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Religious Heritage and Nation in Post-Vatican II Catholicism: A View from Quebec

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Abstract: With Quebec's *croix de chemin* (wayside crosses) as a jumping off point, I explore the importance of heritage creation as the province transitioned away from pre-Vatican II Catholicism in the 1960s and 1970s. I include two 'sites of memory': fieldwork with contemporary cross caretakers and archival materials from a major government-funded inventory of the crosses in the 1970s. Heritage professionals have generally implied that Catholic objects lose their sacred meaning to become objects of nation-building, while caretakers view them as still-active objects of devotional labour. Regardless, I find that both parties view themselves as laying claim to "modern" ways of interacting with religious objects, while also assuming that a cohesive national identity rests in part on promoting a rural Catholic past. More broadly, I argue that neither side can be fully understood without attention to the convergence of three trends in the 1960s and 1970s: Quebecois and other emergent nationalisms, Catholic liberalization, and the rise of an international heritage industry.

Keywords: heritage; nationalism; devotion; Catholicism; statecraft



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1. Interlocking Sites of Memory

"What was left of experience, still lived in the warmth of tradition, in the silence of custom, in the repetition of the ancestral, has been swept away...Our consciousness is shaped by a sense that everything is over and done with . . . Memory is constantly on our lips because it no longer exists."

—Pierre Nora, *Realms of Memory*, 1996: 1.

"The cross is a symbol of history, it's our past. It's also a sign of vitality. When the wayside crosses are redone, are beautiful, are renovated. That says there are still Catholics here."

—Raymonde Proulx, 62, cross caretaker, Sainte-Gertrude-de-Manneville¹

The *Conseil du patrimoine religieux du Québec* (Religious Heritage Council of Quebec) is housed in a stately former convent along a busy thoroughfare in downtown Montreal. A non-profit organization with a full-time staff of five, it serves a unique role as liaison between religious institutions, citizens, heritage professionals, and the Quebecois state. While the *Conseil*, officially speaking, works with "diverse religious traditions," it focuses on Christian heritage objects, the vast majority of which are Roman Catholic. Its history, as recounted on its website, began in response to Catholic needs: in 1983, the Diocese of Montreal's *Comité de construction et d'art sacré* (Committee for building and sacred art) applied for a Canadian government grant to restore its churches. A decade later, in 1995, a reconceived non-confessional version of the committee negotiated a permanent partnership with the provincial government's *Ministère de la culture et des communications* (MCC), which was concerned about the growing sale and demolition of Catholic churches (Zubrzycki 2016, p. 165). Following an initial grant of 35 million dollars, the *Fondation* (later, *Conseil*) *du patrimoine religieux du Québec* was born (*À propos n.d.*).

¹ Translations from French are my own unless otherwise stated.

As a state-funded entity, the *Conseil* positions the preservation of Catholic objects as serving the higher goal of statecraft. The expectation is that it creates a shared historical literacy that fosters solidarity and peoplehood. In the *Conseil*'s YouTube video announcing its yearly *Journées du patrimoine religieux* (Religious Heritage Days) for 2020, Mario Desrosiers, a Quebecois priest in a region just north of Montreal, articulates this idea in a manner that is typical in my experience. Standing in a lavish Catholic basilica, he says, "Les églises, là, c'est toute notre histoire à nous" (The churches, that's all our history, ours). He reminds listeners that French settlers colonized the territory four centuries ago by building churches. "It's the history of Quebec's heritage..." he continues, "Whether you are a believer (*croyant*) or you are not a believer when you go into a church you feel a peace and that brings us toward something that is greater [than ourselves]." That "something greater" might refer to the godly or the territorial; as he says the words, the camera pans across statues of St. Joseph and Jesus, St. André Bessette, and the Virgin Mary, before focusing on a view from the church door of the Saint Lawrence River, the lifeline of French colonial settlement.² Whatever the case, the "nous"—the "us"—to whom he speaks is clearly people of French and Catholic descent. In short, state-funded heritage objects entwine nation, heritage, and religion in particular ways.

Of course, heritage professionals and scholars are aware of this fact. In the two decades before the *Conseil*'s founding in 1995, there was a massive upswing in heritage-making at the national and international levels, which prompted a growing number of scholarly studies on the topic (Herzfeld 1982; Nora 1996, p. xii; Lowenthal 1997, p. xiii). This body of work has clarified how states promote and build heritage to create the nation, including in Quebec (Handler 1988, 2011), while other heritage objects may be sidelined or even destroyed to serve the same end. A compelling recent study applies this principle to Quebec, arguing that the 1960s nationalist movement, dubbed the Quiet Revolution, was an "aesthetic revolt": people cemented secular nationalism by publicly destroying key Catholic objects, such as saints' statues (Zubrzycki 2013a, p. 428).

As scholarly interest in national heritage grew, studies uncovered the nineteenth-century roots of these mid-twentieth century trends. Political scientist Benedict Anderson was inspired to add museums to the 2006 revision of his 1983 classic *Imagined Communities*, singling out the artefacts they contain as a key site through which the nineteenth-century nation constructed its geographic boundaries and legitimized its ancestry (Anderson 2006, p. 164). Historian Denise Poulot (1988, p. 40) was able to pinpoint the first state-level debates about heritage objects (i.e., *patrimoine*) to the early part of that century when the new French Republic had to decide what to do with thousands of Roman Catholic objects it had confiscated. The result was a novel idea: the state could strip religious objects of sacred value to re-appropriate their power for nation-building ends. Thus Catholic objects played a key role in the very creation of "heritage" as a category in European thought.

These experiments in modern state formation in Europe had a major impact during the explosion of post-colonial states in the 1960s and 1970s—the global trend that initially prompted Anderson's 1983 study of nationalism. In Quebec, the rise of new nations was one factor fuelling aspirations in the 1960s that led to a referendum on sovereignty in 1980 (Mills 2011). This period of high nationalist sentiment coincided with the 1972 ratification of the *World Heritage Convention*, under UNESCO's administration, which lent unprecedented authority to heritage preservation across the world (Gfeller 2013, p. 487; Meskell 2013, p. 485).

Thus in Quebec in the 1960s and 1970s growing nationalism and heritage preservation converged. These trends then coincided with a third, equally important, factor: the Second Vatican Council. One might even go so far as to say that late twentieth-century heritage work, including the founding of today's *Conseil du patrimoine religieux*, is, in part, an extended history of Vatican II. In making this claim, I build on an established body of

² Colonists settled Quebec and Montreal along the St. Lawrence River. It was instrumental for the travel and trade that made White settlement possible and desirable. "Bottom of Form Les Journées du patrimoine religieux 2020," video, min. 2:05. Available at <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=sxy-ZYFLOcA> (accessed on 20 March 2021).

scholarship that has repositioned Vatican II, and the progressive Catholic movements that preceded it, as integral to shaping the Quebecois national imaginary during the 1960s and since (Meunier and Warren 2002; Routhier 2006b; Gauvreau 2007). This work refutes the longstanding assumption that modern nationalism was in direct opposition to, and necessitated the decline of, so-called pre-modern religion (Zubrzycki 2016, p. 16). Instead, they ask how Catholicism still structures assumptions and values, even in a ‘post-Catholic’ Quebec. Heritage-making is an important part of that process.

