Eugenics, McGill, and the Catholic Church in Montreal and Quebec: 1890-1942

SEBASTIAN NORMANDIN

Abstract. Tracing the origins of eugenics in Canada and seeking to apply a national model, the article explores the juxtaposition between the movement's origin in Britain and its popularity in the Canadian academic milieu, and its condemnation in Québécois intellectual circles. The first aspect of the movement is explored through the work of two McGill professors, Carrie Derrick and J. G. Adami. In contrast, there is both apathy and resistance from the Québécois polity—and the influence of Catholicism in forming a resistant position to the eugenics movement—to consider. The impact of works by Blais, Forest, and others are examined in this respect. The conclusion argues for a bifurcated response to eugenic ideas in Quebec, divided along linguistic-cultural lines.

Résumé. Ayant pour but de tracer les origines de l'eugénisme au Canada, ainsi que d'essayer d'appliquer un modèle à l'échelle nationale, cet article confronte les origines du mouvement eugénique en Grande-Bretagne et sa popularité dans les milieux universitaires canadiens-anglais, à sa condamnation par les milieux intellectuels québécois. Le premier aspect du mouvement est exploré à travers l'oeuvre de deux professeurs de l'université McGill, Carrie Derrick et J. G. Adami. Le deuxième est mis en évidence par l'indifférence et la résistance de la société québécoise, ainsi que par l'influence du catholicisme dans le rejet du mouvement eugénique. À cet égard, l'impact des œuvres de Blais, de Forest et d'autres est examiné. La conclusion soumet l'argument d'une réponse bifurquée au Québec aux idées eugéniques, selon des lignes linguistiques et culturelles.

In 1936, André Laquerrière, a doctor at the University of Montreal, wrote a revealing article in the Quebec scientific journal Revue trimes-trielle. Entitled "Les origines de la race et de la mentalité française: Depuis la préhistoire jusqu'à l'établissement du Christianisme," the ar-

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Article was an anthropological examination tracing the origins of the French stock and the threat that Laquerrière felt the degeneracy of urban life presented to its future. Laquerrière argued for the existence of a distinct French character, perhaps not so clearly defined as to be called a race, but certainly a distinct entity; "pas une race pure" as he put it, "mais certaines tendances." Laquerrière concluded his piece as any doctor should, with a prescription. His recommendation of how to treat the disease and decay of urbanization was, in essence, a recipe for the maintenance of the French stock, whose roots he felt were in the agricultural, peasant past. Parroting the arguments social reformers had made for years in Europe, Laquerrière saw the modern city as the main source of degeneracy and decay:

Urban living, the practice of the arts and sciences, and the stresses of large-scale industry and commerce erode not only physical health, but also the moral strength of the individual. Modern habits of mobility impose cosmopolitan characteristics on overly civilized individuals. In short, we must have, outside of the city and all its bustle, a pool always ready to supply the new blood required to replace urban trash. This pool is made up of the French peasant, and Quebec "habitants". Among them are individuals with hardy constitutions, solid good sense, and a moral fiber that the excesses of civilization have not spoiled. It is these peasants who ceaselessly supply the city the necessary elements to continue the race.

Laquerrière's arguments had all the earmarks of similar diatribes that were once so frequent in the European milieu, but without any of the eugenic notions that were often their accompaniment. There was a clear desire for reform, and racial degeneracy was a central concern, but the solution to the problem lay with the influx of "new blood" into the city, and not with eugenics.

Laquerrière's article reflected a general disinterest in the notion of eugenics on the part of activists and social reformers from French-Canadian backgrounds and raises an important question about why eugenics was ignored in this milieu. Like many aspects of the history of Quebec, the story of eugenics in the province is one of contradictions and curiosities. There are two very different historical attitudes to consider, each reflective of their source within the two cultural contexts, the "two solitudes," that characterize the province. This division of opinion resulted not from a difference in language—the line of distinction and contention that makes up the contemporary discourse—but of culture. In Quebec, the historian has an opportunity to explore the cultural factors implicit within eugenics and their impact on the popular reaction towards it. Looking at the situation within such a maelstrom of highly divergent cultural currents reveals the issues of "race," ethnicity, and class that underlie eugenic theories.
On one side is a French-Canadian polity that possessed a strong sense of its own identity, an identity based on a common language and religion, not on common "hereditary" traits. Nonetheless, as Angus McLaren notes poignantly, Quebec Nationalists certainly must have realized the significance of eugenics as it would in all likelihood be applied to French Canadians: "They could not help but see that Francophones would necessarily do poorly when judged according to eugenic measurements." He goes on to say that religion also played a significant role in Québécois reticence: "Their early indifference to eugenics could also be attributed in part to the declared hostility of the Catholic Church to all schemes aimed at interfering with reproduction." This basic trend of resistance to eugenic notions contrasts sharply with the popularity of those same ideas within Montreal's English-speaking community. In fact, McGill University in Montreal was the main centre for the dissemination of eugenic ideas and theories from Britain to Canada in the early twentieth century. One is presented then with the task of exploring this curious contradiction, in hopes of further understanding what made eugenic theories so popular to some, and so unpopular to others.

THE ORIGINS OF THE EUGENICS MOVEMENT

The term eugenics was first coined in 1883 by Francis Galton, cousin of Charles Darwin, to describe what he called "the study of the agencies under social control that may improve or impair the racial qualities of future generations, either physically or mentally." The word itself is derived from the Greek eugenès, meaning "well-born." Galtonian eugenics was born of the social circumstances in Britain at the time, which saw a marked decrease in the birth rate of the upper and middle classes as compared to the lower. Social commentators became worried; some went so far as to predict that by the turn of the century the nation faced "race suicide" and national degeneration. If a healthy demographic balance was to be maintained, they claimed it would be necessary to entice the "fit" to breed or take measures to restrict the birth of the "unfit." Certainly, seeing the health of a nation in racial terms would form one of the central tenets of eugenic movements the world over, and Canada was no exception. Evidence of the degradation of the race, in the wretched lives of the poor and in the ill health and physical weakness of military recruits in the Boer War crisis, provided a basis for the conclusions of eugenists. Two potential policies were devised by Galton in response to these trends. The first, known as "negative eugenics," was aimed at restricting the breeding of the unfit, while the other, "positive eugenics," was designed to encourage the fertility of the fit. Galtonian eugenists also relied on statistical analyses to trace the influence of in-
nate characteristics, and this statistical methodology was all-important in forming his ideas. Galton was a product of his age of empiricism and scientific positivism. His dictum was “whenever you can, count” and he reflected his era’s almost mystical faith in the powers of statistical analysis characteristic of the science of the late Victorians. Karl Pearson, a British psychologist who enthusiastically adopted some of Galton’s ideas, also used statistical analysis quite extensively in his capacity as director of the Galton Laboratory for National Eugenics. In America, early pioneers in the psychological field, like G. Stanley Hall and E. L. Thorndike, espoused inescapably naturalistic notions of human development which hinted at the suitability of eugenic responses. James McKeen Cattell, an American innovator in the area of standardized testing, provided the “evidence” to support such claims of racial degeneracy.

Eugenics was born of a marriage between science and social policy, and its origins obviously went beyond the scientific theories of one man. Why then was eugenics popular in a broader social context? Certainly, in the nineteenth century, the reasons were manifold:

The rise of eugenics symptomized a shift from an individualist to a collectivist biologist by those who sought to turn to their own purposes the fears raised by the threat of “degeneration.” Individualism, materialism, feminism, and socialism were said to be rampant. The purported surges in venereal disease, tuberculosis, alcoholism, divorce, and labor unrest were pointed to by the nervous as evidence of the erosion of traditional values. Early Victorian science had reassured the middle class of the harmony of religious and scientific truths and the possibility of social peace and industrial harmony. This vision had been momentarily lost.

