

THE POWER OF MEMORY THROUGH OBJECT-METAPHORS: THE WORKS OF
GABRIELLE ROY

by

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DEDICATION

This is dedicated to mother, who is my Eveline; my father, who taught me the power of feeling my memories; and Andrew Ilardi, for whom I will forever carry “une étrange nostalgie,” and with whom I spent beautiful time wandering “dans le monde.”

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ABSTRACT

THE POWER OF MEMORY THROUGH OBJECT-METAPHORS: THE WORKS OF GABRIELLE ROY

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This thesis examines the theme of object-metaphors in the works of Gabrielle Roy, specifically how Roy uses these object-metaphors to trigger the memories of the characters in the texts: *Bonheur d'occasion*, *Rue Deschambault*, and *La Route d'Altamont*. Memory is a recurring and important theme in Roy's works, and throughout the texts, the memories of the characters are stimulated by objects found in daily life. In this thesis, the objects have been classified into the categories of clothing, food, and domestic objects. Upon encountering these objects, both positive and negative memories for the characters Jean Lévesque, Florentine and Rose-Anna Lacasse and Christine are generated. Using primary critics of Gabrielle Roy and drawing on psychoanalytic and memory-based studies, this thesis demonstrates that exposure to these object-metaphors directly impacts the characters' memories as well as their actions.

INTRODUCTION

I “met” Gabrielle Roy (1909-1983) in 2009 when I studied several of her texts in a Québécois literature course. Immediately, I found myself captivated by her stories, her writing style, and her characters with whom I felt I uniquely identified. The first book I read of Roy’s was *La Route d’Altamont* [*The Road Past Altamont*], (first published in 1966.) She wrote so quaintly, told the story so simply yet tenderly, that it felt like she must have taken her characters, especially the mother figure, from my life and not her own. For a moment, early in graduate school, I would have sworn I was the basis for Roy’s character Christine, and not herself! But as I dug deeper, I realized that is the gift of a writer who speaks to every reader, regardless of age, demographic, or socio-economic background. Thus, very early on in my Master’s career, I decided that studying Gabrielle Roy would be the path that I would follow. Part genius, part egoist, part story raconteur and part autobiographer, Gabrielle Roy is one of the best known and most important writers not only of Québécois literature, but also Francophone literature.

In 1947, Roy received France’s Prix Femina for *Bonheur d’occasion* [*The Tin Flute*], (1945.) Throughout her career, she received many literary awards, including a third Governor General’s Award in 1978 for her last novel, *Ces enfants de ma vie* [*Children of My Heart*] (1977). She was the first woman to become a fellow of the Royal Society of Canada (1947) and was made a Companion of the Order of Canada in 1967

(Zeilig). She is considered amongst literary critics to be a pioneer of specifically Canadian/Québécois social realism, and she is widely known for her humane and sensitive representations of the family structure as well as immigrant culture (Parks Canada).

The youngest of a large family, Roy was born in Manitoba on Deschambault Road. Her experiences with her family in her childhood home would profoundly affect her and would be alluded to in many of her works. In 1916, the law mandated that school would be obligatory for children up to the age of fourteen; this in turn “opened up the possibility of education [for] the generation of Manitobans as English-Speaking Canadians” (Chapman 318). As an Anglophone province with French speaking constituents, the Manitoban government mandated a bilingual lifestyle and education: “Roy was a member of Manitoba’s francophone minority, for whom bilingualism was required to survive and succeed in life” (Chapman 318). But, from an early age, the French speaking Roy was very strong in English, possessing the talent of passing between the two languages easily (Chapman 318). With her mother’s urging, she became a teacher. Although she only taught for a few years, her experiences affected her greatly, later inspiring the novel *Ces enfants de ma vie*. After leaving the teaching profession, Roy moved to Europe and studied theatre. When she returned to Canada in 1939, she found work as a freelance journalist in Montreal (Parks Canada).

During her time as a journalist, Roy observed the working class and the conditions in which they lived. She was particularly interested in poverty, social struggle, and the lack of nutrition. Disgusted yet inspired by these deplorable conditions, she

published her first novel *Bonheur d'occasion*, in 1945, which detailed the Francophone workers' struggles in Montreal during the Second World War. With her linguistic talents, "Roy was able to juxtapose French and English thus depicting the power relations of the two colonial languages" (Chapman 318). Her book won France's "Prix Femina," marking the first time a piece of Canadian literature had won this prize (Parks Canada).

After her success with *Bonheur d'occasion*, Roy's works became more personal and nostalgic, as she took inspiration from her youth and her family, including the experiences of the immigrants coming to Canada (Parks Canada), reflecting the experiences of her own family who had immigrated to Manitoba. *Rue Deschambault*, [*Street of Riches*] (1955), named for her childhood house and based upon her youth and her family, as was *La Route d'Altamont. Ces enfants de ma vie*, which was based on her teaching experiences, won Roy even more literary renown as well as further literary prizes. Her official autobiography, *La détresse et l'enchantement*, [*Enchantment and Sorrow*] (1984) was published posthumously and was translated into over fifteen languages, including English, Spanish, and Italian to name just a few. "Roy's bilingual and bicultural upbringing make her not only a French-Canadian or Quebecois author but a Canadian author who wrote in French and had her works translated into English" (Chapman 318).

While Roy passed away in 1984, she is still being lauded to this day. Currently, a monument of more than thirty statues, sculptures, and plaques is being designed and erected by Etienne Gaboury, a retired architect. The different parts of the monument will be built in places mentioned by Roy in her works: Manitoba, France, and even England;

“the first monument, which will be set up at Provencher School, is composed of a sculpture and five stainless steel chairs, portraying Roy as a teacher before a classroom” (Zeilig). Other notable places where the monument’s pieces will be displayed include: Roy’s home, the town of Altamont; Deschambault Road; and St. Boniface cathedral. Each part of the monument will have quotations from her works and will be translated into the two official languages of Canada: “We wanted something artistic and contemporary to pay tribute to a woman who was ahead of her time, says Huguette Le Gall,” president of the Gabrielle Roy Literary Committee (Zeilig). Even today, Roy is venerated and celebrated as one of the most influential writers of the Francophone world.

While Roy addresses numerous topics in her texts, there are certain consistent themes within the writings of Roy: nature, music, food, clothing, objects, the rapport between mother and daughter, and the role of women, to name just a few. Roy was a feminist, before the second wave of feminism. The first wave of feminism formally began in 1848, at the Seneca Falls Convention, where “300 men and women rallied to the cause of equality for women” (Rampton). The first wave of feminism was initially linked largely to temperance and abolitionist movements, although it went on to question the “cult of domesticity” (Rampton). The second wave of feminism spanned the 1960s to the 1990s and began in Atlantic City with protests against the Miss America pageant: “In this phase, sexuality and reproductive rights were dominant issues, and much of the movement's energy was focused on passing the Equal Rights Amendment to the Constitution guaranteeing social equality regardless of sex” (Rampton).

Roy's incorporates the feminist concerns that the first wave espoused in her works: "a number of articles have pointed out the centrality of feminist concerns in Roy's published work, particularly the importance of the mother-daughter relationship" (Green 438). These feminist undertones are consistently present throughout all of these themes, even if they are presented as more of a subtext. Lauded as an author of "realism," Roy is also a "symbolist," as she often uses the tools of symbols and metaphors which illuminate the aforementioned prominent themes: "certain hints encoded in the narrative generate possibilities for allegorical interpretations that go beyond the straightforward" (Bell 622). The beauty of this style of writing is, of course, the interpretive liberty given to the readers.

One narrative style particularly characteristic of Roy is the ambiguity of who is speaking: is it Roy herself as the author? Or is it a fictional narrator? According to the majority of her critics, Roy is an autobiographical writer, although it must be noted that never once does she name herself in her narration. This then poses another question as we read her works: when the narrator remembers, who exactly is remembering? In the texts *Rue Deschambault*, *Ces enfants de ma vie*, and *Route d'Atlamont*, Roy writes in the first person thus implementing "je," thus we cannot distinguish whether the narrator is, in fact, Roy or her character Christine with exactitude:

Comme l'identité entre Gabrielle Roy et Christine, la narratrice, n'est jamais clairement établie dans ces écrits, le fait qu'une femme adulte y raconte son enfance et sa jeunesse en puisant abondamment dans les propres souvenirs de la

romancière suffit à les rattacher à un genre littéraire hybride, dans lequel il est impossible de distinguer clairement ce qui tient du fictionnel. (Le Bras 2)

Le Bras' articulation of a "literary hybrid" is accurate; Roy succeeds in creating texts that blend autobiography with fictional story telling.

When I began my work on Roy, I noticed how she employs symbols in her anecdotes to unlock the memory of Christine, the narrator. In continuing my research, I saw that she used symbols, particularly objects as symbols, to unlock the memories of other characters such as Jean Lévesque and Rose-Anna Lacasse from *Bonheur d'occasion*. I came to the conclusion that memory, and specifically *how* we remember, is one of the most significant themes in Royan literature.

Memory can trick us. To quote Charles Dickens, "I'm not going to tell the story the way it happened, I'm going to tell it the way I remember it" (*Great Expectations* 1) (1860). We remember with subjectivity; perhaps we remember how we felt during a specific time in our lives, perhaps we only remember a small detail of an event, or perhaps we remember the past with more charm than truth. Often, when we remember something from very far back, it is the result of having been exposed to some sort of catalyst, such as an object, that was associated with this specific memory: "The metaphor determines the way people perceive, remember, and analyze information they receive" (Hamburger 383); thus, the significance that we give to these objects renders them much more than merely "objects." In the adult memory, when we give significance to objects of our youth, for example, we are constructing metaphors:

There are two broad categories or classes of metaphor: the personal and the impersonal. Metaphors can be impersonal, conventional, and fixed in their meaning, in which case they are totally unrelated to the history of the individual. We are most interested in the personal, idiosyncratic, that is to say private, meaning of metaphor. (Modell 8)

In the work of Roy, I am interested only in the personal metaphors. Since each metaphor is subjective, when we assign meaning and importance to an object we are creating a way to remember:

Symbolism is a mundane language that transcends into sacred space. Simple objects become imbued with greater power. A piece of wood becomes a symbol of power to be anchored and stand firm. We do have power to transcend into a sacred context and work with greater powers. We are gifted with the ability to broaden our horizon and make anything sacred. (Sullivan 23)

In the works of Roy, we see the very application of this idea in the construction of metaphors from seemingly banal objects: a pink hat, a yellow ribbon, clothing, even maple syrup. These objects not only illuminate the memories of the characters of Christine, Jean Lévesque, and Rose-Anna Lacasse, for example, but they also help the characters to remember the past, and remember their lives.

For my thesis, I will examine these objects found in daily life and the way in which Roy turns them into “object-metaphors.” I have classified the objects into clothing, food, and domestic objects. What is more, I will examine how these objects are metaphors for both positive and negative memories through the texts of *Bonheur*

d'occasion, *Rue Deschambault*, and *Route d'Altamont*. Through the critiques of Susan Kevra, Paula Ruth Gilbert, and Juliette Rogers, as well as various psychoanalysis studies, I will explain how Gabrielle Roy uses metaphors created from objects found in daily life to liberate the memories of her characters.

SYNOPSIS OF TEXTS

Before I begin my analysis, I would like to briefly summarize the texts with which I will be working: *Bonheur d'occasion*, *La Route d'Altamont*, and *Rue Deschambault*:

Bonheur d'occasion takes place in the Saint-Henri neighborhood in Montréal, during the Second World War. For the most part, the story focuses on the Lacasse family, comprised of the parents: Azarius and Rose-Anna, as well as their children: Florentine, Eugene, Philippe, Lucile, Albert, and Daniel, the ailing youngest. Florentine, the eldest, works at the “Quinze-Cents” brasserie as a server, and contributes her earnings to her family although she is enamored with the idea of a more comfortable and affluent life.

