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# Stronger, Leaner, Francophone: Physical Culture in the Nationalism of Adrien Gagnon

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## ABSTRACT

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The idea of nationalism within the Province of Quebec has been prominent throughout its history. As a notable subject, French Canadian nationalism has been studied in great detail, in relation to sport, politics, and art. However, the relationship between Francophone pride and physical culture has yet to be examined.

The purpose of this thesis was to reveal the presence of French Canadian nationalism within the realm of bodybuilding, more specifically, to study Adrien Gagnon's physical culture magazine *Santé et Développement Physique* as a vehicle for nationalist thinking. Since Gagnon was publishing between 1946 and 1956, but was born in 1924, it was important to describe nationalism in Quebec from Gagnon's birth to the end of his career as a bodybuilding author and editor. By doing this, my justification of seeing Gagnon as a protector of the French Canadian population of Quebec could be related to the environment in which he was raised and lived – characterized by linguistic tension and Francophone oppression.

Through an analysis of articles about health and exercise in relation to youth and religion, Adrien Gagnon's longstanding feud with Ben Weider, and with Gagnon's perseverance as an author and bodybuilding contest organizer, I argue that Adrien Gagnon strove to build what he referred to as a perfect French Canadian race. For Gagnon, healthy individuals made a healthy population and a strong "race." Also, with the help of numerous allegations against Weider and frequent promotional messages of his own physique and lessons, Adrien Gagnon attempted to undermine his Anglophone competition and display the supremacy of the French Canadians within the sport of bodybuilding and the realm of physical culture. Finally, beyond his muscle publications, and through the creation of his weightlifting club and his bodybuilding federation,

both of which emulated Francophone ancestry and pride, Gagnon found his vehicles with which to promote the significance of strong French Canadians.

Finally, the termination of his publications led to the disappearance of Gagnon's nationalistic propaganda, but did not result in his demise. Adrien Gagnon went on to create one of the biggest natural supplement companies in Quebec and experienced immense success through hard work and perseverance as an ambassador and advocate of healthy living. Nevertheless, within the pages of this thesis, Adrien Gagnon will be remembered as a protector and vanguard of what he referred to as the French Canadian race.

## **KEYWORDS**

Adrien Gagnon, Physical Culture, Bodybuilding, Health, Nationalism, Quebec, Provincial Autonomy, Linguistic Turmoil, Muscle, Male Beauty.

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## CHAPTER 1

### Background and Rationale

#### **Introduction**

On April 7, 2014, a minority *Parti Québécois* awaited the verdict of the polls regarding the Quebec election and the province's possible separation from Canada. Following a minority victory in 2012, the leader of the PQ, Pauline Marois, called upon issues of the past to strengthen her political supremacy – provincial sovereignty was exhibited through 'regretful' messages and the importance as well as preferred use of French language dominance was explicitly displayed throughout *la belle province*.<sup>1</sup> It was Marois' belief that these steps would rally Quebeckers towards her claim of provincial sovereignty, instead, it sparked talk of a third referendum, resulting in the defeat of the PQ and the reinstatement of the Liberal party.

The PQ's attempt at achieving provincial sovereignty and its obsession with the ascendance of the French language were not a novelty. The Province of Quebec, and Lower Canada before that, were built on beliefs defined by economic, cultural, and linguistic independence – which consolidated to form a reoccurring ideology, Quebec nationalism.

The history of Quebec with its focus on national pride has resulted in a wide range of literary accounts, extending from its colonization during the New France era, to the most recent political struggles.<sup>2</sup> Although the idea of sovereignty was not popularized until the Quiet Revolution in 1960, provincial autonomy was the desire of most French Canadians facing annexation by the British Empire, as early as 1760. From the ruins of a destroyed New France arose a culture that, 200 years later, determined that cutting its ties with Canada would result in

the best possible outcome for the province. The culture that stemmed from the conquest was defined by its persistence in preserving its linguistic, religious, cultural, and sporting traditions.

Sport in Quebec was, and still is, interwoven with Quebec nationalism. Despite the fact that lacrosse was one of the first sports in Quebec with roots in Native Canadian culture, its cultural significance was quickly overshadowed by big sport franchises and ‘larger than life’ sporting figures. Being a Québécois, it comes natural for me to view hockey, in particular, as the heart and soul of Quebec culture. However, many other sports, teams, and individuals come to mind when studying sport and Quebec. As will be argued in this study, Louis Cyr was immortalized by Quebec as a sport legend, displaying the “pure strength” of Quebec against the English-speaking population. However, throughout Quebec history, many stars and teams left their mark on French Canadian culture, and their influence can still be felt today. For example, goal tender Patrick Roy, who led the Montreal Canadiens to a Stanley Cup victory, established his name and reputation amongst the famous players in the National Hockey League; Jacques Villeneuve, won the Formula One World Championship; the Montreal Expos gave the city of Montreal and Quebec as a whole a sense of pride in Major League Baseball; the Quebec Nordiques which, despite their move to Denver in 1995, are still discussed and commemorated in Quebec through the team’s apparel proudly worn by Quebeckers; and, finally, the Montreal Canadiens, whose own history is embedded in the history of Quebec as a whole and who can be considered to be the very spirit of Quebec’s French-speaking population. The world of Canadian sport is known to be predominantly English; however, Quebec has produced important enough stars to merit greater notice, beginning with the strongmen of the 1800s, leading into the Quiet Revolution. Hockey in particular was a nationalistic vehicle for French Canadians. With the somewhat involuntary help of Maurice Richard and the explicit nationalist messages of physical culture author Adrien Gagnon, the

Francophone population was imbued with a more pronounced sense of national pride. Seeing that Francophone supremacy could be achieved in an English-dominated milieu, French Canadians, driven by political forces such as the Liberal party, under Quebec Premier Jean Lesage's leadership, strove towards sovereignty and total segregation from Canada.

As will be discussed, Maurice Richard gave national as well as cultural identity to French Canadians as one of the greatest hockey players of all time, despite being a Francophone in the "Anglo-NHL," and being mistreated for it. This was clearly demonstrated through the 1955 riots which will also be discussed. Adrien Gagnon, for his part, through physical culture and health, established a sense of French Canadian superiority by promoting nationalism within muscle magazines. In order to fully comprehend Gagnon's contribution to the development of French Canadian nationalism and render this study valuable, an historical analysis of nationalism in Quebec must be discussed, beginning in 1760 with the seizure of New France by the British Empire, to the eve of the Quiet Revolution, 200 years later.<sup>3</sup>

## **Quebec Nationalism**

As the British Empire assumed control over Quebec following the Seven Years' War, Quebec's culture was retained and, through the Quebec Act of 1774, its French Civil Law Code was preserved and religious freedom was granted. In part due to the heavy influx of an English-speaking population, the British Empire followed suit with the Constitutional Act in 1791 which divided Quebec into Upper Canada, populated by English-speaking Canadians, and Lower Canada, which was mostly Francophone.

Although a colonial government was established in Lower Canada, French Canadians founded the *Parti Canadien* which requested its own legislation. The *Parti Canadien* became known as the *Parti Partiote* in 1822, led by reformist, Louis-Joseph Papineau. Although the



*Patriotes* were considered to be somewhat extremist, Gougeon argues that the party's nationalism was dedicated to the respect of Lower Canadian culture, rather than solely seeking recognition of the French language – which became the basis for Quebec nationalism in the near future.<sup>4</sup> In conjunction with its focus on culture as a whole, the *Parti Patriote* demanded more autonomous political institutions that would be responsible for the Francophone colony in its entirety. With their requests denied, and several threats by the British directed at Quebec's seigneurial system, Civil Code, and French language, the *Patriotes* led an armed rebellion against the ruling Empire which resulted in not only the defeat and complete suppression of the *Parti Patriote*, but also the unification of Upper and Lower Canada under British rule, legitimized by the Union Act of 1840.

The Union Act was proposed by British administrator, Lord Durham. Durham suggested several reforms, including the absorption of Quebec, in order to accelerate British assimilation of the Francophone population who were considered by Durham as a people without a history or culture.<sup>5</sup> Following the unification of the Canadian population, French-speaking individuals became known as *Canadien-Français* – French Canadian. The term 'French Canadian' will be used here to describe the population of Quebec between 1940 and 1960. As explained by Brunet, the term '*Québécois*' only became commonly used during the Quiet Revolution, when the Francophone population of Quebec, striving for an identity, truly saw itself as an independent entity.<sup>6</sup> It was also as a result of the Union Act that the preservation of the French language was, and still is, a primary concern of French Canadians. Additionally, as language retention became crucial, so did the role of the Catholic clergy who propagated that "language was the keeper of faith."<sup>7</sup> The clergy became especially important during the reign of Maurice Duplessis, when Adrien Gagnon surfaced as a prominent French Canadian publisher.

The Union Act also divided Canada into Canada West (Ontario) and Canada East (Quebec). Although Quebec found itself separated once more from its Canadian neighbor, and French Canadians finally found themselves to be a majority population, they remained under British rule. Following several decades of sporadic rebellions within Quebec, the British Empire passed the British North American Act in 1867, referred to by Brunet as “the Great Compromise of Canadian History.” Realizing that the French population would not let itself be assimilated, the BNA Act united Canada as a whole – Quebec, Ontario, New Brunswick, and Nova Scotia – resulting in the granting of the Province of Quebec to the French Canadians, which, in turn ensured the establishment of a provincial government, with limited function.<sup>8</sup> Although the BNA Act merged Quebec with the rest of Canada, the creation of a distinct province elevated its population’s sense of nationalism and coined terms such as *survivance* to refer to the French Canadian ability to resist assimilation and preserve its culture; *la Trinité Québécoise* – the Quebec Trinity, encompassing Faith, Language and Race; and “the French Canadian Miracle,” also denoting the Quebec population’s will and ability to survive.<sup>9</sup>

From the BNA Act onwards, economic and especially provincial autonomy was paramount for the Francophones of Quebec. In the ensuing decades, French Canadian nationalism escalated. The government of Canada, or federal government, was embroiled in long term disagreements with the provincial government of Quebec regarding provincial rights and decisions. Several events from the instigation of the BNA Act to the Quiet Revolution pushed French Canadians to feel that they were constantly being undermined as a people by the rest of Canada. In 1885, after Francophone Métis leader Louis Riel was executed, protests erupted in Quebec due to the French Canadian belief that they were purposefully being persecuted for their religion and language.<sup>10</sup>

Additionally, at the height of the First World War, Quebec and the rest of Canada were apart regarding Canada's involvement in the war. With a majority of Canada voting "Yes," for conscription and Quebec voting "No," the French Canadians who voted against conscription felt excluded and powerless – an additional reason to strive for provincial autonomy. A similar situation occurred during the conscription vote regarding the Second World War. Just prior to this war, Canada, and Quebec in particular, suffered from the economic hardships of the Great Depression, which French Canadians blamed on the Anglophone population of Quebec.<sup>11</sup> As a primarily rural population, they believed that the English business-men and corporate leaders played a significant role in the province's economic decline. This heightened animosity between the French and English population, along with the province's financial state brought forth a difficult period of Quebec history characterized by the province's stagnation under conservative policies, while the rest of Canada progressed. This period was known as *la Grande Noirceur* – the "Great Darkness."<sup>12</sup>

This 'Great Darkness' emerged with the election of Maurice Duplessis' *Union Nationale* in 1936, followed by a return to power in 1944 after being superseded by Adélard Godbout and the Liberals in 1939. Under Duplessis, Quebec experienced an elevated sense of traditionalism or conservative nationalism, where the main concern of the province was to remain rural and clerical, as opposed to liberal nationalism which sought to move forward and evolve Quebec as a French autonomous nation.<sup>13</sup> Due to his focus on rural life and the importance of the Church, Maurice Duplessis hindered the development of Quebec while the rest of Canada prospered – the English-speaking population was embracing a "second" industrial revolution caused by the need for war supplies, while the Francophones were led by a man stuck in the past. As a result, the job market was largely Anglophone and dominated by English-speaking Canadians. Moreover, Duplessis

refused any assistance from the federal government – he refused funding offered by the Canadian government towards Montreal Universities under the claim that education was a provincial matter and “sacred to the survival and development of a distinct French Canadian nationality.”<sup>14</sup> Of course, this stubborn approach resulted in a lower education rate among French Canadians, and ultimately, lower incomes. As Quinn explains, an additional and important section of the population, strongly influenced by ideas of nationalism, was the youth of the province – “they were entering a world which had no place for them in its economic structure.”<sup>15</sup>

An additional occurrence during the *Grande Noirceur* and in the beginnings of the Quiet Revolution was the emergence of several nationalistic messages still present in Quebec to this day. First, “*nous et les autres*” attempts to distinguish the French-speaking population (*nous* – us) from the Anglophones (*les autres* – the others). Also, and used as a national slogan, “*Maître Chez Nous* – Masters of our own house” describes the theme for the changes desired in Quebec, and a rallying cry for all French Canadians. Strengthened by these nationalist beliefs were several important figures and groups that paved the way for French Canadian pride. First, *l’Action Française* emerged as a nationalist group under French Canadian political leader and publisher, Henri Bourassa. Formed near the end of the First World War, its goal was to “defend and promote all those traditional rights and interests of the French Canadians as a distinct cultural group.”<sup>16</sup> Furthermore, during the Second World War, journalist and politician André Laurendeau established the *Bloc Populaire* whose initial purpose was anti-conscriptionist. They also clearly stated and believed that “Canada [belonged] to the Canadians, [and] Quebec [belonged] to the Quebeckers;”<sup>17</sup> displaying such a distinction in territorial ownership promoted provincial autonomy within French Canada during a time when the rest of the country was deciding the fate of many young men.<sup>18</sup>

Aside from politicians such as Maurice Duplessis, Adélard Godbout, and Jean Lesage, one of the most prominent figures active between 1920 and the 1940s was Canadian Roman Catholic Priest, Lionel ‘l’Abbé’ Groulx. Groulx wrote several articles in his own nationalist newspaper *l’Action Française* (not to be mistaken for Bourassa’s group), and books which told stories regarding French Canadian nationalist mythology.<sup>19</sup> Joining Lionel Groulx as prominent national figures were several individuals involved in Quebec sport, among them the subject of this paper, Adrien Gagnon. Among the sportsmen who were present during a period of French Canadian nationalist emergence throughout Quebec history, there was legendary strongman Louis Cyr who became famous in a time of utter French subordination in the late 1800s; Henri Richard, whose conflict with coach Scotty Bowman illustrates the ethnic conflict between the French and English-speaking population; Maurice Cyr who was seen as “the avenger of French Canadian injustices” due to his dominance in an English controlled sport; the Weider brothers, who serve as a direct contrast to my protagonist in the world of bodybuilding; and finally, my subject, Adrien Gagnon whose Francophone physical culture magazine in which muscular culture and nationalism are closely interwoven with French Canadian nationalism, referred to as the “pioneer and pillar of physical culture [in Quebec].”<sup>20</sup>

### **Sport, Culture, and the Emergence of Quebec Nationalism: Literature Review**

Nationalism, as defined by Cook, refers to an “acute sense of group-consciousness developed among a people.”<sup>21</sup> Cook also explains that nationalism “implies a closer drawing together within a group, most frequently within the framework of a political structure, with its leaders, its symbols, and its historical myths.”<sup>22</sup> As will be expounded, Quebec nationalism is a good example of Cook’s definition. With differing ideas emerging in Quebec, it will become apparent that the French Canadian population are drawn together by their leaders’ ideologies, their

symbols, and by their myths. Furthermore, it is important to note that Quebec nationalism is not resistant to change. In the period studied, 1920s to the eve of the Quiet Revolution of 1960, three major nationalist ideas surface. Conservative nationalism, focused on preserving the old ways of Quebec, thus causing a stagnation in the province's overall progress. Cleric-nationalism, led by the Catholic religious movement who believed that their doctrines and, similar to the conservative nationalist, that the old ways, especially centred on the rural lifestyle, were the ideal for Quebec. Finally, liberal nationalism, which, compared to conservative nationalism, looked towards the future of the Quebec population within a unified Canada.

The culture of Quebec, since its inception as 'New France' is, above all, a culture of imitation rather than innovation. As Guay clearly states "the cultural history of French Canadians is, first and foremost, a history of borrowing and adapting [to other cultures]."<sup>23</sup> French settlers borrowed practices from Native Canadians, and the first Canadians to be struck by British invasion, for the most part, quickly adapted to the conquering nation's customs, traditions, and language. Of course, there were certain individuals who refused to be completely assimilated by the intruders. French Canadians built and maintained their culture around their language and beliefs. As sport anchored itself in Quebec society, it became a founding characteristic of the French Canadian ethos.

Sport, for its part, was also brought from England into Quebec during the period of British influx. As Guay reveals, sport was a product of the English aristocracy which established itself in their newly conquered province.<sup>24</sup> It is important to note that the sports introduced to French Canadians by the British were practiced strictly by its founders – the French Canadians were simply spectators for the remainder of the 18<sup>th</sup> and the beginning of the 19<sup>th</sup> century. It was not until the early 1800s that Canadians shifted from onlooker to participant, and this, in the sport of

horse racing.<sup>25</sup> For their part, the English used sport as entertainment to pacify the Francophone population of Quebec.<sup>26</sup> This act of conciliation led to a rise in French Canadian participants, ultimately rendering sport a fundamental aspect of Quebec's culture.

Despite the fact that the Catholic Church in French Canada attempted to hinder participation in sport, under the presumption that it placed the *survivance* of the Francophones in danger due to sport's "Anglo-protestant factor," the French-speaking population strived to become a prosperous sporting community which rallied around athletics – making them better within the realm of sport, and unique through it. Guay explains that sport was successful in Quebec due to its defining character of free-time – providing the Francophone population some time away from work, mass, and from their rural responsibilities.<sup>27</sup> Jacques Mathieu, in the preface of Guay's book, explains that sport is "an innate need of man," demonstrated through the amount of time spent training towards a sport, participating in the activity, being distracted by it, and immersed into it.<sup>28</sup> As sport is regarded as a means to "settle internal conflict [and] build a nation [as well as] affirm national unity," this fact cannot be more evident than in a Quebec seeking autonomy, often resulting in internal strife.<sup>29</sup>

When repressed by outside invasion and attempts at assimilation, sport can be viewed as a vehicle for French Canadians to rise against British invaders. Their participation in sport brought pride among their people and wove their culture closer together. French Canadians shifted from spectator to contestant and began competing, not only for supremacy in sport, but also within its dualculture. As Francophone clubs began emerging in Montreal and Quebec City, and an increasing number of French Canadians took to the field or the ice, sport became as important as language and religion to the French-speaking population located in a dominant Canada. The importance of sport resonates even today with *Québécois* pride. When the Montreal Canadiens fail

to make the Stanley Cup finals, the '*habitants*' take to the streets in protest and disappointment and the media discusses its implications on Quebec's population for several weeks preceding the event. If the Canadiens manage to win the Stanley Cup, Quebecers also take to the streets, this time in joy and national pride, and the media heralds the province's happiness for several years. When men like Maurice Richard were suspended from the playoffs, or a fighter named George St-Pierre became the UFC Welterweight Champion, or even a young McGill Alumnus named Laurent Tardif-Duvernay joined the Kansas City Chiefs, Quebec sport fans, especially football fans, showed their support. Sport began as a way for the British to pacify French Canadians through its entertainment value; it has now become part of the essence of cultural life in Quebec.

Bodybuilding, as a physical activity practice, did not fully emerge in Quebec until 1940 with Joe Weider's *Your Physique*, while the concept of physical culture can only be considered implanted in Quebec society with the arrival of the strongmen.<sup>30</sup> Prior to their arrival and during the annexation of Quebec by the British Empire came the establishment of several sports. As French Canadians became more fervent participants in English sports, the events themselves became a place of ethnic confrontation between the French and the English-speaking population where "the French Canadians presented themselves as the only group capable of defending the faith, language, and institutions of the French Canadian nation [against] the conquering English."<sup>31</sup> The sport in which confrontation was elevated during the period of divide in Canada and then unification under Durham was horse racing, where French Canadians began as simple breeders, became riders, and rode their pure Canadian breeds against the English breed that was considered by the *habitants* as "not of the right race."<sup>32</sup> Rowing was also an activity that was practiced and perfected by French Canadians, along with curling and boxing.<sup>33</sup>



After Quebec became a province in the Dominion of Canada through the BNA Act of 1867, sport quickly became “a political element and stake, [in which] French Canadian integration increased their feelings of nationalism.”<sup>34</sup> Although hockey became popular during this particular period, its nationalist importance was not realized until much later. However, an activity of cultural significance that emerged in Quebec in the late 19<sup>th</sup> century and early 20<sup>th</sup> century, was the strongman competitions, also referred to as the vaudeville circuses.<sup>35</sup> This early tradition created longstanding national heroes praised for their ability to not only out-lift Anglophone competitors but, also, to display a strength that resonated with the oppressed French Canadians. The presence of such a tradition led George Jowett to name Quebec the ‘cradle of strongmen.’<sup>36</sup> Among the numerous French Canadian strongmen whose names are still remembered today; such as Horace Barré, Arthur Dandurand, and Victor Delamarre, the most famous Quebec icon was Louis Cyr. Born in 1863, in Saint-Cyprien-de-Napierreville, Cyr, through his outstanding feats of strength along with his numerous defeats of English competitors, “glorified the vitality of the French Canadian bloodline, [and] symbolized the vigor, toughness, and power of a nation which doubted its own value.”<sup>37</sup> In a way, to the French Canadian population, Louis Cyr became an answer to its sense of inferiority.

According to former president of the International Federation of Bodybuilding, Ben Weider, Quebec, as a whole, became the ‘cradle of strongmen’ due to its rural origins. Due to the fact that major corporations were controlled by the English-speaking population, French Canadian lives were built around manual labor in fields or foundries. As a working class population, French Canadians came to value the characteristics of labour including physicality, size, and strength. Louis Cyr was particularly admired for these qualities.<sup>38</sup> Although only a few field workers had such strong bodies, they were, nonetheless, valued as markers of a French Canadian masculinity

of a previous era. Weider explains that such strong bodies developed as “a condition of survival” – having no access to the corporate world and a scarce presence of advanced machinery, French Canadians were obligated, involuntarily, to integrate physical culture into their lives.<sup>39</sup> In the case of Cyr, he was the symbol of the “French Canadian at the mercy of English owners.”<sup>40</sup> Having moved back to Lowell, Massachusetts the year following his wedding, Cyr found himself working in a travelling circus for an American promoter. When Cyr returned to Quebec, his displays of strength came to epitomize French Canadian strength at a time when the Francophone population experienced linguistic and economic oppression at the hands of English Canadians.<sup>41</sup>

Cyr presented an image of a strong people, instilling pride among Quebeckers, and body image gained importance with regard to nationalism at a time when weakness was regarded with disfavour and “strong muscles [made] men great and nations free.”<sup>42</sup> Luciano explains that “muscularity serves as an allegory for national strength in troubled times, and as a class indicator,” separating the middle class from the working.<sup>43</sup> In the case of Quebec in the 1800s, the working class was comprised of rural French Canadians striving to survive while the middle/upper class were the British invaders who sought to assimilate the French. This same notion of physical image and class is found in Budd’s study on physical culture and body politics; he states that “ideal bodies were used as tools of domination in both class interactions and in Imperial contexts.”<sup>44</sup> In addition, the early stages of physical culture were related to national strength in the military during “troubled times.” Budd explains that “physical culture led to higher enrollments in the war due to its link to manliness and strength,” as a means to erase national decline.<sup>45</sup> In a particular instance, the British Empire sent the father of modern bodybuilding, Eugen Sandow, who was active as a performer alongside Cyr, to the British occupied provinces of South Africa after the Boer War in order to provide exercise tips and show off his muscularity. During his trip around the South African

provinces, Sandow was presented as a national treasure of the British Empire, the conqueror of nations. Eugen Sandow later became the personal trainer of King George V, who used physical culture as a means to symbolize the strength of the United Kingdom.<sup>46</sup> George V wanted to demonstrate, as Luciano maintains – that “exercise did not only cultivate healthy bodies, but strong character and judgement [necessary] to shape citizens of the modern nation.”<sup>47</sup> One of the major proponents who acknowledged the importance of physical culture, encompassing strength and physicality as a means to build national pride, and who promoted such an activity in North America was ‘the father of physical culture,’ Bernarr Macfadden.

Macfadden experienced the benefits of weight lifting at a young age after flirting with death as a sickly child. From there, he opened his first studio and began referring to himself as a “Kinestherapist – teacher of higher physical culture.” At the end of the 1800s, Macfadden started publishing pamphlets on health and physical training, which led to the release of his physical culture periodical in 1899 – *Physical Culture*.<sup>48</sup> Under his slogan “weakness is a crime, don’t be a criminal,” Macfadden promoted physical culture in America for the longevity and prosperity of a strong nation.<sup>49</sup> Luciano explains that, in the mind of Macfadden, “physical strength was not only a virtue but a duty, necessary to preserve the integrity and overall health of a nation,” which the ‘father of physical culture’ constantly promoted in his pamphlets and *Physical Culture*, that Luciano cleverly terms the “body-development bible.”<sup>50</sup>

Before bodybuilding and its connection to nationalism developed in Quebec, the province entered the period of “Great Darkness,” defined by Duplessis’ leadership. Despite this period of stagnation, sport remained an essential part of French Canadian culture. French Canadians established sports in Quebec through various clubs and associations that rivalled English supremacy, such as the *Association Athlétique d’Amateurs le National*. Founded in the 1920s, the

AAAN challenged the Montreal Amateur Athletic Association which was the reigning sport leader and governed by an English board. By establishing the AAAN, French Canadians demonstrated that their “race in sport, like in other branches of human activity, [was] not inferior to others.”<sup>51</sup> This idea of the ‘Francophone race’ being superior was also present in hockey.

