

Vrbata, Aleš

## Latinité as image in Charles Maurras and Lionel Groulx

*The Central European journal of Canadian studies*. 2016, vol. 10-11, iss. [1], pp. 73-89

ISBN 978-80-210-8690-6

ISSN 1213-7715 (print); ISSN 2336-4556 (online)

Stable URL (handle): <https://hdl.handle.net/11222.digilib/138477>

Access Date: 16. 02. 2024

Version: 20220831

Terms of use: Digital Library of the Faculty of Arts, Masaryk University provides access to digitized documents strictly for personal use, unless otherwise specified.



# Latinité as Image in Charles Maurras and Lionel Groulx

La latinité comme image chez Charles Maurras  
et Lionel Groulx

Aleš Vrbata

---

## Abstract

This paper deals with the politico-ideological imagery of two prominent protagonists of French and Québécois conservative nationalism – Charles Maurras and Lionel Groulx – from the perspective of archetypal psychology. As historians and ideologues, both men drew on concepts that were based on their own personal imaginative leaps into the past, a subjective but fundamental aspect of their work. Even though there are significant differences in their views of the history of French civilization, they share certain common backward-looking characteristics, i.e., a valorisation of tradition as a sort of maternal security mechanism, in contrast to their feared and redoubtable vision of future modernity. Stuck in a psychology of black-and-white polarity and good-and-evil dynamics, both ideologues engaged in what Jungian psychology calls “coniunctio oppositorum” – a universal, trans-historical and trans-cultural complex, along with corresponding archetypal images.

**Keywords:** archetypal psychology, France, Lionel Groulx, historical imagery, Charles Maurras, Nouvelle France

## Résumé

L'article évoque l'image politique et idéologique de deux importantes figures françaises et québécoise du nationalisme, Charles Maurras et Lionel Groulx, dans une perspective de psychologie archétypale. En tant qu'historiens et idéologues, les deux hommes ont défini des concepts, dont les bases sont inspirées par leurs sauts imaginaires et individuels dans le temps. Ces concepts sont des aspects subjectifs mais fondamentaux de leurs travaux. Même si on trouve des différences significatives dans leurs visions de la civilisation française, ils ont en commun un regard passéiste qui se raccroche aux traditions comme à un mécanisme de sécurité maternelle, contrastant avec la peur de la redoutable vision d'une modernité future. Adhérant à une psychologie binaire de type manichéen et à une dynamique du bien et du mal, les deux idéologues promulguent, ce que la psychologie de Jung nomme la «coniunctio oppositorum», c'est-à-dire un complexe universel, transhistorique et transculturel, ainsi que des images archétypales.

**Mots-clés :** imagerie historique, France, Lionel Groulx, Charles Maurras, Nouvelle France, psychologie archétypale



## I. History as imaginative archetype

*Je ne crois pas beaucoup au sens physique d'une race latine. Mais de toute mon âme, je confesse l'esprit latin ou plutôt helléno-latin. [...] Ne vous semblent-elles [nos parentés] pas un peu trop oubliées par nos temps d'internationalisme unificateur plus ou moins fédéral ou confédéral?*

Letter to Salazar (Maurras 1958, 261–263)

*Pour expliquer notre mutuelle sympathie entre royalistes français et Canadiens, j'ai déjà dit à quelques-uns de vos catholiques républicains: 'Entre un royaliste et nous, il n'y a que l'océan et cela se passe; entre nous et un républicain il y a la mer de 89 et cela ne passe pas'.*

Lionel Groulx, Letter to Houpert (Trépanier, 186–187)

Working with the past has much to do with the unconscious. The Ancients were doubtless aware of this in their appeals to Mnemosyne and her daughters, the Muses. Early historians/mythologists such as Hesiod, Homer and Herodotus recognized the implications of Mother Memory and like forces that enabled the opening up of their vision of the past as it had existed in soil, trees, rivers and in the countryside. Theirs was not a *head* history but a *body* history, and their successors – singers, bards, poets, dancers, entertainers, musicians, historians, prophets and countless others – worked with their own inner visions. Some of these visionaries, even if physically blind or otherwise incapacitated, could see the past with their inner, third eye.

In a personification of psychic forces, British historian Ruth Meyer traces Psyche (depth psychology) and Clio (history) as sisters and companions working hand in hand in the consciousness of historians. Not all of the writers Meyer follows were familiar with depth psychology – as was, for example, Arnold Toynbee – but all of them allowed themselves to be led by their own inner perceptions.<sup>1</sup> In their thinking they wandered off the beaten paths, taking long meditative walks across the countryside; linear Cronos time was suspended and indeterminate Kairos time could be experienced.

This article will not deal with contemporary historiographers' views of depth psychology, nor with the importance of imagination in the creative work of historians or philosophers of history. Rather, I am going to turn to two important actors within the French-speaking world who unquestionably took their fertile imaginations into the distant past. As political thinkers, ideologues and writers, both men looked back to the ancient myth of *latinité* in what had become a rational, secularized, scientific 20<sup>th</sup> century. The roots of their ideological struggle stretched to the distant mythological landscape of the collective unconscious, with the real enemy of their ideas being

1) Sigmund Freud, Carl Gustav Jung, Arnold Joseph Toynbee, William Wordsworth, Henry David Thoreau, George Macaulay Trevelyan, Alfred Leslie Rowse, Richard Cobb, Simon Schama and others.



neither Anglo-Germanic Protestantism (Maurras) nor the Anglo-Protestant culture of British North America (Groulx), but rather modern and rational scientific objectivity. Maurras died in 1952 and Groulx in 1967, but even though they are considered “men of the past”, they still arouse attention in France itself as well as in Québec or other Franco-Canadian and American regions.