At the “Quinze-Cents” restaurant, Florentine meets Jean Lévesque, an arrogant and cold young man who has worked hard, and risen to an elevated social standing. Oxy-moronic-ally, Jean becomes immediately unsympathetically fascinated by Florentine: on one occasion, he invites her to the movies only to intentionally stand her up. On another occasion, he invites her to dinner, purposely choosing a restaurant that will make her feel uncomfortable and inferior. Though Florentine falls in love with Jean, he quickly tires of her and introduces her to a friend of his, Emmanuel Létourneau, a soldier on leave, who immediately falls for Florentine.

In one of the most famous and controversial scenes of this novel, Jean visits Florentine while her parents are away at the “sugaring-off” festival in the countryside. In this scene, Jean’s cruel nature and lack of empathy become evident when he forces himself on Florentine¹, resulting in an unwanted pregnancy for Florentine. After this encounter, Jean will have nothing to do with her, and leaves her alone and carrying his child.

Shrewdly, Florentine quickly decides to pursue a union with Emmanuel, before her pregnancy has a chance to show. She seduces Emmanuel, and does not tell him that she is carrying Jean’s child. Very soon after they marry, Emmanuel receives notice that he is to return to war and he departs, leaving Florentine with money and a myriad of fine outfits, clothes, and accessories. In one of the closing scenes, Florentine acknowledges that while she does not love Emmanuel, she is grateful and appreciates him for what he was able to provide for her; in marrying Florentine, he provides for her financially and, unknowingly, saves her honor.

One of the dueling plot lines follows Rose-Anna and Azarius struggles; their eldest son, Eugene, enlists in the army. Worse, Azarius loses his job, and their youngest son Daniel is very ill. To cheer Rose-Anna, Azarius offers to take the family to the countryside where Rose-Anna and Azarius grew up, to partake in the “sugaring-off” festival of the maple trees. Nostalgic and homesick for where she spent so many pleasant moments in her childhood, Rose-Anna is overcome with excitement to return home. Upon arrival, though, her sister and mother insult her and her memories become tarnished; this is a scene that will be examined further. Young Daniel eventually

succumbs to his illness and passes away, leaving Rose-Anna with the loss of three children - one to war, one to marriage, and one to death.

The novel ends with Emmanuel's departure back to the war. Florentine is left pregnant and alone, Rose-Anna gives birth to yet another child and Azarius enlisting in the army. The novel concludes with an ominous tone: "très bas dans le ciel, des nuées sombre annonçaient l'orage" (Roy 386).

La Route d'Altamont is a collection of four short stories comprised of "Ma grand-mère toute-puissante," "Le vieillard et l'enfant," "Le déménagement," and "La route d'Altamont." For this resume, only "Ma grand-mère toute-puissante" and "Le déménagement" will be summarized, as they are the two short stories that I examine. Each of the four stories is told in the first person, from Christine's point of view; the age at which Christine narrates ranges throughout the course of the text.

Just a small child of six in the first half of "Ma grand-mère toute-puissante," Christine recounts a summer that she spent at her grandmother's. Her grandmother, Mémère, sews Christine a doll, which becomes the focal point of the story. Mémère's impresses Christine so much with her talents and with the creation of the doll, Christine labels her as "toute puissante" and likens her to God. In the second half of the story, Mémère's health has deteriorated and she must come live with Christine and her family. The story eventually ends in the passing of Mémère, and Christine, now eight or so, wrestles with the mortality of the woman she had once considered potentially divine.

"Le déménagement" takes place when Christine is eleven. She has a neighborhood friend, Florence, whose father is a part-time mover and Christine becomes

enamored with the concept of moving. Never having had to move herself, she sees moving as an exciting and glamorous event. She is still quite young as she recounts this story, and naively assumes that if someone moves, the natural conclusion is that they are moving somewhere better than their previous residence.

One day, Florence and her father bring Christine with them on a move. Quickly, Christine sees the sadness involved in this family's move. Florence and her father act disrespectfully toward the belongings of the Smith family, looting through them and scattering them on the lawn. Worse still, Christine learns that the Smith's new home is just as deplorable as the last. The move is not an exotic adventure, it is tragic and depressing. Though jaded and disillusioned by what she witnessed during the move, Christine realizes that her mother had good reason to want an established home for their family.

The story ends with Christine's safe return to her mother, who while initially goes to scold her daughter for running off for the day, immediately sees the sadness and loss of idealism in Christine and embraces her daughter instead, and starts to "chantonner une sorte de chanson plaintive" (Roy 113).

Rue Deschambault features the same characters as *La Route d'Altamont* and Christine narrates these stories as well. The stories that I will examine from this text are "Mon chapeau rose," "Ma coqueluche," "Un bout de ruban jaune," and "Les bijoux."ⁱⁱ

In "Mon chapeau rose," Christine recounts when she had jaundice. To make her feel better, her mother buys her a pink hat. She then sends Christine to spend time with her aunt to heal from her illness. She becomes much attached to her hat while visiting her

aunt and cousins, and humorously refuses to be separated from her hat at all costs. “Ma coqueluche” also takes place during a period of illness; one summer Christine has a “whooping cough” and must remain secluded from all of the other children. To lift her spirits, her father buys her a hammock and a wind chime, which delight Christine. She spends the summer relaxing and healing in her hammock, listening to the wind chime, and recounts this story using those items as the focal point of the story.

In “Un bout de ruban jaune,” Christine (slightly older than in “Mon chapeau rose”) develops an irrational infatuation with her sister Odette’s yellow ribbon. Christine idolizes her 20 year old sister, who is always at the cutting-edge of fashion and friends. The story has comedic tone as Christine recalls all the occasions and attempts at getting Odette’s ribbon. In the second half of the story, Odette leaves to become a nun, and Christine laments all the time she spent plotting the acquisition of the ribbon, time that could have been spent with her sister. In the end, Odette leaves the ribbon to Christine, who remembers that shortly after finally obtaining the ribbon it was lost.

One day, a slightly older Christine sees a finely accessorized woman and thinks how powerful and confident she looks. Christine becomes obsessed with “Les bijoux,” the namesake of this story. She cannot seem to have enough jewelry and perfumes until one day, her older brother mockingly offers her a dollar so that she can buy more. Their mother intervenes and lectures Robert for not only teasing his sister, but also for perpetuating the unfair standard and stereotype to which men hold women. Christine takes her mother’s reprimand to heart, and throws away all of jewelry and perfumes stating that she would rather have “l’égalité sur terre” (212).

Roy's prevalent themes, which I mentioned in the introduction, exist in all of these texts. Also present in these texts is a recurring focus on objects, and in each of the texts, the objects are a pivotal device for the memories of the characters. As I stated previously, I will show how these objects catalyze the memories of the characters in these texts, and how these objects become powerful metaphors for the characters' respective pasts.

CHAPTER I: CLOTHING

Florentine and Jean

In the novel, *Bonheur d'occasion*, much emphasis is placed on clothing. Albeit poor and uncultured, the character Florentine Lacasse believes that a better wardrobe could improve her image in the eyes of others; she adheres to the notion that if she wears more “correct” garments, her outwardly impoverished appearance can be erased. When Jean Lévesque invites her to dinner in town, she mentally exhibits consternation for not being better dressed: “N’était-ce vraiment pas navrant, pensait-elle, d’aller en ville dans sa pauvre petite robe de travail et sans aucun bijou?” (Roy 79). We see the importance that Florentine puts on her clothes; she sees herself as poor and realizes with dismay that her clothes will reflect her social class in town: “as she moves through the landscape of commercial temptation, Florentine must cope with the limits of her buying power, as well as the limited power of clothing to genuinely improve her lot” (Kevra). In the following passage, Florentine struggles with the knowledge that she lacks the means to buy more elegant clothes and that her poverty and social class are thus reflected:

Cela valait vraiment la peine d’aller en ville et d’être mise dans sa plus vilaine robe, avec, en plus, un bas qui avait filé. Chez elle, dans un tiroir de la commode, elle avait une belle paire de fins chiffons. Tout ce qu’il y avait de plus fin. Ç’avait été une folie d’acheter ce bas, qu’elle avait payés deux dollars, mais aussi ils

étaient de la plus jolie soie et d'une couleur qui semblait celle même de sa chair pâle. (Roy 80)

As she worries about her appearance, she remembers the clothes she has at home, wishing that she were wearing them now: “Florentine believes that through her body and her choice of clothing she is able to turn situations to her advantage” (Kevra). If only she were wearing her prettier clothes, the situation with Jean would be much more advantageous, again highlighting the importance that Florentine places on her clothes and appearance, as well as her insecurities. As she remembers the shoes she has at home, she becomes more convinced that they would be more appropriate for a night spent in town. She is completely dissatisfied with her appearance, and the moment is made worse when Jean mocks her with a profound sarcasm: “Si tu baissais un peu ta jupe ou si tu décroisais les jambes, l'échelle ne se verrait pas, dit-il tout bas en se penchant à son oreille” (Roy 80). In this cruel statement of mockery, “[Jean] stages a scene which amounts to a conflation of voyeurism and exhibitionism, drawing attention to Florentine’s body in the very public space of the tramway car” (Kevra). The reader realizes that Jean, too, is paying attention to Florentine’s clothing and ridicules her for it, which of course further encourages Florentine’s insecurities in this regards: “Not only does she believe that her wardrobe influences others’ perception of her, but what she wears also affects her own feelings of self-worth” (Kevra). Thus, when Jean reveals his attention to her wardrobe, and implicitly her poverty, Florentine’s insecurities become more intense.

However, when she arrives at the restaurant, “elle se sentait immensément flattée, elle en oubliait déjà sa pauvre petite robe de laine et l'échelle qui descendait au long de

son bas. Son regard se tournait, grisé, vers Jean” (Roy 81). For a brief moment, Florentine forgets her poverty. She is momentarily captivated by the opulence of the restaurant and is distracted from her clothing. Unfortunately, Jean is not. Perhaps he knew it all along, but it is here that Jean recognizes Florentine’s economic situation as he stares at her hands and her finger nails, and now it is Jean who is distracted by Florentine’s appearance and the way in which she stands out in this restaurant:

Jean ne voyait que le haut de sa figure et, ressortant sur le carton blanc, ses ongles où le vernis se fendillait et se détachait par plaques. Au petit doigt, il n’y avait presque plus de laque, et cet ongle nu, blanc, à côté d’un doigt teinté de carmin, le fascinait. Il ne pouvait en détacher son regard. Et si longtemps, si longtemps par la suite, il devait, en pensant à Florentine, revoir cet ongle blanc, cet ongle du petit doigt, toujours il devait se rappeler ce petit ongle mis à nu, marqué de rainures et de taches blanches; un ongle d’anémique. (Roy 82)

While nail polish is not an item of clothing in the traditional sense, it is something worn on the body and falls under the category of make-up. The nail polish is a symbol of Jean’s superficiality; to him, Florentine in her entirety can be summed up in this sad, bare nail. Roy also alludes to the theme of nutrition in referring to the nail as “anemic.” In examining her nail, we have a glimpse into the state of Florentine’s nutrition as well as her link to poverty by way of her clothes. Despite having lingered on Florentine’s nail, it is not until later that the reader sees that Florentine’s nail and nail polish are catalysts of Jean’s memory. The image of Florentine’s chipped nails and un-manicured hands stays with Jean and leaves the reader with sadness and a sense of dread. As we leave the scene

in the restaurant we wonder about the focus on Florentine's nails and in what way that image will return. Roy uses this scene to foreshadow: "as powerful as a 'chant impérisable,' one's memory is generally a deep and intimate secret, locked in one's mind, often seemingly lost in 'les mystérieux abîmes du souvenir,' but then suddenly, instinctively, and involuntarily activated" (Gilbert 234).