Eugenics was the scientific tool that would help to recapture this lost vision.

EUGENICS AND MCGILL

It was a McGill University graduate, Dr. Alexander Peter Reid, who was the first to introduce eugenic ideas to the Canadian public when he gave a talk on the subject before the Nova Scotia Institute of Natural Science in January of 1890. Reid began by outlining the applicability of Darwin’s biological science to the human condition, suggesting that more than anything else Darwin had shown the “changeable character of species” through the means of “natural [which Reid also took to mean judicious] selection.” This said, Reid arbitrarily classified “The Human Family” into four distinct groups; the good, the bad, the irresponsible (the insane and idiotic), and “the great bulk of humanity that is molded by and are the creatures of association and training.” He fur-
ther outlined six fundamental areas where the greatest improvements in society and humanity could be made: hereditary transmission; indissolubility of the marriage tie with its home associations; a correct appreciation of the dignity of labor; moral training with fixed or positive religious ideas; a general and practical education; and definite instruction in sanitary laws. The remainder of Reid’s presentation was devoted to expanding in greater detail the six areas he outlined, mixing his own brand of social reform, grounded firmly in Christian morality, with contemporary scientific ideas about heredity and the improvement of species. This mix was not unusual in early eugenic arguments and represented a curious blend of science and social theory.

As an example of this kind of idea, one only has to look as far as Reid’s talk the following year (1891), also before the Nova Scotia Institute of Science. In it, he made strong economic arguments for social improvement, presumably with the understanding that a multipronged attack on the decay of modern society was necessary to save humanity. His argument was like a scrying mirror, anticipating some of the most popular elements of progressive reform, arguing for a greater social safety net and heavier government involvement in regulating the economy, all to be made possible in his mind by the introduction of a personal income tax and the creation of a social savings bank of sorts. This was typical progressive social reform with moderately conservative roots, involving a desire for change, but always within the confines of established institutions. As one observer has noted: “effective reform worked within the limits of public images of governmental and social institutions.”

Eugenics was a highly theoretical science, heavily couched in the language of social theory and public policy. As such, it was part of a wider “scientific” discourse, popular around the turn of the century, that regarded race and physical characteristics as scientifically definable and distinct. A good example of this trend is to be found in the writings of J. G. Adami, one of the McGill professors who popularized eugenics early on in Canada. In an article originally written for the Montreal Medical Journal in 1900 entitled “The Plague: A Prospect and a Retrospect,” Adami accepts the notion of a distinct racial character, in this case applied to the resistance to certain diseases. In this article, he demonstrates a somewhat hypochondriacal analysis of specific resistance to the plague. It was his belief that Caucasians long had a hardy resistance to the disease, in contrast to the people of India, for example, but that this continued resistance was not assured: “Hence, even if certain races are relatively refractory to the germ in one epidemic... the germ may have its virulence increased to a point at which racial insusceptibility becomes an absent quality.” Adami sounded the alarm that the plague remained
a deadly disease that would not forever be conquered and that "we in
Northern America must no longer live in a fool's paradise of assured
danger." This concern was a pretence for greater vigilance with regard to the decay of urban society:

All that I wish to urge is that reasonable precautions should now be taken to guard against [the plague's] entrance, and that the present is a particularly fa-
vorable time to seek out and remove the weak spots in our hygienic defenses, and if, as in the case in Montreal, there are foul and utterly unhealthy areas in the city, now is the acceptable moment for cleansing those areas.

Given Adami's language and the climate of social reform that it re-
lected, it is not hard to see how one could move towards eugenics as a viable tool in the crusade to "remove the weak spots in our hygienic de-
fenses."

Adami was a crusader for the cause of public health, which he first came into contact with as the director of the Canadian Association for the Prevention of Tuberculosis. This organization was founded in 1900 at a meeting of the Canadian Medical Association held in Ottawa, and three years later it had established a Montreal branch. As in many other parts of the world, tuberculosis was a problem in Montreal around the turn of the century, and the C.A.P.T. set about the task of in-
forming the public and suggesting preventive lifestyle changes "by a campaign of education, by the distribution of leaflets, by sermons from city pulpits, and by the use of a willing daily press." Adami himself talked at length about the problem of tuberculosis in particular and dis-
ease in general. He gave lectures to all segments of the city population, warning them of the dangers and suggesting ways to prevent infection. In 1905 he gave a speech on "Tuberculosis" at the Grand Trunk Railway Literary and Scientific Institute in Pointe St. Charles, telling the audi-
ence of railroad workers that to avoid the disease "bodily cleanliness, good food, and the avoidance of whiskey were essential things to keep in mind." The concern about tuberculosis was part of a larger preoccu-
pation with public health, city improvement, and a number of other trends typical of this era of reform. Many of these organizations and as-
sociations interacted and gave rise to one another, particularly in the context of Montreal itself. One of the offshoots of the Association for the Prevention of Tuberculosis was a campaign against the disease which eventually culminated in a great exhibition on the subject in Montreal in 1908. The exhibition and the tuberculosis crusade in turn gave rise to a City Improvement League, founded the following year, with Adami named as its English president. The City Improvement League, which transcended the barriers of language and religion, also "acted as a cen-
tral clearing house for all bodies working for the general good of the city, and dealt with such things as city planning, water supply, the gen-
eral improvement in cleanliness and order on the streets, and the renting problem." The widespread appeal of the City Improvement League, which was in part due to Adami’s skill and enthusiasm, led to the even larger question of child welfare—a growing concern in the city at the time. Montreal was then adding 40,000 people a year to its population, and slums and other poor living conditions were on the rise. Under such conditions infant mortality was steadily increasing, and the public needed to be awakened and informed about the problem. The result was the Child Welfare Exhibition of 1912 in Montreal, the first of its kind to be held in Canada. The task of properly organizing the exhibition was difficult, since it sought to incorporate both the French and English sections of the population. It was felt that both elements of the city had to be actively involved and genuinely interested. For all intents and purposes, and with the help of considerable financial backing from some of the city’s wealthier citizens, the exhibition was purported to be a success.

Success or not, there is no doubt that support for the exhibition came from two very different sources, particularly when one considers the nature of the traditional institutions designed to respond to the child welfare crisis. Historically, the predominant form this kind of institution took was the orphanage, run in almost all cases in Quebec by the church. Support from this sector was based on a desire for improved recognition of the problem and nothing more. The exhibition, however, was much more a result of reform and scientific positivism, in a sense not unlike the approach taken in presenting the World’s Fair. One could easily go beyond the realm of a Child Welfare Exhibition into the realm of natalism, the sterilization of the unfit, and other eugenic ideas, but the older system of child welfare that was already in place in Quebec would not follow this path. Not surprisingly, Adami, the exhibition’s chief organizer, wrote an article in the same year entitled “A Study in Eugenics: Unto the Third and Fourth Generation.” He had been developing his eugenic theories along scientific principles for years, primarily through speeches and articles in journals, and one can trace his move towards generalization—away from the confined spectrum of his specialty, pathology—into the realm of eugenic theory. One text in particular, Medical Contributions to the Study of Evolution, looked in great detail at the evolution, adaptation and behavior of germs and pathogens—and from these findings generalized about aspects of human evolution and heredity. Adami used Weismann’s text On Heredity—which argued that there was little evidence for a Lamarckian view of heredity, and that each generation was free from the defects acquired from the preceding generation—as a starting point from which to discuss his ideas about the subject. Adami, while he accepted this notion of heredity as a theor-
ically sound, was unwilling to entirely abandon the Lamarkian idea, more out of a sense of moral preference than for any concrete scientific rationale: "For, accepting the theory, we must be prepared to deny wholesale the transmission of acquired defects of every order and give ourselves over to a most serious form of fatalism." Adami held on to Lamarkian ideas in part because they supported his theories about pathology, but more importantly for the sake of this discussion, because they served the purpose of heightening the relevance of eugenics in his mind, particularly with respect to limiting the passage of acquired characteristics, like feeble-mindedness and alcoholism, from one generation to the next.

