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STYLING A NATION:
THEATRE AND BELONGING IN QUÉBEC

by

ERIN HURLEY

A dissertation submitted to the Graduate Faculty in Theatre in partial fulfillment of the requirements for the degree of Doctor of Philosophy, The City University of New York

2000

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Abstract

STYLING A NATION: THEATRE AND BELONGING IN QUÉBEC

by

Erin Hurley

Advisor: Professor Marvin Carlson

How is a nation invented? And how does that invention come to be lived as fact by those who would be its nationals? These two questions are fundamental to scholarly work on the nation in the social sciences and in postcolonial studies. "Styling a Nation: Theatre and Belonging in Québec" proposes that some of the more productive and provocative answers to these questions are supplied by the practices and analytical tools of theatre and performance.

I take as my case study the production of *le fait national* (the national fact) and its attendant identity in the postcolonial "cultural nation" of Québec, locating these processes in the material practices of québécois theatre and cultural performance. I propose the concept of "style" as the means for investigating the naturalization of the invented nation. I argue that québécois style, or *québécité*, as practiced in and disseminated through theatrical and cultural performance, is the means by which the national fiction is reproduced as fact. "Styling a Nation" examines the changing contours of Québec nation-ness, or *québécité*, from 1967 to 1999 in relation to national movements within Québec and Canada and to global systems, including anticolonial political movements, intercultural theatre, transnational capitalism, and immigration.

Through extended analyses of four different performance forms, this dissertation queries performance's various contributions and challenges to the *indépendentist* national project and examines its potential for modeling new forms of *québécité*. Chapter one analyzes the concept of the nation across a range of disciplines, using the 1967 World's Fair as a locus of competing national discourses. Chapter two analyzes dramatic realism as the preferred style of *québécité* during the cultural nationalist period of the early 1970s in Michel Tremblay's *Les Belles-Soeurs*. Chapter three focuses on dance-theatre troupe Carbone 14 and their performative investigations of québécois history during the 1980s and 1990s. Chapter four considers the trans-national style of Montreal's globe-trotting circus, the Cirque du Soleil. Finally, the Epilogue examines the stresses of immigration and the pressures of linguistic assimilation on *québécité* through two manifesto-poems: Michèle Lalonde's "Speak White" (1971) and Marco Micone's "Speak What" (1986).

Acknowledgements

The kernel of this dissertation was formed in conversation with its eventual director, Marvin Carlson. In the time since that exploratory independent study on québécois theatre, I have benefitted from the gifts he bestows on all those lucky enough to study with him: his consistently provocative engagement with and investment in our work, his expressive intellectual curiosity, and his quiet patience. Marvin's seemingly limitless knowledge is matched only by his expansive generosity (and his expansive library). He told me once that there are two kinds of scholars: those who burrow deeply into a single specialty, and those who range widely over a number of specialities. Marvin, of course, is both kinds at once. His fine example is one from which I learned a tremendous amount and which I strive to emulate.

The theoretical and critical framework within which this dissertation operates derives in large part from my studies with Jill Dolan. Her foundational work on feminst, gay and lesbian theatre and identity deeply informs my own on national identity and feeds my desire to render national discourses more inclusive and flexible than, regrettably, they often are. Her consistent enthusiasm for my work and for this project in particular buoyed my occasionally sagging spirits; her incisive feedback prompted generative lines of inquiry and sharpened their argumentation. I am hugely fortunate and deeply grateful for her attention to my work and my professional development.

Patricia Ticineto Clough introduced me to the rich field of social theory in the graduate seminar I took with her at CUNY. Her insights into the place of psychic processes in social processes fed my interest in identification and nationalism. I am

grateful for the feminist and interdisciplinary model her work her work provides – straddling sociology, anthropology, and media studies – and for her willingness to to straddle yet another disciplinary divide by participating on this dissertation committee.

I am thankful that Denis Salter, my undergraduate mentor at McGill University, remains an important part of my professional life. He first taught me how to read the theatre in its textual and material manifestations, while instilling an enthusiasm for what historical inquiry and critical engagement could reveal. During my Masters, it was Denis who introduced me to the Association for Canadian Theatre Research, a professional association I have found as welcoming, encouraging, and stimulating as Denis himself. In his capacity as outside reader for this dissertation, Denis provided detailed feedback, particularly on the *Belles-Soeurs* and Cirque chapters. His unstinting good will and generosity toward my work is deeply appreciated.

This dissertation was researched and written in several different locations. I was fortunate to find smart, supportive and fun fellow-dissertaters in each place. In New York, Jill Lane, Ted Ziter, Sharon Green, and Jay Plum very generously read and commented on sections of this project at various stages; I benefitted enormously not only from their insightful and kind-hearted readings of my work, but also from their congenial/collegial spirits and the examples they provided me with compelling original work. In San Francisco, Phaedra Bell was kind enough not only to befriend me, but also to help put together a dissertation group comprised of Phaedra, Mimi McGurl, and Christopher Gabbard. I thank them for their feedback, encouragement, and monthly deadlines and, most important, their friendship in what were, to me, new environs. In Providence, Mark Cohen was a sympathetic colleague and dear friend; I am grateful for

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Jennifer Harvie has been both a cherished friend and a superlative colleague since our days at McGill. The chapter on the Cirque du Soleil was written in large part during the time when we were co-authoring an article on the Cirque and Robert Lepage. During that time, Jen shared her acute insights on the Cirque and on my work with her usual wit, charm, and warmth. I could not have written the Cirque chapter without her and pleased to acknowledge her strong and welcome influence on it.

Mark Elkin has sustained this project, and more importantly, this writer, in more ways than can be counted. I am greatly indebted to him for his kind spirit, wit, curiosity, and great love during the dissertation process. I look forward to being the benefactor of Mark's joyful gifts for the rest of my life.

My family's contributions to the educational process of which this dissertation is the culmination are vast. The love and support so freely given me by my parents, Morrison and Brenda Hurley, and my brother, Rob Hurley, have sustained me through my professional and personal development. Without my brother's technical wizardry, this dissertation would lack illustrations and footnotes. Thanks, Rob! My parents have always encouraged and supported my work and the choices I have made in order to pursue it. I would like to dedicate this dissertation to them.

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Nation and the Mimetic Faculty

The concept of the nation is a troubled yet fascinating one in social science and humanities discourses. Critical interest in the concept has waxed and waned over the course of the twentieth century. However, never has the nation – and its affective dimension, nationalism – been so thoroughly interrogated from so many different disciplinary angles as now, on the cusp of the twenty-first century and a new millennium. As Benedict Anderson points out in his introduction to the edited volume, *Mapping the Nation*, despite the intensity of focus on the nation and the lengthy history of nationalism, no widely held definition exists.

> No one has been able to demonstrate decisively either [the nation's] modernity or its antiquity. Disagreement over its origins is matched by uncertainty about its future. Its global spread is read through the malignant metaphor of metastasis as well as under the smiling signs of identity and emancipation; and where did these processes begin – in the New World or the Old?[1]

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[1] Benedict Anderson, "Introduction," in *Mapping the Nation*, ed. Gopal Balakrishnan (London: Verso, in association with New Left Review, 1996), 1 - 16; here, 1.

The definitional and evaluative uncertainty surrounding the nation has spawned numerous texts regarding its features, histories, and origins across the social sciences and humanities disciplines, each of which has generated its own modular forms of the nation. My project, "Styling a Nation: Theatre and Belonging in Québec," proposes that some of the more productive and provocative insights into the nation form are supplied by the practices and analytical tools of theatre and performance. This introductory chapter outlines the ambivalent and variegated forms the nation has taken since the rise of modern studies in the nation form across social science and humanities disciplines. My analysis reveals a constitutive aporia in these discussions: theatrical performance. I argue that it is precisely that which is overlooked in these discussions that enables the invented nation to be lived as a fact by its nationals. Rewriting the narrative of the nation through theatre as a set of practices and heuristic devices not only completes the logic of social science and humanities work on the nation, but also alters the constitution of the nation-form as object. "Styling a Nation: Theatre and Belonging in Québec" proposes another lens through which one might read the nation: as a theatrical subject.

The Nation Form

Historical inquiry dominated early studies of the nation form. Concerned with illuminating the nation's past and uncovering its origins, historians model the nation as a community of people who share a common history and historical awareness. Ernest Renan delivered what is now considered the classical statement on the nation and its

features at the Sorbonne in 1882, "Qu'est-ce qu'une nation?"[2] In his address, Renan argues that the nation is a spiritual principle constituted by the common possession of memories and present-day consent accomplished through the oft-quoted "daily plebiscite." Interestingly, Renan emphasizes the importance not only of memory to national cohesion, but rather of forgetting or historical error ("*l'erreur historique*"). He writes that to be a cohesive force in society, national memory must be selective. As a result, the work of historians can be dangerous for the principle of nationality, reminding the nation, as it might, of divisive events in national history. On the other hand, contemporary English historian Eric Hobsbawm underscores the necessity of history and its makers to national movements writing, "Nations without a past are contradictions in terms. What makes a nation *is* the past." He understands historians and their work as essential to the process of nation-formation writing, "Historians are to nationalism what poppy-growers are to heroin addicts: we supply the essential raw material for the market."[3] These providers of nation-building fodder were also among the first to engage critically with the results of their contributions.

The work of historians was later supplemented by social scientists from the disciplines of political science, international relations, sociology, and anthropology. Political scientists and international relations specialists focus on the statist features of the nation and understand it as a set of political institutions comprising a civil government.

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[2] Renan's address has been frequently anthologized in translation as "What is a Nation?" See Ernest Renan, "What is a Nation?," in *Becoming National: A Reader*, ed. Geoff Eley and Ronald Grigor Suny (Oxford and New York: Oxford University Press, 1996), 42 - 55.

[3] Eric J. Hobsbawm, "Ethnicity and Nationalism in Europe Today," in *Mapping the Nation*, 255 - 266; here, 255.

Moreover, they understand national units as the core of political, economic, and cultural relations both internal and external to national borders. Key concerns are the relationship between nation and state often formulated in the question, "How does a nation become a state?"[4] International relations specialists situate nations in a comparative frame of analysis and concentrate on the roles of state actors in international organizations of trade and security. Consonant with the tenets and *raisons d'êtres* of their disciplines, sociologists and anthropologists tend to analyze the nation as a form of social organization and community. For example, Romanian cultural anthropologist Katherine Verdery defines the nation as "a system of social classification [which is] both symbolic and instrumental . . . . [I]t is an ideological construct essential to assigning subject positions in the modern state, as well as in the international order. "[5]

Historians and social scientists have joined in their attempts to discover the origin of the nation as a form of community. The answers they provide can be divided into two positions. The first of these is often referred to as "primordialist" or "ethnic"; the second as "modernist" or "civic."[6] The terms of the debate adhere fairly closely to the outlines of

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[4] See, for example, Charles Taylor, "Why Do Nations Have to Become States?," in *Reconciling the Solitudes: Essays on Canadian Federalism and Nationalism*, ed. Guy Laforest (Montreal and Kingston: McGill-Queens University Press, 1993), 40 - 58; Charles Taylor, "De la nation culturelle à la nation politique" *Le Devoir* (édition internet), www.ledevoir.com/ago/1999a/ntaylor.html.

[5] Katherine Verdery, "Whither 'Nation' and 'Nationalism'?," in *Mapping the Nation*, 226 - 234; here, 226.