I flesh out this theme by focusing on a particular object of preservation: *croix de chemin*—large devotional crosses planted across rural Quebec. These wayside crosses, as I call them, are hand-made by local people, stand twelve to twenty feet tall, and are situated on roadsides. They are often made of wood, painted white, and decorated (sometimes elaborately) based on Catholic iconography of the Passion. Traditionally, the crosses were built to commemorate an event, to fulfill a vow (*promesse*), to ask for protection, or to provide a gathering place if the parish church was far away. Although scholars have repeatedly predicted their imminent demise, about 80% of the 3000 crosses surveyed 40 years ago still remain, cared for by the rural people who live nearby.³

To structure my argument, I draw on sociologist Danièle Hervieu-Léger who, inspired by Maurice Halbwachs and historian Pierre Nora, interrogates the role of collective memory and the decline of institutional religious authority in rural France. Her study, *Religion as a Chain of Memory* (2000), is influential in studies of religious memory (Knobauch 2001; Sakaranaho 2011; Brosius and Polit 2011), even as it has been criticized for its inherent Catholic bias (Geaves 2009). Here, *Chain of Memory* is a good starting point precisely for that reason: its focus on memory and authoritative tradition highlights Catholic concerns. However, I bring an ethnographic sensibility to bear on Hervieu-Léger’s theoretical paradigm. How is collective memory and religious tradition lived, felt, and talked about in rural Quebec?

I approach the subject by comparing two interlocking *lieux de mémoire* (Nora 1996, p. 14). The first site of memory is the reminiscences and everyday practices of contemporary cross caretakers, among whom I did twenty-four months of intermittent fieldwork from 2012 to 2014. The second site is an archive amassed by ethnologist Jean Simard, principal investigator of a major MCC-funded inventory of the crosses in the 1970s.⁴ These *lieux de mémoire* are best thought of as “braided” (Orsi 2005, p. 9), since the perspectives of ethnologists and caretakers concur and diverge. Both sites are emic, in that they are produced by and for French Canadians, and they share much in common insofar as they both promote the view that a cohesive national identity rests in part on nostalgia for a rural past. However, heritage professionals, including scholars, repeatedly imply that French-Canadian Catholicism is “over and done with” (Nora 1996, p. 1) and that places of popular devotion have become secularised sites of national heritage, though they may not be aware of this ideological subtext, as Routhier (2006a) notes. Caretakers, by contrast, view the crosses as patrimonial and still-active objects of devotional labour. As practicing Catholics, they maintain them in order to express and promote a relationship with God.

I explore these ideas through three key factors particularly salient to a Catholic conception of memory, drawn loosely from Hervieu-Léger’s theoretical paradigm and Simard’s body of work: perspectives on temporality, the role of institutions, and the rise of individual consciousness. Ultimately, I trace how Quebecois ethnologists and caretakers both lay claim to certain kinds of modernity—secular and Catholic—in the name of collective

³ This number is an estimate (including new crosses and reconstructions) based on eight books detailing the crosses in particular parishes and a 2012–13 telephone survey conducted by my RAs of 398 parishes, of which 199 had crosses.

⁴ My fieldwork was intermittent over 24 months. During this time, I participated in group prayers, cross benedictions, and springtime clean-ups. I also directed a telephone survey (See note 4) and conducted a set of fifty 1–2 h interviews with caretakers over the phone and in person, and twelve interviews with leaders in historical societies and the *Chevaliers de Colomb* (Knights of Columbus). The inventory archives to which I refer are the *Fonds Jean Simard* (#F1081), *Archives de folklore et ethnologie*, Laval University, Quebec. When the MCC funded the surveys it was called the *Ministère des Affaires culturelles*. I have kept MCC throughout to alleviate confusion.

continuity.⁵ The argument is not a new one for me; this article is a revision of a chapter I published previously (Kaelin 2017). However, the opportunity to revisit this material in an open access format enables me to position it somewhat differently. In this respect, I hope it serves as a call for more studies that examine whether what I sketch out in Quebec has salience in Catholic-majority places elsewhere. Are there patterns of interaction between Vatican II, burgeoning nationalism, and heritage preservation in the 1960s and 1970s? If so, what are the impacts on institutionalized and informal religious heritage preservation? Before exploring temporality, institutions, or individuality, however, let us begin with some background about Quebec and Simard's wayside cross inventory.

2. Catholic Quebec in a Season of Change

Writing in the shadow of the First and Second World Wars, Maurice Halbwachs developed what became a classic theory of memory. His great insight was that collective memories, even religious ones, never merely preserve the past—they also establish identity in the present. In *Chain of Memory*, Hervieu-Léger extends this idea as a rejoinder to the 'secularization thesis,' a reigning sociological theory at the time. She argues that religion is a creative force that confers transcendent authority on the past in order to assure present meaning and future continuity. Based on Halbwachs' complementary forms of Catholic memory—the theological and the mystical—she posits that all religions rely on a central dialectic between the symbolic evocation of a chain of memory in an institutionalized liturgy and its actualization through a community's shared beliefs and practices. Her overarching definition of religion thus contains three symbiotic components: beliefs (individual and collective), tradition (the chain linking beliefs to collective memory), and institutional structures. Her conclusion is that modernity, or more precisely the neoliberal secular state in France, promoted individualism and eviscerated the institutional authority of a rural "parish civilization" essential to Catholic memory. The result, she opines, was that the chain was broken, precipitating religious crisis (Hervieu-Léger 2000, pp. 73, 86–87, 127, 132–35).

This view of history is echoed, and arguably amplified, in Quebec where a similar process of modernization was condensed into an intense season of change. In the 1960s, the Quiet Revolution swept through the province, leading to vast political restructuring, economic modernization, and rapid unchurching. The Catholic Church was largely divested of its previously central role in education and social services. Monthly mass attendance fell from 88% in the mid-1960s to under 20% today (Bibby 2008, pp. 161, 175). This 'revolution,' though popularly perceived to be at odds with Catholicism, paralleled Church-led modernizations spurred by Vatican II (Routhier 2006b). Like elsewhere in North America, the Latin Mass was vernacularized in 1964 and laity began to assume greater responsibility. The Quebec Bishops exhorted the faithful to a deeper understanding of 'true' Christianity divested of the devotional "superstitions" of the past (Baggett 2009, pp. 22–23; Gauvreau 2013, p. 193). As a result, Church renewal contributed to "divest[ing] the people of their religiosity" by scorning the popular practices and saintly relationships that had sustained it (Simard 1979, p. 1).