Today rational and objective psychology concepts like what once was called secularization have lost much of their appeal and in many respects are considered obsolete (Hanegraff 2012). According to Ruth Meyer many workers in history consider depth psychology quite a problematic set of discourses; although both disciplines seem to share a common base, they remain incompatible. This may sound counterintuitive in light of the seemingly successful and fruitful intersections of depth psychology with theology, literary studies, cultural studies and other arts. Success, however, is always relative. Connections between history and depth psychology were stimulated by Sigmund Freud’s *Civilization and its Discontents* and *Leonardo da Vinci and a Memory of His Childhood*, as they had been in the previous century by Johann Jacob Bachofen’s *Mutterrecht*. Shortly after Jung’s death, his admirers and followers would come to include such luminaries as British historian Arnold Toynbee (Toynbee 1954, 1956). In 1957 the intermingling of both disciplines was given official sanction when the president of the American Historical Association, William Langer, urged that the “next assignment” for historians was to take advantage of insights of depth psychology in their work.

One answer to Langer’s call was the birth of a new discipline, psychohistory, the landmark study of which became Erik Erikson’s oeuvre *Young Man Luther: A Study in Psychoanalysis and History*. During the following decades, history, philosophy and psychology went through a sometimes interdisciplinary shift toward to what I would call the “primacy of mental/archetypal imagery,” a direction pointed to already in the 1950s by Erich Neumann. It was James Hillman, however, who in the early 1970s revolutionized, first, Jung’s concepts of the archetypal and, later, imaginal psychology. It seems that one contingent of Jung’s disciples sided with the part of his work in which psyche was equated with the imagery of fantasy:

As in Jung’s *Collected Works*, I employ the word “fantasy” as a synonym for “imagination”, whether conscious or unconscious. “All the functions that are active in the psyche,” Jung says, “converge in fantasy.” He remarks that fantasy has “a poor reputation among psychologists,” including psychoanalysts, but, he asserts, “it nevertheless remains the creative matrix of everything that has made progress possible for humanity.” Jung very much esteems fantasy, which he claims “has its own irreducible value.” According to Jung, “Developing fantasy means perfecting our humanity.” (Adams, 2–3)



If Adams considers Jung someone who overthrew the Reality Principle to replace it with the Fantasy Principle, Paul Kugler expresses the same view:

The experience of reality is a product of the psyche's capacity to image. It is not an external being (god, ideal, or matter), but, rather, the "essence" of being human. Subjectively, reality is experienced as "out there", because its originary principle is located "in the beyond", transcendent to the ego's subjectivity. With this ontological shift, mental image ceases to be viewed as a copy, or a copy of a copy, and now assumes [...], the role of ultimate origin and creator of meaning and of our sense of existence and reality. (Kugler 2008, 87)

In a radical break from Jung, Hillman declared the primacy of image, which is "always more inclusive, more complex [...] than concept" (Hillman 1983, 30–31). Moreover, he rejected almost all of Jung's structural concepts:

I don't emphasize [...] some of Jung's terms, like: self, compensation, opposites, types, psychic energy. You won't find anything about mandalas and wholeness, and I don't refer much to Eastern thought, synchronicity, and the Judeo-Christian God-image. My favourite books are not *Aion* and *Answer to Job*. When I use the term "ego" I put ironic masks around it: the so-called ego, because for me the task of psychology is to see through it and get around it. I certainly don't place his construct ego in the center of consciousness [...] (Hillman, 30–31)

Hillman dismissed even the privileged ego-image, disparaging the role "I-ness" often plays in a Western (heroic) culture which identifies ego with the "hero archetype". Adams points out how, "[i]n a sense, for Hillman, the ego is the unconscious. The ego is that sense of 'I-ness' that imagines it knows when it does not know. What the 'I' does not know is that it, too, is an image – what I call the 'ego-image' – a figment of the imagination, a fiction, a fantasy – and not 'reality'" (Adams, 173). Thus, it is not an exaggeration to state that according to the Hillmanian perspective rationality is preceded by the epistemologically primary phenomenon of fantasy.

Ruth Meyer does not deal with the Hillmanian interpretation of Jungian psychology. Instead, she is inspired by Hillman's biography of R.G. Collingwood<sup>2</sup> in which he uses Collingwood's story to illustrate his theory that "the Daimon, or guardian angel [i.e. imagination], knows our destiny and guides us toward it" (Meyer, 134). Because imagination and inner life in general are not and cannot be centred, it can be seen as poorly structured and polymorphous. Meyer takes

---

2) Collingwood developed the concept of historical empathy, where history is not about a chronology of events but rather "getting inside other people's heads" and looking at the situation through their eyes (Collingwood, R. G. *Autobiography*, p. 58).



a close look at déjà-vu moments, out-of-time experiences, inner visions and the use of imagery in the work of a number of historians, particularly those who have defended literary history against its scientific critics. Some, like Trevelyan or Toynbee, were aware of their close relation to Clio, some were not. In addition, Meyer is convinced that their creative powers and imagination were prompted not just by walks, or visits to libraries, but first of all by historical sites. In this article I defend a thesis according to which both Maurras and Groulx were such historian-thinkers. Not only were they both historians, they were also writers and poets who used powerful archetypal images to mythologize the past of their respective national histories.