Adami had a fully developed notion of how adaptation and variation occurred in living things, and he expressed it in a simple thesis with three main points. The first of these points was "that individual variation is not primarily due to any inherent tendency on the part of living matter to vary. On the contrary, living matter is capable of being varied according to its environment." This was a basic argument for environmentally motivated change, and in terms of eugenics, suggested that positive alterations in the natural milieu were the key to the improvement of the species. The second point involved the nature of change:

When individuals of a species are exposed to a particular environment they do not present multitudinous variants of all orders. On the contrary, alteration of environment of a particular order gives origin to a particular order or series of variations, of which that grade will survive and be perpetuated which represents the most complete equilibration between the organism and its surroundings.

This was essentially an argument for orderly change, which in a eugenic context could be viewed as controlled orderly change. This view of adaptation smacked of a kind of linear uniformitarianism, suggesting that changes in a species were only possible within limited confines, dictated by the environment, and that radical and sudden changes were a distinct rarity. It is Adami's last point that addressed the possibility of radical change, which he demoted to the level of chance, arguing that it was all the more unlikely because it had to occur in numerous individuals at the same time (a situation not unlike winning a lottery involving a long combination of numbers). It was no matter of chance, however, that Adami's theory of adaptation and variability so seamlessly reflected his cultural climate. It was truly evolution for the Progressive Era; the primacy of environment reflected the progressive concern for improving the urban environment (which had also been a concern of Adami's since before the turn of the century), its predictability matched the scientific certainty of the era, and finally there was a certain conservative uniformitarianism that was amenable to a desire for order.
The year of the Child Welfare Exhibition, 1912, was an important one for eugenics, both in Montreal and abroad. Worldwide, the year saw the First International Eugenics Congress held in London. Two notable men with a connection to McGill in attendance were William Osler and J. G. Adami. The congress supplied concrete evidence that the popularity of eugenic ideas was still on the upswing and entering mainstream science and medicine. With a membership of 750, the Congress reflected the widespread sway of eugenics, larger than ever in North America in an era of progressive reform. Still, as was clearly evidenced by the Congress's presidential address, eugenics remained more clearly connected with a tradition of nineteenth-century social Darwinism. The sense of the address was that eugenics was a practical application of evolutionary theory: "We have seen how the long fight against ignorance ended with the triumphant acceptance of the principle of evolution in the nineteenth century," and that, by extension, "eugenics is but the practical application of that principle." This triumph over ignorance presumably had set the stage for a golden age of eugenics, where there lay a "hope that the twentieth century will . . . be known in [the] future as the century when the eugenic ideal was accepted as part of the creed of civilization." There is the further suggestion, frightening in light of later developments in a national socialist Germany, that the proper application of eugenics would be linked with a state's power and prestige: "The nation which first takes this great work thoroughly in hand will surely not only win in all matters of international competition, but will be given a place of honour in the history of the world." 29

Evidently, all this rhetoric was lost on French Canadians in Quebec. The year 1912 also saw Carrie Derrick embroiled in the Montreal debate over eugenics. Derrick, professor of botany at McGill and prominent local feminist, was also something of a crusader for the eugenic cause. 30 Derrick was adamant about her position and, in fact, "she was even bold enough to lecture Sir Lorimer Gouin, prime minister of Quebec in the era of very large families, on—of all subjects—birth control." For Catholic French Canadians, this was a taboo subject, such that, "after that interview, the prime minister is said to have exclaimed: 'Elle m'a tellement fait rougir, cette vieille fille de McGill!' (How she made me blush, that old maid from McGill!)." 31 Prudishness and sexism aside, the prime minister's comments reflect an unwillingness to approach the subject seriously, so unacceptable were such ideas among French Canadians at the time.

Derrick, however, had long been a supporter of eugenics, and lectured widely on the subject. In 1910 she gave a lecture on "heredity and environment" to the Montreal Natural History Society in the Assembly Hall of the downtown YMCA. 32 This was only the first of many times
that she gave her prepared “heredity and environment” speech, perhaps one of the more notable times being in 1912, the same year as her encounter with the prime minister, when she spoke in front of the American Physical Association’s Convention in Montreal. This was the association representing the “physical culture” phenomenon that was so popular at the time, and she doubtless found an audience open to her ideas.

Derrick’s most frequent audiences were the local women’s organizations in and around the city, who presented her with a steady supply of opportunities to spread her ideas. This included the full spectrum of theories of degeneration and eugenic control. Presenting an address on “heredity” to the Women’s Literary Society of Olivet Baptist Church in 1914, “she spoke of the growing interest manifested in the study of the relative influence of heredity and environment by those concerned with the improvement of the human race.” Though heredity was a complicated science that seemed to disadvantage humanity, she felt there were reasons for optimism. Instead of being a hopeless theory, she said, “heredity was really a hopeful one, for ultimately it should be found possible to induce individuals capable of proper self-control to hand on to their descendants only good characteristics.” People needed to be told, however, who was at fault for not allowing this positive development to come about: “The public must be taught that the existence of a very large proportion of crime, physical and mental disease, alcoholism and pauperism was attributable to the making of feeble-minded and more or less degenerate persons.” In other words, if only hereditary degeneracy could be eliminated, then one would find that most of the problems in society would be solved. It is here that Derrick mimics the conventional eugenic argument based on the fear of degeneracy and degradation within society, an argument that was quite persuasive among the audience of middle- and upper-class women who were increasingly frightened by what they saw on their city’s streets. Derrick blamed the influence of hereditary forces, suggesting that unfortunate births were the cause of society’s ills.

Derrick not only wanted to inform the public about the problem posed by heredity, she also wanted to take practical and concrete action. In a speech presented at McGill in October of 1914, Derrick tackled the subject of “eugenics and social service.” The talk’s primary focus was schooling, and “after stating that psychological examinations of the pupils in the school were necessary in order to separate those who were ‘backward’ from others,” she went on to create a profile of the family prone to produce mental defectives. Her description sounds disturbingly like a typical French-Canadian family of the time:
They remain at home, and marry young, and have large families. It is a well-known fact that the feebleminded have larger families than normal people. One has to choose between quantity and quality. Early marriages are to be deprecated, as too many children do not make for the highest development of the race.

Derrick further suggested that the problem was quite widespread, saying that "in Montreal there are probably 2,000 families of feeble-minded parents." Her solution for this grave problem was compulsory education for children, something which had yet to be introduced in Quebec, combined with a certain moral virtue among the adult population: "If men and women were taught to be chaste, clean living and high thinking there would be an uplifting of the race without any special legislation." Derrick saw that one of the central keys to this "uplifting" trend was women's education and emancipation. Much of the rest of the speech was devoted to a history of eugenics (from its Galtonian origins on), and an introduction to the notions of negative and positive eugenics. Interestingly, as an example of positive eugenics Derrick cited the English aristocracy as evidence that "good qualities as well as bad 'run in families.'"