We leave the restaurant to discuss the scene in which Florentine accepts an invitation to Emmanuel's party. She accepts, hoping to see Jean again, this time dressing herself in her best dress:

Elle était bien résolue à ne pas manquer cette fête, elle y était fortement résolue, car Jean viendrait plus tard sans doute, et il ne fallait pas perdre cette chance de le revoir. Elle avait tout de même sa plus jolie robe, que Jean n'avait point vue, et ce serait trop triste vraiment de revenir à la maison quand elle portait sa robe de soie, et que son cœur bruissait en rumeur de fête et d'animation, son cœur comme sa robe tout porté à plaire. (Roy 126)

We see a paradigm of Kevra's statement about the advantages of finer clothing as Florentine arrives at the party, certain that she will make a better impression this time as a result of her nicer dress: "her intrinsic value is affected by her style of dress and adornment" (de Beauvoir 574). Florentine arrives at the party with a newly found confidence, but suddenly is overcome with shame when a woman asks her:

« Où as-tu acheté ta robe ? » demandait-elle. L'intention n'était sans doute pas malveillante, mais Florentine crut y déceler un parti pris de hauteur. Et pendant qu'elle hésitait à répondre, voici qu'elle revit soudain sa mère occupée à lui tailler

la robe, un soir d'hiver, l'étoffe étalée sur la table de la salle, la belle soie noire, souple, bruissante, et Rose-Anna, hésitante, le souffle court, toute tendue pour donner le premier coup de ciseaux - et le vent au dehors qui sifflait aux petites fenêtres givrées ! Oh, qu'elle lui avait paru belle, l'étoffe ce soir-là, et qu'elle se rappelait bien le premier essayage quand, vêtue d'une ébauche de robe, sans manches, elle s'était penchée devant la glace du buffet, puis était montée sur une chaise pour la voir ainsi en entier, d'abord le corsage, ensuite la jupe. (Roy 138)

Resulting from this brief encounter, Florentine has a flood of memories: how her mother sewed the dress for her; the weather outside that night; and how she had felt so proud of her mother's beautiful handiwork. But the memories turn sour as Florentine realizes the shame in having a dress sewn by hand:

The [woman's] question provokes a kind of Proustian flashback: the sound of her mother's sewing and the snipping of the scissors resurface in her memory like a sad song she'd rather not remember. An innocent question, small-talk exchanged between two young women at a party, elicits a feeling of deep insecurity and the shameful realization that she doesn't really belong. (Kevra)

Florentine lies, saying that she does not remember where she had acquired the dress, showing us again the power of clothing in this passage, since it is the clothes that are generating the actions, memory, and deception of Florentine. In thinking about the dress, the reader also experiences Florentine's Proustian flashback and experiences the power of the clothes as well as the power of a lapsed memory, which seems innocuous, but becomes Florentine's all-encompassing focus.

Jean never comes to the party; however, he does pay Florentine a visit a few days later, prompting her, once again, to put on her poor silk dress, in the hopes of impressing him:

Des bijoux de couleur vive sautaient à son cou et à ses bras, s'entrechoquant et semblaient exprimer sa volonté nerveuse ; mais sur sa robe de soie noire, un petit tablier de caoutchouc glissait à ses hanches à chaque mouvement de son corps, avec un bruit doux et continu. (Roy 203)

Not only does Florentine put on her best dress, she also over-accessorizes, sadly making her outfit inappropriate for such a visit. We return for a moment to the scene in the restaurant when Florentine's every effort annoyed Jean, and this time, her effort and her clothes inspire a rage within him: "One of the important ways in which [people] distinguish and translate the world is through explanatory metaphors, which contain patterns of intention, values, and meaning. In this way, the organization [of memory] is given meaning by its members" (Smircich 384). Since we have established the subjectivity of memory, we can also see the misunderstanding here between Jean and Florentine. When Florentine dresses herself in her finest clothes and accessories, it is with the intention of pleasing and impressing Jean; however, he interprets her gestures as naive and infantile. Thus, the intention is misunderstood by Jean, and he creates his own negative metaphors concerning Florentine's efforts. And, as Roy foreshadowed in the restaurant scene: "this power of memory [is] involuntarily activated by chance and by exterior circumstances" (Gilbert 236). Florentine's clothes and gestures are

misunderstood, and they unleash Jean's memory. He then becomes cruel and violent towards her.

Suddenly, Jean can no longer tolerate Florentine: "l'odeur de la pauvreté, cette odeur implacable des vêtements pauvres, cette pauvreté qu'on reconnaît les yeux clos" (Roy 209). Jean can no longer resist his memories, as images of his childhood as an impoverished orphan return to him; he can no longer escape remembering everything he has worked to forget: "odors, in particular those of poverty, fish, and flowers, inspire these imagined return trips to the past" (Gilbert 237). Jean finds himself completely susceptible to his memories and back in a tragic and harsh past. He appears unable to control himself and forces himself on Florentine in an act of defiance against what she represents.

Later, in reflecting on the day's events, Jean comes to the realization that "l'image de Florentine pourrait mourir dans son souvenir, l'image de sa jeunesse pourrait se perdre, mais jamais il n'oublierait l'affreuse pauvreté qui avait entouré leur instant d'amour" (Roy 212). Florentine's association with her clothing is the apex of the poverty in which Jean formerly lived, and ultimately could not forget: "even more complexly, an older memory can be resuscitated by another, more recent remembrance" (Gilbert 235). The manner in which Jean interprets and reacts to Florentine's appearance and advances shows that these metaphors are personal and unique to him, and not just a vague metaphor for generalized poverty; her clothes are a metaphor for Jean's past. We see, too, the way in which metaphor and metaphor creation are subjective occurrences since the best efforts of Florentine to impress and please are misinterpreted by Jean.

Rose-Anna

Florentine's mother, Rose-Anna, places similar importance on clothing. When Rose-Anna learns that she has the opportunity to visit her childhood home in the country during the maple syrup harvest, she immediately remembers her happy childhood when: "les enfants aux tuques rouges, jaunes, vertes, sautaient comme des lapins" (Roy 173). She remembers her youth in the country, and it is the colors of the hats that she remembers most vividly. For Rose-Anna, her childhood appears lovely as she remembers her brothers and sisters running about in their brightly colored hats, and she wants to recreate the same feeling by sewing new clothes for her own children: "one of the most intriguing aspects of memory can be found in what the mind chooses to recall from the past. At times, it is only a seemingly unimportant detail that is remembered" (Gilbert 237). The details of the caps evoke nostalgia for the past that is so strong that Rose-Anna wants to recreate it.

In the scene where Rose-Anna decides to sew new clothes for the trip to the country, we see the significance she puts on these clothes: "Tu vas acheter," dit-elle, 'deux verges de serge bleue, trois paires de bas de coton, une chemise pour Philippe si t'en vois une, non, quatre paires de bas de coton et une paire de chaussures pour Daniel'" (Roy 179). Her children are so elated by the idea of new clothes that they playfully tease their mother, encouraging her to sew herself something as well; not only are clothes important to Rose-Anna, but to the entire family!

And so, "les épaules affaissées, le dos arrondi, les paupières lasses, Rose-Anna cousait pour la fête, en se privant même de chanter pour ne pas effrayer sa joie" (Roy

182). Because of their poverty, new clothes are a special rarity for the Lacasse family. Humbly, the children request the simplest of clothes: a tie for Albert; a dress for Lucile; and shoes for Daniel, the ailing youngest. Clothes that might be considered “rights” to others are “privileges” to the Lacasse children. We see also that despite the frail health of Daniel, Rose-Anna clings to the belief that new clothes can cure her son. She appears to have the imprudent belief that new clothes can correct the life of the entire family. The way in which Rose-Anna must produce the new clothes before their trip to the country connotes a type of superstition, as though clothes could counteract their working class life in Montreal.

When the Lacasses arrive in the country, Rose-Anna is welcomed by an insult regarding the weight she has gained since she left: “elle s’était corsetée tant qu’elle avait pu et elle avait espéré que sa grossesse passerait inaperçue” (Roy 195). The insult comes as an ironic surprise, since she had tried so hard to appear young and well-off. In corseting herself, she continues placing importance on clothing as she tries to recreate her past-self: “the metaphor also determines the way people perceive, remember and analyze information they receive. However, any single metaphor limits people’s perceptions by blocking and distorting information encountered” (Hamburger 383). We revisit the theory of subjective memory as we see through Rose-Anna the ability to distort memory; that is to say, we are predisposed over time to romanticize the past as opposed to remembering the event the way it actually happened. Rose-Anna tricks herself into believing that she resembles the Rose-Anna of her youth, but her memory of her youth is distorted by time: “Elle avait compris soudain combien sa joie était une chose frêle et vite menacée” (Roy

195). Rose-Anna begins to realize that her best efforts of making new clothes, and appearing more elegant are not working: “Metaphors are like filters that emphasize some elements of reality and screen out others” (Black). Rose-Anna suffers not only from a subjective memory, but also a selective one, and suddenly, she is unsure if she is remembering an accurate past, or a glamorized one.

Similarly, Rose-Anna’s joy disappears completely when she sees her family and is instantly criticized by her sister:

Cette fois, Rose-Anna se sentit prise de colère. Réséda parlait par dépit, bien sûr, elle qui habillait si mal ses enfants. C’est qu’ils avaient l’air fagotés, avec leurs gros bas de laine du pays. Rose-Anna appela la petite Gisèle pour refaire la grosse boucle dans ses cheveux et remonter sa robe au-dessus des genoux ainsi que le voulait la mode. Mais, alors qu’elle mettait une main hâtive à la toilette de ses enfants, ses yeux tombèrent sur le groupe que formaient Daniel et l’aîné de Réséda, le gros Gilbert, joufflu et rosé. (Roy 195)

Rose-Anna had tried her hardest to dress and present her children well, but all the same, they appear thin and poorly dressed. Rose-Anna’s memories of her childhood in the country become a cruel mockery, a lie. In her mind, it is impossible to understand how her memories had once appeared so beautiful and as she looks at her children in their new “à la mode” clothes, her once charming memory sours.

Rose-Anna’s descent into bitterness brings us back to the theory that we create our own realities through our subjective memories. Rose-Anna remembers a happy and plentiful past in the countryside; however, when she returns, she is faced with her

indigent and unattractive present. Similar to the case of Jean and Florentine, clothes are a metaphor for poverty, a poverty from which none of the characters can delude themselves.

Christine

In 2007, in Chesapeake, Virginia, there was an exhibition of antiques and art put on by the residents of the Chesapeake Bay area. The residents amalgamated their belongings for this exhibit honoring their ancestors, their pasts, and their family legacies: “and that’s what this was, a collection of cherished items- things that conjured up memories of lives spent in faraway places, items with a provenance that lead along a branch of someone’s family tree. In this regard, the exhibit offered a look at objects that are priceless” and in viewing the exhibit, those in attendance were struck by the happy nostalgia that had been collected in one place (Stefansky).. In the novel, *Bonheur d’occasion*, we experience how object-metaphors inspire despair and sad memories. We also experience the way in which memories can become corrupt, seen through the object which inspire the memories. However, the collection of short stories, *Rue Deschambault*, exemplifies the Chesapeake art exhibit. When Christine, the narrator, speaks of her childhood, she remembers it through specific garments that punctuate the stories like objects in an art exhibition. And in the case of Christine, while the objects themselves are important, the way in which they were acquired. and what they represent, is what gives them their significance. The image that the object conjures up holds the most importance.