## II. *Latinité* mythologized: Backward-looking prophets and their French-speaking muses

*N'est-ce pas plus doux de croire aux dieux sans nombre de la mythologie, depuis Apollon, père des Arts, ou Vénus, mère de l'Amour, jusqu'aux petits lares qui protègent nos foyers? Un Dieu unique – cette centralisation!*

Charles Maurras to Gustave Thibon (Thibon, 16)

*Like the novelist, the historian constructs a complete world around him, which must form a coherent whole.*

(R. G. Collingwood, 245)

If there is a view according to which Jung is simultaneously a pre-modern, a modern and a post-modern thinker, then this is also surely true about the Hillmanian version of Jung's thought. If Hillman states that Jung's fantasy is directed by *anima*, then this study must turn to those who were inspired essentially by Mnemosyne and her daughter Clio, Muse of history.

The imagery sustaining in Charles Maurras's and Lionel Groulx's thought is immersed deep in the past. Regardless of the specific cultural background in which they made their "imaginative leap" back into history, the result of their inquiries signifies a free movement between modern times and a mythological image of a pure, uncorrupted, pre-modern Latin society, perhaps a regressive "pastoral paradise [...] inhabited by shepherds and shepherdesses, and nymphs and Satyrs, who dwell in the atmosphere of romantic love [...]. The idealized rural retreat, the place of escape from the reality and complexity of life in town and court, is fundamental to the idea of Arcadia" (Hall, 30). Contemporaneous historical reality exteriorized their inner enemy, with their works becoming notable renderings of that inner drama. At the



same time, they each took on the role of prophet endowed with the certain knowledge of national destiny and its secure guide to the future.

Charles Maurras is an excellent example of a thinker profoundly inspired by abundant imagery. But it seems that his imagination did not follow just one direction toward an idealized *Méditerranée* of ancient classicism. As observed by Philippe Mège, Maurras's later intensified anti-Germanism was preceded by eager reading of Nietzsche, Schopenhauer, Fichte and Stirner regarding the inner battle between nihilism and religious faith. His religious crises (Nuit de Tholonet and Nuit de Pau)<sup>3</sup> were accompanied by his own loss of hearing (1883), finally leading to the decision to side with science and not with religious faith: "Saint Thomas ne satisfait pas toujours. Il ne répond pas à la grandissime question, la seule qui me passionne: savoir la réalité objective de nos idées" (Mège, 19). Even though he preached traditional Catholicism, in his private life – as is clear in the introductory quotation above – Maurras followed certain steps of Greco-Roman paganism and declared himself a disciple of Comte. This challenge confronted his Catholic followers and sympathizers when his first work, *Le Chemin de Paradis* (1895), was published. Catholic reviewers were outraged by Maurras's paganism and asked "Monsieur Maurras n'est pas, ou n'est plus avec nous?" (Massis, 111). Rejection of metaphysical monism did not mean lesser receptivity toward inner inspiration, but contributed to ambiguity and misunderstandings of his thought. Even today Maurras hardly "fits in" to a specific "camp". In French historiography he is "présent [...] de façon détournée" and is labelled as "le condamné perpétuel" (Goyet, 124):

Une des constantes de l'action de Maurras fut d'être condamné par les autorités qu'il disait défendre. Il fut condamné avec une telle régularité qu'on peut y déceler une des logiques profondes de ses actes: le Félibre en 1893, le Vatican en 1926, le Prétendant en 1937, la Nation en 1945. Et cette succession chronologique ne rend pas entièrement compte de l'envahissement de sa vie par ses condamnations, car celles-ci connurent plusieurs épisodes épisodiques, de prémices en rebondissements. Il n'est donc pas question de n'y voir de simples accidents de parcours. (Goyet, 211)

Maurras became a "catholique secularisé". Committed to a rationalized, intellectualized image of a stable and powerful tradition, he nevertheless can be seen as a gnostic Catholic dreaming his counter-revolutionary dream. Maurras was a traditionalist but preferred his rational concept of monarchy to loyalty to a pretender. Described as "l'homme de rempart" or as a man with the "mentalité d'un assiégé" (Weyembergh, 16), Maurras considered his doctrine of integral nationalism

3) That is how Maurras himself labelled the two spiritual crises that finally took him away from Catholicism and led him to adopt a scientific worldview.



and *latinité* as “un mur protecteur et son oeuvre comme un ouvrage d’art” (Goyet, 211). In his works one repeatedly comes across the image of a fortress, massive city walls, or a sturdy ship. From the Jungian perspective it becomes clear that throughout his discourses there is a fundamental *coniunctio oppositorum* (archetype of unified opposites) behind his purported “archetypal polarity”. Maurras’s self-image was the reflection of a vanishing *latinité*, a harmonious Greco-Latin tradition and a threatened Catholicism, whereas he viewed as most dangerous the Anglo-Germanic, individualist, Protestant and “barbarian” world. Maurras’s *latinité* cannot be understood without considering this fundamental polarity, since he used it to construct a powerful theoretical apparatus consisting of a theory of arts, French and European history, war strategy (“la seule France”) and aesthetics. Certainly he was not the only one who had experienced the French fin-de-siècle as a triumph of decadence. Victor Nguyen introduced his opus *Aux origines de l’Action Française* with a prologue entitled “Un mythe majeur du XIXe siècle français: la décadence.” There Nguyen characterizes late 19th-century decadence as a collectively shared imagery that was not exclusively French, but could be found in many conservative and reactionary authors. In Maurras this anxiety was compensated for by the grandiloquent projection of *latinité* and his own self-image as its defender and reformer. It is in his concept of *latinité* that Maurrassian politics meets aesthetics, ideology, history and philosophy, becoming universalist and assuming trans-historical dimensions. Such a trans-historical, imaginal and spatial-temporal leap was already perceptible in his project *École romane*. Here we can see how his colleague Jean Moréas viewed such a project:

