



Expressions of well-being and happiness

in *Les Grandes Marées* and *Le Vieux Chagrin* by Jacques Poulin

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Declaration

I certify that this work does not incorporate without acknowledgement any material previously submitted for a degree or diploma in any university and that to the best of my knowledge and belief it does not contain any material previously published or written by another person except where due reference is made in the text.

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Abstract

This thesis focuses on two novels by Jacques Poulin: *Les Grandes Marées* (1978) and *Le Vieux Chagrin* (1989). In particular, it aims to investigate the manifestations of well-being and happiness through the prism of the thematic network identified in the two novels. We analyse the concepts of well-being and happiness according to Seligman's PERMA model, a framework that describes the state of well-being and happiness through five core pillars. The PERMA model offers a convenient way to identify and analyse textual data. Moreover, it constitutes an original way of investigating well-being and happiness in a textual context. Our analysis indicates that Poulin has woven a subtle message through his narratives: life satisfaction, the result of well-being and happiness, cannot be achieved individually, nor can it be achieved through social construct and imposition. However, people can be happy and satisfied through intimacy, mutual understanding and the simplicity of everyday life. Happiness cannot be forced on people, rather it must flourish naturally and emotionally through meaningful interactions.

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“Happiness is not a possession to be prized,
it is a quality of thought, a state of mind.”

Daphne du Maurier (1907-1989)

Introduction

Two years ago, *Un jukebox dans la tête*, the last novel by the Canadian author Jacques Poulin was published. The acclaimed novelist was hailed as one of most celebrated contemporary novelists in Canadian literature (Lamontagne, 2002). Poulin's writing is unique. Poulin has gained a literary reputation by creating a fictional universe where violence, aggressiveness and sexism are absent, and by portraying non-violent characters throughout his work. The novelist deals with a number of themes through his writing which are strongly related to social issues. The concepts of 'well-being and happiness' are recurrent throughout his novels, as Poulin strives to explore the nature of, and the condition for happiness through the depiction of his main characters. Well-being and happiness are linked to each other, the former being a prerequisite for the latter. However, it is difficult to separate these two concepts as they complement one another intimately and contribute to one's life satisfaction.

The central research question of our thesis will therefore be 'How and to what extent well-being and happiness are manifested in *Les Grandes Marées* and *Le Vieux Chagrin*?' In this thesis, we will concentrate on two novels by Jacques Poulin: *Les Grandes Marées* (1978) and *Le Vieux Chagrin* (1989), as these novels expose the concepts of well-being and happiness perhaps more prominent than any other work by Poulin. We will explore them through, the prism of the thematic network identified in these two novels. Consequently, we have decided to undertake this study in order to investigate these concepts further. In doing so, we will analyse the concepts of well-being and happiness according to subjective and objective markers, which will

be subsequently defined, and framed. We will see how these markers can describe instances of well-being and happiness as identified in both novels. Based on textual data, our analysis will be qualitative. We will follow the thematic reading of the two novels, which will allow us to bring to light the most salient themes and to study the concepts of well-being and happiness through these themes. In this study, we will define a 'theme' as "an idea that recurs in or pervades"¹. In other words, for our purpose, a theme is an important idea and topic expressed (in an overt or covert way) in the texts studied. The thematic approach is a text-based method which identifies and organises data around topics of interest revolving around activities or actions taking place in the novels. Such an approach will allow us to identify and organise textual data around ideas and topics of interest, as well as uncover interaction between the themes present in the two novels (Braun & Clarke, 2006).

The thematic analysis has several advantages in qualitative research. One of the advantages of this approach is its flexibility. It provides the researcher with an opportunity to divide literary works to be studied into workable sections that are thematically organised, which may be analysed independently and associate with other themes in a comparative way (Thomas & Harden, 2008).

Once our textual data is organised thematically, we will then apply the prism of the PERMA model for data analysis. PERMA is a framework that describes the state of well-being and happiness. American psychologist Martin Seligman has designed this original model to identify and theorise the components of a flourishing life and life satisfaction through five core pillars. Although it originates in psychology, in our view, the PERMA model offers a simple and convenient way to identify and analyse textual

¹ Oxford dictionary 2017

data. Moreover, it is an original way of investigating well-being and happiness as the model has never been used in relation to Poulin's references to a quest for happiness. We will discuss the PERMA model in detail and its five pillars in the third chapter.

A number of scholars have studied Poulin's work. Pierre Hébert (1997), for example, has argued in his book *la création d'un espace amoureux* that Poulin's novels deal with essential issues linked to society and that life satisfaction is a central issue. Rochon (2012) and Sévigny (2012) assert in their work that Jacques Poulin treats social problems through his fictional work. In his essay entitled *The myth of the Lost Paradise in the Novels of Jacques Poulin*, Socken (1993a) refers to how Poulin attempts to create a better world in his fictional universe. However, the survey of the literature on Poulin's work suggests that the concepts of well-being and happiness have not been studied to a large extent, especially in relation to themes that bring these concepts to the fore, and certainly not together.

The thesis will be divided into three chapters in order to highlight the broader context of Poulin's work, describe and analyse the texts on which we will focus, and address our research problem that concerns the manifestation of well-being and happiness through a selection of themes. The first chapter will deal with the historical and socio-cultural background of the province of Québec in order to gain an understanding of the socio-cultural context in which Poulin's literature has evolved. In the same chapter, we will highlight the significance of Jacques Poulin and his work into the context of Québécois literature in terms of his style and his literary influences. In the second chapter, we will discuss the contextual background of the two studied novels *Les Grandes Marées* and *Le Vieux Chagrin* in terms of the context and narrative features. Later in this chapter, we will describe the main themes present in the two novels in order to map out their thematic network. In the third chapter, we will

define well-being and happiness in order to characterise the focus of this study. In doing so, we will present the emotional and physical aspects of well-being and happiness and provide a framework for analysing these concepts in their textual contexts. We will show how well-being and happiness are manifested through the themes that appear in the novels. At the end of this chapter, we will make a brief reference to a third novel *Le Cœur de la Baleine Bleue*, as this novel provides another perspective on well-being and happiness, which complements that of *Les Grandes Marées* and *Le Vieux Chagrin*.

Chapter One: overview of Québec's history and of Poulin's novels

This contextual chapter aims to provide a brief historical and socio-cultural introduction in order to situate the context in which *Les Grandes Marées* (1978) and *Le Vieux Chagrin* (1989) were written. We will start by describing the early days of the creation of Nouvelle France in Canada. We will then highlight the darkest period (la Grande Noirceur) in Québec's history as well as the role the Roman Catholic Church had played in the colonisation of the province. Closer to us in time, we will discuss the influence of the Quiet Revolution in 1960s and the most important social achievements of the 1960s. We will highlight the main themes found in the Québécois literature, which are historically influenced, and show how these themes were affected by the change following the Quiet Revolution. Furthermore, we will provide a summary of Jacques Poulin's biography, and finally we will present his work.

1.1 Québec: history and literature background

'Nouvelle France', the old name of the French colony in North America, was situated in the north-eastern part of the North American continent. By the third decade of the 16th century, Jacques Cartier, a French navigator from Saint-Malo, explored the Saint Lawrence River in 1534, which led to the subsequent claim of Canada by the French. Canada became a French colony in 1600. The province of Québec was established in 1608 by Samuel Champlain (BNF, 2008). From then on, the French started to migrate to Nouvelle France with the aim of spreading the Catholic faith to the native population. In the 18th century, the French and the British were engaged in a conflict over the new colony. The English took control over Nouvelle France in 1755. Four years later in 1759 the French took Nouvelle France again from the English (BNF, 2008). The French Canadian people fought for their language and literature in order to sustain their

identity (Paquette, 1974), and after the French victory over the British forces, the press in Québec became bilingual as most people spoke French. For example, the *Quebec Gazette*, a bilingual newspaper was founded in 1764 and still exists today. In 1806, the newspaper *Le Canadien* was published in French, which gave more prominence to the French language in Québec. Today more than 80% of the French Canadian community lives in the Québec province (Homel, 2006).

1.2 The Great Darkness ('la Grande Noirceur')

This event occurred in Québec in the mid-1930s and ended by the end of the Second World War in 1945. The Catholic Church tried to protect the old traditions on which French Canadian history was based (Vaugeois, 2012). Protecting faith, family and farms was the Church's highest priority (Rivet, 2016). During the period of the Great Darkness, the Québécois, who wanted to speak freely and express themselves without fear, were exiled by the Church (Cédric, n.d.). The Catholic Church had a prevailing influence on the economic and the educational systems during the period of the great darkness, which was why Québec remained a relatively rural and uneducated province compared to the other Canadian provinces (Linteau, 2006). Schools programs focused merely on religious beliefs, and children usually left school when they finished Year Six. On the social level, the rate of children becoming orphans increased, and many children fell mentally ill. Québécois women were not equal to men due to the Catholic Church doctrines, which dictated that women should stay at home and look after their children (Cédric, n.d.). Women had no rights to engage in politics and social affairs when the Church controlled society. Women were only allowed to work in the education sector and in hospitals.

Despite the important powers of the Catholic Church, Maurice Duplessis (1890-1959), a lawyer and politician, was able to make significant changes in Québec's society. As a result of his modernising vision and profound reforms, the Québec province became more developed (Sarra-Bournet, 2009). The economy increased rapidly as Maurice Duplessis supported the industry and the province's urbanisation (Linteau, 2006). The improvement of the region's economic situation had a positive effect on the social situation as middle-class workers became more skilled and, consequently, were able to earn more. Maurice Duplessis was known as the orphans' father as he implemented a plan to help orphaned children by building institutions for the youth and provide them with an improved life. Culture also reaped the benefits of modernisation and Québécois literature was influenced by the new changes in society. Novelists, poets and painters started to form new literary groups. For example, 'l'Hexagone' was a group for poets in Québec established in 1953, which subsequently became a powerful circle of poetry. *Liberté* is a magazine that started publishing in 1959. It organised conferences in Québec for international writers (Kathy Mezei, 2012) and provided a platform for exchanges of ideas and for the recognition of Québécois literature beyond the confines of the province. Noticeably, in the post-war period, the power of the Church declined as the government's power increased. The event of the subsequent Quiet Revolution was an important turning point in Québec's history, which promoted modernity and freedom. All these social changes had an influence on young novelist Jacques Poulin. These same changes influenced other writers of the same generation such as Hubert Aquin, Roch Carrier, Jacques Godbout and Anne Hébert.

1.3 The Quiet Revolution ('la Révolution Tranquille')

Jacques Poulin started his writing career in the second half of 1960s at a time of profound changes brought by the Quiet Revolution in the province of Québec. This was a time of rapid social and cultural changes for the French Canadians. When the Liberal Party won the election in 1960, the main leader of the Liberal Party, Jean Lesage (1912 -1980), raised the slogan "It is time for a change". According to Lesage, the people, who lived in the Québec province regardless of their origins or their languages, would be treated equally.