In the midst of these societal upheavals, Jean Simard, a young ethnologist from Quebec City, was appointed at Laval University. Simard completed his doctoral training in art history in the 1960s in Strasbourg when the secularization thesis reigned supreme. Concurring with other observers, he averred that "the people" had left the Church behind when Quebec emerged from its "medieval age" in the 1960s to join the modern "Western world" (Simard 1979, pp. 1–2). Yet, Simard also developed a deep respect for the Catholic devotional artefacts he came to understand as popular art in need of government protection. His training coincided with a major uptick in European efforts, following two world wars, to preserve national heritage objects (much of which was sacred art, like the kind that

⁵ I use the term "secular" sparingly. It is more accurate to say that ethnologists operate in what might be called a "post-Catholic" context, referring to how Catholicism's structuring traces are still highly relevant in their work.

Simard studied). From the 1940s to 1960s, there was a steep rise in legal statements and committees dedicated to heritage preservation in Europe, which became the basis for the *World Heritage Convention* in 1972. Though the committees had different specialties, each one rested on the principle that professional experts should monitor and evaluate heritage objects in order to counsel governments and UNESCO about what should be preserved and how (Meskell 2013). In the 1960s and 1970s, these experts consisted almost entirely of university-trained men from continental Europe (Gfeller 2013, p. 485). Although looking back he does not recall being aware of these trends at the time, Simard was trained in what was effectively the center of cutting-edge debates about heritage practice.⁶

These norms and attitudes about heritage reflected longstanding European priorities that historians generally trace back to the French Revolution, as noted, and the *Treaty of Paris* in 1815.⁷ The treaty, which required that France return heritage objects looted during the Napoleonic wars, was the first formal articulation of national sovereignty over cultural property. In this respect, two points are notable. First, it set a precedent for viewing objects created or housed in a particular territory as belonging to the place and thus to the identity of the ‘nation’ (people) that occupied it (Hall 2011, p. 10). In 1949, the *Fourth Geneva Convention* restated this idea regarding religious sites, calling for the protection of “places of worship which constitute the cultural or spiritual heritage of peoples” (Tsivolas 2019, p. 3). Second, the *Treaty* focused on objects looted from the Papal States. “It is not insignificant,” writes historian Melanie Hall, “that the Papal States were the first to receive heritage recognition” (2011, pp. 10–11). The geographic heart of Catholicism was envisioned as a “site-museum,” a holistic area in which everything is linked (“a collection”) and understood to require protection due to its universal value.

While Hall discusses this concept in secular terms, it was not completely alien to Roman Catholic thought. It made sense in Catholic terms that Rome had value for the whole world. More subtly, it made sense to perceive of objects as linked to each other and to a particular site. For Catholics, objects could be connected via the sacred, especially in consecrated (blessed) sites such as churches, cemeteries, and pilgrimage destinations. Catholics also viewed many religious objects as kept in perpetuity, at least ideally, which squared with nascent notions of heritage preservation. My point is this: Catholic objects were central to the first legal articulation of heritage in Europe in the early nineteenth century, and they have continued to define many (likely most) of the religious objects Europeans have sought to preserve. It is therefore difficult, perhaps impossible, to disentangle whether ‘secular’ or ‘Catholic’ ideas about sacred objects gave rise to heritage concepts that have, more recently, been rightly criticized for their European bias (Meskell 2013, p. 488).⁸

On that note, let us return to Jean Simard, a key figure who shaped religious heritage preservation in Quebec after Vatican II. Before securing a professorate at Laval University in 1972, Simard worked for three years at Quebec’s newly formed Ministry of Culture (MCC) to index inventories created by Gérard Morisset, a self-taught art historian who compiled major collections of largely Catholic devotional art in the 1930s and 1940s. After being hired at Laval, Simard continued his partnership with the MCC by developing inventories of popular religious art and objects (Bouchard 2018, p. 137). Throughout his career, Simard served a role similar to the European advisory bodies, noted above, where elite experts evaluated heritage objects to counsel governments about what to preserve.

Though Simard was professionally trained and a self-identified “bourgeois” (Simard 2018, p. 141), he did not view himself as elite. One of his first students, with whom he

⁶ He did tell me he suspects the government bodies that supported him during and after his PhD may have been influenced by these trends. “Cette question était avant tout l’affaire du [MCC]...J’imagine que ce contexte m’a bien servi pour obtenir des fonds.” Jean Simard, pers. comm., 15 February 2021.

⁷ European concerns about heritage, forged through internecine destruction in the nineteenth century, found fuller expression between the World Wars. European intellectuals founded the International Committee on Intellectual Co-operation (ICIC) from 1936 and 1946 (Ducci 2012; Meskell 2013, p. 485) alongside the League of Nations. After World War II, ICIC’s mission was revived through a UNESCO committee and multiple agreements, such as the *Hague Convention for the Protection of Cultural Property in the Event of Armed Conflict* (1954) (Gfeller 2013, p. 487).

⁸ A potentially fruitful avenue of comparative research is the relation between national heritage preservation and the rise of ‘inculturated’ Catholicism, which also valorized local art, objects, rituals.

worked closely in the 1970s, recalled that Simard, like his students, “fell into” the work in part because they shared an “innate understanding [of popular Quebecois Catholicism] that came from childhoods impregnated by the smell of incense, the gold of tabernacles, the glow of votive candles...” (Bouchard 2018, p. 137; also Simard 2018, p. 153). Simard’s self-understanding also developed vis à vis Morisset’s work. The two men first met in 1958 when Simard worked for a summer in Morisset’s *Musée de la province* (today it has the more grandiose title of *Musée national des beaux-arts du Québec*). The experience inspired Simard to study Quebecois religious art and Morisset later helped him secure government funding for his doctoral work in France (Simard 2018, pp. 151–52). But Simard’s close familiarity with Morisset also led him to work differently. Later, he recalled that Morisset, like many of his contemporaries, “turned his nose up” at art made in Quebec after the mid-nineteenth century because he viewed it as hopelessly contaminated by British influence and therefore not truly French (Simard 2018, p. 154). By contrast, Simard prized handcrafted objects made by Quebecois people in their own style. He was especially drawn to objects that collectors, like Morisset, snubbed and Vatican II era clergy belittled as popular superstitions. Wayside crosses were thus a perfect fit for his first big project.