L’École Romane Française revendique le principe gréco-latin, principe fondamental des Lettres françaises qui fleurit aux XIe, XIIe, XIIIe siècles avec nos trouvères; au XVIe avec Ronsard et son école; au XVIIe avec Racine et La Fontaine. [...] L’École romane française renoue la chaîne gallique, rompue par le Romantisme et sa descendance parnassienne, naturaliste et symboliste [...].<sup>4</sup>

L’École romane was founded by Maurras and Moréas in 1891 shortly after Maurras’s arrival in Paris (1885), with the aim of promoting the pagan and classicist spirit. In Paris – probably under the influence of the Félibrige de Paris – Maurras achieved a synthesis of positivism with the harmony of classical (i.e. pagan) arts. It was probably here where “paganisme lié à l’ordre et la beauté du monde” was born and never deserted. After Félibrige de Paris (1888), *École romane* became a continuation of his involvement with *latinité*, although his conscious identification of beauty and harmony gave shape to the opposite:

4) Jean Moréas, *Lettre au Figaro* quoted by Ernest Raynaud in the preface of “Choix de poèmes” published in *Mercure de France*, 1939.



The young ego is obliged to establish itself as something definite and therefore it must say, “I am this and I am not that.” No-saying is a crucial feature of initial ego development. But the result of this early operation is that a shadow is created. All that I announce I am not then goes into the shadow.[...] if psychic development is to occur, then split-off shadow must be encountered again as an inner reality. (Edinger, 13)

Maurras never overcame this psychological crisis. His philosophic-politico-aesthetic attitudes required “the barbarian other”. Maurras was caught in the clutch of good/Latin and evil/barbarian binaries and remained trapped in this mindset until the end of his days. Could Maurras be then viewed as a “gnostic crusader” who mythologized himself as a solar hero in defence of Latin reason, order and harmony (Apollo) against chthonic underworld forces (Dionysus)?

[...] the most crucial and terrifying pair of opposites is good and evil. The very survival of the ego depends on how it relates to this matter. In order to survive, it is absolutely essential that the ego experience itself as more good than bad. There has to be a heavier weight in the side of good [...]. .. for the young ego can tolerate very little experience of its own badness without succumbing to total demoralization. It also accounts for another universal phenomenon – the process of locating evil. Evil has to be located [...]. .. blame or responsibility must be established [...]. It is exceedingly dangerous to have free-floating evil. Someone must personally carry the burden of evil. (Edinger, 13–14)

Thus Maurras’s ego became a scene of universal drama of the opposites. The proportions of such an intra-psychic conflict are visible from his global vision of *latinité*:

Ma Méditerranée ne finit pas à Gibraltar, elle reçoit le Guadalquivir et le Tage, elle baigne Cadix, Lisbonne et s’étend, bleue et chaude, jusqu’à Rio de Janeiro. Elle atteint le Cap Horn, salue Montevideo, Buenos-Aires et, sans oublier Valparaiso ni Callao, elle s’en va, grossie de l’Amazonie et de l’Orénoque, rouler dans la mer des Caraïbes, caresser amoureusement nos Antilles, puis Cuba et Haïti, ayant reçu le Meschacébé du grad enchanteur de Bretagne; elle court au Saint-Laurent et, sauf de menues variations de couleur ou de température, va se jeter dans la baie d’Hudson où elle entend parler français. Le caprice de cette Méditerranée idéale la ramène alors dans notre hémisphère, mais non pas nécessairement pour revoir Baléares, Cyclades, Oran ou Alger, car ni Anvers, ni Gydnis ne lui apparaissent barbares: ma Méditerranée ne demande pas mieux que de devenir nordique ou baltique pourvu qu’elle rencontre, ici ou là, les deux lucides flammes d’une civilisation catholique et d’un esprit latin. (Maurras 1963, 21–22)



Nonetheless, this *latinité* – and with it, its main reservoir, i.e. France – became seriously threatened. If Maurras saw before him a clear image of *latinité*, he could see its adversary with the same clarity. He waged his war on the field of the arts, a war against what he viewed as anarchic Cubism or Surrealism. Together with Barrès, he fought against German philosophy hegemony at French universities because, as he asserted, “le kantisme est la religion de la Troisième République” (Mège, 18). His was the so-called “oeuvre de dégermanisation” exposed in *Quand les Français ne s’aiment pas* and in *Devant l’Allemagne éternelle*.<sup>5</sup> In the latter work, he depicts the France of intellectuals and universities at the end of 19th century, and later (1914) he observed with sadness that the Sorbonne “a été blessé par l’Allemagne, non dans la guerre mais dans la paix” (Mège, 17).

The threat to *latinité* was anything but short-term. In fact, it was a consequence of neither the Franco-Prussian War nor the French Revolution. Maurras imagined himself as a warrior waging a war against the modern Germanism initiated by Luther, “le grand séparateur de la Germanie et la latinité”. But such a war was “pas dissociable du germanisme de l’Antiquité ou du Moyen-Âge catholique contre lequel il lançait déjà ses ‘barbares assauts’” (Maurras 1939, 24). In the following extract from his letter to Barrès (who was staying in Germany at the time), we can see that Maurras considered the struggle against Germanism to be secular or even archetypal: “Soyez heureux chez les barbares. J’aime infiniment ceux d’entre eux qui ont eu le bonheur de se laisser romaniser. Quel est donc cet ingénieux philosophe qui disait justement que c’est Arminius qui a fait tout le mal? Sans cet Arminius, Luther et quelques autres, nous aurions une Europe catholique et romaine, c’est-à-dire classique et païenne [...]” (Monday, June 1896, Barrès, Maurras, 123–124).

