o]n vit en démocratie. Chacun est libre de penser et de circuler comme il veut. Là, on a l'impression que c'est devenu une dictature militaire" (39-41). Because the action of the novel lasts only two days and because the protagonist is so young, effort on behalf of the Francophone family and neighborhood to fight the oppression by the government is limited. The disagreement between the older sisters serves as an important subplot for the novel, but the primary action revolves around Gabriel's discovery of a kidnapped woman and his making an anonymous police report. His detective work makes him a hero, though the kidnapper is not a member of the FLQ. The protagonist is only able to fight injustice on a small level.

While the Quebec separatist movement of the 1960s and 1970s was "a revolt of Francophones against the English-speaking Ottawa government and the business interests" that dominated the province, the bombings and kidnappings of the extreme Front de Libération du Québec brought the wrath of the police and military upon innocent people, as is reflected in all three of the novels studied here (Andrew Pulley, qtd. in Kopyto). In Hamelin's text, as in Quebec history, because of the violence of their acts and the harshness of the backlash of the Canadian government against the FLQ with the War Measures Act, the group loses favor with the public that it was hoping to support by robbing government banks and writing manifestos. The narratives show that the searches and arrests increase the oppression of the Francophones. Armed soldiers in tanks patrolling the streets of Montreal shock and intimidate the everyday citizens, as is depicted in Marois' cover drawing of a frightened ten-year-old Gabriel bearing a hockey stick, faced with an armed soldier in the street. This intimidation constituted a new form of oppression of French speakers.

In summary, Gaétan, Luc, Coco, Gode, Jean-Paul and Gabriel, all Francophones from working-class Montreal, live in simple if not sub-standard housing and work in or are supported by jobs with low pay and precarious conditions subject to the whims of a foreman or boss like Luc's "qui aboie ses ordres en Anglais" (Favre 14). As they and the young characters around them begin to agitate for better pay and conditions through unions and political rallies, their freedom to do so is limited by the invocation of the War Measures Act, which sends police to confiscate documents without a mandate, some as harmless as Chevalier Branlequeue's son's stamp collection, and to arrest people without a warrant with the aim of protecting the population from the violence of the FLQ. The members of the kidnapping cells of FLQ themselves, including Hamelin's Gode and Jean Paul who had started out so poor, do not win any improvements for themselves or their communities either, as they are arrested and jailed or exiled. The Parti Québécois had warned young militants against joining the "childish cells in a fruitless revolutionary adventurism which might cost them their future and even their lives" (Fournier 378). But for the reading of the manifesto, the FLQ's demands were not met.

The trajectory of Hamelin's Coco Cardinal seems to parallel the setback of the Francophones during the October Crisis. Although he was born in a tarpaper shack in the semi-rural slum of Coteau Rouge, this hustler dreams of owning a schooner that he builds himself. His *arrivisme*, like the work of the FLQ, is abruptly halted when, during its maiden voyage, described on the last page of the book, the boat sinks, leaving Coco protesting "Noooo! Non!" (593). *Le Patriote,* like the Patriot Rebellions of 1837 and 1838 and the October Crisis of 1970, quickly meets its end. The metaphor is clear and the narrative allows no quarter for this character whose struggle against the system leaves him dead from a drug overdose.

When now sixteen-year-old Gaétan and his friend Luc of *21 jours en octobre* are released from jail, they seem optimistic, thinking "[u]n jour on va l'avoir, notre pays!" but recognizing that some ground has been lost during the implementation of the War Measures Act (Favre 142). No improvement has been made to the socioeconomic status of their families, neighbors, and co-workers as a result of the activities of the FLQ. Rather, they have been further disenfranchised by their government and remain alienated.

Although he is too young to be directly affected by suspension of citizen rights during the insurrection, Gabriel of *Mesures de guerre* finds himself at the police station at the end of Marois's narrative. It is symbolic that he is being released from questioning by a lieutenant after giving an exaggerated tip about a kidnapped woman. He leaves the police station having provided his contact information, which suggests that the government will be watching him, a ten-year-old boy, just like they are monitoring teenagers in parks or young workers at union meetings.

The protagonists of Hamelin, Favre, and Marois witness the occupation of Montreal by the Canadian Army and experience the suspension of their civil liberties. What the unions and FLQ wanted to change has not come to fruition. The characters are unable to witness the fulfillment of the demands that the Québécois began following the October Crisis to protect their language and culture and improve their way of life as a result of the tumultuous awakening of the province's youth that occurred in the sixties and seventies. At the end of each narrative, the heroes and antiheroes are still incapable of participating in the "social totality" (Stahl n.p.). They have not overcome alienation based on their housing, working conditions, and discrimination, and social change has not taken place.

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