[6] The former is generally associated with the German Romantic nationalism of Johann Gottfried von Herder and Johann Gottleib Fichte, the latter with the experience of the French Revolution. See David McCrone, *The Sociology of Nationalism: Tomorrow's Ancestors* (London and New York: Routledge, 1998); Geoff Eley and Ronald Grigor Suny, "Introduction: From the Moment of Social History to the Work of Cultural

the essentialist/constructivist debates common in the humanities. Primordialists place the origin of the nation in the familial or kinship structure. For instance, American sociologist Pierre Van Den Berghe argues that nations, like ethnic and racial groups, are based on nepotism and kin selection; in other words, they constitute "superfamilies."[7] English sociologist Anthony D. Smith argues that the specificity of ethnic collectivities found in their "myth-symbol complex" forms the basis of national communities. U.S. political scientist John Armstrong asserts that nations preexist nationalism writing that "modern nationalism [is] part of a cycle of ethnic consciousness" evident over the *longue durée*.[8] For each of these commentators, the nation is an organic outgrowth of a prior community of language, territory, religion, or culture. Put differently, primordialists assert that nations, defined as larger-scale, ethnic communities, pre-exist nationalism, the "political principle that holds that the political and national unit should be congruent."[9] In Smith's words, primordialists argue "for the 'reality' of nations, and the almost 'natural' quality of ethnic belonging."[10]

Representation," in *Becoming National*, 3 - 37; and Michael Keating, *Nations against the State: The New Politics of Nationalism in Quebec, Catalonia and Scotland* (London: MacMillan Press, Ltd., 1996).

[7] Pierre Van Den Berghe, "A Socio-Biological Perspective," in *Nationalism*, ed. John Hutchinson and Anthony D. Smith (Oxford and New York: Oxford University Press, 1994), 96 - 103.

[8] John Armstrong, "Nations Before Nationalism," in *Nationalism*, 140 – 146; here, 141.

[9] Ernest Gellner, "The Coming of Nationalism and its Interpretation: The Myths of Nation and Class," in *Mapping the Nation*, 98 - 145.

[10] Anthony D. Smith, "The Origins of Nations," in *Becoming National*, 106 - 130; here, 107.

One of the goals of the "modernist" view of nation-formation is to dissociate the ethnic from the national, the cultural from the political, an association on which primoridialist and ethnic theories rely for their coherence. They do this in large part by analyzing the nation not as a self with a "personality" or an organic outgrowth of the *ethnie*, but rather as a response to changing socio-political and economic conditions. In national personality-based, ethnic theories of the nation "the history of nations . . . is always already presented to us in the form of a narrative which attributes to these entities the continuity of a subject."[11] Where ethnic theorists place nations before nationalism in time and import, modernists or civic theorists assert the reverse. Their credo was most famously articulated by the Czech sociologist who pioneered the modernist perspective, Ernest Gellner: "Nationalism makes nations." In other words, the political and/or economic need for national social units creates those units; nations are an organizational response resulting in the bounded entity of the nation, not essential beings with ancient pedigrees.

It is perhaps unsurprising that a sociologist first came up with this theory, given the discipline's founding agenda of "explain[ing] the Great Transformation from pre-industrial, pre-modern to industrial, modern society."[12] Gellner, in *Nations and Nationalism*, argues that the nation is the signal result of modernity and industrialization. From this perspective, the Great Transformation requires homogeneity, a single high culture, and progress in order to ensure its material self-preservation. This homogenizing

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[11] Etienne Balibar, "The Nation Form: History and Ideology," in *Race, Nation, Class: Ambiguous Identities*, ed. Etienne Balibar and Immanual Wallerstein (London and New York: Verso, 1991), 86 - 106; here, 86.

[12] McCrone, 17.

drive of capitalism gives rise to national units.[13] Fellow modernist, anthropologist Benedict Anderson, attributes the rise of the nation to one of modernity's key features: print capitalism. He defines the nation as a cultural artifact, arguing that print capitalism's standardization of national languages and creation of a national public created the conditions of possibility for nation-formation.[14] Social science literature on the nation evinces a shifting emphasis away from ethnic/cultural and toward economic/political determinants.

Despite the differing conclusions regarding the nation's origin and development offered by primordialists and modernists, each of these viewpoints shares a common assumption on which their work rests. They presume that the nation is an entity or thing – a bounded, integrated social unit characterized by the properties it bears. Those distinctive properties are to be found in the past (via historical inquiry), in the *ethnie* (via anthropological fieldwork), in its organizational structures (via sociological data), and in the evidence of representative political institutions (via political science). Whether positioning the nation as either subjective being or objective response, both primordialists and modernists endow the nation with a facticity or reality in their analyses that is either "natural" (primordialists) or "material" (modernists). For instance, Anderson writes of the nation as analogous to a "sociological organism."[15] According to anthropologist Richard

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[13] Ernest Gellner, *Nations and Nationalism* (Ithaca: Cornell University Press, 1983).

[14] Benedict Anderson, *Imagined Communities: Reflections on the Origin and Spread of Nationalism*, rev. ed. (London: Verso, 1983).

[15] Anderson, *Imagined Communities*, 26.

Handler, these presuppositions of boundedness, on which the epistemology of "entitivity" depends, "dominate . . . social science discourse, which takes discrete social entities, such as 'societies' and 'cultures,' as the normal units of analysis." He continues

> "Nation," "state," "society," "group," "family," and so on . . . are understood in terms of the same presuppositions that underpin our commonsense notion of what a thing is. Like a thing, the nation or ethnic group is taken to be bounded, continuous, and precisely distinguishable from other analogous entities.[16]

Hence the nation is unified and recognizable in the same way that a thing is. This understanding of the nation as a thing is important to underscore because it begets a particular conception of the relationship of culture and cultural production to nation and national processes that this project strives to challenge. If the nation is an entity distinguishable from other national entities, the "content" of its distinction is provided by culture. In this perspective, national culture becomes the expression of the nation's self, recapitulating a Romantic model of "expression/blockage, which presumes a self behind it."[17] Culture, therefore, is derivative of nation, a secondary process stemming from the nation as subject, or the contents of the object-nation, proof of its nation-ness.

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[16] Richard Handler, *Nationalism and the Politics of Culture in Quebec* (Madison: University of Wisconsin Press, 1988), 7 and 15.

[17] Terry Eagleton, "Nationalism: Irony and Commitment," in *Nationalism, Colonialism, and Literature*, ed. Seamus Deane (Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press, 1990), 23 - 39; here, 28. See also Elizabeth Grosz, *Volatile Bodies: Toward a Corporeal Feminism* (Bloomington and Indianapolis: Indiana University Press, 1994) for her allied discussion of the body as transparent conduit of "inner" forces.

The two most significant challenges to this entity model of the nation and its subsequent devaluation of culture arise when considering the relationship of colonialism to nation-formation and postcolonial national movements to the nation form. Postcolonial scholars underscore the inadequacy of the entity model on two grounds. First, the entity model of the nation is based in Enlightenment conceptions of the unified and knowable subject, a notion less easily applicable to people, their identities, or nations of the twentieth century. The experiences of postmodernity and the linguistic and cultural "turns" in critical theory which seek to describe and analyze them reveal the Enlightenment subject as fiction, not fact.[18] Postmodern anthropology and sociology have deconstructed the impact of their disciplinary formations and those formations' assumptions on the creation of unified wholes including the self, culture, and society. [19] These "turns" have been incorporated into recent social science discourse on the nation, altering their conception of the nation as subject with a personality to an objective response to changing conditions to a persuasive fiction constituted through ideological and imaginative labour. Disavowing the "selfhood" of the nation form, poststructuralist critics of the nation understand the nation form as a category of practice not a category of

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[18] See Grosz, especially Part One, for a critical history of the Enlightenment subject and its deconstruction.

[19] In anthropology see James Clifford and George E. Marcus, eds. *Writing Culture: The Poetics and Politics of Ethnography, Experiments in Contemporary Anthropology* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1986) ; James Clifford, *The Predicament of Culture: Twentieth-Century Ethnography, Literature, and Art.* (Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 1988); in sociology see Patricia Ticineto Clough, *The End(s) of Ethnography: From Realism to Social Criticism* (Newbury Park: Sage Publications, 1992) and Patricia Ticineto Clough, *Feminist Thought : Desire, Power, and Academic Discourse* (Oxford and Cambridge, MA: Oxford University Press and Blackwell, 1994). In political science see Charles Taylor, *Sources of the Self: The Making of the Modern Identity* (Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 1989).

being, a relation not a thing. As Rogers Brubaker writes, "'Nation' is a category of 'practice,' not (in the first instance) a category of analysis. To understand nationalism, we have to understand the practical uses of the category 'nation,' the ways it can come to structure perception, to inform thought and experience, to organise discourse and political action."[20]

The processes of colonization and decolonization further underscore the inadequacy of the entity model of the nation themselves. England, France, Spain, and Holland, among others, created bounded national entities where none existed prior to the colonial powers' arrival. Indeed one of the most substantial challenges to the naturalization of nations as bounded entities is the proof of their almost random construction provided by, for example, the colonial powers' carving up of Africa into nation-states during the "Scramble for Africa" of the 1880s. (The division of the Caribbean island of Hispaniola into Haiti and the Dominican Republic by France and Spain provides another example.) These colonized "nations," congruent with little more than the colonial powers' territorial acquisitions and the reach of their administrative structures, force reconsideration of both essentialist and modernist theories of the nation form. The imposed/constructed nature of these colonial "nations" drives the wedge between the nation and nature first wielded by the modernists even deeper. Nation is not merely a response to other socio-economic conditions, but rather a construction. Most national scholars would now agree with Hobsbawm and Ranger's assessment of the

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[20] Rogers Brubaker, *Nationalism Reframed: Nationhood and the National Question in the New Europe* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1996), 10, quoted in McCrone, 3.

nation as an "invented tradition" and Smith's assertion that "The nation is an invented category; it has roots in neither nature nor history,"[21] though they might debate the extent of its invention. The central questions asked of the nation have changed profoundly. The central question is no longer "What is a nation?" or "What are the origins of the nation form?" (although these continue to be debated) but are rather "How is the nation invented?," "How does the nation produce nationals?," and "What relations does 'nation' name?"

Performance Paradigms

One of the more productive relational models employed by postcolonial critics in particular is that of performance. In her 1993 *Theatre Journal* article "Geographies of Learning," Jill Dolan sketches performativity's expansion across the disciplinary boundaries of theatre, performance, cultural, feminist, and lesbian and gay studies.[22] Dolan interrogates its use-value as a metaphor and critiques its a-contextual appropriation. The interest in performance as explanatory trope for deconstructivist critiques of all kinds continues unabated with postcolonial criticism adding its name to the list. In Homi Bhabha's work in particular, performativity is at once the center of the nation/national subject relationship, and its key unraveling point. Acting as a Derridean

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[21] Eric Hobsbawm and Terence Ranger, ed. *The Invention of Tradition*, Canto edition (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1983) ; Anthony D. Smith, "Nationalism and the Historians," in *Mapping the Nation*, 175 - 197; here 177.

[22] Jill Dolan, "Geographies of Learning: Theatre Studies, Performance and the 'Performative'," *Theatre Journal* 45:4 (1993): 417 - 441.

