Traditionally, Québec cinema has been used in Anglo-Canadian universities as a pedagogic tool for the teaching of Québec culture. Without question, Québec cinematic productions have provided many Anglo-Canadian undergraduate students with a compelling look into Québec’s so-called “distinct society” in its main historic forms. Examples include Claude Jutra’s *Mon oncle Antoine* (1971), Michel Brault’s *Les ordres* (1974), Jean Beaudin’s *J. A. Martin photographe* (1977), Gilles Carle’s *Maria Chapdelaine* and Claude Fournier’s *Bonheur d’occasion* (both 1983), Denys Arcand’s *Le déclin de l’empire américain* (1986) and *Jésus de Montréal* (1989), and Jean-Claude Lauzon’s *Un zoo la nuit* (1987) and *Léolo* (1993). Such films could be regarded as authentic and linear cultural reflections on the francophone community and on its cultural differences with what Québécois have long perceived as a mythical anglophone bloc called “Canada Anglais.”

In such a perspective, in which traditional forms of relatively good-quality cinema were viewed as unequivocal statements about a certain state of Québec society as a whole, the result was also a paradoxical confirmation of English Canada’s distinct identity. In fact, the many points of dissimilarity depicted by what I shall call the “classic Québec cinema” offered reassuring ways to measure the cultural disparities between the two solitudes. There was,
of course, the use of the French language, both in its standard form and as a *joual* dialect, but the lines of separation were also drawn by the subject matter of these films: the influence of Catholicism on gender relations and on family and social structure, the economic and political subordination of French Canada, the translation of canonical Québec literary works onto the screen, and the alleged post-referendum breakdown in Québec cultural output after 1980. The cinematic expressions of such topics were not especially shocking to English Canada. Viewers of these films were, in a way, expecting such themes and could reflect on them as a paradoxical part of Canada itself, whatever pointed criticisms of Canada the films implied through their portrayal of French-Canadian conditions.

Francophone Québécois instructors teaching Québec culture courses in the early nineties faced a decade of Québec-Canada relations in motion. The decade began with the failure of the Meech Lake Accord in 1990, followed five years later by the second referendum on Québec sovereignty. These events were close enough in time that instructors could use them to remind their students about the role of René Lévesque and the first referendum of 1980, and, before that, the October Crisis of 1970. I was one of those instructors, and the memory was fresh enough to allow me to convey to students the emotions attached to those events and their fundamental importance and significance for both solitudes. In more than one way, history and culture were alive, and they marked the defining and familiar lines of the historic Canada-Québec confrontation, in which everyone knew their roles and positions.

My own experience as professor of Québec culture and literature at the University of Calgary somehow induced me to conclude that the year 2000 presented a new fault line in the perceptions and role of Québec cinema for each solitude. As I reflect on teaching a course on Québec cinema as recently as the fall of 2009, I realize that those opposed and comforting positions of culture in Québec and Canada, responding to each other with perpetual reminders of past rights and wrongs, did not and could not be translated in the same manner any longer. Multiple factors need to be examined in a more detailed way to assess precisely a remarkable change not only in the way Québec communicates its culture through its cinematic productions but also in the way a new wave of Québec movies can be received by a new set of Canadian viewers.
One of these factors is a well-known phenomenon experienced by all university professors: the growing generation gap between teachers and pupils. Although this gap may have minimal significance in the case of the pure or applied sciences, it does have an impact when it comes to explaining historic events or conveying memory and emotions about such events as the military occupation of 1970 or the close call of 1995, depending on your degree of involvement at the time.

In 1970, most of the parents of the students of 2009 were toddlers who probably had no direct or indirect memories of this event. These same parents were barely teens during the first referendum of 1980, and, knowing what teens make of politics, they probably do not remember even having seen René Lévesque on television. In the same vein, the students of 2009 were still babies during the failure of the Meech Lake Accord and were probably watching Sesame Street rather than the big public demonstrations in Montréal during the second referendum in 1995. These generational considerations and the resulting “memory gap” regarding recent historical landmarks in Canada-Québec relations produce the uncomfortable but unmistakable sense that one is being viewed by one's students as a “geezer,” or as what Québécois call a “mon oncle” (or, in my case, a “ma tante”).