Although hockey made its appearance in Montreal in the 1870s and became more nationally recognized in the later 1890s, it is the sport’s presence in this “Great Darkness” that instilled its national value. The game of hockey itself has been the subject of Quebec novels, poems, songs, and the media.<sup>52</sup> During his career, and through his retirement, Maurice Richard was lionized in French Canadian culture as a national hero. The literature on Richard is extensive, and his relation to Quebec nationalism, far-reaching. Maurice Richard played at a time when sport was still under English governance, and Quebec was under the supervision of the *Union Nationale*’s nationalistic rhetoric. While ‘the Rocket’ is not the subject of this study, his role in French Canadian nationalism helps to explain the close relationship between sport and nationalism in Quebec.

Maurice Richard was often called “Saint-Maurice” and “the avenger of French Canadian injustices.”<sup>53</sup> According to Foran, “Richard helped everyone find strength, [and] permitted a nation to recover its pride and claim its place in the sun.”<sup>54</sup> Morrow and Wamsley also argue that “to his fans, he was the very symbol of French Canadian sporting excellence in a sport dominated by English Canadians.”<sup>55</sup> Through his ability to resist the linguistic tension in hockey and his willingness to stand against constant acrimony and inequality against his language, Maurice Richard involuntarily led a movement of heightened nationalism throughout Quebec, giving him the title of the “incarnation of Quebec nationalism.”<sup>56</sup> Most notable of which was the ‘Richard Riots’ in 1955. Following an altercation between Richard and an opposing player, the Rocket

struck a linesman resulting in his suspension for the remainder of the season. This in turn led to a massive riot in the streets of Montreal due to the belief that the severe suspension was related to Richard's heritage – being a Francophone in the Anglo-NHL.<sup>57</sup> Aside from his skills as a hockey player, and arguably, as a coach, Richard is the symbol of the “French culture that has survived in North America, despite all the obstacles,” and functioning as the embodiment of “the fire and style of their race” – which was exploited for a long time but, through sport, could finally compete against the oppressors and even dominate for once.<sup>58</sup>

The subject of this study can be compared to Maurice Richard – not as a national sport hero, but as an individual who advanced the spirit of French Canadian nationalism in his surroundings. Instead of taking hits and scoring goals, Adrien Gagnon wrote physical culture publications in which he promoted the need to get fit and healthy, in parallel with an appeal to French Canadians to establish themselves as a strong people. However, preceding Gagnon as a physical culture author in North America was Bob Hoffman.

Prior to his involvement in the First World War, Bob Hoffman began participating in weightlifting and grew very fond of the activity. His interest led to the foundation of the York Barbell Company, a weightlifting equipment industry, and the publication of his physical culture magazine, *Strength and Health*, in 1932. The purpose of his periodicals was, at first, to promote weightlifting and answer inquiries related to the activity. However, as Woycke and Fair demonstrate, the publication quickly took a turn towards endorsing national strength.<sup>59</sup> However, Hoffman's most important contribution to the promotion of American strength and nationalism was before and during the Second World War. Both Woycke and Fair describe a temporary section in *Strength and Health* where Hoffman discusses the link between “barbells and victory,” claiming that “many of [America's] heroes were barbell men,” and that they were led to victory with the

help of *Strength and Health*.<sup>60</sup> It is also argued that Hoffman believed that America was trailing the Nazis during the war and that they could “learn something about fitness from Germany.”<sup>61</sup> Finally, Bob Hoffman was also an advocate for the training of America’s youth to ensure that the future generation could be the protectors of the ‘land of opportunity.’<sup>62</sup>

Hoffman’s magazine experienced only a short life in Canada after its appearance in 1934. However, that short period of time was enough for Canadian-born Joe Weider to inspire the publication of his own periodical *Your Physique*. The English-speaking ‘Montrealer’ took the bodybuilding world by storm with the help of his brother Ben. In 1940, his muscle magazine hit the shelves across Montreal and a greater part of Quebec, replacing *Strength and Health* which was banned from Canada in 1938, due to allegations of the production of homosexual pornography.<sup>63</sup> The Weider Brothers shook the world of bodybuilding once more in 1946 when they founded the International Federation of Bodybuilding during the first Mr. Montreal contest, directly opposing Hoffman’s Bodybuilding legislation within the Amateur Athletic Union. As the event was about to begin, officials for the Amateur Athletic Union (AAU) working under Bob Hoffman threatened to stop the competition due to a direct violation of the AAU legislation. Instead of backing down, the Weiders left the AAU and established the IFBB that very night.<sup>64</sup> While the articles found in *Your Physique*, and later *Muscle Power* were not particularly aimed at promoting the Canadian nation and not interspersed with nationalistic messages, Joe Weider followed the trend of using muscle to incite victory among the troops fighting in World War II. Although Ben Weider enlisted in the infantry, Joe Weider was exempt from military service because his writing advanced the war effort.<sup>65</sup> Woycke mentions the same publication as I do – he uses a specific quote from *Your Physique* that I will borrow to strengthen my claim that Joe Weider promoted national strength during a time of hardship for North America. *Your Physique* claimed

that they were “building [the] two-fisted, red-blooded manhood that the Allied Nations [were] clamoring for.” Also, during the Korean War, *Your Physique* explained that they were helping prepare “the youth of today, the protector of tomorrow.”<sup>66</sup> Although his statements on national pride were not as elaborate as Hoffman’s claim to national regeneration, it is apparent that Weider participated in the endorsement of nation building through the use of sport, in this case, bodybuilding.

Alongside Joe Weider emerged his French-speaking counterpart, Adrien Gagnon. While *Your Physique* grew in numbers and the IFBB was being planned, Gagnon started publishing his own magazine entitled *Santé et Développement Physique* in which he discussed various ways to increase one’s health, longevity, and muscularity. The pages of his periodicals are filled with the testimonials of French Canadians claiming to have reached an elevated physical development through the teachings of Adrien Gagnon, and through weightlifting as well as physique contests exclusive to Quebec. Yet, within the messages regarding health and vitality are visible connotations about strengthening the Francophone population and promotional messages of nationalism. However, with regard to secondary accounts of Gagnon, there is a gap in the literature. To my knowledge, Gagnon’s life is probably best recounted in the biography written by his son Yvan, and in a *Globe and Mail* article by Philip Fine. The late James Woycke, in *Esprit de Corps*, also provides a cursory treatment of Adrien Gagnon. In the Yvan Gagnon biography, his father is painted as a pioneer and founder of physical culture in a Quebec characterized by political turmoil and ethnic conflict, while Fine gives a linear account of Gagnon’s accomplishments, emphasizing his success as a business man. However, in *Esprit de Corps*, Woycke reveals that Adrien Gagnon was, indeed, a prominent physical culture author but, also, a man who used his publications to promote French Canadian nationalism and who “dedicated himself to the physical and moral

regeneration of the Franco-Canadian race.”<sup>67</sup> Although it is true that Gagnon was the first to publish a Francophone physical culture magazine, he was soon joined by Ben Weider’s *Santé et Force* the same year and, thus, overshadowed by the establishment of the first and biggest bodybuilding federation in the world.

## **Statement of Purpose**

The purpose of this research is to study through critical narrative analysis, Adrien Gagnon’s promotional and, at times, racist messages supporting French Canadian nationalism as set forth in his physical culture magazine, *Santé et Développement Physique*, during the period of publication, 1946 to 1956. This thesis will demonstrate how, with his writing, Gagnon raised the issue of French Canadian weakness and how, in his perception, it could be countered through physical culture and health.

Bairner explains how sport and physical activity can serve as effective tools in building a nation and in solidifying an existing sense of nationality – the same can be said for physical culture as a means to increase national pride.<sup>68</sup> With the presence of the Weider brothers in Montreal and the launch of bodybuilding magazines in Quebec in 1940 under Joe Weider, the city of Montreal slowly became the centre of physical culture in Quebec. While Weider’s initial publications catered to the English-speaking population, Adrien Gagnon published his periodicals exclusively for French Canadians. Being the first Francophone physical culture publisher in Quebec, and directly competing against the English-speaking Weiders, Gagnon emerged as a protector and vanguard of what he referred to as the French Canadian race.

It is important to understand that, for Gagnon, what he conceptualized as the ‘French Canadian race’ was built around language, culture, religion, and a rural economy. For this reason, when stating that Gagnon used somewhat racist comments, it is meant that, although connotations



made by Gagnon seem, indeed, racist, the importance he attached to the term ‘race’ should be considered in the sense of pitting the French Canadians against the English Canadians in the realm of bodybuilding. Being a French Canadian striving to build a physical culture empire in an Anglophone world, Gagnon used racist slurs to denigrate his English-speaking opponent, and coin his business as being superior due to the fact that it was Francophone-operated.

### **Justification for the Study**

Quebec is often referred to as the ‘cradle of strongmen’ due to the high number of these individuals who originated from the province, including the presence of Louis Cyr. Additionally, bodybuilding is now a common practice in the Western world and an array of literature has been published on the sport itself regarding its history, the science around the sport, the psychology of the athletes, and biographies of certain bodybuilders. Although physical culture experienced its first ‘boom’ in the United States in the early 1900s, both Weider and Gagnon, both of whom originated from Quebec, brought the sport to where it is today.<sup>69</sup>

The period when the Weiders first began publishing magazines on bodybuilding was also one of mixed nationalism and division in linguistics in the Province of Quebec. French Canadian nationalism was elevated, animosity towards the English was ever present, and the search for provincial autonomy was preeminent. In the midst of this ethnic struggle was a man striving to promote French Canadian nationalism in his own way – through physical culture magazine issues and exercise booklets.

Adrien Gagnon had a strong presence in Quebec bodybuilding, but he was overshadowed by the fame of the Weider brothers and the cultural limitations imposed by the dominance of the English-speaking population. Literature on Quebec nationalism is also vast, along with literature on Quebec sport. However, as previously stated, sources regarding Adrien Gagnon and his position

on French Canadian nationalism narrow down to one author – James Woycke. For these reasons, this study will be beneficial for the advancement of the literature on bodybuilding, sport in Quebec, French Canadian pioneers and, in a way, Quebec nationalism.

## **Method**

The method used for this study is a critical narrative analysis (CNA). Souto-Manning defines CNA as merging critical discourse analysis and narrative analysis.<sup>70</sup> Discourse, on its own, can be viewed as a unified set of texts, along with its production, or in my case, dissemination, resulting in “bringing an object into being.”<sup>71</sup> In my study, the act of disseminating is explored via Adrien Gagnon’s muscle magazine in order to expose its nationalist messages and, thus, “bringing [the] object into being.” Historical narrative, or narrative analysis, can be defined briefly as producing history through narration.<sup>72</sup> When performing an historical narration, the historian gathers facts, events, dates, and names from the past, places them in chronological order in relation to the era chosen, and creates a linear history – Hoxie refers to this as an “academic reconstruction of the past.”<sup>73</sup> However, this method is rather simplistic and would not do this thesis justice. As explained by McCullagh, “the humblest narrative is always more than a chronological series of events;” the events are supported with multiple sources, providing a story rich in detail, as opposed to a simple tale.<sup>74</sup> A broader definition states that historical narrative is “a form of discourse for the representation of historical events,” where the goal is not only to list facts and dates, “but to reveal the meaning, coherence, or significance of the listed events;” doing so increases the events’ realism instead of simply being presented as stand-alone occurrences in time.<sup>75</sup>

By combining both discourse analysis and historical narrative analysis, critical narrative analysis arises. As critical discourse analysis analyzes discourses within a specific social context, narrative analysis seeks to interpret a story. Therefore, CNA enables me to interpret a story, in this

case Adrien Gagnon's promotion of nationalism, which was influenced by specific discourses, in this case Quebec's along with the province's nationalistic beliefs between 1924 and 1956 – from Gagnon's childhood to the final issue of *Santé et Développement Physique*.

With regard to my thesis, the discourse analysis of Gagnon's nationalism was performed with *Santé et Développement Physique* between 1946 and 1956. Furthermore, I conducted a narrative analysis of Quebec's history between 1924 and 1956 in order to expose specific nationalistic beliefs in that era. Bringing these two together enabled me to provide a critical narrative analysis of Gagnon's publications within a specific, detailed era of Quebec. With regard to Gagnon's publications, it is important to note that sampling was common practice.<sup>76</sup> The magazine *Santé et Développement Physique* is a rare find, forcing me to only use the issues available (a few months) per year.

In order to give a detailed account of Quebec during that period, several secondary sources, written in both French and English were examined. Using both languages allowed me to find any discrepancies regarding facts, and provided a view of Quebec from the Anglophone, as well as the Francophone, perspectives. Some of these publications were identical, but read in both languages, while the others were entirely different.

Also, any discussion about Bob Hoffman or the Weiders was based solely on secondary sources. As was discussed, Adrien Gagnon was a direct competitor to the Weider brothers, and worked alongside Bob Hoffman during his rise as an editor. Reading secondary sources about both the Weiders and Hoffman revealed their points of view on Adrien Gagnon and their own position within the world of physical culture, as they related to nationalism. With regard to Weider, however, access to Ben Weider's French publication *Santé et Force* was possible. However, as is the issue with Gagnon's magazine, magazines of *Santé et Force* were sampled between 1946 and

1956. In these publications, I explored a view of Gagnon according to Ben Weider and provided a detailed account of the fierce competition that raged between both physical culture authors.

In order to understand Adrien Gagnon's life prior to, during, and after his publications, I utilized Yvan Gagnon's biography, James Woycke's *Esprit de Corps*, and certain newspapers in which Gagnon is discussed, such as *The Globe and Mail*, *Photo Journal*, *La Presse*, and *La Patrie*. The newspapers were surveyed using the Bibliothèque et Archive National de Québec's system, which allowed me to examine these newspapers using specific keywords such as 'Adrien Gagnon,' 'Physical Culture / *Culture Physique*,' and '*Santé et Développement Physique*.' With these newspapers and Woycke providing a brief account of Gagnon's life, and with Yvan's hagiographic rendition of his father's life I offer an investigative narrative of Adrien Gagnon within the context of Quebec between 1924 and 2011. Though his birth, childhood, and life following his muscle publications are given limited treatment the main focus is on Gagnon's entrance in the workforce, through his years as a publisher.

Finally, as Quebec was on the brink of its Quiet Revolution, and *Santé et Développement Physique* experiences a name change to *Culture Physique et Santé*, there was an apparent change in Gagnon's writing. Leaving the inner city of Montreal to establish himself on the south shore of the island, Gagnon stepped away from his muscle magazines to focus solely on his health product business. To expose Gagnon's writing, free of nationalist messages, a sampling of *Culture Physique et Santé* was completed.

## **Delimitations**

Although Adrien Gagnon published exercise booklets in 1944, he was most active as a muscle magazine publisher from the initial launch of *Santé et Développement Physique* in 1946 through most of the 1950s. After this period, Gagnon dedicated his time to his business of natural

health products and his career as a naturopath. Because of his specific period of extended activity, this study examines Gagnon's contribution to physical culture between 1946 and 1956.

As previously mentioned, Hoffman and the Weiders were considered strictly through secondary sources. More specifically, I searched for any mention of using physical culture to promote nationalism, or any instances where Adrien Gagnon was referenced. As for the period in which these men were studied, it varied between the 1930s, in which Hoffman was the most active, and the 1940s, in which the Weiders were active. Furthermore, Ben Weider's *Santé et Force* was also analyzed between 1946 and 1956, due to the fact that I was interested in Gagnon's presence within Weider's Francophone publication.

Regarding the various newspapers, the years varied from 1944 to 2011. Although this is a vast period, the in-text search application enabled me to find specific articles regarding Gagnon relatively quickly. Furthermore, the reasoning behind searching to 2011 was due to the fact that this was the year Adrien Gagnon passed away. Obituaries offer useful details on someone's life and achievements – this was also true for Adrien Gagnon.

With regard to Quebec history, the secondary sources surveyed those produced between 1920 and 1956. Within these years, multiple events occurred such as the financial crash and the Second World War; and alongside each of these events, Adrien Gagnon was growing into a man, joining the workforce, and publishing his muscle magazine. Once again, both French and English sources were used, providing a differing linguistic account of the numerous events from the 1920s to the 1950s.

Finally, due to my bilingualism, I read, write, speak, and understand French and English. This ability enabled me to use both French and English sources without the assistance of a translator. Each passage written in French was translated by me. To facilitate reading, the quotation

was directly written in English within the text, but the original French passage was provided in the endnote section.

## **Limitations**

This study is limited by the sources available. Although I hoped to gather many of Gagnon's publications, it was not possible to acquire them all. I had easy access to archives in Quebec, at Western University, London, ON, as well as the Stark Center at the University of Texas in Austin; however the archives did not have all the sources on hand. The same can be said for microfilm and electronic periodicals. Also, while Yvan Gagnon is still alive and in possession of Adrien Gagnon's personal papers, I was denied access to them. Finally, as mentioned, previous literature on Adrien Gagnon is scarce.

## **Chapter Outline**

As this first chapter provided a brief overview of Quebec nationalism, sport in Quebec, and the different publishers of North American physical culture, the remainder of the study focuses on the specifics of Quebec history between 1920 and 1956, focusing especially on Gagnon's promotion of nationalism through physical culture between 1946 and 1956.

The second chapter provides a biography of Adrien Gagnon in relation to Quebec and the varying ideologies of the time, from Gagnon's birth to 1946 – the eve of his publication commencement. Gagnon's biography is built around the idea that man is a product of his environment. This notion is explained with the help of *Sociological Imagination* by Charles Wright Mills, in which he explains that “neither the life of an individual nor the history of a society can be understood without understanding both.”<sup>77</sup>

Chapter 3 exposes three specific themes found in Gagnon's publication: health, nationalism, and competition. This exposure was achieved through the use the of *Santé et Développement Physique* as well as Weider's *Santé et Force*.

Finally, chapter 4 provides an epilogue to Adrien Gagnon's career and life. This chapter also contains a summary of my study and my final conclusion.

## Endnotes

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- <sup>1</sup> The term ‘regretful’ is used during an interview with Pauline Marois on CBC News in 2014. She mentions that “if she could do it again (her campaign), she would speak less about sovereignty.” See Canadian Broadcasting Corporation. “Pauline Marois Regrets Talking Sovereignty during Campaign.” CBC.ca. <http://www.cbc.ca/news/canada/montreal/pauline-marois-regrets-talking-sovereignty-during-campaign-1.2599685> (Last Modified April 6, 2014). As for the explicit displays of language dominance, Marois had her team, the ‘Language Police’ visit Quebec establishments and give hefty fines if the English language was used to display products or advertisements. See The Huffington Post Canada. “Quebec Language Police.” [Huffingtonpost.ca](http://www.huffingtonpost.ca). <http://www.huffingtonpost.ca/news/quebec-language-police/> (Last Modified November 13, 2014) for several examples. Lastly, ‘la belle province’ is a term used by Quebecers when talking about the Province of Quebec.
- <sup>2</sup> Louis Balthazar, “The Faces of Quebec Nationalism,” in *Quebec State and Society*, 2<sup>nd</sup> ed., ed. Alain-G Gagnon (Scarborough: Nelson Canada, 1993); Michael D. Behiels, “Quebec: Social Transformation and Ideological Renewal, 1940-1976,” in *Quebec since 1945: Selected Readings*, ed. Michael D. Behiels (Toronto: A Longman Company, 1987); Michael D Behiels, “The Bloc Populaire Canadien and the Origins of French-Canadian Neo-nationalism, 1942-8,” *Canadian Historical Review* 63, no. 4 (1982): 487-512; Daniel Béland and André Lecours, *Nationalism and Social Policy in Canada and Quebec* (New York: Oxford University Press, 2008); Gérald Bernier and Daniel Salée, *the Shaping of Quebec Politics and Society: Colonialism, Power, and the Transition to Capitalism in the 19<sup>th</sup> Century* (Washington: Crane Russak, 1992); Michel Brunet, “The French Canadian’s Search for a Fatherland,” in *Nationalism in Canada*, ed. Peter Russel (Toronto: McGraw-Hill Company of Canada Limited, 1966); Harold Chorney and Andrew Molloy, “Boss Politics in Montreal and Quebec Nationalism, Jean Drapeau to Jean Doré: from the Pre-modern to the Post-modern,” in *Quebec State and Society*, 2<sup>nd</sup> ed., ed. Alain-G Gagnon (Scarborough: Nelson Canada, 1993); Dominique Clift, *le Déclin du Nationalisme au Québec* (Montreal: Libre Expression, 1981); Dominique Clift, *Quebec Nationalism in Crisis* (Montreal: McGill University Press, 1980); Jeffrey Cormier and Philippe Couton, “The Limits of Quebec Nationalism, 1918-39: an Interwar Paradox,” *Nationalism and Ethnic Politics* 4, no. 4 (1998): 47-74; John Dickinson and Brian Young, *Diverse Pasts: a History of Québec and Canada*, 2<sup>nd</sup> ed. (Toronto: Coop Clark Ltd., 1995); Léon Dion, *Nationalismes et politique au Québec* (Montreal: Hurtubise HMH, 1975); Stéphane Dion, “Will Quebec Secede? Why Quebec Nationalism is so Strong,” *the Bookings Review* 9, no. 4 (1991): 14-21; Alain-G Gagnon and Mary Beth Montcalm, *Quebec beyond the Quiet Revolution* (Scarborough: Nelson Canada, 1990); Gilles Gougeon, *Histoire du Nationalisme Québécois* (Montreal: Les Distributions ADP, 1993); Richard Handler, *Nationalism and the Politics of Culture in Quebec* (Wisconsin: The University of Wisconsin Press, 1988); Richard Jones, “Duplessis and the Union Nationale Administration,” in *Quebec since 1945: Selected Readings*, ed. Michael D. Behiels (Toronto: A Longman Company, 1987); Kenneth McRoberts, “The Sources of Neo-Nationalism in Quebec,” in *Quebec*



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since 1945: *Selected Readings*, ed. Michael D. Behiels (Toronto: A Longman Company, 1987); Cameron Nish, *Québec in the Duplessis Era, 1935-1959: Dictatorship or Democracy* (Toronto: The Copp Clark Publishing Company, 1970); Herbert F. Quinn, *the Union Nationale: a Study in Quebec Nationalism* (Toronto: University of Toronto Press, 1963); Thomas Sloan, *Quebec: the Not-So Quiet Revolution* (Toronto: The Ryerson Press, 1965); Dale Thomson, "Language, Identity, and the Nationalist Impulse: Quebec," *the Annals of the American Academy of Political and Social Science* 538, (1995): 69-82; Reginald A. Whitaker, "From the Quebec Cauldron to the Canadian Cauldron," in *Quebec State and Society, 2<sup>nd</sup> ed.*, ed. Alain-G Gagnon (Scarborough: Nelson Canada, 1993).

- <sup>3</sup> As will later be shown, I decided to end before the Quiet Revolution because Gagnon's publication of Santé et Développement Physique ends in 1956.
- <sup>4</sup> Gougeon, *Histoire du Nationalisme Québécois*, 38.
- <sup>5</sup> Lord Durham was sent to Lower Canada following the *Patriotes* rebellions. Following his visit, he completed his *Report on the Affairs of British North America* in which he suggested the unification of Lower and Upper Canada. See Dickinson & Young, *Diverse Pasts*, 179.
- <sup>6</sup> Brunet, *French-Canadian Search for a Fatherland*, 52.
- <sup>7</sup> Gougeon, *Histoire du Nationalisme Québécois*, 52.
- <sup>8</sup> Brunet, *French-Canadian Search for a Fatherland*, 75.
- <sup>9</sup> For "La Survivance," see Handler, *Nationalism and Politics of Culture*, 5. For "la Trinité Québécoise" see Clift, *le Déclin du Nationalisme*, 12. For "the French-Canadian Miracle" see Quinn, *the Union Nationale*, 3. Here, the term 'race' is explained by Historian Pierre Trépanier in an interview with Montreal Journalist Gilles Gougeon as "nation, nationality, ethnic group, cultural community." Gougeon, *Histoire du Nationalisme Québécois*, 100. This is important to note because Adrien Gagnon used the term 'race' on several occasions in his magazines and advertisements.
- <sup>10</sup> Louis Riel led several opposition movements against the Federal government and Prime Minister, Sir John A. MacDonald. His main goal was to preserve Métis rights and culture. See Dickinson & Young, *Diverse Pasts*, 229.
- <sup>11</sup> Behiels, *Quebec: Social Transformation and Ideological Renewal*, 14.
- <sup>12</sup> Handler, *Nationalism and Politics of Culture*, 13.
- <sup>13</sup> Behiels, *Quebec: Social Transformation and Ideological Renewal*, 29; Richard, *Duplessis and the Union Nationale Administration*, 12.
- <sup>14</sup> Behiels, *Quebec: Social Transformation and Ideological Renewal*, 34.
- <sup>15</sup> Quinn, *the Union Nationale: a Study in Quebec Nationalism*, 44.
- <sup>16</sup> Ibid. Important to note that 'l'Action Française' was in no way a political party.
- <sup>17</sup> Translated from French: [*Canada aux Canadiens, Québec aux Québécois.*]
- <sup>18</sup> Michael D Behiels, "The Bloc Populaire Canadien and the Origins of French-Canadian Neo-nationalism, 1942-8," *Canadian Historical Review* 63, no. 4 (1982): 485.

