

National Manhood and the Creation of Modern Quebec

Jeffery Vacante



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Acknowledgments

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To live in Montreal in the 1980s and 1990s was to live against the backdrop of a perpetual and at times tense conversation about Quebec's place in Canada. Growing up in the city in the 1980s, I remember the tensions arising from the passage of Bill 178, the collapse of the Meech Lake Accord, the Oka Crisis, the

failure of the Charlottetown Accord, and the 1995 referendum. It was a time when the news was dominated by great debates about the meaning of Quebec nationalism, the language of commercial signs, and the purpose of constitutional amendments. I was first exposed to this world by listening to my mother and my now late father as they engaged in ongoing discussions about those great issues of the day and in the process transformed our dinner table into nightly seminars on the meaning of Quebec nationalism and the finer points of the constitutional amending formula. They provided a home that was filled with books and newspapers and created an intellectually stimulating world that taught me that ideas, including my own, mattered. This book is in some ways a continuation of those conversations. It represents an attempt to understand the historical roots of some of the issues that I first encountered in those years. It is also an expression of gratitude to my parents, who have provided me with so much.

I now have two children of my own – Ryan and Ashley – and would like to provide them with a home that also encourages them to think for themselves and to engage meaningfully with the world around them. As I was completing this book, I found myself hoping that they might get to know the Montreal that I grew up knowing and that they might also come to understand how it came to look the way that it did when they came along. As they pursue their own paths in this world, I hope that one day they might pick up this book and discover the world that I knew and that also helped to shape their lives.

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National Manhood and the Creation of Modern Quebec

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Introduction

THIS BOOK IS an exploration of manhood in Quebec during the late nineteenth and early twentieth centuries. It looks at a number of French Canadians who sought to reconcile an agrarian model of manhood, which was tied to the land and the family and characterized by self-restraint and piety, with the urban model taking shape at this time, which was defined by greater materialism and individual autonomy.¹ It covers a period when the province of Quebec was making its final transition from a primarily agrarian and rural economy to one that was largely urban and industrial. Although French Canadians generally welcomed the development of large-scale industrialism, few were willing to embrace the type of manhood that went along with it because of a sense that this manhood was incompatible with their desire for cultural survival. Thus French Canadians came to articulate a model of manhood that permitted them to embrace industrial modernity without having to succumb to the cultural values with which this modernity was associated. This manhood was disentangled from the workplace, the family, and the land as well as distinct from emerging expectations about what it meant to be a man in English-speaking Canada. French Canadians embraced a model of manhood that was tied, instead, to a person's national identity. This national manhood permitted French Canadian men to define their gendered identity outside of the militarist and imperialist values that were emerging at this time as features of increasingly aggressive English Canadian expressions of manhood. And it served as an anchor for those men who were feeling displaced in the new industrial landscape. National manhood emerged during these years as an important part of the struggle for cultural survival as well as an expression of French Canadian modernity.

The embrace of national manhood was one part of a broader effort to modernize the province's institutions in a manner that would permit French Canadians to meet the challenges of the new industrial economy. French Canadians navigated the transition to industrial capitalism by employing a nationalist discourse that permitted them to negotiate a place for themselves in the modern world as men. National manhood permitted men to remain loyal to their community, Catholic faith, and culture while living in an urban and industrial setting. It also stood in marked contrast to a version of English Canadian

industrial capitalism that many French Canadians came to describe as irrational, overly materialistic, and effeminate. French Canadians turned to nationalism as part of an effort to produce a new model of manhood that would in turn permit them to come to terms with industrial modernity. Nationalism was thus both a reaction to modernity as well as a product of that modernity.

The men putting forward these ideas about manhood, nationalism, and modernity – the men I have placed at the centre of this study – were mostly members of the French-speaking elite in Montreal. These men were important Catholic leaders, like Abbé Lionel Groulx, who was perhaps the most influential priest and public intellectual in French Canada during the interwar years. But they were also members of the lay Catholic leadership, members of the Catholic Action Movement in the 1920s and 1930s who were looking for ways to transform the Catholic Church into a more responsive and relevant institution for the masses. They were also journalists and novelists, like Jules-Paul Tardivel, whose writing is key to understanding the emergence of what I call national manhood. It is difficult, of course, to determine the extent to which such individuals shaped the popular mind. My intention in this study is not to establish the representativeness of these views or even to determine the degree to which these views came to dominate in the public mind. Rather, it is to suggest that a discussion about industrialism, modernity, survival, and manhood was taking place at this time on the basis of the terms being set by these thinkers. These ideas were embraced, altered, distorted, or rejected, or they simply remained unnoticed by a public that probably spent less time thinking about these matters, and certainly less time writing about them, than did these intellectuals. My intention is to suggest that this small and disparate group of intellectuals was thinking about the challenges associated with modernity in ways that would serve as the basis of a more popular and widely embraced nationalist movement in the first half of the twentieth century.