Maurras, his *Action française*, the counter-establishment university-like *Institut d’Action française*, his *Revue d’Af* and later *Journal d’Af*, his books and his practical politics all raised attention. Such attention rose particularly high in Latin realms, including in Québec, among intellectual elites (frequently Catholic and Franco-American) in the USA and UK and even in Germany. Such a network of sympathizers and followers was charted for the first time by Eugen Weber and later – in 1968 – on the occasion of the centennial anniversary of Maurras’s birth it was Victor Nguyen who founded *Institut d’études politiques d’Aix-en-Provence*, where he organized four conferences on Maurrassian studies. This was the first serious attempt to legitimize Maurrassian discourse, albeit without any success. The resistance by official authorities was manifested even later, in 1976, on the occasion of the appointment of the Maurrassian thinker Pierre Boutang as a professor at the University of Paris IV (Goyet, 114–115).

And yet, Maurras can count on considerable support abroad. Such support is visible in the interest in what Weber described in his chapter “Amis étrangers” and

5) Articles collected between 1898 and 1903; articles collected between 1915 and 1916.



what he termed “maurrassisme diffuse”, which suggests many possible avenues for comparative studies about “l’idéologie maurrassienne chez les clercs nationalistes des pays de culture française ou latine au XX<sup>e</sup> siècle [...] (Pomeyrols, Hauser, 5).

Hors de France, le maurrassisme fournit à des groupes d’intellectuels [...] un prestigieux modèle, qui permet d’obtenir une reconnaissance sur la scène locale [...] propose une conception unitaire et essentialiste de la nation fondée sur des permanences présentées comme naturelles et anciennes telles la famille, les traditions, une culture propre etc. Cette conception peut servir à légitimer la revendication d’autonomie [contre] un État ‘pluriethnique’, libéral ou démocratique. Le Maurrassisme est, enfin, une référence qui a pu servir de levier, permettant [...] le passage d’une revendication régionaliste à une revendication nationaliste, car il fournit des arguments utiles pour légitimer la nouvelle définition du groupe en ‘nation.’ (Pomeyrols, Hauser, 7)

Maurrasian influence reached Québec and French Canada as well. Here, the main protagonist of Maurrasian influence was Lionel Groulx (1878–1967). Given the above-mentioned contradictoriness and especially Maurras’s agnosticism, this influence should not be overestimated. As Trépanier points out, “Groulx dit ce qu’il sait du rayonnement de l’école de Maurras au Canada français, mais en évitant de se placer explicitement sur le terrain des rapports entre le traditionalisme canadien-français et le traditionalisme français, plan sur lequel se révèlent les affinités les plus profondes” (Trépanier, 182). Even though Groulx declared that “Maurras a contribué à me dégoûter de la démocratie”, at the same time he added that Maurras was “grand esprit avec un grand trou par en haut” (Trépanier, 182–183).

In other words, Groulx’s *latinité* is not *latinité païenne* or *latinité greco-latine*, but *latinité catholique*. Groulx imagined French Canada as first of all a restored and renewed New France,<sup>6</sup> i.e. a *civilisation française catholique* whose existence was brutally disrupted by the Anglo-Protestant Conquest: “Le petit peuple de 1760 possédait tous les éléments d’une nationalité: il avait une patrie à lui, il avait l’unité religieuse, l’unité de la vraie foi, et, avec elle, l’équilibre social et la promesse de l’avenir” (Groulx 1919, 293).<sup>7</sup>

6) “Groulx believed that French Canadians, right up to his own day, were endowed with an apostolic mission in the New World, a mission they could fulfil only by remaining faithful to their deeper ‘nature’, which consisted of their Frenchness (Canadianized Frenchness, of course) and Catholicity. His historical work consisted to a very large extent of trying to rekindle in the mind of his compatriots the former grandeur of the ‘French Empire of America’. This historical project, in turn, fuelled his work as a nationalist militant, particularly his efforts to win a guarantee that the ancestral rights of French Canadians, in Québec and the other parts of America to which they had spread, would be respected” (Bock, 77).

7) Despite these words of Groulx, there is the fact that Groulx himself strongly viewed differences, for example between *Québécois* and *Acadiens*, as fundamental. In his work *Visions Canadiennes* Groulx writes: “Why not to admit it? We French Canadians have not always understood that a political situation different



If Maurrasian *latinité* was based on pagan and agnostic counter revolution and anti-modernity, Groulxian imagery followed much more traditionalist prescriptions, a fact that became perceptible after the Papal condemnation of the Parisian Action Française (1926), when Groulx distanced himself from Maurrassism. That is why today's historians rightfully point to other figures of French conservatism, especially to Joseph de Maistre, Henri Massis or Jacques Maritain (Monier, 11–12) as alternative inspirers of conservative and anti-modern thought. On the other hand, if Maurras felt himself “l'homme de rempart” and suffered from the “mentalité d'un assiégé”, Groulx – surrounded by Protestant Anglo-American culture – certainly felt the same. There is another analogy between Maurras and Groulx that seems to have produced the deeply felt polarity, namely, the threat from the Anglo-Protestant “other” and consequently an incapacity to integrate both. Behind both the Maurrassian and Groulxian visions was a projection of a “dark/threatening other”. As Edinger puts it, such profound and collectively experienced opposites are an expression of *coniunctio*, the essential unity of both, even though consciously dis-united: “Once you start thinking about it [opposites], and once you become familiar with the phenomenon of the opposites, you'll see it everywhere. It's *the* basic drama that goes on in the collective psyche. Every war, every contest between groups, every dispute between political factions, every game, is an expression of *coniunctio* energies. Whenever we fall into an identification with one of a pair of warring opposites, we then lose the possibility [...] of being a carrier of opposites. And instead we become one of God's millstones that grinds our fate” (Edinger, 15).