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- <sup>19</sup> One of these books was *The Call of the Race – L'appel de la Race*. It follows the struggle of Ottawa lawyer Jules de Lanatagnac, an anglicized French-Canadian who becomes a nationalist and joins the fight against Ontario's Regulation 17 to save French language schools in the province. In the process of returning to his French roots, he sacrifices his English-speaking wife and three children. Groulx explained that this was caused by a psychological trauma brought upon by mixing races. See Handler, *Nationalism and the Politics of Culture in Quebec*, 41.
- <sup>20</sup> The titles "Pioneer and pillar of Physical Culture and Naturopathy" are taken directly from the title of the biography of Adrien Gagnon, written by his son Yvan Gagnon: *l'Histoire d'un Pionnier et d'un Pilier de la Culture Physique et de la Naturopathie*. Yvan Gagnon and Jacques Beaulieu, *Adrien Gagnon: l'Histoire d'un Pionnier et d'un Pilier de la Culture Physique et de la Naturopathie* (Montreal: les Éditions Quebecor, 2009).
- <sup>21</sup> Ramsay Cook, *French Canadian Nationalism: an Anthology* (Toronto: Macmillan of Canada, 1969), 19.
- <sup>22</sup> Ibid.
- <sup>23</sup> Donald Guay, *La Conquête du Sport: le Sport et la Société Québécoise au XIX Siècle* (Outremont: Lanctôt Éditeur, 1997), 100.
- <sup>24</sup> Ibid, 32
- <sup>25</sup> The first account of Canadian participation was in 1808. However, during that time, the Canadians simply bred the horses – there was no actual participation. It is not until the 1830s that Canadians will start riding horses against their own kind, and against the British. Guay, *la Conquête du Sport*, 55.
- <sup>26</sup> Ibid.
- <sup>27</sup> Ibid, 11.
- <sup>28</sup> Jacques Mathieu in Guay, *La Conquête du Sport*, 7.
- <sup>29</sup> The idea of settling international conflict was explained by Michel Jamet, *Les Sport et l'État au Québec* (Laval: Éditions Coopératives Albert Saint-Martin, 1980); while nation building and national unity was argued by Jean Harvey, "Sport and Quebec Nationalism: Ethnic or Civic Identity," in *Sport in Divided Societies*, ed. John Sugden and Alan Bairner (Oxford: Meyer & Meyer Sport, 1999).
- <sup>30</sup> Bodybuilding was not considered a sport until 1998, following its recognition by the International Olympic Committee.
- <sup>31</sup> Ibid, 137.
- <sup>32</sup> Ibid, 145; the term '*Habitants*' refers to the Francophone population of Quebec.
- <sup>33</sup> Montreal Rowing Club established in 1837, five French Canadians in the Curling Club in 1868, and several French Canadian boxers as of the early 1800's. Guay, *La Conquête du Sport*, 11.
- <sup>34</sup> Michel Jamet, *Les Sport et l'État au Québec* (Laval: Éditions Coopératives Albert Saint-Martin, 1980), 22; Gilles Janson, *Emparons-Nous du Sport: Les Canadiens Français et le Sport au XIX Siècle* (Montreal: Guérin, 1995), 94.
- <sup>35</sup> Vaudeville circuses were a theatrical genre of entertainment which included singers, actors, magicians, strongmen, etc., grouped together to create the spectacle.
- <sup>36</sup> Iron Game History publications reveal that the title of 'cradle of strongmen' was attributed to Quebec by strongman and strength training author, George Jowett in the 1920's. See David Chapman, "Emparons-nous

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du Sport: les Canadiens français et le Sport au XIXe Siècle. Let us Seize Sport: French Canadiens and Sport in the Nineteenth Century,” *Iron Game History* 7, no. 2 (2002): 1.

<sup>37</sup> Janson, *Emparons-Nous du Sport*, 92.

<sup>38</sup> Ben Weider, *Les Hommes Forts du Québec* (Montreal: Éditions du Jour, 1973.) 8-10.

<sup>39</sup> *Ibid.* 8-10.

<sup>40</sup> Jamet, *Les Sports et l'État au Québec*, 99.

<sup>41</sup> Don Morrow and Kevin Wamsley, *Sport in Canada: A History*, 3<sup>rd</sup> ed. (Ontario: Oxford University Press, 2013), 130.

<sup>42</sup> Quote from Friedrich Ludwig Jahn. See John D. Fair, *MuscleTown USA: Bob Hoffman and the Manly Culture of York Barbell* (Pennsylvania: Pennsylvania University Press, 1999), 51.

<sup>43</sup> Lynne Luciano, “Muscularity and Masculinity in the United States: a Historical Overview,” in *The Muscular Ideal: Psychological, Social, and Medical Perspectives*, ed. J. Kevin Thompson and Guy Cafri (Washington: American Psychological Association, 2007), 42.

<sup>44</sup> Michael Anton Budd, *The Sculpture Machine: Physical Culture and Body Politics in the Age of Empire* (London: MacMillan Press Ltd., 1997).

<sup>45</sup> *Ibid.*, 83.

<sup>46</sup> Sandow was a German who became famous through strongman feats and later with displays of his ‘Greek Ideal’ body. With several books to his name about the importance of physical culture and his own periodicals, Eugen Sandow gained the name of ‘Father of Modern Bodybuilding.’ For a full biography on Eugen Sandow, see David L. Chapman, *Sandow the Magnificent: Eugen Sandow and the Beginnings of Bodybuilding* (Urbana: University of Illinois Press, 1994); for Sandow and his implications in Africa, see Budd, *the Sculpture Machine*, 91.

<sup>47</sup> Luciano, *The Muscular Ideal*, 43.

<sup>48</sup> For a full account of Macfadden’s life, see Robert Ernst, *Weakness is a Crime: the Life of Bernarr Macfadden* (New York: Syracuse University Press, 1991).

<sup>49</sup> His quote was first made public upon the opening of his physical culture studio. Ernst, *Weakness is a Crime*, 51.

<sup>50</sup> Luciano, *The Muscular Ideal*, 44.

<sup>51</sup> Jean Harvey, “Sport and Quebec Nationalism: Ethnic or Civic Identity,” in *Sport in Divided Societies*, ed. John Sugden and Alan Bairner (Oxford: Meyer & Meyer Sport, 1999), 29.

<sup>52</sup> Especially in 2015 following the franchise bid between Las Vegas and Quebec City.

<sup>53</sup> Interview between Maurice Richard and Charles Foran. See Charles Foran, *Maurice Richard* (Toronto: Penguin Group, 2011), 2.

<sup>54</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>55</sup> Morrow and Wamsley, *Sport in Canada: a History*, 146.

<sup>56</sup> Benoît Melançon, *The Rocket: a Cultural History of Maurice Richard*, trans. Fred A. Reed (Montreal: Greystone Books, 2009), 151.

<sup>57</sup> Morrow and Wamsley, *Sport in Canada: a History*, 146.

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- <sup>58</sup> Melançon, *The Rocket: a Cultural History*, 160; Hugh MacLennan, “the Rocket: a Hero for Quebec,” in *Remembering the Rocket: a Celebration*, ed. Craig MacInnis (Toronto: Stoddart Publishing Co., 1998), 41.
- <sup>59</sup> James Woycke, “Esprit de Corps: a History of North American Bodybuilding,” *History eBook Collection*, Book 2, 2016, 33; Fair, *Muscle town USA*, 71.
- <sup>60</sup> Woycke, *Esprit de Corps*, 35; Fair, *Muscle town USA*, 102.
- <sup>61</sup> Fair, *Muscle town USA*, 87; Woycke, *Esprit de Corps*, 43.
- <sup>62</sup> Booker C. O’Brien and John D. Fair, “‘As a Twig is Bent’ Bob Hoffman and Youth Training in the Pre-Steroid Era,” *Iron Game History* 12, no. 1, 2012, 28-51.
- <sup>63</sup> For the ban, see Fair, *Muscle town USA*, 75.
- <sup>64</sup> Joe Weider, Ben Weider and Mike Steere, *Brothers of Iron: How the Weider Brothers Created the Fitness Movement and Built a Business Empire* (Champaign, Sports Publishing L.L.C., 2006), 69-70.
- <sup>65</sup> *Ibid*, 60.
- <sup>66</sup> Woycke, *Esprit de Corps*, 57-58.
- <sup>67</sup> *Ibid*, 83.
- <sup>68</sup> Alan Bairner, *Sport, Nationalism, and Globalization: European and North American Perspectives* (Albany: State University of New York Press, 2001), xi.
- <sup>69</sup> The sport of Bodybuilding has been frowned upon and often linked to homosexual pornography (as discussed with Bob Hoffman.) However, with his magazine, Gagnon spread the benefits of weight training throughout Quebec, while the Weider brothers, although also expanding the sport’s knowledge in Quebec, also ensured its growth in popularity in the United States. This led to the establishment of the Mr. Olympia contest, as well as the world-renown International Federation of Bodybuilding (IFBB).
- <sup>70</sup> Mariana Souto-Manning, “Critical Narrative Analysis: the Interplay of Critical Discourse and Narrative Analyses,” *International Journal of Qualitative Studies in Education* 27, no. 2 (2014)
- <sup>71</sup> *Ibid*.
- <sup>72</sup> Rösen explains that “Narration is the way this activity is being performed and history – more precisely, a history – is the product of it.” Jörn Rösen, “Historical Narration: Foundation, Types, Reason,” *History and Theory* 26, no. 4 (1987): 87.
- <sup>73</sup> R. F. Hoxie, “Historical Method vs. Historical Narrative,” *Journal of Political Economy* 14, no. 9 (1906): 572.
- <sup>74</sup> C. Behan McCullagh, “The Truth of Historical Narratives,” *History and Theory* 26, no. 4 (1987): 30-46.
- <sup>75</sup> Hayden White, “The Question of Narrative in Contemporary Historical Theory,” *History and Theory* 23, no. 1 (1984): 1-33.
- <sup>76</sup> The method of ‘sampling’ entails that, within the sources that I was able to acquire, I identified and extracted the relevant material.
- <sup>77</sup> Charles W. Mills, *Sociological Imagination* (New York: Oxford University Press, 1970), 3.

## CHAPTER 2

### Shaping of a Vanguard

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It would be simplistic and unwarranted to state that, based on his muscle magazines, Adrien Gagnon was a crazed nationalist. Gagnon's life is more complex than that. In order to understand what this man defended and the methods he employed, we must consider who Gagnon was. As was previously mentioned, information about Adrien Gagnon is scarce. His son Yvan wrote a biography about his father; Philip Fine glanced over Gagnon's business life; James Woycke scraped the surface of Gagnon's involvement in the history of North American bodybuilding; and finally, obituaries of Gagnon provided a handful of short stories throughout various Quebec newspapers. In *Adrien Gagnon: l'Histoire d'un pionnier et pilier de la culture physique*, Yvan Gagnon uses a hagiographic tone. James Woycke, in *Esprit de Corps*, devoted most of his writing to the conflict between Adrien Gagnon and Ben Weider rather than the life of the former. Finally, it goes without saying that obituaries are designed to praise the dead, thus leaving out the issues involved in Gagnon's lifetime.<sup>1</sup> Therefore, the purpose of this chapter is to construct my own mini-biography of the French Canadian physical culture author Adrien Gagnon. This construction will be supported by the aforementioned sources as well as some of Gagnon's articles in *Santé et Développement Physique*. Additionally, the historical context of Quebec during the 1920s and 1940s, its social, economic, and cultural landscape, as well as the nationalistic beliefs will be analyzed. Indeed, Adrien Gagnon and his ideologies were shaped by his environment – leading to his publications and his portrayal as a protector and vanguard of what he, like many of his contemporaries referred to as the 'French Canadian race.' This belief of 'man as a product of his environment' emerges from C. Wright Mills' idea of the sociological imagination. Mills argues

that “neither the life of an individual nor the history of a society can be understood without understanding both.”<sup>2</sup> Mills also notes that people are shaped by their environments without their awareness<sup>3</sup> – Gagnon would not have guessed that he was promoting a specific idea due to the propagation of *la fierté francophonique* – Francophone pride. Also, as Mills explains, “man lives out a biography, and he lives it out within some historical sequence” – in this case the Province of Quebec during the Depression, the Second World War, and post-World War II – and that man “contributes, however minutely, to the shaping of this society [...]”<sup>4</sup> As will be revealed, Gagnon’s messages of national pride and pleas for change affected the population reading his magazines.<sup>5</sup> Mills’ idea of the sociological imagination enumerates two important factors to consider – trouble and issue. In his words, trouble refers to the “values cherished by an individual that are felt by him to be threatened,” while issues are “values cherished by the public which are felt to be threatened.”<sup>6</sup> For the purpose of this study, trouble and issue will be viewed the same way – troubles being the values defended by Gagnon, and French Canadian nationalism being the issues –. Finally, the use of Mills’ idea of the sociological imagination will allow me, and the reader, to “grasp history and biography, and the relation between the two within society.”<sup>7</sup>

Before proceeding, it is important to mention that the purpose of this study is not to provide an exhaustive account of nationalism in Quebec. French Canadian nationalism has a complex history which, to describe in full detail would surely require years of extensive research. Nationalism will only be treated in a somewhat cursory fashion – who was involved, and what they were defending. It is crucial for this study to note that nationalism in Quebec was not a concept resistant to change. During the period discussed, French Canadian nationalism shifted from a liberal, or progressive nationalism, to a conservative, or stagnant nationalism.<sup>8</sup> Finally, the main purpose of studying French Canadian nationalism is to situate Adrien Gagnon’s ideologies within

a society that was “obsessed with the difference they had with their neighbors, the late discovery of their diversity, its fear of strangers leading to an amalgam of xenophobia, and its ancient conservative traditions.”<sup>9</sup>

### ***‘Les Années Folles’***

As Quebec, along with the rest of the Western world, was trying to recover from World War I, its people found themselves entering a period of economic prosperity and cultural alteration. This period was known as the roaring twenties, or as termed in Quebec, the crazy years – *les années folles*.<sup>10</sup> Following the First World War, the 1920s were characterized by a heightened urbanization movement and an attempt by the Liberal Party under Louis-Alexandre Taschereau to modernize the province. Most adult *Québécois* of the population experienced a change in their occupations, a rise in their incomes, a rise in productivity, and as mentioned, an elevated migration from the rural setting to an urban milieu. Louis Balthazar notes that in 1911, 44 percent of Quebec’s population lived in the city; however in 1921, the percentage surpassed the majority, rendering the Province of Quebec “irredeemably an urban territory.”<sup>11</sup> Furthermore, the urban population was not exclusive in its growth – the Quebec population as a whole increased. Although Quebec experienced a massive arrival of English Canadians – 50,000 to 100,000 in the 1920s alone – a larger influx of French Canadians ensued in a one percent decrease of the English-speaking population resulting in a step towards Francophone supremacy.<sup>12</sup> An additional reasoning behind the population increase in Quebec was the immigration of Americans. As a means to modernize the Province of Quebec, the Liberal Party allowed for the entry of American capital into Quebec industries and promoted labour force training in order to increase urban migration – this in turn correlated with an influx of Americans within the borders of the province and within the hierarchy of the workforce. As noted by Louis Balthazar, “the influence of the liberal economy was now

stronger than traditional nationalism.”<sup>13</sup> Despite this shift towards a liberal economy, the French Canadian population remained a minority within its business setting.

Of course, Quebec Premier Taschereau’s attempt to urbanize Quebec was met with resistance. His government was one that could be termed progressive nationalist – the Liberals in Quebec were in favour of the betterment of the Francophone population, yet in an evolving environment in accord with the rest of Canada following the Great War. However, the idea of urban growth was countered with the belief that the rural milieu should be the main characteristic of the French-speaking population of the province. Seeing that “a bigger population of French Canadians made a living in the manufacturing business, rather than in agricultural exploitation,” the Catholic Church decided to voice its opinion, leading to a movement of cleric-nationalism, according to which French Canadians would remain in the stagnant *église-nation*.<sup>14</sup> The main proponent of this movement was a group called *l’Action Française* led by Lionel Groulx, who was discussed in the previous chapter.<sup>15</sup> Through a publication of the same name, this non-political group promoted the ideology of the ‘rural myth’ despite the irrevocable presence of an urban-industrial order.<sup>16</sup> *L’Action Française* defended that “*bonne-ententisme* was wrong [...] that French Canadian unity, hierarchical social order, the values of a traditional society, Catholicism, and strong, [undisputable] leadership were right.”<sup>17</sup> The key figures of the cleric-nationalist publication wrote messages directly inciting French Canadians to move away from urbanization and to “knit [themselves] to [their] past, to [their] lost tradition, to [their] land and to [their] dead,” and to return to the milieu that suited them.<sup>18</sup> Furthermore, Quebec journalist Olivar Asselin preached that French Canadians must find a way “of attaching the sons of farmers to the land,” while French Canadian lawyer Athanase David bluntly stated that “Quebec [was] farmland above all else; it [was] and will remain an agricultural province.”<sup>19</sup>



An additional theme under the traditional nationalism of Groulx was the importance of the survival of a ‘French Canadian race’ – a separate entity within the Province of Quebec. Seeing that the Anglophone market was reinforced by the penetration of American-branded products, and supported by the use of abundant publicities, the English language became more and more associated with the language of economic success and social ascendance.<sup>20</sup> Asselin justified this by explaining that, in the 1920s, the total assets of the Bank of Montreal, the Royal Bank, and the Canadian Bank of Commerce – all English owned, were fifteen times as great as the combined assets of the Francophone *Banque Canadienne* and the *Banque Provinciale*.<sup>21</sup> This was an additional factor that prompted *l’Action Française* to encourage French Canadians to bind themselves to the past, in order to be led into a brighter future.

Receiving pressure from the traditional nationalist, and realizing the potential of having a productive agricultural milieu, the Quebec Liberal government offered premiums to rural landowners towards the clearance of the land, seeding, production, breeding, beekeeping, poultry farming, and even towards the embellishment of the land. Also during the 1920s, the government developed an education program towards agriculture and farming, in order for the rural population to have more success with the harvest, resulting in a more prosperous Quebec.<sup>22</sup> Into this prosperous rural environment Adrien Gagnon was born.

Gagnon’s life began on March 4<sup>th</sup>, 1924 in a small rural “picturesque village on the south shore of the Saint-Lawrence” called St-Louis de Kamouraska, about 170 kilometers North-East of Quebec City.<sup>23</sup> As the urban population grew exponentially during the ‘roaring twenties,’ the Gagnon family remained on their farmland to care for their livestock and ensure dairy production was successful – dairy farming was the main source of their income. Born in a rural setting, Adrien Gagnon spent most of his childhood fulfilling rural practices for the sake of his family – boys in

his family tended to the more physical tasks such as cutting firewood, while his sisters likely dedicated their time to the maintenance of the house. According to his son Yvan, this period of physical labor was, although very early in his lifetime, Gagnon's first taste of physical activity, which can be considered as a precursor for his interest in physical culture.<sup>24</sup> An additional aspect of the rural life during Gagnon's childhood was the presence of religion in the household. As discussed in the previous chapter, Catholicism was prominent among the French Canadian population, especially for families living on farms – the priest visited the household, families attended mass, and education was conducted by heads of religion. This was no different for Gagnon. Although there is no mention of his religious beliefs in his biography, Philip Fine's mention of a particular room in the Gagnon household reserved strictly for the priests' visits points towards the plausibility of Adrien Gagnon being exposed to the Catholic religion – which was governed by the cleric-nationalists who promoted the 'rural myth.'<sup>25</sup>

As modernization in the urban setting was underway, and the rural setting was kept alive by the various messages of *l'Action Française*, Adrien Gagnon, as well as most of the Western world, was shaken by an event that greatly impacted Quebec's social ideologies, culture, and economy. In October 1929, Quebec experienced the repercussions of the stock market crash.

## **The Great Depression**

One of the main characteristics of the 1920s was, as mentioned, an economic boom within the Province of Quebec. Although increased wealth led to an increase in employment and industries, it naturally resulted in an increase in spending – some of it directed towards the stock market. Seeing that the value of most shares was doubling, tripling, or even quadrupling, English and French Canadians with enough money to spare found themselves engulfed in the phenomenon that Lacoursière and Philpot term “the stock market fever,” which was “highly contagious” at that

point.<sup>26</sup> Quickly though, the boom was cut short by the stock market collapse, resulting in a steep decline in the economy, and a shift from the ‘roaring twenties’ to the Great Depression.<sup>27</sup>

With the deterioration of the economy in Quebec came a rise in unemployment. In the earliest stage of the depression (1930 – 1932), the unemployment rate in the province increased to 22.8 percent, leaving a family of about five people with a salary of \$21 per week. Two years later, unemployment reached 30.9 percent, leaving families with a mere \$18 as a weekly income. It is estimated that by 1934, more than 32,000 Montreal inhabitants were unemployed, representing approximately 30 percent of the workforce.<sup>28</sup> Although the economic crash affected both the Francophone and Anglophone sectors, French Canadians felt most of the negative repercussions related to the Great Depression – as explained by Louis Balthazar, during this period, “it was the less specialized workers who were the most penalized,” referring to the French-speaking population of Quebec.<sup>29</sup> An additional event resulted in increased hardships on Francophones, that of immigration. The main people entering Quebec during the 1930s were Americans, and Jews and Slavs from Europe. Americans tried to establish their businesses in Canada while the Jewish population along with the Slavs, attempted to escape a Europe on the brink of collapse. With immigration quickly on the rise within the Province of Quebec, Lionel Groulx, in his newly established *Action Nationale* exclaimed that “there was no longer a place for the 30 or 50 percent French Canadian; only one French Canadian had a chance to survive, the 100 percent French Canadian.”<sup>30</sup> These events which aggravated the French-speaking population sparked, yet again, a heightened sense of French Canadian nationalism, yet more extreme than the previous, with leaders stating that “strangers have come, whom we are wont to call the barbarians; they have taken hold of nearly all the power; they have taken over nearly all the money [...]”<sup>31</sup> The economic decline in the Francophone sector even led Groulx to ask openly if “there was any inherent or

unavoidable reason why, with 2,500,000 French Canadians in Quebec, all big business, all high finance [...] should belong to a minority of 300,000?,"<sup>32</sup> referring to the English-speaking population. Under fear of assimilation by the Anglophones and by the Jewish population who were considered "protestant for educational purposes," and therefore Anglophone as well, some French Canadians resorted to xenophobic remarks as well as develop notions of sovereignty.<sup>33</sup> Prominent figures such as Paul Simard stated that French Canadians "must conquer [their] intellectual, political and economic independence at all cost," while others, like journalist Adrien Arcand, openly declared that the Jewish population should be sent to Madagascar.<sup>34</sup> This clearly displays the animosity felt within the French-speaking population during the Great Depression.

The reasoning behind the feelings of fear and neglect felt by the French Canadians, as well as their sudden use of extreme nationalist messages is well explained by Pierre Elliot Trudeau:

A people vanquished, occupied, leaderless, kept aside from business life and away from the cities, gradually reduced to a minority role and deprived of influence in a country which, after all, it had discovered, explored, and settled, could have but a limited choice of attitudes that might help it preserve its own identity. A system of self-defense was thus developed [...] this is why, pitted against an English, Protestant, democratic, materialistic, business-minded environment, [French Canadian] nationalism's system of self-preservation glorified every contrary tendency; and made a cult of the French language [...].<sup>35</sup>

This system of traditional nationalism was accentuated by traditional values. Similar to the 1920s, these values revolved around a return to the land. Yet, the idea of rural colonization was not simply a nationalist idea. Most of the agricultural population was not as impacted by the economic crash compared to the urban dwellers – rural families could live off their farms, and the production of everyday necessities kept the agricultural economy in a somewhat stable position.<sup>36</sup> The idea of farmland being a safe haven, away from the economic hardship of the city, was promoted by Quebec journalists such as Jean Bergeron who explained that "the land capital was indeed the most

stable producer of riches [and] the most durable,” and Olivar Asselin who stated that agriculture “remained the most essential and most vital of [their] industries.” This in turn, led cleric-nationalists to promote their traditional lifestyle, exclaiming that French Canadians “must toil or die, sow or go jobless [and that the French Canadian] race [should] be agricultural, or it will cease to grow, it will perish.”<sup>37</sup> Additionally, the abbé Georges-Marie Bilodeau published a written work entitled *le vrai remède*, ‘the true remedy,’ in which he states that “the city is a killer of people; it is the chasm which engulfs humans, alters health, bodies dwindle, the power of a race becomes sterile, families perish.”<sup>38</sup> These graphic pleas for a return to the land did not fall on deaf ears.

With pressure from the Catholic Church and the realization that unemployment would not simply fade away, Louis-Alexandre Taschereau, a fervent believer in industrialization, understood that the most profound solution was to use the unemployed of Quebec to colonize the farming sector of the province.<sup>39</sup> Although the Liberal government viewed the return to the land as a necessary and progressive movement from the adversities in the urban sector, the idea of increasing the rural population was also defended by Maurice Duplessis, the *Action Libérale Nationale*, and later, the conservative *Union Nationale*.<sup>40</sup> However, instead of his intentions being progressive in nature, Duplessis simply argued that the farmland was where French Canadians belonged because the rural lifestyle was “the cornerstone of progress, stability and security.”<sup>41</sup> Additionally, in Duplessis, the cleric-nationalists finally found a leader to promote and implement their traditional nationalism. Exemplifying “the fear of industrialization, urbanization, and all other social change,” Duplessis quickly became allied with the Church who defended the same position. Maurice Duplessis proclaimed his Catholicism and the “special connections between his government and that Church,” which resulted in a permission to the religious sectors to promote their social doctrines in the education and labor milieu. They did so by explaining to workers, through the

word of God, that they must stop asking for reduced hours and higher wages.<sup>42</sup> However, the main idea Duplessis argued before his election, and throughout his political career, was the return to a rural lifestyle due to its relationship to national traditions, which in turn ensured “national growth and survival.”<sup>43</sup>

Although Taschereau and Duplessis were of different political parties, their emphasis on the return to rural life found some success. Between May and July 1931, 2550 families established themselves in rural Quebec, followed by an increase to 3769 families the subsequent year – resulting in an increase of 14 percent in occupied farms between 1931 and 1941.<sup>44</sup> In 1932, the Liberal government of Quebec established the Gordon plan which provided colonizing families with a \$600 deposit. In 1935, rather than giving a single monetary amount, the Vautrin plan provided settlers with a series of grants tied to various aspects of land labor, such as land clearance, house-building, and planting. Finally, the following year, the Rogers-Auger plan provided the new rural inhabitants with a monetary gift of \$1000.<sup>45</sup>

Despite the financial plans established by the government, and the numbers indicating a positive exodus towards the rural setting, it is important to note that the farmlands were not entirely unaffected by the economic crash. When the First World War came to an end, it is true that several agricultural regions, such as Quebec, experienced a substantial increase in agricultural production, due to an easy access to postwar European markets. However, in the mid to late 1920s, as Europe rejuvenated, most of its countries sought to protect their agriculture in an effort to restore it to pre-war health – leading to the overproduction of certain goods produced by the rural population of Quebec and, thus, a decrease in market price.<sup>46</sup>

This struggle in the rural regions did not seem to have affected the Gagnon family. A common practice among rural families was the use of the male offspring to work the fields and

produce enough goods for both the survival and economic sustainability of the family. However, for Adrien Gagnon, the hardships of the field ended when he was six years old and his mother enrolled him in school – to the disapproval of his father who was a laborer for his own father a generation before.<sup>47</sup> Although there is no mention of the economic situation of the Gagnon family, the fact that Gagnon could be sent to school, thus removing capable hands from the farm, demonstrated that they were not affected by the economic crash as much as most Quebec families were. An additional event worth mentioning is Gagnon's entrance into academia. In September 1933 – Gagnon was eight years old, in third grade – it was estimated that over 200 schools in rural Quebec closed, resulting in over 7,000 children prevented from receiving a proper education.<sup>48</sup> However, this did not seem to have any impact on Adrien Gagnon's education.