"supplement," performativity both constructs and deconstructs the national subject.[23] Despite the emphasis on the performative, however, their work neglects to examine the concrete instantiations of that performativity in theatrical performance. Indeed, arguably the most influential English-language postcolonial critics of nationalism, Bhabha, Tom Nairn, Edward Said, Gayatri Spivak, and Helen Tiffen take the novel as their object in investigating colonial and postcolonial nation formations.[24]

Given the proven interest in "performance" as metaphor, why is theatre so frequently overlooked in postcolonial criticism? Several theories might be posited. The theatre's audiences are generally small and often elite and, hence, not representative of the "people" as a whole. Because audiences are small, theatre practice has little impact on socio-political or economic processes. Biases toward texts and textual analysis in postcolonial studies also contribute to the theatre's alienation from nation studies. As a discipline (or interdiscipline) postcolonial studies as they are currently formulated began in colonial discourse analysis. Edward Said's landmark book, *Orientalism*, generally deemed the opening salvo of postcolonial studies as a self-conscious, academic discipline launched analyses of "a variety of *textual* forms in which the West produced and codified

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[23] Homi K. Bhabha, "Dissemination: time, narrative and the margins of the modern nation," in *Nation and Narration*, ed. Homi K. Bhabha (London and New York: Routledge, 1990), 291 – 322.

[24] Bhabha; Tom Nairn, *Faces of Nationalism: Janus Revisited* (London and New York: Verso, 1997); Edward Said, *Culture and Imperialism* (New York: Alfred A. Knopf, 1993); Bill Ashcroft, Gareth Griffiths, and Helen Tiffen, *The Empire Writes Back: Theory and practice in post-colonial literatures* (London and New York: Routledge, 1989); Gayatri Chakravorty Spivak, "Woman in difference: Mahasweta Devi's "Douloti the Bountiful"," in *Nationalisms and Sexualities*, ed. Andrew Parker, Mary Russo, Doris Sommer and Patricia Yaeger (London and New York: Routledge, 1993), 96 - 117.

knowledge about non-metropolitan areas and cultures, especially those under colonial control."[25] Australian theatre scholars Helen Gilbert and Joanne Tompkins hypothesize that postcolonial criticism overlooks drama because of its incomplete textuality. They write, "[P]layscripts are only a part of a theatre experience, and performance is therefore difficult to document."[26]

Gayatri Chakravorty Spivak defines "text" more capaciously, as an act of inscription or a "worlding." In so doing, she self-consciously underscores the colonial implications of textualization.[27] In part because of this association between text and colonization, two postcolonial critics have advanced the performance paradigm as an alternative heuristic device and practical location for the discussion of postcolonial models of nation. Poet, novelist, and cultural critic Édouard Glissant and sociologist Paul Gilroy draw on the colonial and diasporic histories of the Antilles and black England respectively. Each exposes the fictitious nature of the homogeneous nation-as-thing via deconstruction of the fiction of the stable cogito. Each subscribes to the notion of identity – individual and national – as rhizomatic, formed in cultural contact: "an identity no

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[25] Patrick Williams and Laura Chrisman, "Colonial Discourse and Post-Colonial Theory: An Introduction," in *Colonial Discourse and Post-Colonial Theory: A Reader*, ed. Patrick Williams and Laura Chrisman (New York: Columbia University Press, 1994), 1 - 20; here, 5.

[26] Helen Gilbert and Joanne Tompkins, *Post-Colonial Drama: Theory, practice, politics* (London and New York: Routledge, 1996).

[27] See Gayatri Chakravorty Spivak, *In Other Worlds: Essays in Cultural Politics* (New York: Metheun, 1987) and Gayatri Chakravorty Spivak, *The Post-Colonial Critic: Interviews, Strategies, Dialogues* (New York: Routledge, 1990).

longer as a single/unique root, but rather as a root seeking out other roots."[28] Glissant's most recent critical work, *Introduction à une poétique du divers*, argues for a new aesthetic, a new means of conceptualizing the experience of what he calls the "*chaos-monde*." His chaos-world is "the shock, imbrications, repulsions, attractions, complicity, oppositions, the conflicts between peoples' cultures in the contemporary world."[29] This world, in its diversity, produces the unexpected, the hybrid. The only means he sees of entering the *chaos-monde*, of living with the promiscuous mixture and uncertainty it portends, is to adopt a vision of the world anchored in poetics, a creative practice which likewise produces the unexpected out of mixture. In other words, he matches the experience of hybrid cultures, nations, peoples to an equally hybrid aesthetic.

Where Glissant focuses on poetry, Gilroy employs musical performance and the practice of antiphony as his means of modeling the "national" experience of what he calls the "black Atlantic." His goal is to "get on board" the Atlantic-crossing slave ship in an effort to "transcend both the structures of the nation state and the constraints of ethnicity and national particularity."[30] Gilroy exhorts his readers to think both "roots" — where one comes from/where one is situated — and "routes" — where one has traveled, how one got where one is — in cultural analysis. This guards both the specificity and

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[28] (l'identité non plus comme racine unique mais comme racine allant à la rencontre des autres racines) Édouard Glissant, *Introduction à une poétique du divers* (Paris: Éditions Gallimard, 1996), 23. All translations mine unless otherwise noted.

[29] (Le choc, l'intrication, les répulsions, les attirances, les connivences, les oppositions, les conflits entre les cultures des peuples dans la totalité-monde contemporain.) Glissant, 82. See also Édouard Glissant, *Poétique de la Relation* (Paris: Éditions Gallimard, 1990) on his concept of the "relation."

[30] Paul Gilroy, *The Black Atlantic: Modernity and Double Consciousness* (Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 1993), 19.

locatedness of identity and that identity's rhizomorphic formation deeply indebted to mixture, promiscuity, and exchange. His relational model of national identity is theorized through practices of antiphony, scratching, dubbing and the kind of mutually interdependent relationships they create between performer and audience. By emphasizing the construction of national identities as relational and through artistic practice, Glissant and Gilroy point a way toward circumventing the interpretive paradigms of text and textuality in discussions of national identities and the nation form.

More important than theatre's marginal status, textual biases in postcolonial studies, or drama's imperfect text in obscuring theatre's potential roles in national imaginaries, however, is the longevity of the Arnoldian division between culture and politics. This separation, so elegantly deconstructed by Terry Eagleton, keeps the theatre, as a cultural form, out of discussions of "politics." In Matthew Arnold's logic, the "works and practices of intellectual and especially artist activity"[31] act as hedges against anarchy; they inhabit their own rarified space, autonomous and self-referential, divorced from the various social functions they had previously served.[32] The culture/society split renders theatre and other cultural forms immaterial to socio-political processes like nation

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[31] This is Raymond Williams' third definition of "culture." Raymond Williams, *Keywords: A Vocabulary of Culture and Society*, rev. ed. (New York: Oxford University Press, 1983 [1976]), 87 – 93.

[32] Matthew Arnold, *Culture and Anarchy*, ed. Samuel Lipman (New Haven: Yale University Press, 1994 [1867]). Terry Eagleton, *The Ideology of the Aesthetic* (Oxford: Basil Blackwell, 1990).

formation.[33] According to Eagleton, the concept of the aesthetic on which the culture/society dichotomy depends, was developed in eighteenth-century Germany as a means of penetrating the world of feelings and sensation by reasoning faculties. Aesthetics, an idiom of reason, reveals the unity and order or the underlying logic of the "raw stuff of perception." Eagleton describes the aesthetic's ideological work as follows:

> Aesthetics, Baumgarten writes [in *Aesthetica*, 1750], is the 'sister' of logic, a kind of *ratio inferior* or feminine analogue of reason at the lower level of sensational life. Its task is to order this domain into clear or perfectly determinate representations, in a manner akin to (if relatively autonomous of) the operations of reason proper. . . . As a kind of concrete thought or sensuous analogue of the concept, the aesthetic partakes at once of the rational and the real . . . It is born as a woman, subordinate to man but with her own humble, necessary tasks to perform.[34]

I cite Eagleton at length here because his insight into the gendered dimension of aesthetic discourse is crucial to the second reason why theatre is underrepresented in scholarly discourse on the nation form. Not only are aesthetic practices or products often seen through this Kantian idealist framework, they are, thereby, devalued, assigned the position of under-labourers and gendered female.

The idea of the nation as object and of the aesthetic realm as female combine to sideline culture in relation to nation and the scholarship around it. Culture is presumed to

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[33] One need only call to mind the works of English scholar Allan Bloom to see the tenacity of the Arnoldian vision of culture. See, for instance, Allan Bloom, *The Closing of the American Mind* (New York: Simon and Schuster, 1987).

[34] Eagleton, *Ideology of the Aesthetic*, 16.

be in a mimetic, derivative relationship to the object-nation; it reflects or expresses nation/national movement. Feminized culture is positioned as a reproducer, not a producer in its own right. Feminist scholars have documented the association of the material with the female stemming from Cartesian philosophy.[35] That the theatre is also often demonized as "feminine," employing artifice to falsely move the minds, spirits, and desires of audiences, only casts it farther outside the bounds of traditionally masculin(ized) discourses of the nation. Anti-theatrical tracts from Plato to Rousseau and the Puritans to the National Endowment for the Arts argue for the banishment of theatre from their ideal states on the grounds that acting is false.[36] Its falsity derives from the alleged duplicity of the actors who, in their dual subject-positions as actor and character, are problematically doubled. Fundamentally dis-unified, bridging the realm of ideas and material actions, actors embody the chaotic condition the aesthetic as a theory sought to eliminate.

Finally, and most crucially, theatre is largely invisible in work on the nation because theatre studies has not developed a way (or ways) to engage models of the nation. Unlike the other disciplines discussed in this chapter, theatre studies has not

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[35] See Luce Irigaray, *Speculum of the Other Woman*, trans. Gillian C. Gill (Ithaca: Cornell University Press, 1974); Hélène Cixous and Catherine Clément, *The Newly Born Woman*, trans. Betsy Wing (Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press, 1986); and Grosz.

[36] Jonas Barish, *The Antitheatrical Prejudice* (Berkeley; Los Angeles: University of California Press, 1981). I should note that Barish himself does not make the link to gender that I am proposing above. See, for example, Froma I. Zeitlin, "Playing the Other: Theater, Theatricality, and the Feminine in Greek Drama," *Representations* 11 (1985) for a more complete elaboration of the associative connection between theatre, artifice, and women.

elaborated a model of the nation that is unique to the discipline. Nor have its scholars fully utilized or exploited the theoretical constructs inherent in the practice of theatre and performance that might produce modular national forms. Capitulating to the ideas of the nation as object, the aesthetic as an autonomous realm, culture as feminine, and/or theatre as naively mimetic, theatre studies has not developed a means for conceptualizing the contribution of theatre as a practice and set of heuristic devices to nation forms beyond its reproductive facility. The theatre is placed in a mimetic relationship to the nation, reproducing its characteristics, modalities, and peoples. The nation is "real"; the theatre is artifice.

Within theatre studies, the relationships between theatre and nation have been explored variously. In its earliest incarnation in the literature of "national theatres" the relation of theatre to nation is naively mimetic. The existence of a national theatre composed of both permanent structure(s) and native repertoire proved the maturity of the nation through the autonomy of its national culture. These studies usually discuss the foundation and maintenance of a national theatre building or national theatre system, and its repertoire.[37] In the 1970s and 1980s, works by Marvin Carlson on the French, German and Italian national stages and Laurence Senelick on Northern European national theatres analyzed the processes of national theatre formation in greater depth and with more critical acuity.[38] Linking the development of national theatres to the development of

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[37] See Drury Lane and Covent Garden hagiographies like Walter James Macqueen-Pope, *Theatre Royal, Drury Lane* (London: W. H. Allen, 1945) as examples of this genre.