Although references to Maistre were not entirely common,<sup>8</sup> it seems that for Groulx he was very much a reliable inspiration. Maurras considered Maistre “le premier de nos philosophes politiques”, but for him he was “fondateur” especially because of his critique of Revolution. Philosophically, Maistre was – paradoxically – closer to Burke. Moreover, he interpreted history theologically. Maurras “ne pourra jamais se reconnaître dans le mouvement de pensée, propre à Maistre, qui fait le fonds de Soirées: la vision de l'histoire comme le drame d'une chute et d'une régénération cosmiques [...]” (Glaudes, 1224).

from our own, [...], has made the French person in Acadia a quite distinct nationality type. [...]. [Other French Canadians] refused to accept that the *Acadiens* did not want to become obedient little *Canadiens*; we mocked their flag, their national feast day, their language [...]” (Bock, 78–79). Groulx was convinced that the difference between *Québécois* and *Acadiens* is of old date, especially since the Treaty of Utrecht (1713) that ceded Acadia to the English.

8) Maistre was an Anglophile and a Mason. His political thought was essentially influenced by English history, especially by the Glorious Revolution (1688). Similarly to Burke, Maistre interprets the Glorious Revolution as a conservative revolution that restored English liberties; in contrast to Burke, he views it as misguided because it was based on Protestant reform, which means that it emphasized and attributed the highest value to individual judgment, leading to the destruction and damage of the authority principle. In his *Reflections on the Revolution in France* Burke explained that the Glorious Revolution did not aim to put people's rights above those of the sovereign, but rather salvation of the monarchy and constitution threatened by the illegal actions of James II.



Groulx was a priest and a historian. Unlike Maurras, providentialism constitutes an axis of his thought about French Canada. In this he is Maistre's heir. This feature of his thought makes him really a prophet whose idea of nation was both "a subjective and objective reality" (Bock, 64), which becomes perceptible especially when he uses the terms "âme collective" or "race". There is a conviction that the destiny of the Franco-Canadian nation is directed and predestined by divine Providence to work toward the "conquest of souls" and that Franco-Canadians possessed a hereditary birth right in all North America. In a 1925 lecture, Groulx spoke about his nation as a "chosen race" inspired and directed by a "providential plan" with its own spiritual vocation:

Whatever we believe about the motive of the kings of France [...], there is one major fact that cannot be contested: that the idea of mission caused the idea of colonization to triumph. French penetration into the heart of the continent was as much an advance of the Catholic apostolate as it was commercial penetration. And if we could read the providential plan above, [...], perhaps we would learn that the winds of heaven pushed [...] caravels towards the vast hunting grounds [...], where the most populous indigenous nations lived and where there was the greatest potential for apostolic work. (Bock, 75)

The Maistrian backward-looking theological vision of European history and Revolution and the Groulxian backward-looking vision of rural and Catholic New France went hand in hand. These visions were far from being matter-of-fact theories. Both contained a considerable dose of romanticism. Maistre, even though generally considered a man of the 18<sup>th</sup> century, was actually influenced by German "romantisme politique" of reactionary inspiration initiated by Novalis.<sup>9</sup> In Groulx one can find a romantic vision of the nation as defined by Sternhell, who identifies its founder in Herder and his subjective concept-image of the *Volksgeist*. Neither should we forget that Groulx's visions were formulated at a time when different ideological currents within Western civilization converged, aiming at the delegitimization of concepts of society and politics as conceived by the Enlightenment and institutionalized by the French Revolution. Those currents promoted a Herderian, essentialist concept of nation and cultural relativism. In this context it is appropriate to mention Bélanger's interpretation of Groulx's nationalism in his book *L'Apolitisme des idéologies Québécoises*, where Bélanger stresses an apolitical aspect of Groulx's nationalism leading to "Québécois mystique" more than to a genuine political programme.

---

9) But if Maistre did not know German Romantics, they knew him very well: Adam Müller and Friedrich Schlegel expressed their admiration for Maistre explicitly. The differences in their initial motivation does not prevent us from following their convergence with Maistre, who inspired German Romantics to reject liberal theories of state and contractual theories of state in favour of an organic and hierarchic concept of society which, moreover, enjoyed the support of obvious nostalgia for medieval theocracy. Schlegel's *Geschichte der alten und neueren Literatur* (1815) was an open panegyric on Joseph de Maistre.