The leader of the Liberal Party promised people he would achieve two main objectives. The first thing was improving the educational, economic and social systems in the Québec province. The second promise was to bring more respect for the French background people of Canada (Rosemary, 2016). One of the most important values of the Quiet Revolution was the rejection of traditions based on religious ideals (Pierce, 2004), At that time, the education sector was controlled by the Catholic Church. Until then, most of the academics were priests, brothers and nuns (Rosemary, 2016). They provided a good educational service, although this service was strongly influenced by religion. The new government of Jean Lesage wanted to offer the young generation more possibilities for studies in fields such as business, science and engineering in order to create more opportunities for young people to support the economy. Under the new economic circumstances and newly acquired freedom of expression, French language books, music and plays grew in popularity in Quebec. Freedom of expression gave young writers permission to explore themes and topics such as love and nature. Writers were no longer bound by the Church's doctrine.

On a social level, women obtained more rights in Québec after a long period of inequality under the Catholic Church's domination. The Liberal Party fought for women's rights in social life and in business (Rivet, 2016). The acquisition of women's rights is considered a significant step forward in the Québécois history.

The major consequence of the Quiet Revolution was the reduction of the Church's power over education, social and economic systems. According to the Official Languages Act, Canada became a bilingual nation in 1969 (Makarenko, 2007). The introduction of French as the official language of the nation led to significant improvements in all aspects of daily life for French. The public service and the educational sector were thereafter became bilingual. After the decline of the Catholic Church power, Jacques Poulin's fame rose. The young novelist gained an opportunity to write without the Church's pressure.

1.4 The main themes in the Québécois literature

Québécois literature is a French-written literature which was developed in the context of English dominated Canada. Historically, the French community have given importance to developing their literature rather than developing other art forms in order to save the French language in a country where English language is considered as a powerful language (BNF, 2008). Traditionally, Québécois literature was mainly oral. It was transmitted from parents to children (Rivet, 2016). Literature had the power to make life more sociable in Québec as it can deal with social problems in society (Provenzano & Dozo, 2009). As a result, it now has become as a reflection of Québécois society (Diana Espinola, n. d.).

Québécois literature has forged its character through history by developing unique themes. It went through several phases. It was influenced by two different

cultures, the British and the French (BNF, 2008). This double identity is evident and is omnipresent in the work of Jacques Poulin. Québécois literature is an American-based literature which has been influenced by French literature and French culture (BNF, 2008). The period of the 1960s is considered an important decade in Québécois literature due to the significant changes which took place after the Quiet Revolution, especially in the socio-cultural sphere. The decline of the power of the Roman Catholic Church, and the flourishing of freedom of thinking had a direct impact on literature

The vast geographical size of Canada influenced many writers to include the theme of nature in their works. There was a group of writers, who were influenced by nature, called 'local colourists (Pierce, 2004). These writers were fascinated by the animal kingdom and the wild life of Canada. Jacques Poulin was also a nature lover. In his article *L'autre Poulin* Lamontagne (2002) argues that Poulin is a natural writer. One can see clearly the theme of nature in his work. In *Les Grandes Marées*, Poulin depicts this theme through the main character. He loves to be with birds and on rivers banks ("pour regarder le coucher du Soleil sur le fleuve" (GM 33)). In addition, there are other Canadian naturalists, who have written on this theme such as Peter McArthur and Anna Jameson (Pierce, 2004).

After the Quiet Revolution of the 1960s, which we mentioned earlier, the Québécois literature witnessed a new era in its history. It was like a new start, a rebirth of culture. Québécois writers wanted to assert their identity through their newfound freedom to write. Consequently, the theme of childhood in literature embodied the beginning of the new change in Québec. Jacques Poulin considers childhood to be a very sacred time in life (Lapointe & Thomas, 1989). Childhood represents the purity and peace of life. Poulin includes this theme in his work. This theme appears clearly

in *Le Vieux Chagrin*. The second main character, la Petite, is a young girl who plays a significant role in the novel, as we will see in the subsequent chapters.

The themes of history and autobiography are also important in Québécois literature (Pierce, 2004). There are many books written on these themes. For example, *The old province of Quebec* (1933) by Alfred L. Burt combined great works on the history of Québec such as *The fortress of Quebec* (1904), *Quebec under two flags* (1903), *The siege of Quebec* (6 vols., 1901) and other works (Belanger 2004). Jacques Poulin refers to these themes in his work. He gives his characters his personality and his love for history when he writes his novels (Lapointe & Thomas, 1989).

1.5 Jacques Poulin's personal life

In Canadian literature, there are many renowned authors such as Michel Tremblay, Roch Carrier and Rejean Ducharme, who the 1960s supported the literary movement in French Canada. One of those significant novelists is Jacques Poulin (Sanchez, 2016).

Jacques Poulin was born in Québec in Saint-Gédéon-de-Beauce on 23 September 1937. He is the second child of a family of seven children. His father is Roger Poulin, and his mother is Jeanne d'Arc Grondin. He is a bilingual speaker of French and English.

After his secondary studies, he obtained a Bachelor of Arts in 1957 at the Seminaries in Saint George and Nicolet. In 1960, Poulin obtained a degree in Psychology then in 1964, he completed another degree in Arts. Both of those degrees were from Laval University. Jacques Poulin started his career as a counsellor in a high school at Saint Fay from 1967 to 1970. Subsequently he became a translator for the

Federal government from 1970 until 1973. After he published his second novel *Jimmy* in 1969 Jacques Poulin realised that he had to dedicate himself to translation and writing (Krajicek, 2015). Poulin spent about 15 years in Paris, where he lived modestly. Poulin has written 14 novels and has won several prizes in literature not only in Canada but also overseas including the Prix Athanase-David in 1995, the Prix Molson des Arts du Canada in 2000, and the Prix Gilles-Corbel in 2008 (Sanchez, 2016). Jacques Poulin has been one of the most powerful writers in his generation right from the publication of his first novel (Krajicek, 2015), and critics respect him.

1.6 Jacques Poulin's novels

Poulin's novels have been widely distributed in Québec², and people have loved his fictional work (Fortin, 2008). The first novel by Jacques Poulin, *Mon cheval pour un royaume*, was published in 1967. This novel was inspired in part by terrorism. It is the story of a man who was fighting with himself and then was hospitalised for psychological problems. While that man was in hospital, he tried to free himself, but instead ended up hurting himself. *Jimmy* Jacques Poulin's second novel tells the story of a child who watches the ruins of everything. *Jimmy* was published in 1969. Jacques Poulin's third novel *Le Cœur de la Baleine Bleue*, is about a man who needs a heart transplant. The donor of the new heart is a young girl. After the operation, that man starts to face some identity issues. The novel was published in 1970. Four years later, Jacques Poulin published *Faites de beaux rêves*, for which he received the prix la Presse (Arguedas, 2016). *Les Grandes Marées* is Poulin's fifth novel. This acclaimed novel is about a lonely translator who lives on a very small and isolated island in peace and tranquillity. The translator does his job perfectly and he is very happy with his

² See list of Poulin's novels in Appendix 1

situation, until his boss starts bringing people onto this peaceful island. This novel was published in 1978, and Poulin received the Governor General Prize for this work. This novel has taken a prominent place in Québécois literature (Arguedas, 2016). *Volkswagen Blues* is Poulin's sixth novel, which is about the missing of young brother of the main character in the story, and the main character looks for his missing brother in United States of America. This book was published in 1984. Poulin received the Canada-Belgium prize for this novel. This novel may be considered as one of most important Québécois literature works in 1980s (Lamontagne, 2002), and brought fame to Jacques Poulin (Montpetit, 2008). The seventh novel, *Le Vieux Chagrin* was awarded four prizes: the Québec-Paris prize in 1989, the Molson du Roman prize, the Louis-Hémon prize in 1990 and the France-Québec prize in 1991. *Le Vieux Chagrin* was published in both France and Canada in 1989. This novel is about a writer who tries to write a love story about a woman who does not exist. The author published another novel *La Tournée d'automne* in 1993, which depicts a librarian who travels in a bibliobus from Québec City to the north shores of the province to bring books to small towns. The librarian meets a French woman named Marie. The relationship between the two people develops, and they become very close to each other. The ninth novel of Poulin is *Chat Sauvage*. This novel was published in 1998. The narrator plays a role of a detective in Québec city who, by chance, meets a young girl who becomes more and more important in his life. The tenth novel is *Les yeux bleus de Mistassini*, which was published in 2002. *La traduction est une histoire d'amour* was the next publication in 2006. This novel is about a young translator meets the writer of a piece of work he must translate. *L'Anglais n'est pas une langue magique* was published in 2009. *L'Homme de la Saskatchewan* is one of the most recent novels by Poulin, published in 2011. This novel is considered as a new version of *Volkswagen*

Blues (Dumais, 2011). The last novel by Poulin is *Un jukebox dans la tête* which was published in 2015. This novel is a fictional work about Poulin's *alter ego* (Houde, 2015).

Poulin is a master of imagination, and his novels are written in a simple way. Poulin shows in his works the connection between a human being and the environment in which the main characters live, and one can see the themes of solitude, nature, ambiguity and love appearing prominently in the novels.

1.7 Poulinian characters and style

According to Lamontagne (2002) Jacques Poulin is one of the best Canadian writers in the last three decades. Poulin's style is characterised by the absence of violence in his unique universe and his entire work (Levasseur, 1992). The characters in the poulinian universe are presented in a way that a reader can see their lives in transition between languages, cultures and lands, mentally or physically (Krajicek, 2015). Childhood memories play an important role of the main characters' lives. For instance, Jimmy considers his childhood memories as a way of facing the adult world. The protagonist of *Le Cœur de la Baleine Bleue* is a middle-age man, who is dealing with his youth memories and who is given the transplanted heart of a young girl.

Poulin tends to provide his male characters with androgenic traits, and that is why we usually see male characters as passive, and conversely, female characters are portrayed as active (Saint-Martin, 1999). Teddy Bear and Marie in *Les Grandes Marées* are clear examples of this. The personages in Poulin's work are different from the general stereotype. There are usually no sexual relations between males and females, and there is no physical violence in Poulin's work. The style of writing of Jacques Poulin is simple and not complicated (Arguedas, 2016). According to Weiss

(1993), Hemingway has had an influence on Poulin through his work. We can see the similarity in the style of writing and how both writers present their characters. Like Hemingway, Poulin casts androgynous characters. Poulin created his main character in *Le Cœur de la Baleine Bleue* as half man and half woman. Jack, the main character in *Volkswagen Blues*, travels between America and Canada in order to find his younger brother. The Translator in *Les Grandes Marées*, Jim in *Le Vieux Chagrin* and le Chauffeur in *La Tournée d'automne* are dealing with words and language, and solitude has a significant impact on Poulin's main characters. The poulianian characters are not aggressive. We can see the similarity between Hemingway and Poulin when comparing Poulin's *Le Vieux Chagrin* and *Jardin d'Eden*, a novel written by Hemingway, in terms of the names of the female characters Marita and Marika. When starting to write his novels, Poulin creates the main character as a person of his own age. Consequently, Poulin's characters become older as the author himself ages (Lapointe & Thomas, 1989).

