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Cet été qui chantait: a thematic analysis

by

M. Timothy J. Marks

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The undersigned certify that they have read, and recommend to the Faculty of Graduate Studies for acceptance, a thesis entitled, "Cet été qui chantait: a thematic analysis" submitted by M. Timothy J. Marks in partial fulfillment of the requirements for the degree of Master of Arts.

Richard M. Chadbourne

Supervisor, Richard M. Chadbourne
French, Italian and Spanish

Glen W. Campbell

Glen W. Campbell
French, Italian and Spanish

Victor Ramraj

Victor Ramraj,
English

Date: Feb 6, 1992

Abstract

Cet été qui chantait, Gabrielle Roy's eighth literary effort, is considered by most critics to be an unworthy successor to her previous works, an anomaly in an otherwise relatively cohesive oeuvre.

In-depth analysis of this work's principal themes, and of its unified structure, demonstrates that Cet été qui chantait is far more than a disparate grouping of récits: it is, in fact, at least as cohesive a whole as the sum of its predecessors. Furthermore, it can be claimed that Cet été qui chantait recapitulates the themes of those previous works; in this work, those same themes emerge to illustrate the importance of harmonious relationships to the survival of humanity within nature, and to offer a perspective regarding the author's vision of paradise.

These factors combine to produce a work which is far more philosophically oriented than would appear at first glance.

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Introduction

Gabrielle Roy is considered to be one of Canada's foremost French language writers. Although most recognized for her initial novel Bonheur d'Occasion, this author produced a variety of literary works, the eighth of which is Cet été qui chantait, a collection of anecdotes relating primarily to her summer residence in Charlevoix County in Quebec. Many critics believe that this particular work is inferior to her other efforts--that it is a trite, banal little book with no real literary merit. As a result, Cet été qui chantait has been largely neglected, even dismissed, by critics of Roy's work; there is, therefore, very little evaluative material related to it.

My initial reaction to Cet été qui chantait was not unlike that of many of those same critics. In fact, had I not been required to present a synopsis of it to my fellow graduate students, I might not have read it a second time. Subsequent readings have led me to believe that this work is in fact of greater literary significance than I had previously thought. Analysis of the principal themes of Cet été qui chantait, as well as of the thematic interaction and of its overall structural unity has served to convince me of the value of this work to the oeuvre of Gabrielle Roy. An examination of François Ricard's model regarding the thematic alternance of Gabrielle Roy's works from Bonheur d'Occasion

to Cet été qui chantait provides interesting insights into the role of the latter as a recapitulation of its predecessors, further underlining the merit of this seemingly frivolous divertissement.

Cet été qui chantait represents a significant step in the espousing of a philosophy, at once very personal, yet with social import, relating to the attainment of peace, freedom, environmental equilibrium, in short, a kind of utopia.

Chapter 1--Critical Misunderstanding of the Work: a Survey

Gabrielle Roy's Cet été qui chantait is undoubtedly the single most ignored work of the author's corpus. Critical review is remarkably limited. Critical analysis is even more obscure. Indeed, many critics seem to have dismissed this work completely, even when discussing 'the works of Gabrielle Roy'; for example, Marc Gagné makes hardly a mention of Cet été qui chantait in his in-depth study, Visages de Gabrielle Roy. One could conclude from this reaction a number of possibilities: that the work merits no attention seems unlikely . . . would Gabrielle Roy have written such a work? that the work is far too profound to be understood is equally unlikely; that the work represents a departure from previous literary accomplishments is undeniable:

Malgré son écriture passéiste et baroque,
Cet été qui chantait constitue une étape
 importante dans l'évolution littéraire de
 Roy. Ce recueil marque, en effet, une
 rupture: l'auteure délaisse la technique
 narrative médiatisée par personnage
 interposé . . . pour faire coïncider le
 regard du lecteur avec celui de l'agent
 romanesque, à la fois auteur-narrateur et
 personnage. (Marcotte and Schonberger 915)

In many cases, including the more positive reviews, Cet

été qui chantait remains largely misunderstood by critics and analysts who have neither treated it with the respect it merits nor ventured deeply enough into the world put forth by Gabrielle Roy in this work, a world which is far less imaginary than would appear at first glance. A significant exception to this trend comes from the work of François Ricard, who is recognized as one of the foremost literary scholars of the works of Gabrielle Roy. (Other exceptions include Paul Socken and, to a lesser extent, Paula Gilbert-Lewis.) It is interesting to note that those critics who accept the literary merit of Cet été qui chantait are the same ones who have already spent countless hours analysing Roy's other works. Perhaps their knowledge of the other works has enabled them to develop a greater sense of the overall unity of Gabrielle Roy's oeuvre.

A summary of the available literary criticism will show its limited and superficial nature. (Relevant critical analysis will be incorporated into subsequent chapters as appropriate.) Much of the critical work read had no mention of Cet été qui chantait; consequently, it will not figure in this thesis.

Gabrielle Roy II; dossier de presse is a collection of newspaper articles published between 1946 and 1985 which relate to Gabrielle Roy and her works. The most remarkable feature of this collection is the near-absence of any references to Cet été qui chantait. The book review by Paul Gay was the only article devoted solely to this work (13).

(This book review will be treated separately.) In the articles which address more than one component of the overall work of Gabrielle Roy, Cet été qui chantait is frequently completely absent, or given only fleeting notice. In his article "La merveille du retour à la source", an article concerning primarily Ces enfants de ma vie but connecting aspects of previous works, Réjean Robidoux's only mention of Cet été qui chantait is to say "il me semblait sentir . . . l'aboutissement assez banal du pur élan acquis" (21). An article written by Victor-Lévy Beaulieu which treats the corpus of Roy's works to 1974 referred to Cet été qui chantait as the product of a depleted source of inspiration, of which nothing remained "que ces mots médiocres, bien sûr sincères mais médiocres" (14). This represents all that was found to be relevant from this entire collection of articles.

In Allison Mitcham's The Literary Achievement of Gabrielle Roy, there is but one reference to Cet été qui chantait. In discussing Roy's ecological concerns for all forms of life and their interrelationships, Mitcham quotes (out of context, in my opinion) from the work.

Jean Ethier-Blais seems rather unimpressed by the work. Although he recognizes its soft and gentle tones, its simplicity, in his opinion, nullifies its merit. "Ce n'est pas la voix de l'Abbé Savard . . . C'est plutôt la douce constatation d'un coeur et d'un esprit proches de la réalité des choses" (16). He goes on to say:

J'ai l'impression, après avoir lu les trois

derniers livres de Gabrielle Roy [La montagne secrète, La route d'Altamont, La rivière sans repos], qu'il se prépare, dans la petite maison au bord du fleuve, un grand roman. Les nouvelles, les souvenirs, les croquis de Gabrielle Roy, que sont-ils sinon des jalons psychologiques et esthétiques qui mènent vers une oeuvre plus importante, aux nombreuses ramifications. (15)

François Hébert examines the spiritual nature of Cet été qui chantait in his review. (Spiritual in this context has connotations associated more with organized religion; my use of spiritual in subsequent chapters will relate less to religion than to the concept of unity among living creatures.) From such a perspective, Cet été qui chantait is destined to be less than adequate, even misunderstood:

Les personnages s'effacent au profit du décor, de l'univers, avec lequel l'auteur tente d'entrer en communication. La tentative échoue. La nature garde son secret, et les animaux, qui en sont les porte-parole, qui semblent (ce n'est qu'apparence) si proches de l'auteur, conservent jalousement entre eux le dernier mot de l'énigme. (347)

In the Dictionnaire des oeuvres littéraires du Québec, Hélène Marcotte and Vincent Schonberger affirm that the "thèmes existentialistes se conjuguent d'un conte à l'autre" and that they "relient l'architecture apparemment fragmentée

du recueil en un tout synthétique et cohérent." In discussing the various critical reactions to Cet été qui chantait, the authors claim that it was generally well received, primarily for its "pureté d'expression, son écriture simple et poétique, ainsi que son humour doux et discret" (915).

Paul Gay's review is one of the few positive ones to be found. It seems as if he is able to look beyond the superficial aspects of this work in order to understand some of its more philosophical underpinnings. Unfortunately, he stops short of developing these in any detail; instead, he contents himself with description rather than with analysis. His appreciation for the work, however, seems boundless.

Gilles Cossette, as well, examines this work in greater detail. According to him, although the book has "quelque chose de bénin et de pieux . . . qui le fait un peu ressembler à un manuel scolaire", it elaborates a theme similar to one found in Alexandre Chenevert: "C'est un plaidoyer pour la vie, sous toutes ses formes, même les plus primitives" (49).