Adding to the generation gap, another change in the very composition of the Canadian university population becomes indisputably clear when one is discussing Québec and its stormy relations with Canada: an increasing number of undergraduate students are “neo-Canadians”. That is, they were not born in Canada, or their parents were not born in Canada. So all the above-mentioned elements of recent Canada-Québec relations are almost completely alien to them. They may know certain facts, but they are culturally, as well as generationally, disengaged emotionally from these conflicts between the two solitudes, which in their minds could be merged in a bigger entity in which all the components are equally problematic: francophones, anglophones, First Nations, immigrants, West, Centre, East, North.

It is this experience of cultural communication with a new generation of Canadian and neo-Canadian students that I would like to reflect on through a collection of Québec films produced after 2000, using the reaction of the student viewers to evaluate the communication value of this more recent cinema. In other words, what do these newer films say about Québec that is not said in the classic Québec cinema?
For my 2009 class, I selected the following films, whose only common feature is that they were produced after the year 2000: Pierre Falardeau’s 15 février 1839 (2001); Charles Binamé’s The Rocket (2005); Jean-François Pouliot’s La grande séduction (2003); Benoît Pilon’s Ce qu’il faut pour vivre (2008); Robert Morin’s Le Nèg’, (2003); and Éric Canuel’s Bon Cop, Bad Cop (2006). Although all produced recently, the films have little in common, nor have they been received in the same way. For example, the comparison between 15 février 1839 and La grande séduction is not an obvious one. How should one compare a highly artistic film that describes a difficult time in the history of Canada and Québec, one that is characterized by an atmosphere heavily charged with British imperialism, with a charming comedy that illustrates, with almost an Italian flavour, the daily contemporary life of a tiny fishing hamlet? What should students make of the biography of Maurice Richard, with its rather fast-paced and Hollywood-like account of the life of a hockey player, in comparison to the slow and poetic narrative of Ce qu’il faut pour vivre? How do you juxtapose a slapstick comedy like Bon Cop, Bad Cop and the shocking account of racism in Le Nèg’?

These contrasting movies presented students with diverse points of view. I was anxious to understand how they would process and comment on what these movies communicated to them, and whether that message would be similar to that received by Québec audiences. I assumed their reactions would be somewhat varied, given the diverse backgrounds of the students in the class, but I ended up with unexpected surprises.

Let’s start with 15 février 1839, directed by the ultranationalist Pierre Falardeau, who, among his earlier productions, released a film in 1994 about the October Crisis. Octobre was not well received in English Canada. The same anglophone reviewers were more open to 15 février 1839 (if not necessarily to the director), largely because both Canadian and Québec critics focused on the more artistic dimensions of the movie—the plot, the elegance of the images, the magnificent lighting, and the strength of the interpretation by the actors, notwithstanding the occasional interruption by a few nationalist diatribes delivered by secondary characters.

Even with the lapse of time since the actual events, the story of 15 février 1839 provoked different responses in the two solitudes. The intervening 170 years allowed this paradoxical effect. Québécois perceived the hanging and deportations of the Patriotes through the galvanizing effect of the well-known
“Je me souviens,” conveniently forgetting that the revolution of 1837–38 was an all-Canadian insurrection involving both Upper and Lower Canada against the British Crown. Instead, Québécois viewers turned the rebellion into a uniquely French-Canadian event. For their part, if Anglo-Canadians could use the argument that Falardeau turned terrorists into heroes in Octobre, the historically accurate depiction of the fate of the Patriotes on 15 février 1839 could lead to a more ambiguous reaction. Did English Canadians really hang the Patriotes? Or deport them? Are Chevalier de Lorimier and Charles Hindelang heroes of English Canada’s making? One can see different cathartic potentials at work here: an obscure feeling of historic guilt, a vague acknowledgement of the importance of this episode, or a fatalism in the face of a complicated past that remains unresolved by giving way to a harmonious present.