[38] Marvin Carlson, *The French Stage in the Nineteenth Century* (Metuchen, N.J.: Scarecrow Press, 1972); Marvin Carlson, *The German Stage in the Nineteenth Century* (Metuchen, N.J.: Scarecrow Press, 1972); Marvin Carlson, *The Italian Stage from*

national consciousness, they reinscribe the theatre into a broader network of social and political signification.

Foremost among the recent work on national processes in theatre studies is Loren Kruger's *The National Stage: Theatre and Cultural Legitimation in England, France, and America*. Her study focuses on the role of national theatres in England, France, and the United States in making nations out of audiences in accordance with official, state-sanctioned discourses of colonial nationalism during the nineteenth and twentieth centuries. She "plots the processes by which certain practices are treated as legitimate theatre with national aspirations, while others are illegitimate as foreign or . . . as untheatrical," thereby deconstructing the national monument theatre as a static representative of a stable and unified nation.[39] Unfortunately, the parameters of Kruger's project and the acuity of her insights do not extend to the proposition of a modular theatrical nation. In her work, the theatre remains derivative or responsive to macro structures like the nation instead of generating its own discourse of nation-ness.

My project, "Styling a Nation: Theatre and Belonging in Québec" argues that theatre studies is well positioned to participate in the ongoing and increasingly contentious debates surrounding the nation and its (postcolonial) discontents. Advocating for theatre's inclusion in studies of postcoloniality Gilbert and Tompkins write:

Goldoni to D'Annunzio (Jefferson, N.C.: McFarland, 1981); Laurence Senelick, ed. *National Theatre in Northern and Eastern Europe, 1746-1900* (Cambridge and New York: Cambridge University Press, 1991).

[39] Loren Kruger, *The National Stage: Theatre and Cultural Legitimation in England, France, and America* (Chicago and London: University of Chicago Press, 1992), 26.

> Given that dramatic and performance theories, particularly those developed in conjunction with Brechtian, feminist, and cultural studies criticism, have much to offer postcolonial debates about language, interpellation, subject-formation, representation, and forms of resistance, this marginalisation of drama suggests a considerable gap in postcolonial studies.[40]

Moreover, the social science and postcolonial literatures cited above point the way to theatre's entry into these discussions. Their critical apparatuses break down over the conundrum the nation presents: it is a fiction but perceived and, more importantly, lived as a fact. As anthropologist Michael Taussig points out, "With good reason postmodernism has relentlessly instructed us that reality is artifice yet, so it seems to me, not enough surprise has been expressed as to how we nevertheless get on with living, pretending – thanks to the mimetic faculty – that we live facts, not fictions."[41] Theatre's differential deployment of the mimetic faculty can help answer the compelling questions of nation studies asked above: How is the nation invented? How does the nation produce nationals? How and when does social invention become persuasive enough to convert a group of people into "nationals," an audience into a citizenry? It is precisely the history of the aesthetic posited by Eagleton and the power of reproduction that recommends theatrical practice so strongly to the investigation of the nation form. Instead of being

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[40] Gilbert and Tompkins.

[41] Michael Taussig, *Mimesis and Alterity: A Particular History of the Senses* (New York and London: Routledge, 1993), xv.

consigned to a non-interfering ethereal realm, the aesthetic acts as a conceptual and practical bridge between sensation and reason, material and immaterial, fiction and fact.

The mimetic faculty with its "artificial truths" enables the living of fictions (like the nation) as facts. Its bridging of the sensuous particular and the conceptual facilitates the incorporation of the national fiction, its naturalization as a "real" entity. Moreover, the theatre – mimetic art *par excellence* – embodies the doubled subjectivity of national affiliation. Split subjects with dual affiliations populate the theatre event as much as they populate the nation. If a doubled theatrical body is antithetical to the integrity of the nation form, how does the theatre contribute to or challenge national movements? How do actors' thinking, performing bodies propose an alternative nation form? If performance disrupts the stable cogito, might it similarly disrupt the stable nation?

So how might theatre open up the discussion of nation, and even change its terms? Work in feminism and theatre provides several avenues worthy of pursuit.[42] One of these is feminist and lesbian scholars' deconstruction of mimesis' truth-effects. Reminding their readers of the arbitrariness of the sign, materialist feminists examine the processes by which fiction is sutured to fact, the "really-made-up" to the real. For example, among the many contributions of Jill Dolan's foundational work on feminist spectatorship, *The Feminist Spectator as Critic*, is her deconstruction of mimetic realism as a profoundly gendered and sexualized strategy of representation that restricts feminist representations and reading strategies of women and lesbians.[43] Part of this critical

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[42] Although these avenues are not discrete, for the purposes of discussion I will separate out their constituent elements.

[43] Jill Dolan, *The Feminist Spectator as Critic* (Ann Arbor: University of Michigan Press, 1988). See also Sue-Ellen Case, *Feminism and Theatre* (New York:

project is a reorientation of identity and identity politics, moving away from epistemology (i.e., who one is) to practices (i.e., what one does). Emphasizing the cultural construction of gender over the essentializing discourse of sex, materialist feminists destabilize the unitary (read: male) cogito. As in the work of Glissant and Gilroy, the resulting materialist models of identity, representation, and interpretation could serve to highlight the construction of the nation and analyze the processes by which it is naturalized in the body politic. Like the self, nation would be understood as a particular configuration of social relationships, like the self, an always unfinished project. These models make strange the assumption that national belonging is predicated on possession — self-possession (i.e., a unitary, non-hyphenated identity) and the possession of "unchosen" qualities (i.e., race, gender, sexuality, and territory).

A second avenue provided by feminist and lesbian theatre critics focuses on mimesis as a reading strategy and a potentially disruptive/liberatory force. In this discourse, the sign is not merely arbitrary, it is also unreproducable. Elin Diamond's much-anthologized article, "Mimesis, Mimicry, and the 'True Real'," is widely acknowledged as one of the first and most influential attempts in theatre studies to develop a feminist mimesis. In brief, she argues mimesis can be "retheorized as a site of, and means of, feminist intervention" through the disruptive potential of mimicry which denies the existence of a referent. Her book *Unmaking Mimesis* continues this work in

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Methuen, 1988); Lynda Hart and Peggy Phelan, eds., *Acting Out: Feminist Performances*. (Ann Arbor: University of Michigan Press, 1993); and Jill Dolan's "'Lesbian' Subjectivity in Realism: Dragging at the Margins of Structure and Ideology," and Teresa de Laurentis's, "Sexual Indifference and Lesbian Representation," in *Performing Feminisms: Feminist Critcial Theory and Theatre*, ed. Sue-Ellen Case (New York and London: Johns Hopkins University Press, 1990), 40 – 53 and 17 – 39 respectively.

exploring the progressive potentialities of mimesis for feminists through analyses of hysteria and Brechtian *gestus*.[44] Peggy Phelan's *Unmarked: the politics of performance* likewise investigates the potential of performance to mark the failures in representation –its excesses and its limits. She writes, "Representation follows two laws: it always conveys more than it intends; and it is never totalizing."[45] In other words, representation (or mimesis) fails in its attempts to reproduce. Performance is the sign and instance of this failure; the performance event is unreproducable, unrepeatable. Liberating performance from an ontology of reproduction and its attendant epistemology of truth, Diamond and Phelan emphasize performance's performative aspects, its ability to do or make what it says.[46] In her introduction to *Performance and Cultural Politics*, Diamond argues forcefully the importance of performance to cultural criticism that invests heavily in the utility of performativity as a means to unmask "concealed or dissimulated conventions."[47] The nation, in its various guises, might be one of those concealed conventions that performance could unmask, thus allowing us to get closer to "how we nevertheless get on with living, pretending . . . that we live facts, not fictions."

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[44] Elin Diamond, "Mimesis, Mimicry, and the 'True Real'," in *Acting Out: Feminist Performances*, ed. Lynda Hart and Peggy Phelan (Ann Arbor: University of Michigan Press, 1993), 363 - 382; Elin Diamond, *Unmaking Mimesis* (London and New York: Routledge, 1997).

[45] Peggy Phelan, *Unmarked: the politics of performance* (London and New York: Routledge, 1992), 2.

[46] Performative speech acts were, of course, first theorized by J.L. Austin in his *How to do Things with Words*, 2nd ed. (Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, [1962] 1975).

[47] Elin Diamond, "Introduction," in *Performance and Cultural Politics*, ed. Elin Diamond (London and New York: Routledge, 1996), 1 - 12.

Yet another avenue provided by feminist theatre scholarship is one that posits theatre as social practice in its own right. Theatre is a powerful site of national imaginings. As a growing body of work on theatre and community has proven, theatre is a productive site at which to practice or rehearse being a collectivity — or to rehearse an emergent collectivity into being. Dolan's more recent inquiries into the possibilities for community-building and coalitional politics in the lesbian/gay/queer community have influenced the work of numerous theatre scholars interested in similar questions.[48] Performances can act as what feminist theatre scholar Janelle Reinelt has called "transformative social practice," and what Diamond has called "cultural practices that . . . passionately reinvent the ideas, symbols and gestures that shape social life," and that "enable new subject positions and new perspectives to emerge."[49] The theatre's invention and reinvention of the ideas, symbols and gestures that shape social life *as national* is the object of this study.

The Politics of Style

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[48] Jill Dolan, *Presence and Desire: Essays on Gender, Sexuality, Performance* (Ann Arbor: University of Michigan Press, 1993). See also, David Román, *Acts of Intervention: Performance, Gay Culture, and AIDS* (Bloomington : Indiana University Press, 1998); and Stacy Wolf, " 'Never Gonna Be a Man/Catch if You Can/I Won't Grow Up': A Lesbian Account of Mary Martin as Peter Pan," *Theatre Journal* 49:4 (December 1997): 493 – 509.

[49] Janelle Reinelt, "Introduction," in *Crucibles of Crisis: Performing Social Change*, ed. Janelle Reinelt (Ann Arbor: University of Michigan Press, 1996), 1 - 12; here, 1; Diamond, "Introduction," in *Performance and Cultural Politics*, 2 and 6.

The analytical tools offered by the above rhetorical/operational strategies have not yet been applied to the question of nation and national identity in any sustained way. I will be employing them as models for analysis throughout this dissertation. In addition, I will continue to rely on the reading strategies of postcolonial, feminist, and lesbian/gay/queer theory. Each of these post-structuralist schools interrogate the politics of identity-formation and consolidation, emphasize resistant readings, and are expressly linked with the late-twentieth-century, international liberation movements of anticolonial independence movements and the women's and gay liberation movements. Their disciplinary formation in resistant and marginalized political movements links their theoretical inquiries to a history and ongoing practice of cultural politics that attempt to stylize the public sphere and paradigms of the nation along more inclusive, pluralistic lines. Hence, they, like the sensuous aesthetic, focus on both the conceptual and the material at once; indeed, they rely on political struggle around material circumstances to fuel the conceptual work to be done and vice-versa. At their best they are theoretical and practical interventions in the public sphere working toward deconstructing the fallacies of nineteenth-century, colonialist national paradigms and extending citizenship to those populations disenfranchised as a result — the immigrant, the racialized Other, and the woman in particular. Building on this work, I focus on theatre as a material site that reflects but also shapes a national culture. I emphasize occasions of theatre as sites of theory housing the possibility of re-theorizing models of the social/national and practicing alternative, postcolonial forms of nation-ness.