THE MATTER OF QUEBEC'S transition to modernity has preoccupied historians for some time. The province had been understood by historians, until recently, to have modernized more slowly than the rest of the country. This assumption was based on the belief that the province remained less urbanized than the rest of North America and that it lacked the political and institutional infrastructure regarded as necessary for the effective governance of a modern industrial state. It was reinforced by the rhetoric of influential figures in Quebec, which appeared to suggest that there existed within the province a widespread distrust of urbanization, industrialization, and the expansion of the state. And it encouraged English-speaking Canadians to discriminate against

French Canadians, who were perceived at the time to be resistant to modernity and to be less than interested in participating in the new industrial order.

Historians initially disagreed over what exactly had kept Quebec from progressing at the same rate as the rest of the country. For some historians, the roots of Quebec's economic inferiority could be traced to the British Conquest of New France in 1760, when French-speaking Canadians fell under British control and thereafter lived as a conquered people. The Conquest put an end to the colony's natural evolution toward statehood, some historians suggested, and instilled in French-speaking Canadians feelings of inferiority that discouraged them from competing with English-speaking Canadians for positions of leadership.² Other historians pointed to the religious elite within the province, who promoted an ideology that, these historians suggested, deprived French Canadians of the tools required to compete in the modern world.³ If historians could not agree on the reason for French Canada's apparent failure to modernize, they did agree that French Canadians had failed to modernize at the same rate as other Canadians. By the middle of the twentieth century, then, we were left with a somewhat unflattering portrait of the province as an autocratic and backward place. Writing in the 1950s, the historian Michel Brunet lamented that the three dominant themes of French Canadian thought were "agriculturalism, anti-statism, and messianism."⁴

The level of French Canadian resistance to industrialism and to the growth of the state, it has now become evident, was overstated. In the 1970s a new generation of historians began to look past the religious discourses of the period and, employing the tools of the new social history of the time, uncovered evidence suggesting that Quebec had a dynamic business class and showing that the rates of industrialization and urbanization in the province were not all that different from the rates found in English-speaking Canada. This work emphasized those aspects of Quebec's past that made it appear more like the other provinces. By focusing on trends such as rates of urbanization and industrialization, rather than on traditional issues like linguistic and religious conflict, these historians made the province appear more urban and industrial than had previously been assumed.⁵ Historians were quick to embrace this new narrative because it highlighted a part of the Quebec experience that had been until that time hidden.⁶

This new narrative served an important purpose in a society that was eager to erase the increasingly awkward perception that Quebec was somehow less well developed than the rest of the continent. "Coming of age in a Quebec where everyone was talking about modernization, living in an urban-industrial society," according to Paul-André Linteau, one of the leading proponents of this

new approach to the past, “it was natural that we would want to understand the roots of contemporary Quebec.” Linteau, therefore, along with his cohort of historians, “set off to explore the various factors that led to the emergence of an industrial, capitalist society in Quebec by the middle of the nineteenth century.”⁷ This new narrative, which tended to emphasize those aspects of Quebec’s past that made it appear modern, also ended up downplaying the attention paid to those institutions that reminded people of Quebec’s supposed backwardness, including the church.⁸ More recently, historians have also attempted to integrate the church into this modernization thesis. Michael Gauvreau, for example, has looked at more progressive elements within the church, especially the Catholic Action Movements that emerged during the first decades of the twentieth century, and has demonstrated how Catholic organizations played an important role in modernizing the province and in paving the way for the Quiet Revolution.⁹ This work has challenged the assumption that the modernization of the province necessarily occurred as part of a larger process of secularization.

Much of this work serves to remind us that French Canadians had a much more nuanced attitude toward the state than has been suggested. To be sure, many French Canadians during these years exhibited considerable distrust of their political leaders, an attitude that some said was due to the population’s limited exposure to democratic institutions. This suggestion, of course, rests upon an assumption that English Canadians had a much more robust democratic experience. Such an assumption was reinforced by observers like Francis Parkman, the nineteenth-century American historian and perhaps the most influential interpreter of New France for an English-speaking audience until the middle decades of the twentieth century, who framed the Battle of the Plains of Abraham as a struggle of “the past against the future; of the old against the new; of moral and intellectual torpor against moral and intellectual life; of barren absolutism against a liberty, crude, incoherent, and chaotic, yet full of prolific vitality.”¹⁰

