

---

## From Object of Poverty to National Treasure: The Ambiguous Place of Catholic Convents in Quebec and the Rhetoric of Heritage

TANIA MARTIN

### Résumé

*Les couvents et autres établissements religieux catholiques constituent indéniablement une composante importante du patrimoine religieux du Québec. Au cours de la dernière décennie, les intérêts populaires et officiels à préserver ces bâtiments et les préoccupations à cet égard ont augmenté de façon exponentielle. Les discussions sur la démolition ou l'attribution de nouvelles vocations aux édifices des communautés religieuses de femmes révèlent la grande diversité des attitudes des citoyens, des membres de communautés de femmes et du clergé, des défenseurs du patrimoine ainsi que du gouvernement. La façon dont le patrimoine religieux a été défini et présenté (pour consommation touristique, pour justifier le discours nationaliste) reflète non seulement des asymétries en fonction de l'appartenance à un sexe dans l'attribution et l'appréciation de ce patrimoine, mais aussi une ambivalence envers le rôle joué par l'Église dans l'histoire du Québec.*

### Abstract

*Convents and Catholic religious institutions undeniably constitute an important component of Quebec's religious heritage. Yet, popular and official interest in and concern over the preservation of these buildings seems to have grown exponentially in the last decade. Arguments over the demolition and reuse of properties of religious communities of women reveal the wide-ranging attitudes of concerned citizens, members of sisterhoods and the clergy, heritage advocates, and government. The ways religious heritage has been defined and packaged (for tourist consumption, to bolster national narratives) reflect not only gender asymmetries within the attribution and appreciation of religious heritage but also ambivalence toward the role of the Church in Quebec history.*

---

Montreal city council approved the demolition of the 150-year-old Saint-Isidore convent on 18 May 1996, despite having declared it a historic and architectural landmark six years earlier (Fig. 1). A few days prior to the decision, a journalist with the *Montreal Gazette* had warned that citizens risked losing a precious architectural heritage because Catholic religious communities of women were putting their properties up for sale. "Whose property?" the headlines demanded.<sup>1</sup> Publishing the article was a last ditch attempt to mobilize Montreal citizens to save the convent. Not surprisingly, the subsequent destruction of the edifice provoked a province-wide controversy, placing the religious community at the centre of a heated public debate concerning the future of religious heritage in Quebec.

The controversy over Saint-Isidore, and religious heritage more generally, demands closer analysis: it cannot be summarily dismissed as a battle of interests, those of the public or of a private buyer over those of the actual real estate owner, in this case a religious community. More was at stake than the profit of the developer, taxes to the city, or the saving of a historical landmark. The issues ran much deeper. In addition to safeguarding historic convents and religious-run institutions, which often qualify as architectural monuments in their own right, within their midst as ways of revitalizing neighbourhoods, or because the buildings visually enrich the urban fabric, or as sites to include on tourist itineraries, might Quebecers be appropriating religious heritage as a means of coming to terms with their divorce with the Catholic Church? Quebec



**Fig. 1**  
 Postcard of the Saint-Isidore convent of the Soeurs de la Providence, Longue-Pointe (Montreal), Quebec. Deemed exemplary of vernacular convent architecture, its Second Empire Style refurbishing in the 1880s also makes it a canonical building when compared to other kinds of “borrowed buildings,” like donated dwellings. (Courtesy Bibliothèque nationale du Québec, Phototèque, Collection Barrière DS3 2510)

society spurned the Roman Catholic Church some thirty years ago, and now it is desperately trying to convince the clergy and religious communities to hang on to their remaining institutions.

Demolition of the Saint-Isidore convent prompted such questions as: Did Saint-Isidore, and by the extension, any Catholic religious-run institution, belong only to the titular owner of the building, in this case to the Congrégation des Filles de la Charité, Servantes des Pauvres, commonly known as the Soeurs de la Providence? Or did it also belong to the general public? Or to some larger, more abstract entity — cultural heritage? Questions over the “ownership” and heritage value of religious properties have not disappeared. They continue to plague municipalities throughout the province as religious communities increasingly divest themselves of underused convents and other institutional facilities. Although a few convents have been restored, innumerable Catholic institutional edifices already have been either recycled for other purposes or demolished so that the land can be redeveloped, a situation that contributes to an overall sense of loss.

Governments, preservationists, planners, religious congregations, concerned citizen groups, and heritage advocates in Quebec grapple almost daily with what to do with these abandoned properties and who is going to pay for their maintenance, conservation, renovation, or demolition. Because of the financial outlays these different approaches require, decision makers are confronted with such pressing issues as should all religious sites be carefully preserved

in the first place. The different groups each have their own agendas, which further complicates the problem. Although the goals of religious superiors, heritage groups, and city planners might coincide — the preservation of a convent on a particular site — the reasons for doing so do not always intersect. Whereas a municipality might view the recycling of an ex-convent boarding school (*pensionnat*) into a museum, thus potentially attracting tourists and ideally generating revenue for the maintenance of the heritage property, the former administrator-occupants of the building might see the conversion as a means of keeping the faith alive in the landscape. The inherent value and significance of the saved structure therefore differs according to the advocate and the intended audience.

Ultimately, the problem is not so much “whose property” as who gets to decide what happens to the properties presently or formerly owned by Catholic religious communities in Quebec. Whose heritage do the buildings and sites really represent? What exactly is at stake in deciding whether to keep, recycle, or demolish religious patrimonial artifacts? Who will control the meanings attributed to these buildings and the ways religious heritage is presented and interpreted? The stakes have as much to do with physical ownership of admittedly prime real estate located in the heart of city centres, enviable vast domains located in choice suburbs, and well-situated plots located in the core of villages and towns throughout the province, as it does with imaginary ownership of the “cultural capital” the

buildings embody, their potential as exploitable resources for new social initiatives and economic uses, as records of collective memory, and the ways they can help construct an ethnic, national identity. These are the questions this paper tries to untangle.

This article examines the rhetoric around religious heritage and the positions taken by various groups in terms of its definition and its safekeeping. It unravels the ways in which convents and Catholic charitable, educational, and hospital institutions have been “constructed” as historical monuments, as objects of preservation, as relics of the past. My observations are based on my prior research on convents and Catholic religious-run institutions and a cursory survey of newspaper, heritage magazine, and architectural journal articles; ephemera produced by religious communities and tourist offices; a couple of building inventories written for the purposes of heritage evaluation; and, Internet sites and governmental publications that express positions and policies regarding the development and conservation of convent buildings.<sup>2</sup> This article examines the ways people have talked about and treated religious heritage as reflections of economic, social, and political agendas. The process of deciding what to keep and what to demolish simultaneously invokes and ignores the gender asymmetries enacted in these structures and between different types of religious heritage — the edifices erected by religious communities (religious institutions and residences) and those erected by parishes (churches and presbyteries). Conventual buildings, institutional complexes administered by religious communities of women and men, fundamentally occupy an ambiguous place in the landscape and in the mind of Quebecers.

Doomed to failure, the passionate efforts to save the Saint-Isidore convent seem misplaced. The fate of the historic building had been decided well in advance. The religious community had deserted the edifice in 1982. Adjacent properties zoned for industrial use encroached on the site. The construction of the Louis-Hippolyte-Lafontaine Tunnel-Bridge highway extension, the enlargement of CAST’s shipping terminal, and the expansion of the Port of Montreal all had detrimental consequences on Saint-Isidore, effectively isolating the building from the rest of the city. Repeated vandalism of the convent also made its occupation as a religious residence practically impossible.<sup>3</sup>

The media attention the event received nonetheless succeeded in mobilizing citizens to consider the future of the province’s religious heritage — the debacle catalyzed debate. Catholic religious institutions, along with the church and presbytery (priest’s house), formed the centre of neighbourhoods,

parishes, and villages. Prominent markers in the Catholic landscape, the buildings oriented passers-by and functioned as a point of convergence for the faithful. Although battles had been fought over the preservation of convents before the mid-1990s, Saint-Isidore awakened Quebecers to the fact that architectural monuments that had long claimed pride of place in their neighbourhoods and towns were threatened with extinction. No one thought twice about Catholic religious institutions until they started to disappear in large enough numbers. So numerous and ubiquitous in Quebec, conventual buildings were taken-for-granted fixtures of the landscape.