As time went on, Derrick continued her crusade, becoming more and more adamant that some formal action be taken. One of her strongest stands on the subject was taken during a lecture on "mental deficiency" given before the Montreal Women's Club in 1915. She told her audience that attempts were being made to take action, and that a "local council of women had endeavored for several years to secure authoritative investigation into the matter and eventually move for the segregation of mental defectives." Derrick continued to blame the problem partly on the lack of a compulsory education system, but this was the first time that she called for such harsh and stringent action. Her proposed solution to the problem was as follows:

It seems obvious that one step towards the improvement of the race might now be taken. At least, persons with serious hereditary defects, who become wards of the state, should be segregated in order that society may be protected from a repetition of hereditary blunders. Such a course may seem expensive, but it would probably prove much more economical eventually than the present method of supporting successive generations of the feeble-minded in jails, penitentiaries and other institutions, ill adapted to dealing with them wisely and humanely.

The call for segregation hardly seems "wise" and "humane"; rather it is a solution designed to make those who feel threatened by the supposed "degeneracy" of society more comfortable. Consider also that there is a danger that definitions of who is "fit" and "unfit" can change and widen. This can be seen in what Derrick said about identifying the men-
tally deficient, suggesting that there was not always easily recognizable external evidence, and that “there are large numbers of apparently normal people in whom feeblemindedness is latent,” and that “the latter are especially dangerous, for feeble-mindedness, like other Mendelian recessive qualities, tends to appear in alternate generations.” Even the apparently normal then could be the purveyors of mental degeneracy, and, by Derrick’s prescription, subject to segregation. Derrick was quite adamant about the seriousness of her cause, and in concluding her speech, called for a royal commission on “mental deficiency;” staffed by physicians, “alienists,” psychologists, and crusaders.37

Derrick’s call for action was reflective of contemporary trends towards more restrictive legislation pertaining to immigrants, and in some cases the mentally unfit or degenerate. The perception of health professionals was colored by class and cultural biases, and affected the way mental deficiency was characterized and perceived. Eleossa Polyzoï describes the state of psychology before World War II, and provides a framework for understanding professionals throughout the pre-war era. She states that “early psychologists often courted Social Darwinism, and Eugenics as well as the Intelligence Test Movement.” All this was in a quest for a greater understanding of the forces which affected human mental development and degeneracy.38 Of particular concern was the immigrant, who represented a threat to the Canadian population, and became a focus of perceived disdain and disorder.39 The psychologists’ concern about the impact of an immigrant influx on the dominant Anglo-Saxon character of the country led the government to develop more restrictive legislation. By all accounts, waves of immigrants moving into the country represented a significant portion of the population: “between 1901 and 1911, Canada’s population increased by 43 percent and the proportion of immigrants in the country as a whole reached 22 percent.” This represented such a change to the character of the Canadian population that it fundamentally altered previous demographic patterns. “In 1911, people of non-British and non-French origin formed 34 percent of the population in Manitoba, 40 percent of the population of Saskatchewan, and 33 percent of the population of Alberta.”40 This change in population was not just occurring in the west; Montreal and Quebec were experiencing their own immigrant wave.

Psychologists did their best to restrict the entry of undesirable immigrants, and their skewed research led to more and more restrictive immigration laws. In 1869, Canada’s first Immigration Act restricted the entry of undesirable immigrants, particularly “lunatics and idiots.” By 1902, amendments to the Immigration Act expanded the restricted list to those immigrants who suffered from any “loathsome, dangerous or infectious disease.” In 1906, a new set of immigration regulations in-
cluded the gross categories of the "feeble-minded, idiots, epileptics, the insane, deaf, dumb, blind, and infirm." Finally, a new Immigration Act in 1910 more clearly distinguished among these restricted classes using three broad categories: the mentally defective, the diseased, and the physically defective. These categories, particularly those involving the mentally defective, were based on the results of various intelligence tests. The development of legislation geared towards the restriction of "feeble-minded" or "mentally defective" individuals represented a clear cultural bias in the selection of appropriate immigrant populations. Poor scores on these types of tests were seen as evidence of inherent mental deficiency. Few bothered to consider the influence of linguistic and cultural handicaps on these scores. Instead, the source of these low scores was often identified as genetic. Various measures, some eugenic in nature, were taken to study the problem of immigrants and their impact on the Canadian population. Again McGill University stood at the forefront of these initiatives—in 1918, the Canadian National Committee for Mental Hygiene was established with Dr. D. F. Martin, a faculty member at McGill, as its first president. While Carrie Derrick never got the Royal Commission on Mental Deficiency that she called for, the National Committee for Mental Hygiene was the next best thing.

Interestingly, immigrants also were used by French-Canadian professionals to direct attention away from themselves in the eugenic battle that was being waged in Quebec. A. H. Desloges, writing about the "immigration of the mentally unfit" in Social Welfare and observing the overcrowded condition of Quebec's mental hospitals, remarked that the blame for this financial and logistical burden was not to be placed on the French Canadian but on the newly arrived immigrant:

If our hospitals are overcrowded, ... it is not because the mentally defective and the feeble-minded are more numerous amongst them than elsewhere, but because the foreign-born element occupy too large a place in our asylums ... If immigration agents had been more scrupulous in the selection of their recruits for this Dominion, there would not be such a large number of foreign-born as inmates of our hospitals.

In the hierarchy of social and cultural stratum, French Canadians could try to place themselves above the immigrant and in so doing deflect negative attention in another direction. While this may have seemed a reasonable strategy, and the role of the immigrant as victim in the eugenic movement seemed clear enough, it was far less the case that this became the focus in Quebec than in the rest of Canada. In Quebec, social hierarchy placed French Canadians in a position where they were prone to be victims of the eugenics movement, with its Anglo-Saxon impetus, just as much as the immigrant.
The Canadian National Committee for Mental Hygiene played a significant role as a clearing house for ideas about mental health after its establishment in 1918. The Committee’s involvement in eugenics, however, was less clear cut. In 1929 the Committee published a series of lectures on the “The Mental Hygiene of Childhood,” which had been held at the University of Toronto and McGill University. The introductory speech in the series, given by the President of the Committee, Charles F. Martin, on the occasion of the 10th annual meeting of the Committee in Toronto in 1928, was on “The Mental Hygiene Movement in Canada,” and traced developments in the field over the last few years. Rather than pay lip-service to eugenic theories where they concerned the problem of mental hygiene, Martin cautioned against putting too much faith in hereditary explanations for mental problems. He said that the cause of mental disorder involved many factors, and that “heredity and predisposition are only two of many factors, and are in themselves indifferent as causes—an established fact which should allay the fears of those with unfortunate family histories.”

Martin doubtless felt obliged to send out a positive message, and not burden the field of mental hygiene with the concerns of heredity. His speech included a suggestion that heredity, or “nature,” was not the driving force behind the problem of mental hygiene. Rather, “nurture” could be just as responsible for passing along bad mental traits to successive generations, and parents could pass along the problem much more through “idiosyncrasies and behavior” than genetics. This cautionary note extended beyond Martin’s speech and reflected the ideas of other speakers in the series. In “The Prevention of Mental and Nervous Disorders,” C. Macfie Campbell, professor of psychiatry at Harvard Medical School, suggested other possible explanations, and cautioned against eugenic views in the mental health profession, particularly given the conclusions they could lead to: “The acceptance of this hypothesis would bring up the question of Eugenics, and the assumption of responsibility on the part of those about to marry for the biological heritage they are likely to give to their children.”

Campbell felt it was necessary to not only shy away from these hereditarian assumptions about the origins of mental disorders, but also to warn his colleagues of the dangers involved in investing too much stock in an individual’s genetic make-up:

There is a danger, however, that one may lay too much stress on the congenital endowment and fail to attribute its due weight to the influence of environment and of training, and to the special circumstances which elicit the mental disorder. The nervous child of a nervous mother may be nervous not because of any inherited defect, but because she has been brought up by a neurotic mother.