Furthermore, living in a rural setting proved fruitful for Gagnon – one event in particular forged his desire to begin weight training, and sparked his interest in studying physical activity. Entering his teens, Gagnon witnessed the sheer strength and grace of a strongman. During the 1930s, it was common practice for strongmen to travel from village to village and perform feats of strength for an interested public. During one particular spectacle, Gagnon witnessed the showmanship and beauty of Victor Delamarre in Kamouraska. Fine explains that Adrien Gagnon was “mesmerized by [Delamarre's] feats, which included lifting a 200 pound barbell with one finger.”<sup>49</sup> According to Yvan Gagnon, “Delamarre's victory was the spark which lit a never extinguished flame in Adrien Gagnon: the maintenance and improvement of a good physical condition.”<sup>50</sup> I argue here that Victor Delamarre's appearance and grandeur did not only spark an interest in physical culture within Gagnon, but also a sense of pride towards his heritage – French Canadians had the means to be strong and successful.

With regard to the urban exodus during the Depression, it did not seem to have affected Gagnon's thinking and ambition – at 15 years old, he left the rural setting in order to pursue studies at *l'École Technique de Rimouski*.<sup>51</sup> While Gagnon's new destination was not the urban setting of Montreal, Rimouski was still more urbanized than Kamouraska, resulting in easier accessibility to the newspapers of the city, featuring, as was previously argued, explicit messages of nationalism and animosity towards the English-speaking population. Still, it was during his studies as a machinist that Gagnon was truly exposed to the world of physical culture. With more access to various publications, Adrien Gagnon learned from American bodybuilding magazines such as Bob Hoffman's *Strength and Health*, and Bernarr Macfadden's *Physical Culture*. Also, although European publications faded during the Second World War, Gagnon was still able to procure the French magazine *La Culture Physique* written and published by Edmond Desbonnet.<sup>52</sup> Additionally, within these magazines, Gagnon discovered Charles Atlas and his isometric exercise program entitled *Dynamic Tension*, which the former practiced religiously.<sup>53</sup> Not only did Adrien Gagnon's reading and exercising keep him healthy and strong, it also paved the way for his own physical culture program and publications.

### **Quebec in a Time of War**

At the end of the 1930s, while Adrien Gagnon's life was being shaped by his studies as a machinist, leading to his employment in the urbanized city of Montreal, where he read numerous bodybuilding magazines, that directed his attention to the publishing business, the Province of Quebec underwent yet another political shift. In Europe, in 1939, Germany conquered Poland, forcing Great Britain and France to form the Allied forces and declare war on the Nazi regime.

The Second World War not only brought turmoil within Europe – Canada, and Quebec within it, felt the repercussions of yet another global conflict. On the political level, Maurice



Duplessis and the *Union Nationale* were defeated by the Liberal movement of Adélard Godbout. Having asked for a snap election confronting the possibility of a conscription one month following Canada's declaration of voluntary participation in the war, Duplessis found himself arguing that "a vote for the Liberals was a vote for conscription, [...] while a vote for the *Union Nationale* was a vote for autonomy and against conscription."<sup>54</sup> The Liberals took the lead with the popular belief that Duplessis' traditionalism was not the right approach during times of global conflict, and due to support from Quebec ministers in Canadian Premier Mackenzie King's Liberal government, who threatened to resign if the *Union Nationale* was re-elected.<sup>55</sup> At the time of the 1939 elections, the matter of conscription was simple – there would not be any – mobilization would be on voluntary basis only. To the detriment of Duplessis, Liberal leader, Godbout firmly supported this. However, the conscription issue quickly became the source of conflict between French Canadians and English Canadians, resulting in another rise in nationalist sentiment within Quebec. Several months following Canada's entrance to the war, it was estimated that 7500 Canadian volunteers had joined the fight overseas, leading King to mention on multiple occasions that Canadians must be aware that, although there weren't conscriptions, voluntary fighting was highly favorable for the country.<sup>56</sup> This was supported by local newspapers that displayed messages such as "enroll or starve," and the federal government that linked fighting with free university education upon returning.<sup>57</sup> Still, for some French Canadians, fighting for Canada was not appealing. As Angers explains, French Canadians did not want to participate in the war because they were aware of their weakened state and saw no reason to be mixed up in the quarrels of the great powers.<sup>58</sup> Francophones saw themselves as a minority in the industrial sector and, therefore, fighting for Quebec's economy did not make sense due to the fact that the economy was controlled by the English-speaking population. Simply put, referring to their autonomy within the economic sector,

“their position within Canada put them against joining in the war [...] [they] should not be forced to rush to the aid of a people fighting to preserve what [they] had not so much have acquired”.<sup>59</sup>

The state of the industrial sector as a whole represented its own justification against conscription and nationalist implication amongst French Canadians. When the war broke out, Adrien Gagnon, as well as thousands of French and English Canadians, were led to work towards the war effort – they began working in the industrial sector, producing essentials for the fighting such as, in Gagnon’s case, aircraft parts.<sup>60</sup> However, as Everett Hughes explains, “French Canadians formed a strong majority among the industry’s employees overall. They occurred in the largest number at the worker level [but] their ranks thinned out on the way [...] to the offices, and disappeared altogether as one moved higher up the ladder.”<sup>61</sup> Although French Canadians were needed in the industries, the latter were still dominated and controlled by the Anglophone population, causing conflict between both parties. As shown by Monière, around the same time as the war, of 22,108 businesses in the Province of Quebec, only 40 percent were French-speaking. With regard to financial power, English-speaking enterprises held 86.6 percent while the French-speaking, only 12 percent.<sup>62</sup> Considering these numbers, it is no wonder that the cleric-nationalists as well as the *Union Nationale* fought so hard for a return to the land. Finally, in relation to the importance of industrialization for conscription, Mackenzie King himself stated that Canada’s “particular role in [the] war did not leave room for conscription; that conscription will impede a total war-effort by depriving industries of the necessary manpower for supplying England.”<sup>63</sup> This led to work conscription in 1943, where every man between 16 and 43 was forced to work towards the war effort.<sup>64</sup>

Prior to that event, industrialization was still prominent, leading to a period of urbanization – for the first time since the economic crash, the urban way of life supplanted the “rural ideal” with

promises of “better education, social anonymity, occupational mobility,” and, for many, a higher standard of living; as clarified by Behiels, “the massive rural depopulation was prompted by [...] attractive salaries and benefits in the industrial and service sectors.”<sup>65</sup> For many, including Gagnon, urbanization and hopes of a better economic structure, led them to the city of Montreal, increasing the belief among nationalists that Montreal, like Quebec City, would eventually become a Francophone metropolis, economically and socially speaking.<sup>66</sup> However, as explained by Fernand Harvey, it was quite the contrary, “industrialization and the exodus to the city emphasized the economic inferiority and forced Anglicization of the French Canadian workers.”<sup>67</sup> When Gagnon moved to Montreal in 1940, his knowledge of, not only bodybuilding, but bodybuilding within his province expanded. In 1940 the magazine *Your Physique* was published, providing Gagnon with additional local information, and enabling him to finally make the acquaintance of his future competition, the Weider brothers.<sup>68</sup>

In the year 1940, a more significant event than Gagnon’s move and the rural exodus occurred – France’s partial occupation by the Germans. While this event shook all of Europe, its impact in Quebec led to a series of Francophone parties to rise against the federal government. Following the occupation, federal leader Mackenzie King announced that military service became obligatory for conflicts occurring within Canadian borders, while the decision to fight in Europe remained voluntary.<sup>69</sup> Furthermore, feeling that power should be centralized, the federal government established the Rowell-Sirois Commission, granting it complete control over every province’s social security and finances. To the disappointment of many French Canadians who felt the commission was a direct violation of their autonomy, Adélar Godbout agreed to its terms.<sup>70</sup> Louis Balthazar explains that this commission rendered the Quebec government “an empty shell” – the government, “still imbued with principles of pure *laissez-faire*, had no control over the

economy, which was in the hands of the Anglophones; nor on culture and education, which resided in the hands of the Church, nor on social affairs, which were managed by religious communities.”<sup>71</sup> Thus, the French-speaking population feared assimilation.

Matters worsened two years later. Under pressure from the other countries in the Allied forces, King held a plebiscite on conscription, asking Canadians to release the government from any obligations arising out of past commitments which restricted overseas conscription. The vote ended with a majority agreeing to conscription, to the discontent of a majority within the Province of Quebec.<sup>72</sup> Faced with the obligation to fight a war that was thought to be of no consequence for their culture, several French Canadians who “perceived the plebiscite to be the epitome of deceit since, to get elected, Mackenzie King had promised only to Quebec that conscription would not be imposed,” decided to resist the federal government.<sup>73</sup> Under the direction of former member of the Liberal Party, Maxime Raymond, as well as André Laurendeau, and with the support of Montreal mayor Camillien Houde, the *Bloc Populaire Canadien* was founded, whose primary purpose was anti-conscriptionist. The *Bloc Populaire* led their campaigns under the slogan “Canada to the Canadians, Quebec to the Quebeckers,” referring to the idea that Quebec make its own decisions and not follow Canada into war.<sup>74</sup> This was also a direct call for the autonomy that Quebec had been seeking for the greater part of its history. Moreover, to further advance their message of independence against King’s dictum of “conscription if necessary, but not necessarily conscription,” Raymond responded “separation if necessary.”<sup>75</sup> As an answer to the *Bloc*’s mottoes, Camillien Houde, who verbally shared his discontent at conscription, was intercepted while exiting a hotel in Montreal and was sent to an internment camp at the outskirts of the province.<sup>76</sup> Along with the *Bloc Populaire*, a group of younger nationalists formed an opposition within Quebec under the name *Jeunesses Patriotes*. Claiming to speak in the name of Quebec’s youth, the

'Patriotic Youth' stated that "the young French Canadians preferred living freely in their old French Quebec then die as a service to a Confederation anti-French and more British than Canadian."<sup>77</sup> As such, the nationalist feelings within the Province of Quebec did not disappear with the waning of the 'rural myth' or the defeat of the Conservative Party but, rather, evolved, from a stagnant, cleric-nationalism, to a progressive, somewhat extreme and quasi-sovereign nationalism involving various generations.

From the events occurring in Quebec also Maurice Duplessis re-emerged. Noting the struggle based on conscription, Duplessis built a political campaign around the resentment felt in the province, portraying himself as a defender of provincial autonomy, language, and traditions, exclaiming "cooperation, yes; assimilation, never!"<sup>78</sup> Although this allowed Maurice Duplessis to lead Quebec once more, it is important to note that Adélard Godbout played a major role during his term as Premier. Dubbed by Hamelin and Montminy as a "mini Quiet Revolution," Godbout granted women from Quebec the right to vote in provincial elections, established a civil service commission, adopted a labor code regarding unions, rendered education compulsory until the age of 14 and free in the primary sector and, finally, created Hydro-Québec which nationalized the Montreal Light, Heat & Power Company, each of which he completed in four years.<sup>79</sup> However, this 'mini Quiet Revolution' quickly ended with the re-election of Maurice Duplessis in 1944. Along with his promise of provincial autonomy, Duplessis exemplified the fear of industrialization, urbanization, and all other social change that was the hallmark of the traditional elite – his conception of autonomy actually served "as a smoke screen, veiling the eyes of the French Canadians as to the economic and social issues that came with the deformation of structures belonging to dependent societies," such as the one Duplessis was trying so hard to establish.<sup>80</sup>

Yet, in 1944, specific events occurred which worked in favor of Adrien Gagnon's progress as a publisher – “the evolution of communication” in Montreal, and the importation of newspapers from France coming to a halt.<sup>81</sup> France, under German occupation, was prevented from publishing anything outside of the country, providing French-Canadian writers with the opportunity and incentive to produce Quebec periodicals, music, poems, and novels, and have an audience able to purchase them. For Gagnon, it led to publishing his first exercise program. Maurice Desjardins, in *Photo Journal* explains that “seeing that repeated sessions of physical culture completely cured his insomnia and provided him with resistance to fatigue, [Gagnon] decided to provide his compatriots with the benefits of physical culture by offering them a course.”<sup>82</sup> This course was *Vibro Tension*, based on, and rather similar to Charles Atlas' *Dynamic Tension*, which Gagnon pursued for several years. Woycke explains that “although [Gagnon] preferred weight training, the course aimed for overall health and development which could be applied to work and to sports,” while his son Yvan states that *Vibro Tension* was “adapted for people from here,” referring to the French-Canadian population.<sup>83</sup> Gagnon's course was divided into eight lessons, splitting each body part within the lessons – chest, back, shoulders, abdomen, arms, and legs. The course did not require any machines or equipment. With a picture of himself showing off his physique, Gagnon explained that *Vibro Tension* was not only focused on muscle building, but also on providing motivation, breathing techniques, nutritional advice, how to prevent constipation, improve sexual drive or mitigate it, have proper hygiene, the importance of fresh air, and the advantages of sunlight.<sup>84</sup> Furthermore, within the “evolution of communication” came the accessibility to French language newspapers. With this, Adrien Gagnon was able to publicize *Vibro Tension* in papers such as *La Presse*, *La Patrie*, and *Le Petit Journal*, where he listed a mailing address for ordering the exercise program delivered over a period of three months.<sup>85</sup>

## Fighting Ends, Insecurity Persists

In 1945, the war came to an end with the defeat of Germany. As Balthazar explains, in Quebec the end of the war “should have brought [the province] into another cultural and social domain, however the presence of Duplessis kept Quebec where it was prior to the war.”<sup>86</sup> As mentioned, Maurice Duplessis was defending provincial autonomy, which although it consisted of opposing conscription, causing over 2,000 French Canadians to hide from the call for overseas warfare; it also meant that the province clung to past values and constantly referred to its position of national weakness. As explained by Monière, buried in the illusions of Maurice Duplessis, French Canadians were unconsciously working towards their own disappearance as a political force. Due to Duplessis’ heightened *laissez-faire*, modernization of the state and of Quebec society was delayed, resulting in, as mentioned, a slower rise in the economy compared to the other Canadian provinces.<sup>87</sup> For Duplessis, autonomy meant the right to maintain the existing social order in Quebec, a base from which to fight change and preserve the role of the religious orders in health care and education – under his leadership, the Rowell-Sirois Commission had to be stopped, while the federal government was trying to retain centralization after the war. By 1945, 82.8 percent of Quebec taxes went to the federal government, while the provincial government only retained 7.3 percent.<sup>88</sup> To this end, Duplessis imposed a strict provincial tax, resulting in double taxation for the Province of Quebec; this was used by Duplessis to argue that Ottawa was the “monster of double taxation.”<sup>89</sup>

With Duplessis’ focus on autonomy, a heightened sense of nationalism occurred, centred on the French Canadian challenge to the unification of Canada; the “Quebec Problem.”<sup>90</sup> This “Quebec Problem” was accentuated by the massive immigration following the Second World War – in particular, the arrival of yet another increased number of Jews, significantly altering the

composition of the Francophone community, giving rise to nationalism centred on xenophobic beliefs.<sup>91</sup> Monière tells us that it is important to understand that xenophobia was related to the socio-economic status of Quebec during that period. Antisemitism developed among French Canadians as a reaction to the structural powers in which they were dominated – threatened by cultural disappearance, French Canadians sought to affirm their position by attacking collectivities weaker than their own, in this case, the Jews.<sup>92</sup> Although the Catholic Church's influence diminished as urbanization grew at the end of the war, its messages, several of which involving the Jewish population, were still broadcast amongst the masses. According to the clerics, the Jews were “instigators of revolutions and the sons of Satan, who sought to spread fear in the face of change.”<sup>93</sup> A religious newspaper entitled *La Croix*, ‘the Cross,’ argued that the Jewish population was “a people rejected by God and the scourge of humanity. [Jews] are Satan’s right arm on Earth [...] they live in Germany, England, France, and Canada. They cannot be assimilated, they are unchangeable...they invade all [...] Army of the Cross, let’s block their way [...] do not sell to them, rent houses to them, or buy from them. We have to boycott them, we have to force them to leave.”<sup>94</sup> In the end, the Jewish population of Quebec was held responsible for most of the hardships that occurred in the province, including the Second World War, and the emigration of French Canadians. This heightened hatred against the Jews was reproduced by other political leaders, presented in novels, and most importantly for this study, embellished by Adrien Gagnon in his muscle magazine *Santé et Développement Physique*, with regard to the integrity of the French Canadian realm of bodybuilding.<sup>95</sup>

Additionally, with regard to publications and the position of French Canadians within their province, the end of the Second World War brought some legitimacy of the French language in Quebec. As remarked, even if the industries were still controlled by the English-speaking



population, the workforce was predominantly Francophone, resulting in a boom in the French Canadian economy, aided, of course, by Duplessis' refusal to agree to the continuation of the Rowell-Sirois Commission.<sup>96</sup> This rejuvenation of the French language was an additional factor which favoured Adrien Gagnon's publications of *Vibro Tension* within the Province of Quebec, as well as his, soon-to-be published physical culture magazine.

To conclude, as Quebec, and most of the Western world, slowly pulled away from the harsh memory of the Second World War, the province continued to seek autonomy within a Canada that sought centralization within a concept of unity. At the Dominion-Provincial Conference on Reconstruction, held in Ottawa in 1946, in which the federal government discussed financial arrangements and public investments, based on their own involvement in the country as a whole, Maurice Duplessis, seeing that Quebec was once more facing assimilation, responded:

the autonomy of the province, the rights of the province, therein lays the soul of a people, of a race, and nobody will be allowed to do it any harm. They are the rights and prerogatives that enable us to raise our children in the French language and in the Catholic religion [...] We have a choice position in the Confederation. In numbers, we form a minority, but we are a majority because of our years in the land. The Province of Quebec demands the right to live and to ensure its survival.<sup>97</sup>

This message resonated throughout Quebec – the word 'autonomy' was built into the statement and directly delivered to the federal government – nationalism was fervent once more. Although Duplessis' idea of nationalism and autonomy was built on the presence of the Catholic Church and on the preservation of traditional ideas, there was an ascendancy of a new French Canadian middle class turning away from traditional ideas and professions such as priest, lawyer, or doctor, and turning towards business, engineering and social sciences.<sup>98</sup> Amongst these ambitious French Canadians was Adrien Gagnon.

Against unfavorable odds and against the pleas of his mother who believed that there was no way a French Canadian could make it within the Anglophone business world, Gagnon published his first issue of *Santé et Développement Physique* in March 1946.<sup>99</sup> The aim of this magazine was to promote health within the French Canadian milieu by providing advice on nutrition, exercise, and supplements. Yet, as will be discussed, intertwined within these tips and tricks, were messages promoting French Canadian nationalism. The purpose of this chapter was to insert Gagnon in the context of Quebec during his lifetime. Although it served as a brief history of Quebec within a twenty-year period, this section also provided a brief biography of the man himself. Gagnon was born during a time of heightened cleric-nationalists who argued that the rural milieu was safe and that the cities should be avoided. English Canadians were constantly blamed for the hardships of the urban milieu, and were later branded as the cause for the Great Depression. When Gagnon entered the workforce, he worked under Anglophone rule with no means of improving himself within the ranks. Also, during the Second World War, the conscription argument created a linguistic battleground within the Province of Quebec, pitting Anglophones and Francophones against each other once again. Finally, when Gagnon began publishing his magazine, Quebec was led by Maurice Duplessis who constantly fought for provincial autonomy and for the legitimacy of the French language, each continuously reinforced by explicit messages of nationalism within newspapers, the radio, or by word of mouth. Within such an environment of political, social, cultural, and, most importantly, linguistic turmoil, Adrien Gagnon not only rose as the first French Canadian physical culture publisher, but also as a protector and vanguard of what he conceptualized as the ‘French Canadian race.’

## Endnotes

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- <sup>1</sup> [Ce livre n'est non seulement un hommage à un grand homme, mais un hommage au monde de la naturopathie.] Yvan Gagnon and Jacques Beaulieu, *Adrien Gagnon: l'Histoire d'un Pionnier et d'un Pilier de la Culture Physique et de la Naturopathie* (Montreal: les Éditions Quebecor, 2009), 3 – 121; James Woycke, “Esprit de Corps: a History of North American Bodybuilding,” *History eBook Collection*, Book 2, 2016, 68; Philip Fine, “Quebecker Built Health-Supplements Empire out of his Passion for Physical Fitness.” *The Globe and Mail*, June 7, 2011; “Décès d'Adrien Gagnon,” *infoDimanche.com*, (Last Modified May 16, 2011), <http://www.infodimanche.com/actualites/actualite/80115/deces-dadrien-gagnon#>; “Décès de l'Homme d'Affaire Adrien Gagnon,” *tvanouvelles.ca*, (Last Modified May 14, 2011), <http://www.tvanouvelles.ca/2011/05/14/deces-de-lhomme-daffaires-adrien-gagnon>.
- <sup>2</sup> Charles W. Mills, *Sociological Imagination* (New York: Oxford University Press, 1970) 3.
- <sup>3</sup> Ibid.
- <sup>4</sup> Ibid, 6.
- <sup>5</sup> [Je vous souhaite beaucoup de résultats dans la tâche que vous avez entreprise, de faire de notre race des Surhommes.] – “I wish you a lot of results in the task that you have taken, to render our race Supermen.” M.A.L, “A Letter from a Fan,” SDP, June & July 1946, 62.
- <sup>6</sup> Mills, *Sociological Imagination*, 8.
- <sup>7</sup> Ibid, 7.
- <sup>8</sup> For definitions of these two types of nationalisms, see page 6 in Chapter 1 of this study. On some occasions, Conservative nationalism can also be referred to traditional nationalism.
- <sup>9</sup> Gérard Bouchard, *La Construction d'une Culture: le Québec et l'Amérique Française*, ed. Serge Courville (Québec: Les Presses de l'Université Laval, 1993), 3.
- <sup>10</sup> Gilles Gougeon, *Histoire du Nationalisme Québécois* (Montreal: Les Distributions ADP, 1993), 71.
- <sup>11</sup> Louis Balthazar, *Bilan du Nationalisme au Québec* (Montreal: l'Hexagone, 1986), 92.
- <sup>12</sup> Garth Stevenson, *Community Besieged: the Anglophone Minority and the Politics of Quebec* (Montreal: McGill University Press, 1999), 41. Stevenson displays a graph taken from Rudin's *The Forgotten Quebeckers*, which shows the change in Quebec's population between 1900 and 1950.
- <sup>13</sup> Ibid.
- <sup>14</sup> Balthazar, *Bilan du Nationalisme*, 92; The term *église-nation* can be directly translated as ‘Church-nation’ in which the state is an instrument of the Church, and the latter makes decisions based on religious beliefs and traditionalism, see Ramsay Cook, *Watching Quebec: Selected Essays* (Montreal: McGill University Press, 2005), 73.
- <sup>15</sup> *L'Action Française* changed its name to *L'Action Canadienne-Française* due to its similarity with the nationalist movement in France which had the same name but promoted a different message. See Ramsay Cook, *French Canadian Nationalism: an Anthology* (Toronto: Macmillan of Canada, 1969), for further details.