Le chapeau rose

Christine, the narrator of *Rue Deschambault*, recounts the partially autobiographical stories of Roy in this text. While Christine is an adult when she tells the stories, she takes on the persona of her childhood self throughout the vignettes. She frequently speaks of the objects of her desire that influenced her throughout her childhood, and she details her thoughts and emotions during these periods of time. As she remembers these objects, often the details of the objects escape her memory, but in each instant, there is a reason why Christine is so attached to the object. As the stories culminate, we see that according to Christine, and by extension Roy, the childhood objects are the manner in which we remember our lives and the way in which we mentally treat the past. We see that these objects are not only materials, but metaphors for life experiences and lessons learned.

Through Christine, Roy begins organizing her emotions and memories through her objects, beginning at quite a young age. We first see this when Christine develops jaundice; to cheer her, her mother buys her a pink hat. While her mother encourages her to choose a more flattering color, Christine is insistent on the pink hat, and eventually her mother concedes. Christine describes the hat as “rose bonbon” (Roy 43), but she does not describe the hat any further. What she does convey is that she is never without her hat during the trip to her aunt’s house, a trip without her family meant to rehabilitate her from her illness. She describes her arrival at her aunt’s house, going directly to the table for dinner, “avec mon chapeau sur la tête” (43), not taking a moment to remove her hat. Later, as she prepares for bed, “ma tante, pensant peut-être que quelqu’un en se levant la

nuit pourrait marcher sur mon chapeau, le prit à mes côtés pour le déposer sur une commode” and so, without her hat “je me mis à me lamenter doucement” (44).

At first analysis, Christine is exceedingly attached to her hat. However, in a moment of adult reflection, she explains her distress stating “ce n’était pas uniquement parce que ma tante m’avait ôté mon chapeau. Tout à coup, je m’étais sentie triste d’être si loin de chez nous, chez ma tante que je ne connaissais pas beaucoup, et, de plus, couchée sur un matelas par terre” (44). When Christine admits her lamentation, she (as well as the reader) realizes that it is not necessarily the absence of her hat that saddens her, but she misses her mother, her own home, and her family. The pink hat is no longer only a pink hat, but a metaphor for family and security. It is only in wearing the pink hat that Christine feels comfortable in her aunt’s home:

Ritual and ceremony remind us that the story is really multidimensional and that the richness of the experience of living happens amidst a tapestry of flavors, textures, sounds, sights and waves of energy. To be able to see and experience the many dimensions and frequencies that surround us and flow through us is food for the spirit and soul. (Brittany 22)

We know that the memory of the adult Christine is biased, and that she is not remembering the event of her aunt’s house with accuracy: she is remembering how she felt during that time and how her hat made her feel. The pink hat is the first item of clothing that she puts on in the morning and the last item of clothing she removes in the evening. When she describes playing on the swing set, she describes the scene around her, using her hat as the lens through which she sees the world: “quand j’étais en l’air, je

voyais loin sous le bord de mon chapeau rose” (Roy 44); her hat is the frame through which she perceives the world. The pink hat is the context in which Christine, the adult, remembers this moment in her life where she is conscious of missing her family. “We [psychoanalysts] believe that young children organize their bodily sensations and feelings into conceptual and perceptual metaphors” (Modell 9). Thus, in reflecting on this memory, triggered by the pink hat, Christine recognizes her appreciation of her family, and the reader recognizes the metaphor of the pink hat.

Le ruban jaune

What we saw in the case of the “chapeau rose” is an exchange between the physical object of the pink hat and Christine’s mind. Christine relies on the pink hat to tell the story, and thus her memory of this time spent at her aunt’s house is generated:

Metaphor can be thought of as the currency of the emotional mind. It is now generally accepted that metaphor is fundamentally embodied and is not simply a figure of speech. We now know that metaphor is the expression of a yet to be determined neurophysiological process that has been secondarily co-opted by language. (Modell 6)

While Modell does not expressly say so, I propose to elaborate and suggest that there is an exchange between our memories and reality, and the currency of this exchange is metaphor. Similar to the “chapeau rose,” Roy shows this analogy of human memory as *Rue Deschambault* shifts vignettes to Christine’s memory of her sister Odette’s yellow ribbon. Odette, older than Christine, is idolized by her younger sister as being “à la mode” in her fashion, makeup, and accessories. At the beginning of the story, Christine

reflects on all of Odette's belongings that she coveted: "[p]eut-être admirais-je trop Odette pour l'aimer vraiment" (Roy 62). Of course it is the adult Christine who is so poignantly reflecting on her competitive nature with her sister.

From her toilette to her friends, Christine remembers an exhaustive list of items that she lusted after, finishing her list mentioning Odette's yellow ribbon: "[s]ur le coup, je désirai ce ruban jaune avec une telle force que je ne me rappelle pas avoir jamais ensuite tenu autant à aucun autre objet" (Roy 62). In her mind's eye, this ribbon has an enormous importance since of all the objects she covets; the yellow ribbon remains the most clear and the most exotic to the young Christine. She even reflects on the illogical nature of this desire:

Mais pourquoi ? Pour le mettre dans les cheveux de ma poupée? Ou dans les miens que j'avais fort embroussaillés et qu'ainsi j'espérais peut-être embellir? Ou seulement pour le mettre au cou de mon gros chat gris, lequel dormait tout le jour sous les groseilliers? Je ne sais plus, je n'ai souvenir que d'un passionné désir de ce bout de ruban jaune. (Roy 62)

As an adult looking back, Christine is not even sure what to do with the ribbon, should she ever possess it. It is unclear at the beginning of the story in what way the metaphor of the yellow ribbon will manifest. Upon first and even second examination, I thought perhaps it was tied to the way that Christine wanted to emulate her sister, suggesting that the yellow ribbon might represent the transition to adulthood. However, we learn that Odette is becoming a nun and is preparing for her departure to the convent. Seemingly unrelated at first, the ribbon and Odette's departure are linked.

Leading up to Odette's departure, Christine reflects upon her lack of appreciation for family events, as she spends most of her time plotting the acquisition of her sister's ribbon: "memories are, of course, remembrance of the past and, in the Royan world, usually of a past, happy childhood or young childhood" (Gilbert 235), and in spending so much time trying to get the ribbon, Christine (the adult) acknowledges that she lost those last childhood moments that could have been spent with her sister. When Odette finally leaves for the convent, she leaves her yellow ribbon to Christine; however: "après cela, ce qu'est devenu le petit ruban jaune, je ne me souviens plus" (Roy 68). After all the time spent coveting the ribbon, it is ultimately lost, suggesting that the ribbon does not represent adulthood as I had previously suspected. Instead, the ribbon is a metaphor for loss. As the family loses Odette to the convent, the ribbon is lost as well. The ribbon is the metaphor that inspires Christine, as an adult, to remember and reflect on the loss of her sister to the religious life; the loss of the ribbon parallels the loss of Odette.

Les bijoux

As an adolescent, instead of a pink hat or a yellow ribbon, the objects that catch Christine's eye are jewelry: "Pendants le temps que cette passion m'a tenue, jamais je n'en eus assez pour me satisfaire; j'étais trop avide de tout ce qui brillait" (Roy 209). Even though she is older, she is still distracted by objects of interest. One day, Christine sees a woman to whom she is immediately drawn, remembering:

Elle devait avoir le double de mon âge, peut-être même beaucoup plus, des paupières bleuies, de lourds cheveux noirs dans lesquels était piqué un peigne espagnol, des sourcils refaits, un visage insensible ; et aussi, sur son visage,

quelque chose de savant, d'invulnérable, comme si la vie ne pouvait plus lui faire du mal : quelque chose en tout cas qui me tenta fort. (Roy 210)

This woman is exotic to Christine as she appears confident, sexy and powerful- as Christine says "invulnérable." In the same way that Christine wanted to emulate her sister as a little girl, as an adolescent, she wants to emulate this woman; the woman's apparent confidence remains with Christine, and the jewelry appears to be a metaphor for self-assuredness. It is Christine's mother, however, who reveals the true metaphor of the jewelry when she lectures Robert, Christine's older brother, stating:

Celle qui se joue de vous, celle qui se prépare à mille jeux durs et impitoyables, oui, c'est celle-là que vous encouragez. Au fond, il n'y a pas d'égalité entre les hommes et les femmes. Les belles vertus : la loyauté, la franchise, la droiture, l'admirable simplicité, vous les revendiquez pour vous, alors que vous prizez les femmes pour leurs détours, leurs caprices. C'est très mal, d'abord pour vous-mêmes qui êtes les premiers à en souffrir, et pour les femmes que vous vous plaisez, on dirait, à maintenir dans un état d'enfance rusée. Oh! Quand donc les mêmes qualités seront-elles bonnes pour tous! (Roy 212)

Here, Roy reveals her quasi- feminist inclination as Christine's mother reprimands Robert for giving Christine a dollar to encourage her jewelry-centric caprices. Not only does Robert mock Christine by doing this, but women in general. I suggest that, as her mother explains the injustices faced by women and the inequalities between the sexes, Roy alludes to the "cult of domesticity" that I mentioned earlier. Seeing her mother challenge this convention of the sexes, Christine comes to the realization that the woman she had

idolized was neither confident nor powerful. Instead, she is a woman who has succumbed to the stereotypical path of women, presenting herself elegantly to please men through superficial means. And so, ironically, the jewelry is not a stereotype for confidence or self-assuredness, but for inequality and stereotypes.

As Christine processes this new lesson from her mother, she decides she does not want to be a slave to her whims, “cette sauvage, cette enfant, cette esclave” (Roy 212), and in a volatile gesture truly demonstrating her tender and impressionable age, she throws away all of her jewelry and perfumes stating dramatically “[t]out à coup, oui, je veux l’égalité sur terre” (Roy 213), a naive and juvenile statement, to be sure. Gilbert states that “the travels of a creative mind can be more grandiose than those of reality” (234). And we see that, similar to the case of Rose-Anna’s dreaming of her past in the countryside, the adolescent Christine appears to have romanticized the state of adulthood until her mother explains the harsher reality of injustice faced by women.

Christine is perhaps too young and naive to thoroughly understand the weight of the concept of “l’égalité sur terre,” but all the same, jewelry becomes a metaphor for her mother’s subtle battle against injustice, especially that between the sexes. In a gently comedic conclusion, Christine vows that she will depart for Africa to cure the lepers of their illness. This subtle touch not only humorously shows Christine’s guilelessness and tender age, but also blends the point of view of the story that has been told: the story concludes without clear definition of exactly from what age, or from whose point of view, the story has been told.

In each text, Roy implements metaphors as the primary way in which the characters remember: “[i]n using metaphors, it is not only their content that is important, but also the process of inquiry and interaction that are engendered” (Hamburger 398). The process of acquiring the metaphor is more important than the metaphor itself, since it is the acquisition that results in the memory and gives it its depth. Roy shows this through Jean, Rose-Anna, and Christine and how their connection with clothing and garments provokes their memories.

The process of metaphor creating and storytelling is not exclusive to the literary world; artist Joseph Cornell creates “memory boxes” for exhibition, similar to that of the Chesapeake Bay Antique Exhibition. Cornell takes items from his past and amalgamates them into arrangements to tell a story. “From his repository of old objects came combinations that recalled old memories” (Vroon). Like Cornell’s memory boxes, the clothes in *Bonheur d’occasion* and *Rue Deschambault* are a way of recounting a story, and they are their own form of art due to the image they conjure up, be they positive or negative.