1.8 Chapter conclusion

In this chapter, we have highlighted the history of Québec. We have discussed the role of the Roman Catholic Church in the province of Québec. Then we moved from the darkest period in the history of Québec to the time of prosperity of the Quiet Revolution of the 1960s and its profound influence on the social, cultural and economic fabric of Québécois society. The main themes in the Québécois literature have been illustrated in this chapter. We have highlighted the important phases of Jacques Poulin's life, his achievements and his work. Also, we have presented the essential characteristics of Poulin's main characters. In the next chapter, we will deal with the contexts and main themes in the two novels *Les Grandes Marées* and *Le Vieux Chagrin* in order to gain greater insight into the poulinian universe.

Chapter Two: presentation and themes

In the preceding chapter, we have discussed the historical and literary elements pertaining to Québec. Furthermore, we have highlighted the important themes in Québécois literature and in Poulin's literary work. This chapter will deal with the two novels which are the focus of this thesis: *Les Grandes Marées* (1978) and *Le Vieux Chagrin* (1989). In doing so, we will introduce the novels and establish their thematic contexts. We will also refer to how scholars have talked about happiness in the poulinian novelistic universe. Then we will move to the main themes in the two novels. This will give us an opportunity to discuss how these themes are interrelated throughout the two books. We will also discuss the importance of the themes in relation to Poulin's quest for happiness in order to get an understanding the manifestation of well-being and happiness in both novels.

2.1 *Les Grandes Marées*

Context

Les Grandes Marées is the fifth novel by the Québécois author Jacques Poulin. This acclaimed novel was first published in 1978 in Montreal. *Les Grandes Marées* is structured into 43 chapters and contains over 200 pages (Lemeac edition). Each chapter has a title which gives the reader a hint about its context (González, 2010). This work is one of the most successful novels by Poulin as in 1979, it was rewarded with the 'Prix du Gouverneur Général. *Les Grandes Marées* was written four years after *Faites de beaux rêves*, the fourth novel by the Québécois novelist. *Volkswagen Blues*, the following novel, came directly after *Les Grandes Marées* in 1984. *Les Grandes Marées* was translated into English in 1986 as *Spring Tides* which is evidence of the success this novel encountered (Boivin, 2005).

Summary

Les Grandes Marées is about a comics' translator who lives alone on a small and isolated island named Ile Madame (a real island on the St. Lawrence). The Translator has no name, but he has a code name which is Teddy Bear. Every Saturday 'le Patron' his boss and the owner of an important newspaper, comes to the island by helicopter to bring food and work to Teddy Bear, and to collect the translations done by the translator in order to publish them in his newspaper.

The island on which Teddy Bear lives is very small. It is only 2 kilometres in length and 500 metres in width. There is a forest in the middle, and many different kinds of birds take refuge there. There are two houses, one in the north of the island and another one in the south part of the island. Oddly, there is also a tennis court that stands right in the middle of the island. The Translator has elected to live in the house on the northern side of the island, which is the larger of the two houses. Teddy Bear's office is his room in which he has many dictionaries. He also has an old cat named Matousalem³.

There is also something unique on this island named 'Prince', a machine or training cannon that throws tennis balls. Teddy Bear always plays tennis with his robotic machine because tennis is one of his hobbies and, as a result, he feels relaxed when he plays.

Le Patron strives to make people happy. To make Teddy happier, le Patron starts bringing people onto this small island, as he believes that Teddy Bear cannot be happy alone. The first person le Patron brings to the island after Teddy is a young

³ Matou is a familiar word for 'cat' in French.

woman named Marie who is a very active and independent person. Marie arrives on the island with her books and her cat and she decides to live in the house on the southern side of the island. Teddy Bear is very fond of this young and agile woman, and despite an important age difference between the two, he feels that he is very close to her. For a while, Teddy experiences true happiness with Marie, but this state of things does not last long because le Patron keeps bringing people one after another onto the island.

When alone Teddy Bear and Marie experience the island as a paradise on earth until another woman, le Patron's wife, arrives. She has no name, but is referred to as 'Tête Heureuse'. This woman invades the harbour of peace and tranquillity built by the Translator and Marie and destabilises the delicate balance between the two friends. A few weeks later, le Patron brings two new residents onto the island known as 'Professor Mocassin' and 'l'Auteur' who le Patron thinks could inspire Teddy in his translation work, but those two make the situation worse. Soon after, le Patron brings another person, 'l'Homme ordinaire', to organise the island in order to make it function better. Then the next person le Patron brings onto the island is named 'l'Animateur' who tries to organise social relations between the island's inhabitants. The last person brought by le Patron onto the island is 'Le Père Gérisol', whose job is to take care of Teddy Bear on a spiritual level. After all these people have arrived, the island becomes a microcosm of society with all its basic functional attributes. Teddy has no space left to do his work, he has lost Marie and feels very tired of the situation. Unable to cope with the others, Teddy is forced to leave the island and is saddened by the loss of his love and his beloved island.

2.2 *Le Vieux Chagrin*

Context

The novel *Le Vieux Chagrin* is Jacques Poulin's seventh novel and is considered one of his most successful novels (Boivin, 2005). *Le Vieux Chagrin* was published in both Québec and France in 1989. This novel is structured into 33 chapters over 200 pages and all chapters are numbered and titled. As in *Les Grandes Marées*, the chapters of the novel are all relatively short (Boivin, 2005).

Le Vieux Chagrin was published five years after *Volkswagen Blues*. Jacques Poulin received four prizes for the novel: the Québec-Paris prize in 1989, the Molson du roman prize in 1990, the Louis-Hémon prize in 1990, and finally the France-Québec prize in 1991.

The title suggests that the novel is about an unsuccessful love story from the past. However, it can be seen from the very beginning of the novel that *Le Vieux Chagrin* is in fact the name of a cat. *Le Vieux Chagrin* was translated in English by Sheila Fisherman as *Mr. Blue*, a title that does not quite capture the essence of the French title.

Summary

Jim, writer, lives on the Saint-Laurent riverbank with his cat Vieux Chagrin. One day, he finds the book *The Arabian Nights* in a cave near where he lives. Jim is very curious about *The Arabian Nights* and about the owner of the book. The next day, Jim goes to the cave and sees some marks on the book and finds the name Marie-K inside the book cover. He becomes very keen to know who is this Marie-K might be. Marie K becomes Marika in Jim's mind. Jim is unhappy with his writing because he believes

his work lacks inspiration, and so he chooses to write a love story about a woman he has never met.

One day, another woman named Bungalow comes to Jim's house. She runs a refuge for abused women. She asks Jim if he wants his roof fixed. Jim takes this opportunity to ask Bungalow if she knows Marika; she says she does. Day after day, Jim waits to see if Marika will turn up as he thinks about her all the time. Every time Jim sees Bungalow, he thinks he will also see Marika, but this never eventuates. Jim writes four letters to Marika, and he put these letters in four different places in his house just in case Marika comes. However, she never does.

There is one young girl in Bungalow's group nicknamed 'La Petite'. Jim and la Petite become very close to one another as she starts talking to him about her life and how hard it has been. La Petite is not comfortable with adults because she does not trust them anymore. However, she stays at Jim's house and both of them share their life stories.

Having introduced the context and the summary of both novels, and we now present the main themes in the two novels, and how these themes are integrated in the stories. We will also discuss how the themes interact with each other in the two novels.

2.3 Happiness and love

The theme of happiness is central to *Les Grandes Marées*. This theme has been studied the most by scholars interested in Poulin such as Rochan (2009), Socken (1993) and Leduc (2001). This theme is expressed right from the beginning of the novel through the major and central question that le Patron puts to Teddy Bear is

("Qu'est-ce qu'il vous faut pour être heureux?" What do you do to be happy? (GM p.13)). According to le Patron, happiness is being in company of other people, to communicate and interact with them. However, this way of living does not suit Teddy Bear, because his personality is totally different from his boss's. When Marie arrives on the island by helicopter the situation changes for the better and a friendly relationship develops between him and Marie. The two feel close to each other and happy. They start eating and walking together on the island (Rochan 2009).

According to (Hébert, 1997), *Les Grandes Marées* Poulin presents the harmony between men and women through Teddy Bear and Marie and refers to the notion of happiness as a personal matter. When Marie arrives onto the island, Poulin depicts Ile Madame as Utopia away from the real world (Hébert, 1997). Happiness may also be found away from society. According to (Renaud, 1979), Poulin considers isolation and silence as a way toward happiness through his fictional world. Being away from society can bring satisfaction in life according to the poulinian view. (Leduc, 2001) argues that Poulin discredits materialism and capitalism in his fictional work and argues that these are sources of unhappiness, as he does not give them any credit in his writing. Poulin portrays his main characters as detached from both materialism and capitalism, as emotional figures that are not self-interested. (Leduc, 2001) says that the poulinian characters are against modernism, and they find happiness in the simplicity of life, which includes their interaction with nature.

The theme of love is not as important in *Les Grandes Marées* as it is in *Le Vieux Chagrin* which is a love story. According to (Hébert, 1997) in *Le Vieux Chagrin*, Poulin expresses happiness through love, and indeed, *Le Vieux Chagrin* is a love story. There are two kinds of love in the novel. The first kind of love is based on a fantasy story created by Jim (Dorion, 1990). As a writer, Jim creates a love story. He

does not meet the girl he creates and with whom he falls in love. Jim creates an image of Marika in his mind. She is thin, wears a skirt and a tee shirt and she does not wear shoes. Marika is described in most of the novel as a real person although she is an imaginary one, as it is discovered at the end of the story.

The second kind of love is paternal love. When la Petite enters Jim's life, the writer feels this young girl can change his life forever. The relationship between the writer and la Petite is real and it is completely different from the imaginary relationship he has with Marika. La Petite exists and interacts with Jim, but Marika is imaginary and absent. Jim finds his purpose in life (to be a father figure) in his relationship with la Petite, however, he cannot find the romantic love he is looking through Marika.

2.4 Nature/ Environment

Teddy Bear has an unconditional passion for the natural world. He loves the island where he lives and he always tries to protect and preserve it. When Marie first reaches the island, she tells Teddy Bear that they should not cut any trees on the island, and they also should not change anything on the island. Teddy Bear and Marie agree to save and protect the environment on the island (Boivin, 2008).

Teddy Bear has an unlimited love for nature ("Il faisait le tour de l'île, et le soir, de temps en temps, pour regarder le coucher du Soleil sur le fleuve" (GM 33)) because he can find happiness and peace in the natural world (Georgescu, 2011). While he is surrounded by beautiful nature, Teddy Bear feels calm and unstressed on the small island because there is no aggressive behaviour or violence. Teddy Bear cannot find those soothing elements within society because it is very competitive, aggressive and violent, and Teddy Bear cannot deal with those concepts easily in real life.

In *Le Vieux Chagrin*, being connected with nature gives Jim strength and joy in life (“J’étais heureux de savoir que le fleuve était là” (VC 54)). According to Socken (1993b) in his article “*water imagery in the novels of Jacques Poulin*”, water represents hope. When Jim tries to console la Petite, he does it by singing “*L’eau vive*” which is a calming and soothing song. Even when la Petite finds her real parents, they are sitting beside the river.

2.5 Writing

Teddy Bear loves his work and he feels so happy while he is translating (Leduc, 2001). Teddy Bear does not find trouble or disagreement when he is working as he finds his pleasure in his work.