Simard’s cross inventories reflected a heady mix of Quebecois nationalism and Vatican II liberalism in the 1970s, which found expression in heritage preservation. According to the cross caretakers with whom I worked, most of whom are of Simard’s generation, Vatican II prompted them to reclaim ‘their’ church from ‘the Church,’ which they viewed as bureaucratic and often inscrutable. By contrast, their church was the local parish, *fabrique*, and clergy and religious sisters who were part of Quebecois kinship networks and with whom, not incidentally, Simard often worked closely. This local pride reflected Vatican II’s valorization of lay people’s faith and vocation in the world, along with its promotion of local expressions of culture, notably in the vernacularization of the Mass. Observers note that Rome’s new “sensitivity to cultural heritage” after Vatican II encouraged the creation and conservation of local sacred art, with significant impacts at the diocesan level on “stimulat[ing] and strengthen[ing] pride in a sense of place and in [national] identity” (Torralba 2010, p. 2).⁹ Wayside cross work, whether carried out by cross caretakers or Simard and his students, was grounded in local understandings of Quebecois Catholicism and in step with a changing Catholic Church.

Simard’s work also reflected an important presupposition bequeathed to the heritage industry from its European roots: a culturally homogeneous people (French Canadians) inhabit definable territories (Quebec) and the objects they make and preserve are thus fundamental to national identity. At first, Simard’s ethnology seems at odds with how historians of heritage view the period, especially after 1972, as associated with the internationalization of objects deemed to have worldwide value; as a result, scholars and others sometimes deride the narrower identity politics of nation-states (Meskell 2013, pp. 488–89). Yet, nations are the building blocks of international bodies like UNESCO. Around the world, governments in the 1970s understood that state sovereignty—particularly in new or aspiring states, like Quebec—rested on their ability to promote a cohesive sense of peoplehood, which could be enhanced through heritage creation. Simard and his colleagues at MCC incorporated religious objects as part of this process.

In effect, Simard represents an important movement that anthropologists have only begun to explore: elites’ conscious assimilation of religious heritage to shape emerging national identities in sites as diverse as South Africa (Chidester 2005), Turkey (Tambar 2010), Poland (Zubrzycki 2013b), Vietnam (Endres 2011), and Brazil (van de Port 2005). Birgit Meyer’s work on Ghana is especially helpful since it delineates a historical trajectory similar to Quebec’s: beginning in the late 1950s, state-led initiatives defined the modern nation by re-appropriating as heritage those religious traditions deemed irrational or embarrassing (Meyer 2010, p. 10). While ‘witchcraft’ and ‘juju’ were more fraught in Ghana than was

⁹ The author, a Filipino priest, credits *Sacrosanctum Concilium* (1963), Chapter VII, with stimulating commissions and respect for local sacred art. The term “cultural heritage” per se entered official Church vocabulary only in 1988 with Pope John Paul II’s *Pontifical Commission for the Cultural Heritage of the Church*.

pre-Vatican II Catholicism in Quebec, popular devotions were nevertheless viewed by elites as vestiges of the past that needed to be transformed to serve contemporary ends. Historian Michael Gauvreau (2007, pp. 307–52) has catalogued this process in the 1960s as Catholic intellectuals, priests and laypeople, urged French Canadians to assume an “adult” “purified spirituality” and abandon the “ghettoized” Church with its “mere attachment to religious ritual” (Bradet 1963, p. 73; Proulx 1967, p. 117). While traditionalists balked at such characterizations, reformists held the public ear, arguing that devotional Catholicism—now called “a dross of sentimentalism and folklore” (Lefebvre-Germain 1963, p. 209)—should be abandoned yet recognized for its historic utility since it had shaped a shared culture that would help the new Quebec, with its modern Catholicism, remain distinct from its Anglophone neighbours.¹⁰

It was within this charged political, religious, and scholarly atmosphere that Simard’s wayside cross inventory emerged.

Les îles Bizard and Jésus

In June 1972, three university students, Nicole, Louise, and Luce, alighted on the islands of Bizard and Jésus. Two of the four largest islands at the confluence of the St. Lawrence and Outaouais rivers, Bizard and Jésus are nestled just north of the densely settled island of Montreal. Their young professor, Jean Simard, having chosen these mainly rural locations as a promising field site, tasked the young researchers with conducting the inaugural survey of Quebec’s wayside crosses in preparation for a seminar on “Traditional Ethnography.” Armed with 50-cent notebooks and cameras, they fanned out across the islands.

Ethnology and folklore studies emerged as distinct branches of anthropology in Quebec under Marius Barbeau, the most prominent early Canadian anthropologist. Barbeau joined the Canadian Geological Survey in 1911 under Franz Boas’ protégé Edward Sapir, in order to catalogue the presumed last remaining specimens of “authentic” indigenous culture (Dominguez 1986; Nurse 1997, p. 99). In 1914, with Boas’ encouragement, Barbeau also began to gather French Canadian songs and stories, leading to the creation of *ethnologie* in Quebec. His construction of this field relied on a few key assumptions, which he transmitted to his student Luc Lacourcière, who then mentored Jean Simard (not least by introducing him to museums of popular art during his PhD in France).¹¹ First, Barbeau felt that French Canadian “peasants” lacked the inspiration to create; they were mere vessels that transmitted an oral culture derived from medieval France. He also incorporated the strong anti-modernist bent that colored his work with indigenous people: modern, commercial life (“hot-dog stands and coca-cola”) was destroying an authentic French Canadian “essence” (Barbeau 1935, p. 290; Barbeau 1962, p. 9; Nurse 1997, pp. 30, 314). It was up to ethnologists to preserve its traces as it disappeared.

Simard inherited these concerns, along with the feeling, shared by Quebec’s nationalist government, that promoting “folklore” could bolster French Canadian identity (Handler 2011, p. 49). His former colleagues at MCC were embarking on a period of “grands inventaires” (Simard 2018, p. 155): efforts to catalogue and preserve as many items as possible of a particular type found across Quebec, such as wayside crosses. With a five-year grant from MCC, Simard started his cross inventory in 1973.¹² In fact, such projects had been *de rigueur* among Quebecois intellectuals for a generation. The inventory was central to Barbeau’s ethnological practice. In the 1940s, Luc Lacourcière began his

¹⁰ The reformist view informed the important Conférence catholique canadienne’s *Commission d’étude sur les laïcs et l’Église* (1968–71), a series of studies and public conferences. The *Commission* chair, Fernand Dumont, had earlier dismissed devotional Catholicism as “pseudo-beliefs that are in reality superstitions barely disguised by a thin coat of Christian veneer” (Dumont 1966, p. 382). For more details see Gauvreau (2007) and Warren (2014).

¹¹ Morisset introduced Simard to Quebecois religious art, while Lacourcière introduced him to popular culture. Lacourcière, a visiting professor at Strasbourg when Simard was a student, invited him to the Musée international de l’imagerie à Épinal to demonstrate the possibility of a museum devoted to popular artifacts (2018, p. 154).

¹² Simard’s first grant for a pilot project on the crosses was from the (federal) Canada Council for the Arts in 1972. For more on this period see (Simard 2018, p. 158).