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- <sup>16</sup> The ‘rural myth’ was the idea that a rural life was better than the urban lifestyle. Although this idea was more inciting in the 1930s, the 1920s favored the urbanized cities over the agricultural milieu. Cook, *Watching Quebec*, 73.
- <sup>17</sup> The term *bonne-entente* can be translated as good harmony between parties – in this case Francophone and Anglophone. Michael Oliver, *The Passionate Debate: the Social and Political Ideas of Quebec Nationalism, 1920-1945* (Montreal: Vehicule Press, 1991), 107.
- <sup>18</sup> Quote taken from André Laurendeau’s *Notre Nationalisme*; cited in Oliver, *The Passionate Debate*, 125.
- <sup>19</sup> Pierre Elliot Trudeau, “Quebec on the Eve of the Asbestos Strike,” in *French Canadian Nationalism: an Anthology*, ed. Ramsay Cook (Toronto: Macmillan of Canada, 1969), 37-38.
- <sup>20</sup> Paul-André Linteau, “La Nouvelle Organisation Économique et Sociale,” in *Le Français au Québec: 400 ans d’Histoire de Vie*, ed. Michel Plourde and Pierre Georgeault (Montreal: Éditions Fides, 2008), 213.
- <sup>21</sup> Olivar Asselin, “Industry in the Economy of French Canada,” in *French Canadian Nationalism: an Anthology*, ed. Ramsay Cook (Toronto: Macmillan of Canada, 1969), 184.
- <sup>22</sup> Richard Jones, “De la Terre à l’Usine (1896-1939),” in *Histoire du Québec*, ed. Jean Hamelin (St-Hyacinthe: Edisem, 1976), 422.
- <sup>23</sup> [Un village pittoresque sur la rive sud du Saint-Laurent.] Gagnon and Beaulieu, *Adrien Gagnon*, 20.
- <sup>24</sup> *Ibid*, 22.
- <sup>25</sup> Philip Fine, “Quebecker Built Health-Supplements Empire out of his Passion for Physical Fitness.” *The Globe and Mail*, June 7.
- <sup>26</sup> Jacques Lacoursière and Robin Philpot, *A People’s History of Quebec* (Montreal: les Éditions du Septentrion, 1992), 145.
- <sup>27</sup> *Ibid*.
- <sup>28</sup> *Ibid*, 146; Lacoursière, *Histoire Populaire du Québec*, 189, 196.
- <sup>29</sup> Balthazar, *Bilan du Nationalisme*, 93.
- <sup>30</sup> *L’Action Française* ended in 1928, however Groulx quickly recovered by publishing *L’Action Nationale* in 1932. Richard Handler, *Nationalism and the Politics of Culture in Quebec* (Wisconsin: the University of Wisconsin Press, 1988), 38.
- <sup>31</sup> A quote by Marie Chaptelaine, used by members of the Catholic Church. Trudeau, “Quebec on the Eve of the Asbestos Strike,” in *French Canadian Nationalism*, 38.
- <sup>32</sup> Groulx writing in the Quebec newspaper *Le Devoir*. *Ibid*, 36.
- <sup>33</sup> The Jewish population adapted to English because they were sent to Protestant schools which used that language. This also ensured that the second generation of Jews would be English-speaking, Garth Stevenson, *Community Besieged: the Anglophone Minority and the Politics of Quebec* (Montreal: McGill University Press, 1999), 45. As a side note, it is within this population of second generation English Jews that Gagnon’s competitors Ben and Joe Weider would find themselves.
- <sup>34</sup> Paul Simard was a member of the group *Jeune Canada* who promoted French Canadian nationalist messages of independence, Lacoursière and Philpot, *People History of Quebec*, 147; For Adrien Arcand, see Paul-André

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- Linteau, René Durocher, Jean-Claude Robert, and François Ricard, *Quebec since 1930*, trans. Robert Chodos and Ellen Garmaise (Toronto: James Lorimer & Company, 1991), 81.
- <sup>35</sup> Trudeau, “Quebec on the Eve of the Asbestos Strike,” in *French Canadian Nationalism*, 33.
- <sup>36</sup> Linteau, Durocher, Robert, and Ricard, *Quebec since 1930*, 2.
- <sup>37</sup> Stated by Father Alexandre Dugrès, Trudeau, “Quebec on the Eve of the Asbestos Strike,” in *French Canadian Nationalism*, 43.
- <sup>38</sup> [La ville est une tueuse de peuple; elle est le gouffre où s’engloutissent les humains, les santés s’y altèrent, les corps s’y anéantissent, les puissances de la race s’y stérilisent, les familles s’y éteignent.] Jacques Lacoursière, *Histoire Populaire du Québec 1896 à 1960* (Québec: Édition Septentrion, 1997), 199.
- <sup>39</sup> The idea was given to Premier Taschereau by the bishops of Montreal. *Ibid*, 201.
- <sup>40</sup> *L’Action Libérale Nationale* was a political group that branched out of Taschereau’s liberal party who felt that the party in power was incapable of adapting their policies to the problems brought by the Great Depression. At that time, Duplessis’ struggling Conservative party allied with Paul Gouin and the ALN in order to win an election against the Liberals. Upon the merge, the ALN changed its name to the *Union Nationale*. Shortly before the Conservative victory, Duplessis drove Paul Gouin out, to become the Premier of Quebec. Balthazar, *Bilan du Nationalisme*, 99.
- <sup>41</sup> Denis Monière, *Ideologies in Quebec: The Historical Development*, trans. Richard Howard (Toronto: University of Toronto Press, 1981), 237.
- <sup>42</sup> Monière, *Ideologies in Quebec*, 233, 237, 238.
- <sup>43</sup> *Ibid*, 233.
- <sup>44</sup> Lacoursière, *Histoire Populaire du Québec*, 201; Denis Monière, *Le Développement des Idéologies au Québec: des Origines à nos Jours* (Montreal : Éditions Québec/Amérique, 1977), 274.
- <sup>45</sup> Linteau et al. *Quebec Since 1930*, 21.
- <sup>46</sup> *Ibid*, 2.
- <sup>47</sup> Gagnon and Beaulieu, *Adrien Gagnon*, 22.
- <sup>48</sup> Lacoursière, *Histoire Populaire du Québec*, 199.
- <sup>49</sup> For information on Victor Delamarre, see Ben Weider, *les Hommes Forts du Québec* (Montreal: Éditions du Jour, 1973), 55; Fine, “Empire Built out of Passion for Physical Fitness,” *The Globe and Mail*.
- <sup>50</sup> [La victoire de Victor Delamarre fut l’étincelle qui alluma chez Adrien Gagnon une flamme qui n’allait jamais s’éteindre: le maintien et l’amélioration d’une bonne forme physique.] Gagnon and Beaulieu, *Adrien Gagnon*, 26.
- <sup>51</sup> Today, l’École Technique is integrated into the Cégep de Rimouski. Gagnon and Beaulieu, *Adrien Gagnon*, 26; Fine, “Empire Built out of Passion for Physical Fitness,” *The Globe and Mail*.
- <sup>52</sup> Gagnon and Beaulieu, *Adrien Gagnon*, 27; Edmond Desbonnet was a French academic and champion in the realm of Physical Culture in France during the early 1900s.
- <sup>53</sup> Fine, “Empire Built out of Passion for Physical Fitness,” *The Globe and Mail*; Woycke, *Esprit de Corps*, 68; Angelo Siciliano, aka Charles Atlas, before creating a publishing his exercise program, was a popular

bodybuilder in the 1920s, after being dubbed "America's Most Handsome Man" in 1921, and "Americas Most Perfectly Developed Man" in 1922 by Bernarr Macfadden.

- <sup>54</sup> Canada declared war in September 1939, leading to the elections in October of the same year. John A. Dickinson and Brian Young, *A Short History of Quebec*, 2nd ed. (Montreal: McGill University Press, 2000), 281
- <sup>55</sup> Ibid, 281-282.
- <sup>56</sup> Lacoursière, *Histoire Populaire du Québec*, 250.
- <sup>57</sup> [Enrôlez-vous ou crevez de faim,] Ibid, 309-310.
- <sup>58</sup> François-Albert Angers, "Why We Shall Never Accept Conscription for Overseas Service," in *French Canadian Nationalism: an Anthology*, ed. Ramsay Cook (Toronto: Macmillan of Canada, 1969), 230.
- <sup>59</sup> Ibid, 233-234.
- <sup>60</sup> Hamelin and Montminy reveal that, between 1931 and 1941, the amount of people living on the land reached 62%, however the war reversed these statistics, thus increasing the population in the urban setting, see Jean Hamelin and Jean-Paul Montminy, "La Mutation d'une Société Québécoise, 1939-1976. Temps, Ruptures, Continuités," in *Idéologies au Canada Français 1940-1976*, ed. Fernand Dumont, Jean Hamelin, and Jean-Paul Montminy (Québec: Les Presses de l'Université Laval, 1981), 38. For Adrien Gagnon's career as a machinist, see Fine, "Empire Built out of Passion for Physical Fitness," *The Globe and Mail*; Gagnon and Beaulieu, *Adrien Gagnon*, 55.
- <sup>61</sup> Monière, *Le Développement des Idéologies au Québec*, 206.
- <sup>62</sup> Ibid.
- <sup>63</sup> François-Albert Angers, "Why We Shall Never Accept Conscription for Overseas Service," in *French Canadian Nationalism: an Anthology*, ed. Ramsay Cook (Toronto: Macmillan of Canada, 1969), 228.
- <sup>64</sup> Lacoursière, *Histoire Populaire du Québec*, 310.
- <sup>65</sup> Michael D. Behiels, *Prelude to Quebec's Quiet Revolution: Liberalism versus Neo-Nationalism, 1945-1960* (Montreal: McGill University Press, 1985), 11.
- <sup>66</sup> During the period of urbanization, French Canadians constituted over 60 per cent of the city's population, and a progressively larger proportion of this Francophone majority spoke only French. Behiels, *Prelude to Quebec*, 14. For Gagnon moving to Montreal, see Maurice Desjardins, "Adrien Gagnon Vous Fera Grandir à Volonté," *Photo Journal*, Septembre 1950, 25; Gagnon and Beaulieu, *Adrien Gagnon*, 55.
- <sup>67</sup> Fernand Harvey, "Le Canada Français et la Question Linguistique," in *Le Français au Québec: 400 ans d'Histoire de Vie*, ed. Michel Plourde and Pierre Georgeault (Montreal: Éditions Fides, 2008), 191.
- <sup>68</sup> Joe Weider wrote and published his first issue of *Your Physique* in his kitchen. Joe Weider, Ben Weider and Mike Steere, *Brothers of Iron: How the Weider Brothers Created the Fitness Movement and Built a Business Empire* (Champaign, Sports Publishing L.L.C., 2006).
- <sup>69</sup> Although this was due to the annexation of France, German U-boats were spotted off of the Pacific Coast, stirring fear within the Canadian population. Lacoursière, *Histoire Populaire du Québec*, 267.
- <sup>70</sup> Officially known as the Royal Commission on Dominion-Provincial Relations, the Rowell-Sirois Commission was first signed in 1937. Balthazar, *Bilan du Nationalisme*, 109.

- <sup>71</sup> [Le gouvernement, encore imbu des principes du plus pur laissez-faire, ne contrôlait ni l'économie de la province, qu'il laissait entre les mains des financiers et entrepreneurs anglophones, ni la culture et l'éducation qui demeurerait entre les mains de l'Église, ni les affaires sociales qui étaient gérées par des communautés religieuses.] Ibid, 110.
- <sup>72</sup> 80 percent of the ensemble of Canada voted 'yes' while 71 percent of Quebec voted against. Lacoursière, *Histoire Populaire du Québec*, 290.
- <sup>73</sup> Lacoursière and Philpot, *A People's History of Quebec*, 151.
- <sup>74</sup> Maxime Raymond was the leader at the federal level, while Laurendeau was elected at the provincial level. The ideas of the 'bloc' were inspired by the same nationalist ideas of former Quebec politician, Henri Bourassa, who fought against the same issues during the First World War. Denis Monière, *Ideologies in Quebec: The Historical Development*, trans. Richard Howard (Toronto: University of Toronto Press, 1981), 225; Behiels, *Prelude to Quebec*, 29.
- <sup>75</sup> Monière, *Ideologies in Quebec*, 225.
- <sup>76</sup> Houde would remain in the camp until the end of the war. Lacoursière, *Histoire Populaire du Québec*, 272.
- <sup>77</sup> [La jeunesse canadienne-française préfère vivre librement dans son vieux Québec français que d'aller mourir au service d'une Confédération antifranaçaise et plus Britannique que Canadienne.] Ibid, 245.
- <sup>78</sup> [Cooperation, oui; assimilation, jamais!] Dickinson and Young, *A Short History of Quebec*, 283.
- <sup>79</sup> Female suffrage (1940), Superior Council of Labour (1940), Economic Orientation Council (1943), Obligatory schooling (1943), Health Insurance Commission (1943), Union Commission (1944), Hydro-Québec (1944). Hamelin and Montminy, "La Mutation d'une Société Québécoise," in *Idéologies au Canada Français 1940-1976*, 43.
- <sup>80</sup> Monière, *Ideologies in Quebec*, 233; Monière, *Le Développement des Idéologies au Québec*, 292.
- <sup>81</sup> The term was coined by Hamelin and Montminy to explain the rise and accessibility of Quebec newspapers. Hamelin and Montminy, "La Mutation d'une Société Québécoise," in *Idéologies au Canada Français 1940-1976*, 39.
- <sup>82</sup> Maurice Desjardins, "Adrien Gagnon Vous Fera Grandir à Volonté," *Photo Journal*, Septembre 1950, 25.
- <sup>83</sup> Woycke, *Esprit de Corps*, 68; Gagnon and Beaulieu, *Adrien Gagnon*, 32.
- <sup>84</sup> For more details about *Vibro Tension*, see Adrien Gagnon, "Cours de Santé et de Développement Physique," *Santé et Développement Physique*, March-April-May 1946, 16-17; and "Santé et de Développement Physique," SDP, August-September-October-November 1952, 33.
- <sup>85</sup> Gagnon and Beaulieu, *Adrien Gagnon*, 32; Woycke, *Esprit de Corps*, 69.
- <sup>86</sup> Balthazar, *Bilan du Nationalisme*, 105.
- <sup>87</sup> Monière, *Le Développement des Idéologies au Québec*, 292.
- <sup>88</sup> Dickinson and Young, *A Short History of Quebec*, 274.
- <sup>89</sup> This would only be implemented in 1953 under the Tremblay Commission. Monière, *Ideologies in Quebec*, 235.
- <sup>90</sup> Michel Brunet, "The Historical Background to Quebec's Challenge to Canadian Unity," in *Quebec Society and Politics: View from the Inside*, ed. Dale C. Thomson (Toronto: McClelland and Stewart Limited, 1973), 40.

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- <sup>91</sup> More than 420 000 immigrants arrived in Quebec between 1945 and 1961, Dickinson and Young, *A Short History of Quebec*, 274.
- <sup>92</sup> Monière, *Le Développement des Idéologies au Québec*, 281.
- <sup>93</sup> Ibid, 281.
- <sup>94</sup> [Ce peuple rejeté de Dieu est le fléau de l'humanité. Il est le bras droit de Satan sur terre... Il est pervers, astucieux, intrigant... Le Juif est toujours Juif qu'il vive en Allemagne, en Angleterre, en France ou au Canada. Il ne s'assimile pas, il ne change pas... Ils envahissent tout: la finance, le commerce, les positions lucratives... Ils s'enrichissent à nos dépens... Eh Bien! Armé de la Croix, nous allons essayer de leur barrer le chemin. Nous prions d'abord nos compatriotes de n'avoir aucune relation avec les Juifs, de ne pas leur vendre, ni leur louer leurs maisons, de n'acheter rien d'eux. Il faut les boycotter, il faut les obliger à s'en aller.] Cited from Journal *La Croix* in Monière, *Le Développement des Idéologies au Québec*, 282.
- <sup>95</sup> On one particular occasion, Gagnon refers to his competitors as selfish and dishonest 'Israelites,' in reference to Ben and Joe Weider, who were Jewish.
- <sup>96</sup> Paul-André Linteau, "La Nouvelle Organisation Économique et Sociale," in *Le Français au Québec: 400 ans d'Histoire de Vie*, ed. Michel Plourde and Pierre Georgeault (Montreal: Éditions Fides, 2008), 216.
- <sup>97</sup> Lacoursière and Philpot, *People History of Quebec*, 156.
- <sup>98</sup> Cook, *Watching Quebec*, 7.
- <sup>99</sup> Gagnon and Beaulieu, *Adrien Gagnon*, 33.



## CHAPTER 3

### Healthy, Beautiful Nationalism

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Adrien Gagnon's arrival in the publication world of bodybuilding was an uneventful one in the context of the overall history of the sport: writing about health and physical culture was not a novel idea, especially within Montreal where the Weiders had already been active as authors, publishers, and competition organizers for six years. However, not only could the fact that Gagnon published in the French language be considered unique but, as discussed, the environment in which he did so was nothing short of eventful. Adrien Gagnon began publishing *Santé et Développement Physique* in 1946 in a Quebec transfixed by a traditionalist mindset evoked by Maurice Duplessis and the *Union Nationale*. The latter spread feelings of racism and fear of Anglophone control, leading to the refusal to cooperate with the English-speaking population, interest in a return to the land, and supremacy of the Catholic Church. Duplessis' beliefs and political decisions led to the establishment of a shared idea between Duplessis, the clergy, and poet Paul-Émile Borduas and his *Refus Global* who, although did not agree with all of Duplessis' legislations, wished the same end for French Canadians – the acquisition of their own autonomy, referenced by the term 'French Canadian race'.<sup>1</sup> The idea of French Canadians possessing their own distinct identity also resonated within Gagnon's physical culture publications. Gagnon, through his writing, sought to mend a "true degeneration of the race."<sup>2</sup>

*Santé et Développement Physique* does not appear unique upon first glance. The magazine features numerous images of American bodybuilders, advertisements for health products such as vitamin capsules, weightlifting records from various competitions, and various pieces of gym equipment. However, what makes the magazine interesting are the themes that emerge within its numerous articles. As discussed in the previous chapter, following the concept of Mills'

sociological imagination, Adrien Gagnon was a product of his environment. Born and raised in the 1920s in the Province of Quebec, Gagnon was shaped into a man consistent with the society around him. The same can be said about his publications. The magazine's topics, articles, wording, and the ideas as a whole were based on popular beliefs and ideas surrounding the author – the main idea was advocating the betterment of the French Canadians.

The purpose of this chapter is to analyze Gagnon's articles, to demonstrate what he expected of his countrymen. In order to do so, recurring themes will be enumerated and expanded. As these themes are defined, one will notice that all are related to one another, resulting in explicit messages of French Canadian nationalism. Furthermore, each theme will be located within the specific time period of Quebec history – between 1946 and 1956, to better interpret the meaning behind Gagnon's writing. With that being said, keep in mind that the definition of health and fitness in the 21<sup>st</sup> century greatly differs from its meaning in the 1940s and 50s. This chapter will be built on three specific themes – health, competition, and nationalism. As mentioned, one theme blends into the other, uncovering explicit Francophone pride along with superiority in the bodybuilding business, and apparent feelings of French Canadian nationalism.

### **A Healthy Spirit in a Healthy Body**

Embedded within the title of Gagnon's first physical culture publication, are two distinct characteristics, *Santé*, health, and *Développement Physique*, physical development. Although, as mentioned, images of American (and French Canadian) bodybuilders filled most of the pages, the theme of health was the most extensive within the publication's content. The reasoning behind this was explained in Gagnon's biography – his son Yvan states that “in a time when sickness meant death and that prevention was always cheaper, [Gagnon's] magazines were successful.”<sup>3</sup> A healthcare system and healthcare professionals were not part of Quebec in the 1940s. Adrien

Gagnon explained this phenomenon himself in his magazine, stating that in his day, “the sickness state was the normal state, health was a phenomenal, strange, and paradoxical state [but] chemical medication [could not] prevent sickness [...]”<sup>4</sup> With regard to medicine, Adrien Gagnon preferred the use of natural vitamins found in food or through vitamin capsules, clarifying that parents “always go to the pharmacy, to ask for a strengthening medication [...] the[ir] child takes it regularly and continues to feel sick.”<sup>5</sup>

Health, however, was not expressed as a simplistic entity in Gagnon’s publications. The theme of health itself can be broken down into subthemes, and as mentioned, exercise encompassed all. However, for Gagnon, being healthy did not solely refer to the physical aspect of the body, but also the mental, the spiritual, and the moral. He explained that “physical culture must fully develop a student’s personality and adapt to his temperament.”<sup>6</sup> All aspects of health had to be combined in order to render an individual truly healthy. This idea of different themes building a healthy individual was also expanded upon by a contributor to Gagnon’s publications who claimed that man had seven lives, each of which was altered and improved by the other.<sup>7</sup>

In the first instance, Adrien Gagnon and his contributors emphasized hygiene and nutrition for a properly functioning body. Ideas regarding hygiene and nourishment propounded by the magazine have also emerged in the present. For example, alcohol and tobacco, like today, were frowned upon – although tobacco was not viewed as completely harmful, in this case writers in *Santé et Développement Physique* suggested that users reduce consumption to one or two cigarettes a day. However, a complete smoking cessation was still favoured for “stronger muscles, solid nerves, a powerful heart, robust lungs, better digestion, better vision, a clear spirit, and balanced morals.”<sup>8</sup> Alcohol, however, was viewed as “the prime enemy of the bodybuilder.”<sup>9</sup> As noted by Gagnon, during the war, tobacco and alcohol consumption was common, leading to disease and

an unhealthy population. On several occasions, Adrien Gagnon asked his readers what the reasoning was behind adding alcoholism to the numerous diseases already plaguing the province – evoking the sad stature of the drinker.<sup>10</sup> “Alcohol never resolved true difficulty,” he argued, drinking simply caused “incapacity and sterility,” resulting in “weak children with flat chests, without muscles, small in height, and who [wore] the mark of infantilism.”<sup>11</sup> He concluded, “a man who knows how to resist to alcohol is a strong man, a healthy man, a sure man,” who will live a happy life with a healthy offspring, and who will not “generate idiots and disabled children.”<sup>12</sup>

Additionally, alcohol and nutrition were often related to hygiene, which in turn resulted in a more healthy being. Hygiene, like the other aspects of health, must be considered within the period studied. In one particular article, Gagnon described a phenomenon that he termed winter intoxication, *intoxication hivernale*, which was caused by a lack of ventilation in the dwelling.<sup>13</sup> According to this specific article, it is apparent that winter was a difficult season to adapt to in the 1950s. Furthermore, Gagnon explained that individuals exercised less during the winter and were not as hot, resulting in the absence of sweat, in turn causing people to shower less – according to Gagnon, “winter becomes the poisoning season due to the lack of movement.”<sup>14</sup> Finally, in relation to winter, proper nutrition seemed to decline and alcoholism appeared to increase, which, according to Gagnon, meant that people would be “poorly built, sick, and overwhelmed by failure,” as a result of the state of their intestines – “if [people] are worth something, if [they] are someone, if [they] are intelligent, this could only come from [their] stomachs.”<sup>15</sup>

## **Mind and Soul**

As Gagnon’s credo was, ‘a healthy spirit in a healthy body,’ it is no surprise that he emphasized the development of the exerciser’s mind and soul, in addition to the body.<sup>16</sup> According

to Gagnon and his co-contributor Yves Benoist, “it is impossible to separate mental and moral development from physical culture [...] with an improved physique, one would experience an improved intelligence.”<sup>17</sup> With an accent on a fit mind, Gagnon’s aim was to spread *la joie de vivre*, the joy of living, among his readers. He wrote that “good mood was the best lubricant that prevented the wheels of life to grind, and pushed away the harmful effects caused by life’s hassles.”<sup>18</sup> The joy of living was an important notion in the post war period – many families lost loved ones, Quebec’s economy was not fully recovered to its state prior to the Great Depression, and French Canadians still feared assimilation from the Anglophone ruling class. Influenced by this dark period, Gagnon expounded that “with daily physical culture routines, [individuals] could acquire a radiating health and consequently a magnetism which radiated joy and a good mood.”<sup>19</sup> Additionally, related to happiness would be an increase in overall self-confidence. In an article by Yves Benoist entitled *‘La Psychologie du Succès* (the Psychology of Success), the author related physical culture to self-confidence, a positive attitude, and a strong personality, stating that “success in life is proportionate to personality,” and that people must be “the artist of their happiness.”<sup>20</sup> This was not only reflected through the writings of the author and contributor, but also through the letters of Gagnon’s readers. On one occasion, a man who signed his response with the initials A.G. explained that through physical culture “[he] succeeded in waking the joy of living within [himself], [he] muffled the beast and awoke the man.”<sup>21</sup>

Along with a healthy mind, Gagnon sought to promote a healthy soul. According to his writings, the best way to improve both was through relaxation. Gagnon explained that “in the atomic reign in which [he and his readers] lived, it was absolutely important to know the art of relaxation,” for a calmer mind and a serene soul.<sup>22</sup> An important aspect present in Gagnon’s ‘atomic reign’ was religion. Gagnon’s specific religious affiliations are unknown to me as they are

not discussed by his son, or Woycke; however, the Church was present in the author's life through his education, in his household, and in Quebec as a whole.<sup>23</sup> The importance of religion was also mirrored within the pages of Gagnon's magazine in relation to health. With regard to the soul and morality, Gagnon explained that "the body and the spirit have the right to equal treatment, good physical health brought infallibly an improved intelligence," and also that "physical activity is a marvelous antidote against moral poisons."<sup>24</sup> By moral poisons, Gagnon meant immoral acts which involved sex and indecent dress during a couple's honeymoon.<sup>25</sup> A clear defense against "immorality" is evident in *Santé et Développement Physique*. Adrien Gagnon spoke against masturbation, relationships that did not lead to marriage and, of course, sexual intercourse prior to the wedding. In one particular section, Gagnon criticized Ben Weider for writing a piece on the normalcy of masturbation, in which Gagnon stated that:

[he] had read in one of these works that masturbation, practiced in case of necessity by an adult, is an acceptable and harmless practice. Masturbation appears in their writings as a safety valve. Is man to be regulated like a furnace? Is he subject to explosions? Do any of you know a man who has exploded for not masturbating? [...] This volume recommends masturbation. Is the author a masturbator or a love expert? Or is he a degenerate and a being of debauchery? Masturbation is never a recommended practice for anyone.<sup>26</sup>

Gagnon then openly asked if a certain author, meaning Weider, was a married man or a *viveur*, who indulges in excess, also inquiring if "the ones who publically lead a life filled with debauchery and who are proud of having one or multiple mistresses, are they morally qualified to give physical advice to children? [...] They are the ones who seek to nurture desires, to spread longing for vice."<sup>27</sup>

In addition, in relation to exercise, the soul, and immorality, Adrien Gagnon published an article written anonymously by 'un ami,' a friend, entitled *Les Deux Ascetismes*, the Two Asceticisms, in which the author argued that "the body and the soul are indissolubly linked, never

separating. The health of one always influences the health of the other.”<sup>28</sup> The article clearly links physical culture to religion, stating that physical activity was like a baptism for the body, “with physical exercises we atone, the body atones its bad physical habits, its sins towards hygiene, [...] moral hygiene is the sister of bodily hygiene” and that “with asceticism, we clean, we tame, we toughen a body too attached to this world [...] with exercise, we also clean, tame, and toughen a body attached to the bad habits of its comforts.”<sup>29</sup> Also, the anonymous author explained that people died more of laziness than old age, and the soul died the same way, “laziness being the mother of all sins.”<sup>30</sup> In the end, he stated that “the bodily trophy and the spiritual trophy, [are] a reward for this world and a reward in the beyond. We should not separate what nature and God has united.”<sup>31</sup> Furthermore, Adrien Gagnon stated that he had to fight for his right to display the male body in his magazines and give advice in favour of a beautiful physique. He wrote that, in the beginning, parents returned the exercise programs ordered by their children for fear of corrupting the minds of the young – to this Gagnon replied that “the beauty of the human body was created in the image and the resemblance of God.”<sup>32</sup> To support his claim, he published a response from the religious Franciscan order stating that the

conviction on the absolute necessity of a rich ensemble of knowledge to pursue with honesty the work of a bodybuilder is already a solid argument in favour of [their] methods. If [they] understood [him] well, [Gagnon’s] goal would be to bring balance to the senses and the body in order to render them in harmonious service to the soul. This objective does not contradict at all the most basic facts of ethics but renders homage to the Creator, because as it is written in the book of Wisdom, the grandeur and the beauty of creatures reflect in analogy the One who is the Creator.<sup>33</sup>

Gagnon then continued to defend his methods by explaining that spiritual leaders approved his system because “the bodybuilder showed patience, abstinence, strength, will, renounced the simple pleasures, and demonstrated other Christian qualities.”<sup>34</sup> Yvan Gagnon also mentions the Franciscans in his biography, remembering a time when members of this religious order appeared

at their front door, welcomed by Adrien Gagnon himself, and they engaged in extensive conversations on the importance of a healthy body and a healthy soul.<sup>35</sup> In the end, it is important to remember the importance of religion in Quebec in the 1940s in order to fully appreciate Gagnon connecting God and muscle. Maurice Duplessis was a religious man who supported the Catholic religion during most of his political career, giving the Church supremacy in education and a place in his political decisions. No doubt this favour towards the Catholic Church was transferred to the French Canadians living under Duplessis' leadership, not sparing the author of the nationalist vehicle, *Santé et Développement Physique*.