Similarly to Maurras, Groulx viewed party politics as a condemnable division of organic unity: “his concept of the nation as an organic entity rested, instead, on the notions of consensus, harmony and corporatism” (Bock, 31), and national interest “defined as separate from the concepts of statehood and political conflict, was at all times to take precedence over party interests” (Bock, 32). Groulx’s nationalism fits in with a Herderian vision of nation and nationality because for him nations are “organic entities, analogous to living beings, each with their own national ‘genius’”. The diversity of nations was the work of Providence, and Providence did not tolerate the possibility of legitimating the absorption of the weakest by the strongest. [...] This conviction was shared likewise by colonial powers of the late nineteenth and early twentieth centuries” (Bock, 55). According to some, the Groulxian concept of nation was influenced by Count Gobineau’s racial theories (Bock, 19) and combined racial mythologizing with “apostolic vocation”. In 1921 Groulx published the following lines:

We wish to find once more, seize again, in its integrity, the ethnic type that France brought to our shores and that one hundred and fifty years of history then formed ... And it is this French type, clearly distinguished, dependent on a history and a geography, having its ethnic and psychological heredities, it is this type we wish to continue, on which we rest the hope of our future, because a people, like any person growing up, can only develop what they have in them, can only develop those strengths whose living seed they already contain. (Bock, 65)

Such a rejection of enlightened revolutionary politico-ideological universalist imagery should be understood as a part of Western national imagery. If we keep in mind Sternhell’s “l’idéologie, ne l’oublions pas, est l’interaction de la culture et de la politique” (Sternhell, Sznajder, Ashéri, 12), we can see that Groulx’s politics of *latinité canadienne-française* derived directly from the imagery of Anglo-Protestant danger.

Whereas Maurras’s Latin imagery was a reaction against Revolution but also against 19<sup>th</sup>-century modernization processes, Groulx was still challenging modernity in the 1950s. In France, the Maurrasian reference to the Ancien Régime and classicism remained at the theoretical level; French Canada, however, was no heir of modern France. Rather, it constituted an extension of Catholic pre-modern France. These two theses are even more convincing if we keep in mind that Groulx used terms like “living seed” and “soul”: “Groulx considered the France of the Grand Siècle the only one that could be deemed the authentic repository of the French ‘soul’. The ‘other’, the one born of the French Revolution and the Third Republic [...] strayed from its deeper nature under the impulse of the individualistic, universalist and, of course, anticlerical ideal” (Bock, 64). The fact that Maurras was aware that the reality of French Canada



was closer to his ideal is perceptible in this short text, a text in which the Muse of his imagination did not forget to add heroes of ancient Greece. If Groulx imagined French America in terms of “Latin Catholicism”, Maurras viewed it as an extension of his *Méditerranée greco-latine*:

Heureux pays! Vous avez une foi, une langue, un esprit de famille, une paysannerie, des mœurs ... Où n'irait une race humaine avec de tels atouts? Comparez la stabilité, la fécondité de vos foyers à l'instabilité, à la stérilité du foyer américain. Votre moralité à la criminalité des autres. Votre fidélité, votre unité religieuse, à leur morcellement, au pullulement de leurs sectes et de leurs temples! Votre puissance et courageuse continuité ethnique et linguistique à cette mosaïque d'immigrants de tous lieux et de tous pays! Comparez vos champs, même vos forêts, à l'industrialisme dont vos voisins sont prisonniers, même la charrue à main. Un seul élément paraît militer contre vous, c'est leur nombre. Mais l'armée du roi des rois comptait des centaines de milliers d'hommes, et les bataillons de Miltiade, de Thémistocle et de Léonidas ne faisaient qu'une poignée: ils l'ont emporté pour les siècles. Les mécanismes de l'histoire sont héroïques. (Maurras 1934, 217)<sup>10</sup>

Whereas Maurrassism gradually became discredited and, in post-war France, totally marginalized, in Canada Groulx's influence became gradually reduced by the modernization effect of the Quiet Revolution. In postwar France there were several groups that could line up with Action française ideology: Maurrassian “modernistes” (Pierre Boutang and his group), those with a nostalgia for Vichy (revues like *Écrits de Paris* and *Rivarol*), traditional Catholics (the revues *Verbe* and *Itinéraires*) and finally the “jeune droite” (Jacques Laurent, Michel Déon etc.). In postwar Canada a new generation of historians initiated a new kind of historiographical approach and modernization, putting Groulx's traditionalist vision aside. By 1950, Abbé Groulx “had entered the ranks of the principal ideologues or ‘definers’ of French-Canadian nationalism, [...] he made himself the spokesman for a profoundly conservative nationalism situated at the intersection of several influences, including the counter-revolutionary tradition, ultramontanism, the Church's social doctrine and parliamentarism, ideologies that wove together into a delicate and original synthesis” (Bock, 5). But after the late 1950s imagery connecting all these doctrines started eroding. At that time Groulx's cultural particularism started retreating to cultural universalism because Canada became increasingly open to globalization processes. Already in his Montréal lecture “Où allons nous?” (1953) Groulx noted that French Canada had lost its moral compass

---

10) In this extract Maurras acclaims French Canadian rural and traditional culture and society, which, for him, corresponds to the ancestral (French) heritage, to human nature and virtues, and brings French Canadians close to Mediterranean cultures, including that of ancient Greece. In this respect French Canada is much closer to the Maurrassian ideal of pre-modern rural France before the Revolution.



and fought against “objective history.”<sup>11</sup> Defeat of his ideology did not come from the Anglo-Protestant “other”, but from the modernization process to which Canada became exposed.

So the inner eye of the Maurrassian and Groulxian visions and their French-speaking muses so dear to mystical Mediterranean nationalism and Franco-North-American Catholic New France became progressively invisible, condemned, outdated, old-fashioned and forced to withdraw its visionary mythological and providentialist theses. Mythologized national history had to cede to universalist globalized modernity. But bards such as Groulx and Maurras are still, in spite of their controversial ways, at least in some quarters a source of inspiration and a witness to the merging of mythological imagery, historiography, ideology and politics.