Archives de folklore en matière de littérature orale, which provided a model for Simard's inventory of popular religion (Bouchard 2018, p. 137). Gérard Morisset's art inventory was also compiled as Barbeau and Lacourcière were collecting oral stories and songs. For his own archive a generation later, Simard adopted a methodological model then *en vogue* in Quebecois sociology of religion: sending out teams of scholars and students to conduct massive surveys of rural areas (Routhier 2006b, p. 301; Simard, interview, 23 May 2014). In the wayside cross inventory, the goal of these professional evaluations was to identify which crosses constituted a "national treasure" that should qualify for government protection.

Simard chose the islands of Bizard and Jésus as the trial site for two reasons: Barbeau had surveyed the crosses there exactly fifty years earlier and they were undergoing rapid suburbanization. Areas that had been rural farms just five years before were now filled with tract housing and flanked by highways. When Nicole, Louise, and Luce set out, carrying Barbeau's maps and photographs, their goal was to document the presumed destruction of crosses he had surveyed in 1922. Their 23-page questionnaire, designed by Simard and used for the next decade, focused almost exclusively on each cross' placement and material composition, down even to the screws. Did they have square, round, or deformed heads? The young women carefully ticked the boxes beside each one (Genet et al. 1972, p. 5).

Countering their expectations, they recorded twenty-eight crosses—five *more* than Barbeau had found. Nearly all were reconstructed or entirely new. Only five crosses remained intact and unchanged, which were the ones that researchers valued most. Those (few) sections of the survey that elicited more qualitative responses, continually reiterated the loss of an original: Was this cross displaced? Did this cross replace another? Do you know of disappeared crosses . . . [and] can you describe them? Thus despite clear evidence of active cross construction and religious adherence, the young women concluded their report by urging their urban, university-educated readers to take responsibility for the things rural people had built: the crosses are "part of the national heritage as a witness to an era, as well as a historic monument. If we believe that no more wayside crosses will be constructed, those that still exist must be preserved, kept-up, and conserved (Genet et al. 1972, pp. 16–17; Simard 1972, pp. 20–22). Simard often urged the same thing, writing that the ethnologist's role is "pulling this collective heritage from general [societal] contempt" (1979, p. 2) and "find[ing] solutions to prepare for the future of a religious heritage now (and henceforth) menaced" by neglect (2004, p. 2).

3. Recalling Loss and Change at Wayside Crosses Today

Fast-forward to the present. Since the mid-1990s, thanks to Simard's efforts and to trends in heritage preservation worldwide, religious *patrimoine* has become something of a priority for the provincial government. Heritage studies also fit seamlessly with most Quebecois scholarship on contemporary Catholicism, which continually redounds to *ce qui s'est passé*, viewing the present through the lens of the past: What has changed? What remains the same? This mode of scholarship reflects its (post) Catholic milieu, coloured by the history of a foundational religion institutionally entangled in most areas of civil society, including education (Mager and Cantin 2010; Snyder and Pelletier 2011). The longstanding relationship between Church and education provokes not a little anxiety for academics, as Hervieu-Léger (2000, pp. 9–22) notes of French sociology of religion.

There are questions, too, about the often close collaboration between academics and state government around heritage. Although studies now problematize the role of elite "heritage makers" (Drouin and Richard-Bazire 2011, p. 1), others still champion the government's "reinvention" of a Catholic past (Noppen and Morisset 2005). The latter perspective reflects how many scholars, including Simard, view modernization and secularization as a ripple effect where ideas born in intellectual urban centers drift outwards to engulf the rural periphery. Forces destructive of traditional religious culture emanate from urban centres but so too do the saving powers of ethnology: the île Bizard and île Jésus survey, according to Simard, produced almost instantaneous revitalization. Once the university students showed an interest, locals became aware of their crosses' value. When

the students returned a month later, the crosses had been repainted and restored (Simard 2014; Simard 1998, p. 50; Carpentier 1981, p. 391; Joly 2008, p. 43).

Caretakers never describe the reconstruction or maintenance of crosses as related to such experts. Undoubtedly, that is partly because maintaining a *croix de chemin* is not extremely onerous so their preservation rarely (if ever) falls to official bodies, like the *Conseil du patrimoine religieux*. According to contemporary builders, on average, it costs about \$2000 Canadian dollars to make a cross and they are usually preserved as needed using leftover building supplies. Caretakers also never describe themselves as the passive recipients of ideas, swept up in a sea of change. Rather, they clarify that they and their predecessors have actively labored for Catholicism and as Catholics, with God's help. Wayside crosses, in fact, become the *ultimate* example of this process. I turn now to a clearer discussion of how their perspective overlaps with and diverges from that of Quebecois ethnologists, structured around three key themes in Hervieu-Léger's work.

3.1. Temporality

Time—how it passes, how it is remembered—is of the utmost importance to heritage scholars like Simard. It is also central in Hervieu-Léger's model, which sees the cornerstone of religion as the ritualistic rites ("practices of anamnesis") that recall the past and thereby incorporate believers into a historical chain. Such collective remembering belongs to the "pure world of tradition," a concept she often invokes that implies how John Locke viewed time as "the length of one straight line, extended *in infinitum*." This temporal mode is a linear trajectory that moves from a pre-modern period when traditional religion (Catholicism) was 'naturally' transmitted through the generations to a modern one where it is inevitably breaking down and under threat (Hervieu-Léger 2000, pp. 124–25, 127).

For many Quebecois scholars, the 1960s Quiet Revolution has provided a ready axis dividing these two imagined periods. Simard's inventory relied on it, since it was fundamentally an attempt to scientifically distinguish between the "traditional" and the "modern" by categorizing crosses based on age, material coherence, and the intricacy of carvings. This empiricism of the traditional subsumed the mythos of a French Canadian "essence," as per Barbeau, that is rural, pre-modern, and tied to the physical territory of contemporary Quebec. The crosses served as ideal metonyms for this complex of ideas since they are handmade of local wood and planted in the ground. In Simard's "typology of significance" new (or rebuilt) crosses and the use of foreign materials were thus clearly undesirable. All 25 of the crosses he identified as "national treasures" had elaborate wood carvings and were constructed before 1921 (Simard 1995, pp. 7, 47).¹³

Both ethnologists and caretakers connect wayside crosses to idealized memories of a rural past. Nostalgia, scholars note, is the attempt to situate oneself in a particular time and place and is thus constituted differently depending on where one stands in relation to it (Stewart 1992, pp. 253–54). Caretakers differ from ethnologists because, for them, rural Quebec is a memorialized past *and* an everyday reality. The past-tense coexists with multiple cycles of destruction and care that define their rural environment. Each spring, crosses must be repainted and their gardens replanted. Every 45 or so years, they become sufficiently *magané* (broken) that they must be replaced. Comparing it to generational change, Marielle Lemay, age 70, says: "It's like an old person who dies. It's sad but you say, well there's an end to everything. That's just how it is . . . [and] it continues because you rebuild."¹⁴ Although many caretakers cherish and recreate earlier decorative features, they view each renewal as a creative act.