### **The First Francophone Publisher**

The primary goal of a physical culture magazine was to display physicality. Gagnon presented his magazine as not only a vehicle for nationalistic thought, but also as a guide for how to look and the means by which to reach that specific built, yet chiseled appearance. He wrote that his magazine was “created to help Canadians to obtain health, strength, and physical beauty.”<sup>36</sup> Although health was the main theme of his magazines, the portrayal of health through a beautiful body was almost as important. However, the numerous athletes' bodies displayed in Gagnon's magazine along with the multitude of exercise programs did not render this publication unique – images and programs were presented in many other magazines such as Weider's *Your Physique* and *Santé et Force*, and in the United States and overseas in Hoffman's *Strength and Health*, and Desbonnet's *Culture Physique*. Adrien Gagnon displayed the importance of being beautiful in order to legitimize his supremacy as an author, creating a competition with his Anglophone counterpart, and to not only incite competition between the Francophone and Anglophone population, but also to reveal a weakness within the former's population.



As a French Canadian author entering a realm dominated by Anglophone writers in Montreal and across the United States, Adrien Gagnon had to prove his worth amongst his people. Writing articles about supplements and the bench press did not suffice – it had been done before, even in the French language.<sup>37</sup> To legitimize his authorship in Quebec, Gagnon chose to join in the linguistic battle that had been brewing in the province for several decades. Not only did Gagnon fill his pages with images of French Canadian bodybuilders, he also included pictures of himself posing in trunks, with the claim that he provided the greatest physical culture lesson and provided proof by demonstrating his athletic appearance, while other authors “represented themselves as drawings or paintings in which the muscles are extraordinarily exaggerated, or appeared in civil attire, wearing suits with extraordinarily large shoulders.”<sup>38</sup> As far as his own physical appearance was concerned, Adrien Gagnon dedicated four full pages of a 1949 issue legitimizing his physical superiority, showing messages written to him or about him by bodybuilders, readers, or journalists. A letter from American bodybuilder Alan Stephan stated that Gagnon had “the most beautiful physique in Canada,” and 1946 *Mr. Montreal*, René Léger, added that “several years ago, Adrien Gagnon was the most beautiful athlete in Canada.”<sup>39</sup> Gagnon cited a letter from a Springfield University professor stating that he considered Gagnon to be “one of the best physical specimens that [he] had ever met.” He also quoted Bernarr MacFadden, who called him a “young Adonis.” Finally, three articles written in indifferent periodicals claimed that Adrien Gagnon had a great physique.<sup>40</sup>

However, Gagnon’s claim to fame was not limited to his physical appearance. He claimed that he was, without a doubt, the best at what he did. Calling others “charlatans” and “parasites of physical culture,” he wrote that “only one man was allowed to claim to be the best promoter of the bodybuilding movement, and that man was Adrien Gagnon.”<sup>41</sup> Furthermore, Gagnon claimed that

he was the “most eminent physical culture figure in Canada,” due to his physical culture program and his federation (to be discussed later), and that “in front of such justifications, one must admit his superiority.”<sup>42</sup> These self-proclamations and statements about the effectiveness of his methods and courses were, of course, published in *Santé et Développement Physique*. On several occasions, he claimed that his courses and publications were the best, “comparable to Edmond Desbonnet’s course [...] and to Bob Hoffman’s methods.”<sup>43</sup> To accentuate the quality of his publication, Gagnon also displayed images of various French Canadian ‘average’ men along with the latter’s training routine or a testimonial. For example a man called Wilfrid Therrien claimed that Gagnon’s “publication greatly surpass[e]d all of those printed in [the French] language.”<sup>44</sup>

The multitude of endorsements led Gagnon to state that “*Santé et Développement Physique* was jealously attacked [...] by profiteers of which no one had ever seen their physique,” which, as Gagnon claimed, it was normal to be attacked because his publication was “the best about physical culture written in French, in the world.”<sup>45</sup> The comment of ‘best in the French language’ appears on several occasions. At this point it is important to note that, the only competition Gagnon had in Montreal, especially in the French language, was the president of the International Federation of Bodybuilding, Ben Weider, with his magazine *Santé et Force*. It is important to discuss this specific conflict due to its implications in the spread of nationalist thought throughout Gagnon’s publication history. As will be demonstrated, Adrien Gagnon also used racial slurs to denigrate his competitor. Being a French Canadian who had already experienced Anglophone supremacy within the workforce during WWII, he strove to eliminate English-speaking contenders from the bodybuilding world and render it Francophone, thus, “better.”

## Montreal Rivals

The clash between Weider and Gagnon was notable in the history of North American bodybuilding. In *Esprit de Corps*, Woycke dedicates a full chapter to the confrontations between these leaders of bodybuilding in North America. Also, in an interview between Quebec journalist Yves Beauregard and gymnast Jean-Yves Dionne, the latter bluntly states that Weider and Gagnon “were not friends,” and that they were each striving to sell their products and recruit bodybuilders.<sup>46</sup> Joe Weider was not actively involved in the struggle due to his move to the United States, in order to expand the Weider Company, leaving Ben Weider to wage a heated conflict with Gagnon.<sup>47</sup>

Dionne notes that both parties sought to recruit bodybuilders for their respective physical culture systems, leading to a series of contests for various professional athletes and ‘average’ men. One of these incidents was depicted by Gagnon’s pupil Jacques Métras – the young lifter claimed to have read that he was the student of another editor; however, the only courses he followed were Gagnon’s. Métras stated that those who falsely claim athletes for their own are “impostors” and that “those horrible jokers [did] not deserve to be taken seriously, and if they continue[d], [Métras] does not think their publications w[ould] reach great heights.”<sup>48</sup> To add to this, Gagnon declared that “the people [he] proclaim[ed] as his students follow[ed] [his] courses and [were] not paid to call themselves [his] students.”<sup>49</sup> Additionally, in an article where Gagnon wittily invoked the saying ‘tell me who your friends are and I’ll tell you who you are,’ he mentioned a certain Gérard Gougeon who joined the Weider camp in order to win more championships which would result in his recruitment to the police force. Gagnon exclaimed that “for audacity, that’s audacity. In becoming a Mr. This or a Mr. That, [Gougeon] might also become a member of the International Federation of Arm Breakers.”<sup>50</sup> Among professional bodybuilders, the incident that stood out the

most was the affiliation change by René Léger. Following victories in the 1946 Mr. Montreal contest and the 1947 Mr. Canada contest, Léger, who was previously affiliated with the Weiders, was approached by Bob Hoffman to compete for the title of Mr. Universe following his “invalid entry” into the Mr. America contest in 1947. After a year off, Léger was approached by Adrien Gagnon, who took the former Mr. Montreal under his wing. René Léger went on to win Gagnon’s “most perfectly developed bodybuilder in North America” title. Léger later retired after constant resentment from the Weiders.<sup>51</sup> The “*cause célèbre*”<sup>52</sup> is the case of Willie Paquette. Willie Paquette appeared in the 1947 April issue of *Santé et Développement Physique*, depicted as an overweight man. The article claimed that after using Gagnon’s method for 2 months, Paquette lost 20 pounds.<sup>53</sup> Paquette then reappeared seven months later in an article entitled ‘is this a joke?’ where the same pictures of Paquette are displayed.<sup>54</sup> In this piece, Gagnon explained that Paquette, wanting intensive publicity, was jealous of the publicity given to a pupil of the name of Roger Vallée. Gagnon followed this by publishing two letters sent to him by Paquette himself, in which the latter stated that Gagnon’s training was great and that he strived to become “a perfect man through [Gagnon’s] lessons.”<sup>55</sup> The issue around this case is that, not only did Paquette begin practicing the Weider system, but he openly stated that he “made more progress in three weeks than [he] made in three months with Gagnon.”<sup>56</sup> The criticism led Gagnon to openly state that the Weider system was “a new system which has no proof to offer because the author is a sickly individual, a clever trickster and exploiter, who seeks to appropriate the benefits of his neighbours.”<sup>57</sup> Gagnon concluded that “the most ridiculous man in [that] story is not the merchant, the dealer, the exploiter, who is a shameless person, a man who does everything for the love of money; but the exploited, whose naivety led him to commit an act of folly.”<sup>58</sup> In the end, Gagnon warned his readers to “beware of businessmen who strive only to live, worry free, off the physical

culture business [...] will [they] assist to the trading of Whites as it was in the days of slavery? This time more modernized, but as disgraceful and dishonorable as before?”<sup>59</sup>

Slowly, matters took on a more significant scale and became more personal. Gagnon, seeing that the Weiders succeeded in the bodybuilding business, began attacking the IFBB and its competitions – which, as will be discussed, led to the creation of his own federation that was arguably a nationalist vehicle. Regarding the bodybuilding competitions hosted by the International Federation of Bodybuilding, Gagnon mentioned that there was favoritism and that the judges were close collaborators with the Weiders.<sup>60</sup> He continued his rant by stating that, when he hosted competitions,

winner would not be decided in advance. They would not be required to belong to an exclusive club in order to be favored. They would also not be required to work without a salary in the editor's offices. They would not need to pay to be elected. They would not need to buy their trophies. Regardless of the physical culture method they follow, they would have a chance to win. The mentioned prizes would be awarded. They would not receive empty checks. If a trip is promised, it will be awarded. And, once again, the judges will be impartial.<sup>61</sup>

He ended by asserting that, in order for “bodybuilding to survive in Canada, it must be demonstrated on its educational side, if not, it would be banished by the fans forever.”<sup>62</sup>

On a more personal note, Gagnon attacked Ben Weider's physical appearance, his aptitudes as a trainer, and his integrity as a businessman. As previously discussed, Gagnon was very fond of his own body – the same could be said about his strength. Having been challenged to a bench press competition in 1952 by his student, Roger Vallée, Gagnon replied, after calling him ‘stupid,’ that it should not be a problem, seeing his strength.<sup>63</sup> However, the challenger had to complete, not only the bench press exercise that was the basis of the challenge, but a series of about 20 to 30 other movements such as the standing and seated shoulder press, the supination bicep curl, the squat, and the clean and jerk.<sup>64</sup> Ben Weider was not spared from this. A 1949 article explains that

“Adrien Gagnon challenged an editor from Montreal to meet at the Palestre Nationale in a weightlifting competition, as well as in a posing, acrobatic, and muscular control routine.”<sup>65</sup> With this competition, Adrien Gagnon hoped to “publically demonstrate, once and for all, the true value of both men,” which he, in fact, did in this article by explaining to the readers that, the editor in question, responded to Gagnon with the new challenge of competing against “four of the greatest bodybuilders in Montreal.” Gagnon interpreted this as a testimony that he had “athletic value [thus] was superior” and that Weider was “evidently weaker.”<sup>66</sup> With regard to Weider’s knowledge in personal training, Gagnon made his superiority known by stating that the best bodybuilders training under Ben simply “refused to meet [Gagnon’s athletes] in competition [which] proved the superiority of [Gagnon’s] students’ physical developments, and therefore, the excellence of [his] teachings.”<sup>67</sup>

To attack Weider personally, Gagnon published a section entitled *Vu, Lu, Entendu*, ‘Seen, Read, Heard,’ in which he included extracts from Quebec newspapers depicting Weider as a dishonest businessman. According to these extracts, Weider was charged with fraud for not shipping weights to a paying customer and for, apparently, planning a fire to destroy his own product and request insurance compensation.<sup>68</sup> Following these accusations, Adrien Gagnon began referring to Weider’s ‘criminality’ to argue that “individuals who are brought before the criminal justice” could not help in the establishment of physical culture in Canada.<sup>69</sup> When speaking of the Weiders, Adrien Gagnon also used certain racist comments to stress the superiority of French Canadians in Quebec bodybuilding. When discussing the Montreal bodybuilding competitions, he demanded “why people of a certain alien race do not organize contests among people of their own race,” and that he was “tired of seeing strangers striving to possess the bodybuilding monopoly of

Canada.”<sup>70</sup> More straightforwardly, however, Gagnon proclaimed that “his reputation was tarnished by the relentlessness of American and Israelite competitors.”<sup>71</sup>

Ben Weider, in response to these “vile accusations of infantile minds whose jealous rage is nothing but a shabby alibi for their personality that may seem abnormal,” openly declared that when Weider began his enterprise in 1946, “he offered [Gagnon] the most sincere collaboration, so that they may better serve the interest of the public,” which Adrien Gagnon refused “insolently.”<sup>72</sup> Moreover, Ben Weider threatened to publish pictures of Gagnon that would apparently show his poor physique.<sup>73</sup> Weider ended his article by stating that unless Gagnon ceased immediately to propagate falsehoods, Weider would take legal action against the former and would expose him in court. He would show Gagnon as he was.<sup>74</sup> Finally, James Woycke, who also researched the conflict between Gagnon and Weider, reveals that in 1951, Ben Weider did, in fact, launch legal action against Gagnon, seeking damages of \$15,000. Bob Hoffman, who was apparently helping Adrien Gagnon with his publications, wrote that the amount was \$20,000.<sup>75</sup> In the end, in 1953, Gagnon settled out of court for substantially less than Weider’s asking price.<sup>76</sup>

The conflict between Gagnon and Weider was important to explore in extensive detail in order to understand the kind of editor Gagnon was, the business world in which he created his magazine, and to establish some background information on the conflict raging in the small bodybuilding world within Montreal’s borders. On the one hand, Weider began as an Anglophone editor determined to build a muscle empire. On the other, French Canadian Gagnon was striving to remain in business, while an Anglophone competitor trespassed in what Gagnon viewed as his territory, viewing himself as a vanguard of the French Canadians.

## Nationalism in Physical Culture

Adrien Gagnon was indeed, as he constantly stated, “the first in Canada to teach physical culture in the French language.”<sup>77</sup> It was, however, much more than this – Gagnon repeatedly stated that he was, first and foremost, a French Canadian, and that he entered the bodybuilding world “by vocation and not by profession,” to help French Canadians to become healthy, stronger, and have “a perfect physical development.”<sup>78</sup> Ben Weider also mentioned that, upon offering help to Gagnon, the latter responded that “there can be only one muscle magazine written in French, his own.”<sup>79</sup>

Clearly Gagnon wanted to be, not only the leader in the French Canadian publishing world, with regard to physical culture, but a saviour and rejuvenator for his compatriots. He displayed these feelings explicitly through his articles on health, specific exercises, and fitness contests. On numerous occasions, Gagnon justified his advice or comments by stating that it was to “ensure the physical and moral regeneration of the French Canadian race.”<sup>80</sup>

To convey his nationalist messages, Adrien Gagnon utilized several topics in which his encouragements of a stronger Francophone population were intertwined, all relating to Francophone national pride. Firstly, Gagnon used the main theme of his magazine, health, to underscore his nationalist thoughts: “the future of the race depends on the health of every citizen.”<sup>81</sup> The argument for the need for a healthy population was made clear to the readers of the magazine by comparing their health to the health of their Anglophone counterparts. Gagnon explained to his followers that their “compatriots of the English language” were passionate about gymnastics and physical culture, while the Francophone population was not but that, with “good intelligence, a clean conscience, and a heart that beats in the right place,” the Francophone population could ensure the creation of “a generation of men and women that the province would



not be embarrassed about.”<sup>82</sup> The position that Gagnon takes regarding the physical fitness of the province also resonated in the National Physical Fitness Act established in 1943. The act was attempted to be put into place to ensure that every province, Quebec included, would be fit and healthy. Additionally, like Gagnon, the NPFA did not simply wish for Canadians to have a healthy body, but promoted spiritual, mental, and moral health as well.<sup>83</sup> However, there is no evidence that Gagnon followed the guidelines of the National Physical Fitness Act, or even approved of its legislation.

Moreover, Gagnon seemed to focus on the younger generation and the importance of a strong lineage to produce a stronger population. It was important that young men begin training early because it was “especially during growth, the period in which the body develops, when the spirit and character are not yet ripe that [one] obtains the best results from physical culture.”<sup>84</sup> He especially defended the significance of physical education in schools. He vouched for “physical culture in every school and every day for the students; good physical culture, not pantomime gymnastics without value, true physical culture, physical culture that gives results; and [their] race would be saved.”<sup>85</sup> By the time Gagnon was writing, education was mandatory until the age of 14 and free for elementary students, however the sphere of physical education was still lacking behind the education principles of the Church – an atmosphere that Gagnon described as “highly competitive, where students are prepared for examinations, and in which students, encouraged by their professors, wake up earlier or stay awake until late in order to study,” resulting in, as he clearly stated, a younger generation that “existed, but did not live.”<sup>86</sup> Moreover, Gagnon argued that “a percentage of students had deplorable health, and that a radical change must be imposed,” which Gagnon suggested to the parents themselves, pleading for them to take part in the rejuvenation of physical culture among the youth, because rational physical education for children

would ensure a bright “future for the entire race.” Gagnon exclaimed that, “for the regeneration of the race, [they must] reinforce the contemporary youth.”<sup>87</sup>

The health of the youth was also directly related to the health of their parents. In an article entitled ‘Eugenics,’ Gagnon explained that eugenics were the rules that men must follow to ensure “a happy continuity of the species,” and was an excellent way for “man to become the master of his destiny.”<sup>88</sup> The importance of eugenics can be compared to Lionel Groulx’s ‘Call for a Race,’ in which significance of the French Canadians is, not only viewed as important, but as necessary for the survival of the Quebec Francophone population. Groulx also believed that ‘mixing races’ would result in psychological traumas, which would lead to the murder of one’s family.<sup>89</sup> Gagnon never referred to such extreme consequences to pass on his message of a strong Francophone ‘race’; however, he did explain the necessity of being healthy as parents, especially for mothers. Gagnon clarified that “the value of the race compared itself, favorably, to the value of the individual,” most importantly, the woman more than the man “represented the future of the race,” and therefore it was important that she exercised.<sup>90</sup> He also argued that from “a strong man and a weak woman, are born weak children, but from a weak man and a strong woman are born strong children,” once again displaying the crucial need for a healthy wife.<sup>91</sup> For Gagnon, raising young children to be healthy was of the utmost importance, as his “most cherished desire was to contribute in the formation of a virile youth,” and that to oppose this idea would be to “accomplish an act of sabotage.”<sup>92</sup>

Of course, the basis of most muscle magazine is the presence of images. To emphasize his notion of strong youth for a strong population, Gagnon frequently displayed images of young men with the message that the subject exhibited “was an example to follow.” Several names emerged within the pages of *Santé et Développement Physique*, all of them accompanied by an image of a

boy who did not look older than 18 years – for example, Roland Payotte, age 18, was displayed performing a bicep flexion with the statement that he was “again an example of what Canadians should be;” Lucien Bolduc, who appears to be 15 years old, was also “an example to follow and would, without a doubt have several imitators;” Leo Blais, age 12, was also displayed as “an example to follow;” and, finally, Raymond Sioui, age 17, was presented as a “young culturist from Quebec,” with the observation that:

there should be a lot of young men like this one amongst French Canadians. [They] are late in the physical education domain, but now that the sport is starting to reemerge, it is time more than ever to catch up on lost time, and render the Canadian race one of the most beautiful and strongest on the globe.<sup>93</sup>

As I noted previously, the youth of Quebec also played a part in the spread of nationalist thought. An example was given about a group called the *Jeunesse Patriote*, who stated that they preferred to live free in their old French Quebec. It is apparent that the emphasis on the youth was continued and accentuated within the pages of Gagnon’s publication, as either a legitimate personal feeling that the young generation could save the deteriorating Francophone population, or as a vehicle of nationalist thought similar to those surrounding him in the city of Montreal at the time. As evident from his readers, they were proud of Gagnon’s accomplishments and objectives to build strong Francophones: “[they] are pleased that it is a good French Canadian who possesses such a physique,” and that to them, Gagnon “represented strength and courage, firstly by the masterpiece which [was his] body, and second by the duty that [he] wanted to embrace towards his own race, the noble French Canadians.”<sup>94</sup>

## **Nationalist Vehicles**

To promote his ideas of French Canadian nationalism, Adrien Gagnon used specific vehicles – his bodybuilding contests and the club and federation that he established. As noted in

both chapters one and two, several groups emerged to promote Francophone autonomy. Politically speaking, there was the *Union Nationale* that promoted traditionalist nationalism with the help of the Catholic Church, the *Bloc Populaire* that openly opposed the conscriptions of the Second World War, *L'Action Française* which published articles promoting French Canadian unity, and the aforementioned *Jeunesse Patriote*. With regard to sports, the *Association Athlétique d'Amateurs le National* was established in the 1920s in order to demonstrate that French Canadians were not inferior to Anglophones within (and beyond) the realm of sport. On his side, to promote the supremacy of French Canadians in bodybuilding and weightlifting, Gagnon created two groups: *Club Cyr* and *La Fédération Canadienne Française des Culturistes (FCFC)*, the French Canadian Bodybuilder Federation.

In a 1949 issue of *Santé et Développement Physique*, Adrien Gagnon revealed that he was in the process of organizing a weightlifting club that would be named *Club Cyr*. Gagnon explained that members of the club would consent to “give free physical culture demonstrations to promote the bodybuilding movement and for the propagation of physical culture in Canada.”<sup>95</sup> This team of weightlifters was announced as the “first Canadian weightlifting team,” and its creation was referred to as “a first time in Canada that such an initiative was taken,” and it was the belief of all that *Club Cyr* would be successful “considering the moral and physical value of the young athletes on the team.”<sup>96</sup> *Club Cyr* was, however, short lived. In the article describing the team, Gagnon also listed the competition scores, putting one of the members of the team first. He also proclaimed that “with weightlifting demonstrations, [they would] popularize the benefits of physical culture [in their province]. This way, [they would] tend to the rise of the race with strength which is the glory of man.”<sup>97</sup> However, *Club Cyr* is not mentioned ever again in the pages of the journal. Despite this, there is some significance in discussing this particular club. Obviously, its aspirations were

not met, but the name raises an interesting question. In Chapter One, I argued that French Canadians were fixated with the past until the 1960s Quiet Revolution – the same can be said about Adrien Gagnon. His weightlifting club, whose goal was to propagate physical culture, was named after French Canadian strongman and sport hero Louis Cyr. Louis Cyr, as a sport hero of Quebec, represented the pure strength of a French Canadian people oppressed by Anglophones. Arguably, this notion of using one of Quebec’s most famous ancestors can be considered a statement that Adrien Gagnon built not only a weightlifting team, but a group of athletes that would propagate physical culture in the province while, also, demonstrating an image of French Canadian strength and pride.

Although Gagnon’s federation did not outlast the IFBB, the *Fédération Canadienne Française des Culturistes* made an impact in Montreal bodybuilding and seemed to have survived for the duration of the publication of *Santé et Développement Physique*. Gagnon presented the FCFC as “his answer to all of the [bodybuilder’s] problems,” which sought to help them “without strangling them.”<sup>98</sup> It was already clear at this point the federation was established in direct competition to Weider and the IFBB. Gagnon explained that he created the FCFC due to the fact that

for several years, he felt the overwhelming malaise of the country’s young bodybuilders. Always devoted to the physical culture cause, he noticed the hardships and obstacles and was apprehensive towards the misery and danger that awaited every bodybuilder on their way to perfection and reeducation, along the path of reform and healing.<sup>99</sup>

Here there are two aspects to the author’s justification for his new federation. It seems Gagnon was simply stating that being a bodybuilder was hard and that obstacles appeared along the way to physical perfection. However, with the understanding that Gagnon despised Weider, the misery and danger can be directly linked to the involvement of Weider in the sport of bodybuilding, while

the terms 'reform' and 'healing' could be Gagnon's way to state that he was, not only changing the sport of bodybuilding within Quebec, but rendering it better. Under the guise of saving bodybuilding, Gagnon clearly stated that with the FCFC, his goal was to create a strong elite who would be able to "confront life's circumstances, lead the destinies of their compatriots, and transform the world of today, into a better world tomorrow."<sup>100</sup> He also proclaimed that "like the mother who feeds her child, Gagnon ensured today, *la survivance* (the survival) and the blossoming of physical culture."<sup>101</sup> The word *survivance* was mentioned on several occasions in Quebec nationalism literature, meaning the survival of Quebec and the French Canadians. Gagnon, when describing the FCFC, was doing the same thing as the political leaders. Although he wrote about the survival of physical culture, his federation was aimed, as he said, to "unite bodybuilders under a common flag," the French Canadian flag.<sup>102</sup> In the FCFC Gagnon also created his biggest nationalist vehicle, the group consisted of French Canadians, rising against the IFBB who were the English Canadians. With this in mind, one cannot ignore the relation between this and Quebec politics – while the FCFC rose against the IFBB, the French Canadian *Union Nationale* was doing everything in its power to rise against the Liberal Party of Canada, in order to ensure its autonomy within the country, Gagnon even clearly exclaimed that it was "time for the FCFC to chase the profiteers (Weiders) from the bodybuilding temple," thus claiming his own personal autonomy within the sphere of physical training.<sup>103</sup>

Furthermore, the means for Gagnon to put his federation into action, was in the form of bodybuilding contests. Although such competitions were already hosted by the IFBB, Gagnon wrote that "the public loudly claimed that French Canadians be organizers of such events [...] the participating bodybuilders are French Canadians, so why wouldn't these be organized by their people?" Gagnon preached to his Francophone compatriots to react, for fear of being exploited.<sup>104</sup>

The bodybuilding contests were justified by Gagnon as a means to “spread among the French Canadian youth the desire to partake in physical culture,” and this way ensure that they become “physically perfect.” He also stated that one cannot “aspire to the creation of a strong and healthy race, without displaying to crowds the magnificent results obtained by their best examples,” in the end, resulting in “creating better citizens.”<sup>105</sup> Finally, with regard to the FCFC, and in order to entice his compatriots to come together, Adrien Gagnon asserted that “all Canadians of the French language in Canada should, not only by patriotism, but also by pride, belong to a French Canadian bodybuilder movement.”<sup>106</sup>

To end, it was discussed that Adrien Gagnon was born into a rural setting, surrounded by the belief in the preservation of the Quebec Trinity – Faith, Language, and Race; he lived through most of the biggest changes in Quebec politics. Gagnon perceived himself as a protector and somewhat a saviour of the French Canadians. Without doubt, Gagnon’s magazine *Santé et Développement Physique* was his vehicle of nationalist thinking. Gagnon’s nationalism appeared through three themes: health, competition, and of course, nationalism.