Clearly, alternative voices existed out there, but because of the power and popularity of eugenic theories these men were forced to address the
question of heredity in their lectures. Even among their opponents, eugenic ideas could not be ignored. And so, it seems most appropriate to ask, how did those who would seem to be truly resistant to the notion of eugenics, the French Canadians, react?

THE FRENCH-CANADIAN RESPONSE

Morally and ideologically, it was the doctrine of the Roman Catholic Church which was the most significant determining factor in encouraging French-Canadian resistance to the idea of eugenics. Certainly with respect to the fundamental differences between French and English Canadians, it is religion, after language, which is the most distinguishing element—and where eugenics is concerned, religion was quite obviously far more important than language. In fact, the arguments of eugenists were "structural inversions" of the Catholic position. In place of ideas like charity, dogma, and human rights, eugenists substituted state support for the "fit," a cult of "efficiency," and increased state control of a variety of social functions.49 Officially, however, the church was reticent about committing itself to any concrete position on the subject. As one observer has mentioned, the church was guarded in its response to eugenics, adopting a cautious "wait and see attitude." It gave the movement time to evolve before officially passing judgment—mention of eugenics was first made in church documents in a papal encyclical on the subject of Christian marriage written at the end of 1930.50 The main line of argument against eugenics surrounded the notion of birth control, which in the view of the church, was against the law of nature and the law of God.51 As far as the idea of positive eugenics was concerned, there was little in church doctrine that stood against it. Quite the contrary was evident, since the encouragement of human fertility was a by-product of church law restricting the use of any form of contraception. Two other church documents also dealt with eugenics in this period, both of them coming from what was known as the Holy See: recognized more formally as the Suprema Sacra Congregatio Sancti Officii. The first of these, issued in March 1931, condemned certain forms of eugenics.52 The second statement on the subject dealt with the legitimacy, in the eyes of the church, of sterilization. This decree, which also came from the Holy See, was issued in February of 1940. Church condemnation of direct sterilization had already been seen before, in May of 1895, when the Holy See declared the immorality of any surgical operation whose final aim was the sterilization of a woman.53 The decree of 1940 was far more comprehensive and explicit, and included a denunciation of all surgical procedures, temporary or permanent, involving men or women, intended to sterilize the individual involved. This specific condemnation of sterilization processes followed on the heels of the declaration
of 1931, which denounced eugenics, but made no specific mention of any particular procedure. The declaration of 1940 was meant to be that much more explicit.

Beyond the specific religious condemnations of eugenics, it is also worth looking at the spirit in which the two realms clash. In brief, one must ask if (and how) the morality of eugenics, with its notion of human improvement, measured up or harmonized with the moral essence of Catholicism. One excellent way to get a sense of the Catholic reaction and the unique response of a non-English-speaking Catholic country is by looking at eugenics in France. Arguably, one could say that France and francophone Quebec share a similar reaction to the science based on similar cultural assumptions. While this cultural parallel is not a perfect match, it can nevertheless provide a useful and instructive comparison.

The French had a well-developed eugenics movement quite early on in the century, and a formal French Eugenics Society was created in 1912. The Society was quite active before the onset of World War I; monthly meetings were held for a time and they published a monthly journal, *Eugénique.* Eugenists in France had many of the same concerns as those in Britain or Canada; social decay, the urban poor, and the three-pronged evils of tuberculosis, alcoholism, and feeble-mindedness. The difference was to be found in the strong religious opposition of Catholicism, which challenged the eugenics movement in France and created divisions among its proponents. The Catholic response to eugenics was not, however, just a matter of simple opposition, and eugenics only created a problem for the church when it came into conflict with religious doctrine. This led to a situation where the church would "pick and choose" based on a given eugenic measure's compliance with Catholic doctrine. This was reflected in the words of the Jesuit theologian René Brouillard, who in April 1930 wrote, "In principle, Catholic morality does not condemn all eugenic science." Differences occurred, he said, when one "passes into the realm of practice and forgets that man the animal is not the total man." Of the two most commonly mentioned eugenic measures, he found sterilization "absolutely repugnant to Catholic morality." On the regulation of marriage, however, he had a more open attitude. In fact, Brouillard was not reluctant to discuss eugenics or above trying to find a way to incorporate aspects of it into church teachings. In this he was not unlike many other French churchmen who, in May 1930, held a national congress in Marseille devoted entirely to the subject of the church and eugenics. The attitude of most at the congress was summarized in a final address by Monseigneur Dubourg, the archbishop of Marseille, who concluded:
If the goal of the new science [eugenics] is, as the name indicates, to assure good offspring, it can only inspire our sympathy and find in Christian morality an auxiliary, even a very precious guide, because we profess that if God commanded man to multiply, He did not wish him to multiply poorly.\textsuperscript{57}

This conciliatory attitude would change after the papal encyclical of 1930. After the encyclical, the church, armed with a doctrine issued from on high, was much less compliant about the various eugenic measures experts sought to institute through legislation.

THEORETICAL ARGUMENTS AGAINST EUGENICS

The question still remains as to how the Catholic Church interpreted eugenics along moral lines, particularly after the encyclical of 1930. More importantly, it is necessary to get a sense of how this message was received by the French-Canadian population in Canada. As a means to understand what all the church arguments were and how they were received, one text in particular, \textit{Les tendances eugénistes au Canada} by Hervé Blais, provides a comprehensive source for the church point of view. As a theologian, Blais had an excellent grasp of all the main church ideas, and summarized the moral arguments against the eugenics movement quite ably. It should be noted that, just as in France, the Catholic Church in Quebec found no problems with the spirit of the eugenic goal, particularly before 1930. Certainly, in Blais's mind, science and religion were perfectly compatible. Problems lay in the execution of eugenics and in the lack of well-developed scientific evidence to support it, and, as Blais suggests, "the conflict is born of a hasty and unjustified attempt to translate into practice theories still lacking in scientific proof."\textsuperscript{58}

While the church was resistant to certain practices within the spectrum of eugenics, it was not necessarily at odds with the whole idea. Rather than argue against eugenics universally, and seem like an ultra-conservative, anti-modern force, the church was much better served, at least in the mind of this particular author, if it resisted only those eugenic elements that ran completely contrary to Catholic ethics and doctrine. Blais found two theoretical assumptions on which eugenics was based that he found impossible to tolerate: materialism and an inherent racism.

Materialism, in the sense that it applied to the eugenics movement, was an obsession with the physical and mental improvement of humanity without any realization that man embodies a third aspect which science in general and eugenics in particular ignore: the spiritual. This had, in Blais's opinion, taken the burden of furthering and advancing humankind out of the individual's hand and placed it within the domain of science. Furthermore, it had belittled the power of the human
spirit and in Blais's mind represented one of the great tragedies that modern secular society had brought:

If the supreme ambition of man on this earth were nothing more than to contribute, with all the resources and energies at his disposal, to the acquisition of physical well-being, he would have quickly disposed of his dignity; unfortunately, making eugenics nothing more than a science of human husbandry, it is well known, has been a sad 20th century accomplishment.59

The reality of the Catholic worldview that eugenics overlooks is the nature of a human's future destiny, of an afterlife in a spiritual realm. In the end, all that eugenics truly accomplishes is an improvement of one's life in the mortal world. This has to pale in comparison to the spiritual existence that will follow, where eugenics has no relevance. Eugenics also proves contentious in the eyes of the church because of its connection to racist doctrine, which runs contrary to its beliefs for obvious reasons; in the eyes of God, all men are equal. This assumes a certain ideal, but in the realm of ethics and ideology, is arguably relevant. When one goes beyond ethics to consider the practical aspects of eugenics that the church opposes, the list of differences begins to grow. It was this "double-barreled" difference of opinion that really put the church at odds with eugenic science:

Eugenics poses a dual difficulty: firstly a moral and legal problem concerning the conformity of its programs with moral law or the rights of individuals or of society; secondly, a scientific problem concerning the true value of eugenic measures as a legitimate means to achieve a specific goal. If eugenic programs, which are often immoral, are in addition arbitrary to the point of being risky, then it is easy to understand the extreme caution of the Catholic position.60

Thus there were two rationales, one moral and the other practical, from which to argue against the feasibility of eugenics.