The students who viewed the movies told me that they were moved. Some even cried at the final scene of the very graphic hanging of the five men on that cold morning in February. Needless to say, Falardeau spared nothing in his efforts to produce the greatest possible pathos in that scene. But, interestingly, none of the students seemed to experience any particular sense of guilt or unease in their momentary identification with the Patriotes. For this generation, who weren’t yet born in the 1970s, the emotional baggage that my generation still carries about Canada-Québec history is nonexistent. My generation, anglophone or francophone, would still find this a subject for a history class, but the students saw the same history as what it perhaps should be: an object of interest that did not involve them. As a result, for them 15 février 1839 had a universal appeal: it was about the historic battle between two unequal military and political forces and what happens when the more powerful wins.

In this film, the one who wins and subsequently punishes the one who loses is the villain, but not necessarily because he is British. For the students, it all depends on their perspective. Some of the non-Canadian students even transposed the events into the context of their own history or the history of their parents in another country on another continent. From that perspective, the failure of the Patriotes, as narrated by Falardeau, transcended the narrow frame of nationalism and resentment. It could be appropriated into other historical frameworks and imbued with other cultural references.

The next film I presented, The Rocket, had a wider appeal for the students, as this biography of hockey star Maurice Richard takes place within
a highly symbolic dimension of Canadian identity: hockey. Indeed, director Charles Binamé, like Pierre Falardeau before him, made sure that the life of “the Rocket,” especially from start of his NHL career to the riot of 1955, was framed within the same Québec nationalistic perspective, something that was duly noted by the Anglo-Canadian reviewers. Moreover, in comparison to 15 février 1839, The Rocket had a more upbeat plot, one featuring the familiar theme of the ethnically different underdog who competes in a national sport and manages to overcome all obstacles and achieve stardom for himself and, by extension, his people. This angle, which clearly gave The Rocket an American flavour, produced an easy cathartic reaction from the Canadian public. Professional critics may have noted with irritation the film’s ideological context, but as I witnessed myself at the release of the DVD version of the movie, the average Canadian viewer—especially those who remember seeing the Rocket on the ice—enjoyed the film for what it is: a good story about Canadian hockey. The affronts to Maurice Richard perpetrated by the anglophone directors, owners, and coaches of the Montréal Canadiens and the NHL are in a way devoid of bad and good connotations, which is the preferred way to frame history in both solitudes. My students said they could compare The Rocket to Remember the Titans, where the identification with the underdog is in a way decontextualized from political overtones and moves to a universal level, where, in turn, it can be fused with elements from another culture. The students with a European background, and especially the ones with Arabic origins, certainly appreciated the narrative of The Rocket since it played into the elevated and emotional world of the national sport, whatever the origins and the linguistic identity of the player. One just has to think of the European soccer teams formed of players of all nationalities, lending themselves to form part of a united national symbol, as is the case for France.

The next film presented in the course is the largest grossing film in Canadian history: Bon Cop, Bad Cop. After the historical narratives assigning the bad role to Anglo-Canadians, this satire presents the absurdities of the two solitudes through the relations between Québec and Ontario. The students saw this film as welcome comic relief, as well as a golden opportunity to explore many incongruities: Canada’s officially bilingual status, the reluctance of Québec to stay in Canada, and the numerous insults and prejudiced comments the two solitudes daily throw at each other, such as those currently being tossed between Québec and Alberta regarding the oil industry and the tar sands.
Two Solitudes, Two Québecs, and the Cinema In-Between