Heritage objects or family heirlooms are generally valued because of their singularity—the Vikings used *this* ship, my grandmother wore *that* locket. Caretakers 'pass down' crosses in ways that are more suggestive, defined by traces of the past. Clément Lavallière,

¹³ I do not mean to paint too stark a portrait: Simard did suggest that local committees should have some input regarding the ordering of evaluation criteria. He has also worked closely with locals who share his concern for Catholic heritage objects.

¹⁴ In my set of 50 caretaker interviews, two respondents saw the cross as *patrimoine* and explicitly *not* religious. Unlike other respondents, they had each tried to build precise recreations based on old photos.

70, maintains a cross in the village of St-Janvier-de-Weedon. It is typical of such creative (re)constructions. The original wooden cross was erected in 1943 on a ridge just outside the village. By 1995, it had rotted sufficiently that five men, including Clément, decided to replace it. They maintained the size (17 feet), placement, and essential design but remade it in aluminium. They saved one design feature—a crest for the Marian year (1954)—and reattached it. Three years later, the new cross' zinc bolts started to rust so they ascended the ridge again. "We put in three hundred stainless steel bolts. I remember exactly because it's me who changed them all," recalls Clément. "Now it's perfect. It will last a very long time." Then, in 2002, a neighboring village donated a 300-pound steel corpus (Jesus' body) after a cemetery renovation. This was a major coup. "The corpus makes it very special. We're very proud of that," says Clément. Once again, they ascended the ridge, removed the cross, and added to it. They decided to paint the Christ white, and found that car paint kept the rust at bay. The most recent addition, in 2004, was the initiative of a young electrician who decided to illuminate the cross with neon lights "so that it would show up even more at night, be even more beautiful".

Compared to the 1970s, most contemporary crosses are reconstructions. They are rebuilt on, or close to, the site of an earlier one and are thus understood as its re-creation. Yet, paradoxically for heritage experts, caretakers often express a connection to this history by employing new materials—electric lights, zinc bolts, or car paint—that augment visibility and durability. At stake are contrasting notions of continuity. For heritage experts, continuity means material coherence (the *same* materials, the *same* decorations). For Catholics in St-Janvier, it is closer to Hervieu-Léger's living 'chain'—recalling the past by projecting into the future: the aluminium cross will last "a very long time." Yet, Hervieu-Léger (2000, pp. 111, 176) ultimately views traditional Catholicism as transformed only in ways that produce its own destruction. Caretakers, on the other hand, view Catholicism as evolving, especially with regard to expanded roles for laity and women's growing presence in parish *fabriques* (lay councils that control parish finances). At a personal level, their faith has also deepened since they were children. For caretakers, this twin progression offers evidence of positive change—echoed in the improved technologies of wayside cross care.

So what does this mean for future continuity? Caretakers labor to augment a cross' durability yet usually evince little concern about whether it will be maintained when they are gone. There seem to be a few reasons why. Some caretakers emphasize the importance of belief in God, rather than the object itself. A larger number do care about the object *qua* object but are convinced that young people who seem indifferent today would feel the loss if crosses disappeared. Cross care, they say, follows naturally as each new generation begins to head families and own property. Last, a significant number of caretakers refuse a linear view of time altogether by leaving room for something akin to Dipesh Chakrabarty's History 2, which continually interrupts the "totalizing thrusts" of capitalist/secularist history (Chakrabarty [2000] 2008, p. 66). God punctuates the progressive march of time. Florence Bergeron, a 73-year-old caretaker, puts it thus: "I have great confidence that the Church still exists . . . In what way will the religious reawakening happen? I don't know *how* it will happen but [I] have faith. So we await it".

3.2. Institutionalization

Religious institutions are key nodes in Hervieu-Léger's chain. They anchor her very definition of religion, in contrast to idiosyncratic beliefs, because they transmit traditions and proffer authority. It is their failure in the modern era that has produced religious crisis. Pierre Nora's work, upon which Hervieu-Léger draws, implies a similar trajectory, mapping out how the state replaced the Catholic Church as the main site of identity formation after the French Revolution. Nora (1996, p. 3) also decries earlier historians who claimed to be empiricists yet actually privileged narratives that served these nationalist ends. By contrast, Simard's body of work is part of a Quebecois lineage that has promoted collaboration between activist scholars, Church institutions (Warren 2014) and the Quebecois state. What

all these studies leave unexplored, however, is how people like the caretakers actually interact with these institutional authorities.

Most caretakers self-identify as “practicing” Catholics; 83% attend Mass at least once a month. Nevertheless, they are ambivalent about the institutional Church. Like many North Americans, they no longer conceive of it as infallible or impregnable, referring to the amalgamation of parishes, the defection of priests and nuns, and the sex abuse scandals as proof. Yet, such feelings are never as final or as all-encompassing as many theories of modernity imply. In large part this speaks to how, contra Hervieu-Léger, modernity in rural Quebec is not defined by “specialized circles of memory” (Hervieu-Léger 2000, p. 127) where people clearly distinguish between family memory, religious memory, national memory, and so on. Rather, caretakers describe a series of nested institutions, including church, nation, village, *rang*,¹⁵ and family—all of which order the world and thus connect to God. One result is that they often use “religious heritage” and “religion” nearly interchangeably. Jean Robert, a 58-year-old caretaker in the village of St-Telesphore, is a good example. The crosses, he told me, “are part of the *patrimoine religieux* (religious heritage). That’s undeniable.” He continued:

They were planted in this region a hundred years ago and [before that] by [French explorer] Jacques Cartier...so I consider it an important element to conserve from our religious heritage. It represents, as I said, Jesus Christ crucified who came to save the world. It shows that religion, Christianity, is still present among us and that there are people who want it to continue.

This overlap between different institutions, as well as religious heritage and religion, comes to the fore vividly during the village celebrations held on parish anniversaries, which often incorporate wayside crosses. In 2014, Saint-François-Xavier-de-Brompton held one such *jour d’antan* (day of yore) on its 125th anniversary. The villagers prepared historical recreations of village life and renewed three wayside crosses. As is typical, the parish priest, Father Guy Giroux, was invited to offer a short homily and sprinkle holy water on each cross in blessing. The “pioneer families” that had originally built the crosses were honored and had their photos taken with the priest, later reprinted in the local weekly, which described it as a “day full of pride, emotions and remembrances still anchored to memory” (Côté 2014).