The practice that created the largest division between the Catholic Church and eugenics was sterilization. According to the church, sterilization was never a viable or feasible option, unless it was a matter of life and death for the person involved. Certainly it was never going to be approved of solely for the sake of "improving the race." The church's resistance to sterilization of any form cannot be overstated; consider that in the 1960s, long after the real popularity of the eugenics movement had for all intents and purposes come and gone, the clergy in Quebec continued to argue against the immorality of sterilization. In fact, it constituted a significant theological debate at the time. Certainly Catholicism was a powerful force of resistance to sterilization in a number of countries outside of Canada.61 This resistance was particularly relevant in America after 1927, when the Buck vs. Bell decision heightened the focus on sterilization in discussions of eugenics.62 In England, where eu-
Eugenic ideas first took root, the 1930s saw significant Catholic resistance in discussions about the introduction of sterilization laws, eugenic or otherwise. This resistance was led by Letitia Fairfield, who in 1935 wrote a powerful counterargument to the sterilization laws being considered in *The Case against Sterilization*. Fairfield felt the interest in eugenic sterilization had gone too far: “This notion of preventing needless suffering and improving the race by sterilizing the members of so-called ‘tainted stocks’ has become a veritable religion with many well-meaning persons who have lost all sense of spiritual values.”

Trained as a doctor and lawyer, her most powerful appeals nonetheless turned to Catholicism:

Already the specialists in mental disorders who have few illusions about the possible value of sterilization have been stampeded by the doctrinaire eugenicists and social reformers into a qualified support mainly on the ground that it can “do no harm.” Catholics who see the dangers of even the smallest surrender of principle more clearly, will have to bear the brunt of the fight but may reckon on the support of non-Catholic fellow-countrymen when the full implications of the proposal are better understood.

Obviously, French-Canadian Catholics like Blais were not alone in drawing attention to what they saw as the evils of eugenic sterilization. For Blais, like Fairfield, the argument against sterilization was made on the grounds of practicality as much as anything else. In his mind, the ills that prompted the call for a eugenic sterilization program, like alcoholism, prostitution, and feeblemindedness, were not going to be stopped by preventing their genetic transmission. To Blais, these were problems of society, not heredity. This conclusion, he felt, left the door open for another possible solution to the social problems that seemed to constantly plague humanity, and prompted Blais to conceive a rough blueprint for a kind of moral and spiritual eugenics guided by Catholic doctrine. He saw this solution both in terms of “positive” and “negative” eugenic measures, and incorporated within it notions of spiritual growth, legislation of family affairs and counseling to decrease the number of children in families in order that the individual child’s quality of life might be improved. His idea involved not so much eugenics, but a kind of Christian social planning system. Blais shied away from a purely scientific and objective approach to eugenics, preferring to argue on the grounds of morality and ethics. His conclusion about eugenics in Canada was not a positive one, and he not only accurately summed up the negative tone of the eugenics movement that dominated the Canadian milieu, he also convincingly questioned whether the science would actually be effective in bringing about widespread social change.
Other theologians made similar arguments, as in the case of M. C. Forest, who wrote an article in *Revue Dominicaine* in 1930 entitled "Que faut-il penser de l'eugénique?" Forest noted the growing popularity of eugenics, particularly in the United States, where "it has risen, a little at a time, to the level of a cult."\(^{67}\) He did not, however, condemn eugenics entirely, instead arguing that "what still invites the defiance of Catholics is that eugenists are too often the propagators of immoral ideas like euthanasia and birth control."\(^{68}\) Forest then went on to outline the various elements of a eugenic program, from sterilization to marriage laws. Of sterilization he had little that was positive to say, noting the danger involved in classifying those who are "fit" and "unfit":

It is not easy to trace the dividing line between a normal child and one whose spirit is weak. In respect to classifications that are made between the various feeble-minded, they are purely theoretical and remain more or less unusable in practice. A law, like the one regarding forced sterilization, is fatally near to the odious and arbitrary. From the scientific point of view, and the moral point of view, it is a bad law.\(^{69}\)

In fact, Forest thought that such laws were so inappropriate that he saw internment as a viable alternative to sterilization: "Segregation will do everything sterilization would do, and it will do it without violating the inalienable rights of the individual and upsetting the moral sense of the community."\(^{70}\)

In the end, Forest's argument was not against the ideals of eugenics, but their implementation. He felt the state should be more responsive to the spiritual needs of the community, and not simply apply secular solutions to the social problems of modern life:

The state can and should cooperate with the church. It should redouble its effort in the fight against alcoholism and prostitution. It must organize industrial farms and schools for the segregation of the abnormal and the degenerate that it wants to prevent from reproducing. Moreover, it must oppose all measures, like sterilization, birth control, and marriage restrictions, that can only weaken, without any benefit, the spirituality of the people.\(^{71}\)

Clearly, the eugenic solution was unacceptable to Forest, and though he saw some merit in certain measures aimed at social control, he was universally opposed to most of the ideas that one would identify as eugenic on religious grounds.

Interestingly, there is a singular instance of a secular French-Canadian response to eugenics, to be found in *Revue trimestrielle*.\(^{72}\) A pediatrician from the University of Montreal, Gaston Lapierre, took it upon himself to present an argument against eugenics without resorting to religious doctrine. Nonetheless, his tone is noticeably wary, and he begins his article with the suggestion that eugenics is little more than
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a Nazi plot. Lapierre’s main line of attack revolves around the futility of birth control as a eugenic measure. He argues that “birth control did not represent an amplification of human capabilities (like glasses), but a perversion of a human function.” Lapierre’s article is clearly anti-eugenic, but he also asks some very poignant questions about basic eugenic notions. He is particularly wary of terminology, which was felt to be objective and technical by the eugenists of the time, but has a decidedly subjective and arbitrary ring to the modern ear. He asks questions about these terms that no eugenist ever would: “What does it mean to be feebleminded? Can it be measured with I.Q. tests? Or disabilities?” Lapierre also clearly felt that eugenics posed a threat to French Canadians; poor and with a tendency to have large families, their social circumstances were ready-made for victimization. Interestingly, despite all the solid arguments made on moral grounds, Lapierre fell back on arguing against eugenics on its own terms. He felt forced to resort to scientific arguments in bringing home his point, and devoted a significant part of the article to highlighting the futility and the lack of real effectiveness of sterilization as a eugenic measure. In the end, he put forth a strong dissenting voice, accented in both scientific and moral terms.  