The public’s major outcry was that the demolition of the designated landmark would set a dangerous precedent, yet it had already been set ten years earlier, in 1986, with the destruction of the Montmagny convent, a building that was cited in 1982.<sup>4</sup> Nor did sale or transfer of ownership of convents and Catholic religious institutions to a municipality guarantee conservation, as the 1996 razing of the Soeurs de la Charité convent in La Malbaie proved.<sup>5</sup> Outcomes such as these explain the urgent appeals of heritage advocates who demand that the public, the citizens of the province, appropriate their patrimony.<sup>6</sup> In the minds of preservationists, conserving and maintaining religious heritage is a societal project. Few convents meet current building codes and safety norms. Catholic institutional buildings have degraded due to lack of repairs and of the financial resources to carry them out as well as the deterioration of the original construction materials, especially in modern buildings, as seen in spalling brick, rusting rebar, chipped concrete, and broken seals in metal window sashes.<sup>7</sup> Yet, before citizens can figuratively, if not physically, take ownership of these often dilapidated buildings, they have to be able to identify the buildings as “religious heritage” essential to the future of Quebec. If and when the public does accept the designation of convents and Catholic institutional edifices as important historic landmarks, only then will it be easier for governments to direct tax-payer monies to finance the renovation and maintenance of the buildings. Otherwise, municipalities will consider religious communities as just another property owner in the way of urban and rural progress and let developers and the free market determine the use of conventual properties.

The urgency of the situation is largely a question of demographics. Religious communities can no longer maintain their buildings due to reduced personnel and the ageing of their members. Since Vatican II and the Quiet Revolution thousands of

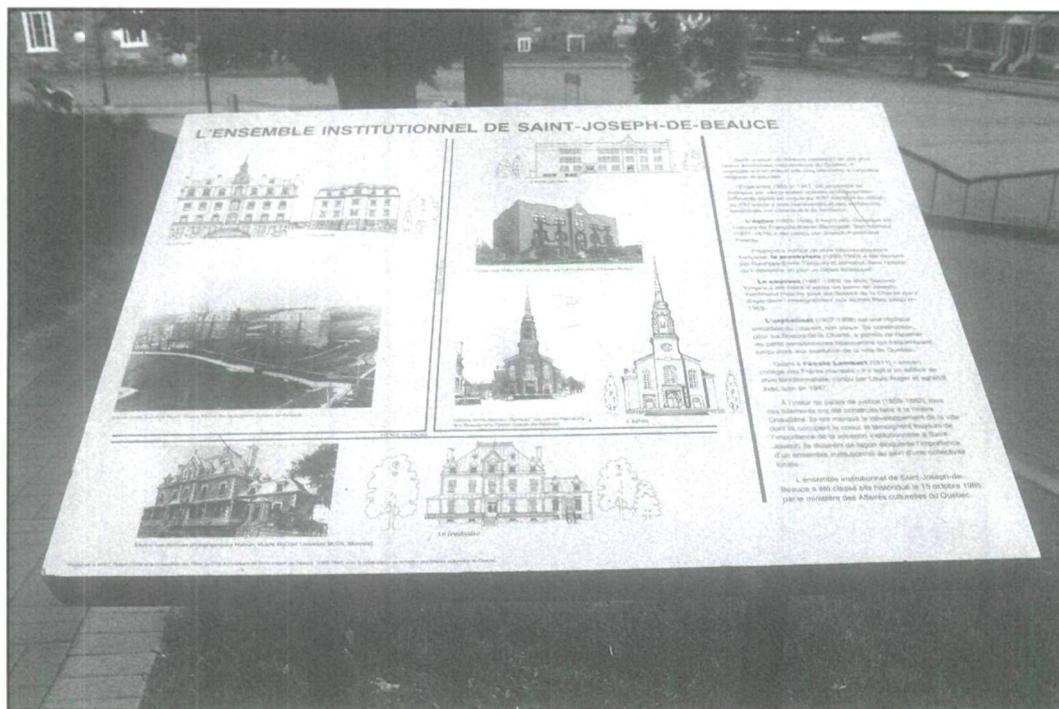
sisters abrogated their vows; the state usurped the management of many of the vital services that religious communities had performed in the province, necessarily forcing the closure of countless missions. Today, the average age of women religious\* hovers around the eighty-years-old mark and few communities are able to recruit new members. Quebeckers therefore not only risk losing an important architecture, but also the people who manned the very (religious) institutions that had formed the backbone of Quebec society.

The sale and disposal of religious properties is contentious, it touches a raw nerve. Catholic religious-administered institutional buildings invoke a sense of shame in some people, a sense of pride in others. For some people, keeping religious institutions instead of demolishing them brings unwanted reminders of unhappy memories. The perceptions of a nun who has been abused, of the Duplessis orphans or of First Nations peoples committed against their will, differ greatly from those who conserve happier remembrances of time spent within convent walls.<sup>8</sup>

Younger generations do not carry the same associations with Catholic religious institutions as do older generations; they hardly know how to interpret religious buildings and artifacts. The recent

appearance of liturgical guides to help students of architecture and material culture comprehend religious edifices and objects points to the insignificance of the Church in the daily lives of the general populace. The tenets and practices of Catholicism are not being transmitted; Catholic sites will soon be relegated to the realm of folklore. Municipalities install interpretative and commemorative plaques to describe the contributions of sisterhoods in their area. They typically erect the plaques after the original convent has “disappeared” because it was converted to suit the needs of a new tenant, replaced by a modern building serving a new function, or simply razed. Heritage organizations and local or provincial governments also put up plaques to explain the institutional core of a village — parish church, presbytery, and convent (Fig. 2). Aside from a plaque in l’Assomption that gives a few details on the original function of the Hospice Notre-Dame, its occupants and designer, there is little else left standing to communicate how people lived in and around the site.<sup>9</sup> While this information helps the tourist understand how these buildings might have figured in the landscape, it mainly represents the building as an art object, thus demoting the potential for a multi-faceted appreciation to the level of nostalgia.

\* New scholarship uses the term “women religious” to refer to nuns and sisters, and the term “men religious” for brothers and fathers. In the case of this article, the term women religious differentiates nuns and sisters from other devout, religiously inclined people who happen to be female.



**Fig. 2**  
Interpretive plaque explaining “L’ensemble institutionnel de Saint-Joseph-de-Beauce,” 1996. This type of nineteenth-century convent architecture is most commonly associated with religious heritage.

Inherent to the loss of religious heritage is the danger of forgetting.<sup>10</sup> Catholic heritage contains multiple dimensions. If anything, it is controversial. Convents and religious-run institutions are coloured by negative and positive associations. The children of baby boomers have had numerous, at times conflicting, stories told to them about these buildings and the people who lived in them. With the lapse of time comes perspective, distance, and detachment and the urge to commemorate the passing of a generation of men and women, a culture.

Although the celebration of this past is problematic, ambivalence toward the buildings has proven dangerous too. Pride and shame perhaps led to the 2002 safekeeping and recycling of the Soeurs de la Providence Salaberry-de-Valleyfield convent and to the selling and subsequent destruction of the Religieuses Adoratrices du Précieux-Sang monastery in Nicolet in the same year. Other factors, such as the wishes of the locality and the conditions of the developer in the real estate transaction, arguably better explain the outcome of these two structures.<sup>11</sup> Yet, the fate of religious properties was as inconsistent and insecure in the 1970s as it is today. A quarter century ago, all levels of government classified particular Catholic convents and religious-run institutional buildings as historic monuments (such as the Mother House of the Grey Nuns). During this same decade, the Roman Catholic Church also voluntarily destroyed numerous churches, mainly in downtown Montreal, until it was convinced that it was destroying an important component of the city's patrimony.<sup>12</sup> To counter renewed ambivalence and to buy time to set priorities, Heritage Montreal in 2003 again called for a moratorium on the demolition or major renovations to religious buildings, which presumably includes convents and Catholic religious institutions as well as churches.<sup>13</sup>

Over the next decade, especially following the prominent media coverage of the demolition of the Saint-Isidore convent, citizens are more and more preoccupied by the future of Quebec's religious heritage. Practically every month, the province's preservation magazine, *Continuité*, reports on the fate of a church or a convent.<sup>14</sup> Since the mid 1990s the number of conferences, symposia, and exhibits devoted to the subject have multiplied as have the number of groups that make the preservation of religious heritage their primary mandate.<sup>15</sup> The different organizations also promote their own agendas. Those such as Heritage Montreal have mobilized the populace to take up positions in the debate, to publicly deliberate a question that is becoming more and more pertinent every day. Citizen groups and defenders of religious heritage lobbied governments to act. Mission patrimoine

religieux, a consortium of religious communities who wish to bequeath an inheritance and commemorate their foundresses, helps sisters promote, conserve, and make inventories of their material culture. Since 1984, the Corporation du patrimoine et du tourisme religieux de Québec has sought to maintain the presence of the Catholic Church inside the tourist district of Old Quebec. To this list we should add the numerous regional conferences and organizations, such as the Organization for the Valorization of Religious Heritage in the County of Brome-Missisquoi (Regroupement pour la valorisation du patrimoine religieux for the MRC, Brome-Missisquoi) established in 2001 to promote religious heritage in that region and establish links between various denominations and ecumenical organizations. Provincial and regional groups such as the Fondation du patrimoine religieux du Québec and the Comité de concertation sur le patrimoine religieux du Québec have additionally held conferences to examine the problem of religious heritage, and since their founding in 1995 they have implemented policies, written guidelines, classified the heritage value of houses of worship, and established aid programs promoting the preservation of religious heritage.