In villages like Saint-François-Xavier, the same individuals head important regional families, serve on the parish *fabrique*, and are elected to the municipal council. For caretakers, the most salient distinction is not therefore between religious and secular institutions, but between those that are faraway (the Catholic Church or the Quebecois state) and close by (parish priests, small businesses, municipal governments, or *fabriques*). While caretakers are split about whether Church and State help or hinder their efforts, they are uniformly positive about local institutions because “everyone here is Catholic,” they often say. Though most of their neighbours are no longer “practicing” (going to Mass), caretakers contend that what makes a Catholic is belief in God, participation in lifecycle rituals (e.g., baptising children, getting married in church), and celebrating Christmas and Easter. Indeed, 92% of French Canadians still identify as Catholics and 91% baptise their children (a number that rises to 97.3% outside of urban Montreal). Among 16–35 year olds, by far the least religious group, 73% still believe in God (Meunier et al. 2010, pp. 92, 122).

This nesting of local authority results in a certain amount of flexibility. Over the last twenty years caretaking patterns have shifted, but not from Catholic caretakers to secular ones as Simard assumed in the 1970s. This shift is within interconnected local institutions—all run by believing (and usually practicing) Catholics. If the original builder is gone, *rang* neighbors may assume a cross’s care. Where local schools no longer maintain the cross, the Knights of Columbus may step in. This Catholic fraternal organization represents a particular innovation in wayside cross care. Since the mid-1990s, local chapters have

¹⁵ The term *rang*, which derives from the seigneurial system, refers to a rural grouping of houses along on what today is effectively a small country road. In Quebec, each *rang* often had its own school, post office, and (often) wayside cross.

started caring for hundreds of crosses across the province, including the St-Janvier cross described above.¹⁶

3.3. Consciousness

For Hervieu-Léger, modernity rests on a paradox. It was Christianity's own promotion of believers' individual faith ("the subjectivization of religious experience") that degraded the chain of memory upon which religion relied (Hervieu-Léger 2000, p. 170). Individual consciousness is thus essential to modern religiosity even as it destroys it, at least in the context of Catholicism. To this, Nora's work adds an element of nostalgia; moderns long for "the silence of custom," as he says in the epigraph. Heritage scholars, like Simard, acknowledge this loss but also propose a partial solution: Quebecers' historical consciousness can be developed anew by state-run programs that "reinvent" its Catholic past to serve the present (Noppen and Morrisset 2005).

Caretakers concur with Hervieu-Léger and Nora, especially in how each one ties the loss of collective memory to societal and economic changes that have gutted formerly thriving rural areas. They often unwittingly echo Hervieu-Léger's contention, following Halbwachs, that religious feeling is adversely affected by individualism and modern capitalism (Hervieu-Léger 2000, pp. 128, 130–40). They differ, however, about the subjectivization of religious experience. Rather than breaking 'the chain' of religion, caretakers view a certain kind of subjectivization as an improvement over earlier forms of Quebec Catholicism. Nicholas Girard, a 62-year-old caretaker and deacon, expresses it well:

Today when people say "I believe" they don't say it because their neighbour is doing it. It's not a mass movement but a movement that is individual, each one chooses. And once that person chooses to say, "Yes I believe," there is a faith within him. A faith that says, "Yes, I believe with my head. Yes, I believe with my heart . . ." By contrast, if we think about the faith of my grandparents or great-grandparents—I'm not saying it wasn't good, my grandparents were strong believers—[but] there was a collective mentality there.

This characterization of French Canadian religious life before the 1960s is so widely believed, and has generated so much public criticism, that even caretakers who decry falling attendance at Mass do not advocate a return to the 'collective mentality.' As caretakers see it today, wayside crosses serve an important symbolic function as a beacon of individual consciousness, now and even in their grandparents' era, since laypeople generally chose to erect them beyond the confines of the church. There is something rather Weberian about this process: it is through labour that individual builders constructed a moral Christian self. However, while Weber was concerned with the advent of wage labour, wayside cross devotional labour is morally significant precisely because it is voluntary; it is unrelated to wages, parish work, or even penance for sin (cf. Mayblin 2010, p. 110). Its sole purpose, say caretakers, rests in how each human builder sought a direct relationship with God. It is the materialization of a prayer and the "tangible architecture" of a vow (Blanton 2013).

Given this fact, surprisingly few caretakers find it relevant to know why their cross was erected or even by whom. In Simard's surveys, 62% of respondents had no idea why the cross had been put up, though it was usually within a generation (Carpentier 1981, p. 42). Today, if they are asked, people who care for crosses on public land often make recourse to generalities ("it was the style back then"), while those who maintain family crosses typically respond like Christian Blanchette, 54, who cares for the cross in front of his house, erected by his grandfather in 1926 and rebuilt by his father. He says:

My grandfather was a good Catholic and very proud of his property, on the corner of the *rang* where almost everyone passed to get into the parish. When

¹⁶ Each Knights chapter operates independently, making it difficult to gauge the precise rate of their involvement. Amateur historian Monique Bellemare has amassed repository of 688 contemporary crosses. Of these, 7.9% clearly display the Knights' insignia. At that rate, they maintain 200–50 crosses province-wide. However, based on my qualitative research, I believe the number is higher since the insignia is not always displayed and because Bellemare's photographic record likely emphasizes crosses that are more ornate. Knights' crosses are usually undecorated.

I knew him, he went to Mass every day and took care of the church and the cemetery . . . that's why he built it. The *real, real* reason why, the *personal* one [the vow], I don't know. I never asked.

Scholars are aware that, at a philosophical and psychological level, memory and forgetting are co-constitutive: each one forges the mechanisms that bring the other into being (Méchoulan 2008, p. 121). Yet, the study of domestic objects tells us that things passed down—such as photos, souvenirs, or mementos—are meaningful because they materialize particular stories associated with particular ancestors. Their sentimental value is lost if no one recalls why they were bought or kept (Stewart 2001, p. 150). Most crosses can be classed as domestic objects because of their association with “the ancestors” and their location on family land. So why, for caretakers like Blanchette, does the object retain meaning even when the stories that originally impelled its construction are lost? To some degree there is overlap with Simard's approach, which sees the reason for a cross' construction as largely irrelevant to its didactic value in recalling the archetypical peasant of an idealized past. At another level, however, caretakers depart from Simard: the *fact* of the original prayer is crucial, even if the details are not.

The best way to describe caretakers' perspective may be to acknowledge, along with Morgan (2010, p. 68), that people do not translate every sensation into discourse, nor do they want to. Put in these terms, caretakers' refusal to trace the narrative behind a cross' construction may actually signal how for them the ‘real story’ concerns the object's power to mediate intangible presences—then and now. As Tom Beidelmann (1993) notes of rituals in Africa, secrets are powerful in part precisely because they intimate the existence of this unknown world, where a man or woman speaks to the gods. Scholars have noted much the same thing about Catholic objects (Orsi 2005, p. 55). When the contents of a prayer conversation are private, it may actually reiterate the existence of these two beings locked in discussion. It thus becomes less important (even irrelevant) to caretakers whether the cross was erected to fulfill a vow, to sacralise the land, or to ward off calamities. That the original prayer remains secret only intensifies the *fact of relationship* between the pious ancestor and God, which works to repudiate the notion that Catholicism is inevitably bound up in the ‘collective mentality’ that Quebeckers, including caretakers, now view with ambivalence.