CONCLUSION

Undoubtedly, eugenics had its origin in the English Victorian class struggle. Although new scholarship is starting to challenge this old assumption, Britain nonetheless persists as the most telling social background in which eugenics came into being. Thus, when the science of eugenics is transferred across the Atlantic to a pseudo-colonial milieu in English Canada, many of the social and cultural assumptions remain constant in the transition. Combined with influences from the United States, such as the progressive movement and the concern about immigration, eugenics in Canada mutated to become another species with a similar form. While it is true that eugenics in Canada was born as a response to the tremendous immigrant influx into the country early in the century, it was also just as truly a product of the Anglo-Saxon middle-class struggle to hold onto its position in the world. This was the eugenics of Ontario and the Canadian west, a science of social order and control, underpinned with racist notions. In Montreal and Quebec, however, eugenics was not nearly as popular. Certainly it never went so far as it did in the prairies and British Columbia, where sterilization and premarital examination laws were passed in the 1920s. Looking at the logistics of the situation there seems no reason why eugenics was not more popular in Quebec. Statistics at the time gave all the indications that public health and poverty were significant problems in the province and improvement lagged far behind the rest of the country. Using
infant mortality statistics one can see, for example, the stark contrast between Quebec and Ontario. In 1921, the infant mortality rate (per 1,000 births) was 178 in Montreal and 92 in Toronto. More than a question of geography, these statistics reflected fundamental social differences between the two provinces. As an example of this, consider that infant mortality in Ottawa in 1921 was 115, but right across the river in Hull the same year it was 240. Canada as a whole had an infant mortality rate of 115, but in the province of Quebec the rate was 142. As a comparison infant mortality in Britain was 78 and in the United States the average was 87. Certainly if one believes, as many did at the time, that “the infant mortality rate is the best index of the social and moral conscience and sanitary status of a given community or nation,” then something was very wrong here. By all indications, especially if one considers the connections between public health and eugenics, the movement should have been much more popular in Quebec.

Why then, was eugenics in fact not more popular in Quebec than in the rest of Canada? The short answer involves the French Canadians, whose depressed standard of living as compared to many English Canadians led to the skewed infant mortality statistics. It was these people who resisted eugenic ideas, more for cultural reasons than for any formal difficulties that they had with the science behind the movement. In fact, French-Canadian resistance to eugenics along scientific lines is a non-sequitur, and never really existed. This article presents French-Canadian resistance to eugenics as a largely religious phenomenon because there are no real incidences of resistance to eugenics within the scientific realm. One of the reasons for this is that French-Canadian science was comparatively late in getting established and institutionalized. Compared to the English tradition led by McGill University, the French-Canadian scientific community had little to offer. The journal of L’ACFAS (L’Association Canadienne-Française pour l’avancement des sciences)—Revue trimestrielle—made only one significant mention of eugenics. This leaves only the theological arguments against eugenics, which in the context of the Catholic Church are widespread and well-publicized. Opponents of eugenics found a voice in journals such as the Catholic Register, Catholic World, and Western Catholic, and only in Quebec did numerous writers subject hereditary ideas to close scrutiny and analysis. These arguments have all been presented in detail, but the question still remains as to how many French Canadians actually listened to what the clergy had to say and followed church doctrine. Since eugenics never achieved the popularity in Quebec that it had in other parts of the country there must be a connection. Still, was it piety or ignorance that led French Canadians to turn their back on eugenics? The answer, in all probability, was a little bit of both. As Blais says in Tendances:
To tell the truth, the province of Quebec has to this point given to eugenic sterilization only an academic interest; with the exception of a few basic writings, one could say that our public opinion doesn’t represent a militant force for or against eugenic sterilization. Authentic French culture and social philosophy have ranked this question among problems already resolved in advance. Things aren’t going the same way in the rest of the country. English public opinion, largely Protestant, has for a long time been taken with the affair. Its cultural milieu and ideals have made it big news and have won it some very influential sympathizers. In Protestant milieus, eugenic sterilization is supported by the Eugenics Society of Canada, applied by the imposing representation of the medical profession and happily bulwarked by various social service agencies.  

In stark contrast to the lukewarm reception eugenics received in the French-Canadian community stands the popularity it had among intellectuals and academics at McGill. The McGill professors acted as disseminators and pundits, pushing eugenics as the newest product of a “golden age” of science in turn-of-the-century Canada. This was doubtless part of the emerging phenomenon of expertise that was so prevalent in the late nineteenth and early twentieth centuries. Like so many other professions, the McGill professors, most of whom were formally trained as medical doctors, were benefiting from a growing respect for the opinions of trained experts. They used their greater importance as medical professionals to introduce ideas to the public through newspapers and by lecturing. They were members of what Robert Weibe has called “a new middle-class” of college- and university-educated professionals. Not only were the McGill professors part of this emerging class, but more importantly, so were many of the people who attended their lectures and read the newspapers which published their writings. French Canadians did not share the same language with these people, and were not attending the same lectures and reading the same newspapers. Perhaps one of the other reasons why French Canadians did not respond to these people was that they were not undergoing this same “class-evolution” at the time. Only much later, in the Quiet Revolution of the 1960s, would French Canadians experience a similar change in class composition. 

In an era where reproductive and genetic issues are in the forefront and hotly debated, the issues discussed in this article seem of particular relevance. Religion is a force of conservatism in the modern discourse, but as science continues to push unconsciously at the boundaries of basic human issues and freedoms, religion may eventually come to be a lone dissenting voice. Without any strong guiding principles, science proceeds along on its objectifying and amoral path, blind to the human wreckage it may leave behind. Certainly in the case of Quebec and Montreal, Catholics, partly unintentionally, stemmed the eugenic tide.
and provided resistance to a movement whose impact was striking in other milieus where religion was less of an impediment.

NOTES

1 While French Canadians, as we will see, were far more likely to be resistant to eugenic ideas, they nonetheless shared the idea of scientifically distinguishable races with the rest of the Western world. The power of race theory (and by extension racism) extended far beyond the sway of eugenics. In Quebec it was tied to French Canadian nationalism, a powerful force early in the century. This distinct notion of race almost always incorporated a sense of racial superiority, organized in some sort of hierarchical system—other races were invariably lesser or superior, never simply different. These arguments about racial distinction, while they sometimes seemed to be little more than rhetoric, were also backed by a certain scientific respectability.


3 For an exploration of this notion of "degeneration" and its historical context see Daniel Pick, Faces of Degeneration: A European Disorder, c. 1848-1918 (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1989). Pick sees degeneration as contrasted with progress and attributes much of its early popularity to the ideas surrounding Cesare Lombroso's criminal science. Eventually, there is a move away from the anthropometry and physiology of Lombroso and degeneration becomes linked to the heredity of the urban poor. This shift in emphasis is what connects degeneration to eugenics. In Gareth Stedman Jones, Outcast London: A Study of the Relationship between Classes in Victorian Society (Harmondsworth: Penguin Books, 1976) degeneration is seen as evolving from demoralization. Jones sees a turning point in the economic crisis in London in the 1880s and shows how the tradition of charity and the poor law gives way to a theory of urban degeneration applied to the poor—in essence, poverty becomes an endemic condition affecting large masses of the population. Thus, poverty and attendant notions of degeneration become problems to be solved by the state, and not through philanthropy or charity as they had been. The ideas that Laquerrière borrowed from past trends in European medicine can be seen in Nancy Stepnan, "Biological Degeneration: Races and Proper Places," and Eric T. Carlson, "Medicine and Degeneration: Theory and Praxis," in J. Edward Chamberlin and Sander L. Gilman, eds., Degeneration the Dark Side of Progress (New York: Columbia University Press, 1985), p. 97-144.

4 This notion of "two solitudes" has been explored in numerous historical contexts, but very rarely with respect to science. For an excellent pair of articles which looks at this duality in engineering see Yakov M. Rabkin and J. Ann Lévi-Lloyd, "Technology and Two Cultures: One Hundred Years of Engineering Education in Montreal," Minerva, 22 (1984): 67-95; and Yves Gingras and Robert Gagnon, "Engineering Education in Montreal: Social Constraints and Opportunities," Minerva, 26 (1988): 53-65. Both articles address the issue of the different nature of science education in English and French in Quebec around the turn of the century, which also figures into the consideration of eugenics.