Through the intimate connection of the characters and their clothes, we also see the personal and subjective nature of memory. In the case of Rose-Anna, we can go so far as to say that she has a selective memory since she remembers a past much more grand than reality. To Jean, the past is tragic yet inescapable once unearthed, while his counterpart Florentine feels shame and embarrassment as she remembers how her clothes were obtained. And for Christine, the past practically does not exist outside of the context of the objects that she loved so much. According to one patron of Cornell’s exhibition,

“these dancing figures look human, of whatever you want them to be” (Vroon)
emphasizing, yet again, that truth lies in our memories; we are the sum of the experiences
represented by the metaphors we create.

CHAPTER II: FOOD

Florentine et Jean

Along with music and nature, food is a well-studied theme in Roy's literature. Upon reading, it was not surprising that food was a category of objects-made-metaphor, particularly in *Bonheur d'occasion* and *La Route d'Altamont*. While food as an object is treated quite differently in both novels, it is present and prevalent in both. From the very first page of *Bonheur d'occasion*, food is foreshadowed with negativity as Roy describes the scene at the Quinze Cents restaurant with: "l'odeur violente du caramel" (Roy, *Bonheur d'occasion* 1). This is a very specific description of caramel yet it is oxymoronic to associate violence with a sweet candy and immediately, the reader associates a feeling of repulsion with the image of sweets. "Sweetness is often directly connected to unpleasant and even unhappy sentiments" (Rogers 13). Very early in the novel, the reader is predisposed to a feeling of disdain, as Roy describes Florentine's job at the Quinze Cents and her revulsion toward her coworker Marguerite. Florentine believes Marguerite is a simpleton because she enjoys making sundaes all day, which repulses Florentine and even sickens her (Rogers 13). The irony about Florentine's revulsion to food is pointed out by Rogers: "Florentine is underweight, yet she is surrounded by food all day and is completely disgusted by it," and it is a stark contrast to everyone else in the novel who is perpetually hungry, especially her own family members (15).

The association of negativity to sweetness is shown, too, through the subtle symbolism of the movie, entitled *Bitter Sweet*, which Florentine agrees to go see with Jean. Here we see “another reference that attaches a negative quality (“bitter”) to sweetness” (Rogers 13). In these first few chapters of *Bonheur d’occasion*, Roy develops a sense of foreboding in the way that she presents food, particularly sweet foods.

If we return to the scene where Jean visits Florentine at her home, we see that, as with her clothing, food triggers Jean’s memory as well, and ultimately fuels his rage. We revisit the idea of misunderstood intentions in this scene as Florentine and Jean arrive to this moment together with two very different sets of experiences and mindsets:

“Florentine s’affairait dans son rôle de ménagère. Il lui avait paru habile de se montrer ainsi au jeune homme ... maintenant, qu’il était là près d’elle, toute son énergie tendue à défier celle du jeune homme plutôt qu’à lui plaire, elle jouait son rôle avec précaution” (Roy 203). We see that based on her own limited experience, Florentine is playing the role of dutiful homemaker through cooking, tidying, and rearranging the furniture to please and impress Jean. Jean misinterprets these attempts though, and “the sugary odor of the fudge and the noises of the pots and pans in the kitchen annoy [him]” (Rogers 14). According to behavioral psychologists, “metaphor determines the way people perceive, remember and analyze information they receive. However, any single metaphor limits people’s perception by blocking and distorting the information encountered” (Hamburger 383). So, when Roy describes Jean’s agitation by citing the fact that the sounds and the smell of the candy “excitaient son instinct de défense contre l’ordre domestique,” (204) we realize that Jean is not experiencing “sucre à la crème” as a candy. He perceives it as

a metaphor for something else entirely. Jean ruefully recalls his “wretched childhood in an orphanage and then his neglected adolescence with his adoptive parents” (Rogers 14). He has perpetually struggled to forget his past; however, as he smells the candy that Florentine has made, his memory is generated involuntarily.

While there are multiple stimuli surrounding Jean at this moment, I maintain that it is Jean’s direct exposure to the physical object of the sweets that contribute to the collapse in his self-control. It begins as Florentine lays down the plate of candy she just finished making: “[e]lle vint aussitôt, mettant entre eux un petit plat de bonbons. Presque rudement, il le lui arracha des mains,” believing that Florentine’s hospitality is part of a ruse to tame and control him (Roy 207). Jean does fight his baser instincts, however, pausing and making conversation with Florentine about the whereabouts of her parents, but it only exasperates him further: “il l’avait saisie aux poignets et soudain jeta les bras autour d’elle comme pour la briser. Son désir l’exaspérait” (Roy 208). Jean had assumed that his afternoon would be spent in the boredom of her little family, but now: “[v]oici qu’il la surprenait plus rusée et tenace que jamais” (208). In my opinion, Jean pauses in a final effort to control himself, telling Florentine: “[v]a chercher ton chapeau..., ton manteau...” (Roy 210) as though this entire time he has been trying to keep his memories foggy. But, faced with the “bonbons,” he can no longer sustain his violent urges. This moment of direct contact with the sweets brings about “his [Jean’s] growing fury and rape of Florentine” (Rogers 15).

Critics debate over whether this scene does devolve into rape; however for this study, I argue that Jean’s approach to Florentine was out of malice and anger. The

chapter is told primarily from Jean's point of view; the reader gains access to his inner thoughts, memories and instincts, but not to Florentine's. While the reader never sees Florentine actively protest his physical advances, we do have insight to Jean's thought process, and know that he is reacting to her out of anger and frustration. Unbeknownst to Florentine, Jean, too, has an aversion to sweets due to his bitter and lonely upbringing. His memory of this is directly brought on by his exposure to the candy and it angers and repulses him; this revulsion to sweets is an interesting commonality between Jean and Florentine. Since Florentine represents poverty to Jean, Jean interprets her advances as the attempts of *Poverty* to control and seduce him; he has all but removed Florentine from the experience. Thus, his forcing himself on her is his method of vanquishing Poverty as an entity, rather than an act of love making.

Rose-Anna

As I mentioned previously, the mother-daughter theme is a highly prevalent one in Royan literature and can be seen in many of her stories. It is prevalent in *La Route d'Altamont*, between Christine and her mother, Eveline, as well as between Eveline and her own mother Mémère. We see the mother-daughter tie in *Rue Deschambault* as well, both between Christine and Eveline, as well as Eveline and her daughter Georgianna (in the story "Pour empêcher un mariage"). Of course, we also see it in *Bonheur d'occasion* with Rose-Anna and Florentine. Roy uses this mother-daughter rapport to contrast paralleling scenes with Florentine and Rose-Anna Lacasse who also experiences memories triggered by food, during the exact timeframe of her daughter's violent interaction with Jean.

As we know from examining Rose-Anna's response to clothing, she is elated at the prospect of returning to the countryside of her youth. When Azarius tells her that they will be visiting the countryside, she allows herself to think about how "par lui, elle avait eu froid et faim, par lui elle avait vécu dans de misérables abris, éprouvé la peur du lendemain la rongant jour après jour" (Roy 172). Thinking about her present circumstances in this manner highlights her desire to be back among "les sucres": "Les sucres! . . . Ces deux mots avaient à peine frappé son oreille qu'elle était partie rêvant sur la route dissimulée de ses songeries" (173). "Les sucres" mean so much to Rose-Anna, and Azarius too, that these are the words that they keep repeating, as if repetition will make their voyage real: "she is thrilled with the idea and launches into a series of reveries about maple syrup and her carefree youth in the country where food is plentiful and life is simple" (Rogers 14). The image of the maple tree brings back such fond memories that it is the epicenter of all of Rose-Anna's memories; as she describes "les délices de son enfance" (Roy 173), they are all based around the maple trees and Rose-Anna's spatial and emotional relationship to the trees.

In describing the creation of symbols and metaphors, Elder and Medicine Man Malidoma Some states that: "we are gifted with the ability to broaden our horizon and make anything sacred. We have also been given the power to desecrate that which is sacred" (quoted in Sullivan 1). In her memory, Rose-Anna has made the maple trees sacred. They are iconic to her, representing her very happy youth and the time she spent in the country.

But Rose-Anna's icons are quickly desecrated when she arrives in the country and is questioned whether or not her children have enough to eat: "[m]ais ils sont ben pâles tes enfants, Rose-Anna. Leur donnes-tu de quoi à manger au moins?" (Roy 195). The juxtaposition of this question to Rose-Anna's childhood that had been bountiful and joyous immediately results in Rose-Anna's negative perception of food. Rather than the pride that she anticipated she would feel when returning to the countryside, she feels only shame and "her bucolic memories are ruined by the comments of her petty sister-in-law" (Rogers 14). Rather than be able to relish these once fond memories, Rose-Anna begins to resent them.

Rose-Anna's memories continue to shatter when "[u]ne dernière blessure lui venait de sa mère" (Roy 196). When Mme Laplante humiliates her daughter by unsympathetically commenting on Rose-Anna's evident poverty, Rose-Anna feels "honteuse d'être venue vers sa mère," and questions her memories wondering "[q]u'était-elle venue chercher exactement? Elle ne le savait plus" (198). All the joy that Rose-Anna felt coming into this day has soured to the point that there is no joy in seeing her family, just shame and regret over the life that she and Azarius have made together, particularly in seeing her children humbly dressed and undernourished.

When Mme Laplante brings Rose-Anna a big basket of food to take back with her, Rose-Anna's shame is complete. The food itself represents all of Rose-Anna's failures and ruins her memories of her happy childhood: "[t]he visit to the sugaring-off thus destroys Rose-Anna's childhood in the countryside. Instead of conferring positive connotation, we see that Roy uses sweets to trigger nausea, disappointment, anger, and

unhappiness in her characters” (Rogers 15). As we saw before with Rose-Anna’s relationship to clothing, her interactions with food also demonstrate the rotting and desecration of her memories. The food does still represent aspects of her childhood, but rather than its being a pleasurable connotation, it is unhappy and makes a mockery of Rose-Anna. In this case, we see both the creation of the metaphor and its destructive capabilities.

Christine

La Route d’Altamont takes the food-metaphor to a gentler, more wistful nostalgia. Christine’s relationship with food in her childhood gives way to happier remembrances when she reflects on her youth with her grand-mère. Despite her grandmother’s declining health, Christine reflects on this period of her life with positivity as she remembers:

Les jours étaient courts, sombres souvent, mais nous entretenions un bon feu dans la maison, nous mangions de la tarte à la citrouille, nous épluchions des noisettes, du blé d’Inde. Nous mettions aussi des tomates à mûrir au bord des fenêtres, et certains jours la maison entière s’imprégnait d’une odeur de marinades cuisant à feu doux en de larges bassines. (Roy, *La Route d’Altamont* 27)

This passage, found on the first page of the chapter, sets the tone for the whole chapter, foreshadowing that while Mémère’s health deteriorates, the bounty of this period of her life results in happy memories for Christine. “The continuing existence of the extended family becomes a substitute for Mémère’s rapidly fading life” (Carr 101), as Christine remembers her family’s stock of provisions as she details “de la choucroute, du sirop d’érable du Québec, des pommes rouges de la Colombie-Britannique, des prunes de

l'Ontario" (Roy 27). And it is particularly interesting, and worth mentioning, that Roy includes the "sirop d'érable" in this memory. I do not believe it is accidental; not only is maple syrup an important production and staple of Canada, it is also the specific food-metaphor that tortured Rose-Anna in *Bonheur d'occasion*.