In *Le Vieux Chagrin*, the main character in the novel is a writer, so the theme of writing occupies most of the novel. Jim considers writing to be a tool that can change the whole world and it can create a new world without violence, war and competition (Boivin, 2005). Jacques Poulin presents the theme of writing more than once in his novels and his main characters as well educated people. Jacques Poulin shows his readers the importance of writing in his universe (Bonsignore, 1985) and writer’s role is very essential in the poulinian world.

2.6 Childhood

The theme of childhood is not presented in *Les Grandes Marées*; however, it clearly features in *Le Vieux Chagrin* through la Petite who is an adolescent. La Petite has a major issue with her family, especially with her stepfather. She was abused by him, and he treated her cruelly. La Petite wants to meet her real parents as she feels she needs a father to protect her and she dreams of a stable family. As argued by Rosbring

(2008), La Petite finds a father figure in Jim, and a mother figure in Bungalow. She needs someone to protect her from the world's violence. Subsequently, at the end of the novel, Jim adopts La Petite and becomes both a father and a mother figure to her.

2.7 Loneliness

Loneliness is a notable theme in *Les Grandes Marées* and we can see it from the very beginning of the novel and even the first sentence ("Au commencement, il était seul dans l'île"(GM p.9)). Physical loneliness is the first concept to appear in the novel (Leduc, 2001). Teddy Bear lives alone for a good part of the novel, until Marie arrives. He has been categorised by psychologists as a 'psycho-affective'. The Translator tries to avoid living in a society and among people because he is a passive and an anti-social person. Teddy Bear finds tranquillity in loneliness (González, 2010).

The second form of loneliness observed in the novel is that Teddy Bear is very detached from the people who are brought onto the island. With exception of Marie, he avoids to communicate with them (Leduc, 2001). The Translator finds that relationships with other people are not easy because he is passive, timid and humble, whereas the others are often full of their own importance. Teddy prefers to be with his dictionaries, his books and his cat (González, 2010). By the time of Tête Heureuse, le Patron's wife, and other people arrive on the island, the level of tension increases (Hebert 1997). When Tête Heureuse reaches the island, an important change occurs, and Teddy Bear's tranquillity is taken when the other arrive onto the island.

The theme of loneliness is clearly exposed in *Le Vieux Chagrin* (Boivin, 2005). The three main characters in the novel experience loneliness in their lives. Jim has a cat, and this cat knows everything about his master, and this cat replaces and occupies the lack of human friend in Jim's life. The cat gives his master what other

people cannot give him such as sharing feelings (Rosbring, 2008). Bungalow is separated from her husband and her children. She is alone since that time and decides to buy a house that becomes a refuge for women who have been abused. La Petite is also lonely due to her difficult childhood as she was abused by her stepfather when she was very young. Through loneliness, the three characters' lives are changed. They start on new paths on a quest for their lost happiness.

2.8 The lost paradise

The theme of lost paradise features prominently in the Poulinian work in different ways. One can see the theme of the lost paradise equated to the loss of privacy and place. On the other hand, it is shown by the loss of family or beloved friends. The theme of the lost paradise appears as an essential theme in most of Poulin's work.

It is in *Les Grandes Marées*, that the theme of lost paradise is most evident. This novel is different from other Poulin's novels because in this particular work, the author criticises society. Socken (1993a) argues that "*Les Grandes Marées* is unique in that it is the only one of the novels that illustrates in detail the critique of society" (p. 49). In *Le Vieux Chagrin*, the theme of lost paradise is strongly linked to emotions and feelings.

2.9 Chapter conclusion

In this chapter, two novels of Jacques Poulin have been discussed, *Les Grandes Marées* (1978) and *Le Vieux Chagrin* (1984). The context of each novel has been highlighted and summaries of the two novels have been provided. This chapter has also presented the main themes featured in the novels and has shown how these themes are related. The theme of loneliness has taken an important place in the poulinian novels, and *Les Grandes Marées* presents this theme particularly vividly. The main character has chosen to be alone on the island and avoid the competition and the aggression of society. The theme of loneliness in *Le Vieux Chagrin* is exposed in relation to the three main characters Jim, Bungalow and la Petite. The theme of nature is closely linked to the theme of loneliness because the poulinian protagonists love to be isolated in nature rather than being in society. In these two novels, nature has played a significant role because it provides refuge to the people who are seeking peace in non-violent places. Another theme, love, is the common and central theme in these two novels. In *Les Grandes Marées*, the theme of love is elaborated through the short relationship between Teddy Bear and Marie. Love is based on common interests, and not on physical attraction. As both characters love nature and books. Love is the central theme of *Le Vieux Chagrin*. The theme of books and writing is presented in both novels. Books and writing are linked to the theme of love because, like love, they bring happiness to the main protagonists in these two novels of Poulin. Now that we have explored the thematic context of *Les Grandes Marées* and *Le Vieux Chagrin*, we will focus on the manifestation of well-being and happiness and see how these are expressed in relation to the themes we have identified.

Chapter Three: manifestation of well-being and happiness

In the previous chapter, we have presented the socio-cultural contexts and summaries of *Les Grandes Marées* and *Le Vieux Chagrin*. In addition, we have identified the main themes, and expressed how these themes are linked through an overarching quest for happiness. This chapter will focus on another important concept, that of well-being, which is the manifestation of happiness, and on how this concept affects the lives of the main characters. Subsequently, we will explore the strong relationships between well-being, happiness and the other important themes appearing in the two novels. *Le Cœur de la Baleine Bleue* will also be referred to in this chapter as it provides a salient element of contrast to the ones that will be presented first. We will start this chapter by presenting a definition of well-being and happiness in order to understand the different facets of these two concepts, and how they can be applied to our thematic analysis.

3.1 Defining the concepts of well-being and happiness

Broadly speaking, the concept of 'well-being' is linked to an individual's quality of life. It refers to an individual's condition in terms of health, situation in life, medical condition, economic situation and spiritual state of being. The notion of well-being is measured according to social settings and standards. However, there are many other aspects of life that can help enhance our well-being, such as the goals an individual has in life (Wong, Tschan, & Semmer, 2017).

In other words, the term 'well-being' is related to the welfare of individuals and to how well their life is going (Taylor, 2011). A distinction can be made between *mental* well-being and *physical* well-being. An individual's well-being can be evaluated

as a whole from birth to death as well as during specific periods of time. If we concentrate on a specific period of life in specific contexts, we can then look at what external or internal factors influence well-being.

There are two types of well-being. The first one is *objective* well-being, which is linked to material goods, wealth and health. This type of well-being is essentially physical and material and can be reasoned. The second type of well-being is more *subjective* and related to psychological matters. Subjective well-being is strongly related to happiness (D'Acci, 2011). As we will see in the sections below, both types of well-being are found in the two books that are investigated in this thesis.

Well-being appears in various ways in the poulinian novels. Happiness, of which well-being is a manifestation, is central to the main protagonists. At times, well-being is sustained by nature, work, books sport and pets. At other times, it is strongly connected to companionship, love and, unexpectedly, even to loneliness and death.

In Jacques Poulin's novels, well-being may be further categorised into two types. Firstly, well-being is associated with tangible activities and aims to improve the characters' lives. It can therefore be associated with activities such as work, sport or reading, etc. These activities energise the characters and give them the strength to carry on with their lives in a less stressed environment. Secondly, well-being is associated with feelings and emotions. This non-tangible type of well-being is dominant in the two novels studied here. In fact, paradoxically, loneliness is one of the non-tangible elements influencing well-being, and it is one of the most important themes in Jacques Poulin's work. In *Les Grandes Marées*, for example, loneliness, which interestingly is not described as a negative feature, is associated with happiness and with a deep sense of life satisfaction. In the same novel, once the main character

Teddy Bear is no longer alone, sadness becomes the dominant feeling as Teddy Bear starts experiencing the pressures of the societal microcosm that is gradually being formed around him to the point of suffocation.

According to positive psychologist Seligman (2012) the concept of well-being contains five elements which are *Positive emotion, Engagement, Relationship, Meaning and purpose, and Accomplishment*. These elements form the pillars of Seligman's PERMA theory of well-being.

Everyone has a particular way to pursue life satisfaction and well-being such as training one's mind to believe that he/she is happy or engaging in material gratification in order to boost the levels of happiness (Pascha, 2015). Martin Seligman did provide us with his original model of well-being and happiness that refers to the profound meaning of one's life satisfaction. As we have mentioned the five components of the PERMA model, we now want to discuss these five core pillars in more detail in order to understand the essence of the model. The PERMA model is grounded in positive psychology, and each of its five pillars can be measured independently (Oxford, 2016).

- *Positive emotion* is the representation of one's state of mind, hedonic sensations and satisfaction in life. This pillar refers to positive elements such as gratitude, joy, hope and, or inspiration (Kern, Waters, Adler, & White, 2015). Seligman argues that *Positive emotion* is not about looking happy, but it is about the willingness to be happy. This optimistic view can induce state of well-being and life satisfaction as people can be inspired to create more opportunities to feel happier wherever they are at work, at home or with friends.

- *Engagement* is strongly linked to the ability to interact with society in terms of daily activities and tasks such as interacting with people and engaging with work. This act can help increase one's self-confidence and boost levels of happiness. This pillar is an important element because people are sociable creatures. They need to interact and participate with others however, this type of engagement has to be made according to one's agency. It is usually free from lack of choice otherwise the engagement will not fulfil its true purpose.
- *Relationship* is linked to the freedom to choose one's acquaintances friends and partners. This pillar relates to the positiveness of relationships. People are sociable beings; they do need to be socially satisfied in order to gain happiness and reach a state of well-being. Moreover, *Relationships* mean connections between one another. One of the most significant activities in our daily life is to have a positive relation with the individuals who have a similar mindset to us. Through positive relationships, we can surmount the difficulties in our lives as we will be supported by genuine people who share our relationships with us.
- *Meaning* (as well as purpose) conditions the drive and motivation for living. This pillar refers to how valuable life is. A sense of *Meaning and purpose* in life can bring well-being and happiness to individuals as believing in the importance of life gives people the sense of hope to live and think this life is worthy (Coffey, Wray-Lake, Mashek, & Branand, 2016). This pillar is related to the purpose for which we are living on this earth. Without meaning, life will become absurd. In order to understand our daily life activities, we have to have *Meaning and*

purpose behind each action we undertake. It is the fulfilment of our life. The meaning of our action is greater than our action itself.

- *Accomplishment* is the successful end of one's purpose and achievement, which provides satisfaction in life. This core element brings up the sense of fulfilment in life. When a person thinks he/she is capable of accomplishments, then self-esteem is enhanced, which has positive repercussions on the person's state of happiness and well-being. According to (Seligman, 2010) *Accomplishment* is the ultimate goal in one's life. One can be happy when he/she achieves something even if there is no positive emotion, no engagement, no relationship or no meaning. Seligman gives an example about individuals who cheat in their lives in order to achieve their goals regardless of whether they have good intention or not. Those people feel happy and satisfied when they reach their own ultimate goals.