There is, however, yet another strategy that has not been employed within theatre studies nor within the social sciences to analyze how "social reality, conceived in terms

of nationhood, is endowed with the reality of natural things."[50] I propose the concept of "style" as the means for investigating the naturalization of the invented nation. Style is the sensate and conceptual incorporation of social classifications or categories (like the nation) in distinctive, characteristic modes and forms of expression – an intimate form of national inscription. It constitutes a central artery through which the national fiction is reproduced as fact in a constellation of cultural and social practices. In *Women and Nation*, feminist nation scholar Nira Yuval-Davis elaborates on the importance of style and other ideologically inscribed social behaviours on the maintenance of the national fiction. She writes,

> The mythical unity of national 'imagined communities' which divided the world between 'us' and 'them' is maintained and ideologically reproduced by a whole system of what [John] Armstrong calls symbolic "border guards". These "border guards" can identify people as members or non-members of a specific collectivity. They are closely linked to specific cultural codes of style of dress and behaviour as well as to more elaborate bodies of customs, religion, literary and artistic modes of production, and, of course, language.[51]

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[50] Handler.

[51] Nira Yuval-Davis, *Gender & Nation* (London; Thousand Oaks, CA: Sage Publications, 1997), 23. Lauren Berlant has discussed this process by invoking a psychoanalytic frame, calling its location the "National Symbolic." The "National Symbolic" is "the order of discursive practices whose reign within a national space produces, and also refers to, the 'law' in which the accident of birth within a geographic/political boundary transforms individuals into subjects of a collectively-held history. Its traditional icons, its metaphors, its heroes, its rituals, and its narratives, provide an alphabet for a collective consciousness or national subjectivity; through the National Symbolic the historical nation aspires to achieve the inevitability of the status of

It is the production and reproduction of those border guards across the bodies of a populace that renders a group national.

French neo-marxist philosopher Etienne Balibar writes, "The fundamental problem [of the nation] is to produce the people. More exactly, it is to make the people produce itself continually as national community."[52] The concept of style has the advantage of grounding what are often rather abstract analyses of the production of citizens in the body. It asks how power, values, and social categorizations are distributed across bodies; it highlights the creative processes central to producing (and reproducing) nationals. Moreover, style foregrounds not only the performative aspects of this process but also their instantiation in cultural and theatrical performance. Diamond writes of the dialectic between performance and performativity,

> When performativity materializes as performance in that risky and dangerous negotiation between a doing (a reiteration of norms) and a thing done (discursive conventions that frame our interpretations), between someone's body and the conventions of embodiment, we have access to cultural meanings and critique. Performativity, I would suggest, must be rooted in the materiality and historical density of performance.[53]

Style, like Eagleton's aesthetic and Glissant's poetic imaginary, bridges the concept and its instantiation, model and copy, signifier and signified.

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natural law, a birthright." Lauren Berlant, *Anatomy of National Fantasy: Hawthorne, Utopia, and Everyday Life* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1991), 20.

[52] Balibar, 93.

[53] Diamond, "Introduction," in *Performance and Cultural Politics*, 5.

Instead of interpreting particular performances according to the terms of a pre-existing nationalist enterprise, I re-think national style in Québec through specific theatrical imaginaries produced at a range of performance sites. National style's preferred forms and exemplary bearers vary over time in relation to shifting pressures on the national fiction. On this subject Verdery writes, "We might call this the problem of national subjectivities – in the plural because we cannot assume that there is only one form of self-experience as national."[54] "Styling a Nation" examines the changing contours of Québec nation-ness, or *québécité*, from 1967 to 1999 in relation to national movements within Québec and Canada and to global systems, including anticolonial political movements, intercultural theatre, transnational capitalism, and immigration. These instances allow me to elaborate on the insights of theatre and performance – as practices and heuristic devices – into the performative constitution of the nation and its incorporation as national identity. In other words, I aim to shift the analytical emphasis from origins of the nation form to the styles or modes in and through which the fiction of the nation is lived *as fact*.

In this displacement, I am inspired by the feminist theorists discussed above and, ironically, by Benedict Anderson's foundational text on the origin and development of the national form, *Imagined Communities*. He writes, "Communities are to be distinguished not by their falsity/genuineness, but by the style in which they are imagined."[55] In "The Nation Form: History and Ideology," Balibar glosses Anderson's

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[54] Verdery, 229.

[55] Anderson, *Imagined Communities*, 15.

insights in a way which is most useful to this study of theatrical productions of and challenges to the institutional project of styling the nation. He asserts:

> *Every social community reproduced by the functioning of institutions is imaginary*, that is to say, it is based on the projection of individual existence into the weft of a collective narrative, on the recognition of a common name and on traditions lived as the trace of an immemorial past (even when they have been fabricated and inculcated in the recent past). But this comes down to accepting that, under certain conditions, *only* imaginary communities are real.[56]

Balibar's emphasis on the reality of imagined communities reinforces the role of the theatre and its unique ways of imagining and constituting communities through its practices in the establishment of the "reality" of the nation.

In Québec, the site of this dissertation's analysis, the national fact is even more fragile and contested than that of nation-states like England and France on which the idea of the nation form was modeled. Québec is a nation without a state: Québec is a province in the Dominion of Canada. Québec is also a legacy of France. Explored by Jacques Cartier and François de la Roque, sieur de Roberval in the mid-sixteenth century, the French colonial territory provided Europe with fish and fur. New France's affairs were directed from Paris and regulated according to the Custom of Paris. When France lost the Seven Year's War to its imperial rival, England, in 1760, it was forced to relinquish its territory to the victor, Britain. Britain already possessed what came to be called "Upper Canada," a swath of land composed of what is currently southwestern Ontario. Nouvelle

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[56] Balibar, 93.

France would join that holding as "Lower Canada." In 1867, Upper and Lower Canada were joined by an Act of Confederation that created the Dominion of Canada.[57] As a former colonial holding of both France and England, Québec's own national concept has vacillated between the "entity" and "invention" poles since its inception. That many within and outside of Québec perceive it to be in a neocolonial relationship to English Canada complicates the national self-concept even more. Given Québec's colonial history and its current situation as a nation without a state, how is Québec nation-ness (or what I will call *québécité*) styled? And through what ideological and imaginative labours is *québécité* styled in such a way that *le fait national* is rendered palpable and persuasive to its would-be nationals? How the performing body and, by extension, the body-politic, is styled *as national* in and through performance – cultural, political, theatrical and discursive – is the overarching problematic investigated by this dissertation.

The remainder of this chapter explores the changing ways that Québec has imagined itself *as national* from the early twentieth century to the turning point of the Quiet Revolution (c. 1960 – 66) in the literature of Québec studies and Québec theatre studies. I close my analysis with the 1967 World's Fair and Exposition held in Montréal; Expo '67 was an important public performance that imagined Québec as a nation instead of a province and its people as "Québécois"[58] instead of "French-Canadian." In the

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[57] John A. Dickinson and Brian Young, *A Short History of Quebec*, 2nd ed. (Toronto: Copp Clark Pitman Ltd., 1993). Acknowledging the first "nations" to inhabit the territory that is now Canada, in April 1999, Canada added a third territory — carved out of the current Northwest Territories — called "Nunavut." It is self-governed by First Nations peoples.

[58] I shall follow French orthography for the word "québécois." When used as a noun, the word will be capitalized: i.e., "a Québécois" or "a Québécoise." When used as

example of Expo '67, one can see the changes in Québec's imagined community wrought by the modernization project of the Quiet Revolution played out in the semiotics of the exposition's sites.

Narrating the Recolonization of Québec

Québec's effort to reconcile its geopolitical and ideological states – reconciling province to nation – has a long history, which is outside the purview of this dissertation. However, since the early 1960s, the period under discussion in this project, Québécois nationalists have sought resolution primarily by working to achieve their coincidence through the institutionalization of the nation into a state, through a territorial concept of identity, and through cultural production which reflects that state and its identity.

Within Québec, provincial leaders have bolstered a sense and practice of Québec's proto-nation-state status by maximizing its control over the policy sectors within provincial jurisdiction, including education, culture, and natural resources. For instance, during his tenure as Liberal Premier of Québec during what has posthumously been called the Quiet Revolution (c. 1960 – 66), Jean Lesage developed an increasingly interventionist (provincial) state, consolidating the province's areas of jurisdiction and expanding the public sector. During that period, the Québec government established a Ministry of Education; nationalized the electricity company, Hydro Québec (1963); founded the Caisee de dépôt et de placement du Québec, which acts as an investor for the

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an adjective, it will appear entirely in lower case: i.e., "québécois theatre." I will not utilize French gender agreement between adjective and noun described when writing in English.

Québec pension fund (1964); and opened offices of federal-provincial relations, cultural affairs, family and social welfare, and national resources.[59] As sociologist Marcel Martel rightly points out, the Quiet Revolution was a movement for the modernization of Québec society by means of state apparatuses.[60] Since that time, Québec has broadened its responsibilities in the policy sectors of education, language, immigration, and, to a lesser extent, international relations. (It is important to stress, however, that these are "administrative arrangements," not formal amendments to the federal system nor to the Canadian Constitution, both of which continue to exercise significant control over Québec.[61]) In addition, Québec governments have held two referendums on sovereignty in less than twenty years, the most recent in October of 1995.

Outside of Québec but within the Canadian federation, successive Québec governments have sought constitutional recognition of the province's distinct cultural and linguistic status for over a decade.[62] On the international circuit, Québec asserts the status of a quasi-nation-state. Québec has achieved this ambiguous status by implementing a

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[59]Michael Keating, "Quebec," in *Nations Against the State*, 65 – 106; here 68.

[60] Marcel Martel, *Le deuil d'un pays imaginé: Rêves, luttes et déroute du Canada français, Les rapports entre le Québec et la francophonie canadienne (1867 - 1975)* (Ottawa: Les Presses de l'Université d'Ottawa, 1997), 107.

[61] Alain-G. Gagnon, "Québec-Canada: Constitutional Developments, 1960 – 92" in *Québec: State and Society*, ed. Alain-G. Gagnon, 2nd ed. (Scarborough, ON: Nelson Canada, 1993), 96 – 115; here, 99. In August 1998, for instance, Canada's Supreme Court ruled that even if, in a future Québec referendum, the Québécois vote to secede from Canada, secession will only be possible with consent from the federal government and at least some of the other provinces. Anne McIlroy, "High Court Leaves Opening for Quebec Secession," *Guardian*, 21 August 1998.

[62] For more information on the history of Canada's constitutional debates see, Jean-François Cardin, *History of the Canadian Constitution, From 1864 to the Present*, trans. Diana Halfpenny (Montréal: Global Vision, 1996).

form of "paradiplomacy," institutionalizing its powers in the international sphere, as granted by the Canadian federal government.[63] For instance, in 1968, Liberal Premier Daniel Johnson established the Department of Intergovernmental Affairs to oversee external relations, international cooperation, and federal-provincial relations. (In 1985 the Department was renamed the Ministry of International Relations and shorn of its control over federal-provincial relations.) Its exclusive mandate is to plan, coordinate and implement international government policy. In the political sphere, the Québec government boasts representatives abroad in established foreign delegations.[64] In the commercial sphere, it ratifies *ententes*, agreements that bind upon the province and a foreign government and pertain, for instance, to economic and cultural matters.[65] Thus, on a governmental or administrative level, as with Expo '67, Québécois take the reigns of power and refashion Québec's policies and institutions to better reflect themselves.