Soon after the demolition of the Saint-Isidore convent in 1996, the Minister of Culture and Communications announced a new financial program to be administered by the ecumenical Foundation for Religious Heritage to aid parishes and dioceses restore religious buildings (almost exclusively churches and chapels), artworks, moveable objects, and archives (especially those of religious communities of women). In March 2003 the Foundation launched a province-wide inventory of churches and houses of worship.<sup>16</sup> So far the Foundation's inventory efforts have really only focussed on churches. The fate of convents and Catholic religious-run institutions are still being considered on a case-by-case basis, although the Conseil des monuments et sites du Québec (CMSQ) is working on an extensive, coordinated inquiry on the subject in order to develop conservation priorities and establish guidelines.<sup>17</sup>

Regions and cities are trying to develop their tourism potential via religious institutional buildings, which suggests that the interest in religious heritage may be more economic than nostalgic. Quebecers, in claiming their Catholic cultural inheritance, are bringing grist to the tourism mill, a sector of the economy that has largely replaced the factories, lumber and other natural resource industries (which are still major economic players, but because of their mechanisation they employ proportionately fewer people) and subsistence agriculture as the major employers of the very people who sent their

children to the nuns. In 1995, the Office des congrès et du tourisme du Grand Montréal (OCTGM) conducted a study of the potential for religious tourism in the Montreal region. Twenty-five of the twenty-eight sites inventoried date from between 1830 and 1907, and most are churches or chapels.<sup>18</sup> Responses to these kinds of studies include the publication of pamphlets distributed by tourist offices, walking tours of Montreal churches and religious institutions, and open houses of chapels and museums of religious communities. The latter activities had already taken place in 1994 and 1995. The Musée de la Civilisation's exhibit, "Patrimoine des communautés religieuses du Vieux-Québec," in 2000 not only sensitized citizens to the material culture of Quebec City's oldest religious communities, but attracted tourists, as did Clara Gutshe's *Convent Series* photographs.<sup>19</sup>

Already, there exist forty-nine museums, historical sites, and interpretation centres devoted to religious heritage in the province. Religious communities constructed some of these museums and interpretation centres. Although this is a relatively new phenomenon, in the last century convents and Catholic religious institutions figured on tourist itineraries and religious communities opened their houses to the bourgeois members of society on certain days. These visitors often made substantial or small contributions to the sisters' work.

Since 1922, the Commission des monuments historiques du Québec (rechristened the Commission des biens culturels in 1972) has classified 407 religious sites, cultural resources, and landmarks. Religious heritage constitutes 47% of all historic buildings they have cited.<sup>20</sup> In 1951, they established a subsidy program for the oldest churches in the province. Clearly, religious heritage plays a significant role in establishing a national (Québécois) identity and serves as an economic engine. Rather than turn all convents into museums, however, different municipalities are innovating other ways of revitalising their economies and giving new life to these architectural landmarks. The Saint-Césaire convent was recently renovated into a centre for art and music therapy, its chapel restored for special events.<sup>21</sup> These initiatives parallel those for tourism development.

The sheer number and variety of religious buildings on the market itself causes problems: if we can't save them all then which ones do we keep? A multiplicity of groups has been established for the sole purpose of finding new uses for religious buildings whose *heritage value is recognized* and that possess liturgical objects whose *artistic qualities are deemed exemplary*.<sup>22</sup> Restoration programs working within the constraints of government

pocketbooks impose guidelines and set out eligibility criteria for financial support. Those organizations applying for funding must prove that the religious building was constructed before 1945, has been used for its "original purpose" continuously over the past fifty years, and they must demonstrate its "heritage value."<sup>23</sup>

Although some guide is necessary in decision making, evaluation of Catholic institutional buildings is inherently problematic because the categories are based solely on ideas of artistic merit and historical relevance. Typical building inventories tell the history of a religious community separately from the chronology of the building's construction, which is told from the point of view of its architects.<sup>24</sup> Standard criteria measure "historical cultural value," artistic and architectural qualities, and the building's condition or "authenticity," ultimately giving priority to a single period of construction (the nineteenth century) and the work of renowned architects.<sup>25</sup> These criteria tend to exclude ordinary structures that housed Catholic institutions and modern institutional architecture (even though the Fondation du Patrimoine religieux recently extended its survey to consider buildings erected prior to 1975).<sup>26</sup> The convent and scholasticat of the Missionnaires du Sacré-Coeur in Sillery, a property valued at over \$5 million, escaped protection because the 1960s building was not deemed part of the religious heritage of the new city of Quebec. It was sold in 2003 and will be converted into a retirement home.<sup>27</sup> Because of their focus on beautiful historic monuments, which usually correspond to those of the oldest religious communities, existing heritage guidelines result in the loss of a variety of buildings. Only the golden age of convent and institutional building is retained.

Convents and Catholic institutional buildings are more than monumental art objects, urban furniture, or potential tourist sites. In ignoring them as material culture, as complex records of history with all of the contradictions that this approach might entail, we lose the stories of the buildings' clients and users. Historically, religious communities readily adapted extant structures, "borrowed buildings" such as hotels and private dwellings, to suit their own needs. This was not necessarily an ideal situation for them, but starting out in the donated residence of a benefactor was a common way of establishing a new mission. These "vernacular buildings" generally receive little attention, although evaluators categorized Saint-Isidore as an exemplary specimen of this convent type.

The *Report of the Consulting Committee for the Protection of Built Heritage* summarized the history of Saint-Isidore: in 1846, les Soeurs de la Providence

acquired the Desautels farm in the village of Longue Pointe on which a 40' × 30' stone dwelling had already been built. Out of this building the sisters ran a joint boarding and day school and received the mentally afflicted and the indigent. The sisters purchased adjacent plots, doubled the area of the house, and added a chapel according to the plans drawn in 1852 by architect Victor Bourgeau. In 1884, architect Hippolyte Bergeron expanded the building further. His brick addition was covered in stucco and finished to mimic stone, and he replaced the gable roof with mansards, and built galleries across the façade.<sup>28</sup> Because the Saint-Isidore convent also featured a second Empire style roof popular for religious-run Catholic institutions in the last quarter of the nineteenth century, it also fit canonical categories.

For religious communities of women, recycling buildings is a familiar practice. Convents, like most large institutional complexes, were built through accretion. When the sisters added new wings, they often renovated the interiors of older parts of the building. Each site, therefore, contains multiple layers of history and a mixture of architectural styles that complicate easy reading and that yet faithfully record the complex evolution of institutional architecture. The very ordinary, non-descript flat-roofed reinforced concrete brick-clad structures that most people would qualify as ugly and uninteresting are not the buildings that come to their minds when imagining a convent. Impure buildings resist interpretation. It is much easier to pretend the messy additions do not exist. It is doubtful that these buildings will ever figure on a tourist itinerary.<sup>29</sup>

Not all convents conform to an ideal architectural style or type and it is this very variety that is interesting. Catholic institutions were experiments that evolved, not ready-made objects. Yet, it is precisely those "ordinary" buildings that are not deemed "beautiful," and to which people have less attachment, that get sold and recycled (if the structure is solid). Although the sisters' most recent constructions, buildings designed and built in the 1950s and 1960s, are not protected, they document a crucial chapter in the evolution of Catholic institutions: recruitment to religious communities peaked at mid-century and religious superiors acted accordingly in building new structures. Architectural historian France Vanlaethem asserts that these are some of the best examples of modern architecture in Quebec. More than illustrating the achievements of home-grown architects as she argues, I contend that once placed in a larger social context, the buildings (many now abandoned by the religious communities who built them) presage and render visible the ruptures within Catholicism that culminated in Vatican II.

Heritage officials evaluate Catholic institutions based on ideas of artistic merit and historical relevance, rather than on meanings intrinsic to the sisterhood. Whereas Mission Patrimoine religieux promotes the spiritual aspects of their material culture, historic preservationists draw attention to the artistic aspects, calling the Saint-Césaire convent chapel a national treasure and an example of local artisan Joseph-Thomas Rousseau's work.<sup>30</sup> Generally, citizens and religious communities value similar types of convent architecture, although the rationales for these choices differ. A turn-of-the-century motherhouse is more readily registered as a landmark than a generic 1950s hospital complex. Because current definitions of heritage exclude edifices built after 1945, and because countless of the earliest buildings and the minor, ordinary, or non-pure structures that housed Catholic institutions have already been demolished, we are left with a skewed sample. Gone are the Grey Nuns' Hospice Saint-Joseph, Refuge Sainte-Brigitte, and Asile Nazareth that were swallowed by the commercial expansion of Montreal.