What did Gabrielle Roy herself say about this work? In a letter to her sister dated April 29, 1970, she wrote:

Si j'écris jamais un autre livre, ma Bernadette, crois-moi il sera dû en grande partie à ton oeuvre sur moi. Il sortira d'une âme épurée par ton exemple. C'est aussi que tu me souffleras ce qu'il faut dire aux hommes à

propos de la souffrance, à propos de la
séparation, à propos de notre réunion et de
notre retour dans l'amour triomphant. (Lettres
212)

François Ricard notes that this work of which she speaks is,
in fact, Cet été qui chantait, according to the autobiography
La Détresse et l'Enchantement in which Gabrielle Roy herself
writes about Cet été qui chantait:

Et puis, elle [Bernadette] morte, je tâchai
de continuer à lui parler, à essayer du
moins de la retrouver dans le vent, les
arbres, la beauté du monde . . . Cela donnait
Cet été qui chantait, un livre étrange,
j'en conviens, qui, sous une apparence de
légèreté, baigne au fond dans la gravité . . .

Le feu des lucioles, le chant de la
vague, celui des feuillages, le cri d'un
oiseau traversant l'espace, Dédette . . .
m'avait fait voir en ces humbles beautés
un peu de la pulsation du grand songe de
Dieu. Je n'ai fait que tâcher de rendre
ce qu'elle avait éclairé pour moi de son
regard pénétrant. (217)

Paula Gilbert-Lewis recalls the following from her
interview with Gabrielle Roy:

En effet, la prédilection de Gabrielle Roy
pour la campagne et son amour de la nature

transpiraient constamment de ses propos. Elle semblait bien documentée sur la nature bien qu'on lui ait signalé de nombreuses inexactitudes en la matière dans Cet été qui chantait. En vertu du pacte de la fiction, elle revendiquait le droit d'ajouter de ses propres idées aux <<exactitudes>> de la nature. Cependant, elle réfuta fermement l'accusation à l'effet que ce livre ne représenterait qu'un simple recueil de contes romantiques. La nature, telle que la décrivait Gabrielle Roy, était toujours ancrée dans la réalité, même si celle-ci empruntait la chaleur et l'amour de l'auteur. (571)

The critical review presented above seems most adequately to represent the general trends associated with the reception of this particular work. Both positive and negative aspects of the reaction to Cet été qui chantait have been examined. Beyond all of this, however, lies the fact that there was so little reaction from which to choose. In many ways, it seems as if this work went largely unaddressed.

The next chapter will discuss the principle themes of Cet été qui chantait as a first step in demonstrating that this work is far more profound and meaningful to the overall corpus of Gabrielle Roy's works than it would appear to be, based on critical response alone.

Chapter 2--Thematic Analysis: Symbiotic Balance

The principal theme of this work is a correlative relationship among living beings which can best be described as symbiotic balance; its primary symbol is the circle. All other themes and symbols relate to it. This symbiotic balance is an expression of Gabrielle Roy's view of spirituality, that is, what it means to attain completion (i.e. self-actualization) and societal actualization. Those of Gabrielle Roy's characters who have found their place in nature adopt a new outlook when they realize that such an harmonious relationship with nature ensures an even greater appartenance to humanity:

Les relations harmonieuses qu'ils établissent avec le milieu naturel ne constituent donc pas une fin en soi mais plutôt le commencement d'une nouvelle compréhension d'eux-mêmes et du sentiment accru de l'importance des autres. (Soken, "L'harmonie" 292)

One subtheme of this symbiotic balance is space: the here and now as related to and interacting with the beyond. Symbols associated with space are the wind, music and light as agents of communication between the two realms, as well as islands and sky which represent the beyond. Still water is the mirror and window between the here and the exterior beyond; the eye is the mirror and window between the here

and the interior beyond.

A second subtheme is that of the quest for happiness. This quest may involve an actual physical journey, or it may involve a psychological, emotional exploration. It seems, however, as if happiness is not the result of a quest or journey toward a goal, but rather a spontaneous feeling of peace associated either with communication from the beyond via its agents of wind, light, and music or with a sense of recognition and admiration by others. The difference between true happiness (symbiosis) and that which stems from an imbalance of power (parasitism) is also present in this work.

Ecology is developed, albeit to a lesser extent, as a third subtheme. Central to the import of the work and indeed of the author's philosophy is the contention that humanity must live in harmony with nature, although the overt expression of this belief is limited. This harmony is of a clearly symbiotic nature, and is the essential element for the attainment of happiness. The beyond, for which we quest, is not a mysterious unattainable place; it is, rather, a state of being, a way of living, which respects other living beings and their right to fulfill their natural role:

Le monde naturel et le monde humain, malgré leur ressemblance donc, ne sauraient être confondus.

La leçon la plus importante que la nature enseigne aux hommes c'est qu'être humain signifie être unique et spécial, faire partie de la nature et pourtant en être distinct. (Socken, "L'harmonie" 284)

Many of Gabrielle Roy's characters seem to spend their lives searching for that beyond, that harmonious state of being, either within nature and the surrounding environment or within themselves. (In Visages de Gabrielle Roy, Marc Gagné puts forth a detailed analysis and discussion of this theme of journey as an image of space, and dream as an image of time; the latter is of particular importance to Cet été qui chantait.) Cet été qui chantait offers greater insight than Roy's previous works into the essential elements of the symbiotic balance necessary for the attainment of such a state of happiness and of actualization.

The theme of space is, as indeed are all of the themes, presented at the outset of the work; space itself is one of the very first themes to be introduced. In the first anecdote, the setting is clearly delineated into its two parts: the here and now, and the beyond. "Ce ouaouaron vivait à l'extrémité du monde habité". The unreal sense of this other world becomes even more apparent: "Nulle part au monde je n'ai connu chemin de fer plus tranquille" (CEC 11). This distinction between the here and now and the beyond is omnipresent throughout the work, and serves to differentiate the world as it is from the world as it could be. The author's utopic vision is thus presented, not as an isolated place for a select group, but rather as a temporal state, available for any and all creatures. According to Paula Gilbert-Lewis, Gabrielle Roy had a growing preoccupation to reach as large and diverse a public as possible: "Cette

préoccupation se trouvait confirmée par sa création d'un monde imaginaire représentant toute l'humanité" (567)

Accompanying this separation of worlds is the exposition of the arduous task involved in journeying from the here and now to the beyond. After describing the difficulties associated with walking along the uneven planks of the tracks, the narrator exclaims, "La marche devient donc vite fatigante, mais n'importe; un mal qu'on s'impose pour le plaisir, c'est le bonheur en fin de compte" (CEC 17).

Another of the many illustrations of this hardship is found somewhat further into the work. During a long walk, after which the narrator and her friend have journeyed to the source of a brook which feeds into the mighty river, the Grande-Minoune-Maigre seems to ask, "Pourquoi ne m'avoir pas dit qu'on irait au bout du monde?" (98). Later, this journey to the river is undertaken by Martine, for whom the descent would be impossible without the assistance of the narrator and her friend (151).

The importance of sunlight as a messenger from beyond and as a giver of joy is illustrated in the first anecdote as well. After having described M. Tounng's pond as somber, the narrator explains: "Peut-être au soleil levant est-elle gaie et scintillante" (12).

Music, another symbol of communication with the beyond, is presented here as well. In describing the bullfrog, the narrator states: "on eût dit, sous l'eau, un musicien facétieux qui pinçait sa guitare immergée" (13). A few pages

later, "le fleuve chante alors à plein bords" (17).

The wind which comes from afar and sometimes brings with it enchanting music is introduced. "Au sommet du rocher, [le pin] se plaignait doucement. Il n'y avait pourtant presque pas d'air en mouvement ce soir-là. Où donc le pin en trouvait-il pour en faire sa chanson dolente?" (18). This symbol is further highlighted. "De loin, à certains tournants, portés sur un courant d'air vif, nous parvenaient quelques échos encore du joyeux ivrogne, sous les larges feuilles, buvant à même le goulot" (23).

The second anecdote continues this introduction of themes. M. Emile's farm is tidy and spotless with the exception of a small area called la gatte: "Un vilain bout de terrain spongieux, bosselé, toujours mouillé, il faisait pitié à côté des champs si bien tenus" (28). After enclosing the area, M. Emile puts one of his cows inside. The continual trodding of the ground by the cow works the soil to the point that, the next spring, an hitherto unseen flower, the kalmia, appears. "Mais d'où venait cette gracieuse fleur? . . . Y fut-elle amenée par le vent?" (29). The arrival of many other species of flowers transforms the gatte into "ce qu'il y avait de plus accueillant dans le pays" (30). What happens to the gatte in the winter? Does it return to its previous pitiful state? Certainly not, because

la gatte se trouve au bout du pays, tout au pied de la montagne. En sorte que le soleil, avant de tourner le cap s'arrête toujours un

moment sur ce champ. Dans cet instant, il l'illumine en entier . . . alors la neige blême et sans vie devient, au centre rose comme le kalmia, sur les bords bleue comme l'iris et, ça et là, elle s'enflamme de l'or des solidages morts. Pendant trois ou quatre minutes, chaque jour, le pauvre champ rayonne des plus merveilleuses couleurs de l'été retrouvé. (31)

The role of light is clearly defined; in this case, it ensures the perpetuation of the established harmony.