The story of Québec's political and social re-annexation during the Quiet Revolution is frequently narrated according to the conventions of what Tom Nairn calls the sociological modernism school of nationalism, founded by Ernest Gellner and discussed earlier in this introduction.[66] Those conventions reprise another common trope

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[63] Jean-Philippe Thérien, Louis Bélanger and Guy Gosselin, "Québec: An Expanding Foreign Policy," in *Québec: State and Society*, 259 – 278; here, 260.

[64] As of 1993, the Ministry of International Relations had established a diplomatic network of twenty-nine "general delegations", "delegations", and "bureaus" throughout Western Europe, francophone Africa, Asia, and the Americas. Keating, 103.

[65] Between 1964 and 1989, over 200 ententes were signed, over 60 percent with a sovereign state. Thérien *et al*, 262 – 3.

[66] Nairn.

of discovery and colonization: a backward people – traditional, pious, poor, and agrarian – are brought into the light of progress through the forces of modernization. According to this story, the Québécois escaped "*la grande noirceur*" (the great darkness), the period just prior to the Quiet Revolution. Before the Quiet Revolution, the dominant strain of nationalist thought was a defensive strategy based on a static notion of *la survivance* (survival). Promoted most vehemently by Premier Maurice Duplessis during the 1940s and 1950s, it viewed North American culture as a contaminant, diluting the French language and French-Canadian values. For although francophones were (and are) a majority in the province, they were (and are) a minority in the Canadian and North American contexts – "*un petit peuple*" (a small people) of six million in a sea of anglophones. To protect against assimilation, *la survivance* encouraged geographic and intellectual isolation/insulation from anglophone North American neighbours, their language, and their ways of life. Instead, it encouraged "returning to the land," a large family, transmission of the French language, devotion to the Catholic Church, and agrarian communities centered around a parish.[67]

Thus when, after years of economic, cultural, and political "backwardness," the Québec provincial government launched a modernization plan in the 1960s, it began by throwing off the albatrosses of an agrarian mode of production and the Catholic Church. This transformation is often allegorized to an awakening, the explosion of a populace's pent-up frustrations with their inferior status vis-à-vis English Canadians in terms of

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[67] For more detail on the differences between Duplessisme and the "new" nationalism see Gilles Gougeon, *A History of Quebec Nationalism*, trans. Louisa Blair, Robert Chodos, and Jane Ubertino (Toronto: James Lorimer & Company, Publishers, 1994); Handler; and Charles Taylor, "Why Do Nations Have to Become States?," in *Reconciling the Solitudes*, 40 - 58.

class, language, and opportunities. Political scientist Daniel Latouche outlines the contours of this narrative in *Canada and Quebec, Past and Future*. He writes that Québec was perceived as a traditional society *par excellence*, shut in on itself, and dedicated to *la survivance*, the protection of its traditional ways and beliefs so that they might survive the onslaught of anglicization/Americanization. Then, "[w]ith the Quiet Revolution [c. 1960 – 1966] . . . [t]he business of catching up and achieving growth replace the defence of the province's treasures. Quebec becomes a modern society."[68] Historian Jocelyn Létourneau concurs, writing that the modernization narrative depicts the pre-Quiet Revolution era as follows:

> [T]he history of the French Canadians was a painful one, and their determination to preserve their traditions was one of the leading causes of the group's unfortunate and inferior condition. . . . On the whole, French-Canadian society was not entirely, or even sufficiently, modern – and thus was flawed. The political inference drawn from this evaluation of Quebec's history was self-evident; it was a question of . . . picking up the pace of progress and reorienting the historicity of the community toward its future, away from its past.[69]

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[68] Daniel Latouche, *Canada and Quebec, Past and Future: An Essay*. Royal Commission on the Economic Union and Development Prospects for Canada, vol. 70 (Toronto: University of Toronto Press, 1986), 12.

[69] Jocelyn Létourneau, "The Current Great Narrative of Quebecois Identity," *South Atlantic Quarterly* 94:4 (1995): 1039 - 1053, here, 1042.

In other words, upon waking up from a long period of darkness and evaluating its compromised history and socio-political status, Québec needed to catch up with its provincial counterparts.

The colonizing contours of this narrative do not go unremarked by Québec's first and pre-eminent chronicler of Marxist québécois history, Léandre Bergeron. He calls the Lesage government's programs assimilationist, preparing Québécois to accept and function well in U.S. and English Canadian colonial capitalism.[70] Moreover, recent reflections on Québec history and québécois historiographic practices including those of Latouche and Létourneau are less likely to attribute Québec's modernity to the programs and policies of an intelligentsia-lead Quiet Revolution. Instead, they establish more of a continuity of modernization and progress between pre- and post-Quiet Revolution eras. For example, they emphasize the gradualism of political, economic, and social change before and after the Quiet Revolution, the Revolution's historical antecedents, early settlers (*les habitants*) moves to the urban centers, and their openness to outside influences.

Despite the revisionist history concerning the Quiet Revolution that de-emphasizes its importance in terms of political, social and economic change, it remains a meaningful temporal marker in the history of national identity in Québec. The Quiet Revolution marks a change in consciousness and political imaginary around that identity, shifting it from an ethnic/linguistic basis to a territorial/statist one. Fundamental to the proof of *le fait national* are a national identity and a believing populace; these are what

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[70] Léandre Bergeron, *The History of Quebec: A Patriote's Handbook*, trans. Baila Markus (Toronto: New Canada Publications, 1971), 216 – 218.

the Quiet Revolution most definitively produced. In this nation without a state, cultural performance bears this burden of representation.

Inventing Identity

The leading Canadian political theorist, Charles Taylor, writes: "Nations exist not just where there is the objective fact of speaking the same language and sharing a common history, but where this is subjectively reflected in a people's identifications."[71] What would ultimately reconcile Québec's disjunctive geopolitical and ideological states into a Québec nation-state was a persuasive national identity with a specific territorial attachment. *Terre inconnue* – associated with the discovery of the Americas as a blank slate – reconstituted itself as *L'État de Québec* – a slate written upon by *les Québécois*.

Prior to the Quiet Revolution, francophone residents of Québec identified as French-Canadian/*canadien-français*, as did franco-ontariens and franco-manitobans.[72] The appellation indicated a shared language and culture among French-speakers across the country and even throughout the continent. This continental outlook stems from the period of French colonial expansion in North America from the sixteenth through eighteenth centuries when French settlements stretched over the continent along the St. Lawrence and Mississippi Rivers from the Gaspé to Louisiana. As francophones became more invested in achieving some kind of political power as a group, they decided they

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[71] Charles Taylor, "Why do Nations Have to Become States?," 56.

[72] The provinces of Ontario, Manitoba and New Brunswick each have significant francophone populations. The influence and magnitude of the francophone (Acadian) population is such in New Brunswick that it is officially bilingual (French-English).

needed to centralize. As a result of this centralization in the province of Québec, the continental vision of *l'Amérique française* gave way to the national, territorial vision.[73] Though others had advanced a national vision linked to the territory of Québec before the 1960s, nationalists of the Quiet Revolution period articulated this political vision most clearly and forcefully. In 1964, Premier Jean Lesage proclaimed, "Québec has become the political expression of French Canada and plays the role of a homeland for all those in the country who speak our language." Residents of the homeland would call themselves "Québécois," thereby linking their collective identity with a particular territory.[74]

Locating themselves in that territory would increase their chances of re-annexing Québec for their own purposes. The Québec Liberals' election-winning slogan of 1962 clearly expresses this attitude and goal of decolonization; Québécois were exhorted to vote for the Liberals who would empower them to be "*maîtres chez nous*" (masters in our own house). As québécois political scientist Louis Balthazar notes,

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[73] It is important to note that the continental outlook did not entirely disappear with the advent of the Quiet Revolution, despite its waning prominence. In fact, Chapter 4 of Martel, "De l'euphorie à la désenchantement: l'intervention gouvernementale québécoise (1956 – 1975)," underscores the commitment of the Lesage government in particular to continentalism. Moreover, this outlook is currently experiencing a revival among scholars of québécois culture and identity in the analysis of "américanité," the sense of attachment and belonging to the continent that produces shared characteristics among the Americas – North and South. "Américanité or Americanization: Quebec Attitudes, Culture, and Commercial Habits" Panel at the Association for Canadian Studies in the United States (Pittsburgh, PA, November 1999). See also Donald Cuccioletta, et al., *Américanité* (Laval: Presses de l'Université Laval). Forthcoming.

[74] Lesage quoted in Louis Balthazar, "Québec Nationalism: After Twenty-Five Years," *Québec Studies* 5 (1987): 29 - 38; here, 29 – 30. See Gilles Sénécal, "Les idéologies territoriales au Canada Français: entre le continentalisme et l'idée du Québec," *Journal of Canadian Studies/Revue d'études candiennes* 27:2 (Éte/Summer 1992): 49 - 62 for a discussion of the historical interplay between continentalism and statism/territorialism in Québec nationalism.

> nowhere but in Québec could be created an elaborate network of communication and institutions that would allow a population to *live in French* and assert a specific French Canadian identity. Nowhere but in Québec could francophones control a government of their own and use it fully to promote their own objectives.[75]

In other words, the French-Canadian identity was only viable as "Québécois." The survival of that identity required its transformation, its creative adaptation to changing socio-political conditions of possibility.

This outgoing, creative response to political realities was a sea-change in French-Canadian nationalist thought. The "new" nationalism of the Quiet Revolution adopted an urban, secular, and statist outlook. Like Duplessisme, it too hoped to protect against French-Canadian assimilation. However, the "new" nationalism looked to the state – the provincial government – to create the conditions of possibility for québécois identity and culture's free and valued expression and expansion. According to new nationalists, securing a distinctive French-Canadian identity in the face of English-Canadian and United States dominance required its own state – an entrenched institutional support that would ensure the reproduction and hence, perpetuation of French-Canadian/Québécois culture. As feminist sociologist Nira Yuval-Davis notes, the correspondence of the nation and the state "naturalize[s] the hegemony of one collectivity and its access to the ideological apparatus of both state and civil society."[76] In Québec, the nation-state

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[75] Balthazar, 30. Emphasis in original.

[76] Yuval-Davis, 11.

alliance was a means for the francophone majority to alter the lines of power, the preferred and advantaged social categories. In the old nationalism to be French-Canadian was to adopt a diffuse, continentalist vision of francophones as an ethno-linguistic group. In the new nationalism, to be Québécois was to assert majority status in the nationalized territory of Québec.