The way religious heritage is defined, the way it gives preference to the beauty of the art object and an artificial sense of traditionalism contributes to the persistence of certain "pre-authorized" forms of Catholic institutions in the provincial landscape and in conceptions of national identity. Each of the proponents sees conventual buildings — their potential and their history — differently. For them, the buildings participate in different economies: spiritual, temporal, and tourist, among others.

Narrow definitions of what constitutes religious heritage warp the history of religious communities. They convey a distorted view of the range of buildings that sisterhoods actually occupied and worked within. Evaluating their properties on a case-by-case basis belies the networks that religious communities established.<sup>31</sup> Each served a sector of society. In contrast, a notion of a landscape of women religious accommodates a vision of their heritage as a system of institutions operating in a region (for example, Quebec City) or internationally. That geographic scope is limited to the political boundaries of Quebec is by default due to the mandate of provincial ministries, particularly those of culture and communication and tourism. This shallow perspective, however, truncates the actual experiences and historical and geographic impact of Catholic religious communities: they operated across Canada, the United States and around the world. It also belies patriarchal attitudes towards what was inherently a gendered landscape.

The creation of Québécois national identity through religious heritage can be construed as a

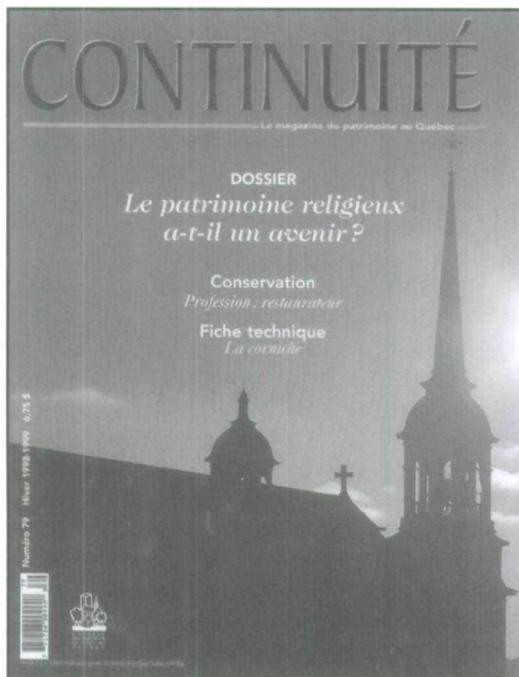
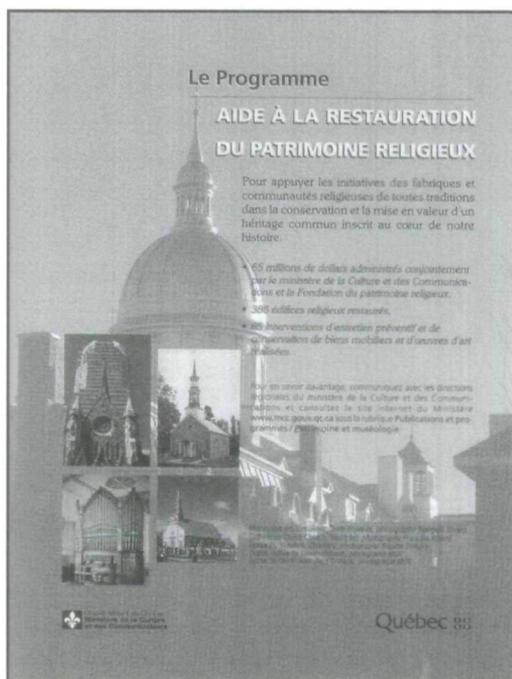


Fig. 3  
 Front cover (far left) of the special issue of the province's heritage magazine, *Continuité* 79, "Le patrimoine religieux a-t-il un avenir?," (hiver 1998–1999). Like the *Fondation du patrimoine religieux du Québec* advertisement on page 46 (left), and the *Ministry of Culture and Communication* advertisement for the *Aide à la restauration du patrimoine religieux* program on page 35 of the same issue (below left), the depiction of churches, chapels, and steeples visually dominates the page. (Courtesy *Continuité*, *Fondation du patrimoine religieux du Québec*, and *Ministère de la culture et des communications*)

tourism gimmick and a serious response to globalization. Heritage advocates and politicians try to convince the populace that this heritage distinguishes Quebec from other regions of Canada and the United States. Yet, nationalist discourse constrains the contributions of religious communities to a delimited territory, the provincial frontiers. Although this suits their agenda, looking only inside the political boundaries flies in the face of reality and minimizes the extensive geographical reach the women actually had internationally. Equating the work of Catholic sisters with the construction of a distinct Quebec society simultaneously aggrandizes and reduces their accomplishments. Aggrandizes because, although giving them credit is laudable, the purpose of their work had little (and yet everything) to do with fostering and cultivating French-Canadian culture and traditions. Rather, theirs was to promote the Catholic faith and bring comfort to those left out of the mainstream. That mission was shared by sisterhoods of other ethnicities operating in Quebec, Canada, and the United States. Reduces, because in establishing missions across the North American continent and indeed the world over, religious communities reached farther than nationalist discourse admits. Not only are convents and Catholic religious institutions testimonials specific to Quebec history, they also document the history of Catholic immigration to North America.

The choice over which components of the Catholic religious landscape to preserve reifies the Church's patriarchal elements. Not only do such statements



as "Churches are the richest heritage, witnesses of the whole history of Quebec...a 'national treasure'... a memorial for all time,"<sup>32</sup> that we repeatedly read in the media, belie nationalist undertones, they also echo gender asymmetries. Disparities in the treatment of different types of religious heritage will be conserved in society's memories of the buildings. The winter 1998–1999 issue of *Continuité* was devoted to the subject of religious heritage. Its cover

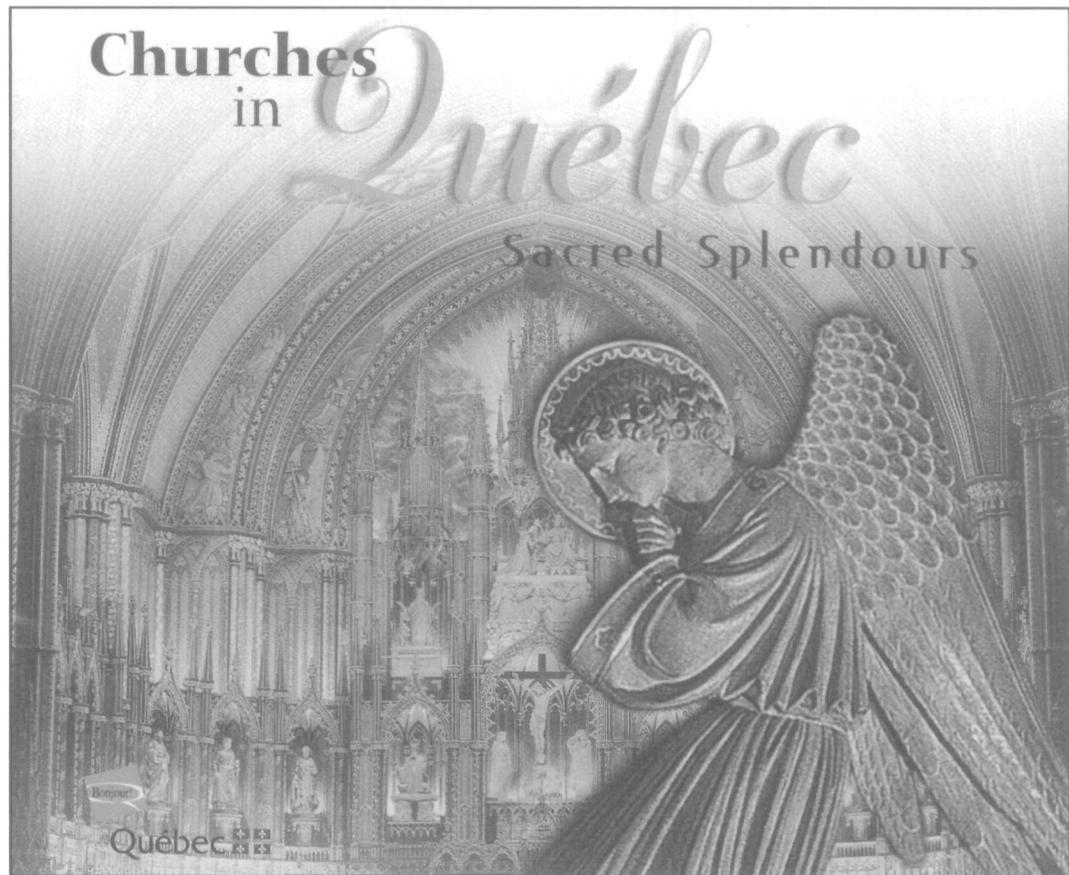
featured church steeples. It is this kind of representation, which prioritizes the “male” official voice of the Church in depicting the readily identifiable vehicles of the faith, that replicates women’s invisibility in the landscape (Fig. 3).