Bon Cop, Bad Cop (especially its French version, which required that the viewer truly be bilingual to appreciate the humour fully) operated at different levels for the Canadian students and the neo-Canadian ones. For the Canadian students, Bon Cop, Bad Cop lampoons the encyclopedia of all that can go wrong in any exchange between francophones and anglophones in this country. Actually, director Éric Canuel and writer Patrick Huard deserve credit for presenting the relations between Québec and Canada for what they often are: a hilarious set of droll performances that are increasingly remote from the tensions, even tragedies, that characterized our initial history. Moreover, most of the students in Québec universities, as well as those in the rest of Canada, have a completely different experience with bilingualism than past generations did, given that many of today’s students were educated in a French- or English-immersion system from elementary or secondary school on. They have a comfortable and ironic familiarity with all the sidesplitting and hyperbolic differences shown in the movie, some of which are pushed to the absurd. The film allowed expressions of prejudice, distrust, rejection, tension, incomprehension, clumsiness, and conflicts of interest and pushed them to nonsensical conclusions with which the students could easily sympathize.

Bon Cop, Bad Cop perceived the effective separation between Québec and Canada as enjoyable, something that can only be the privilege of this younger generation. Remarkably, all the Canadian-born students in the class had seen the movie before our fall 2009 screening. The students born outside Canada, many of whom had lived through the dire consequences of political dissent in their countries of origin, found the movie hilarious—amusing, yet also reassuring. For them, the film showed that it is possible to highlight ludicrous aspects of the relations between the two solitudes without threatening the actual structure of the country as a whole.

The next film was the very moving Ce qu’il faut pour vivre, which takes place in the Québec of 1952 and tells the story of an Inuit hunter displaced from Baffin Island, who spends a year in a sanatorium run by Catholic nuns and doctors. The uncomplicated plot, the slow flow of the images and action, the quiet performances of the main actors, and the dialogue in Inuktitut all contrasted strongly with the nervous and high-octane montage of Bon Cop, Bad Cop. Perhaps for that reason, Ce qu’il faut pour vivre was not perceived as exciting. Nevertheless, the students were intrigued by the very rare presence of First Nations people in any Québec and Anglo-Canadian films, and
especially by the rarity of films that depict the Inuit, along with their language. Following a question asked by a francophone student from Belgium, the discussion of *Ce qu’il faut pour vivre* provided a new and unexpected experience for both the Canadian students and the Québécois professor. Both had to explain to our neo-Canadian classmates the nature and history of Québec-Canada relations with respect to the country’s Aboriginal communities. Attention was very high among the Canadian students as I explained to Romanian, Jordanian, Russian, Japanese, and Belgian students the actions taken against the various First Nation communities in Canada and Québec from the sixteenth century onward: expropriating their lands, confining them to reserves, infecting them with our diseases, depleting their resources, putting them in residential schools, and so on. At this point, the Canadian students and I embarrassingly felt that *Ce qu’il faut pour vivre* was a Canadian movie as well as a Québec movie, that the message it conveyed went far beyond Québec’s cultural borders. In fact, since the in-class test regarding this film focused on a particularly racist scene, the best answers came from students born outside Canada: they could easily identify with the character of Tivi, the Inuit hunter, who is treated as if his culture, his language, and his emotional needs are of absolutely no importance to white people, whether francophone or anglophone. Foreign-born students could relate to this denial of Native identity by the majority.

The next movie, *Le Nèg‘*, is far more shocking than a film that quietly chronicles the way in which Inuit culture has been dismissed and denied. It is a graphic movie about pure racial hatred that depicts in detail the torture and murder of a black teenager at the hands of rednecks from the Québec backcountry, as well as the cover-up that follows. In fact, the violence of the movie would make the depiction of an actual lynching in the American South during the 1950s pale by comparison. But the point of this almost unbearable account of an extremely racist act had to be explained to the students, and despite the discomfiture of an entire Québec social class, it was difficult to find a rationalization for the actions in *Le Nèg‘*. As I listened closely to the film’s dialogue in *joual*, I realized that I had to move to a psychosocial commentary in order to understand, and help the class understand, the extreme acts committed in the movie.