But it is not necessarily the case that English Canadians had a more robust democratic tradition than French-speaking Canadians. Those English-speaking people who had arrived from Britain following the Conquest, as well as those who arrived from the American colonies following the revolution there, may have had greater exposure to democratic institutions, but they did not necessarily experience these institutions as full participants. Once they arrived in Canada, moreover, they also understood and experienced these institutions as colonists because significant constraints were imposed on the elected assemblies created in 1791.¹¹ If English-speaking Canadians in Lower Canada believed that they enjoyed a certain degree of influence in these institutions,

this was simply a perception arising from their presumed proximity to the centre of imperial power. This assumption developed out of the fact that the governed shared a language and perhaps cultural traditions with those who governed them. But sharing a language with those individuals in positions of power did not necessarily translate into tangible political influence for the vast majority of English-speaking Canadians. In the end, Canadians, whether they were English or French speakers, were *colonists*. And although certain English-speaking Canadians may have enjoyed a privileged place in this democratic order by virtue of the fact that they shared a language with those who wielded political authority, the democratic experience of the vast majority of English-speaking Canadians remained circumscribed and thus resembled the experience of most French-speaking Canadians.

It must nonetheless be acknowledged that many French Canadians exhibited a heightened degree of wariness when it came to the state, and it could even be said that this wariness was one of the legacies of the Conquest. If the British Conquest of New France did not fundamentally transform the daily lives of most French-speaking Canadians, it nonetheless influenced the manner in which power was understood in the colony.¹² No matter how French-speaking Canadians may have been treated by their conquerors, the events following the Battle of the Plains of Abraham nonetheless ensured that the state appeared as a remote and somewhat foreign entity. Even with the arrival of representative institutions in the colony with the passage of the Constitutional Act in 1791, which created an elected assembly, the French Canadian voice (as well as English Canadian voices in the assembly, it must be said) could be ignored very easily by the unelected and English-dominated Legislative Council, which reinforced the perception that power was exercised for the benefit of English-speaking colonists.¹³

Many French Canadians remained suspicious of the state in the decades following the passage of the British North America Act in 1867, which restored to the Province of Quebec the assembly that it had lost with the Act of Union in 1840. Although the province regained considerable autonomy with this new assembly, suspicion of the state persisted because ultimate legislative authority remained at the federal centre, in Ottawa, which retained the right to disallow provincial legislation. Even though this right to disallow legislation eventually fell into disuse, a series of political decisions taken in Ottawa and in some of the other Canadian provinces, including the hanging of Louis Riel as well as the passage of regulations limiting access to French-language instruction at school, served to remind French Canadians that they were a minority with only limited influence in their new country. Thus, although many French Canadians, like Sir George-Étienne Cartier and Sir Wilfrid Laurier, served in

powerful positions in Ottawa, that city continued to be seen by many French Canadians as the capital of an English-speaking country.

A more important reason for this suspicion of state power, however, was that provincial institutions, and the province's elected leaders, appeared to be doing little to protect French Canada's interests. There was little reason during the first half of the twentieth century for French Canadians to place much faith in the political process or in the men who sought to hold public office. The provincial Liberal Party, under the business-friendly leaders Lomer Gouin and then Louis-Alexandre Taschereau, dominated the political scene from 1905 until 1936, when Maurice Duplessis and the Union Nationale took over and went on to lead the province, except for an interruption during the Second World War, until 1959. The reactionary and autocratic Duplessis adopted the Liberals' pro-business approach to economic development as his own and allied himself with the conservative Catholic Church, whose institutional network, he hoped, would ensure public support for his policies. Although the province was industrializing rapidly, critics complained that the Liberals and then the Union Nationale were corrupt and that their programs for economic growth appeared to consist primarily of selling the province's natural resources to foreign bidders and of ensuring that French Canadians remained a compliant and cheap source of labour for English-speaking capitalists. It is little wonder, then, that some of the most prominent figures in Quebec during the interwar years expressed serious misgivings about the whole democratic process. Frustrated by the seeming inability of the province's democratic institutions and leaders to safeguard the interests of the population, the influential critic and editor Arthur Laurendeau suggested that democracy was preventing Quebec from moving forward and described those who were elected to public office as "disputatious babblers, vain and sterile."¹⁴

Such statements only reinforced the perception outside the province that Quebec was less democratic than the rest of the country and also less interested in using the power of the state to pursue the reforms needed to sustain a modern economy. The implicit assumption here is that English-speaking Canadians were much more open to the use of state power and thus more progressive than French-speaking Canadians. Indeed, such rhetoric as Laurendeau's had often been upheld as evidence of the province's backwardness and of its suspicion of democracy. This assumption persisted well into the middle decades of the twentieth century and was summed up neatly in 1958 by Pierre Elliott Trudeau, who wrote, "historically, French Canadians have not really believed in democracy for themselves; and English Canadians have not really wanted it for others."¹⁵