Pamphlets published by regional and provincial tourist offices similarly, though perhaps unconsciously, emphasize the traditional heralds of Catholicism: its temples. Of the forty-eight sites listed in *Churches in Québec: Sacred Splendours* published by Tourisme Québec, two abbeys (men’s orders) and three museums of female congregations (all three in Quebec City) figure on the provincial itinerary (Fig. 4).<sup>33</sup> The *Charlevoix Religious Heritage Trail* offers eleven churches and seven chapels for tourist consumption, only one of which is located in the Mother House of the Petites franciscaines de Marie. Not surprisingly, it is characterized as an architectural jewel, the design of Quebec City architect Eugène Talbot. The 1991 Monastère de la Croix Glorieuse, home of les Petits frères de la Croix, a monastic order of men, is also suggested for visiting. It is the only other building built by a religious community to make the cut.<sup>34</sup> The Charlevoix brochure, like the visitor’s guide to the religious

heritage of the province, almost exclusively promotes churches as worthy of a tourist’s time. Although the Corporation du patrimoine et du tourisme religieux de Québec’s map directs visitors to the museums and chapels of the oldest four religious communities of women in Quebec City, it too gives priority to houses of worship.<sup>35</sup>

Such “grand tours” usually highlight the architecture of the oldest religious communities in an area because it is located in a designated historic district (for example, old Quebec or old Montreal) or because it is a part of the protected core of a village.<sup>36</sup> The foundresses of these communities are heralded as “heroines” by the population at large, in the official political, cultural, and social histories of the province, and by the Church through beatification and canonization. Yet, the map lists none of the sisterhoods’ newer, suburban sites, nor does it refer to the buildings of dozens of other religious communities of women and men established in the Quebec City region. As a result, the more modern, nineteenth- and twentieth-century buildings and ways of dealing with society are overlooked and, without aids to help them interpret the buildings, they are therefore less easily comprehensible

**Fig. 4**  
 Front cover of the brochure *Churches in Québec: Sacred Splendours* published by Tourisme Québec. Once again, the painterly illustration of a resplendent, gold-leaf church interior graphically conveys the message that houses of worship, the male preserve of Catholicism, should be appreciated as art objects. (Courtesy Tourisme Québec)



to a passer-by. In these instances, "heritage" is undoubtedly based on notions of age, beauty, and a double standard of gendered space.

Despite occupying larger sites in the cast of buildings that make up Catholic Quebec heritage, religious-run institutional architecture often plays a secondary, supporting role. Convents are portrayed as second class citizens in the physical landscape, as the tourist pamphlet of religious heritage in the city of Quebec adumbrates. It advertises the chapel of the convent of Les Soeurs de la Charité de Québec, Maison Mère-Mallet, as the thing to see. This effectively downplays other parts of the buildings, those that housed the sisters, their wards and their pupils. The complex, of which the chapel is but a small part, sits on two city blocks. The charitable and educational endeavours of the women religious are barely mentioned in the brochure. This phenomenon also extends to guides to specific buildings, such as the booklet on the decoration of the chapel of the Précieux-Sang monastery, Saint-Hyacinthe. Although the author acknowledges the contributions of two sister-artists, he keeps decorator Joseph-Thomas Rousseau and architect Victor Bourgeau in the spotlight.<sup>37</sup> Even within convent buildings, the chapels obtain solo performances. Yet, without the rest of the building, its *raison d'être* and architectural context, they lose much of their meaning.<sup>38</sup>

The process of determining which projects deserve funding and who is given grants reveals systemic preferences. The "value" assigned to a heritage structure often reflects patriarchal and gender biases. Indeed, the primary recipients of government grants tend to be houses of worship — churches receive the lion's share of resources. Although religious communities have obtained funds for the preservation of their chapels, art works, movable objects, and archives, few monies are earmarked for their institutional complexes. This might be an outcome of the way the Foundation and other government programs distribute money. Rather than forego subsidy, religious communities take advantage of the program to restore and maintain at least that portion of the building that is eligible for such funding. After the chapel of the Mother House of the Grey Nuns was declared a historic monument in 1976, the religious community could apply for financial subsidies for its restoration. The decisions of sisterhoods might also be symbolic of that part of their own heritage they value most: their own places of worship.

Promoters of religious heritage say *churches* constitute the patrimonial wealth of the "nation." By equating churches with castles, they want to show Europeans that the New World is old. Quebec too has buildings of historical significance and

these distinguish Quebec as a unique region within North America. The loss of religious buildings (understood as churches), we are told, is tantamount to the loss of the "nation's" history. This discourse reproduces the patriarchy of the church and of Quebec society by elevating one category of religious building over all others. I would argue that the other institutional forms of the Church — the orphanages, schools, asylums, refuges, hospices, and hospitals — are what really "produced" and "reproduced" Catholic society in North America, the ones that made up a welfare, education, and healthcare system built in parallel with that of other faiths and public institutions. The issue of gender asymmetry did not escape one religious heritage workshop participant who, after listening to discussions about the utility of forming partnerships between municipalities and church councils, asked "What about forming partnerships with religious communities?"<sup>39</sup> Ignoring conventual buildings erases the contributions of vowed Catholic women to society.

Religious communities treated buildings as utilitarian instruments in accomplishing their goals — to dispense charity, education, and healthcare services and to support a particular religious worldview, one of poverty.<sup>40</sup> Today, as in the past, religious communities have their own agendas for keeping or selling their properties. Monies raised through the divestment of their properties go to support the work of cash-strapped congregations and to pay for the care of retired elderly, infirm, and dying members of the religious community.<sup>41</sup>

We should not be surprised when a religious community divests itself of land it has judged extraneous and too onerous to carry and maintain with reduced personnel. In today's discourse, we hear the same refrain: religious communities and parishioners simply do not have the monies required to defray the costs of maintenance, let alone restoration.<sup>42</sup> Furthermore, sisterhoods lack the resources to bring their buildings up to code. The decision by les Soeurs de la Providence to sell the Longue-Pointe property is understandable. They did so in order to finance their charitable works and to defray the tremendous health care costs of their elderly and infirm members, women who have worked all their life without remuneration. The number of sisters requiring medical assistance is growing daily and religious communities take seriously their responsibilities to care for their members. It was a promise made to the novice when she took her vows. In this light, it would have been impractical and unrealistic to transform the Saint-Isidore convent into housing or a museum considering the industrial zoning of the area and the fact that a highway cut the building off from the rest of the quarter. The Port of

Montreal coveted the site. The congregation wanted to get rid of it. Sale of the property presented itself as a pragmatic solution and the convent's landmark status reduced its real-estate value.

Religious communities were accused of having sacrificed, in the 1960s and 1970s, a considerable proportion of their built heritage.<sup>43</sup> Although framed in different terms, we hear similar accusations today. Defenders of religious patrimony worry that the owners of convents and Catholic institutional properties are unaware of the heritage value of their buildings, gardens and woodlots. Sisterhoods know full well how much a property will fetch. Les Soeurs du Bon Pasteur in Quebec City had the Monseigneur Lemay property, formerly the Crèche Saint-Vincent-de-Paul on chemin Sainte-Foy, which they have recently put up for sale, evaluated at ten million dollars.<sup>44</sup> They want to finance the construction of a new infirmary next to their motherhouse with the proceeds. Are citizens-at-large willing to compensate the religious community? Is the city willing to buy them out at what the property is worth? Or do they expect the nuns to simply give away their land?

The public often assumes religious communities are wealthy and confound the properties of religious communities with those of an abstract entity called the Church or the Vatican, arguably one of the largest landowners in the world. Parish churches are communally owned in the sense that parishioners bore the costs of construction financially and sometimes physically contributed to their construction.<sup>45</sup> Their purpose is evidently public in orientation: to assemble the faithful for worship. Convents and other religious-run institutions, however, are a social project of a different order. Religious communities instead depended on government subsidies, the generous donations of private benefactors, and fundraising campaigns to pay for new construction. Because the nuns' institutions were meant to serve the public, people believe society "owns" the buildings and in staking a claim on what is essentially private property, people presume they can dictate to the religious what to do with them.

Contentions over who "owns" Catholic charitable institutions have recurrently plagued religious communities in the province. Historically, communities of women religious battled the media's and society's misperceptions of their purported wealth. Deliberations about what kind and amounts of taxes religious communities should be levied or exempt from recurred regularly in the press. Questions also periodically circulated over whether or not Catholic communities of women were (and are) extraordinarily wealthy, often couched in exclamatory terms: "look at all the property they own!"<sup>46</sup> Such debates

suggest that people take issue with the fact that women can be and were large property holders in a patriarchal society. Other large property holders, such as large private business corporations, are not subject to such questioning.