In this study, we will use the five core pillars of PERMA as our analytical framework. According to Coffey et al. (2016), the theory of well-being and happiness is strongly linked to PERMA's five pillars. Coffey et al. (2016) argues that people are able to gain life satisfaction through these potential elements of well-being and happiness. Seligman has identified these five pillars as the PERMA components cover all aspects of human life satisfaction (Coffey et al., 2016). We will use these core pillars as a framework, which allows us to analyse the manifestations of well-being and happiness as identified through our selection of themes. This gives us an opportunity to investigate Poulin's fictional universe through the actions, emotions

and states of mind of his main characters. To our knowledge, an analysis of Poulin's work based on the PERMA model has never been carried out.

The five elements of well-being may be categorised into two different groups which are subjective and objective. We can see how these elements are linked to the poulinian characters in so much as they increase their life satisfaction. For example, Teddy Bear considers that the subjective elements of well-being are more important than the objective ones. However, le Patron believes that objective elements are required to create well-being and happiness in life. In *Le Vieux Chagrin*, Jim illustrates how well-being and happiness are intrinsic to the thematic fabric of the narrative through the meaning and purpose of his life, and through his relationship with la Petite. Becoming a father and la Petite becoming a daughter is the accomplishment of happiness for both characters.

The concept of happiness is a vast one. What is happiness? This is a classical question in philosophy. When defining happiness, the first thing that comes to our minds is the idea of positive emotion. Through the ages, many thinkers have attempted to define the concept of happiness. According to Greek philosopher Aristotle: "*Happiness is the meaning and the purpose of life, the whole aim and end of human existence*" cited in (*Lifeoptimizer, 2008*). Kahneman (2011) argues that happiness has two aims. First is to spend time with people who we love and trust. Second is to be satisfied in life and achieving one's goals. In other words, people may gain happiness through their success (Katz, 2011). Also according to (Markman, 2013), happiness is strongly linked to subjective well-being, which refers one's optimism. Both Teddy Bear and Jim believe that life satisfaction can be achieved through emotions. For example, Teddy Bear finds his happiness in simplicity in life which links with his optimism. Jim strongly believes that well-being and happiness are totally

coupled with one's thoughts therefore Jim creates a vivid image of Marika in his head, and consequently he starts looking for this woman in his real life.

Cooper and Theobald (2011) further argue in their book *Doing the Right Thing* (pp13-14) that happiness is the accomplishment of our goals in life. However, well-being means to be well, and it is quite different from being happy. The two concepts are linked but they do not refer exactly to the same thing.

Having introduced the notions of well-being and happiness, in the next sections, we will study these concepts in relation to the major themes identified in the two novels and reported in chapter 2. We will start from the most obvious themes identified in the two novels, and see how the concepts of well-being and happiness are expressed through them to the least obvious themes, which one normally would not associate with well-being and happiness in terms of life satisfaction. Hence we will start with the quest for happiness as it is the most evident theme linked to the concepts of well-being and happiness.

3.2 The quest for happiness

The quest for happiness is perhaps the most central theme featured in Poulin's work. This theme is very present through the novels of the Canadian author. In *Les Grandes Marées*, the notion of happiness is evident from the beginning of the novel ("le Patron lui posa la question rituelle: Etes-vous heureux dans l'île"? "Très heureux, dit Teddy" (GM10)). It is very important for le Patron to make sure that a lonely person on the island is not bored. Le Patron has a dream; he wants to make people happy. He thinks that he is able to make that dream come true as he is very rich person and as he believes that money can buy anything including happiness. He says: "maintenant que je suis riche. J'essaye de réaliser un vieux rêve. Je vous en ai déjà parlé la première

fois qu'on s'est vus. Mon rêve, c'est de rendre les gens heureux" (GM 57). Le Patron forgets about the emotional aspects of life on Ile Madame. He only believes in the material dimension of life. The Translator has a totally different point of view about money and material matters. In fact, Teddy Bear has nothing in common with le Patron. Teddy Bear is asked by his boss about his happiness not only once but many times; "J'ai une question à vous poser: qu'est-ce que je peux faire pour vous rendre heureux?" (GM13), and then: "Vous n'avez pas répondu à ma question. Qu'est-ce qu'il vous faut pour être heureux?" (GM 14). Le Patron considers the question about happiness as a top priority and does not give Teddy Bear any choice. Le Patron always imposes his will on Teddy Bear consequently, the promise of happiness is an illusion from the outset as Teddy Bear has no agency, and le Patron keeps asking that question until he gets satisfaction.

Happiness encompasses many concepts, and people have the freedom to select what suits them. In *Les Grandes Marées*, Teddy bear is forced to be with people, because of the ignorance and selfishness of his boss. Another example that demonstrating that le Patron is eager to achieve his goal of making people happy is when he sends his wife Tête Heureuse to watch and to observe the Translator and to see whether he is happy or not. Le Patron does this without telling Teddy Bear about it because he knows very well that this would make the situation on the island worse. One day, Tête Heureuse receives a phone call from her husband, enquiring about Teddy Bear's well-being. Was he happy living among the other members of the island's micro society? The answer is that Teddy appears to be unhappy with the situation he has to endure; "IL N'EST PAS HEUREUX?" (GM 91). When Poulin writes these words in capital letters, he expresses clearly the Translator's feelings of dissatisfaction.

It is at this point in the novel that le Patron realises that all his attempts to make Teddy Bear happy are pointless, and that his dream of making people happy may not be realised. Teddy Bear does not show any reaction or objection towards le Patron, and this gives le Patron a clear sign that the Translator is disinterested in the social experiment that has been set in place on the island.

Although the question of Teddy's happiness concerns le Patron, the Translator however, also takes opportunities to reflect upon this notion. Teddy Bear infers that the question of happiness is not a simple one, and that happiness cannot be measured ("Comment fait-on pour savoir si on est heureux ou non?" (GM 96)). Le Patron could not answer this question because happiness is so intangible that it cannot be measured and quantified. Teddy Bear is intelligent, and he is very good with words. He suggests to his boss that they check the *Petit Robert* dictionary for a definition of happiness to find out the real meaning of happiness. The dictionary proposes that to be happy is an emotional state linked to a mental state of a plenitude ("Etat de la conscience pleinement satisfaite" (GM 96)). By using the dictionary, Teddy tries to tell le Patron, indirectly, that happiness is not something that can be set up. By using the dictionary, he avoids a direct confrontation with his boss about the meaning of happiness.

According to Leduc (2001), Teddy Bear finds his happiness in his passivity and isolation. Nevertheless, le Patron, "Père du capitalisme", does not believe in Teddy Bear's way of finding happiness. Loneliness represents happiness for the Translator. He chooses to be alone and not to interact within society. Poulin makes a reference to solitude clearly from the first line of the novel, ("Au commencement, il était seul dans l'île" (GM 9)). One can see that the theme of loneliness is strongly linked to

happiness according to Teddy Bear's way of life. Teddy insists on being himself and not being like others.

The Translator finds the real meaning of friendship in his beloved dictionaries. His dictionaries do not argue with him, and they are always available to him. The level of aggressiveness is nil between the Translator and his real friends: "le Petit Robert, le gros Harrap's, le Grand Larousse, le Petit Littrée, le gros Webster [qui] remplaceraient les amis" (GM 18).

In the novel *Le Vieux Chagrin*, happiness is represented through the successful relationship between Jim, Bungalow and la Petite. These three people embody real happiness through the harmony of being together, in a way, they are like an ideal family. There are never quarrels or a disagreement between them. Jim, Bungalow and la Petite have faced significant personal problems in their lives. Jim has separated from his wife and now lives by himself. Bungalow has decided to leave her husband and her children and to start a new life. La Petite has had a very difficult childhood. Together, these three people create an ideal family. They find the sense of happiness in being close to each other. The young girl, la Petite wants a stable life (Rosbring, 2008). She needs a person who can take her mother's place. Bungalow is able to achieve la Petite's dream ("Bungalow est vraiment comme ma mère. Elle me prend dans ses bras et elle me dit des choses qui m'aident beaucoup" (VC 107)). As la Petite lives with Bungalow, she is inspired by Bungalow's way of life. Bungalow is a thoughtful person, and she cares about every woman who is boarding in the women's house. La Petite is treated well by Bungalow, and she embodies the image of a good mother ("Elle est super-maternelle.... A la Maison des filles, quand je ne peux pas dormir, je vais la trouver dans son lit et on parle de toutes sortes de choses des fois" (VC 106)).

La Petite decides to leave the women's house and move to Jim's house, and from that time onward she considers Jim a father as he is also very good to her. La Petite is relaxed at Jim's place, and she does not see any barrier between Jim and herself. She can ask about anything she wants to know, like a child would with her parents, because of this La Petite feels comfortable and happy.

As Jim sits in the gallery room in his house, La Petite comes to him and asks about a very old photo album belonging to Jim's family. She looks at the pages in this album and starts asking many questions about every photo in it. Jim answers all her questions as he wants to make the young girl happy as, in return, she makes him happy ("Elle était arrivée dans ma vie juste au bon moment: Durant une période où j'essayais d'écrire une histoire d'amour. Elle était un cadeau du ciel" (VC 143)).

According to Weiss (1993) the context of the adoption of La Petite is the ultimate achievement in *Le Vieux Chagrin*. Adoption is the most logical consequence of happiness in the novel as both Jim and La Petite decide to stay together forever. La Petite feels that she has to be with Jim to survive in this life. She asks Jim to be her adoptive father ("Adopte moi, reprit-elle. Je voudrais rester ici avec toi et les animaux" (VC 187)). It is an important decision for both of them, and eventually Jim accepts to adopt her. La Petite asks Jim to fill in an official form that shows that he committed to adopt her. Instead, Jim writes a letter of adoption, in which he pens: "CHERE PETITE, JE T'ADOpte" (VC 188), and signs the paper. La Petite knows that her life will be secure and happy with Jim and the cats. Jim finds his purpose in life from being a writer dealing with dreams to being a father dealing with real life.

When applied to the theme of the quest for happiness, the PERMA model on this theme, two pillars *Engagement* and *Relationship*, are highlighted. Teddy Bear

cannot cope with the new islanders, as they do not respect his privacy. These two PERMA pillars are not achieved, except for the exceptional case of Marie, because the new islanders are not interested in Teddy's life style, and they want him to conform the rule of society by becoming more social and less private. Teddy and the islanders are not able to work towards the same goal as they have different visions of well-being and happiness.

At the end of *Le Vieux Chagrin*, we can see all the pillars of the PERMA model have been realised through the adoption of la Petite, and therefore this is why this novel ends happily. As a result, Jim and la Petite eventually find themselves in a deep state of well-being and happiness embodying the five dimensions of the PERMA model. With the model in mind, it could be argued that the adoption is the representation of life satisfaction.

Through this theme, one can noticeably see that the subjective and the objective concepts of well-being and happiness cross with one another as there is a profound difference between Teddy Bear and le Patron in the way they conceive well-being and happiness. However, in *Le Vieux Chagrin*, one can see how well-being and happiness are manifested through the adoption of la Petite. To achieve this, Poulin uses the emotional concept of the father/daughter relationship, and through the accomplishment of purpose in life in relation to both Jim and la Petite.