In the chapter entitled 'La Fête des vaches', the role of wind as an agent of communication from beyond is further highlighted. The cows are at rest, "orientées toutes de manière à recevoir ce vent béni entre les cornes, des vaches se laissant vivre!" (115). The narrator describes her surprise at the cows' behaviour. "Elles parurent me reconnaître au premier coup d'oeil aujourd'hui. A cause du vent sec qui leur éclaircissait le cerveau?" (116). Jeannot-la-corneille comes to the narrator's garden "les jours où chante le vent du sud-ouest." Jeannot repose in the cherry tree, "l'arbre sous ce vent d'été n'étant que balançoire dans le ciel" (39). An overt expression of the role of the wind is offered in the text: "Ce vent béni, je l'imagine né dans un lointain pays heureux où les êtres ne se donnent plus la chasse, mais vivent tranquilles les uns à côté des autres" (49). Paul Socken examines the emphasis on human fellowship

and its conceptualized expressions in Gabrielle Roy's works.

In discussing this particular passage, he states:

It is important to note that in this scene,

'le pays' is presented not as a wish only, but

as if it really does exist, albeit far away . . .

Gabrielle Roy is therefore suggesting that this

ideal world is indeed accessible. . . . [I]deal

peace is realized under certain conditions within

this 'real world'. ("Le pays" 310)

Light as a symbol is best developed in the section 'La
Nuit des lucioles'. The narrator refers to the fireflies as

"les porteuses de flamme" (CEC 174). She goes on to call

them "les phares minuscules . . . pour guider dans la nuit

d'invisibles voyageurs" (174). Paula Gilbert-Lewis

recognizes the importance of this metaphor. She explains the

expression "fragiles lumières de la terre", which is, among

other things, the title of one of Roy's later works:

Selon l'auteur, cette expression . . .

faisait la synthèse de toute son oeuvre

et traduisait son opinion et ses espoirs

concernant le genre humain et le monde.

Il y a toujours des lumières; il y a

toujours une aurore; et la possibilité

d'un recommencement existe toujours pour

tout le monde. Ces lumières, cependant,

sont inévitablement fragiles et, même, par

exemple, dans Cet été qui chantait,

éphémères. L'important, tout compte fait,
c'est qu'elles existent. (573)

The eye and still water act at once as a mirror and as a window between the two worlds; this demonstrates the extent to which this 'beyond' is really no further away than the core of oneself. The water is "le miroir offert au ciel serein" which "réfléchissait tout ici avec une parfaite fidélité" (66). In M. Emile's gatte,

à l'automne les solidages et les asters à
longues feuilles firent cercle autour de
l'eau morte qui brillait faiblement dans
tous les petits creux de la gatte. Et ces
minuscules trous . . . à peine plus grands
qu'un oeil, trouvèrent moyen de refléter
. . . un peu de ciel. (30-1)

In 'La Paire', the horse without a companion of its own kind would stand with the cows in the wind, "mais dans le grand oeil agité du cheval persistait une ombre, une tristesse lointaine, peut-être le rappel vague d'un bonheur perdu" (123). The horse eventually meets his counterpart. "Leur crinière ondule pareillement au vent. Et dans leur grand oeil est presque disparue l'ombre, la tristesse, la mémoire peut-être" (124). An important reciprocity is established. The two horses each fulfill a need within the other by providing a soul-mate.

When the narrator and her friends are visiting one evening, the room is lit by candlelight. "Mais à la chétive

lueur, les yeux aussi prennent souvent qualité de songe. On dirait de petits lacs cernés de nuit qui miroitent sous le lointain rayon de quelque lumière invisible" (131).

The islands as the unattainable beyond are symbolized in the second to last chapter. These islands are several miles off-shore, closer to the south bank of the St. Lawrence River. Few of the twenty-one islands are inhabited. (It should be noted here that the river at this point is quite wide and is in fact affected by tides; it is therefore frequently referred to as the sea.) The narrator's view of the islands depends upon the weather. "A peine les a-t-on eues pour compagnes un ou deux jours que déjà elles partent à la dérive, dans une sorte d'existence de rêve". When the west wind blows, "le malheur paraît lointain. On en vient à ne penser presque plus aux îles" (193). This happiness of a summer of full life is contrasted with the vision of autumn, of impending death. In the fall, the "îlots" come back to life; one by one, "ils naissent, pourrait-on dire, alors que tout meurt dans la nature" (194). In spite of their desire to go to the islands, the narrator and her friend cannot; the journey is too difficult for them; it is not yet their time.

As a theme, happiness is presented and developed throughout the work in an almost contrapuntal fashion. Happiness can be achieved in one of two ways. It can come from a sense of belonging, of recognition, even admiration by others of this world, or it can be the result of communication from beyond by means of the agents wind, light

and music. In both cases, the interactive, symbiotic nature of the relationship which produces happiness is indisputable: happiness cannot be achieved alone. Contrasted with this happiness are two elements: despair and parasitic happiness. Despair can best be described as an interruption in the symbiotic relationship which is essential to happiness. François Ricard uses this concept of interrupted happiness in discussing the deaths of M. Toung and Jeannot: "on fait d'abord la connaissance du personnage-animal, puis on jouit un certain temps de son amitié, avant que la mort, finalement, ne vienne brusquement interrompre cette joie" (Gabrielle Roy 148). Parasitic happiness stems from a sense of power exercised by one participant in a relationship over the other. (The latter, parasitic happiness through power, in fact plays a pivotal role in the structure of the text; it will therefore be treated in more detail in a subsequent chapter.)

Happiness and despair are clearly present from the outset. The narrator and her friend have met M. Toung at the end of the inhabited world. Their encounter brings joy to all. The hopelessness felt when, upon their third visit to the pond, they discover that M. Toung has probably been "had" (i.e. killed) by the muskrat is expressed: "Mais pour nous c'était maintenant un peu comme si ce coin du monde s'était dépeuplé" (23).

The narrator describes the gatte as initially a desperate, barren place (28). When the flowers appear the

following spring, "la chatte prit un aspect jeune et gai" (29).

The despair of being out of harmony with one's surroundings is no more clearly presented than in the anecdote 'Ames en peine'. The narrator describes a pond-like body of water which has undergone an evolution not unlike that of the gatte. "Plus de créatures qu'on ne le croit aiment donc vivre en paix autour d'une eau paresseuse qui ne coule même pas" (67). Time here has stopped; this place has become paradise. "Mais, par un jour de mai, y descendirent deux voyageurs du Minnesota, monsieur et madame Pluvier kildir, et l'endroit perdit à jamais la paix et l'harmonie qui en avaient fait le renom loin déjà dans le monde" (67). The precise time of arrival and the defined earthly origins of the killdeer reinforce the notion of the interruption of happiness, of a paradise lost. The killdeer are described as mistrusting, selfish birds, frightened and unhappy. When asked why they have chosen this place, they reply "c'est cette petite eau reposante . . . nulle part il n'y en a d'aussi pure qu'ici" (71). They have selfishly chosen to impose themselves on this hitherto idyllic place, to drive away other residents who had lived there in peace, and yet they themselves are not happy.

The joy which comes from being respected and admired, that is, accepted as a valuable member of the society is one of the more frequently presented elements. The Grande-Minoune-Maigre, an old 'stay-at-home' cat has, with

difficulty, descended to the river. Tired, her paws cut by the sharp rocks, she manages easily to pass by the energetic dog on the railroad tracks; "elle avait sur les traits ce je ne sais quoi d'aimable qui vient aux gens comme aux bêtes quand ils ont été admirés au moins une fois dans leur vie" (102).

The importance, indeed necessity, of feeling loved by others is clearly demonstrated in the case of the little kitten who makes the rounds from one lap to another during an evening visit: "Chacune la flattait, lui disait qu'elle est la plus jolie chatte du monde, ce que Mouffette ne se lasse jamais d'entendre. Ce petit coeur animal autant qu'un coeur humain a besoin de savoir qu'il est aimé" (131).

In describing the fireflies, the narrator questions the purpose of their existence:

Leur existence est fugitive. Peut-être les
lucioles ne vivent-elles que le temps de
briller un instant d'un vif éclat.

Comme nous tous d'ailleurs!

Heureux ceux qui, du moins avant de s'éteindre,
auront donné leur plein éclat!