Battles over Saint-Isidore and other religious properties forced heritage advocates to acknowledge these sites as private property. They had to find other ways of figuratively reappropriating Catholic religious institutional buildings and religious heritage. In 1991 ICOMOS (International Council on Monuments and Sites) Canada organized an education campaign that targeted those responsible for religious heritage, especially among the "owners" of religious properties. This consciousness-raising stemmed from perceived needs to educate religious communities about their heritage (obviously, sisterhoods were not aware of this fact if they were content to sell their holdings to private developers). Such statements could be construed as patronizing. They also assume that religious communities are willing to act as docents and conservators of this heritage.<sup>47</sup> Alternatively, heritage proponents argue that because religious-run Catholic institutions served the public, they should continue to serve collective interests. Arguments such as these "construct" private religious estates as "public property."

Religious communities abandoned a property for external reasons as well. The destruction of the Asile de la Providence in Montreal, cradle of the Sisters of Providence, made way for the construction of the Berri-UQAM subway station. The demolition or reuse of convent properties, perceived as being easier to recycle than churches, lead to the effacement of sisterhoods from the landscape. Whereas ecclesiastical officials wish to maintain the pastoral functions of their churches, religious superiors readily give up their buildings, especially when they can be recycled in ways that are sensitive to the women's spiritual and temporal missions, in ways that continue the good works they accomplished. Religious communities such as Les Servantes du Coeur Immaculé de Marie (s.c.i.m.), commonly known as Les Soeurs du Bon-Pasteur de Québec, are beginning to insist that the recycling of their properties respects their mission or institutional purpose. Consequently, they have started by undertaking feasibility studies before putting a convent or institution on the market in order to find a suitable buyer.<sup>48</sup>

Religious communities operate within economies that are occasionally different than those of other organizations: the temporal and spiritual. They have their own reasons for transmitting religious heritage to future generations that do not always coincide with the agendas of preservationists, heritage advocates, government officials, and citizen groups.

Despite abandoning some of their properties so that others may appropriate them, women religious have found their own ways of leaving their mark on the landscape and in the public's imagination. They are writing their histories as a way of leaving something to posterity. They are also building museums, erecting shrines, restoring chapels and preserving their archives, artworks, and moveable material culture. The success of these initiatives is partially explained by the subsidy programs that are available to them. The political will and sources of funding exist for these types of endeavours, but not necessarily for the rehabilitation and technological updating of their institutional complexes.

Although religious communities had already started making inventories and conserving their material culture much earlier (by 1978, archivists of religious communities had formed their own association, independent from the Quebec Association of Archivists), in 1994 the Pontifical Commission on the Cultural Resources of the Church exhorted religious communities and parish councils to preserve their heritage. The pope's reasoning had little to do with the objectives of the tourist industry or of Quebec identity politics. His wish was to remind

people about the important place faith had occupied in society through the medium of material culture. Everything that testifies and documents all stages of the spiritual life of a people of God was to be conserved.<sup>49</sup>

In addition to preserving some components of their heritage, religious communities have erected sanctuaries in honour of their canonized foundresses and museums in order to explain their history and ministry. The Congrégation de Notre-Dame assembled and sponsored a permanent exhibit at Louisbourg to interpret that religious community's presence at the eighteenth-century fort. While many of these projects are the sisterhoods' own initiative to promulgate their own agendas, the goals and results often parallel the agendas of other organizations: to attract pilgrim-cum-tourists.

Brochures published by religious communities, like those published by regional and provincial tourist offices, emphasize the chapel and or the museum. The bulk of the text of the Sisters of Charity of Quebec brochure — an 8.5" × 14" sheet folded into thirds — either describes the chapel or recounts the life and work of the community's founder, Mother Marcelle Mallet. Only the back



**Fig. 5**  
Front (right) and back (left) cover of the pamphlet welcoming visitors to the Maison Mère-Mallet chapel of Les Soeurs de la Charité de Québec. Although communities of women religious showcase their ministry, particularly the charisma of their foundress, in their museums, they, like other heritage promoters, place great emphasis on sites of worship. (Courtesy Les Soeurs de la Charité de Québec)

page, or one sixth of the pamphlet, enumerates the charitable and apostolate works of the community (Fig. 5). An intercessory prayer is printed on the remaining sixth. Whereas the tiny photograph of the sisters' complex included at bottom of the list of good works the community accomplishes gives an idea of the size of the institution, the larger photograph of the interior of the chapel and the considerable attention given to Mother Mallet better reflect the concerns of the religious community. It also jives with the expectations society has of women vowed to serving God and the poor. The "place" of nuns' mission is located on an imaginary plane. They identify more with their ministry than with the buildings in which that work was housed. This view of their religious heritage coincides with the "experts" in terms of designating what is worth keeping. Chapels deserve greater consideration, even if this comes at the expense of other parts of the building. Yet, the whole building is essential, it gives the chapel context, and amputating the chapel from this larger context undermines full appreciation of the work of the women religious and the site within the city.

Similarly, focussing on particular buildings or specific aspects of a religious community's heritage diminishes a comprehensive understanding of the Catholic landscape. The Centre Marie-de-l'Incarnation brochure claims that the "Church as well as history is richer because of Mother Marie's spiritual and historical writings." Again, while this understatement situates the foundress of the Ursulines as an important historical and theological actor, it detracts from the physical impact the religious order had on the development of Quebec City, and indeed elsewhere on the continent. Neither the private school nor any of the other schools this female religious order established in Louisiana, the American west, and other places in Quebec and the rest of Canada are mentioned in the pamphlet. From reading the brochure describing the chapel and museum of the Augustines de l'Hôpital général de Québec we expect to learn of the community's works through documents and objects, rather than their buildings.

Quebeckers are now claiming their Catholic cultural inheritance. The arguments they invoke for saving the heritage of religious communities as keepsakes for future generations include: convents are beautiful architectural monuments that enrich the urban and rural landscape of the province; they are historical landmarks that recall Quebec history; when recycled they contribute to sustainable development; they serve as an economic mechanism for the revitalization of a village, neighborhood, or city centre; as institutional cores,

they can be marketed to tourists; they represent a French-Canadian (Québécois) and Catholic national identity. Citizens' concerns and relationships to the religious built environment are connected today to larger questions of Quebec's economy and identity, rather than solely based on the pleasure of having a relationship with artifacts of the past. Quebec society views the 4000 houses of worship and religious institutional ensembles waiting to be inventoried in Quebec as a cultural resource to be exploited.<sup>50</sup>

It is precisely because the Catholic Church has lost its capacity to dominate the life of Quebeckers that they are ready to appropriate its monuments.<sup>51</sup> Rather than let the buildings stand as objects of shame, the perennial reminder of a so-called authoritarian paternalism, citizens of the province are trying to recapture the pride of place the buildings once had in their landscapes. Part of this process involves reusing the properties of religious communities in ways that better reflect what Quebec wants to become. It also means deciding what memories of the past are worth conserving and what the best way to preserve them is. We can interpret the contests over the heritage of religious communities, the significant efforts spent in finding new uses for these relics of the past, as a way for people to come to terms with the mixed associations and the ambivalence they have with religious-run institutions. Rather than commit acts of "violence" against the people who administered the buildings, society expresses and manages its collective emotions by converting the buildings, by demolishing them, by repackaging the stories told about them.<sup>52</sup> Heavily criticised in terms of its design, the convent of the Soeurs de l'Immaculée Conception-cum-Université de Montréal Faculty of Planning nonetheless accomplishes two goals. It "saved" a modern specimen of religious heritage while practically evacuating the structure of all references to Catholicism. Relics of this scale cannot be easily stolen or removed to a new context. These acts must take place from within, by stripping away old connotations and by superimposing new meanings on an existing site.

By reinvesting in religious artifacts of the past, by preserving or reusing conventual buildings, Quebeckers can displace their dis-ease with the Catholic Church into something more manageable: "national pride." Their renewed interest in convents and other forms of religious heritage translates into a kind of rebirth, one which allows them to represent a "unique" national identity. In 2001, the Corporation of the Centre d'interprétation de la Côte-de-Beaupré obtained a grant of \$1.24 million from the programme Soutien aux équipements

culturels to restore the *Congrégation de Notre-Dame's* Château-Richer convent. The Centre used a prior award of a \$300 000 grant from the *Programme de revitalisation des vieux quartiers dans le cadre de la mise en valeur du patrimoine bâti* to conduct archaeological digs, develop a plan for the restoration and interpretation of the building, and to seek additional funds.<sup>53</sup> Because the archaeologists discovered important remains on the site, notably the vestiges of seigneurial buildings and older convents representing 350 years of continuous occupation of the site, in other words, evidence that it had existed since the arrival of the first colonists, the Centre could argue for the preservation of the site.<sup>54</sup> Like the provinces' churches, the convent could be woven easily into a nationalist tapestry.<sup>55</sup> The government's preference for the oldest convents, such as those in the Old City of Quebec, gives a skewed rendition of the region's history. Selection and presentation of heritage are wrapped up in storytelling and national-mythmaking. Churches and now convents and Catholic religious institutions have fast become empty containers to be filled with new ideologies and narratives of national identity.