But French Canadian attitudes about the state were not all that different from English Canadian views. If many French Canadians remained suspicious of the idea of expanding state power during the interwar years, so too did many other Canadians. Led by the cautious William Lyon Mackenzie King for much of this period, the Canadian government took only limited steps prior to the Second World War to expand the size of government, and R.B. Bennett, who served as prime minister from 1930 to 1935, resisted until the very end of his time in office before significantly enlarging the government's role to deal with the crisis of the Great Depression. It is true that King would preside over the beginnings of the welfare state, but he would do so reluctantly and only as a result of the political pressure developing from the rise of leftist movements such as the Progressive Party and the Cooperative Commonwealth Federation.¹⁶

And it has also become increasingly clear in recent decades that the growing power of the state, which was viewed as an effective and progressive means of redistributing part of society's wealth to the disadvantaged and as a means of attenuating the excesses of the capitalist system, was not always achieved in the name of liberty or progressive ends. The idea of a more powerful state may have been a hallmark of modernity, but the manner in which the state used that power could also be regarded as anything but progressive. Some of the individuals most associated with progressive ends in Canada were also adherents to what we would consider regressive ends, including the strict control of immigrants and the sterilization of those thought to be mentally or physically unfit. The desire for social control led to abuses that reveal the dark undercurrents of the reform movement. The government's purported resistance to expanding state power on behalf of the poor and indigent was taking place at the same time as the state was embracing eugenics and becoming much more interested in limiting the freedoms of minority communities, controlling morality, and regulating sexuality.¹⁷

If French Canadians were not opposed to industrialism or to the exercise of state power any more than other Canadians, there were also plenty of French Canadians who called for greater state involvement in the economy. English Canadians tended to view French Canadians as very attached to an agrarian way of life, largely because of the prominence of those French Canadian leaders who spoke about the virtues of rural life. But alongside these voices were the voices of others, like Étienne Parent, who spoke in the middle years of the nineteenth century of embracing industry, and Victor Barbeau, who called during the interwar years for educational reform and modernization. For his part, Henri Bourassa, the nationalist leader and founder of *Le Devoir*, called on the state to use its power to ensure that French Canadians could acquire the

skills necessary to compete in the new industrial economy, as well as to regulate business in a way that would ensure minimal abuses within the market economy and more equitably distribute society's wealth. Bourassa's call for a more activist government was perfectly consistent with calls from the Vatican for social justice, even if it appeared to contradict the church's teachings in Quebec, which remained much more protective of its political influence.¹⁸

The Catholic Church in Quebec, to be sure, played an important role in discouraging the expansion of state power. It had long opposed, for example, greater state interference in areas such as the delivery of social services or education. But the church resisted calls for greater state involvement in the economy less out of any deeply held antipathy to the exercise of state power and more out of the belief that the expansion of state power would disrupt a social order that it felt rested upon the autonomy of the family as well as undermine its own authority. The church had a long history of turning to the state in order to ensure its own power. In the years following the Conquest, the British leadership overcame any anti-Catholic sentiments it might have had and recognized that the church could play an important role in maintaining social order and thus in easing the colony's integration into the empire. And the church, for its part, realized that its very survival as an institution depended upon the benevolence of the state. It also recognized that as the constituted authority, the British state became crucial to the maintenance of social order in the colony. Over the next century, the church proved to be a dependable ally to the British, securing French Canadian loyalty, including during the Rebellions of 1837.

The church was not opposed to state power; indeed, it had long allied with political leaders as a means of using its institutional authority to prop up its own authority. Rather, it opposed particular issues that it believed undermined its own authority or challenged the social order that it wished to uphold. For this reason, the church objected to female suffrage, which many reformers had come to view as a potentially useful tool for cleaning up society, and was instrumental in delaying the vote for women in Quebec until 1940. It also resisted the implementation of family allowance programs in the 1940s, which were to be paid to mothers, and spoke out against mandatory education for children, arguing that all such reforms would undermine a man's authority within the home. The church rejected, in other words, any change that would threaten the autonomy of the patriarchal household or undermine its own power over the province's institutional network.¹⁹ But it had never opposed the idea of state power. Thus, when the state stepped up its efforts to monitor and regulate sexual behaviour and effectively criminalized homosexuality, the church went along.

The church was also not so much opposed to industrialism as it was opposed to the disorder that industrialism was said to produce.²⁰ The primary question thus became not whether the province should embrace industrialism but just how its benefits could be distributed more equitably. The church, for example, was very concerned about French Canadians' place in the new economy. Notably, the priest and historian Lionel Groulx, one of the most influential public intellectuals following the Great War and sometimes described as the spiritual father of modern Quebec nationalism, warned that French Canadians were being "proletarianized" in this new economy.²¹ The church was not prepared to surrender its authority to the state. Nor was it convinced that it was to blame for Quebec's difficulties. But neither was the church intent upon turning the clock back to create an idyllic agrarian world. And it did not criticize industrialism as much as it attacked the disorder that industrialism was thought to create. Instead, the church turned to nationalism, rather than the expansion of the state, as a means for French Canadians to defend their rights while also embracing the modern world. This nationalism was not a reactionary or old-fashioned nationalism. It was forward-looking and part of a larger attempt to come to terms with modernity.