## Works cited

- Adams, Vannoy Michael. *Fantasy Principle, Psychoanalysis of the Imagination*. New York: Brunner-Routledge, 2004. Print.
- Barrès, Maurice; Maurras, Charles. *La République ou le roi Maurras-Barrès, correspondance inédite*, Paris: Plon, 1970. Print
- Bélanger, André. *L'Apolitisme des idéologies québécoises: Le grand tournant de 1934–36*. Québec: Presses de l'Université Laval, 1974. Print.
- Bock, Michel. *A Nation Beyond Borders. Lionel Groulx on French-Canadian Minorities*. Ottawa: University of Ottawa Press, 2014. Print
- Collingwood, R. G. *An Autobiography*. Oxford, UK: Clarendon Press, 1978.
- . *The Idea of History*, with Lectures 1926–1928, rev. ed. Oxford, UK: Oxford University Press, 1994. Print.
- Dard, Olivier. “De la Rue de Rome au Canada français: influences ou transferts.” In *MENS*, vol. 8, n°1 (Autumn 2007), pp. 7–66. Print.
- Edinger, Edward. *The Mystery of Coniunctio. Alchemical Image of Individuation*. Toronto: Inner City Books, 1994. Print.
- Hall, James. *Dictionary of Subjects and Symbols in Art*. New York: Harper and Row, 1979. Print.

---

11) After World War II, the traditional theological interpretation of history was replaced by the myth of modernity and secularism. In French Canada such a change became visible in the rejection of a major part of the intellectual heritage of Lionel Groulx. On the intellectual scene a neo-nationalist movement and the École de Montréal appeared. Its prominent leader Michel Brunet “frequently denounced what he called the ‘consoling myths’ of traditional French-Canadian nationalism, including the myth of messianism and of the spiritual conquest of America. Brunet claimed to be using, instead, scientific objectivity and a certain historical determinism [...]. The neo-nationalist historians believed that the movement they were participating in represented a form of progress when compared to the thought of Lionel Groulx” (Bock, 217).



- Hanegraaff, Wouter J. *Esoterism and the Academy. Rejected Knowledge in Western Culture*. Cambridge, UK: Cambridge University Press, 2012. Print.
- Hillman, James. *Inter Views, Conversations with Laura Pozzo on Psychotherapy, Biography, Love, Soul, Dreams, Work, Imagination, and the State of Culture*, New York: Harper and Row, 1983. Print.
- Glaudes, Pierre (ed.). *Joseph de Maistre: Œuvre*. Paris: Éditions Pierre Laffont, Paris 2007. Print.
- Goyet, Bruno. *Charles Maurras*. Paris: Presses de Sciences Po.: Paris 2000. Print.
- Groulx, Lionel. *Naissance d'une race*. Montréal: L'Action française 1919. Print.
- Kugler, Paul. "Psychic imaging: a bridge between subject and object", In Young-Eisendrath, Polly & Dawson, Terence (eds.), *The Cambridge Companion to Jung*. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2008. Print.
- Massis, Henri. *Maurras et son temps*. Paris: Plon, 1951. Print.
- Maurras, Charles. "Dictionnaire politique et critique." In *L'Action française*, August 30, 1934. Print.
- . *Lettres de prison, 8 Septembre – 16 Novembre 1952*, Flammarion: Paris, 1958. Print.
- . *Soliloque du Prisonnier*, Paris: La France Latine, 1963. Print.
- Raynaud, Ernest. "Préface" In *Choix de poèmes*. Mercure de France 1939,
- Mège, Michel. *Charles Maurras et le Germanisme*. Paris: Éncre, 2003. Print.
- Meyer, Ruth. *Clio's Circle. Entering the Imaginal World of Historians*. New Orleans: Spring Journal Books, 2007. Print.
- Monier, Denis. *Pour comprendre le nationalisme (au Québec et ailleurs)*. Montréal: Les Presses de l'Université de Montréal, 2001. Print.
- Nguyen, Victor. *Aux Origines de l'Action française. Intelligence et politique à l'aube du XXe siècle*. Paris: Fayard, 1991. Print.
- Pomeyrols, Catherine; Hauser, Claude (eds.). *L'Action française et l'étranger. Usages, réseaux et représentations de la droite nationaliste française*. Paris: L'Harmattan 2001, Print.
- Sternhell, Z., Sznajder, M., Ashéri, M.: *Naissance de l'idéologie fasciste*, Fayard, Paris 1989. Print.
- Thibon, Gustave. "Introduction". In Vatré, Éric. *Maurras, un Itinéraire spirituel*, Paris: Nouvelles Éditions Latines, 1978. Print.
- Toynbee, Arnold J. "The Value of C. G. Jung's Work for Historians", *Journal of Analytical Psychology* 1 (1956): 193. Print
- . *A Study of History, Vol. X: Contacts between Civilizations in Time*. London: Oxford University Press, 1954. Print.
- Trépanier, Pierre. "Le maurrassisme au Canada français", In *Cahiers des dix*, 1999, no. 53, pp. 167–233. Print.



Weber, Eugen. *Action française. Royalism and Reaction in the Twentieth Century France*. Stanford, California: Stanford University Press, 1962. Print.

Weyembergh, Maurice. *Charles Maurras et la révolution française*, Paris: VRIN, 1992. Print.

**ALEŠ VRBATA** / has an MA in Philosophy and History (Masaryk University, Brno) and a PhD (2010) in Ibero-American Studies (Charles University, Prague). Since 2011 he has been living in Brazil, where he is a member of various Brazilian academic associations, including the NEC (Center of Canadian Studies). He has been a visiting scholar at the Department of Post-Graduate Literary Studies at the State University of Feira de Santana.

**e-mail:** alesvrbata@hotmail.com