The hurry to save Quebec religious heritage stems not only from the desire to retain those significant components of the landscape that buttress national identity, but also from the urge to commemorate. We might ask whether Quebec society is collectively mourning the passing of a distinct culture, the religious way of life. From this point of view, do not convents and Catholic religious institutions function as a memento, like the photograph of a dear friend or lover that one keeps on one's desk? Consequently, Quebecers seek to keep the buildings in which the nuns worked and lived, where they taught orphans and children, nursed the ill and ailing, and cared for the needy who knocked on their doors. Convents and Catholic institutions in this scenario can be regarded as tombstones or memorials of past institutional lives. Commemoration lies at the heart of these questions. The issues are not just about the preservation of Catholic religious institutional buildings for their own sake, or because it is financially viable, environmentally responsible, economically advantageous, or spiritually uplifting.

The competing agendas and interests make it difficult to arrive at an overall strategy or an agreement over what constitutes an acceptable way of recycling buildings, whether it is to restore to museum quality, or to raze the building and reuse the land for some other function. The ramifications of these decisions must affect the way Quebecers see themselves. Catholic institutional buildings and

the religious communities who ran them are intimately wrapped up in the development of Quebec as a modern state. Many of the arguments raised in debates about the preservation of religious heritage smack of nostalgia. The mourning over this heritage could express for some a backlash against rampant individualism or the disappearance of "community" that the Church consolidated, for better or worse. Yet, while society uses the built environment (especially houses of worship) to tell a story about the importance of the Roman Catholic Church in the province, indeed its dominance over Quebecers, it tends to leave out a considerable portion of the evidence, the buildings of religious communities.

Thirty years ago, laypeople in Quebec turned their backs on the Catholic Church. Rejection of the Church is as powerful a reaction to modernity as is the embrace of religious fundamentalism. It takes time to digest the full implications of such gestures, which in turn inevitably take their toll on the buildings that once enabled now discounted world views. As the graffiti spray-painted in spring 2003 on the base of the Saint-Jean-Baptiste church in Quebec City so well expressed, Quebecers deemed the Church "a temple of servitude." Quebec society cared little about the fate of convents a decade ago. Now, they are bent on saving religious buildings, symbols of their alleged oppressor. We might ask whether Quebec society is collectively mourning the passing of this distinct culture, the religious way of life. Inevitably, today, citizens of Quebec are taking stock of the enormous impact religious communities have had and now that they have taken notice, it is almost too late. I'll wager Quebecers are afraid of forgetting the genuine contributions of religious communities to the development of their society and of their cultural landscapes. They risk losing these women forever and they are already beginning to miss them. I suggest Quebecers have undertaken the preservation of this particular Catholic heritage as a way of making peace with their collective past, of finally dealing with the political and cultural fallout of their divorce with the Church, on their terms.

Buildings are records of the relationships that knit human society. By keeping or reclaiming these records we can proceed to understand the ties between people, and between people and their environment. If buildings remain part of the landscape, they are available for interpretation, and thus we are left with the hope of understanding who built them, for what purpose, under what circumstances, when and why they were modified, among other questions. We can therefore also

unravel why and how these ties between people (the creators, users and modifiers of the built environment) and between people and buildings get broken. In this case, we seek to comprehend the

abandonment, destruction, and reclamation of Catholic institutional buildings, or, in other words, Quebecers' divorce with the Church and why people in Quebec are today mending those breaks.

#### NOTES

1. *The Montreal Gazette*, Saturday, 18 May 1996. See also articles related to this consciousness-raising campaign published Saturday, 13 April 1996 and Saturday, 15 June 1996.
2. Tania Martin, "The Architecture of Charity: Power, Gender, and Religion in North America, 1840-1960" (Ph.D. diss., University of California, Berkeley, 2002).
3. For a detailed history of the controversy, see Canada, Province de Québec, District de Montréal, Cour supérieure, *Requête pour jugement déclaratoire et en nullité (Articles 33 et 453 C.p.c.)* N° 500-05-018103-914, 22 novembre 1991, among other documents conserved in the Saint-Isidore dossier at Heritage Montreal.
4. Anne Vallières and Anne-Marie Dufour, "L'éveil d'une conscience," *Continuité* 83 (hiver 1999-2000): 65; Marc-André Bluteau, "Le couvent de Montmagny," *Continuité* 34 (hiver 1987): 48; "Montmagny récidive," *Continuité* 42 (hiver 1989), 57.
5. "Avis et prises de position du Conseil des monuments et sites du Québec: Bâtiments conventuels," *Continuité* 94 (automne 2002): 64; "Un sursis pour le couvent de la Malbaie," *Continuité* 68 (printemps 1996): 66; Marc-André Bluteau, "Le couvent de la Malbaie," *Continuité* 34 (hiver 1987): 47.
6. Jean Simard, *Le patrimoine religieux au Québec: Exposé de la situation et orientations* (Québec: Publications du Québec [Commission des biens culturels du Québec], 1998), 9, 49.
7. Catherine Croft and Elaine Harwood, "Conservation of Twentieth-Century Buildings: New Rules for the Modern Movement and After?" in *Managing Historic Sites and Buildings: Reconciling Presentation and Preservation*, ed. Gill Chitty and David Baker (London: Routledge, 1999), 160-161, raise this issue in the context of British institutional architecture.
8. Gabrielle K-L Verge, *Pensionnaire chez les Ursulines dans les années 1920-1930: Réminiscences d'un passage heureux* (Sillery: Septentrion, 1998) is an example of recent positive testimonials. She reports happy memories of attending convent school.
9. Site visit, summer 1998.
10. André Brouillette, s.j., "Je ne me souviens pas," *Relations* 672 (novembre 2000), 13.
11. "Le couvent des Soeurs de la Providence de Salaberry-de-Valleyfield," Avis et prises de position du Conseil des monuments et sites du Québec *Continuité* 88 (printemps 2001): 66; "Le monastère bientôt vendu?: Une offre d'achat sur la table," *Le Nouvelliste*, 2 octobre 2002, Actualités, 21; "Le monastère sera démoli: Les Soeurs adoratrices du Précieux-Sang de Nicolet en ont fait la cession," *Le Nouvelliste*, 10 octobre 2002, Actualités, 3; "Les démolisseurs sonnent le glas: Le monastère des Soeurs du Précieux-Sang réduit en poussière," *Le Nouvelliste*, 25 octobre 2002, Actualités, 3.
12. Janko Pavsic "Le destin de ces clochers qui firent une ville," *Mémoires de la Société généalogique canadienne-française* 52, 4 (hiver 2001): 301.
13. "Édifices religieux: Héritage Montréal sonne l'alarme," *La Presse*, 17 février 2003, Montréal Plus, E1.
14. It would be interesting to quantify the number of articles devoted to religious heritage issues published in Quebec newspapers and preservation, architecture, and urban planning magazines and journals since 1960.
15. Simard, *Le patrimoine religieux au Québec*, 9, 11, lists some of these as does *Patrimoine, Bulletin de la Commission des biens culturels du Québec* (hiver 2002). Newspapers regularly publish announcements for conferences on religious heritage, see for example "Nicolet sera l'hôte d'un colloque: Il aura pour thème 'Un patrimoine en partenariat'," *Le Nouvelliste*, 2 mai 2002, Arts et Spectacles, 30.
16. Jocelyn Groulx, "Des fois, un patrimoine," *Continuité* 94 (automne 2002): 54; Simard, *Le patrimoine religieux au Québec*, 9.
17. Conversation with Catherine Lord at the Conseil des monuments et sites du Québec (CMSQ), 29 July and 7 August, 2003.
18. Département de recherche et de développement, Office des congrès et du tourisme du Grand Montréal: (OCTGM) *Étude sur le potentiel touristique du patrimoine religieux montréalais* (Montreal: 1995).
19. "Patrimoine religieux montréalais à découvrir," *Continuité* 86 (automne 2000): 6, invited denizens to discover the city's churches and religious institutions. "Patrimoine religieux," *Continuité* 84 (printemps 2000): 9 announced "Le patrimoine des communautés religieuses du Vieux-Québec," at the Musée de l'Amérique française. Clara Gutsche, *La série des couvents/The Convent Series* (Musée d'art de Joliette, 1998).
20. *Un clocher, un village: Actes du colloque sur l'avenir du patrimoine religieux de Portneuf, 27 mai 2000* (Cap Santé: Comité multisectoriel du patrimoine religieux de Portneuf, MRC de Portneuf, 2000), 19.
21. "Branle-bas de combat à Saint-Césaire," *La Presse*, 3 décembre 2002, Actuel, B7.
22. Simard, *Le patrimoine religieux au Québec*, 11.
23. *Ibid.*, 32.
24. See for example Patri-Arch [Martin Dubois], "Évaluation patrimoniale de la résidence Mgr-Lemay, 1210, chemin Sainte-Foy à Québec" (Ville de Québec, Service de l'aménagement du territoire/Division design, architecture et patrimoine, May 2002) and Paul Trépanier, *Le patrimoine des Augustines du monastère de l'Hôtel-Dieu de Québec: Étude de l'architecture* (Ville de Québec: Division design et patrimoine, Centre de développement économique et urbain, 2001).
25. Hélène Bourque, "Les églises catholiques et anglicanes de Portneuf" in *Un clocher, un village*, 22-29, explains