Much of this debate was framed by a pervasive sense that manhood in Quebec was in a state of decline. Lionel Groulx was, it might be said, pre-occupied with manhood, and he devoted much of his time to writing about ways of improving it.²² He regularly criticized French Canadian men for being weak, describing them once as a "race de nouilles,"²³ and challenged teachers to do a better job of turning the province's school-age boys into strong and productive men.²⁴ Others, like Father Louis Lalande, complained about the state of manhood in the province, suggesting that French Canadian men had been "reduced to a state of pallid womanhood,"²⁵ and the conservative Catholic priest Georges Courchesne attacked schools for providing an "education for hermaphrodites" that failed to produce strong men ready to lead the province.²⁶ For his part, Henri Bourassa directed much of his anger at feminists, whom he described as "monsters, in every sense of the word," for attempting to destroy French Canadian manhood with their supposed efforts to undermine the gender boundaries that he argued were essential to the maintenance of patriarchal order.²⁷ This concern about the state of manhood was not restricted to conservative-minded individuals. The liberal journalist and novelist Jean-Charles Harvey, for one, blamed church-run schools for what he described as French Canada's slide into "effeminacy" and called on the state to exercise greater control over the province's schools so as to ensure that boys developed into "des simples hommes normaux."²⁸ By the 1930s younger activists like the journalist André Laurendeau had rejected the "sterile" nationalism of the past

in favour of one that would more effectively turn French Canadians into “masters in our own house.”²⁹ This new generation of men, in fact, sought primarily to infuse nationalism with greater vitality so as to rehabilitate French Canadian self-confidence and pride – that is, manhood.³⁰ Although these thinkers fundamentally disagreed on a number of issues, including on the meaning and uses of nationalism, they shared a concern about the state of manhood in the province and had come to believe that any effort to address Quebec’s cultural, social, and economic problems had to include an attempt to shore up French Canadian manhood.

THE STUDY OF MANHOOD has not been without controversy. After all, the idea that *more* attention needs to be paid to men might appear absurd to those observers who can point out that the entire historical project has been preoccupied with men for quite some time. Although this observation is undoubtedly true, it is also true that few works have until recently treated men as gendered beings.³¹ Early work on manhood grew out of the feminist movement as well as the male-liberation movement of the 1960s and the 1970s.³² By the 1980s a number of self-described enlightened men had made common cause with feminist activists to challenge the barriers that women encountered in a male-dominated society. These activists also came to believe that true equality between the sexes would occur only when traditional assumptions about the gendered behaviour of both women and men were challenged.³³ True liberation would take place, in other words, only when men were released from the burdens placed upon them by an oppressive and patriarchal culture.³⁴

The study of manhood was also influenced by the growth of women’s history in the 1960s, which meant that it tended to follow the outline set out by women’s historians for their own work, including its early focus on the separate-spheres paradigm. Early academic work on manhood thus explored various fraternal groups, male friendships, and male spaces.³⁵ Such work went a long way in revealing the ways that men understood their roles as men, and it examined the manner in which men carved out gendered spaces in the same way that women were shown to have created female spaces of their own. Yet much of this work on manhood appeared somewhat dated almost as soon as it appeared because it had adopted the separate-spheres paradigm as a conceptual framework at the very moment when many women’s historians were beginning to turn away from it.³⁶ The result was that much of this early work tended to describe men’s separate worlds, appearing more interested in uncovering men’s previously unexamined male identities and in exploring the ways that men struggled to live up to society’s expectations of them than in exploring the gendered dimension of power.³⁷

The study of manhood was also shaped by the emergence of gender studies in the 1980s as well as by a larger shift away from social history within the historical profession. By the 1980s the profession had been shaken by a shift away from the materialist priorities of social historians of the 1960s and toward the study of discourse. In 1986 Joan Wallach Scott wrote an influential article that described gender as “a constitutive element of social relationships based on perceived differences between the sexes” and also as “a primary way of signifying relationships of power.”³⁸ By calling on historians to explore the manner in which men and women had been represented in discourse and also how gender had been used to prop up male power, Scott called on historians to examine how attitudes about gender and how the language used to prop up gender differences were being used to preserve unequal relationships of power.