All themes were intertwined. Gagnon’s goal undoubtedly was to create a healthy and physically-perfect population. Within some of the articles providing health advice, were explicit messages calling for a stronger and healthier ‘race’. At the same time, the purpose of the Gagnon was to overcome the fierce competition from Anglophone challengers, Ben and Joe Weider. By establishing a Francophone bodybuilding federation, by portraying himself as a young Adonis who practiced what he preached, and by constantly undermining Ben Weider with falsehoods and newspaper articles that were at variance in content from what one might expect in a health magazine, Gagnon attempted to bring the French Canadians above the English-speaking

challengers in bodybuilding – similar to French Canadian politicians who attempted to undermine their Anglophone compatriots.

By spreading an idea of French Canadian nationalism, Gagnon can also join the numerous conservative politicians who preached for the betterment of the Francophone population and the overcoming of Anglophone “supremacy.” Similar to politicians, Adrien Gagnon used his own ideas and a specific vehicle, his magazine, to propagate the idea of Francophone weakness, thus, a need for Francophone strength. By doing so, as will be noted, it can be concluded that Gagnon built himself a persona revolving around a sense of self-righteousness, realism, and nationalism.

In the end, however, the vehicle sputtered. After experiencing a name change from *Santé et Développement Physique* to *Culture Physique et Santé*, articles written by Gagnon drifted away from messages of national pride, to instead focus on bodybuilding. At the same time, the FCFC also disappeared when the magazine changed titles.<sup>107</sup> Adrien Gagnon slowly stepped away from the realm of bodybuilding shortly after his magazine changed titles. Although his attention was not on providing advice for building muscle or promoting physique competitions, Gagnon remained in the sphere of health with a new business dedicated to natural supplements. In present Quebec, Adrien Gagnon’s name can be found in various pharmacies, displaying his devotion to natural products. Though his involvement in bodybuilding is not common knowledge, it remains preserved within the pages of *Santé et Développement Physique*.



## Endnotes

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- <sup>1</sup> Refus Global, which translates to Total Refusal, was a manifesto written and published by a group of sixteen artists from Quebec, including Paul-Émile Borduas. The manifesto spoke against the establishment and against religion, and called for an untamed need for liberation. Borduas, within it, yearned for French Canadians to shake off cultural oppression that they stifled quietly within, in shame and in terror of being overwhelmed. Jocelyn Maclure, *Quebec Identity: The Challenge of Pluralism*, trans. Peter Feldstein (Montreal: McGill University Press, 2003), 23.
- <sup>2</sup> [Une véritable dégénérescence de la race.] Adrien Gagnon, “L’éducation Physique de la Jeunesse,” *Santé et Développement Physique*, March 1947, 8.
- <sup>3</sup> [Dans un temps où la maladie voulait dire la mort et que la prévention coûtait toujours moins cher, Gagnon et ses magazines connurent un géant succès.] Yvan Gagnon and Jacques Beaulieu, *Adrien Gagnon: l’Histoire d’un Pionnier et d’un Pilier de la Culture Physique et de la Naturopathie* (Montreal: les Éditions Quebecor, 2009), 112.
- <sup>4</sup> [De nos jours, l’état de maladie est l’état normal; la santé est un état phénoménal, étrange, paradoxal [...] les médicaments chimiques ne peuvent pas plus arrêter la maladie que les forces policières n’arrêtent la fureur d’un peuple.] Gagnon, “L’Homme Moderne est un Malade,” *SDP*, July & August 1947, 9.
- <sup>5</sup> [On va chez le pharmacien presque toujours, on demande un fortifiant, [...] l’enfant le prends bien régulièrement et...il continue à mal se tenir.] Gagnon, “Ce qu’on l’entend trop souvent dire,” November 1953, 17.
- <sup>6</sup> Maurice Desjardins, “Adrien Gagnon Vous Fera Grandir à Volonté,” *Photo Journal*, Septembre 1950, 25.
- <sup>7</sup> The seven lives are enumerated as such: the animal life (*vie animale*), the vegetative life (*vie végétative*), the mental life (*vie mentale*), the intellectual life (*vie intellectuelle*), the moral life (*vie morale*), the social life (*vie sociale*), and the spiritual life (*vie spirituelle*). [Tout s’enchaîne dans l’unité de la personne.] Yves Benoist, “Vous avez Sept Vies.” *SDP*, April 1947, 18 – 19.
- <sup>8</sup> Yves Benoist in his article “Vous Désirez?” suggested that smoking in a controlled manner was not detrimental. [Des muscles plus forts, des nerfs plus solides, un cœur puissant, des poumons robustes, une meilleure digestion, une meilleure vue, l’esprit claire, et un moral mieux équilibré.] Benoist, “Vous Désirez?” *SDP*, June & July 1946, 19.
- <sup>9</sup> [L’ennemi numéro un du culturiste.] Gagnon, “Mort à l’ennemi,” *SDP*, June 1948, 6.
- <sup>10</sup> [Il est superflu d’ajouter l’alcoolisme aux maladies précédentes et d’évoquer le triste tableau de la descendance des buveurs.] Gagnon, “Eugénique,” *SDP*, April 1947, 4.
- <sup>11</sup> [Jamais l’alcool n’a résolu de véritable difficulté.] Gagnon, “Mort à l’ennemi,” *SDP*, June 1948, 6; [La lignée des alcooliques est vouée à l’impuissance et à la stérilité menant à des enfants frêles à poitrine plate, sans muscles, de petite taille, et qui porte le sceau de l’infantilisme.] Gagnon, “Eugénique,” *SDP*, April 1947, 4.

- <sup>12</sup> [Un homme qui sait résister à l'alcool, c'est un homme fort, un homme sain, un homme sûr [...] vous voulez vivre heureux, vous voulez vos enfants sains vous ne voulez ni engendrer des idiots ou des infirmes? Eh bien oubliez l'alcool.] Gagnon, "Mort à l'ennemi," SDP, June 1948, 6.
- <sup>13</sup> Gagnon, "Pourquoi l'hiver est la saison des maladies," SDP, April 1950, 6.
- <sup>14</sup> [L'hiver devient la saison de l'empoisonnement par manque de mouvement.] Ibid.
- <sup>15</sup> [Si vous êtes mal bâti, malade, ou que les échecs et l'insuccès semblent vous accabler plus que de raison, cela ne serait dû qu'à l'état de vos intestins [...] si vous valez quelque chose, si vous êtes quelqu'un, si vous possédez l'intelligence, cela ne peut venir que de votre ventre.] Gagnon, "Mort à l'ennemi," SDP, June 1948, 9.
- <sup>16</sup> It should be noted that Gagnon did not invent this credo. It was taken from the latin phrase 'Mens Sana in Corpore Sano,' which translates to Gagnon's [Un esprit sain dans un corps sain,] or 'a healthy spirit in a healthy body.
- <sup>17</sup> [Il n'est pas possible de séparer le développement mental de la culture physique.] Benoist, "Vous avez Sept Vies." SDP, April 1947, 18 – 19; Gagnon, "Contraction Musculaire et Intelligence," SDP, April 1947, 14.
- <sup>18</sup> [La bonne humeur est comme le meilleur lubrifiant qui empêche les roues de la vie de grincer et éloigne les effets néfastes causés par les tracas de la vie.] Gagnon, "La Bonne Humeur et la Culture Physique," SDP, July & August 1947, 13.
- <sup>19</sup> [Par une culture physique quotidienne vous acquerrez une santé rayonnante et conséquemment un magnétisme qui radiera la joie et la bonne humeur.] Ibid.
- <sup>20</sup> [Le succès de la vie est en proportion de la personnalité [...] vous êtes l'artisan de votre bonheur.] Benoist, "La Psychologie du Succès," SDP, June & July 1946, 7 – 8.
- <sup>21</sup> [J'ai réussi à éveiller en moi la vraie joie de vivre, j'ai étouffé la bête et j'ai éveillé l'homme.] A.G. Lévis, reader of *Santé et Développement Physique*, SDP, June & July 1946, 60.
- <sup>22</sup> [Sous le règne atomique que nous vivons, il est absolument important de connaître l'art de la détente.] Gagnon, "Votre Apparence Physique," SDP, April 1947, 5.
- <sup>23</sup> Louis Balthazar explains that, though the Church was not as important post-war compared to the 1920s, a great amount of French Canadians still listened to their religious doctrines. Louis Balthazar, *Bilan du Nationalisme au Québec* (Montreal: l'Hexagone, 1986), 105.
- <sup>24</sup> [Le corps et l'esprit ont droit à des soins égaux, une bonne santé physique amène infailliblement un meilleur fonctionnement intellectuel.] Gagnon, "La Conservation de la Santé est un Devoir," SDP, March, April, & May 1946, 3; [L'activité physique est un antidote merveilleux contre les poisons moraux.] Gagnon, "Eugénique," SDP, April 1947, 4.
- <sup>25</sup> Gagnon, "Eugénique," SDP, April 1947, 4.
- <sup>26</sup> [J'ai lu dans l'un de ces ouvrages que la masturbation pratiquée en cas de nécessité chez l'adulte était une pratique recommandable et aucunement dommageable. La masturbation est paraît-il d'après leurs écrits une 'valve de sûreté.' L'homme est-il régi comme une fournaise. Peut-il être sujet à des explosions? [...] Ce volume recommande la masturbation. Son auteur serait-il lui-même un masturbateur ou un expert de l'amour? Ou bien il est un dégénéré ou un débauché. La masturbation n'a jamais été une pratique recommandable pour qui que ce soit.] Gagnon, "La Culture Physique ne doit pas être une École d'Immoralité," SDP, June, July, &

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August 1953, 8. The article in question, criticized by Gagnon was written by E.M. Orlick, who, as Woycke points out, was married and had children. The article was entitled “the true facts about masturbation,” and appeared in Weider’s ‘Your Physique’ in January 1949. See James Woycke, “Esprit de Corps: a History of North American Bodybuilding,” *History eBook Collection*, Book 2, 2016, 177.

- <sup>27</sup> [Est-il un homme marié ou un viveur? Ceux qui mènent publiquement une vie de débauche et qui se font une gloire de posséder une ou plusieurs maîtresses sont-ils moralement qualifiés pour donner un enseignement physique adéquat à vos enfants? [...] celui-ci cherche à faire naître des désirs, à répandre le goût du vice.] Gagnon, “La Culture Physique ne doit pas être une École d’Immoralité,” SDP, June, July, & August 1953, 8, 48. Although Gagnon writes these accusations about Ben Weider, I am in no position to confirm if these are true. It could simply be a way for Gagnon to hurt his opponent’s reputation.
- <sup>28</sup> [Le corps et l’âme sont liés indissolublement, ne se séparent guère. La santé de l’un influe toujours sur la santé de l’autre.] Un ami, “Les Deux Ascetismes,” SDP, June 1948, 10. The author ‘un ami’ can well be Gagnon himself, especially after reading his defense against masturbation.
- <sup>29</sup> [Par des exercices physiques on expie, le corps expie ses mauvaises habitudes physiques, ses péchés contre l’hygiène, l’hygiène morale est la sœur de l’hygiène corporelle [...] Par l’ascèse, on dégrasse, on dompte, on aguerrit un corps trop attaché aux choses de ce monde et par les exercices physiques, on dégrasse de même, on dompte et on aguerrit un corps trop attaché aux mauvaises habitudes de ses aises.] Un ami, “Les Deux Ascetismes,” SDP, June 1948, 10.
- <sup>30</sup> [La paresse étant la mère de tous les vices.] Ibid, 11.
- <sup>31</sup> [Le trophée corporel et le trophée spirituel, une récompense dès ce bas monde et une récompense dans l’au-delà. Ne séparons pas ce que la nature et ce que Dieu a uni.] Ibid, 10.
- <sup>32</sup> [Je fis comprendre la beauté du corps humain qui a été créé à l’image et à la ressemblance de Dieu.] Gagnon, “La Culture Physique ne doit pas être une École d’Immoralité,” SDP, June, July & August 1953, 8.
- <sup>33</sup> [Votre conviction sur l’absolue nécessité d’un riche ensemble de connaissance pour poursuivre honnêtement le travail de culturiste est déjà un solide argument en faveur de notre méthode. Si je vous ai bien saisi, votre but serait de d’équilibrer les sens et les membres du corps pour les mettre harmonieusement au service des facultés de l’âme. Cet objectif ne heurte en rien les plus saines données de l’éthique mais rend hommage au Créateur, car comme il est écrit au livre de la Sagesse, la grandeur et la beauté des créatures font connaître par analogie Celui qui en est le Créateur.] Gagnon, “Grâce au Maître Adrien Gagnon, la Culture Physique fut établie au Canada sur des Bases Sérieuses et Solides,” SDP, June, July & August 1953, 40.
- <sup>34</sup> [Le culturiste fait preuve de patience d’abnégation, de force, de volonté, de renoncement aux plaisirs faciles, et autres qualités chrétiennes.] Gagnon, “Pourquoi Plusieurs Concours de Culture Physique,” SDP, Special Edition, 40.
- <sup>35</sup> Gagnon and Beaulieu, *Adrien Gagnon*, 45-46.
- <sup>36</sup> [Créée en vue d’aider aux Canadiens à obtenir la santé, la force, et la beauté physique.] Gagnon, “Editorial,” SDP, March, April & May, 1946, 1.
- <sup>37</sup> Prior to the Second World War, Edmond Desbonnet’s *Culture Physique* would have been available in Quebec.

<sup>38</sup> Gagnon claiming that he was the greatest is written in almost every issue of SDP that I have acquired –about his physique, his business, and his lessons. For an example, see Gagnon, “Je puis Faire de Vous en Deux Mois un Homme Fort et Musclé,” SDP, June 1948, 17.

His comment on his competition was written as follows: [Des instructeurs se font représenter par des dessins ou peintures dont les muscles sont extraordinairement exagérés, ou ils apparaissent en tenue civile en portant des complets aux épaules extraordinairement large.] Gagnon, SDP, “Voici Canadiens ce que je puis Faire pour Vous,” November & December 1947, 40. Gagnon’s comment about the author drawn or painted refers to Joe Weider on the cover of *Your Physique* in August 1946 and again in November 1947. However, the first image of Joe Weider displayed on the cover of his magazine is an actual picture of a young and muscled Weider, which can be seen on *Your Physique* October, 1944. Regarding the author in a suit, Gagnon was referring to Ben Weider in both *Your Physique* and *Santé et Force*. Ben was the leader for the International Federation of BodyBuilding (IFBB) and was often shown with various leaders in their country with, of course, a full suit. For an easy access to the various *Your Physique* covers, visit <http://www.musclememory.com/mags.php?mag=yp>.

<sup>39</sup> Alan Stephan: [Vraiment, vous avez le plus beau physique au Canada, si j’en juge pas les photographies.]; René Léger: [Il y a quelques années à mon point de vue, Adrien Gagnon était le plus bel athlète au Canada.] See SDP, May, June & July 1949, 22 – 23. It is worthy to note that, within the letter sent by Alan Stephan, the latter was seeking to display pictures of himself in SDP, and therefore his comment could be considered a flattery to get on Gagnon’s good side. Moreover, Léger at the time of his letter was a bodybuilder working and training under Gagnon.

<sup>40</sup> The University professor was Joseph Racine, who wrote [Je considère que tu es l’un des meilleurs spécimens physiques que j’aie rencontré.] The three periodicals were *La Patrie* (December 30, 1945), *Le Front Ouvrier* (February 22, 1947), and *Design* (undated). See SDP, May, June & July 1949, 26.

<sup>41</sup> [Certains s’attribuent à tort d’être les promoteurs du mouvement culturiste dans la province de Québec et du Canada. Un seul homme peut à juste titre revendiquer un tel droit, et c’est l’éditeur de cette revue, Adrien Gagnon.] Author unknown, “La Culture Physique au Canada Français,” SDP, April 1950, 14.

<sup>42</sup> [Le Prof. Gagnon est sans contredit la personnalité la plus éminente au Canada [...] Devant de telles justifications, il faut admettre sa supériorité.] Photograph Editor, “l’Institut Culturiste du Prof. Adrien Gagnon,” SDP, November & December 1948, 7. As a side note, the article is signed by the ‘photograph editor’ and not by Gagnon himself because it speaks about the author. However, Gagnon presented himself as the editor of the magazine and as the photographer, meaning that the author of the article about Gagnon might be Gagnon himself.

<sup>43</sup> [Mon cour est le meilleur et il se compare à Edmond Desbonnet [...] Quant à la méthode que j’enseigne, elle s’apparente à celle de Bob Hoffman.] Gagnon, “Les Bases Techniques de la Méthode Culturiste Athlétique du Maître en Culture Physique Adrien Gagnon,” SDP, May 1951, 3; Gagnon, “Réponses à vos Problèmes Culturistes,” SDP, July & August 1948, 12.

- <sup>44</sup> [Cette publication surpasse hautement toutes celles du genre imprimé en cette langue.] Therrien, “Nouvelle Personnalité Culturiste,” SDP, October 1947, 11.
- <sup>45</sup> [Santé et Développement Physique est donc attaqué jalousement. Il ne pourrait en être autrement, surtout lorsque l’on sait qu’elle est la meilleure publication mondiale en langue française sur la culture physique.] Gagnon, “L’Évolution de la Culture Physique au Canada,” SDP, November 1952, 44; [Des commerçants s’aperçurent que mes cours avaient acquis une grande renommée, mais fait curieux à noter cependant, nous n’avons jamais vu les physiques de ces profiteurs.] Gagnon, “Entraînez-vous à Domicile,” SDP, October 1947, 32.
- <sup>46</sup> Yves Beauregard, “Force et Esthétique la Passion d’une Vie: Entrevue avec monsieur Jean-Yves Dionne,” *la Revue d’histoire du Québec*, no. 69, 2002, 44-48.
- <sup>47</sup> Joe Weider moved to Jersey City in 1947. Woycke, *Esprit de Corps*, 65.
- <sup>48</sup> [J’ai été réellement surpris de lire dans une certaine revue de culture physique que j’étais élève de l’éditeur de cette publication. Les seuls cours que j’ai suivi et que j’ai en ma possession sont ceux du Prof. Adrien Gagnon. Ceux qui ont fait du chantage à ce sujet sont des imposteurs, ces horribles farceurs ne méritent pas d’être pris au sérieux, et s’ils continuent d’agir ainsi, je ne crois pas que leur publication atteigne une grande renommée.] Jacques Métras, “Lecteurs de Santé et Développement Physique,” SDP, November & December 1947, 37.
- <sup>49</sup> [Les personnes que je proclame comme mes élèves ont suivies mes cours et ne sont pas payés pour se dire mes élèves.] Gagnon, “Succès, les Résultats de mes Enseignements,” SDP, March 1947, 19. Gagnon believed that Weider bribed his athletes to write testimonials.
- <sup>50</sup> In French the International Federation of Arm Breakers is ‘Fédération Internationale des Briseurs de Bras’ which results in the acronym F.I.B.B which stands for ‘Fédération International du BodyBuilding,’ International Federation of BodyBuilding (IFBB). Full quote: [Pour de l’audace, c’est de l’audace. En devant un Monsieur Ci ou un Monsieur Ça, il deviendra peut-être aussi membre de la Fédération Internationale des Briseurs de Bras.] Gagnon, “Dis-moi qui tu Fréquente, je te dirai qui tu es,” SDP, April 1950, 23.
- <sup>51</sup> Woycke, *Esprit de Corps*, 98.
- <sup>52</sup> Woycke also writes about Paquette due to the heightened animosity it caused between both parties. Ibid, 83.
- <sup>53</sup> Gagnon, “Voici des Preuves de l’Excellence de mes Cours par Correspondance,” SDP, April 1947, 24.
- <sup>54</sup> Gagnon, “Est-ce Une Farce?,” SDP, November & December 1947, 30-31.
- <sup>55</sup> Gagnon, in the article, revealed that Paquette became his pupil on December 20, 1946. Both letters are dated in the year 1947, the first in January, and the other a month after. Paquette said [Votre cours est merveilleux [...]] je veux devenir un homme parfait de votre cours.] Gagnon & Paquette, Ibid.
- <sup>56</sup> [J’ai fait plus de progrès en trois semaines qu’en trois mois avec Gagnon.] Paquette, “Lettres de nos Lecteurs,” *Santé et Force*, August 1952, 5.
- <sup>57</sup> [Un nouveau système qui n’a pas de preuve à donner puisque l’auteur est un être chétif, toutefois habile truqueur et exploiteur, qui cherche à s’approprier les bénéfices de son voisin.] Ibid.

- <sup>58</sup> [L'homme le plus ridicule dans cette histoire n'est pas le mercantis, le trafiquant, l'exploiteur, qui est un être éhonté, un homme qui peut tout faire par amour de l'argent, mais l'exploité dont la naïveté lui a fait commettre un acte de démente.] Ibid.
- <sup>59</sup> [Le public doit se tenir en garde contre ces commerçants qui cherchent à vivre grasement en trafiquant sur la culture physique [...] Assisterons-nous au commerce des blancs comme la chose se fit au temps de l'esclavage? Cette fois plus modernisé, mais aussi sale et aussi ignoble.] Ibid.
- <sup>60</sup> It is important to note that, once Gagnon began hosting his own competitions, the judges, who were listed in the program, were all close collaborators for Adrien Gagnon as well. Gagnon, "Invitation à tous les Culturistes du Canada," SDP, December 1950, 12, 17.
- <sup>61</sup> [Les gagnants ne seront pas choisis à l'avance. Ils ne devront pas non plus appartenir à des clubs exclusifs pour être favorisés. Ils n'auront pas non plus besoin de travailler sans salaire dans les bureaux de l'éditeur. Ils ne devront pas verser non plus aucun montant d'argent pour être élus. Ils n'auront pas besoin d'acheter leurs trophées. Peu importe qu'ils aient suivi ou non les cours de culture physique du Prof. Adrien Gagnon, ils ont autant de chance de gagner. Les prix mentionnés seront donnés. Ils ne recevront pas de chèques sans fonds. Si un voyage est promis, Il sera accordé. Les juges seront impartiaux.] Gagnon, "Démonstration de Culture Physique, Unique en son Genre," SDP, January & February 1949, 11.
- <sup>62</sup> [La culture physique au Canada pour survivre doit être démontrée sur son côté éducatif, sinon le public qui est toujours le juge principal, la bannira à jamais.] Ibid.
- <sup>63</sup> Gagnon writes that Vallée was known for his physical vigor, [peut-on dire autant de sa vigueur intellectuel,] "Can we say the same for his intellectual vigor?" Gagnon, "La Culture Physique doit Entretenir celle de l'Esprit – il ne faut plus que l'on dise des culturistes: 'Tout dans les Muscles, rien dans la Tête,'" SDP, November 1952, 31.
- <sup>64</sup> Ibid.
- <sup>65</sup> [Adrien Gagnon lança un défi à un éditeur Montréalais de le rencontrer dans un concours de levé de poids, de poses plastiques, d'acrobatie et de contrôle musculaire à La Palestre Nationale.] Author Unknown, "Voici une autre Preuve de la Valeur du Prof. Adrien Gagnon," SDP, May, June & July 1949, 34.
- <sup>66</sup> [Démontrer publiquement une fois pour toutes la vraie valeur de chacun d'eux.] Ibid.
- <sup>67</sup> [Plusieurs culturistes reconnus auparavant comme étant les meilleurs ont refusé de rencontrer mes élèves dans cette compétition. Ceci prouva la supériorité du développement physique de mes élèves et par le fait même l'excellence de mes enseignements.] Gagnon, "Devenez un Champion, Suivez la Route qui mène au Succès," November 1953, 19.
- <sup>68</sup> For the fire, see "Echo du Feu de la Gare Bonaventure." *La Presse*, February 21, 1950 in "Vu, Lu, Entendu," SDP, April 1950, 18. For the Weider in court, see "Mandat d'amener contre Weider." *Le Canada*, February 22, 1950 in "Vu, Lu, Entendu," SDP, April 1950, 18, and in "Benjamin Weider envoyé en procès." *La Presse*, March 7, 1950, Ibid; finally, for the weights never shipped, see "La Culture Physique et les Haltères Jamais Expédiés!" *Le Canada*, March 2, 1950 in "Vu, Lu, Entendu," SDP, April 1950, 23.