4. Marking Memory in Quebec

One of the most comprehensive scholarly volumes on Quebec's religious heritage, *Le Patrimoine religieux*, begins with a preface by Jocelyn Groulx (2009), director of the *Conseil du patrimoine religieux du Québec*, who writes, “unfortunately, it is clear that as the major historic and founding [religious] traditions are less practiced and less passed down, the few remaining people will not be able to adequately assure the survival of this vast heritage.” In many ways heir to the work of Simard and other ethnologists of Catholic folklore, the tone of Groulx's contribution is hardly surprising. For that reason, however, it is helpful to clarify its assumptions.

First, the *Conseil*, as represented by Groulx, views Quebec as a place filled with a “vast” number of religious heritage objects, which (as evident in even a cursory glance at its materials) essentially means Catholic things.¹⁷ To one degree this overrepresentation reflects a quantifiable fact: the “sheer number” of Catholic objects and sites in the province (Zubrzycki 2016, p. 168, n.19). Yet, I also want to underline that the very idea of religious heritage has, from its origins, been deeply entwined with Catholic propensities, for example in the value placed on sacred objects made of stone or metal that could be passed down or in the consecration of objects and even whole sites to dedicate them to God. This kind of relationship with objects is not simply a feature of religion writ-large as becomes

¹⁷ Occasionally, other churches, usually Anglican, show up in the Conseil's videos and website. These churches are exceptions that prove the rule since they create and view heritage objects in much the same way as do Catholics. They also fit easily into the same history that emphasizes (and at times glorifies) European colonization.

abundantly clear through a comparison, for example, to indigenous practices at the time that French settlers colonized Quebec.

Groulx's reference to "major founding traditions" is also important. The Quebecois state's definition of what constitutes heritage—built before 1945, open to the public, deemed to have public value by dint of being listed on a government-funded inventory—is far from impartial. It constitutes the "nous," to quote Mario Desrosiers from the start of this piece, as largely francophones of French descent who are distinguished both by their long residence and by their propensity, as Catholics, to have built or maintained religious objects. People in the majority tend to view "the public" as a reflection of themselves and are thus more likely to define their own heritage objects as having value for the public. Sociologist Geneviève Zubrzycki makes a similar point, writing, "Quebec may have undergone a thorough secularization...but religion survives either in defining a collective 'us'—former or cultural Catholics—against a certain non-Catholic 'them' or in defining an irreligious 'us' against a religious 'them'" (2016, p. 186).

Zubrzycki focuses mainly on nationalist politicians and intellectuals in urban areas who purposefully rejected Catholicism (becoming "former or cultural Catholics") to forge a new Quebec. Groulx, a Montreal-based heritage professional with an MBA, fits this basic model, at least outwardly. This brings us to a final idea implied in his short statement: the sad but firm prediction of religion's demise and the view that religious people cannot therefore be left to look after (and perhaps discard) sacred objects. The state-funded *Conseil* must step in. As we have discussed, for many heritage professionals, and their associates in governments, universities, and even churches, this process implies a form of secularization. A religious object, understood to represent private interests *ipso facto* because it is religious, is desacralized so the public can share it as national heritage (Joly 2008, p. 43; Turgeon and Saint-Pierre 2009, p. 411). Anthropologists have noted the same principle in operation across a number of sites (Chidester 2012, pp. 91–111; Meyer and Witte 2013). In essence, Simard's study of wayside crosses was premised on it too. Though it is worth noting that decades later, after helping establish a religious heritage museum, he felt a nagging concern about whether "we [heritage professionals] were going to 'museumify' all religious heritage under the pretext of saving it" (Simard 2004, p. 2).

This article argues, first, that such religious heritage projects are part of a larger context that many scholars in Quebec have already emphasized: Catholic liberalization was instrumental in shaping 'secular' national identity in Quebec. The potent confluence in the 1960s and 1970s of Church modernization, emergent nationalism, and heritage preservation at an international level gave rise to a view of religious heritage that is still expressed in the *Conseil*'s work today. Comparative work in other Catholic-majority places is needed to test and flesh out this idea, particularly in locations that also saw burgeoning nationalism and (perhaps) state formation in the mid-twentieth century. What role has religious heritage preservation played, institutionally and informally, in collective memory making in the wake of Vatican II?

The other point this article makes concerns the "nous" in Mario Desrosiers' video. As Zubrzycki notes, this "us" includes former or cultural Catholics. However, the wayside crosses remind us that it also encompasses believing and practicing Catholics, assuming they are French Canadian and celebrate or at least accept, as nearly all caretakers do, the modernizations following Vatican II (versus *intégriste* traditionalists). Thus making heritage does not necessarily, or inevitably, mean "belonging without believing" in a religious tradition that only does cultural identity work (Hervieu-Léger 2000, p. 162; Handler 2011, p. 48). Instead, it can braid together multiple *lieux de mémoire*, bringing together cross caretakers, scholars, and government officials in the same sites. Hervieu-Léger's *Chain of Memory* is a good framework for highlighting key issues in this Catholic-heritage milieu, especially in how she emphasizes collective memory and the pull that an institutional religious past (and present) may exert.

Ultimately, it requires a careful hand to trace the interaction of heritage, culture, and religion in a place where Catholicism has been so closely associated with ethnicity, yet

weekly Mass attendance has dropped precipitously and “memory” is on many people’s lips. Quebecois ethnologists and caretakers each lay claim to particular kinds of modernity—secular and Catholic—in the name of collective continuity. As such, their perspectives are more than sites of contestation; they are parallel and overlapping, enmeshed in shared societal, cultural, and political networks (Kilde 2013, p. 192). Through them we see how Quebec Catholicism encompasses multiple modes of simultaneous interaction—including heritage work and devotional labour operating side-by-side at the same cross.

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Note on Terminology: I use “Quebecois,” and “French Canadian” for francophones of historic French ancestry in Quebec. Neither term is satisfactory. “French Canadian” is more precise but outmoded; however, it was still widely used when Simard conducted his surveys in the 1970s. The preferred term today, Quebecois, colloquially also means people of French ancestry (the terms “Anglophones” or “immigrants” are often, and problematically, used for other residents of Quebec). Another word to note is “heritage.” In French, it is defined more precisely as personal property, whereas *patrimoine* is associated with society (and thus statecraft). English lacks this nuance so I use “heritage” to refer to both aspects, following the *Conseil du patrimoine religieux du Québec*, which translates its name to Religious Heritage Council of Quebec.

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