Here, I was describing the conditioning and behaviour of a certain social class, easily recognizable to both Canadians and Québécois. These are people characterized by economic vulnerability, emotional instability, the inability to
project oneself into the future and envisage consequences, feelings of resentment and suspicion in the face of differences of any sort since those differences could provide the rationale for a position of superiority, the view of any event solely in terms of its impact on the individual and not on the collectivity, thinking driven by emotion rather than reason, a distorted sense of morality, violence as a ready answer to any situation seen as challenging, and that violence well magnified by the abuse of alcohol. As well, it is clear that racist psychological and physical abuse becomes an obscure but reliable way to get a certain “satisfying” revenge for one’s own dissatisfying life. The young black teenager in the movie serves as an ideal scapegoat for the meaningless lives of his torturers. But, at this point, I was describing only a specific class within Québec society rather than the whole society, and the students could all recognize what I was talking about. As with *Ce qu’il faut pour vivre*, *Le Nèg’* has a universal dimension, albeit a darker and more tragic one embodying racism as it is expressed in a particular situation, to which the whole class could relate.

After these films, *La grande séduction* provided welcome relief for everyone. It is a light comedy about a small seashore community that tries to retain a doctor in order to attract some job-providing industry to their unemployment-plagued hamlet. I remember that *La grande séduction* played for a long time in a commercial cinema in Calgary, rivaled only in that respect by *Jésus de Montréal* and *Les invasions barbares*. If we keep in mind that *La grande séduction* won the World Cinema Audience Award at the Sundance Film Festival in 2004, it is clear that the movie has a strong appeal for the general public, like *Ce qu’il faut pour vivre* but unlike *Le Nèg’*, which provides no feel-good optimism about the possibility of overcoming racism.

There are a variety of reasons for the Canadian and international success of *La grande séduction*. It describes in French the specific conditions of fishermen who lost their livelihood as a result of the structural changes occurring in the fishing sector but who try to turn their lives around by convincing a local developer to locate his business in their isolated outpost. The energy, creativity, good humour, and tenderness displayed by the inhabitants of this tiny village, and their ultimate victory in saving it, effectively inspire in the audience an enormous optimism. The story of the film doesn’t belong exclusively to Québec society. Canada’s West Coast and Atlantic provinces are dotted with small towns that have witnessed the collapse of their industries, and Canada
as a whole is marked by one-industry lumber or mining towns, often struggling to survive. The first images of abandoned boats and fishing gear thus speak not only to Québec but also to a good part of rural Canada and the United States. From such a perspective, Québec’s culture and society matter less than its creative capacity to translate what could be the object of a social tragedy into a humorous presentation.

So what are all these Québec films made after 2000 saying about Québec society or the ability to define this society? Do they provide us with an obvious way of describing this society as “distinct,” do earlier films such as Le déclin de l’empire américain, Mon oncle Antoine, Léolo, J. A. Martin photographe, and, above all, Octobre? Clearly not, as the more recent films provide us with a representation of another Québec, or another view of Québec, which cannot be explained in terms of a single point of view. Instead, our understanding of these films must take account of components: the sense of history (15 février 1839), xenophobia and racism (Ce qu’il faut pour vivre, Le Nèg’), the power of myth and the capacity of mythification, the sense of irony related to the concept of two solitudes (Bon Cop, Bad Cop), and the deep social fissures caused by declining economic circumstances (La grande séduction).