3.3 The plenitude of love

Poulin presents love through his imaginary world in a unique way. In general, when we usually read about love, we are presented with romantic stories and physical relationships; however, in Poulin's novels love is portrayed in a more subtle way. In *Les Grandes Marées*, when Marie arrives to the island, a new page has been opened

in Teddy's life. Because of Marie, the Translator discovers happiness. Marie shares her feelings with the Translator. She looks after him, and she wants to make him happy ("elle passa un bras autour de son cou" (GM 39)). Their happiness is soon interrupted by Tête Heureuse. In spite of this, Teddy Bear and Marie have a silent conversation. This is an example about how strong the relationship is. They talk with their hearts not with their mouths ("Ils eurent ce que Marie appelait une conversation muette. Ils se parlaient avec leurs yeux et leurs mains" (GM 77)). She expresses her feeling to Teddy Bear when she says to the Translator that he is the sweetest man she has ever met ("Je n'ai jamais rencontré un homme aussi doux que toi" (GM 78)). Days pass on that island, and the relationship between Teddy and Marie becomes stronger until others arrive on the island.

The theme of love is very dominant in *Le Vieux Chagrin*. Jim lives a deep love story with an unknown woman, Marika whom he never meets. However, he creates an image of this woman in his mind believing that Marika is thin, wears a skirt and a white T-shirt, walks without shoes on. Jim becomes quickly obsessed with Marika. He writes several letters to her, thinking that she will read his letters ("*j'ai le cœur tout réchauffé de savoir que vous êtes*" (VC 16)) ("*Vous n'avez pas encore de visage, mais déjà vous vivez dans mon cœur*" (VC 16)). Jim needs to live a real love story in order to be able to write his novel which is about love (Miraglia, 1990). The mysterious woman has a significant influence on Jim, as he looks for his lost love in Marika ("*j'attendis la visite de Marika. Dix fois par jour*" (VC 43)).

The omnipresence of Marika is a very centre of Jim's life. When he wakes up, the image of Marika is at the forefront of his mind. When he writes his novel, Marika is omnipresent. Even when he plays tennis, Marika is with him ("*L'image de Marika était en moi, installée en permanence*" (VC 159)), and although she is

physically nowhere to be found, she is emotionally very close to him (“Dans un coin de mon cœur, comme une lampe allumée, il y avait aussi la pensée que Marika était tout près de moi” (VC 168)).

However, when la Petite and Bungalow enter Jim’s life, another type of love begins, family love. When Bungalow wants to help Jim renovate the roof of his old house, Bungalow brings with the women from the shelter to assist, and one of them is la Petite. At this time, Jim is working on his novel, but he still needs to establish the main character. Jim feels that la Petite could be the heroine of his novel (Rosbring, 2008).

Paternal love is very clear between Jim and la Petite, one can see it in their conversations, and there is nothing romantic between these two. They talk about their private lives, and challenges they faced in the past. La Petite is very honest with Jim. The young girl asks Jim to forget all about Marika and to forget his love for the woman no one has ever seen. La Petite helps Jim confront his obsession in order to restart his normal life again. Her presence gives Jim’s life a sense of purpose. Both Jim and la Petite reach a conclusion that they need human love in order to be satisfied, and Bungalow plays a significant role in helping them (Miraglia, 1990).

The adoption of la Petite by Jim is a fundamental turning point for both of them. Jim starts living his real life without dreaming of Marika and the unreal relationship. La Petite realises her dream of living in a family with no fear of the future. Well-being and happiness are presented subjectively through this theme. Teddy Bear and Marie truly achieve well-being and happiness by being together as they build their relationship on pure emotion, far from materialism. As well as Jim and la Petite also

find well-being and happiness by finding meaning in their lives as they create a family atmosphere between them and start a new life full of pure emotion.

In *Les Grandes Marées*, three PERMA pillars may be identified in relation to the theme of love. The first pillar is *Positive emotion* as this core element refers to the joy of living and to inspiration. Teddy tastes happiness and reaches a state of well-being when Marie shares her emotion with him. The second pillar is *Engagement*, which is strongly related to harmony in life. In their interaction Teddy and Marie find peace therefore, through being together they also find well-being and happiness. *Relationship* is the third pillar linked to the freedom of making friends in life. The couple have the freedom to stay together or leave each other, and Teddy and Marie decide to stay together as they believe that well-being and happiness may be realised through their deep friendship.

When applying the PERMA model to this theme in relation to *Le Vieux Chagrin*, we can see that love, as a catalyst for well-being and happiness, connects with the all five pillars of life satisfaction in terms of *Positive emotions, Engagement, Relationship, Meaning of life and Accomplishment*. Jim and la petite realise their ultimate goals in life and gain well-being and happiness through finding their essential roles in life. Jim returns to his normal life without being overtaken by his fantasies. La Petite also restarts her life through her adoption by Jim relating to *Engagement* and *Relationship* the two core elements of well-being and happiness.

3.4 The comfort of food

In our daily lives, having a nice meal or drink can give people comfort and joy especially if it is shared with the people we love. Poulin presents food as another element contributing to well-being and happiness. In *Les Grandes Marées*, Poulin

makes this very clear right from the beginning of the novel when Teddy Bear and his boss share a cup of coffee. Whether or not le Patron drinks that cup of coffee does not matter to Teddy Bear because the two men have opposite views of the world (“une tasse de café en vitesse” (GM 10)), indeed, we have established, the only point of connection between them is purely work-related (Rochon, 2009).

The situation is totally different when it comes to Marie, Teddy Bear’s soulmate, Teddy and Marie spend a comfortable and happy time drinking coffee together. When Marie asks Teddy to prepare coffee for them (which Teddy wants to make as good as possible for Marie), they sit next to the window to be comfortable and enjoy the best view. Marie takes small sips from her cup (“à petites gorgées en tenant la tasse au creux de ses mains” (GM 27)), while talking about their cats.

The couple also find happiness in sharing their meals. Teddy Bear and Marie eat at a small table, and they light two candles to create an intimate atmosphere. They enjoy having Graham crackers after dinner. When Teddy makes breakfast, Marie joins him to have breakfast without any disagreement. She says: “I always feel good when there is no aggressiveness” (“je me sens toujours bien quand il n’y a pas d’agressivité” (GM 59)). Teddy and Marie live peacefully, but also independently of one another. Independence is important for them because moments together are all more precious. This confirms that Teddy needs to build relationships that include private space. The Translator and Marie consider the small island as a terrestrial paradise. She says to Teddy (“j’ai même trouvé du miel. C’est le paradis terrestre ici” (GM 37)).

According to Rochon (2009), the honey mentioned here may refer to the sweetness of life, and could be a symbol of the pleasure of togetherness. Well-being and happiness are objectively demonstrated by the theme of comfort of food.

Noticeably, the peaceful engagement between Teddy Bear and Marie obviously refers to how they are happy and reaching a state of well-being while they share meals together as they feel happy and relaxed. The comfort of food relates to the PERMA pillars of *Positive emotion* and *Engagement* between Teddy Bear and Marie. The emotional effect of food leads to well-being and happiness as the couple creates a friendly environment therefore, they do not suffer any tension between them.

3.5 The peacefulness of nature

The theme of nature is very dominant in the poulinian fictional universe. The protagonists in Poulin's novels consider nature as a source of hope and happiness, which translates into well-being. Nature represents peace, tranquillity and a refuge for the main characters in the poulinian's sphere. Poulin uses nature to induce a state of contemplation and isolation. He inserts a deep secret in nature and in his literary work (Bourque, 1979). We can see the prevalence of nature in *Les Grandes Marées* right from the very beginning of the novel ("Il restait encore de la neige dans les sous bois" (GM 9) "il voyait que les oies étaient là" (GM 9)). Teddy Bear finds happiness when he observes trees and birds on the island, as nature does not force him or stop him from doing what he wants. Because of this, Teddy Bear and his cat Matousalem always go to the riverbank to watch the boats as the cat loves to play in a spacious place ("Le traducteur sortit avec lui et alla s'asseoir sur la grève" (GM 16)). According to Socken (1993b), in his article *Water imagery in the novels of Jacques Poulin*, water is a significant element in the poulinian universe. Water appears in almost all Poulin's novels. In *Les Grandes Marées*, the protagonist is surrounded by water which isolates and insulates him from the harshness of society.

Teddy and Marie share in a common love of nature. When Marie arrives to the island, she asks Teddy to take her on a tour to see the natural features of the island “pour regarder le coucher du soleil sur le fleuve” (GM 33). Teddy and Marie do not cut any trees or change anything natural on the island. They want to leave everything in its original state (Boivin, 2008).

One can see that there is a total harmony between the Translator, Marie and nature. Tension is at its lowest level when the pair talk about nature. Le Patron’s apparent aim is to make everyone on the island happy, so when he brings gifts for everyone, he is very thoughtful about what Teddy and Marie like and what they are interested in. Le Patron knows that Marie loves nature and birds so he gives her a book by R.T. Peterson entitled, ‘A Field Guide to Birds’ (GM 58). The Translator and Marie spend quality time together before their situation starts deteriorating with the arrival of Tête Heureuse on the island (Hebert 1997). (“[T]u connais beaucoup de choses sur les arbres et les animaux et les jardins et sur la nature en général” (GM 63)). Teddy and Marie have an interesting conversation about birds on the island and wild animals. The topic of nature brings them peace and calmness. One can see in the couple’s conversation, that there is no complication of tension.

In *Le Vieux Chagrin*, the theme of nature is also introduced from the very beginning (“Le printemps était arrivé. L’air était si doux que je descendis du grenier plut tôt que d’habitude. Je sortis sur la grève avec le Vieux Chagrin et je marchai jusqu’à l’extrémité de la baie” (VC 9)). The poulinian characters’ moods are affected by nature. One can see Jim’s reaction when the weather is pleasant as he walks to the furthest point of the bay. Jim absorbs nature’s energy. Furthermore, there is a unique relationship between Jim and the river which is near his house. He contemplates that river from the window of his room while writing. Jim says: “Mes

rapports avec le fleuve étaient ambigus. J'étais heureux de savoir que le fleuve était là, tout à côté, pendant que je travaillais. Il donnait me semblait-il, un peu de force et de régularité à ma pauvre inspiration" (VC 54). The Québec landscape is described and presented as a one of the most beautiful places in the world. Jim describes the old mountains, hills and the Saint Laurent River on his travels. ("La route était bonne pour moi: elle me consolait" (VC 130)). Jim believes these natural places help him to recover from the pressure of life when he needs a break. Moreover, according to Socken (1993b), water and the ability to write novels are linked. Jim can strengthen his inspiration from nature as both water and inspiration are harmonised. Through the theme of nature, well-being and happiness are presented subjectively as well as objectively. The main characters in both novels can feel happy and in a good mood when they spending time observing natural features such as rivers, mountains or birds. Moreover, the main characters can be energised and inspired by nature when they face difficulties in life.

The two pillars of the PERMA model *Positive emotion* and *Engagement* are highlighted in the theme of nature in *Les Grandes Marées* as these pillars deal with the psychological side of one's life. Nature has a significant effect on Teddy and Marie. It provides them with inspiration and peace therefore the state of well-being and happiness can be reached through direct contact with nature. Peacefulness of nature in *Le Vieux Chagrin* is also related to the same two of the PERMA pillars *Positive emotion* and *Engagement* through which the main characters find their life satisfaction as natural features can give energy and strength to the poulinian characters. Jim's inspiration in his daily life is drawn from nature, and this inspiration leads to well-being and happiness.