Pris au feu de Dieu! (175)

The feeling of peace which comes from experiencing communication with the beyond by way of the music of the wind can extend beyond the individual level in order to incorporate entire groups of living beings, that is, societies. This wind, which exercises its influence upon the

cows, has an even greater effect on the birds, the blacks and the whites:

D'ailleurs, je finis par m'apercevoir que c'était ces jours-là seulement [when the wind blows] que sur les rochers à découvert, au loin de l'eau frémissante, des oiseaux noirs se joignaient aux oiseaux blancs. (49)

The theme of ecology is to a great extent intertwined with that of the symbiotic aspect of nature and consequent happiness. A nature which is in balance, without excess, where moderation reigns, is put forth as the prerequisite for discovering and living in paradise. Although there are few direct references in Cet été qui chantait to ecological problems, it is indisputable that Gabrielle Roy was concerned with environmental issues (Chadbourne, "Ecologie"). The concept of moderation is somewhat more subtly expressed. During the hike toward the pond where M. Toung is first encountered, the narrator and her friend discover wild flowers along the railroad tracks. The advantage for these flowers of growing here is that they are far away from animals who would graze and people who would gather. The two women, therefore, take but a few. "Nous veillons à ne pas arracher les racines et jamais ne prenons plus de fleurs que pour en faire à chacune un bouquet" (12).

Rarely does the narrator mention pollution directly. However, in one instance, she describes a truck coming up the

road emitting "de mauvais air qu'on nomme aujourd'hui pollution". The scents of flowers and of the tide "furent noyés dans la forte senteur d'huile à chauffage qui barbouille le coeur" (108). When the elderly Martine is journeying to the river for her last time, she recalls her earlier perceptions of the pollution of the river at Hochelaga, near Montreal; she would hardly recognize it the few times she bothered to go:

Sur les bords, on ne voyait plus l'eau. Seulement des pelures de bananes, des écorces d'oranges, des papiers sales jetés du pont des bateaux. Et puis on ne respirait pas autre chose que l'huile. Une fois seulement, en fermant les yeux, j'ai attrapé, venant de loin, une faible, faible odeur de marée, puis je l'ai perdue. (152).

The balance of nature is at times deliberately upset by a cavalier act of interference on the part of humanity. A group of boys throws stones at the crows relaxing in the 'frères- arbres'. The crows regretfully take flight, "trois petites formes dont le noir dans tout ce bleu du ciel aujourd'hui déployé prit tout à coup un sens de chagrin" (107). The sense of power and the consequent parasitic happiness associated with such an act are also well illustrated in 'Le mobile', where the kitten, despite the pleading of the narrator to stop, continues to enjoy its game of setting the daisies in motion, abusing this other life form for its own enjoyment (79).

Perhaps the most poignant representation of this theme of ecology is found in the narrator's wish on the falling stars: "J'ai souhaité que les enfants de par ici ne se lassent jamais d'entendre raconter leur planète Terre" (173). This same wish figures in the author's Dedication: "aux enfants de toutes saisons à qui je souhaite de ne jamais se lasser d'entendre raconter leur planète Terre."

These themes, space, happiness, and ecology, along with their symbols, are integral parts of the all-encompassing theme of symbiotic balance, an expression of spirituality and purpose of life and living. The affective element of the soul of life is best symbolized by the heart. The symbiotic balance between the here and now and the beyond is found in the circle, an obvious symbol of the eternal.

The heart as a symbol of the soul which is common to us all, of that which binds life together, is present throughout the work, and more frequently toward the end. When the summer is over, the killdeer leave the small pond which they had adopted and which had, because of them, lost its idyllic state; "il nous arriva à Berthe et à moi d'éprouver du regret de ne plus entendre la plainte des pluviers . . . parce que liée à l'obscur peine du coeur humain" (74).

During the evening visit, Mouffette, the little kitten, jumps from one lap to another. The narrator remarks that "ce petit coeur animal autant qu'un coeur humain a besoin de savoir qu'il est aimé" (131). When the narrator contemplates her desire to journey to the far-off islands, she asks, "Quel est

donc sur notre coeur l'attire des îles? Ne serait-ce pas que nous sommes des enfants perdus qui aspirent à un commun rivage?" (198).

That the circle is associated with the eternal, the beyond, that state of ultimate happiness is indisputable. Ricard explains the use of the circle as a symbol of reconciliation (or, in my words, a rediscovered symbiotic relationship). The circle can be the family circle or the school circle, both images being of great importance to Gabrielle Roy: "la famille a vite acquis, dans l'imagination de Gabrielle Roy, la valeur d'un archétype, devenant en effet l'une des représentations les plus adéquates du rêve de réconciliation." He goes on to affirm that "il y a, entre l'image de la famille . . . et l'image du cercle enfin un des hommes . . . une filiation directe, celle-ci étant . . . l'extension indéfinie de celle-là, son élargissement à la mesure de l'univers" ("Cercle" 73). The family circle is not closed; it is a structure open to the outside and capable of assimilating much outside of itself. If the family threatens to close in on itself, it breaks apart only to reconstitute itself on a wider base. "Le cercle, pourrait-on dire, n'éclate que pour se reformer de nouveau autour de lui-même" (74). Ricard continues:

Ainsi donc, on pourrait représenter la démarche de Gabrielle Roy comme la tentative, à partir d'un noyau initial figuré par le microcosme familial, d'élargir à l'infini ce noyau. . . . Mais le but

ainsi visé, que représente l'image tant de fois citée du 'cercle enfin uni des hommes', ce but ne peut que se dérober sans cesse. Il n'est pas ce qu'on atteint: il est seulement ce vers quoi l'on s'achemine. (75)

The circle is the perfect symbol to represent the symbiotic relationship. Any two points on the circle are always in direct contact, one with the other, joined not by a segment, which implies movement in a single direction, but by two separate arcs, so that movement can occur simultaneously in opposite directions. There are glimpses of the circle throughout the work. In the first anecdote, when the two women return to the pond in search of M. Toung, he is no longer there. "Je pris une pierre. Je la lançai avec force au milieu de la mare. L'eau rejaillit. Les cercles à la surface allèrent grandissant" (CEC 22, emphasis added). The outward movement of the concentric circles symbolizes the ongoing unity of the source point with the infinite: the death of the frog is not a discreet, isolated event. Its effect on other lives (e.g. those of the women in particular) is expressed by the ripples which move from one point, the frog's home, toward infinity and all other living creatures, and which are consequently connected, one to another, each deriving its power and movement from the initial internal force. The circle as a symbol of symbiosis is well-defined. After the transformation of the gatte into "ce qu'il y avait de plus accueillant dans le pays" (31), due to the

relationship between the cow and the flowers, "à l'automne, les solidages et les asters à longues feuilles firent cercle autour de l'eau morte qui brillait faiblement dans tous les petits creux de la gatte" (30-1).

The circle is also associated with the happiness generated by a feeling of worth. Mouffette is encouraged by the narrator: "Et danse au milieu de notre cercle la petite forme blanche à rayures noires, folle de son succès!" (132). Life as a circle is expressed by what the narrator calls "la ronde sourde des générations" (149). The firefly, symbol of a guiding light, "virevolte" and "tourne sur soi" (174).

In the episode 'L'Enfant morte' during which the narrator remembers the death of one of her students, she recalls that as she and her other students were making their way to visit with the dead girl, the children "ne parlaient pas, ne faisaient que me tenir enfermée dans leur cercle" (183). After the children had covered their dead friend with roses, everywhere but her face, "les enfants faisaient cercle autour de leur compagne" (188).

Spirituality as a theme is also well represented by more traditional means. Water as a symbol of life and of the eternal is mentioned several times. The river, to which go first la Grande-Minoune-Maigre and later Martine, symbolizes a variety of spiritual elements: connection with the beyond, the infinite, the journey of life and homecoming. At the water's edge, the narrator describes the river as "une joie inépuisable: ce brisement à l'infini du flot, toujours

dispersé, toujours se rassemblant" (89). She goes on to say, "le fleuve et la vie, tous deux en mouvement, nous semblaient proches l'un de l'autre" (93). "Pour Berthe et pour moi le temps ne compte guère, nous le voyons à peine passer quand nous sommes au bord du fleuve . . . Ce qui est éternel n'a apparemment pas besoin de changer" (96).

Later, as the narrator recalls her cousin Martine's last visit to the river, the spiritual aspects of the experience are more pronounced. "Martine [est] revenue au pays après cinquante années d'exil dans un logement sans air ni horizon pour revoir, avant de mourir, la mer" (146). When a neighbour offers to ease the difficulty of the descent by taking Martine in his tractor, Martine replies, "<<En tracteur au fleuve>> . . . comme si elle se fut écriée: A l'église en tracteur!" (150). At the edge of the river, Martine "continua seule, sur les galets, dans le sable rude. Elle ne vacillait plus. Tout son être la portait en avant comme une créature tendue vers Dieu" (155).