Leftist intellectuals (cultural nationalists) of this period advocated for the adoption of "Québécois" as an indication of the decolonization of Québec and its people, their collective recognition of their colonized status, and their desire to control the means of production to advance their own goals. As Milner and Milner amply document, Québec's natural resources, heavy industries, and the majority of businesses were "foreign"-owned – owned by either anglo-Canadians, generally of British descent, or by United States capitalists.[77] Throwing over the hyphenated Canadian identity for "Québécois" came to stand for not simply a francophone resident of Québec, but also one with a consciousness of the need for political struggle. This struggle was ideologically linked with anti-colonial movements in Africa and the Black Power movement in the United States that coincided with Québec's postcolonial awakening. Many québécois cultural nationalists of this period drew on these international anti-colonial movements and their philosophies (including *négritude*) – not unproblematically – for inspiration in their own political and cultural battles with anglophone Canada. Indeed, one of the most influential articulations of the new "québécois" identity was a book by Pierre Vallières, imprisoned for his

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[77] See Sheilagh Hodgins Milner and Henry Milner, *The Decolonization of Quebec: An Analysis of Left-Wing Nationalism* (Toronto: McClelland and Stewart Ltd., 1973) for a sympathetic analysis of the nationalist movement and its roots in the economic, social, and historical conditions of Québec.

involvement with the separatist cells of the *Front de la libération de Quebec* (FLQ), entitled *Les Nègres blancs d'Amérique* (The White Niggers of America).[78] Cultural nationalists would use the state and its institutions to create the conditions of possibility for unfettered efflorescence of national expression. By changing those conditions, québécois identity and the culture that would be its greatest proof would be enabled to "'mature' from colonial adolescence to autonomous, self-actualized adulthood."[79]

With this ideological shift from French-Canadian to Québécois, adolescent to adult, came the challenge of making the québécois national identity persuasive and palpable to those it would define. Its symbolic borders would need to be agreed upon and applied; its uniqueness proven through documentation and evidentiary procedures. Most importantly, however, it would have to take hold on an intimate level – in affective structures, social practices, and cultural forms. I will call this intimate form of national inscription "style," the corporealization of social classifications or categories in distinctive, characteristic modes and forms of expression. The result of national institutional, cultural, and personal incorporation in Québec is "*québécité*," or, Québec-

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[78] Pierre Vallières, *Les Nègres blancs d'Amérique* (Montréal: Parti Pris, 1968). Translated into English by Joan Pinkham as *The White Niggers of America* (Toronto and Montréal: McClelland and Stewart Limited, 1971). The English translation of "Nègres blancs" as "White Niggers" reinforces Québécois' perceived denigration at the hands of "white" (read: English) Canada. For more on Québec's use of metaphorical "blackness" in cultural and political discourse, read the Epilogue of this dissertation.

[79] Alan Filewod, "Viewing Canadian Theatre/Canadian Theatre Review-ing," *CTR: Canadian Theatre Review* 79/80 (Summer/Fall 1994): 14 - 17; here 14. Filewod is discussing the origin story of (English) "Canadian" theatre as narrated by Canadian theatre historian Don Rubin. His characterization of that project is certainly compatible with that in Québec.

ness.[80] In other words, *québécité* – québécois "nationness" – is a constellation of cultural and social practices that are recognized as "québécois" and that "produce an inherent and often unarticulated feeling of belonging, of being at home."[81] The creation and performance of a distinctive style of *québécité* serves a dual purpose: not only does it render the québécois national identity palpable to those it would define, it also renders it visible and, hence, persuasive, to those outside of its contours.

Provincial governance and québécois institutions would not be enough to prove the nation-ness of Québec, nor to ensure that population's accelerated maturation. Without a sovereign state, the Québec nation is more a "cultural nation" than a "political nation"; its nation-ness is derived from its cultural distinctiveness, determined by language, historical circumstance, and a common ethic, not by its political domain.[82] Hence, cultural production bears the burden of proving *le fait national* since the political realm cannot.[83] On the basis of its distinctive cultural identity Québec can advocate for

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[80] "Québécité" is drawn from Annie Brisset, *A Sociocritique of Translation: Theatre and Alterity in Quebec, 1968 - 1988*, trans. Rosalind Gill and Roger Gannon (Toronto: University of Toronto Press, 1996). Elspeth Probyn develops an aligned notion of "Québécitude" in "Love in a Cold Climate: Queer Belongings in Quebec," a chapter in her book *Outside Belongings* (New York and London: Routledge, 1996), 63 – 92; here, 68. She defines "Québécitude" as "a state-funded project of identity formation distributed across individuals."

[81] Drawn from anthropologist John Boreman's definition of "nationness" as quoted in Verdery, 229.

[82] As part of a summer-long forum in the Montréal newspaper *Le Devoir* entitled "Penser la nation québécoise," Charles Taylor wrote an article on the distinctions between a cultural nation and a political one. Taylor, "De la nation culturelle à la nation politique."

[83] See Handler for his astute discussion of producing national culture in Québec in folk festivals and street parades.

sovereign state-status. Moreover, cultural production ensures the incorporation of the national fact in national identity, proof positive of a nation's existence. Thus, cultural production provides not only the grounds for independence, but also the means through which those grounds become lived as fact in the populace.

Nation and Theatre in Québec

Given the importance of cultural production to proving *le fait national* in Québec, it is unsurprising to discover that theatre and performance have occupied a central place in the production of culture as national, as québécois. Theatre has significantly contributed to how the québécois nation styles itself. That the theatre and its impact on national development are discussed in standard historical and political science textbooks evinces the importance of its contribution to the efflorescence of the québécois identity. Dickinson and Young's *A Short History of Québec* asserts that in the 1960s artists were the leading voices of Québec nationalism and cite playwright Michel Tremblay as an important force for social change. *Québec: State and Society*, edited by one of Québec's best-known political scientists, devotes an entire section of the book to the roles of "Symbols, Ideologies, Culture and Communications" in the development of *L'État de Québec*. Social scientist Daniel Latouche has gone so far as to argue that the state of Québec is a literary, not a political, creation.[84]

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[84] Alain-G. Gagnon, ed. *Québec: State and Society*, 2nd ed. (Scarborough, ON: Nelson Canada, 1993); Dickinson and Young, 329 – 330; Daniel Latouche, "The Power of Words: The State as a Literary Creation," *Quebec Studies* 3 (1985): 12 - 31.

However, the theatre's assigned importance in the narrative of Québec's development into a self-actualized nation is often restricted in historical and theatrical scholarship to its ability to reproduce/represent the national fact. In other words, its role is not generally seen as constitutive in styling Québec as national, but rather as reflective of the nation of Québec. The recent comments by québécois playwright and performer René-Daniel Dubois are explicit about the role culture, and particularly theatre, plays in fostering nationalism in Québec: "Culture is always used symbolically in Quebec. Artists are only good if they can be used for nationalism."[85] Although his may be an over-simplification of the relationship between cultural production and the nation form, it does succinctly outline the terms of the relationship between theatre and nationalist projects frequently found in scholarship and journalism on Québec theatre. National discourse achieves the ideological effect of an inclusive, universalist discourse through which particular theatrical events and texts are analyzed as "national" or "not-national."

Among the most influential artists to advocate for a national drama in Québec was a key player in that drama's development – playwright and burlesque actor Gratien Gélinas. In a 1949 address at the Université de Montréal, Gélinas proposed casting off the imported theatre of other nations and advocated the creation of a French-Canadian national drama. He analogized the experience of this drama to that of a marriage, saying that "actor and spectator melt and dissolve into each other." The spectator murmurs the words of the actor at the same time as the actor speaks them. Gélinas cautions that this most perfect union between actor and spectator will happen only when "an author and a

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[85]Quoted in Guy Lawson, "No Canada? After the referendum, a chill descends on Montreal," *Harper's Magazine*, April 1996, 74.

public [are] of the same essence, the same *souche*, the same past, the same present, the same future." From this goal of perfect communion, he derives the argument that "*the most pure dramatic form* – not the only dramatic form but rather the most pure – *would be that which would represent the same public it addresses in the most direct possible manner.*"[86] Privileging the idea of sameness among author, actor, and audience and that similarity's expression in realist drama, Gélinas' speech set the standards for measuring Québec-ness in the theatre and in theatre scholarship. Québec-ness on stage would consist of reflecting as accurately and completely as possible the reality outside of its theatre buildings, thereby reinforcing the mimetic relationship between theatre and nation. Moreover, it underscored the mistaken Duplessian notion that the French-Canadian reality was homogeneous and unchanging.

Much of the subsequent scholarship on québécois theatre reinscribes the mimetic relationship found in Gélinas' treatise and in other scholarship on theatre and nation. A rapid sampling of books on québécois theatre suggests that Gélinas' location of nation-ness in the theatre's reflective capacities took firm hold in Québec theatre scholarship. The first book to take an explicitly "québécois" theatre for its object, *Théâtre québécois I* (1970) by Université de Montréal literary scholars and dramatic critics Jean-Cléo Godin and Laurent Mailhot, asserted that "the theatre, in its particular characteristics, is the most

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[86] (Donc, s'il faut pour qu'il ait théâtre que l'acteur et le spectateur se fondent et se dissolvent l'un dans l'autre, l'homme de la salle *se voyant* lui-même et murmurant les paroles de l'homme de la scène *du même coeur que lui et en même temps que lui*, cette union ne sera jamais aussi totale, en principe du moins, qu'entre un auteur et un public *de la même essence, de la même souche, du même passé, du même présent et du même avenir.*)... (*la forme dramatique la plus pure* – je ne dis pas la seule mais bien la plus pure – *serait celle qui représenterait le plus directement possible le public même auquel ce théâtre s'adresserait.*) Gratien Gélinas, "Pour un théâtre national et populaire," *Amérique Française* I:3 (1949): 32 - 42; here, 37 and 35. Emphasis in original.

tied [of the literary arts] to the environment/milieu." Although they disavow the necessity of realistic accuracy in the depiction of the milieu on the national stage, they suggest that what makes the québécois theatre national is the fact that it "reflect[s] and identif[ies] our milieu."[87] The only book-length study of québécois theatre that takes as its object the theatre's relationship to the national movement, Elaine Nardocchio's monograph, *Theatre and Politics in Modern Quebec*, likewise reinscribes a mimetic relationship.[88] Annie Brisset's *Sociocritique of Translation* addresses the importance of alterity and difference in Québec theatre to the maintenance of québécois identity through an analysis of theatrical translation.[89]

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[87] (Des trois genres littéraires, c'est peut-être le théâtre qui, par ses catactéristiques [*sic*] particulières, est le plus lié au milieu. Non seulement parce qu'il le reflète, s'en nourrit, l'attaque, mais parce que son succès, son existence, dépend directement de la réception que lui donnera ce milieu. Le théâtre est placé entre deux miroirs aux ecrans très rapprochés.) (C'est justement parce que l'ensemble des pièces retenues [par Godin et Mailhot pour le livre] reflète et identifie notre milieu que nous sommes justifiés de parler d'un théâtre *québécois*.) Jean-Cléo Godin and Laurent Mailhot, *Théâtre québécois I: Introduction à dix dramaturges contemporains* (Québec: Hurtubise, 1988 [1970]), 20 and 23.

[88] Elaine Nardocchio, *Theatre and Politics in Modern Québec* (Edmonton: University of Alberta Press, 1986). Inquiry into the politics of nationalism on the English-Canadian stage are more numerous. They include Denis Salter, "The Idea of a National Theatre," in *Canadian Canons: Essays in Literary Value*, ed. Robert Lecker (Toronto: University of Toronto Press, 1991), 71 – 90; Richard Paul Knowles, "From Nationalist to Multinational: The Stratford Festival, Free Trade, and Discourses of Intercultural Tourism," *Theatre Journal* 47 (1995): 19 – 41; and Alan Filewod's consistent investigations into the politics and poetics of nationalism on the English-Canadian stage both in his book, *Collective Encounters: Documentary Theatre in English Canada* (Toronto and Buffalo: University of Toronto Press, 1987) and in numerous articles. Inasmuch as Québécois nationalist cultural production continues to dialogue with English-Canadian national visions and performances, the work of these scholars operates both as a model for my own and as an ongoing conversation into which I wish to enter.

[89] Brisset, *Sociocritique*.