Historian and political scientist Jocelyn Létourneau offers an explanation as to why Québec society can no longer be represented through its film as one-dimensional. He questions the usefulness of viewing Québec as having only one identity and one social level—the traditional view that does not account for what is communicated in post-2000 films, including the Falardeau film. Létourneau speaks of a phenomenon that is not exclusive to the Québécois and should be borne in mind in communication with contemporary Canada. Québec’s socio-economic space has split into two distinct identities: metropolitan Montréal and the new ROQ—the Rest of Québec.1 Létourneau singles out Montréal as an emerging global and world-class city—a francophone reference point in the world, like Paris, but characterized as well by a different identity and culture that he calls “Montreality.” It could be defined as polyglot, educated, and independent of ethnic or linguistic origins, a cultural identity that can easily circulate in the international environment of industrial, financial, or cultural capital. This “first Québec,” to use Létourneau’s expression, does not depend solely on the French language, although it can retain it as an important feature of its self-identity. It is also highly mobile and does not consider the territory of Québec as a limitation on its goals and visions. This
is particularly true among the artistic and business community. Belonging to the first Québec creates a distance from another kind of Québec, one that is not blessed with these prerogatives and privileges—the Québec outside of Montréal, the Rest of Québec. The population of the latter is typified by unilingualism that is not the product of a political will. It is the result of insufficient education, and it is not marked by a mastering of standard French. Both the intellectual capacity and the professional competence of those who live in ROQ lie in the realm of the ordinary and do not allow them access to the same global mobility that those from the first Québec enjoy. In fact, Létourneau goes so far as to divide Québec society between winners and losers, integrating differences confronted in the process of centralization of identity by the different groups who are living at the periphery. They share more or less the same “Québecitude”: unemployed school dropouts, workers in the traditionally soft sector of primary industries, older generations uncomfortable with changes of all kinds, people living in the increasingly empty regions outside Québec City and metropolitan Montréal, for whom any idea of globalization or contact with outsiders represents a threat to their fragile integrity.

I would argue that such a social fracture, as described by Létourneau, can be found as well in the more recent wave of Québec films and can help explain the response of Canadians to these movies. For example, *Bon Cop, Bad Cop*—which depicts the bilingual communication between Québec and Canada as a funny and sometimes absurd performance—and its popularity in Québec are undeniably related to a sense of “Montreality” that can be fully appreciated (whatever the lowbrow traits of the film, such as slapstick clownery) by those familiar with the sometimes hilarious effects of bouncing between the two official languages of Canada, as my students and Montréalers often do.

One might argue, however, that Pierre Falardeau’s *15 février 1839* cannot be so easily understood by framing it within the “Montreality” effect. But if we compare the highly political *Octobre* (1994) and the more artistic *15 février 1839*, we notice with no difficulty the passage between a raw description of the Féquistes as especially belonging to this second Québec—the Québec with no hope, no real prospect of improving its situation except by literally turning violence onto itself, as it did with the murder of Pierre Laporte—and the more artsy (and also quite accurate) interpretation of the final journey of the Patriotes. In *15 février 1839*, one can feel that the sense of political urgency
of *Octobre* has shifted into something more universal, something that does not properly belong to any specific class or even nation. Imperialism can be found in all countries, and the main theme of *15 février 1839*, beyond its specific political context, is really how men agree to die for a cause and find the courage and the dignity to do so. In that sense, the last words of Chevalier de Lorimier on the gallows—“Vive la liberté! Vive l’indépendance!”—fit perfectly into global history. In this way, the film moves the Québec problem into a realm that can no longer be controlled just by the political will of Canada. For that reason, my students (Canadian and neo-Canadian) reacted emotionally to a film in which the conflict in Canada was not localized within the specific relationships between the two solitudes but became part of a global history and could be recognized by any citizen of this world.

The case of *Ce qu’il faut pour vivre* illustrates the same shift of perspective. Here, it is the Inuit hunter who is the target of the structural racism with which French Canada is familiar, although viewers (regardless of their social origins) don’t identify with the racists. The doctors at the sanatorium where Tivi is treated, the nuns who run the institution, the working-class men with whom he shares his hospital room, even the bishop who wants to make sure that Tivi is duly Catholic, are all references to the Québec of the great Duplessis darkness in the fifties. But was that darkness exclusive to Québec of the fifties, in Louis St. Laurent’s Canada? How many provinces shared the scandal of residential schools? Was the systematic displacement of Inuit people in order to ensure Canada’s sovereignty merely a matter of provincial policy?