A very traditional, albeit somewhat unorthodox religious experience is portrayed in 'La messe aux hirondelles', a Roman Catholic Mass attended by humans, cows, swallows and even Miquette the dog. Its connection with the beyond is made explicit: "Ainsi dans cette petite chapelle de rien du tout pénètre le lointain" (137) When the Mass is finished, the narrator takes note of the effect it has had on the animals:

On dirait qu'à nos bêtes domestiques est

venu pour nous aujourd'hui un sentiment
d'adoration.

Ou peut-être une humble, une confuse jalousie.

--Qu'est-ce qu'ils connaissent de plus que nous?

Ont vu aujourd'hui? Reçu? Et qui laisse pour
un moment sur leur visage cette beauté?" (p 141)

The theme of spirituality, whether represented by traditional symbols or otherwise, is seen, then, to embody elements of each of its subthemes. The commonality of space, happiness, and ecology lies in the symbiotic balance between two elements. The theme of space illustrates the relationship between the here and now and the beyond. Communication from beyond guides the living creatures into a greater harmony within their own here and now world. Happiness is the result of a mutually beneficial interaction. Ecology extends this individual happiness into the collective, the societal consciousness. A disruption of the symbiotic balance creates despair and misery. The death of Jeannot illustrates this point. Jeannot's symbiotic relationship with plant life (they give him food, he spreads their seeds) is deemed unacceptable by a selfish human who wishes to keep the plants for himself. As a result, Jeannot is killed and the symbiotic relationship is destroyed (53-5). M. Simon may be content that his tomatoes are safe, but this is in fact a parasitic happiness; he has exercised his power over another life form and created a sense of societal despair which far outweighs his own individual happiness.

True happiness lies in the development of a respect for other living creatures within a meaningful symbiotic relationship: the basis of spiritual communion.

Chapter 3--Thematic Analysis: Network of Themes

The theme of spirituality as symbiotic balance is well-served by its component parts: space, happiness, and ecology, and their related symbols. However, analysis of these themes and symbols as separate units obscures the thematic integrity of Cet été qui chantait. It is essentially impossible to grasp the true significance of these themes and symbols without a detailed examination of their fundamental interaction. In fact, one of the important aspects of this work is the manner in which the themes and subthemes reside in a symbiotic balance within the work itself. Each is there for the benefit of the other. Each supports the other and contributes to its healthy development. These themes and symbols speak to the reader in much the same way as the 'frères-arbres'. "Si jamais l'un se tait, c'est pour laisser à l'autre la parole. Mais d'habitude c'est ensemble qu'on les entend parler, au reste pour dire la même chose" (CEC 105).

An analysis of this network of themes is important for understanding the way in which the anecdotes interact to produce this symbiotic relationship. Of the three subthemes, happiness is the one which encompasses space and ecology. The theme of ecology in this work is an extension of the idea of symbiotic balance which ensures happiness. The theme of space is also related to that same symbiotic balance--a

harmony which exists between the here and now and the beyond and which as well is essential to happiness. Although each anecdote contains many more than one of the themes or symbols, each can be said to have a certain tone or colour which stands out above the others, that is, a certain reflection of the element of happiness. A chronological representation of the principal themes of each work, particularly as the theme relates to happiness, is useful in demonstrating the thematic relationships as well as the overall unity of the work. The presence in some chapters only of certain symbols, the circle in particular, serves to clarify these relationships. It is necessary, therefore, to examine each chapter sequentially in order to determine its principal theme, to categorize each chapter on the basis of its position on the happiness continuum and finally to discuss the role of particular chapters as they relate to the work as a whole.

The theme of happiness can be divided into three strands: happiness gained, happiness lost and the search for happiness. Happiness is gained through a symbiotic relationship of some sort; symbiosis includes the idea of recognition and admiration. Happiness is lost when there is an interruption or breakdown of the symbiotic relationship. The search for happiness necessarily implies a more profound, reflective representation of happiness rather than a mere state of bliss or despair. Certain anecdotes will be seen to contain reflections upon 'existence', that soul-searching

philosophical quest for meaning in life and living.

Each of the anecdotes of the work can be said to fall into one of these three strands. In fact, the first anecdote, 'Monsieur Toung', has elements which relate to all three, as a sort of introduction. The search for happiness is symbolized by the difficult journey to the end of the world. The joy in finding M. Toung is replaced by a despair at his death. M. Toung's appeal, "Revenez. Ne laissez pas passer trop de temps . . . La vie est courte . . ." (20) is more than foreshadowing. It is a comment on the fleeting nature of existence and happiness.

'La Gatte de monsieur Émile' clearly shows the happiness found in the symbiotic relationship between the animal and the plant life. Had it not been for the cow's actions, the gatte would never have acquired its beauty and renown.

'Les Vaches d' Aimé', although obviously a precursor to 'La Fête des vaches' contains the element of happiness gained through recognition, which can also be considered as a sort of symbiotic rapport.

'Jeannot-la-Corneille' is the first anecdote of the strand related to happiness lost or despair. The relationships established are interrupted by a selfish humanity.

'La Trotteuse' shows a return to happiness; the tinkling of the cow's bell has evoked in the narrator a pleasant, but otherwise forgotten memory: "The bell's music has the power to draw together the elements of past and

present, and to make the happiness of the relationships enjoyed in those formative years a vivid reality in the present" (Socken, "Art" 345).

'Ames en peine' is an even more powerful representation of despair. Whereas Jeannot enjoyed a happy life, these birds show no signs of contentment. Not only are they themselves miserable, but they also breed misery into their surroundings. Again, we see despair as the result of relationships broken through selfishness. "The title, 'souls in pain', obviously refers to the human world and to the natural world, as the author sees all creation as suffering and seeking consolation" (Socken, "Le pays" 323).

'Un mobile' appears (at face value) to demonstrate happiness by the manner in which the little kitten finds visual pleasure in the manipulation of the daisies.

'La Grande-Minoune-Maigre' is the first anecdote (excluding 'Monsieur Toug') to contain elements of the search for happiness and the reflective quest for the meaning of existence. Although this story clearly foreshadows the one about Martine, it has value of its own; it shows the need which all creatures have to be recognized and validated in order to feel happiness.

'Les Frères-Arbres' is about despair, the kind of despair that comes from cavalier interference in the balance of nature. Although the two trees live in a mutually supportive fashion, they are prevented from enjoying their relationship with the birds, first by boys throwing stones at

the crows perched in the branches, next by the truck spewing noxious fumes. Only when a considerate human passes by, flattering them, do the birds stay. The author shows the way in which despair can be overcome by admiration and, consequently, how happiness can be regained.

'La Fête des vaches' is a blissful representation of happiness achieved through self-acceptance and communication with the beyond. Unfortunately, that same wind which profoundly delights the cows has destroyed some of the flowers. Not everyone is happy at the same time.

In 'La Paire', we see the importance of finding a soul-mate in order to be happy. All creatures have a need to be with someone, to enter into a mutually satisfying relationship.

'Danse, Mouffette!' continues the idea earlier presented of the need for recognition or admiration, of the need to be needed by others.

'La Messe aux hirondelles' is a celebration of the happiness gained through spiritual communion with the beyond, of humans and animals worshipping together in harmony: "this story suggests that the ideal is not a remote possibility since it presents the world as if it were born anew and were truly capable of a profound transformation" (Sacken, "Le pays" 315).

In 'Le Jour où Martine descendit au fleuve', the principal tone is one of the search for meaning in existence and reconciliation with life.

'Les Visiteurs de la journée' is, among other things, a humorous examination of the way in which all animals, human or otherwise, share certain traits. Beneath this facade, however, is a demonstration of the need we all have to be with someone, and to be recognized in order to experience happiness.

'La Nuit des lucioles' is the culminating anecdote of the happiness through recognition/admiration strand. It overlaps to some extent with the question of existence as well.

'L'Enfant morte' is related to 'La Trotteuse' in that both involve memories evoked by some element of nature. The memory in 'La Trotteuse' was a happy one; this second memory is a profoundly sad and disturbing one relating to the death of a child, an occurrence which no amount of questioning of existence can ever seem to justify.

'Les Iles' represents that yearning we all have for something beyond our grasp, in this case, the perfect harmony which seems so elusive in this here and now world. The search for happiness is carried beyond the here and now and into the realm of the beyond. Even though the women live contentedly in this world and have gained their happiness through their relationship with the nature which surrounds them, they have not fully developed such a relationship with the beyond. Nor can they, it seems. The beyond can come to them at will, but they cannot go to it. Consequently, they see themselves in some way as "des enfants perdus qui

aspirent à un commun rivage" (CEC 198). All of the strands of the happiness theme are present, yet something is missing: the hope of communing symbiotically with the beyond.