3.6 The company of cats

Cats are presented in the Poulinian novels as a symbol of an ultimate friendship. The Canadian author gives cats a prominent role in the two novels *Les Grandes Marées* and *Le Vieux Chagrin*. Importantly, the title *Le Vieux Chagrin* refers to a cat. The two protagonists in the two novels are cat lovers. The protagonists' cats are males, and the cats share some characteristics with their masters. These cats are old and skinny and like their masters. Cats love to be in calm and spacious places like their masters. In *Les Grandes Marées*, there are two cats. Teddy has a cat, Matousalem (a male) and Marie has one too, Moustache (a female). Teddy and Marie's cats love each other, mirroring their masters' feelings. These two cats do not fight over food or a place to sleep, and Teddy and Marie do not have any disagreements either. ("La chatte s'est laissée faire, puis ils ont bu un peu lait ensemble. Elle avait l'air de se sentir chez elle" (GM 34)). The Translator and Marie always talk about cats in very pleasant way, and they want to let the two cats spend as much as time they want together ("Les deux chats s'entendaient bien, et Marie, ne voulant pas les séparer, avait de laisser la chatte à la maison du Nord" (GM 61)). Poulin indicates that the cats are a source of happiness for both Teddy and Marie when he dedicates a whole chapter to the cats in the novel and names the chapter "UN HEUREUX ÉVÉNEMENT" (Chapter 37 p. 182). In that chapter, Marie's cat gives birth to three kittens.

Poulin focuses on the idea that pets share common behavioural traits with their masters and this is so clear when one looks at Tête Heureuse and her dog. Tête Heureuse contributes to bringing an imbalance on the island, so does her dog. The dog fights with cats, and the two cats are scared of the Tête Heureuse's dog ("Ils sont cachés sous la galerie" (GM 72)). The savage dog and the two cats do not get on at

all. The dog is a nuisance as Tête Heureuse (“Elle m'empêche de travailler et je n'aime pas son chien” (GM 92)).

In *Le Vieux Chagrin*, Chagrin the cat shares emotions with Jim. The cat feels the grief of his master when Jim's wife left him, he stays with Jim as he wants to console him (Rosbring, 2008). The relationship between Jim and his cat is not like any relationship between a human and an animal. Jim considers Chagrin as a real friend, and they completely understand each other. When Jim writes letters to Marika, he mentions the name of his cat in his letters (“*Le vieux Chagrin et moi, nous souhaitons que votre séjour parmi nous soit agréable*” (VC 15)) as Jim thinks that Chagrin is very valuable to him. He writes the cat's name in the letter to Marika to signify how important this cat is to him. Cats are preferred by Poulin's main characters in *Les Grandes Marées* and *Le Vieux Chagrin* as the protagonists always look for living in a peaceful environment with no arguing or disagreement, and they find that with their cats (“Tous les chats étaient mes amis” (VC 19)). Cats are living creatures so well-being and happiness are emotionally indicated through this theme in the two novels. Both cats provide well-being and happiness to the main characters as the cats share common things with their masters. This theme relates to two pillars of the PERMA model. The first pillar is *Engagement* between the main characters and cats, and the second pillar is the unique *Relationship* when cats are able to feel the emotions of their masters especially in *Le Vieux Chagrin*. Cats, in the poulinian fictional world, take the place of human friends, as pets may bring happiness to Poulin's characters more than humans do. It is a different type of engagement and relationship. This is another illustration of the individual happiness and well-being, which the poulinian protagonists can reach through their association with their pets. In this relationship, there is no competition or

arguing about material matters, and well-being and happiness may be achieved through this unique relationship.

3.7 Work routine and friendliness of books

The main protagonists in the two novels have similar professional characteristics. One translates and the other writes. Books are very important in the Poulinian's universe. According to Sevigny (2012) in her article *Réchauffer le cœur de quelqu'un*, books bring Poulin's main characters happiness and well-being. Poulin presents his main characters as very well organised men who respect their work and their work routine. According to Bastien (2008), Teddy Bear is not happy without his work as he finds his purpose in life through his work as a translator. According to Rochon (2012), the theme of writing is not new, however, Poulin includes writing as a central element right from his early work. The main characters in Poulin's novels seek a better world, and through writing they can achieve their dreams to create a world without conflicts or disagreements (Leduc, 2001). Through writing, they can express themselves without interacting with society; they are able to create a personal space. In *Les Grandes Marées*, Teddy Bear plans his daily life according to his work schedule. ("Il commençait à travailler vers huit heures" (GM 18)). When le Patron asks Teddy to do the translation, Teddy does his best to satisfy him ("Teddy s'éveilla de bonne heure et il eut envie de jeter un coup d'œil sur les bandes dessinées" (GM 61)). This illustrates what a genuine person Teddy is. This loyalty to his work gives Teddy the real sense of happiness. Teddy Bear considers the island to be a terrestrial paradise where he can organise work the way he wants and when le Patron starts bringing people to the island, Teddy feels that he will lose his paradise soon. The arrival of Tête Heureuse signifies the beginning of destruction of the Translator's work routine.

In spite of all the unpleasant incidents that take place on the island, Teddy still finds completeness and pleasure in his books, which are his refuge. Marie shares the same feeling about books, with Teddy and this is one of several common points between them. She is not a writer, but she is a book lover. Reading gives her tranquillity and peace (“Votre sac est drôlement lourd. C’est à cause des livres, dit-elle” (GM 31)). Usually Marie invites the Translator to join her to share reading time together. She is the reader, and the Translator is the listener. Teddy Bear and Marie complete each other harmoniously.

One day, when all the islanders have arrived, le Patron comes to the island with gifts for everybody. He knows about each person on that island and about what they prefer and what things suit them. The gifts for Teddy Bear and Marie are two books. One book is a new dictionary for Teddy, and the other book is Richard Brautigan’s latest novel for Marie. Le Patron does not bring Teddy and Marie anything else because he knows what makes these two people happy.

Marie asks the Translator to join her in her reading sessions. She involves herself deeply in reading because she is looking for happiness through her books (“Elle ferma les yeux et se recueillit durant plusieurs minutes. Puis elle récita, de sa voix ferme et douce.” (GM 51), “Je vais te la raconter si tu m’invites, dit-elle.” (GM 123)). The Translator wants to share Marie’s feeling by closing his eyes and listening carefully during their reading session. Teddy and Marie are mentally close to one another, and that makes their conversations and thoughts all the more harmonious. (“je suis content que tu sois là” (GM 52)).

In *Le Vieux Chagrin*, as a writer, the main character has a deep relationship with his books. He finds himself and he finds happiness while he writes in his office (“il

passé toute sa journée à écrire au grenier” (VC 30)). According to Weiss (1993), writing represents a liberation from life’s daily challenges. Writing gives Jim another take on life. Jim can create his own world through writing, and this imaginary world is perfect with no war, conflicts or injustice. Writing is Jim’s tool to change his reality and to create happiness in his life (“J’aime beaucoup mon travail et je n’en changerais pas pour tout l’or du monde” (VC 87)). Jim does not feel happy when he stops writing, and not writing is very painful for him. Sometimes he just loses his motivation for writing due to something beyond his control (“Depuis une semaine, je ne travaillais pas bien. Il m’est pénible d’avouer” (VC 135)). However, writing gives Jim hope to keep going with his daily life. Writing also is the only way to communicate with Marika. He writes several letters to her in order to let her know how much he loves her (“vous vivez dans mon cœur” (VC 16)). Furthermore, when the adoption of la Petite is confirmed, Jim writes an adoption notice. La Petite wants a written contract in order to keep it with her. The adoption letter signed by Jim signifies the start of a new life for la Petite and her adoptive father.

Through books and work, well-being and happiness are objectively presented. Teddy Bear and Jim reach a state of well-being and happiness as through their works, as they feel they achieve their purpose in life. Reading books gives the poulinian characters peace as they consider books as true friends. Work and books in the poulinian universe convey elements of *Engagement*, (as well as Friendship) and *Accomplishment* as featured in the PERMA model. The powerful emotional side of work and books plays a dominant role in the main characters’ lives in Poulin’s novelistic universe. As a writer or a translator, they can taste the flavour of well-being and happiness through the feeling of being useful people and by accomplishing their tasks, which they love.

3.8 The necessity of sport

When we read Jacques Poulin's novels, we stop thinking about stereotyping of sport and literature as these two activities have nothing in common (Mainguy, 2010). In general, Canadians who practice sporting activities do it for health and fitness (Boivin, 1999). Poulin gives sport an important role in his novels. Some protagonists in his novels consider practicing sport as a ritual because this can give them energy and bring well-being. In *Les Grandes Marées* and *Le Vieux Chagrin*, the main characters Teddy Bear and Jim are book lovers, and both of them love sport specially playing tennis. Teddy Bear, a middle-aged man not particularly athletic, appreciates tennis. Teddy considers that playing tennis with le Prince – a sophisticated machine for throwing tennis balls – to be a ritual, like showering or having meals (Mainguy, 2010). Even though Teddy bear plays tennis with a machine by himself, he respects the rules of the game by even wearing a tennis uniform although he is by himself on the island. Poulin further emphasises the role of the tennis in *Les Grandes Marées* by situating the tennis court right at the geographical centre of the island.

Teddy Bear and Marie love to play tennis, and this is another shared hobby between them (“J’aime beaucoup le tennis moi aussi et je trouve que le Prince est très beau” (GM 36)). Playing tennis helps both of them minimise the tension, which is caused by the other islanders who have disagreements with them.

In *Le Vieux Chagrin*, one can see how strong the relationship is between the protagonist Jim and tennis is. (“au tennis.... [m]on corps et mon âme se trouvaient en harmonie parfaite” (VC 20)). Jim appears to be a natural tennis player when he plays, as he is relaxed when he hits the ball.

Moreover, when Jim practices tennis with his younger brother Francis, Jim feels that during these moments that he is very close to his brother. The two brothers share a feeling of harmony between their souls and their bodies (Mainguy, 2010). Well-being and happiness are embodied by playing tennis together. Jacques Poulin presents sports in several of his novels, such as *Jimmy*, *Le Cœur de la Baleine Bleue*, *Faites de beaux rêves* and *L'anglais n'est pas une langue magique*.

In these books, Poulin talks about different kinds of sports. For example, in *Le Cœur de la Baleine Bleue* he features ice hockey, a very popular sport in Québec. The author refers to this sport as binding people together. Poulin has chosen tennis in *Les Grandes Marées* and *Le Vieux Chagrin* as tennis is not an aggressive sport, and the second reason is one can play tennis individually as tennis is not necessarily a team sport like other kinds of sports such as football, basketball or volleyball (Desmeules, 1999). Sport is presented in Poulin's novels as physical and mental well-being because it gives the main characters life satisfaction. Sport is another image of objective well-being and happiness in the Poulin's work. Sport is considered as a ritual activity by the poulinian characters as it gives them motivation for their daily life. The PERMA pillar of *Positive emotion* can be identified through the theme of sport because this core pillar is strongly linked to the need both main characters in the novels have to focus on physical activities. They find the ultimate harmony between their souls and their bodies when they engage deeply with sport. Sport can take the poulinian characters to a world without distraction therefore, placing them in a state of well-being and happiness.