Although such a call raised the possibility that a whole new set of conceptual paths might be opened, some historians pointed out that works focusing on discourses would simply have the effect of resurrecting the old way of doing history by privileging the voices of the literate and thus unrepresentative elite from the past, while ignoring the real lives of most others. There was also a concern that this new history would sidestep the real experiences of men and women in favour of representations of those experiences, raising fears that such a shift in focus would downplay the material realities of women’s oppression.³⁹ The historian Joy Parr observed that “feminists have worried that post-structuralism might perform ‘a vanishing trick on questions of agency and responsibility’ in sexual politics, so fragmenting masculine power that it becomes elusive to strategy and apparently politically benign.”⁴⁰ Joan Sangster, too, warned, “There is a danger that historical work on masculinity will repeat one stream of the contemporary men’s movement, which urges men to ‘reclaim their tears’ but ignores men’s power and women’s oppression.” By focusing on the “nicer side of masculinity,” she wrote, the study of manhood risked sidestepping “the unpleasant questions of power, domination and patriarchy.”⁴¹

Those who study manhood must balance the activist roots of the field with the theoretical insights of gender history. Both strands certainly have the potential to recentre men in the historical narrative and thus to further marginalize women in society. Indeed, one of the major challenges confronting the historian of manhood is to reconcile suggestions about the contingent nature of male identity with the very real power that men have possessed and exercised. One such observer has warned that scholars are in danger of creating “a disciplinary field in which all genders and sexualities are equally constructed, even if they do not share equal political and social power.”⁴² But efforts to illustrate the contingent nature of manhood need not detract from the ongoing feminist historical project. One of the primary objectives of those who study

manhood is to remove manhood from its presumed biological mooring by exposing it as a historically contingent and constructed identity. It is the invisibility of male power, after all, and the assumed naturalness of men's privileged position within society's patriarchal structure that have reinforced men's power over women for so long.

The study of manhood encountered a particular set of challenges in Quebec. The shift in the 1980s away from the material realities of the past in the larger historical profession was at odds with the dominant trend in Quebec historical writing at the time. The desire to integrate Quebec history into the larger narrative of North American economic and social development had depended very heavily upon empirical research intended to demonstrate in some tangible fashion that French Canadians had progressed at the same pace as other Western societies. Quebec historians deployed statistical evidence to point to a declining birthrate in the province, for example, in order to challenge the perception that French Canadians had continued to have large families well into the twentieth century, and they uncovered evidence that French Canadians had participated in commerce and business in much the same ways as English Canadians had. Their aim was to challenge a perception that Quebec was backward or had failed to progress along with the rest of the country.⁴³ Any work that shifted the emphasis away from quantifiable data and toward the discourses of a particular era threatened to once again highlight Quebec's distinctiveness and, in the process, to unravel a generation of social scientists' efforts to rewrite Quebec history as a narrative of progress toward a modern and secular – that is, normal – state.⁴⁴ The study of manhood, then, which was part of the drift within the historical profession away from the material past and toward the study of discourse, threatened to shine a light on those very discourses that marked Quebec society as different.

Literary critics have not felt these same pressures and have been looking at the gendered nature of Quebec's nationalist discourses for some time. In the process, these critics have produced a gendered reading of French Canadian nationalism that has done much to historicize manhood in ways that historians have not. Many of these critics place the Quiet Revolution at the centre of their work, viewing it as a key moment in the evolution of Quebec manhood because they suggest that it fulfilled many men's long-held desire to overthrow the power of mothers, wives, and the Catholic Church, which they had long blamed for French Canadian men's supposed emasculation.⁴⁵ Robert Schwartzwald, for example, reminds us that the church had been historically "represented as 'wedded' to the Anglo-Canadian bourgeoisie in a marriage where it takes care of all womanly vocations, while at the same time effeminizing its own sons." The discourses of decolonization that proliferated during

the 1950s and 1960s, he argues, reflected a desire to break up this supposed alliance and were infused with “homophobic tropes,” whereby “those found to be traitors or sell-outs to the cause of national revolution are gendered as passive/seductive men.”⁴⁶ Schwartzwald suggests that French Canadian nationalists have defined their own heterosexual virility according to their ability to lead the province out of its figurative state of homosexual weakness and dependence within Canadian federalism.⁴⁷ Katherine A. Roberts agrees, reminding us that the “model of liberation” adopted by many nationalists during the 1950s incorporated a “pre-existing hierarchy of sexual relations,” which was embedded in the period’s decolonization discourses and intended to further their own ambitions for masculine and national liberation.⁴⁸ Because many nationalists associated the colonized man with a state of femininity, Roberts suggests that “the movement towards decolonization involves the desire for full masculinity and the concomitant destruction of one’s femininity.”⁴⁹ Or as Mary Jean Green has put it, “the image of the newly decolonized subject [w]as a virile, heterosexual man.”⁵⁰ For this reason, according to Patricia Smart, “the revolutionary project is that of a son rebelling against the mother and seeking a ‘virility’ seemingly achievable only at women’s expense.”⁵¹ Both man and nation would reclaim heterosexual virility only when the nation emerged from its figurative state of homosexual weakness and dependence. The Quiet Revolution, then, becomes an exclusively masculine project of personal and political empowerment because it represents the means through which the feminized, emasculated, and homosexualized man/nation can reassert his/its heterosexuality.