In the last anecdote, 'De retour à la mare de monsieur Toung', all of the themes and symbols are present, woven together in full symbiotic splendour. The narrator explains why she and her companion have decided to return: "Parce que meurt un peu tous les jours ce qui fait notre joie de vivre, on ne doit pas en détacher d'avance son coeur" (201). They are delighted to find "Sire Malard et sa Dame" turning about in the patch of clear light, their beauty mirrored perfectly by the still water (201). They are equally enchanted to discover a border of plants which have been able to grow because of the "eau vivifiante" of the river (202).

As well, the strands of happiness are reunited in this, the final chapter. The narrator has come searching for joy in a place where there remained only the memories of despair. The symbiotic aspect of discovering the birds is highlighted: "La beauté du malard ne chassait pas le souvenir de monsieur Toung; elle l'accompagnait" (202).

But it is the killdeer who best explain the theme of happiness and its association with the eternal:

--Tous ne sont pas heureux au même moment . . .

Un jour c'est l'un, le lendemain l'autre . . .

Quelques-uns jamais, hélas! . . .

--Ici on est heureux . . . Là-bas non . . .

Quand on sera heureux ensemble, ce sera le

paradis . . . le paradis . . . le paradis . . .

(203-4)

What might have appeared to be a trite or banal definition of paradise becomes far more profound in light of the development of the theme of happiness.

It has been demonstrated that each anecdote can be said to have its place on the happiness continuum, that is, as demonstrating primarily happiness gained, happiness lost or the search for happiness. In order to appreciate the development of each component of happiness it is necessary to separate out the related anecdotes to discuss further the aspect of happiness presented in each one.

In the happiness gained strand, there is first one animal who has found her symbiotic balance ('La Gatte de monsieur Emile'). Next, there are several of the same species happy at the same time ('Les Vaches d'Aimé', 'Les Frères-Arbres', 'La Fête des vaches'), and then two species happy together ('La Paire'). In the anecdote which concludes this strand, there are several species, including humans, happy at the same time ('La Messe aux hirondelles').

In the happiness lost strand, there is first one bird whose life ends tragically ('Jeannot-la-Corneille'), next several birds who create misery around them ('Ames en peine'), and finally the most desperate, the death of a child ('L'Enfant morte').

In both of these strands, there is an everwidening scope of involvement, both as an increase in the number of beings

affected, and as a movement from plant or animal life through to human life. The same is true in the third strand, the search for happiness. 'La Grande-Minoune-Maigre' introduces this strand and both of its components (admiration/recognition and existence).

In the admiration/recognition component of this search, there is first the kitten gaining recognition ('Danse, Mouffette!'), then the human visitors ('Les Visiteurs de la journée') and finally the fireflies which, because of their ability to produce light, symbolize something far greater and more profound than banal insects ('La Nuit des lucioles').

In the existence component, there is passage from the old cat to the old woman ('Le Jour où Martine descendit au fleuve') and finally to the dead child, whose story serves to close this strand.

The penultimate anecdote, 'Les Iles', contains elements which relate to all three strands, a sort of false dénouement in that, although complete in the sense that it summarizes thematically, it leaves the reader with a sense of emptiness, of feeling unfulfilled.

The work begins and ends with anecdotes which relate to M. Tounge's pond, the story having come full circle. In both, the search for happiness and happiness gained is evidenced. In the first one only is there happiness lost. This illustrates the author's intent to end her work optimistically.

It is clear, then, that a thematic widening is evident

throughout the work: as more and more different animals and different species enter into harmonious relationships, an almost overwhelming sense of peace envelops the reader.

"Grace au progrès, les obstacles de temps, d'espace et de races ne sont plus infranchissables. <<Le vrai progrès, c'est celui qui tend vers une fraternité plus grande>>"

(Gagné 83).

The circle, hinted at initially, glimpsed here and there throughout, is fully present at the end of the work. The three killdeer, which have been seen to be peaceful and happy, contented with their lot, are flying "dans une sorte de longue promenade en rond, sans désir apparent de sortir jamais de leur cercle enchanté." (CEC 203)

One anecdote remains to be discussed in detail: 'Un mobile'. Although the musical imagery expressed within this text appears to relate a rather amusing tale, this apparently trite story offers, perhaps, a fundamental key to the meaning of the work. Tucked away as it is, between 'Ames en peine', a story of profound misery, and 'La Grande-Minoune-Maigre', the introduction to the search for happiness, it provides a bridge, both in position and in meaning.

The flowers which make up the mobile are ordinary white field daisies "au coeur jaune clair" (79), and can be said to represent creatures who, although individuals, share a unifying heritage from a common Creator. "Ce qui en faisait la beauté c'était leur éparpillement gracieux rattaché pourtant au même noeud" (79). Once placed in a vase, "elles

débordent dans presque toute la pièce" (79), much as life has managed to populate nearly all of the corners of the earth, spilling over into the appropriate available niches. What appears to be nothing more than a harmless anecdote, a cute little story about a darling kitten, can be interpreted as a very powerful metaphor for humanity's apathy with regard to the abuse of power in the world around it. Little Mouffette taps the daisy stem and sets the flowers all in motion; she treats this other life form as a toy. Does this perhaps foreshadow the destruction of the flowers by the wind in 'La fête des Vaches' (118)? Imperialistic powers invade second and third world countries and exploit them for their own purposes. The narrator attempts to stop Mouffette, but gives up because it appears to be a harmless game. Some governments initiate supposedly meaningful sanctions against countries where racism and other crimes against humanity are blatant. Many countries cannot be bothered to do so, or cannot afford to oppose the powers in control.

The struggle for and the abuse of power remain the principal obstacles to planetary harmony. This parable offers the only real explanation within the work for the existence in the world of such misery. Placed as it is, a bridge between despair and the search for happiness, it functions effectively to explain the reason for such abuse and inhumanity. The motive is power, as indicated by the title: 'un mobile' is ambiguous in French; the more obvious interpretation of this expression is the artistic arrangement

of elements which change position according to external forces such as wind; its perhaps less obvious, yet primary, signification is that of motive or driving force.

This chapter, then, has demonstrated the way in which the theme of happiness, as the most representative of spirituality, is developed throughout the work. This theme, initially small and restricted, grows to encompass a far greater scope. At the same time, the order of anecdotes creates an intertwined, fugue-like effect within the thematic development of the strands of happiness. Some anecdotes foreshadow others; happiness gained gives way to despair and the search for happiness and meaning in life, yet returns here and there to remind the reader of its pervasive presence. An explanation for the misery in the world, the destruction of a sense of belonging, is offered as an interruption of the symbiotic balance through pollution, cavalier interference and abuse of power. Through the use of anthropomorphism and personification, the author has illustrated a world in which happiness and harmony ultimately succeed in the face of injustice and despair:

'Le pays de l'amour' is, then, an ideal that exists throughout Gabrielle Roy's writings. The ideal, never completely attained and yet constantly alluded to, implies a generosity of spirit and warmth of human fellowship on a grand scale. These values are based . . . on a visionary

sense of what the world should strive to
attain if it is to fully realize itself.

(Söckle, "Le pays" 323)

Chapter 4--Cet été qui chantait as recapitulation

It has been demonstrated in the previous two chapters that Cet été qui chantait is far more than a banal collection of simple tales about a summer residence in the country. Rather, the anecdotes of this work function symbiotically and synergistically to create a unit of literature of which the import far exceeds the sum of the component parts. This work is a unified, single-minded representation of an ecologically sound philosophy of spiritual happiness:

Considéré comme oeuvre mineure, ce recueil a très peu retenu l'attention. Pourtant, ceux qui s'intéressent à l'évolution de la romancière, pourraient retrouver ici un univers élargi. Depuis la description de l'étang aux grenouilles, qui ouvre et ferme le recueil . . . jusqu'à l'évocation du souvenir des débuts de la maîtresse d'école dans la nouvelle <<L'Enfant morte>>, les grands thèmes affleurent, les grandes interrogations reviennent, mais avec plus de sérénité. (Vuong-Riddick 49)

Furthermore, this work plays a crucial role in the overall corpus of Gabrielle Roy to date and, in fact, it recapitulates those works which preceded it:

loin d'être <<inattendue>>, cette oeuvre a été

depuis longtemps préparée, annoncée par une recherche qui traverse toute la production de Gabrielle Roy et dont elle représente une nouvelle étape, sinon le point ultime. (Ricard, Gabrielle Roy, 151)

François Ricard's model regarding Gabrielle Roy's works from Bonheur d'Occasion to Cet été qui chantait provides valuable insight into this recapitulation. This model demonstrates the quasi-dialectic nature of the principal themes of those works. It will be demonstrated that the anecdotes of Cet été qui chantait function in a similar fashion and, as such, provide a recapitulative synthesis of the preceding works.