Christine also remembers that her family received food staples from her country uncles: "des oies grasses et des dindes; des douzaines de poulets, des jambons et du lard salé; des caisses d'œufs frais et du beurre de ferme" (27). What is particularly fascinating between these two texts, *La Route d'Altamont* and *Bonheur d'occasion*, is that for Rose-Anna, food and the act of accepting food, conjure up negative and sad memories and, as a result, divide her further from her family. On the contrary, for Christine, the gift of food is something that brings her and her family closer. She remembers how her uncles contributed portions of their harvest to her family as something beautiful and wistful; food is a bonding tool for them, and thus a positive metaphor for Christine. Christine likens her family's kitchen to a converted "magasin où le gel conservait" in which "les joies de l'automne reposant sur l'abondance et un sentiment de sécurité" (28) are felt by all. This comparison not only indicates Christine's joy and security, but also that her family's home was open to all, and that anyone could come in and be fed and warmed. It was a time in her youth in which her whole family is together under one roof, again supporting the suggestion that food was a unifying force for Christine's family, as opposed to a dividing presence. It is clearly a much different sentiment than that felt by Rose-Anna in *Bonheur d'occasion*.

During this time, Christine's mother is constantly trying to get her to go play outside: "[v]a dehors, va jouer" (33), but Christine is much more interested in this "autre sorte de jeu auquel ma mère semblait se livrer, assise auprès de sa mère à elle et l'interrogeant- un étrange jeu de questions auxquelles il n'était presque jamais fait de réponses: 'Ne mangeriez-vous pas un peu? Un bon bouillon de poule que j'ai fait exprès?' (33). She is fascinated by the interactions she witnesses between her mother and grandmother: "it is at this point that the young Christine begins to perceive that strange and complex rapport that exists between a mother and daughter, the reversal of roles that occurs especially when the parent becomes old" (Gilbert 91).

While we recognize as readers that Christine's mother is trying to make her mother more comfortable, we also see that in Christine's processing the act of giving food is that which can soothe her grandmother. In Christine's mind and memory, there is nothing more satisfying or secure than her family's kitchen. Since to Christine food equates comfort, her curiosity is sparked since her grandmother does not respond to these advances from her mother. The attempts made by her mother are not only gestures meant to provide comfort, but also efforts to communicate with grand-mère.

But, these pursuits fail: "[p]arfois, les yeux [de Mémère] se fermaient" (33). But it does not deter Christine's mother from continuing to attend to grand-mère: "[e]lle se hâtait, contente de pouvoir encore quelque chose pour quelqu'un, comme elle disait, qui en avait tant fait pour elle" (33). In a mother-daughter role reversal for Christine's mother and grandmother, Christine's mother is content to be able to provide for grand-mère, who had always cared for and nurtured her: "Christine's mother remains a child before her

own mother whom she treats as her offspring” (Gilbert 143). The care given to Mémère by her daughter shows an enormous contrast from Rose-Anna Lacasse and her own mother, Mme Laplante. Despite representing similar age ranges and time periods, Rose-Anna *cannot* provide for Mme Laplante the way Christine’s mother can for grand-mère. On the contrary, Rose-Anna still must accept her mother’s charity and thus is still seen as a child, and not an adult who would in turn be able to care for her aging mother someday.

According to Rogers, based on her study of *Bonheur d’occasion*, food and the perception of food “highlight the differences between the younger and older generations” (Rogers 1). This is applicable to this scene in *La Route d’Altamont* since there is an obvious breakdown in communication between the generations. Christine is unfamiliar with how to communicate with her grandmother, although it is evident to her that her grandmother must want or need *something*. Christine she questions: “[q]u’elle désire?... me disais-je à mon tour. Quel peut être le désir de quelqu’un qui n’a plus à perdre que ses yeux?” (Roy 33). Christine cannot see what someone as old as her grand-mère might want; food, a comfort and security to Christine, seems the most reasonable answer.

As Christine approaches her grand-mère hesitantly and shyly one day, she barely recognizes this woman who was once “toute puissante.” She recounts with precision her attempt to mimic her mother’s attempts to soothe grand-mère: “[p]uis-je songer à demander comme le faisait maman: ‘[a]vez-vous faim? Avez-vous soif?’ (34). Like her mother, Christine suggests food or drink to ease grand-mère’s suffering. She then appears conscious of grand-mère’s age and that needs and desires of the elderly may not be the same as someone her age: “[i]l me parut bientôt que mémère ne devait plus avoir de goût

pour cela et que ses désirs, si elle en avait encore, devaient être pour tout autre chose” (34).ⁱⁱⁱ One must ask, though, if this realization is Christine’s, the adult narrator, or Christine’s, the child. Arguably, this understanding of Christine’s reflects Roy’s style of narrative, and as I mentioned previously, there is an ambiguity in who is remembering a given moment.

Christine’s metaphor creation with food is not limited to *La Route d’Altamont*, it can be seen in *Rue Deschambault* as well, in the vignette “L’Italienne.” In this story, Christine’s father brings their new Italian neighbor their fruit tree as not only a friendly gesture, but also a cultural one: “[t]he narrator's family facilitates their neighbors' transition to life in the Canadian prairies through the use of food” (Hilton-Watson 2). Christine makes her own offering of three luscious strawberries in a humorous passage where she recalls: “[c]’était beaucoup: trois fraises pour une seule personne!” (Roy 186). This welcoming gesture earns Christine the nickname “Fraise,” and she is delighted to be nicknamed after something so delicious.

“Thanks to the initial gifts of friendship and food, they are rewarded not only with a cherished memento of their Italian neighbors but also with the cultural connection they made that will continue to enrich their lives” (Hilton-Watson 3). After their Italian neighbor, Giuseppe, passes away, his wife presents Christine’s mother with a beautiful vase as a reciprocation of the initial gift of the fruit tree and of their friendship. As she leaves to return to Italy, Christine recalls her mother saying “[a]ujourd’hui, c’est le soleil de l’Italie qui s’en va de notre rue!” (Roy 195). As she leaves, Christine’s mother

compares her to the Italian sun, supporting Hilton-Watson's point that a cultural connection has been made as well as a neighborly one (3).

Food recurs as a theme in many of Roy's texts, but I found it poignant that it recurs in *both* texts that are narrated by Christine as she depicts moments from her childhood. Albeit a brief passage in "L'Italienne," we see food as a recurring theme for Christine's memory inspiration, particularly since food remains one of the first concrete details that Christine recounts in both vignettes.

CHAPTER III: HOUSEHOLD OBJECTS

Le déménagement

Always the curious child, Christine goes through a phase where she is fixated on the concept of moving believing it to be glamorous and exotic: “[t]he young Christine saw moving as adventuresome separation, as an almost heroic act of pulling up roots that breaks the monotony of everyday life” (Carr 102). Her friend, Florence’s, father is a part time mover, and she questions why her own father did not have such a thrilling job himself: “[p]ourquoi mon père aussi n’était-il pas déménageur? Quel plus beau métier pouvait-on exercer?” (95). Christine’s mother tries to explain that moving is quite the tribulation and that she should not be so hasty to desire it:

Pendant un temps, me disait-elle, on est comme apparenté aux nomades, à ces pauvres gens qui glissent pour ainsi dire à la surface de l’existence, nulle part ne plongeant leurs racines. On n’a plus de toit. Oui, vraiment, pendant quelques heures du moins, c’est comme si on était à la dérive, au fil de la vie. (Roy 96)

Christine’s mother recalls her own moving experiences, and how without a roof, and nowhere to establish roots, they were akin to nomads. Rather than quell Christine’s curiosity though, it only reinforces it: “[p]auvre mère! Ses objections, ses comparaisons ne faisaient que renforcer mon étrange nostalgie” (96). Christine is too young to understand that “ressembler aux nomades” (96) is not a desirable comparison. To her, “

errer dans le monde” (96) seems like a charming adventure and an intriguing new game to play. In her imagination, not only is moving exciting and thrilling, she also considers the profession of “mover” to be a most noble and glamorous profession as well.

As Christine begins recounting her experience of “the move,” she can hardly recall her childhood friend’s name, stating: “[a]i-je jamais envié quelqu’un autant que, vers l’âge de onze ans, une petite fille dont aujourd’hui je retiens à peine plus que son nom: Florence” (95). But as she describes Florence and her father, “le déménageur,” she remembers the belongings and personal wares of the Smith family, whose move she witnessed. As she continues her story, the details become more and more vivid as the day comes flooding back into her memory, showing that, contrary to her own belief, she remembers much of it.

The day begins with optimism, as Christine states that the voyage “tint sa promesse” (103). But as the truck overfills with the Smith family’s belongings, Christine becomes repulsed by their objects, finding them dirty and repugnant: “[d]es matelas tout neufs, ce n’est pas encore trop affligeant à voir ; mais le moindrement usé ou sali, je me demande s’il y a un objet de maison plus répugnant” (106). Christine was not expecting to see dirty and used items - naively assuming that everything would be as fresh and new as the Smiths’ new home. Everywhere she looks, she sees sad, derelict items: “[e]nsuite, sur leurs épaules, les hommes apportèrent dehors un vieux sofa crevé, des montants de lit, des ressorts” (106). Christine’s enthusiasm is thwarted by the budding realization that the day will *not* live up to its promise:

J'essayai de fouetter mon enthousiasme, d'en faire renaître quelques flammes. Et c'est alors, je pense, que j'eus pour me consoler cette idée : on est venu arracher ces gens à cette misérable vie; on va les conduire à présent vers quelque chose de mieux; on va leur trouver une bonne maison propre. (Roy 106)

“She tries to console herself with the idea that the move these poor people are making will snatch them away from their miserable lives and lead them to better quarters” (Carr 102). Christine is able to continue on by convincing herself that the Smiths' current living arrangement is the reason for this squalor and that Florence and her father are saving them from such a lifestyle.

On the wagon, Christine witnesses Florence rifling through the Smith family's belongings, which is in stark contrast to Christine's efforts to aid in the move:

Florence, pour tromper son ennui, s'amusa à ouvrir des tiroirs d'une vieille commode, à plonger la main dans le fouillis qui s'y trouvait - tout à l'image, il me semble avoir pensé, de cette journée - bouts de ruban décoloré, vieilles cartes postales au dos desquelles un jour on a écrit : “Temps splendide. Bons baisers et amitiés”; aigrette de chapeau, comptes d'électricité, rappels au gaz, petite bottine d'enfant. (109)

Christine is horrified at Florence's treatment of the Smiths' belongings and recalls: “[e]lle ramenait des poignées de ces choses, les examinait, lisait, riait, l'affreuse petite fille” (109).

Watching the disrespectful behavior towards the Smiths' things highlights the sadness of the Smiths as well as the lack of compassion and dignity with which

Florence's father, as well as Florence, execute their moving mission. The lackadaisical treatment of their objects goes further as Florence's father merely leaves them all on the lawn of the new residence, refusing to bring them inside or to help any further. The glamor and romanticism of moving is thus destroyed for Christine, and her thoughts turn to her mother's hope to never have to move: "[p]ar la grâce de Dieu et la longue patience de ton père, nous voilà solidement établis enfin. J'espère seulement que ce soit pour toujours" (96).

In watching the disrespectful treatment of the Smiths' belongings, Christine recognizes a loss of their dignity. As Florence and her father mistreat the Smiths' belongings, Christine grasps her mother's meaning.