3.9 The sweetness of death

When we think about death, the first thing that comes to mind is pain, separation and sadness. However paradoxically, in the universe of Jacques Poulin's novels, the state of well-being and happiness may be connected to death. Death does not appear in *Les Grandes Marées* and *Le Vieux Chagrin*. However; the Canadian author presents death as a state of happiness in the novel of *Le Cœur de la Baleine Bleue* in which he writes: "la douceur la plus grande, c'est la mort" (CBB), and he mentions this notion in the novel more than once "la mort c'est la dernière étape de la douceur. La mort c'est la douceur absolue" (CBB). Noel, the main character in *Le Cœur de la Baleine Bleue*, has a serious heart condition for which he has to have a heart transplant. Noel thinks that life is a struggle, challenging and aggressive. He is not able to find well-being and happiness ("la vie, constate Noel, c'est l'agressivité" (CBB)). However, he believes that his death will set him free from his suffering and his pain (Ricard, 1974). Moreover, Noel believes that in death he will find tranquillity and peace ("La mort, c'est le calme, le repos. C'est l'absence de mouvement et la paix" (CBB)).

In *Le Cœur de la Baleine Bleue*, Noel makes a link not only between death and happiness, but also between childhood and death ("je le suis maintenant, le pôle intérieur, c'est l'enfance" (CBB)). Noel is fascinated by the young girl who gave her heart to him. He becomes "l'homme au cœur de jeune fille" (CBB), and he considers her as a heavenly female. He feels that the young girl incarnates childhood, beauty, and purity. This heavenly young girl is very close to Noel because he has her heart transplanted, yet she is not reachable (Ricard, 1974). Noel is an unusual character in the poulinian world because he sees happiness from a very different angle unlike other poulinian protagonists. Perhaps he wants to rest from his physical pain or he is very

eager to meet that young girl, the heart donor, in the hereafter. The theme of death contrasts with the other themes in the poulinian universe as it represents well-being and happiness in a very distinctive way. Well-being and happiness are demonstrated subjectively and as well as objectively by this theme. Noticeably, Noel is a sick person who has limitations in his life. He is not able to engage with other as a normal person. Consequently, through death he imagines that he will be able to be free from his limitation. On the other hand, Noel thinks through death he will be able to meet the girl who has given him her heart in order to share a pure emotion and to build a relationship with her in the hereafter. The two core pillars of the PERMA model, *Positive emotion* and *Relationship* can be seen through the theme of death, as it is strongly associated with the psychological side of one's life. Noel has very optimistic thoughts of death. His positive feeling about death provides him with hope and joy therefore he is ready for his death. He is willing to leave his earthly life in order to gain the ultimate well-being and happiness by meeting the girl who is now part of him.

3.10 The lost paradise

As an anti-thesis theme, the lost paradise in the poulinian fictional world represents the loss of well-being and happiness. Therefore, we include this theme in this chapter in order to gain more understanding of the manifestation of well-being and happiness in the two novels. However; *Les Grandes Marées* illustrates the theme of the lost paradise more evidently than *Le Vieux Chagrin*.

In *Les Grandes Marées*, the difference in points of views between le Patron and Teddy Bear is fundamental to Teddy Bear's demise on the island. Le Patron is not affected by the changes he brings to the island because he is the decision maker, unlike Teddy Bear who has no agency over his fate on the island. For example, to le

Patron, happiness means to be with others and making money (“quand on a un million, mon cher Teddy, la seule chose qu’on veut c’est un deuxième million” (GM 56)). However, unlike his boss, the Translator finds happiness in simplicity and in being with his beloved dictionaries (“il avait toujours aimé les dictionnaires et les encyclopedies.” (GM 18)). Teddy Bear is never concerned with money nor is money ever referred to in the novel, except in relation to le Patron.

As we have seen previously, in order to provide happiness to Teddy Bear through companionship, le Patron starts bringing people onto Ile Madame. However later in the narrative, others try to impose their own view of happiness on the Translator. Le Patron is convinced that happiness can only take place in a social environment. This is the reason why Marie the second character, appears on the island one day. Marie is the only person who can bring happiness to the Translator as both Teddy Bear and Marie have common interests such as a love of nature, books and even cats.

In *Le Vieux Chagrin*, Poulin presents the theme of the lost paradise in an emotional way. Jim, the main character, looks for love with a woman he has never met in an imaginary story (Soken, 1993b). Jim is obsessed by Marika, (“dans ma tête et dans mon cœur, ce fut le nom de Marika qui résonna pour toujours.” (VC 14)). Jim feels that the woman has a magical power over him. Obsessive thinking about Marika stops Jim from writing, and Jim considers his job as a refuge when he needs to escape from his over active imagination (“J’aime beaucoup mon travail et je n’en changerais pas pour tout l’or du monde” (VC 87)). The imaginary love story with Marika changes Jim’s life. Jim loses his motivation for writing, and Marika becomes the most important thing in his life. He stops writing his story and starts writing letters to the imaginary

Marika. The theme of the lost paradise in the poulinian universe demonstrates the other face of happiness and well-being.

3.11 Chapter conclusion

In this chapter, we have presented a panoramic image of the concepts of well-being and happiness in the poulinian world. These concepts are revealed through a range of themes. Happiness, love, food, nature, cats, work, books and even death are used by Poulin to manifest well-being and happiness. The main characters in Poulin's works consider well-being as a source of energy or as a refuge when they need to be sheltered from life. There is a strong connection between these themes and the personalities of the main characters in the poulinian universe. Also, we have highlighted the anti-thesis theme of the lost paradise and how well-being and happiness are taken from the poulinian characters through this theme.

Conclusion

The thrust of our study has been the manifestation of well-being and happiness in the poulinian universe through two novels. We have started our study by presenting the socio-cultural background of Québec in terms of the formation of the French Canadian society in North America we have then highlighted the most significant events in Québec's history and showed how these important events have influenced Jacques Poulin and his fictional characters. The major impact of the Quiet Revolution opened the door to the Canadian writers in the era of 1960s to be more creative in terms of choosing the themes of writing. Jacques Poulin was a good example of creativity writing in relation to various themes. We have summarised Poulin's life and made mention of the entire work of the Canadian author and his unique way of writing. We have presented the contextual aspect of the two novels studied *Les Grandes Marées* and *Le Vieux Chagrin*, as well as provided a summary of each novel. We have identified and commented on the main themes in the two novels, and showed how these themes interacted together. We have exposed the aim of our study centred the expression of well-being and happiness through a thematic approach. In our study, we have made reference to relevant academic articles to support our claims.

We have subsequently provided a definition of well-being and happiness in order to frame our analysis of these concepts referring in particular to the subjective and the objective aspects. These aspects, which have been identified through the texts, are represented by five pillars *Positive emotion, Engagement, Relationship, Meaning and purpose* and *Accomplishment* [PERMA].

In our study focusing on *Les Grandes Marées* and *Le Vieux Chagrin*, we have identified examples of the manifestation of well-being and happiness. In *Les Grandes Marées*, these concepts are mainly manifested through Teddy Bear, the main character, an isolated person on a personal quest for life fulfilment. In this novel, through the creation of a micro-society, Poulin stages the situation in which well-being and happiness become a collective experience. This experience must be engineered by society for the good of society in which the individual pursuit of happiness has no place, leaving people like Teddy Bear to be marginalised because they are socially unfit, and therefore do not deserve collective and participative happiness. In the beginning of *Les Grandes Marées*, the main character considers himself a satisfied person as he leads a simple life on the small and isolated island. However, he ends up dissatisfied by his social experience, and he is eventually exiled from the island as the other islanders and his boss who impose their social views on how to attain well-being and happiness to Teddy Bear. The different vision of well-being and happiness has led to ruin Teddy Bear's balanced life satisfaction that he had carefully achieved on his own on the island. At the end of the novel, Teddy Bear ends up alone and only left with memories of ephemeral happiness. Both Teddy Bear's happiness and sense of well-being have evaporated, as the Translator is incapable of adapting to the new social environment, from which he was eventually exiled. In the last chapter of the novel, in the image of the stone statue he contemplates, strangely looking like him. Teddy Bear has lost his essential purpose in life and has been stripped of his humanity ("Le traducteur réussit à s'approcher du vieil homme. Quand il fut tout près, il se mit debout et lui toucha doucement le visage. Le vieux n'était pas vivant : il avait la peau dure comme la pierre." (GM 209)).

In contrast with Teddy Bear's initial happiness and sense of well-being, in the beginning of *Le Vieux Chagrin*, Jim is trapped between a dull life and a fertile imagination. He tries to find tranquillity in life through imaginary love but does not realise his dream as solitude and introspection lead to obsession and alienation. However, in contrast with *Les Grandes Marées*, *Le Vieux Chagrin* ends happily, and unlike Teddy Bear, Jim moves from a state of loneliness to being part of a family unit, for which he becomes responsible. In Jim's case, well-being and happiness are realised through social inclusion.

Teddy Bear and Jim's journey in their pursuit of happiness, well-being and life satisfaction are inversed. One succeeds while the other one fails. Through his exploration of well-being and happiness, Poulin has woven a subtle message through his narratives: life satisfaction cannot be achieved alone, nor can it be achieved through social construct and imposition. However, people can be happy and satisfied through intimacy, mutual understanding and the simplicity of everyday life. Happiness cannot be forced on people, rather it must flourish naturally and emotionally through meaningful interactions.

Through the two novels we have studied, Poulin presents the essence of life through simplicity and genuine relationships. Jacques Poulin criticises modern society, and how the material world can change people and takes them away from the real meaning of life, which is based on love, empathy and respect. He believes that simplicity in life can bring about complete fulfilment in every way. The two main characters in both novels are clear examples for the non-materialist characters inhabiting the poulinian world.

The PERMA model, as a framework for well-being, has allowed us to identify manifestations of the characters' inner happiness, well-being and contentment. Their life satisfaction is closely influenced by their state of mind, their freedom of choice, and the people with whom they chose to be. In order to reach contentment, it is essential for them to be in places where they can reflect on their life and be with people who, like them, consider simplicity of life as the key to fulfilment.

Due to the time limitation, we could not explore well-being and happiness in Poulin's other novels. Given their similar characteristics, *La Tournée d'automne* (1993) and *Les Yeux bleus de Mistassini* (2002), could also be the two other novels where the five core pillars of the PERMA model may be applied, as these two poulinian novels present the notion of well-being and happiness vividly throughout their themes such as work, books, love and cats. In both novels, the main characters are deeply human and share similar characteristics such as old age, passion for books and love of life. In *La Tournée d'automne*, we can see the contrast between old age and death, on the one hand, and love of life, on the other hand, as the two main characters hope to achieve their goals later in life. In a similar way, in *Les Yeux bleus de Mistassini*, Poulin presents the interaction between generations, as the main character is an old man who wants to realise his goal through interaction with the young people Jimmy and his sister Mistassini in a fraternal way. A similar PERMA-based analysis focusing on passion for books, work and nature could elicit data on well-being and happiness that could be compared to the findings of the present study.

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Appendix 1

Jacques Poulin's Bibliography (1967 – 2015)

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