7 The importance of class and birthrates in the British eugenics movement is described in Geoffrey R. Searle, "Eugenics and Class," and Bernard Norton, "Psychologists and Class," in Charles Webster, ed., Biology, Medicine and Society, 1840-1940 (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1981), p. 212-42, 289-341. Searle's article contains an appendix which describes the different "types" of eugenist and shows the many and various reasons people became involved or associated with the movement. The con-


10 McLaren, Our Own Master Race, p. 27.

11 Alexander Peter Reid, "Stirpiculture" or the Ascent of Man (Halifax: T. C. Allen, 1890), p. 4-5.

12 Alexander Peter Reid, Poverty Superseded: A New Political Economy (Halifax: Gladwin, 1891), p. 3-16.

13 Reid also has been linked to the early welfare state. See Colin D. Howell, "Medical Science and Social Criticism: Alexander Peter Reid and the Ideological Origins of the Welfare State in Canada," in C. David Naylor, ed., Canadian Health Care and the State (Montreal: McGill-Queen's University Press, 1992), p. 16-37. Howell, it seems, has generously overlooked Reid's intimate relationship with the eugenics movement in lauding him as a reformer. It should be noted that the link between Progressivism and eugenics has long been fundamental to understanding the popularity of the eugenics movement. Mark Haller set the tone writing about eugenics in the American context in the 1960s when in Eugenics: Hereditary Attitudes in American Thought (New Brunswick, N.J.: Rutgers University Press, 1963), p. 5, he said: "Despite the conservative implications of hereditary thought, eugenics was closely related to the other reform movements of the Progressive Era and drew its support from many of the same persons. It began as scientific reform in an age of reform."

14 Pickens, Eugenics and the Progressives, p. 108.

15 This idea, mentioned in n.1, is also very ably described in Stephen Jay Gould, The Mismeasure of Man (New York: W. W. Norton, 1981).


19 Adami, J. George Adami, p. 43-44.

20 Gazette (Montreal), 17 November 1905, p. 4

21 Montreal Star, 9 June 1910, p. 4

22 Adami, J. George Adami, p. 45.

23 Adami, J. George Adami, p. 45-46.


26 Adami, Medical Contributions, p. 161.

27 Adami, Medical Contributions.


In many ways Carrie Derrick was a precursor to the more well-known Helen Macmurchy, who summarized the arguments for and against eugenic sterilization more than a decade after Derrick’s speeches and lectures. See Helen Macmurchy, *Sterilization? Birth Control? A Book for Family Welfare and Safety* (Toronto: Macmillan, 1934).


Gazette (Montreal), 23 February 1910, p. 3.

Daily Witness (Montreal), 23 February 1912, p. 4.

Montreal Herald, 14 February 1914, p. 3.

Montreal Star, 24 October 1914, p. 3.

It is also a solution that was first suggested in the late nineteenth century by Barnett and Booth in England. See Jones, *Outcast London*, p. 304.

Gazette (Montreal), 23 February 1910, p. 3.

Montreal Herald, 14 February 1914, p. 3.

Montreal Star, 24 October 1914, p. 3.

It is also a solution that was first suggested in the late nineteenth century by Barnett and Booth in England. See Jones, *Outcast London*, p. 304.

Gazette (Montreal), 21 December 1915, p. 6


This aspect of Canadian eugenics was heavily influenced by American approaches. American xenophobia and racism, which was inculcated into genetic thought and in turn affected immigration policy, can be seen as typical of the period in question. Sources which reflect these notions include Charles B. Davenport, *Heredity in Relation to Eugenics* (New York: Holt, 1911); and Madison Grant, *The Passing of the Great Race or the Racial Basis of European History* (New York: Scribner, 1922), which mourns America’s Anglo-Saxon/Nordic past. This all culminated in the more restrictive immigration laws introduced in the Johnson Bill in 1924. A good source discussing the eugenic justification for the introduction of the bill is Kenneth Ludmerer, *Genetics and American Society: A Historical Appraisal* (Baltimore, Md.: Johns Hopkins University Press, 1972).

Polyzoi, “Psychologists’ Perceptions,” p. 56.


Polyzoi, “Psychologists’ Perceptions,” p. 61. See also Gould, *The Mismeasure of Man*.


Campbell, “Prevention.”


In Louisiana, the long battle (1924-32) to introduce eugenic sterilization laws faced stiff resistance from the Roman Catholic Church. This in contrast to the rest of the deep south, where predominantly Protestant populations were not resistant to eugenics on religious grounds. A description of this unique American example can be found in Edward J. Larson, *Sex, Race and Science: Eugenics in the Deep South* (Baltimore: Johns Hopkins University Press, 1995), p. 107-15. In 1930s Germany the Catholic clergy stood firm against the sterilization laws of Nazi eugenics even when faced with the threat of reprisals. According to many in the clergy, the question was not so clear cut as it was to the eugenists. Many in the clergy challenged eugenic assumptions, particularly in the context of internal communications within Catholic institutions. See Claudia Koonz, “Ethical Dilemmas and Nazi Eugenics: Single-Issue Dissent in Religious Contexts,” *Journal of Modern History*, 64 (December 1992): S20426. For a broad background of eugenics in the German context see Paul Weindling, *Health, Race and German Politics between National Unification and Nazism, 1870-1945* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1989).


Fairfield, *Case against Sterilization*, p. 24. See also Letitia Fairfield, *Catholics and the German Law of Sterilization* (London: Burns, Oates & Washbourne, 1938), reprinted in *The Catholic Medical Guardian*, and “Catholics and the Public Medical Services,” in *The Catholic Social Yearbook*, 1930 (Oxford: The Catholic Social Guild, 1930). The latter source contains a forward by Rev. T. A. Newsome, who echoes Blais resoundingly: “There are false eugenics as well as true eugenics. The reformer who forgets the immortality of the human soul and regards this world not as the threshold of eternity but as the place circumscribing all the hopes of the human race, who ignores the existence of divine law and, when convenient, human rights, is apt to take what are imagined to be short cuts to a desired end” (p. 2).


Forest, “Que faut-il penser de l’eugénique,” p. 280.

Forest, “Que faut-il penser de l’eugénique,” p. 283.


Perhaps one of the only other secular responses in Quebec was voiced by the psychiatrist Antonio Barbeau, who found a public audience on radio and by lecturing. See Antonio Barbeau, *Sous les plantanes de cos* (Montreal: Bernard Valiquette, 1942), p. 22-80.


For the specifics of legislation in Alberta, see Institute of Law Research and Reform, Edmonton, Alberta, *Sterilization Decisions: Minors and Mentally Incompetent Adults*, Re-


77 For recent treatments of twentieth-century French-Canadian science and the organizational problems that it faced see Yves Gingras, Pour l’avancement des sciences: Histoire de l’ACFAS, 1923-1993 (Québec: Boreal, 1994); and Luc Chartrand, Raymond Duchesne, and Yves Gingras, Histoires des sciences au Québec (Québec: Boreal, 1987).

78 McLaren, Our Own Master Race, p. 151.

79 Blais, Les tendances, p. 84-85.

80 For an extensive discussion of the move towards professionalization and the emergence of a new middle class, see Weibe, The Search for Order.

81 Once this transition was complete in Quebec, secular institutions took on a greater role vis-à-vis the church. In November of 1980, the Comité sur la Stérilization de la Personne Déficience Mentale approved a sterilization policy for mental defectives provided they or their guardians consented. In an earlier time, church pressure would have made such a law impossible (Office des Personne Handicapées du Québec, “Position de L’Office des Personne Handicapées du Quebec, La controle de la Fertilité des Personnes ayant une Dificience Intellectuel” [Quebec City: Office des Personne Handicapées du Quebec, 1980]).