As the items get scattered on the lawn, a life's memories strewn about, the children do not even recognize their belongings and they whimper that they want to go home, back to their "real" house (110). Sadly, their new home is no better than the previous: "[t]heir new house is just as sad as their former one" (Nodelman 2), and a now jaded Christine thinks: "[i]l me semblait avoir fait tout ce voyage pour rien" (Roy 110). The consolation that Christine felt earlier, when she believed that the Smiths were relocating to a finer home "is revealed to be illusory when the wagon arrives at lodgings more squalid than the last" (Carr 102). The fact that the Smiths are not even relocating somewhere better than their previous house leads Christine to think that this whole trip was all for nothing.

Seeing the chaos of the belongings thrown carelessly, Christine understands what her mother means when she says that there is nowhere to establish roots when one is

forced to move (96). Christine describes how Mrs. Smith seems to have no remorse for having to leave behind years of her life, only taking with them the essential belongings; she even opts to leave behind the family dog.

In this vignette, Christine does not experience a personal loss, in the traditional sense; she has not lost a family member, or suffered any personal tragedy. But as she watches the Smiths struggle through their move, she observes them paring down their belongings out of necessity and understands what her mother meant when she said that “ressembler aux nomades” (96) was not something to which Christine should aspire. When Christine returns home, she questions her mother: “[a]h pourquoi aussi as-tu cent fois dit que du siège du chariot, autrefois, dans la plaine, le monde paraissait neuf, beau et si pur?” (112). The reader sees that in witnessing the Smith family’s loss of their objects, Christine loses some of her juvenile idealism and “must seek consolation for the death of a cherished dream, consolation for a desire that is revealed to be an illusion” (Carr 102). Her mother recognizes it as well and tells her that she (Christine), too, would feel the same “maladie de famille, ce mal du départ” (112). Finally, in this last scene of the vignette, Christine is able to develop an appreciation for what her mother said all along. She understands her family’s good fortune for having a permanent home and a place to “plonger leurs racines” (96).

La catin

When Christine is quite young, she is sent to stay with Mémère during the summer. “The young Christine herself, who has been exiled from the city to spend the summer in her grandmother's village, is presented initially as the character in need of

consolation” (Carr 101). To help console Christine and assuage her boredom, Mémère offers to sew a doll for her. Christine is surprised to learn of her grandmother’s capabilities, and the narrator reflects back on how little she knew of her grandmother at this time. Wistfully, Mémère tells Christine: “[I]es jeunes d’aujourd’hui ne connaissent pas le bonheur et la fierté de se tirer d’affaires avec ce qu’on peut avoir sous la main. Ils jettent tout. Moi, jeune, je devais me passer d’acheter dans les magasins. J’ai appris, j’ai appris, dit-elle regardant au loin dans sa vie”(15).

As Mémère mentally reaches into the past, she recalls the time when one took pride and satisfaction in being able to create an object by hand. She incorporates Christine into this process of creation as Christine recalls: “j’observai qu’elle commençait à m’associer à son œuvre créatrice, et je fus encore plus fière de ses talents” (16). As Mémère continues to include Christine in the creation of the “catin,” Christine is able to share in the joy and pride of having created an object from nothing.

Christine continues to remember this day with her grandmother, and she vividly recalls the materials used to create the doll: the leather, the red ink, lace and buttons. What is more, similar to the Chesapeake Bay Antique Exhibition, all of these scraps that Mémère had saved were “meticulously saved scraps of several generations of family clothing” (Nodelman 1). Not only is Mémère creating a doll for Christine, she is also giving her a gift of familial legacy. And what begins as a foggy memory about her initially boring summer with Mémère develops into a more robust and well-rounded memory as Christine recalls the details of the doll.

Upon seeing the finished product, Christine is humbled and amazed at the craftsmanship of her grandmother:

Mais moi, oubliant combien elle se plaisait peu aux épanchements et aux caresses, je grimpai sur ses genoux, je lui jetai mes bras autour du cou, je sanglotai d'un bonheur aigu, trop ample, presque incroyable. Il m'apparaissait qu'il n'y avait pas de limites à ce que savait faire et accomplir cette vieille femme au visage couvert de mille rides. (Roy 19)

Christine is so impressed that she believes that her grandmother must be God “the Father.” What else could explain the ability of creating something from nothing so adeptly? This belief stays with Christine for quite some time: “when Mémère moves into Christine’s house, in fact, the young girl refuses to view her grandmother as an inactive woman; she can remember her only as a vibrant creator” (Gilbert 143).

As Christine sits and listens to her grandmother recount their immigration to Manitoba, Christine is lulled to a half-sleep. Not only has Christine’s boredom been consoled, but for a moment, Mémère is consoled as well: “for making the doll allows her to feel useful once again, and thus to compensate in some way for her growing sense of being cast to the sidelines by old age” (Carr 101). What is more, in having sewn the doll for Christine, Mémère’s memory improves; she recounts their immigration with much more clarity. Mémère describes how she felt exiled in coming to Manitoba: “‘ton grand-père, Élisée, qui m’a fait le coup de partir le premier, sans m’attendre, le bel aventurier, me laissant seule en exil sur ces terres de l’Ouest’ ” (Roy 20).

The “catin” that Mémère has created now serves as a dual metaphor: it inspires both Christine’s memory in recounting this story to the reader *and* it inspires Mémère’s memory of her immigration to Manitoba. The contrast in memory though, is interesting, and brings us back to the subjectivity in metaphor: for Christine, the metaphor and memory are positive as she relishes this moment with her grandmother. For Mémère, however: “what immediately surfaces is that Christine’s grandmother feels a profound sense of dislocation and dissatisfaction” (Nodelman 1) as she misses the Québec countryside of her own youth.

Le carillon

As Christine recalls in *Rue Deschambault*, she develops a “whooping cough” one summer. She laments this lonely period of time, remembering that she had to spend it resting, away from other children: “[c]e fut vraiment la pire des maladies que j’aie eues, puisqu’elle m’interdisait d’approcher les autres enfants, et ce qui est plus triste encore, m’obligeait à les repousser si, dans la bonté de leur petit cœur insouciant de la maladie, ils venaient quand même vers moi” (Roy 71). To cheer her up, Christine’s father returns one day from Winnipeg with a beautiful hammock.

The narrator Christine recalls this day with youthful delight: “[i]l le défit, et j’aperçus le beau hamac tissé de brillantes couleurs : rouge, bleu... et jaune, je pense” (71). Much of this story is punctuated with Christine stating “je pense” and “je crois,” which reveals that “la difficulté reliée à l’entreprise de reconstituer le passé est directement proportionnelle au laps de temps écoulé entre les événements et la narration” (Marcotte 50). But as with the “catin,” and the “déménagement,” Christine’s memories

begin with uncertainty but fill out in detail after she begins recounting the details of the hammock. She continues to remember how her father swiftly installed it:

Il installa le hamac entre deux des colonnes qui supportaient le toit de notre galerie. Ainsi, dit-il, je serais partiellement au soleil et partiellement dans l'ombre. Ensuite papa fixa une corde à un arbre non loin de la galerie ; couchée dans mon hamac, tirant un peu cette corde, je pourrais me balancer sans effort. Mon père me montra comment m'y prendre : un tout petit coup sur la corde, et une vague douce et lente m'emporterait. (71)

Christine loves her hammock, but her father has something else in store for her as he presents her with a glass wind chime with which she is immediately enchanted. She describes it as her “chanson de verre -- un objet composé de fines lames de verre coloré, lâchement réunis par le haut et qui en bougeant, en se choquant doucement au moindre souffle d'air, faisaient un étrange petit bruit charmant” (72). At the moment that she receives this item, she does not yet have the vocabulary to name it, but she recalls suddenly having seen one before and having wanted it: “j'en désirais un de toute mon âme” (72).

Naming this item “chanson de verre,” brings us back to two of Roy's prominent themes: the theme of music as well as nature. The music that the wind chime creates is not music in the traditional sense as the wind chime is not an instrument, per se. The sounds that Christine experience are a form of music rooted in nature since the wind chime is defunct without its surroundings, chiefly the wind. It is the gentle tune of the wind chime that Christine recalls vividly, as she continues to remember this period of

time: “[I]a jeune Christine, malade et couchée dans un hamac, est fascinée par le bruit d’un mobile de verre qui s’agite devant elle sous la véranda de la maison familiale” (Marcotte 10).

Christine is deeply captivated by her wind chime; she remembers hours passing into days into weeks as she lay listening to the wind chime’s tender melody, doing nothing but daydreaming. She later asks herself: “[é]tait-ce du temps perdu, tout cela?” (72). Simultaneously wondering if this was time ill-spent, she reflects upon the many hours passed in the comfort of her hammock saying : “[j]’ai dû passer tout l’été, presque tout l’été, au fond de mon hamac et pourtant il ne m’apparaît que comme un seul instant chaud et tranquille, un instant fixé dans une petite musique claire comme le soleil” (72). In Christine’s memory, an entire season is represented by these symbols of the hammock and wind chime.

The objects not only encapsulate an event in Christine’s life, but also an entire period that has passed. She reflects:

Puis, il me semble que je suis bien éloignée de tout cela, que d’un seul coup j’ai traversé ce qu’on appelle une période de la vie.... J’ai découvert en ce temps-là presque tout ce que je n’ai jamais cessé de tant aimer dans la nature. Et au fond, tous les voyages de ma vie, depuis, n’ont été que des retours en arrière pour tâcher de ressaisir ce que j’avais tenu dans le hamac et sans les chercher. (73)

When the adult Christine considers the past, she realizes that she can remember her entire life as a summation of her time spent in the hammock listening to the wind chime.

Everything that she strived to accomplish, everywhere she wanted to travel, everything

she aspired to be and to do were ultimately acted upon to recreate the sentiment of having been a child lying in a hammock, when there was nothing but wind and a wind chime and a future of unbridled opportunity.

Christine concludes this vignette saying “[c]ar, ne le savais-je pas dès le début? Le hamac au vent, la musique de verre, la main qui poussait le hamac . . . est-ce qu’à tout ce bonheur j’avais le droit de survivre?” (75). Christine is at her most natural and raw that summer, experiencing what she believes to be true tranquility; the story is a “récit d'enfance "pur" centré sur la solitude et la découverte par la fillette du rêve et des jeux intérieurs” (Marcotte 48). As the adult narrator, she reflects on this; she has difficulty believing that a person has a right to such contentment. As Marcotte describes the scene, there is an “accent sur la découverte de la vie intérieure et de la solitude par Christine enfant” (41). There is no dialogue to this story; the action takes place entirely inside Christine’s mind.

We see this level of contentment only one other time in *Rue Deschambault*, at the very end of the text, when Christine has become a teacher. For a moment, it seems as though Christine has lost sight of this moment of wholesome happiness from her youth: “[t]outefois, l’intervention fréquente de Christine adulte empêche la coïncidence parfaite entre le temps du récit et le temps de l’histoire” (Marcotte 40). As she sets off to “gagner sa vie,” she initially tells her mother that it is her utmost goal to become a writer, although she changes course, quickly, stating: “[m]ais ce soir, je passai d’un extrême à l’autre. Je désirai ardemment gagner de l’argent” (Roy 248). She desires, instead, to earn

a living for herself; but at the pleading of her mother, she pursues a career in teaching instead.

In the last scene of this story, Christine describes a moment in the classroom when the students are reciting their lessons as a storm rages on outside. It is here that Christine “returns” to her summer in the hammock as the sound of the wind against the door fills her with joy: “[t]out près de nous, la tempête comme un enfant incompris pleurait et trépignait à la porte. Et je ne le savais pas tout à fait encore – nos joies mettent du temps parfois à nous rattraper – mais j’éprouvais un des bonheurs les plus rares de ma vie” (257). Christine’s ever-changing desires to explore the world, to make money, to write, to teach, all stem from her quest for happiness. Gilbert states “a need and a desire, on the part of the author, to remember, to return to the past, and to recapture her childhood, her *temps perdu*, through literature” (27).