- <sup>69</sup> [Les individus qui sont traduits devant la Justice Criminelle, peuvent-ils aider la culture physique au Canada, non et non.] Gagnon, “Démonstration de Culture Physique, Unique en son Genre à Montréal,” SDP, January & February 1949, 11.
- <sup>70</sup> [Pourquoi les gens d’une certaine race étrangère n’organiseraient-ils pas des concours parmi les gens de leur race? [...] Il est fatigué de voir des étrangers vouloir s’emparer du monopole culturiste au Canada.] Ibid.
- <sup>71</sup> [L’acharnement de compétiteurs Israélites ou Américains dans le but de ternir ma réputation [...].] Gagnon, “Un Centre Culturiste à Montréal,” SDP, July & August 1948, 6.
- <sup>72</sup> [La revue ne tenait pas à utiliser ses pages pour répondre aux viles accusations d’esprits infantiles, dont la rage jalouse n’est qu’un piètre alibi pour leur personnalité qui peut sembler anormale [...].] Dès le début de mon entreprise, je vous ai offert la plus sincères collaboration, pour que nous puissions, en coopérant, servir mieux les intérêts du public. Vous avez refusé en termes insolents.] Weider, “Attention A. Gagnon,” SF, May 1949, 17.
- <sup>73</sup> Weider, in the same article wrote that Gagnon gave money to the photographer, Tony Lanza, to ensure that the photographs were destroyed. Ibid.
- <sup>74</sup> Ibid.
- <sup>75</sup> Weider’s legal action was taken by Woycke from Weider, “Weider vs Gagnon,” SF, April 1953, 24, while Hoffman’s claim was taken from Bob Hoffman, “Here is Evidence,” *Strength & Health*, September 1951, 19. Woycke, *Esprit de Corps*, 85.
- Hoffman and Weider are known to have clashed during Weider’s early ascension in the bodybuilding world. The conflict between the Weiders and Hoffman is described in extent by John D. Fair in John D. Fair, *Mr. America: The Tragic History of a Bodybuilding Icon* (Austin: University of Texas Press, 2015). While Hoffman’s contribution can be viewed in *Santé et Développement Physique* with articles from Bob Hoffman, as well as with endorsements for Hoffman’s protein supplement ‘Hi-Proteen,’ in “Une Bonne Alimentation est Indispensable pour se Développer un Physique à l’Égal des Champions,” SDP, January, February & March 1954, 10. Also, Philip Fine explains that the entrepreneurial Hoffman also influenced Gagnon; he used his magazine as an advertising vehicle for the York Barbell Company that he ran. Philip Fine, “Quebecker Built Health-Supplements Empire out of his Passion for Physical Fitness.” *The Globe and Mail*, June 7, 2011
- <sup>76</sup> Ibid.
- <sup>77</sup> This quote by Gagnon is repeated over and over again within his muscle magazines, sometimes at the most random places. “Je fus le premier au Canada à enseigner en langue française la culture physique.” Gagnon, “Je n’ai pas de Compétition,” SDP, December 1953, 22.
- <sup>78</sup> [Adrien Gagnon est un Canadien Français qui est venu à la culture physique par vocation et non par profession, dans le but d’aider aux Canadiens Français à obtenir la santé, la force, et un développement physique parfait.] Gagnon, “Il ne faut pas avoir Confiance en des Méthodes qui n’ont pas fait leurs Preuves: Fiez-vous à l’Expérience,” SDP, December 1950, 30.
- <sup>79</sup> [Il ne pouvait y avoir qu’une seule revue physique en français, la vôtre.] Weider, “Attention A. Gagnon,” SF, May 1949, 17.

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- <sup>80</sup> [Participer à la régénération physique et morale de la race canadienne-française.] Gagnon, SDP, November & December 1948, 7.
- <sup>81</sup> [L'avenir de la race dépend de la santé de chaque citoyen.] Gagnon, SDP, November & December 1947, 16.
- <sup>82</sup> [Une intelligence avertie, une conscience propre, un cœur qui bat à la bonne place, voilà autant de facteurs qui sauront demain créer une génération d'hommes et de femmes dont notre province n'aura point à rougir.] Adrien Plouffe, "Culture Physique et une Vie Saine," SDP, June & July 1946, 13.
- <sup>83</sup> Cor Westland, *Fitness and Amateur Sport in Canada: an Historical Perspective* (Ottawa: Canadian Parks/Recreation Association, 1979), 10.
- <sup>84</sup> [C'est surtout pendant la croissance à l'époque où le corps se développe, alors que l'esprit et le caractère ne sont pas encore mûrs qu'on obtient de la culture physique les résultats les plus salutaires.] Gagnon, "L'éducation Physique de la Jeunesse," SDP, March 1947, 8.
- <sup>85</sup> [De la culture physique dans tous les écoles et chaque jour pour tous les écoliers; de la bonne culture physique et non pas des pantomimes gymniques sans valeur, de la vraie Culture Physique, de la culture physique qui donne des résultats; et notre race sera sauvé.] Gagnon, "Les Enfants de nos Écoles," SDP, July & August 1947, 18.
- <sup>86</sup> See Chapter 2 of this paper for the details on Adélar Godbout's accomplishments as Quebec premier, which included mandatory education. [L'atmosphère de compétition est si vive dans certains collèges où l'on prépare les élèves aux examens, que les étudiants, sur l'encouragement de leurs professeurs, devançant l'heure du lever ou veillent pour étudier leurs leçons. [...] Ils existeront, mais ne vivront pas.] Gagnon, "L'emploi du Temps dans nos Collèges," SDP, October 1947, 4.
- <sup>87</sup> [Un pourcentage de nos étudiants ont une santé déplorable. Un changement radical s'impose,]; "Songez, chers parents, que l'éducation physique rationnelle de vos enfants réalisera le future de la race entière,]; "Pour la régénération de la race, renforçons la jeunesse contemporaine.] Gagnon, "L'emploi du Temps dans nos Collèges," SDP, October 1947, 4; Gagnon, "L'éducation Physique de la Jeunesse," SDP, March 1947, 9.
- <sup>88</sup> [L'eugénétique est la science nouvelle qui s'attache à établir les règles que doivent suivre les hommes pour assurer une heureuse continuité de l'espèce [...] C'était, en tout cas, un excellent moyen indiqué à l'homme pour se rendre de plus en plus maître de ses destinées.] Gagnon, "Eugénique," April 1947, 4-5.
- <sup>89</sup> *L'appel d'une Race*, The Call of a Race, was discussed in Chapter 1 and 2 of this paper.
- <sup>90</sup> [La valeur d'une race se compare favorablement à celle de l'individu et que la femme plus que l'homme représente l'avenir de la race.] Gagnon, "La Culture Humaine," SDP, November & December 1947, 38.
- <sup>91</sup> [D'homme fort et femme faible, naissent des enfants faibles. D'un homme faible et d'une femme forte naissent des enfants forts.] Gagnon, "L'emploi du Temps dans nos Collèges," SDP, October 1947, 5.
- <sup>92</sup> [Son plus cher désir est de contribuer à former une jeunesse virile.] Gagnon displays this passage from an article in *La Patrie* published on December 30, 1945. "Tenacité d'un Jeune Canadien qui a su Bâtir des Muscles," SDP, May, June & July, 1949, 26; [N'oubliez pas que l'avenir de la race dépend de la santé de nos contemporaines, s'opposer à ce qu'elles s'adonnent à la culture physique, c'est accomplir un acte de sabotage." Gagnon, "Lacune à Combler,] SDP, November & December 1947, 6.



- <sup>93</sup> [Ces jeunes hommes sont des exemples à suivre.]; For Raymond Sioui, “Jeune Culturiste de Québec – [Il devrait y avoir beaucoup de jeunes hommes comme ceci parmi les Canadiens-Français. Nous sommes un peu en retard dans le domaine de l’éducation physique, mais maintenant que ce sport commence à avoir la place qui lui revient, il est temps plus que jamais de reprendre le temps perdu, et de faire de la race canadienne une des plus belles et des plus fortes du globe.] Gagnon, SDP, June & July 1946, Payotte (43), Lucien Bolduc (53), Leo Blais (59), Raymond Sioui (41).
- <sup>94</sup> One letter was from a man called Jean-Claude Bergeron: [Je suis très heureux que ce soit un bon Canadiens Français qui possède un tel physique.]; The other was from a man referred to as L. J. Bouchard: [Vous me représentez la force et le courage, premièrement par le chef-d’œuvre de votre corps et d’autre part, par le devoir que vous avez voulu embrasser envers ceux de votre race, les nobles Canadiens-Français.] “Lettres d’Appréciation Démontrant la Valeur du Culturiste Adrien Gagnon,” SDP, May, June & July 1949, 34.
- <sup>95</sup> [Cette équipe de culturistes sont consentantes à donner gratuitement des démonstrations de culture physique [...] pour promouvoir le mouvement culturiste [...] et pour la propagation de la culture physique au Canada.] Gagnon, “Nouvelles Culturistes,” SDP, January & February 1949, 5.
- <sup>96</sup> [La première équipe canadienne de leveurs de poids. C’est la première fois au Canada qu’une telle initiative est lancée et nous croyons qu’elle sera menée à bonne fin en considérant la valeur morale et physique des jeunes athlètes qui la composent.] Gagnon, “La Première Équipe Canadienne de Leveur de Poids,” SDP, March & April 1949, 20.
- <sup>97</sup> [C’est par des démonstrations haltérophiles que l’on popularisera les bienfaits de la culture physique chez-nous. C’est ainsi que l’on tendra au relèvement de la race par la force qui est la gloire de l’homme.] Gagnon, “La Force Physique, Gloire de l’Homme,” SDP, November & December 1947, 14.
- <sup>98</sup> Gagnon, “La Fédération Canadienne Française des Culturistes; La réponse d’Adrien Gagnon à tous nos problèmes,” SDP, December 1950, 6-7; [Je veux vous aider et non vous étrangler.] Gagnon, “Tous pour Un, Un pour Tous,” SDP, May 1951, 10.
- <sup>99</sup> [Depuis plusieurs années déjà Monsieur Gagnon ressentait le malaise accablant de la jeunesse culturiste du pays. Toujours aussi dévoué à la cause de la culture physique, il se rendait compte des difficultés et des obstacles et il appréhendait les misères et les dangers qui attendent chaque culturiste sur la route du perfectionnement et de la rééducation, sur le chemin de la réforme et de la guérison.] Gagnon, “La Fédération Canadienne Française des Culturistes; La réponse d’Adrien Gagnon à tous nos problèmes,” SDP, December 1950, 6.
- <sup>100</sup> [Son but c’est de former une élite forte, capable d’affronter les circonstances de la vie, de diriger les destinées de ses semblables et de transformer par la seule puissance de son caractère le monde d’aujourd’hui en un monde de demain meilleur.] Ibid.
- <sup>101</sup> [Comme la mère nourrit son enfant après l’avoir mis au monde, Adrien Gagnon assure aujourd’hui la survivance et l’épanouissement de la culture physique.] Ibid.
- <sup>102</sup> [Il fallait unir les culturistes sous un même drapeau.] Ibid.
- <sup>103</sup> [Il est temps que la FCFC chasse les profiteurs du temple culturiste.] Ibid, 24.

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- <sup>104</sup> [Le public réclame à grands cris que les Canadiens-Français soient les organisateurs de ces séances. Tous les culturistes qui participent ordinairement aux concours sont des canadiens-français. Pourquoi alors ceux-ci ne seraient-ils pas organisés par des Canadiens?] Gagnon, “Démonstration de Culture Physique, Unique en son Genre à Montréal,” SDP, January & February 1949, 11.
- <sup>105</sup> [Le but principal de ces concours de culture physique est de répandre le goût de la culture physique chez la jeunesse canadienne-française et les pousser par ce moyen à devenir en bonne santé et physiquement parfait [...] Comment aspirer à la création d’une race forte et saine, sans montrer aux foules réunies, les magnifiques résultats obtenus par nos meilleurs adeptes [...] Former un meilleur citoyen.] Gagnon, “Pourquoi Plusieurs Concours de Culture Physique ont été Organisés!,” SDP, Special Edition, 3.
- <sup>106</sup> [Tous les Canadiens de la langue Française au Canada se doivent donc, non seulement par patriotisme, mais aussi par orgueil d’appartenir à un mouvement culturiste Canadien-Français.] Gagnon, “Nous Vous Présentons Gaston Albert,” SDP, May 1951, 15.
- <sup>107</sup> SDP changed to Culture Physique et Santé in 1956. I use the sentence, “it seems to disappear” because I could only acquire a handful of CPS, but it was clear though that, within the pages of the new magazines, nationalist messages were gone.

## CHAPTER 4

### Summary and Conclusions

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The purpose of this thesis has been to analyze Adrien Gagnon's distinct and promotional messages of French Canadian nationalism found in his physical culture magazine, *Santé et Développement Physique*, during its publishing era – 1946 to 1956. By doing so, I was able to demonstrate Gagnon's various means to raise the issue of what he believed was French Canadian weakness, and where this issue fell within the spectrum of health and physical training. Within the wider field of physical culture, several themes emerged in which nationalist messages were intertwined: health as a theme of its own encompassing the mental, the physical, and the spiritual; the heated competition between Ben Weider and Adrien Gagnon bridging the provincial conflict between the French Canadian leaders of Quebec and the Liberal supremacy of Canada to the small-scale conflict between the English Canadian bodybuilding leaders in Montreal, and Gagnon, striving to become the sole Francophone editor of muscle magazines amongst his people; and, nationalism, which is displayed within each of these themes and given its own account as an idea that was conveyed by Gagnon through various nationalist vehicles such as his articles on health and exercise, his short-lived weightlifting team *Club Cyr*, and his more grandiose *Fédération Canadienne Française des Culturistes*.

Preceding the discussion of Adrien Gagnon's messages of Francophone national pride, this thesis featured an introduction which provided a quick glance at the history of Quebec from the Conquest in 1760 to the eve of the Quiet Revolution 200 years later. Its purpose was to demonstrate that French Canadian nationalism was not an idea that simply appeared during Gagnon's lifetime, but was a longstanding concept that French Canadians, through several generations felt burdened by Anglophone rule. As revealed in the first part of this thesis, Quebec nationalism was a complex

concept. With various groups emerging and defending different types of national pride, such as traditional nationalism and conservative nationalism, each of which focused on a return to the past and the preservation of ancestral ideas, liberal nationalism looked towards a brighter future for Quebec within the country as a whole. Cleric-nationalism, which defended the importance of preserving one's traditions and staying on the land where French Canadians belonged, and, extreme nationalism, which showed its leaders explicitly displaying the importance of preserving the integrity of the French Canadians within the Province of Quebec, add to the argument that nationalism within Quebec is a complex subject.

Moreover, the examination of the history of Quebec demonstrated that each of the aforementioned nationalist beliefs intertwined with certain issues but, on their own, were more prominent than others during specific time periods. For example, the nationalist movement of the *Patriotes* group, or *Parti Canadien* prior to that, would probably not have been prevalent during the Second World War when liberal nationalism was still examining ways to draw Quebec from the Great Depression with various reforms such as free education and the establishment of Hydro-Québec. However, despite the varying ideas and different impacts each type had on the province's history, they could all be merged into one common idea – autonomy. French Canadians, irrespective of the period in which they lived defended three things: faith, language, and race. As time progressed, however, the protection of the group's faith slowly disappeared with the loss of emphasis on religion, while the concept of a 'French Canadian race' disappeared, replaced by a single word, *Québécois*.<sup>1</sup> Despite this, the defense of language remained, and is prevalent to this day. With Quebec politicians today required to justify their use of the English language during press conferences, and the undeniable presence of the 'language police' between 2012 and 2014,

it is difficult to argue against the fact that Quebeckers cherish and will probably defend the use of the French language within Quebec's borders for the foreseeable future.<sup>2</sup>

Gagnon, for his part, also defended the autonomy and superiority of the French Canadians within his publications, which could somewhat be explained by his background as a rural French Canadian. Born in Kamouraska in the 1920s, where religion was prominent and French Canadian pride was accentuated by the traditional visits of the strongmen, a young Gagnon experienced a glimpse of the "roaring twenties" before being plunged into the Great Depression of the 1930s. Within this period, prominent groups such as *l'Action Française* insisted that 'races' should not mix, embedding in the minds of listeners that only the pure French Canadian would survive in Quebec.

Furthermore, being a young man in the mid-1930s, just turned machinist, Gagnon joined the workforce in the Anglophone-operated factories, where he remained until the end of the Second World War, an event which brought the Francophone and Anglophone population against one another over the question of overseas military conscription. During his employment in the aircraft manufacture industries, it is probable that Adrien Gagnon experienced the phenomenon, best explained by Hughes, in which the French Canadians would never reach the top of the career ladder and would never become business leaders in Quebec. With this in mind, Adrien Gagnon, who finally became a Francophone businessman within Quebec strove, to remain at the top of the bodybuilding ladder by constantly undermining his Anglophone opponents and bringing French Canadian bodybuilders together within one common group.

Finally, Adrien Gagnon entered the publishing world in a Quebec ruled by Maurice Duplessis and his traditionalist nationalist attitudes that ensured a continuation of the linguistic battle and called for a return to ancestral beliefs. For this reason, Gagnon began linking health and

physical culture to religion and the rejuvenation of a strong French Canadian population. This ultimately led to his desire for autonomy within the sphere of physical culture to demonstrate, like the *Association d'Athlétique Amateurs le National*, that French Canadians in sport or bodybuilding as in other branches of human activity, was not inferior to the rest of the population.

## EPILOGUE

Adrien Gagnon's contribution to the fitness industry did not terminate with the end of *Santé et Développement Physique*. He slowly retreated from bodybuilding and strength training, to begin a new business, emerging as one of the biggest natural supplement sellers and manufacturers in Quebec.

While Quebec as a whole was experiencing its Quiet Revolution during the 1960s, Gagnon underwent his own change within his business. His first step towards the commerce of health products was the publication in 1954 of his magazine *Santé Naturelle* which focused on providing extensive detail about certain products already on the market, explaining the benefits of certain plants, and to advertise the supplements that Gagnon himself was manufacturing.<sup>3</sup> A slow start at first grew into his main occupation, forcing him to decide between continuing his bodybuilding publications, or leaving that behind and becoming an expert in naturopathy. Gagnon chose the latter, moving to a bigger location on the south shore of Montreal in 1971.<sup>4</sup> Fine reveals that Gagnon's business, unnamed at that point, began as a mail-order service – products were ordered through *Santé Naturelle* and delivered to the buyer's door, just as was done when Gagnon was selling his magazines and his weights.<sup>5</sup> In 1974, the name *Herboriste Vibio Santé Naturelle Ltée* was established and business evolved from mail orders to door-to-door salesmanship, which Yvan claims was a normal occurrence at the time called *la vente itinérants*, door-to-door sales.<sup>6</sup> With sales numbers quickly accelerating from \$250,000 to \$500,000, Adrien Gagnon's products, labeled

as such, found a home within major pharmacy chains across Quebec in the 1980s. His company name, *Santé Naturelle A.G. Ltée*, remains today.<sup>7</sup>

Gagnon's big break was his development of Sulfate of Glucosamine in 1996 which brought his company to new heights, leading to 60 percent of the firm sold in 2002 to a company called Novacap and finally to Hong Kong's CK Lifesciences 3 years later for \$54 million. As Yvan explains, for his father, the sale of *Santé Naturelle A.G. Ltée* was a vindication; his products were finally recognized.<sup>8</sup> Adrien Gagnon continued to oversee the business while in his late seventies and early eighties, with his sons André, in charge of operations, and Yvan, with communications and the science behind the products.

## **PILLAR, PIONEER, NATIONALIST**

At age 87, approximately six years after selling his company, Adrien Gagnon died of heart failure in Brossard, Quebec, following a two-year period of diminishing health.<sup>9</sup> What can be said about Gagnon outside the dimensions of this study is that he was a hardworking man and an advocate of health products.

As an editor, author, and publisher, Adrien Gagnon worked hard to ensure his readers received the next issue of his magazine. One reporter in the magazine *Photo Journal* mentions that "the bodybuilder Adrien Gagnon did not take a vacation for the past eight years, and we were told that interviewing this dynamo would not be a sinecure." Upon the reporter's arrival, Gagnon was speaking on the phone, measuring a client, and agreeing to a colleague's inquiry, all at the same time.<sup>10</sup> Yvan also remembers a time when his father locked himself in their basement until 10 o'clock at night, and then began his daily house chores.<sup>11</sup> It is also important to note that, as of the 1960s, Adrien Gagnon was a single father of two young boys. His son explains that their mother, Marguerite Magnan, who began as a model in Gagnon's magazines, never accepted a life

characterized by work and an absent husband, prompting her to ask for a divorce.<sup>12</sup> Philip Fine, however, notes that, despite the end of their marriage, Gagnon continued to provide for Marguerite until her tragic death in 1979.<sup>13</sup> Finally, Adrien Gagnon might be characterized by some as a workaholic. Yvan Gagnon writes about their numerous road trips together around Quebec to present various supplements and his father's never-ending research on every single vitamin he put on the market to ensure that whatever was printed on the bottle was rooted in scientific evidence.<sup>14</sup> Also, as mentioned, Gagnon was involved with the management of his business until his eighties.

In conclusion, Adrien Gagnon, through his publications and his success, can be remembered as differing characters. He can be seen as self-righteous and, at some times, egotistical. This is apparent with his remarks concerning his own strength and his own physique, especially when challenged by other lifters or when comparing himself to his competitor, Ben Weider. Gagnon can also be seen as somewhat religious; demonstrated by his idea that the male body should be catered to the image of the Creator. Additionally, Gagnon was a realist. Realizing that his Francophone compatriots were lagging behind in terms of physical fitness, he took matters into his own hands and exposed the truth that the French-speaking population needed to commit to improving their health in order to, in turn, improve the health of the entire province.

It is also important, however, to note that Gagnon can in fact be considered, as his son refers to him, a pioneer and pillar of physical culture in Quebec. In a Quebec dominated by the English-speaking population, Gagnon found the strength and ideas to rise as a prominent French Canadian author by publishing the first bodybuilding magazine in the French language within the borders of the province. He built an empire and managed to elevate it to the standards set by the kingpins of bodybuilding, Joe and Ben Weider.



Finally, for the purposes of this thesis, Adrien Gagnon must be remembered as a French Canadian author who spread nationalist propaganda through his magazine. With his numerous publications centred on the betterment of the Francophone population, along with his constant pleading for the regeneration of the French Canadians and the construction of a beautiful and strong people, together with his explicit racist slurs to legitimize the supremacy of the French language within physical culture and accusations of weakness amongst his compatriots, I conclude that Adrien Gagnon perceived himself as a protector and a kind of beacon for what he referred to as the 'French Canadian race.'

## Endnotes

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- <sup>1</sup> The term *Québécois* was ‘legitimized’ during a speech by René Lévesque when he proclaimed “Nous sommes Québécois!” – We are Quebecer, showing the identity of the Quebec population wishing to be autonomous within Canada.
- <sup>2</sup> In a press conference regarding the shooting in a Quebec Mosque, Quebec Premier, Philippe Couillard addressed listeners in English rather than in French. The following day, *La Presse* published an article stating that, due to the circumstances, the *Parti Québécois*, instigators of the 101 law which was established to promote and defend the French language, concluded that Couillard had the right to speak English. However, in normal circumstances, the Quebec Premier would be obligated to speak French. *La Presse*. “Le Québec doit parler au monde en français et en anglais, estime le chef du Parti québécois, Jean-François Lisée.” <http://www.lapresse.ca/actualites/politique/politique-quebecoise/201702/01/01-5065293-le-quebec-peut-aussi-parler-au-monde-en-anglais-dit-lisee.php> (accessed March 5th, 2017.)
- <sup>3</sup> Yvan Gagnon and Jacques Beaulieu, *Adrien Gagnon: l’Histoire d’un Pionnier et d’un Pilier de la Culture Physique et de la Naturopathie* (Montreal: les Éditions Quebecor, 2009), 117.
- <sup>4</sup> In his biography, Yvan Gagnon discusses his father’s struggle in making such a decision. The move to LaPrairie is detailed in both Gagnon’s book and Fine’s article. *Ibid*, 80; Philip Fine, “Quebecker Built Health-Supplements Empire out of his Passion for Physical Fitness.” *The Globe and Mail*, June 7, 2011
- <sup>5</sup> Fine, “Empire Built out of Passion for Physical Fitness,” *The Globe and Mail*.
- <sup>6</sup> Gagnon and Beaulieu, *Adrien Gagnon*, 83.
- <sup>7</sup> Fine, “Empire Built out of Passion for Physical Fitness,” *The Globe and Mail*; *Ibid*, 81. Gagnon’s products can still be purchased in several pharmacies in Quebec.
- <sup>8</sup> Fine, “Empire Built out of Passion for Physical Fitness,” *The Globe and Mail*, Gagnon and Beaulieu, *Adrien Gagnon*, 114.
- <sup>9</sup> Fine, “Empire Built out of Passion for Physical Fitness,” *The Globe and Mail*
- <sup>10</sup> [Le culturiste Adrien Gagnon n’a pas pris une seule journée de vacances depuis huit ans et l’on nous avait prédit qu’interviuer ce dynamo ne serait pas une sinécure.] Maurice Desjardins, “Adrien Gagnon Vous Fera Grandir à Volonté,” *Photo Journal*, Septembre 1950, 25.
- <sup>11</sup> Gagnon and Beaulieu, *Adrien Gagnon*, 51.
- <sup>12</sup> Yvan Gagnon was born in 1953 and André in 1956. *Ibid*, 34.
- <sup>13</sup> Marguerite died in a car accident at the age of 52. Fine, “Empire Built out of Passion for Physical Fitness,” *The Globe and Mail*; *Ibid*, 212.
- <sup>14</sup> Gagnon and Beaulieu, *Adrien Gagnon*, 220.

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