In his article entitled "Le cercle enfin uni des hommes", François Ricard discusses the cyclical, dialectic nature of the works of Gabrielle Roy from Bonheur d'Occasion to Cet été qui chantait. He explains that the rêve conducteur of her work is that of reconciliation: of humans with humans, of humans with the world, of humans with themselves (60). The realism of some works and the idealism of others function in a dialectic relationship which is at the very base of Gabrielle Roy's creative activity (62). They serve to present her vision of utopia: the idealism as an explicit representation, the realism as the foreground to the implicit, utopic image in the background (70). Ricard goes on to say that these two viewpoints are complementary: aucun des deux ne prétend jamais épuiser à lui seul tout le sens de la réalité. Le réalisme, en

effet, empêche l'idéalisme de se changer en angélisme, tout comme l'idéalisme, imprégnant la vision réaliste, la détourne ainsi du désespoir où, livrée à elle-même, elle ne pourrait pas ne pas aboutir fatalement. (71)

This utopic vision is, consequently, present in all of her works:

cette utopie, tantôt contemplée comme en pleine lumière, tantôt seulement suggérée comme par contraste, mais toujours présente, toujours attirante, est ce qui donne à l'ensemble de l'oeuvre de Gabrielle Roy sa constance aussi bien que son mouvement. (63)

The utopic vision is, however, more explicitly expressed in some works than in others:

la Petite Poule d'eau inaugure dans l'oeuvre de l'écrivain un courant de création très particulier, qui trouvera son couronnement dans Cet été qui chantait, et dont on pourrait désigner les productions, faute d'un terme plus simple, comme des <<projections utopiques>>. (66)

It is clear, then, that Ricard views Cet été qui chantait as the culmination of thirty years of writing:

Ce rêve [central qui anime toute l'oeuvre de Gabrielle Roy] trouvera, dans [Cet été qui chantait], peut-être sa plus complète, sa plus pure expression. En effet, Cet été qui chantait . . . représente

probablement l'état ultime où puisse parvenir ce que nous avons appelé la <<projection utopique>>. (76)

Ricard concludes his article about Gabrielle Roy thus: "Depuis trente ans, elle est en marche vers le cercle enfin uni des hommes, vers cet horizon qui, se dérochant toujours, n'en éclaire pas moins chacun de ses pas" (78).

One of the more important aspects of Ricard's article is the explanation of the dialectic between idealism and realism throughout the literary corpus of Gabrielle Roy. An application of this dialectic analysis to Cet été qui chantait itself yields interesting insights. The manner in which each anecdote can be said to have its own tone or colour, i.e. principal theme elucidated by the text, has been analysed through the use of the terms 'happiness gained', 'happiness lost' and the 'search for happiness', the purpose of which is to categorize each anecdote. In the same way, the previous works of Gabrielle Roy can be said to have a certain theme, as illustrated by Ricard (Gabrielle Roy). The anecdotes of Cet été qui chantait, viewed from this perspective, appear to recapitulate thematically the principal themes of the preceding works of Gabrielle Roy.

Table 1

Thematic correspondence between the anecdotes of Cet été qui chantait and the author's previous works

<u>Bonheur d'Occasion</u>	'Monsieur Toung' (1)
-realism, alienation	

<u>La Petite Poule d'Eau</u>	'La Gatte de monsieur Emile' (2)
-utopic vision	'Les Vaches d'Aimé' (3)
	'La Trotteuse' (5)
<u>Alexandre Chenevert</u>	'Jeannot-la-Corneille' (4)
-realism, alienation	'Ames en peine' (6)
	'Un mobile' (7)
<u>Rue Deschambault</u>	'La Grande-Minoune-Maigre' (8)
-quest for	
reconciliation	
<u>La montagne secrète</u>	'Les Frères-Arbres' (9)
-alienation,	'La Fête des Vaches' (10)
reconciliation	'La Paire' (11)
<u>La Route d'Altamont</u>	'Danse, Mouffette!' (12)
-quest for	'La Messe aux hirondelles' (13)
reconciliation	'Le Jour où Martine
	descendit au fleuve' (14)
	'Les Visiteurs de la
	journée' (15)
	'La Nuit des lucioles' (16)
<u>La rivière sans repos</u>	'L'Enfant morte' (17)
-realism, alienation	'Les Iles' (18)
<u>Cet été qui chantait</u>	'De retour à la mare de
-recapitulation	monsieur Toung' (19)

Table 1 presents, at left, a summary model showing the alternance of the principal themes of the works of Gabrielle Roy (Ricard, Gabrielle Roy) and, at right, a grouping of the anecdotes of Cet été qui chantait. The anecdotes thus

grouped are in near-chronological order of their occurrence within the work; the actual order is indicated by the number in the parentheses. These anecdotes have been grouped according to a common theme which relates to the corresponding work at left.

Bonheur d'Occasion can be classified as a work depicting realism and alienation. The first anecdote about M. Toung, besides serving as the introduction to Cet été qui chantait and therefore by necessity presenting the majority of themes to come, has itself an element of realism (the death of M. Toung at the hands of the muskrat) and alienation (the subsequent emptiness of the formerly idyllic world). The world of M. Toung, seemingly harmonious and ideal, yet eventually empty and hostile, is not unrelated to the world of Saint-Denis in Bonheur d'Occasion, a world in which Rose-Anna is sorely disappointed; her anticipation of joy and refound youth upon her return to her family home too quickly dissolves into a sense of frustration and futility.

La petite poule d'eau is a utopic vision, a stark contrast to the first novel. It shows a near-ideal world of happiness and harmony in which fellowship abounds. 'La Gatte de monsieur Emile' reflects a similar situation, whereby we see the development of an idyllic world in which animal and plants live in an harmonious symbiotic relationship. 'Les Vaches d'Aimé' and 'La Trotteuse' continue this theme of harmony and happiness, and add to it the idea of the importance of fellowship, which is one of the principle

themes of the latter part of La petite poule d'eau.

Alexandre Chenevert is another novel of realism and alienation in which the principal character struggles to find happiness in a world which tries continually to thwart him. 'Jeannot-la-Corneille' reflects the reality of conflict between one man and nature. 'Ames en peine' is an account of the desperate alienation of creatures, even in the most ideal surroundings. 'Un mobile' demonstrates the futility which can be felt when attempting to respond to someone or something in power. This injection of reality into the near-perfect world of Cet été qui chantait is an interesting reversal of the injection of an ideal world (Lac Vert) into the grim reality of the world of Alexandre Chenevert.

Rue Deschambault has been categorized as a quest for reconciliation with the past. 'La Grande-Minoune-Maigre' tells us the story of a soul searching for meaning in her life, which can also be considered a reconciliation with the past. As previously indicated, this anecdote is a precursor to the more powerfully touching one about Martine, in much the same way as Rue Deschambault thematically foreshadows La Route d'Altamont.

In La montagne secrète, Pierre Cadrai, an artist, travels throughout the far north of Canada as well as into parts of France in search of the ultimate expression of his art as it relates to his quest for his identity. It is a novel of Pierre's alienation from himself and from the world and of his ultimate reconciliation with himself. In 'Les

Frères-Arbres', there is the alienation of nature by humanity's deliberate demonstration of power and by its pollution, and then the reconciliation of nature and humanity through the efforts of Wilbrod. In 'La Fête des vaches', the wind is at once beneficial to some life (reconciliation) and not to other life (alienation). 'La Paire' is a more straightforward parallel of the corresponding novel; we see an animal who finds its peace when it finds its soul-mate, its other half: its happiness is found when its identity is completed.

La Route d'Altamont represents another quest for reconciliation. It is a more personally detailed account of the emotional involvement of the narrator/author with her loved ones. 'Danse, Mouffette!' shows the need which all creatures have for love and affection. 'La Messe aux hirondelles' is a spiritual culmination of the symbiotic happiness of animals and humans. 'Le Jour où Martine descendit au fleuve' reflects a quest for meaning in life. Martine's desire to return to the sea before her death is reminiscent of the urge of both Christine's mother and grandmother to be reminded once again of their birthplace. 'Les Visiteurs de la journée' is an extension of 'Danse, Mouffette!'. 'La Nuit des lucioles' is a supplication for meaningful harmony on Earth.

La rivière sans repos is another novel of realism and alienation. Elsa raises her half-white child only to lose him ultimately to the white civilization. 'L'Enfant morte'

reflects the despair of a child lost, in this case, to death. Elsa yearns for a return to the earlier, simpler way of life of her ancestors and fails to find it. The narrator, in 'Les Iles', yearns to reach that beyond, that faraway unattainable place which had been visited by the grandfather of her friend, Berthe.