- these criteria in reference to Louise Pothier, *Guide méthodologique pour la présentation des travaux de recherche en matière de patrimoine*. (Québec, ministère de la Culture et des Communications, Direction du patrimoine, 1992).
26. France Vanlaethem, "Le patrimoine de la modernité," *Continuité* 94 (automne 2002): 33–35; "La valeur n'attend pas le nombre des années," *Continuité* 94 (automne 2002): 36, is one of the vocal proponents for the contributions of religious communities to the development of modernist architecture in Quebec. Press release: "Patrimoine religieux – 21M\$ supplémentaires: La ministre Diane Lemieux lance un inventaire national..." Montréal, le 3 mars 2003 ADDRESS: <http://mcc.quebec.qc.ca/sites/mcc/communiq.nsf/42e18349a0462c5185256b7200747b27/b0ad6ad56709933b85256cde006921a5!OpenDocument> (March, 2003).
  27. Louis-Guy Lemieux, "Sillery: La maison des missionnaires du Sacré-Cœur deviendra une résidence pour retraités," *Le Soleil*, 22 janvier 2003, A13.
  28. Comité consultatif de Montréal sur la protection des Biens culturels, "Avis suite aux audiences publiques relatives au traitement de la demande de la démolition de couvent Saint-Isidore" (Ville de Montréal, 2 mai 1996) and *Répertoire d'architecture traditionnelle sur le territoire de la Communauté urbaine de Montréal: Architecture religieuse II, les couvents* (Communauté urbaine de Montréal (CUM), Service de la planification du territoire, 1984), 102–105.
  29. That an annex to the La Malbaie convent was recycled, even if it had no particular redeeming characteristics, mystified the author of "Un sursis pour le couvent de la Malbaie" *Continuité* 68 (printemps 1996): 66.
  30. Simard, *Le patrimoine religieux au Québec*, 11; n.a., "De l'art au couvent de Saint-Césaire," *Continuité* 95 (Hiver 2002–2003): 57.
  31. The City of Quebec has started inventorying the holdings of religious communities of women in its jurisdiction starting with the first congregations to install themselves.
  32. Alain Côté, *Un patrimoine incontournable: Sélection de 29 biens culturels* (Québec: Commission des biens culturels, 2000), 7.
  33. *Churches in Québec: Sacred Splendours* (Tourisme Québec, 2000).
  34. *Circuit du Patrimoine religieux de Charlevoix/Charlevoix Religious Heritage Trail* (CLD de la MRC de Charlevoix, CLD de la MRC de Charlevoix-Est, Association touristique régionale de Charlevoix, 2003).
  35. Corporation du patrimoine et du tourisme religieux de Québec (map) *Découvrez la richesse de notre patrimoine religieux* (Ville de Québec, 2003).
  36. Jacques Lortie, Québec, *Pierre vivantes: À la découverte du patrimoine religieux du Vieux Québec* (Québec: Corporation du tourisme religieux, 1994). Ministère des affaires culturelles du Québec, *Trésors des communautés religieuses de la ville de Québec* (Québec, 1973) highlighted the artworks of the Ursulines, the Augustines, and the Seminary of Québec.
  37. Bernard Favreau, *Sur les traces de Moïse: La chapelle du Monastère du Précieux Sang décorée par Joseph-Thomas Rousseau, Saint-Hyacinthe* (Québec: Valiquette, 2000).
  38. Tania Martin, "The Mother House of the Grey Nuns: A Building History of the General Hospital," *Journal of the Society for the Study of Architecture in Canada* (*JSSAC*) 24, 2 (1999): 49, argues that the chapel of the Mother House of the Grey Nuns would lose most of its architectural significance if amputated from the rest of the complex. A brief survey of *Continuité* shows that convent chapels receive more attention than the convents themselves. The religious architecture section of the Université Laval slide collection contains mainly churches. The few convent slides depict only chapel interiors.
  39. *Un clocher, un village*, 71.
  40. Tania Martin, "The expression of piety and poverty in North American convents and Catholic institutional buildings," (conference paper, Society for the Study of Architecture in Canada, St John's, Newfoundland, 11–14 June 2003).
  41. From conversations with Sœur Marie-Paule Levaque, s.p., December 1998. Martine Roux, "Urgent: Couvents à recycler," *La Presse*, 28 février 2001, Actuel, B1.
  42. Jean-Paul L'Allier, "Des églises en quête de miracles," *Continuité* 79, special theme issue, "Le patrimoine religieux a-t-il un avenir?" (hiver 1998-1999): 25.
  43. Francine Bordeleau, "Le sens du sacré: Une entrevue avec John Porter," *Continuité* 79, special theme issue, "Le patrimoine religieux a-t-il un avenir?" (hiver 1998-1999): 48.
  44. Robert Garon, "Architecture religieuse du xx<sup>e</sup> siècle à Québec: La Ville doit piloter le changement de vocation des édifices religieux," *Le Soleil* 10 décembre 2002, A17.
  45. Luc Noppen and Lucie K. Morisset, "Le noeud gordien: Réflexions en amont de l'héritage des lieux de culte," *ARQ* (juin 1997): 9, implicitly distinguish between the collective ownership of parish churches and the private ownership of convents.
  46. Louis-Guy Lemieux, "Un trésor de 1 milliard \$," *Le Soleil*, 9 mars 2002, estimates the value of built religious heritage in the new city of Quebec at over one billion dollars. The author also demystifies the taxation of religious communities.
  47. As Sœur Marie-Berthe Bailly, s.c.i.m., explained, the first duty of a religious order is to help others in need, not heritage, in Louis-Guy Lemieux, "L'avenir du patrimoine des communautés est en danger, faute de relève," *Le Soleil*, 9 mars 2002.
  48. Conversation with Sœur Ledet, s.c.i.m., 28 March 2003.
  49. Simard, *Le patrimoine religieux au Québec*, 12.
  50. Groulx, "Des fois, un patrimoine," 54.
  51. Louis-Guy Lemieux, "Les croisés du patrimoine religieux," *Le Soleil*, 9 mars 2002, cites Père François Boissonneault, provincial treasurer of the Fondation du patrimoine religieux du Québec as saying "Our mandate is not to save religion but to save religious heritage" (my translation).
  52. Robert Blair St-George discussed the idea of transferring anger against a person to his property in a talk given at Laval. It was this discussion that inspired my research into this concept as it applies to convents. Robert Blair St-George, "House Attacks in Colonial New England," (guest lecture, séminaire *Objets mobiles*, CÉLAT/Département de l'histoire, Université Laval, 21 février 2003).
  53. <http://mcc.quebec.qc.ca/sites/mcc/Communiq.nsf/8a2fe279dcb2e8cd85256b7200747be/305f942974f17dcc852568d3006afa9!OpenDocument>; [http://www.mcc.gouv.qc.ca/region/03/pamu/realisation\\_bati.htm](http://www.mcc.gouv.qc.ca/region/03/pamu/realisation_bati.htm) (March 25, 2003)

54. Nicholas Roquet and Michel Barry, "Château-Richer: Vies et survies d'un couvent," *Continuité* 93 (été 2002): 49–51.
55. Guy Mercier, "The Useful Ambiguity of Urban Heritage," *JSSAC* 26, no.3, 4 (2001): 42, makes a similar argument, as do Luc Noppen and Lucie K. Morisset, "A propos de paysage culturel: le patrimoine architectural religieux, une offre distinctive au Québec?" *Téoros* 16, 2 (été 1997): 14–20, and Cardinal Jean-Claude Turcotte, "Sauver et conserver notre patrimoine religieux," *L'Église canadienne* 33, 11 (novembre 2000): 311–318, in relation to churches.