I am not making these comments to accuse one government more than another but to point out how the story depicted by *Ce qu’il faut pour vivre* relates to nineteenth- and twentieth-century Canadian history as a whole. When one of the roommates of Tivi makes fun of him and his table manners, and then highlights the complicity of everybody in the room when he says, as if it were something scandalous, “Il ne comprend rien, il ne comprend rien là,” he is expressing the same discriminatory attitude most of us harboured about First Nations people. How was it possible to speak, and to keep speaking, Inuktitut, Cree, or Innu? That question is not exclusive to Québec, and certainly not to the Rest of Québec. It is certainly shared, not just by global Canada, but by the other Rest of Canada that we can easily imagine: this fringe of multiple vulnerabilities identical to those in Québec who cannot see Otherness as anything but a threat.
The same comment can be applied to the tragic movie *Le Nèg’*, except that the “racisme ordinaire” is here pushed to an extraordinary level that can be explained not only by the nature of an accomplice society but also by a deep rupture between two states of a society. Létourneau reminds us that the first Québec is also made up of polyglot, educated immigrants who greatly enjoy their ability to circulate globally. In the first Québec, especially after the Bouchard-Taylor Commission, any blatant declaration of racism would be a sign that you do not and cannot belong to this circle of winners. That is why the racist violence and the subsequent murder of a young black teenager in the film is accompanied by all the social characteristics that describe the hopeless losers: unemployment, insufficient or nonexistent education, lack of mastery of standard French, dependence on welfare, living at the edges of legality with a deep sense of insecurity. None of these characters can leave their birthplace. They obscurely understand that they would not survive long in an urban area such as Montréal, Toronto, Vancouver, or Calgary. This condition is not exclusive to Québec: it can be found in a careful reading of the local crime news in any small-town newspaper in Canada. *Le Nèg’* is a deeply disturbing movie precisely because it focuses on a specific phenomenon that transcends the linguistic and ethnic borders of the two solitudes. On this point, Québec and Canada can communicate. Each can recognize its own “rest of” in that of the other.

As mentioned earlier, it is the very same dynamic that produces a totally different effect for *La grande séduction*. This quaint comedy presents the positive side of the communities who cannot go global, who cannot move, who cannot offer something beyond what they are: people ideally united and determined to avoid being swallowed up in a greater market. *La grande séduction* does not expose anything uniquely Québec but instead connects with all the rest of Canada as well—those small hamlets dotting the country and coasts where livelihoods are threatened by every crisis with a global origin: the market, demography, delocalization, the exhaustion of natural resources. In those little villages on the edge of disappearance, a certain kind of Canada—the winner—can invest, generating a lot of nostalgia for a communal country that perhaps never existed but that can provide a space where an easier and traditional definition of identity still seems possible. In the movie, the people of the village of Sainte-Marie-la-Mauderne want to develop a little industry that will help them to avoid the first Québec, the Montréal where they would no longer know who they are. Considering the same imbalances between
rural and urban Canada, I would say that Sainte-Marie-la-Mauderne is more Canadian than Québécois, inasmuch as we assume that it is the first Québec that gives us, by default, our identity.

In conclusion, I want to propose a reformulation of the problem of identities that haunts the always difficult relation between the two solitudes. But I would also question the very principle of those solitudes, given that, in a global world, they are delineated on the basis of something other than ethnicity or language. Socio-economic determinants, rather than political choices, define new solitudes both within and beyond the historical relationship between Canada and Québec. The lines of each flow from their ancient respective solitudes, and they have common elements, but there is no easy way to join them. One can always become bilingual and talk to the Other, provided that each has the means to learn the Other's language: education, employment opportunities, chances to travel, social exchanges. Today, while a class of Canadians and Québécois takes for granted that they can effectively change places if they so desire, another class has none of the luxury of these options for movement, for change, for the future that mobility can provide. They cannot talk to Canada any longer unless they adopt something similar to the approach used by the first Québec to communicate with the Rest of Canada. In both solitudes, the losers do not communicate. They are rather the object of the communication within each solitude, as lovers form their very own country, so to speak.

NOTE