Historians in Quebec have become more interested in manhood in recent years.⁵² Louise Bienvenue and Christine Hudon are leading the way with their studies of boys and the institutions that shape them.⁵³ Other historians have also begun to examine fatherhood in ways that shed light on the construction of manhood in the province.⁵⁴ These historians display little interest in the older preoccupation with progress and are less concerned that highlighting the particularities of the Quebec experience will necessarily cast Quebec’s past as less modern than that of the rest of Canada. It turns out, in fact, that gender history has had the effect of emphasizing the ways that English and French Canadians resembled one another in more ways than they imagined. The types of discourses that were pointed to in the past as evidence of Quebec’s backwardness have been shown to have characterized English Canadian life as well, so neither community can lay special claim to being in any real sense more advanced or modern than the other. By focusing on the discourses of the past, one finds that Quebec was engaged in a process of modernization that was no more difficult than the process undergone in English-speaking Canada. This book thus fits into the older normalizing narrative that continues

to hold sway among some social historians, but it also fits into a new cultural history in the province that investigates Quebec's distinctiveness without the old concern that doing so will make Quebec appear backward.

THIS STUDY BUILDS UPON the insights of these literary critics and historians to suggest that a link between manhood and nationalism developed in response to the challenges associated with industrial changes in the late nineteenth and early twentieth centuries. It was during these years that a model of manhood based on agrarian values gave way to one that was inextricably tied to national identity. Since French Canadians could no longer depend on a fading agrarian ideal of manhood, and because they found themselves becoming increasingly marginalized within an industrial landscape that appeared to be more favourable to English-speaking Canadians, they came to define manhood beyond the farm, the shop floor, and the world of commerce. Manhood came to be linked much more closely to the fate of the French Canadian nation and ultimately to the fate of the provincial state, which were much more within the control of French Canadians themselves.

The present study begins in the late nineteenth century, at a time when a number of French Canadians were beginning to think about ways of reconciling agrarian models of manhood with the reality of industrial modernity. Chapter 1 explores some of the ways that some French Canadian leaders were beginning to move away from the idea of promoting an agrarian model of manhood and toward the idea of manhood becoming linked to a sense of national belonging. Chapter 2 looks at the ways that heterosexuality became much more explicitly affirmed as central to manhood in Quebec. This chapter focuses on urban reformers, medical professionals, and a number of Catholic priests who were growing increasingly concerned about the fate of manhood in the industrial city, where overcrowding, poverty, disease, and pollution appeared to be compromising men's physical health, which in turn was endangering these men's ability to participate fully in the new industrial arena and placing the future of the French Canadian race at risk. As part of their campaign to clean up the city and to improve men's physical and moral health, these reformers came to promote the city as a heterosexual space. Concern about young men's activities in the city beyond the watchful eye of the heterosexual family prompted reformers to pay greater attention to men's sexuality. To ensure the morality of the urban environment as well as the health of the race, reformers became more explicit in their identification of heterosexuality as one of the primary markers of modern French Canadian manhood.

Concern about dissolute manhood during these years also prompted a rethinking of the meaning of racial identity. At the same time that the formerly

semi-private matters of personal hygiene and sexuality were emerging as issues of greater public interest, a growing number of observers came to downplay the biological assumptions about racial identity. Until the early twentieth century, many French Canadians had assumed that they were members of a distinct biological race and that their cultural characteristics had been transmitted to them through their blood. Although this interpretation had bolstered their claims of cultural distinctiveness, it had also conferred upon women, who physically reproduced the race, considerable influence. As French Canadian men's economic and political fortunes appeared to decline with the new century, however, and as the province's birthrate fell, some men began to question the wisdom of tying their fate to women's willingness to perpetuate the race. Those men who had come to depend on an ever-growing population in order to ensure their own political and economic ambitions came to resent the idea that their characteristics and abilities as men had in some way been transmitted to them through their mothers. Chapter 3 looks at men's attempts to dilute the biological dimension of racial identity in ways that might reduce their dependence on women's bodies. By curbing women's role in the perpetuation of the race, men emerged as the sole arbiters of racial belonging, free to perform their manhood outside the confines of the feminized home and unburdened of the thought that their mothers had in any significant way shaped their identities as men.