Ultimately, Roy returns the reader to the sonorous moment of this storm, which brings Christine back to the moment of happiness she experienced that summer in her hammock. The sound of the wind in the storm, in my opinion, alludes to the sound of the wind in the wind chime, and rather than feel uneasy in the storm, Christine thinks: “[e]st-ce que nous n’étions pas au matin...?” (Roy 257). Roy accomplishes two things here: first, she brings back the theme of nature and music, and for this metaphor, the two are inextricably linked; without nature, the object of the wind chime would be useless. And second, Roy leaves the reader with a sense of optimism and tranquility similar to the nurturing embrace of the hammock of Christine’s youth.

Madonna and Child

The household objects that we have examined so far represent nostalgic, wistful and fairly positive metaphors. At the risk of appearing circular, however, I will return to the scene between Florentine and Jean, in Florentine's home, to discuss the last household object-metaphor. This is perhaps the most dramatic and literal metaphor in this entire thesis, and the one that leaves the reader with the most negative and off-putting sensation.

We recall that Florentine's outfit, accessories, and baking already elicited negative responses from Jean and that "[f]or Jean, the repulsion to sweets arises when he hears, sees and smells the sweet "'sucre à la crème' that Florentine is cooking on the day that he visits her alone in her family's house" (Rogers 14). But in addition to Florentine, Jean focuses on a specific object in the house: "[d]e nouveau, il fixa la madone à l'enfant Jésus au-dessus du buffet" (Roy 204). Jean is suddenly aware of the painting in Florentine's home and more suddenly, still, recalls: "[e]t il comprit pourquoi cette image l'attirait et le troublait. C'était tout son passé qu'elle évoquait, toute son enfance malheureuse et son adolescence inquiète. Un flot de souvenirs remontait en lui. Ce qu'il avait cru bien mort, doucement s'éveillait" (204). The manner in which Roy writes this scene gives the reader a prolonged sense of surprise and dread as both the reader and Jean simultaneously develop an awareness of the Madonna and Child painting. The memory of Jean's childhood resurfaces in an unanticipated surprise for both Jean and the reader:

C'était d'abord l'image sainte de l'orphelinat qui ressuscitait; et puis, mêlée à ce souvenir, Jean retrouvait confusément comme une impression de sommeil ; des

silhouettes noires passaient et repassaient devant son petit lit de dortoir. L'image faisait aussi partie des aubes froides dans la chapelle : elle était liée d'une façon étrange et mystérieuse jusqu'au son grêle de sa voix d'enfant de chœur qu'il lui semblait entendre, lointaine, au fond de sa mémoire. (205)

As though he is remembering a dream, Jean recalls seeing this image of Mary and Jesus at the orphanage when he was a child. Shadowy figures come back to him and he slowly begins to recall his suppressed past. "L'image s'associait à une infinité d'autres souvenirs" (205). Jean remembers his biological mother: "[celle qui] n'avait point été dure à son égard" (205) as well as his adoptive parents "[qui] ne lui témoignaient déjà aucune tendresse" (205). It is fascinating that Roy chooses the saintly image of Mary and Jesus to be the impetus of such *negative* maternal experiences. The icon of the Madonna and Child is sadly ironic since it incites such a tragic memory. It is also an ironic contrast to what eventually becomes of Florentine, since as a result of this brief encounter she becomes pregnant with Jean's child.

As Buchanan states, "icons are particularly conspicuous objects" (1), and this is certainly the case for Jean. This painting that he sees in Florentine's home is incredibly conspicuous, so much so that Jean cannot escape it. As the reader learns of Jean's past for the first time, we see Jean's development from a quiet, mirthless boy to an isolated, arrogant young man.

Suddenly Jean stands up: "il regarda autour de lui avec étonnement, car il ne se souvenait plus du point de départ de ses pensées. Le silence pesait sur lui" (Roy 207). Jean is surprised at what he has been able to recall, and his focus shifts to "l'humble

arrangement domestique d'objets si nécessairement confondus avec les gestes de la vie le gênait. Il voulut fuir" (Roy 207).

In seeing these items - the painting and the modest furniture - Jean appears "bouleversé" at the feelings and memories brought about by the objects. These memories return to him in an uncontrollable flood, reflective of his subsequent devolution of self-control. In remembering these objects and in being re-exposed to them, Jean acts "upon his principles and out of his personal victory against mediocrity and futility" (Cagnon 41) regardless of the resulting harm to others. In this scene, Jean experiences a trifecta of stimuli that directly catalyze his actions. He is the anomaly, as compared to the other character that I examined, in that he is the only one experiencing all three metaphor categories all at once: Florentine's clothes, the "sucre à la crème," and the home-décor of the Madonna and Child painting. The other characters encounter all of the categories of metaphors; however Jean, uniquely, experiences them *simultaneously* in this scene. The other characters have their memories stimulated by the object-metaphors that they encounter, with mixed emotions: Rose-Anna and Florentine remember their respective pasts with sadness, while Christine and Mémère remember theirs with nostalgia; however, none of these characters act out, or upon, their memories. Jean, however, not only ruefully remembers his dismal past, but lashes out violently against it. His experience of these objects- seeing them, smelling them, hearing them- directly results in his negative memories and catalyze the violation of Florentine.

CONCLUSION

The tradition of metaphor is an ancient one in all forms of art, especially here, in literature. “Poets, artists, bards and musicians attempt to bring this experience of symbolism back into our realm. Nature does this too” (Brittany 22). Since the beginning of communicated history, artists and writers have strived for the best method to communicate emotion, experiences and stories with their audience, and thus the metaphor was born:

The world is constantly being remade or rebuilt. Without awareness and experiences of symbolism, there is often a starvation of soul and a longing for reconnection. Many people today are in a state of longing for home, for the sacred. We were once connected to it or we wouldn't be able to long for it.

(Some, quoted in Sullivan 2)

Part of the human condition is the desire and the need to communicate. Without this ability, we are void of connection with others; as Some states, this interpersonal connection is hallowed, and thus living without it drives our nostalgia for the “sacred.”

Roy's literary craftsmanship and use of objects as metaphors permeates the three texts that I have examined in this thesis. In my opinion, this challenges the reader to consider his or her own object-metaphors, and challenges the reader, further, to consider the subjectivity of the past. Regardless of whether the memory evoked is a pleasant one

or a despairing one, the reader is left reminiscent of Charles Dickens- and we are left in the ambiguous narrative of whether the story was told the way it happened, or merely the way it was remembered.

I have encountered few authors, if any, who utilize metaphor so poignantly and effectively as Gabrielle Roy. It is not a surprise that she is such a beloved and celebrated author across multiple disciplines and demographics. She is so universal that while I always knew I wanted to study her for my final Master's Thesis, quite often I felt myself pulled in too many directions, wanting to focus on *everything* in her writing. The act of creating, storing, and reigniting memories interested me though, and so I was delighted and fascinated to see it recur so frequently in Roy's writing.

When I first began my study of the works of Gabrielle Roy, I had only read *La Route d'Altamont*, and as I mentioned previously, I was charmed by the quaint and picturesque stories depicted in the text. In class, I had studied the themes of mother-daughter relationships, nature, music; upon reading *Rue Deschambault* I was able to see a new theme: the theme of object-metaphors. Even more intriguing was that the object-metaphors fit well into the themes that I already knew existed and had studied.

After careful reading, I was able to categorize the types of objects and was able to do so in three primary categories: clothing, food, and household items. These can be broken down further into subsets including the human body and the physical spaces of home and nature. Roy not only uses these object-metaphors to enhance the story-telling process but also to inspire and unlock the memory of the characters from whose point of

view the story is told. In each case that I examined for this study, the characters' memories are contingent upon the object-metaphor to which he or she is exposed.

In the stories narrated by Christine, the stories center around the objects that she possesses or covets; and in certain cases such as "Un bout de ruban jaune," "Mon chapeau rose," and "Les bijoux," the objects are so important that they are the title of the story.

Since *Bonheur d'occasion* is told from the third person, the objects and their meaning take a different, less personal tone, but are just as present in *Rue Deschambault* and *La Route d'Altamont*. The objects do not necessarily become the focal point of the scenes in this novel; however they are equally powerful in the memories that they evoke.

Of all the characters I examined for this study, Jean is particularly susceptible to his memories. Once exposed to the stimuli of Florentine's clothes, cooking and "l'humble arrangement domestique d'objets" (Roy 207), he is overwrought with memories of his unhappy childhood where he had experienced and been exposed to similar items. Rose-Anna also succumbs to her memories when she revisits "les sucres" with her family in their new garments, although, upon arrival, we know that her memories are spoiled because of her impoverished and dismal present. I would qualify these two cases as relatively literal metaphors, since both characters are re-experiencing objects from their past; as a result of this re-exposure, their memories are directly activated.

The memories that are inspired in Christine are more figurative than literal. The objects to which she is exposed -- "la catin," le ruban jaune," and "le carillon," to name just a few, are used to convey her stories. Christine uses these objects as tools to recount

her past, but they are not objects that are experienced repeatedly by her, unlike Rose-Anna and Jean.

Lucy Maude Montgomery states that “nothing is ever really lost to us as long as we remember it” (*The Story Girl*). This is ironically befitting both the characters who *want* to remember their past and who find comfort in their memories, such as Christine and Mémère, as well as the characters who wish they could forget their past, such as Florentine, Jean and Rose-Anna, but cannot escape it.

With all characters, however, the acquisition of the metaphor is the most pivotal, even haunting, part of the object-metaphor creation: “[s]ubjects are capable of selectively remembering only one feature of an object and thereby obligatorily store all features” (Woodman 225). That is to say, we do not only remember the object, or one singular feature of the object: we remember our feelings about it, the ambiance, and the manner of its acquisition. All of these components make the object permanently engrained in our minds and thus the object cannot be extrapolated from its acquisition. And with each of Roy’s characters, ultimately the acquisition of the object-metaphor is the most important aspect of the object-metaphor process. Events occur, and sometimes the details are forgotten. However exposure to objects, be they food, clothes, or something around the house, is not always a voluntary or conscious encounter. And, consciously or not, it is when we confront these “clues” to our past that our memories return to us like a “flot de souvenirs” (Roy, *Bonheur d’occasion* 204).

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BIOGRAPHY

Jennifer M. Canning graduated from South Lakes High School, Reston, Virginia, in 2003. She received her Bachelor of Arts and her Virginia Teaching License from the University of Mary Washington, in 2007. She was employed as a teacher in Spotsylvania County for three years before beginning work at the Geo-Institute of the American Society of Civil Engineers. She began Graduate School in 2009, and received her Master of Arts in French from George Mason University in 2013

ⁱ This scene and whether or not Jean rapes Florentine is a controversial and debated topic.

ⁱⁱ Other short stories include "Les deux nègres," "Petite misère," "Pour empêcher un mariage," "Le Titanic," "Les déserteuses," "Les puits de Dunrea," "Alicia," "Ma tante Thérésina Veilleux," "L'Italienne," "Wilhelm," "La voix des étangs," "La tempête," "Le jour et la nuit," and "Gagner ma vie."

ⁱⁱⁱ This scene concludes with Christine showing her grand-mother and family photo-album in a final attempt to soothe and please Mémère. The album becomes an object-metaphor as well, since it is only upon seeing this object that there is any indication that Mémère is aware of her surroundings or remembers her life and family. Christine recognizes Mémère's engagement in this moment when she states "[e]st-ce que ses yeux n'ont pas brillé un peu? Il me semble..." (Roy 35).