The final anecdote, 'De retour à la mare de monsieur Toung' provides a thematic as well as formal conclusion to Cet été qui chantait and, in doing so, leaves the reader with some sense of optimistic hope. In the same way, Cet été qui chantait closes this section of Gabrielle Roy's works to date.

Examined, then, from this perspective, it would seem beyond coincidence that such a striking parallelism exists between Gabrielle Roy's previous works and the anecdotes of Cet été qui chantait. The latter quite clearly captures and re-expresses the principal tones of the former, and consequently makes Cet été qui chantait a true recapitulation of those works.

In Gabrielle Roy, Ricard has also grouped the author's works as "le cycle de l'exil" (from Bonheur d'Occasion to Alexandre Chenevert), "le cycle du retour" (from Rue Deschambault to La Route d'Altamont) and as "écrits postérieurs à 1966" (49-126). He indicates clearly in his book the difficulty of imposing a global description on an incomplete corpus, (17, 50, 52) but he claims that "[l]'intérêt de cette répartition est qu'elle tient compte,

dans la mesure du possible, de la configuration cyclique de l'oeuvre" (51).

This "exil" which François Ricard presents is defined as "la perte d'une patrie humaine capable de satisfaire en l'être son désir de solidarité et de sécurité" (86). Whereas Bonheur d'Occasion and Alexandre Chenevert are "textes de dépaysement", La petite poule d'eau offers "des visions idylliques de la patrie retrouvée" (87). This theme of exile is clearly part of 'Monsieur Toung', in which the principal character, the frog, is killed in his own home. The same can be said of the principal character, the bird, in 'Jeannot-la-Corneille'. 'Ames en peine' serves to demonstrate the inability of some creatures to find any security at all, even in the most tranquil of surroundings. By contrast, the idyllic view of La petite poule d'eau is reflected in its corresponding anecdotes.

Ricard defines the second period as:

celle, non pas du bonheur, mais d'une
réconciliation et d'un approfondissement qui
conféreront à l'oeuvre un tour nouveau, à la fois
plus intime et plus serein. Non que la souffrance
et l'interrogation disparaissent, mais elles se
feront désormais plus discrètes et plus
graves. (88)

The more intimate and serious nature of the anecdotes which correspond to this section can best be expressed by the search for happiness theme of this part of the work as well

as by the thematic widening which develops in this section.

It must be noted that, using this model, 'Un mobile' once again finds itself in the position of a bridge between two sections (cf. p 40 of this thesis). Not only does this anecdote appear to be isolated thematically from the other anecdotes, but it also lies between the anecdotes which correspond to Ricard's groupings of Gabrielle Roy's previous works. It would appear perhaps to be nothing more than an anomaly interjected into an otherwise unified and continuous series. Yet its position within the work and its corresponding position in the model speak of a crucial importance to Cet été qui chantait, namely, a position of transition from one principal theme to another, from the period of "exil" to the period of "retour".

François Ricard uses another model to distinguish the two groups of works, labelling the first as "réalisations" and the second as "méditations" (125) He concludes by arguing that:

peu importe le critère adopté . . . le seul point qui me paraisse tout à fait indiscutable étant l'opposition elle-même, c'est-à-dire la division des six premières oeuvres de Gabrielle en deux groupes symétriques et complémentaires mais assez différents l'un de l'autre et possédant chacun une unité suffisante pour justifier leur étude séparée. (126)

Regarding Gabrielle Roy's publications after 1966, thus

including La rivière sans repos, Ricard says this:

Nulle résignation, ni non plus d'optimisme
béat dans cette attitude, mais au contraire
une compassion et une mansuétude plus hautes
que jamais. On dirait que l'oeuvre, dominé
surtout jusque-là par la recherche personnelle,
tend maintenant à se dégager et veut embrasser
un espace plus vaste, mêlant encore plus
intimement qu'à aucune autre époque le destin
de l'écrivain à celui de tous les hommes. (128)

It is clear that of all the anecdotes 'L'Enfant morte', one of the two which corresponds to La rivière sans repos, is the one which most strongly captures our attention and our emotions. François Hébert referred to it as "la clef du recueil" (347). The symbolism of the 'beyond' conveyed by the image of the unattainable islands has already been discussed in previous chapters.

About Cet été qui chantait specifically, Ricard notes the "mouvement dialectique sur lequel se fonde son inspiration" (Gabrielle Roy 146). He goes on to divide the work into three parts: the first part opposes the themes of "angoisse" and "joie" (146); the second part presents "un univers de calme et de joie presque parfaite" (148); the third part represents "la synthèse et l'approfondissement des deux premières parties" (149). Ricard recognizes to some extent the recapulative aspects of Cet été qui chantait. He affirms that "globalement, c'est à la tendance dite du

<<retour>> qu'il faut rapporter ce livre" (151). While I appreciate the merit of such a perspective, I believe that it has not gone far enough in showing specifically the recapitulative nature of Cet été qui chantait. The last anecdote of the work has been shown to summarize and conclude the principal themes of Cet été qui chantait. In the same way, Cet été qui chantait itself appears to recapitulate and consequently conclude this period of the works of Gabrielle Roy.

The recapitulative nature of Cet été qui chantait has been demonstrated. There exists an unquestionable correspondence between groups of the anecdotes of Cet été qui chantait and the author's preceding works. This is not to say that Cet été qui chantait is nothing more than a rehashing of old material; it is, rather, a work, unique unto itself, which explores and intertwines themes previously treated by the author. This recapitulative nature is merely one more factor which supports the overall importance of Cet été qui chantait in the literary corpus of Gabrielle Roy.

Conclusion

Cet été qui chantait is a work which appears, at first glance, to be surprisingly, even deceptively simple. It presents itself as an almost trite, superficial collection of fable-like stories. Yet, hidden not all that far below the surface, once again, those same themes as in previous works emerge in a powerful demonstration of the importance of harmonious relationships to the survival of humanity.

Although humanity is an integral part of nature, the author is saying that humanity has surpassed the appropriate limits within that nature by no longer respecting its laws and its balance. Humanity has destroyed nature for its own selfish needs and purposes. Much of humanity is, therefore, no longer in touch with the rest of nature. It has very nearly lost its capacity to belong to nature.

Gabrielle Roy uses personification and anthropomorphism as two techniques in order to achieve the expression of her ideas and philosophies. The use of animals and plants rather than humans begs the question 'why?', especially since her previous works have concentrated on human character development. Is this use of non-human life designed to mask the underlying profound nature of the work, to render it too simple for serious consideration? Is it perhaps to highlight the importance of considering all life-forms and their roles within the planetary ecosystem? There is no question that

these techniques of anthropomorphism and personification are essential to the success of the text. Their use is neither gratuitous nor whimsical. The animals speak, not with the intent of providing an amusing aspect to the narrative (although that is at times the result) nor with the intent of moralizing: "ses courts récits ne sont pas des fables, puisque les animaux qui les peuplent ne donnent pas de leçons" (Ethier-Blais 16); rather, the animals serve to represent humans in a variety of circumstances.

The essentially implicit way in which this reflection of human nature is accomplished is at times made explicit. In describing the transformation of the M. Emile's gatte, the narrator explains: "Mais les plantes sont comme les humains. Un groupe vit-il heureux dans un endroit, tout le monde veut y prendre pied" (30). In describing the activities of the two groups of birds, the crows and the gulls, the narrator states: "Ils se tenaient ensemble, c'est vrai, mais apparemment ne communiquaient le moins du monde. Et de loin, ainsi assemblés sans pour autant se connaître, ils ressemblaient à des humains" (45). One of the more striking examples relates to the two killdeer who have taken over the small pond and driven away the happiness. The narrator declares to herself: "Mais ces oiseaux-là au coeur qui oscille, c'est toi, c'est moi, c'est nous tous, les enfants de la Terre" (76).

Roy expresses a profound sadness for human beings who have forgotten their role, their place within nature. The

vision of ecology in Cet été qui chantait is far different from that contemporary philosophy which would treat the symptoms of environmental and ecological disaster, all the while ignoring the fundamental causes. It is, rather, a plea to humanity to remember its origins within that nature and to attempt to find that symbiotic, harmonious relationship with itself and with nature. This would be paradise. . .

The manner in which this concern is presented has appeared to many to be quite banal, even superfluous. It would appear that few critics have seized the deeper nature of Cet été qui chantait, its presentation and co-ordinated thematic developments and its recapitulation of themes presented in previous works. All of these aspects contribute to the overall significance of the work. While its utopic vision is clearly impractical and unrealistic if viewed from a less than symbolic optic, it offers nevertheless a simple, yet profound perspective regarding humanity's role in nature and in the world. Paradise is not a place; it is a state of mind, attainable only when all creatures find their rightful role within nature. Even so, we can, each and everyone of us, experience that paradise when we allow ourselves to experience the joy which comes from meaningful symbiotic relationships.

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