Chapter 4 examines how changing attitudes about the body and racial identity influenced French Canadians' responses to the rising tide of imperialism in English-speaking Canada. Although many French Canadian leaders pointed to Canada's participation in the South African War and the Great War as evidence of the country's dangerous turn toward greater imperial unity, these wars also convinced many French Canadian men of the need to accelerate their efforts to redefine manhood within a retooled and reinvigorated national identity. At the heart of this process was an effort to position the French Canadian man at the centre of a vigorous and martial historical narrative. Chapter 5 focuses on nationalists' efforts to rewrite French Canada's historical narrative in an effort to bring the past into line with the more muscular and aggressive form of manhood that they promoted in the early decades of the twentieth century. During these years, French Canadians broke from the writings of nineteenth-century historians who had often portrayed them as a passive and simple people, content to let others determine their fate. In the wake of French Canadians' failures to prevent the rise of English Canadian imperialism, to thwart the passage of anti-French and anti-Catholic legislation in Manitoba and Ontario, and to block military conscription, the simplicity that historians had upheld in the nineteenth century as a virtue came to be regarded as a

liability in the twentieth century. French Canadian writers thus began purging from the historical narrative any hints of weakness or passivity and replacing them with examples of individual acts of heroism and military glory. This new historical narrative was intended to legitimize the more militant and aggressive manhood that nationalists promoted in the 1920s and 1930s by pointing to its deep roots in the French Canadian past.

Not everyone supported such efforts to bolster manhood by encouraging men to embrace their national identities. An increasingly vocal group of critics emerged during the 1930s to complain that nationalism had done little to attenuate the effects of the Depression or to improve the state of manhood. Chapter 6 focuses on this emerging critique of the effort to link manhood to national identity. Whereas some men turned to nationalism as a means of reinvigorating manhood, these critics attempted to disentangle manhood from national identity, arguing that nationalists had gone too far when they claimed that manhood could be achieved only through a man's immersion in his national identity. Insisting that this placed too great a burden on the province's boys, they suggested that the emphasis on national identity was distracting boys from their primary task of becoming men. By rejecting the nationalist suggestion that manhood was something that flowed from a person's sense of national belonging, these critics recentred the person, privileging individual values above the community and the nation. In this way, they articulated an alternate version of manhood that insisted men should develop their national identities only after they had established their identities as men.

As French Canadian men turned to nationalism as a means of bolstering their sense of manhood and securing their position in the early-twentieth-century urban and industrial world, women became increasingly marginal in Quebec's cultural and social consciousness. Even as women were steadily joining the workforce during these years, they were also being excluded from a national debate that was framed by men intent upon using nationalism to consolidate their own economic and political power as well as their authority over women. Although women had never exercised much real power or influence in a society dominated by the Roman Catholic Church and organized along strict patriarchal lines, the late nineteenth and early twentieth centuries marked an important moment of cultural remasculinization in the province. During these years, women lost some of the influence they may have had over racial destiny and were removed from the province's historical consciousness as men rewrote history in ways that emphasized episodes of manly heroism and violent conflict and that cleansed it of any hints of supposedly feminine passivity. By the middle of the twentieth century, women had become expendable in the nationalist struggle since they were no longer needed to perpetuate the race and were

more easily overlooked if they were seen to stand in the way of men's nationalist aspirations, which were emerging as central to their identities as men.

THIS STUDY THUS OPENS in the closing decades of the nineteenth century, a period when a group of leading French Canadian men were taking the first steps to remasculinize the cultural and economic landscapes of the province. The bulk of the analysis focuses on the interwar years, when efforts to consolidate French Canadian manhood intensified. It ends in the 1940s, the decade that saw women win the right to vote in Quebec provincial elections, thus putting an end to the process of remasculinization. With the vote, women regained some of the influence that they had lost when French Canadian culture was being remasculinized during of the first decades of the century.⁵⁵ As a result, the year women won the right to vote in Quebec stands as a critical moment in the history of manhood and nationalism in the province, bringing to an end the monopoly those men held in the political sphere. In the years after the Second World War, of course, men continued to dominate politics, and women were only very slowly and grudgingly welcomed into the public realm. But if the postwar years were marked by a more aggressive and more obviously gendered rhetoric of nationalism, it was in part because women's formal re-entry into the political world threatened to weaken the connections between manhood and national affirmation that men had drawn in the previous decades.

The late nineteenth and early twentieth centuries, then, were an important period in the history of manhood in Quebec, one that represented the last opportunity of French Canadian men to turn to an exclusively male political world in order to advance a particular idea about manhood. By turning to the state and national identity as central to the meaning of modern manhood, French Canadian men gave shape to a nationalist movement that would emerge as an instrument to promote men's identities as men and to bolster their political and economic power in the province. When the rest of the country had granted women the right to vote following the Great War, the Quebec government had refused to grant women that same right in provincial elections. This stance had permitted men to continue their dominance of the public sphere in a manner that was no longer available to men in the rest of the country. Influential French Canadian men spent these years redefining manhood for the twentieth century, which meant tying it ever more closely to national identity. Although women would be allowed back into the political process in the second half of the twentieth century, the province's political culture as well as its nationalist movement remained resolutely male-centred because French Canadian leaders had so effectively tied manhood to political power and national identity in the first half of the century.