Moreover, the history of theatre in Québec follows almost exactly the traditional narrative of the Québec nation, repeating the conventions of sociological modernism, moving from the backward darkness of national ignorance into the illuminated maturity of self-knowledge. For example, in his book, *French Canadian Theatre*, Jonathan Weiss recapitulates this history of theatre in Québec. His progress narrative begins with Jesuit-lead troupes of French settlers, educating the artistic tastes of the *habitants*. It continues through the nineteenth- and early twentieth-century tradition of "imported" theatre, generally from France or the United States. Weiss notes some advancements toward a national theatre with the appearance of Gélinas' French-Canadian characters on the burlesque stage. Gélinas' efforts resulted in a yearly vaudeville review of French-Canadian types called *Les Fridolinades* and what has been called the founding play of québécois theatre, *Tit-Coq* (first performed in 1948).[90] Marcel Dubé's psychological realist texts of the 1950s and 60s pick up the gauntlet thrown down by Gélinas.[91] But it is Michel Tremblay's "*miroir effrayant*" of *Les Belles-Soeurs* that signals the end of colonial theatre for Weiss. Tremblay's major contribution to the national cause, in this narrative, is his inspiration for a new school of national and theatrical realism.[92] Jacques Cotnam writes in *Le Théâtre québécois* that the major theme of québécois literature since the 1940s is the search for self. He too deems the search complete, the goal of authentic

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[90] Gratien Gélinas, *Tit-Coq* (Montreal: Beauchemin, 1950).

[91] See Marcel Dubé, *Florence: pièce en deux parties et quartre tableaux* (Québec: Institut Littéraire du Québec, 1960); Marcel Dubé, *Zone, pièce en trois actes* (Montréal: Leméac, 1968).

[92] Jonathan M. Weiss, *French-Canadian Theater* (Boston: Twayne Publishers, 1989).

national expression in dramaturgy met with the advent of Michel Tremblay: "Michel Tremblay is on the way to creating an authentic *national* dramaturgy, which reflects the frustrations accumulated over three hundred years and the revolt that they finally provoked."[93]

This is not to say that this narrative is not accurate in many ways concerning the history of theatre in Québec. That this progress narrative is repeated so frequently in the scholarship is testament not only to the persuasiveness of its contours, but also to its widespread academic acceptance. One of the most assiduous historians of Québec theatre writing in English, Leonard E. Doucette, has devoted two deservingly well-respected volumes to tracing this history.[94] Compilations of performance and publication records document the dominance of foreign plays and playwrights in Québec during the nineteenth and early twentieth centuries. With the advent of the Quiet Revolution and its reorganization of identity came a wave of treatises recovering "native" plays among the colonial imports and/or documenting the rise of the québécois theatre from the mid-twentieth century forward.[95] Complementary statistics demonstrate the rise in productions

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[93] (Michel Tremblay est en train de créer une dramaturgie *nationale* authentique, qui reflète les frustration accumulées depuis trois cents ans et la révolte qu'elles ont finalement provoquée.) Jacques Cotnam, *Le Théâtre québécois, instrument de contestation sociale et politique* (Montreal: Éditions Fides, 1976), 67 and 101. Emphasis in original.

[94] Leonard E. Doucette, *Theatre in French Canada: Laying the Foundations, 1606 - 1867* (Toronto: University of Toronto Press, 1984); Leonard E. Doucette, ed. *The Drama of Our Past: Major Plays from Nineteenth-Century Quebec* (Toronto: University of Toronto Press, 1997).

[95] Jean Hamelin, *Le renouveau du théâtre au Canada Français* (Montreal: Les Éditions du jour, 1961); Baudoin Burger, *L'Activité théâtrale au Québec (1765 - 1825)* (Montréal: Parti pris, 1974); Cotnam; Étienne-F. Duval, ed. *Anthologie thématique du théâtre québécois au XIXe siècle* (Montreal: Leméac, 1978).

by Québécois playwrights on Montreal stages following the Quiet Revolution.[96] Nonetheless, tying the theatre's "development" to the development of the state limits the scope of theatrical activity to reflection. Moreover, it limits the idea of the theatre to dramatic literature, invoking what Alan Filewod calls "a compact pledge of ideological codes and modifiers, which rests on assumptions that are rarely challenged: that dramatic literature is the summit and justification of a theatre; that a dramatic repertoire proves the validity of a culture."[97] Given the precarious nation-ness of Québec, the appeal of (and to) an indigenous dramatic literature is understandable.

As explained in the opening section of this chapter, the philosophical reasons for this hierarchical relationship in which theatrical activity is interpreted through a preexisting national grid are many. In Québec, however, this one-way reflection model so prevalent in the literature is complicated by the fact that what is deemed "national" or "québécois" is often and hotly contested. The summer 1999 series of *Le Devoir* newspaper articles from which I drew the notions of "cultural" and "political" nations is a case in point of the ongoing and robust public dialogue in Québec over the features of Québec nation-ness. The features of Québec's nation-ness, or *québécité*, are contested for two reasons. First, *québécité* is not instantiated in the form of a sovereign state and hence,

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[96] Pierre Lavoie, "québec/ bilan tranquille d'une révolution théâtrale," *Jeu* 6 (1977): 47 - 61; Josette Féral, "Practiques culturelles au Québec: Le Théâtre et son public," *Études littéraires* 18:3 (1985): 191 - 210; Elaine F. Nardocchio, "1958 - 1968: Ten Formative years in Quebec's Theatre History," *Canadian Drama/L'Art dramatique canadien* 12:1 (1986): 33 - 63.

[97] Filewod, "Viewing Canadian Theatre," 14.

is denied the consistency and support that the institutions of a national governing structure can provide. Second, that which is "québécois" must be invented as such.

Prior to the Quiet Revolution period, things "québécois" were not conceivable because there was no such descriptor. Just as French-Canadians became Québécois in a creative response to shifting conditions of possibility, those traits, cultural artifacts, historical events, and community features held over from "French Canada" would also need to be reinvented as québécois. Moreover, political, economic, linguistic, and cultural colonization had obscured the components of *canayenité/québécité*. Thus, before being able to reflect *le fait national*, the elements of Québec's nation-ness must be uncovered. Hence, cultural production plays a doubled role in the national project: it invents the truly québécois and, in so doing, it reflects the national fact.

This invention/reflection dialectic is perhaps more aptly allegorized in the architecture of the Québec pavilion at the World's Fair and Exposition held in Montréal in 1967 than in the dramatic literature cited above. By night, its interior was illuminated, revealing through the glass what lay behind the mirror-like surface: Québécois-produced technologies, designs, arts, inventions. By day, its dark-tinted glass reflected national and provincial "facts" around it, the architecture of the French and Ontario pavilions playing over its surface. In this dialectic between creation and reflection in the Québec pavilion, the "revelation" of a mature, modern québécois culture/identity is rewritten as "discovery." (See figure 1) To discover this new New World of Québec *as national*, is to produce it in and through performance.

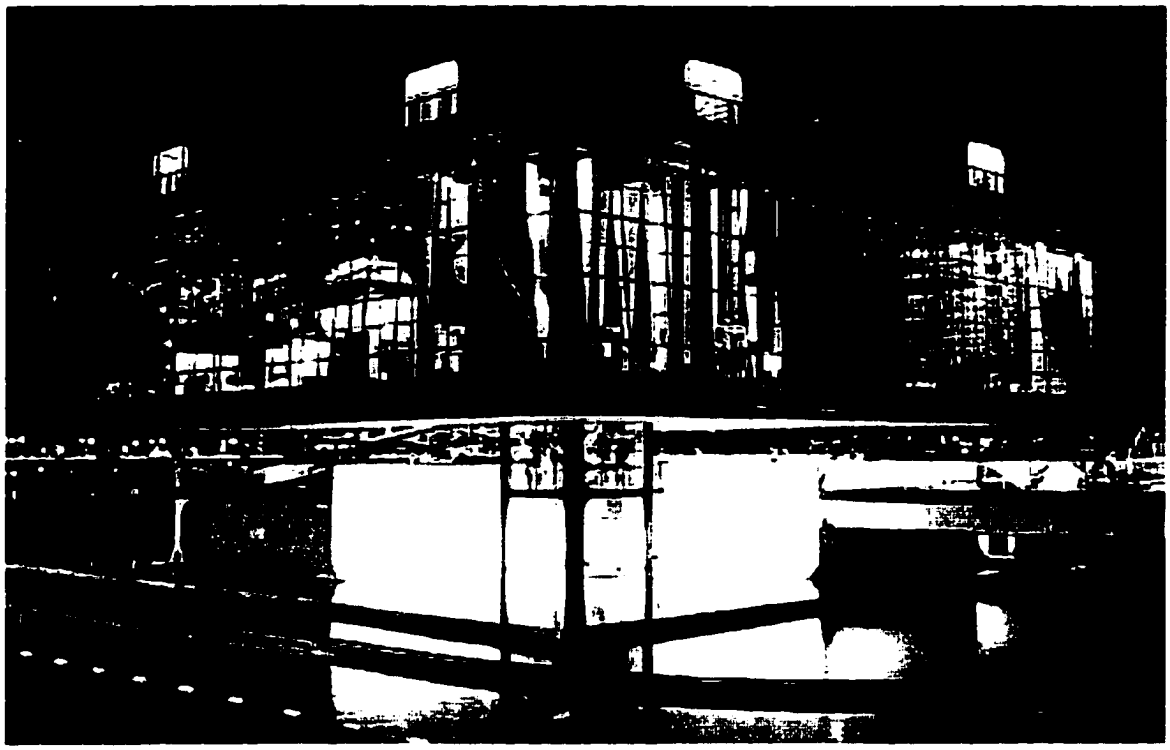

Figure 1: The Québec Pavilion at Expo '67. Reproduced by permission of Jeffrey Stanton.

Expo '67: *Terre des Hommes*/Man and His World

Quinze cent et trente-quatre. Le Québec reçoit son premier touriste, Jacques Cartier. . . .

Mille neuf cent soixante-sept. Cinquante millions de Jacques Cartiers découvrent une terre inconnue – Terre des Hommes.

[Fifteen hundred and thirty four. Québec receives its first tourist, Jacques Cartier. . . .

Nineteen hundred and sixty seven. Fifty million Jacques Cartiers discover an unknown land – Man and His World.][98]

[98] Gilles Carle (director), *Le Québec à l'heure de L'Expo* (Québec: Office du film du Québec, 1967).

Thus begins Gilles Carle's documentary film on the 1967 World's Fair and Exposition, "Terre des hommes/Man and His World." Montréal hosted those fifty million explorers from 28 April to 27 October 1967. Carle's invocation of the tropes of discovery and tourism is not particularly remarkable in the context of world's fairs and their publicity. Indeed, fair-goers are often exhorted to "discover" the wonders of the world and venture into the land of tomorrow.[99] Nor are those tropes uncommon in myths of national origin, particularly in the Americas where *terra incognita* – unknown lands – were "discovered" by European "explorers" and then claimed as possessions of European colonial powers.[100] However, it is noteworthy that Carle has reversed the tropes' usual order. In most origin stories, discovery precedes tourism. In Carle's rearticulation of Québec's founding myth, Nouvelle France's most renowned explorer is cast as tourist and Expo '67's crowds play discoverers. The reversal is significant for it highlights the *new* "New World" of Québec, no longer *terre inconnue* but rather *Terre des Hommes* – a discrete territory of a given people. It establishes *le fait national*, the fact that Québec is a nation, and implies that it would be discovered again and as such in 1967. Thus, Québec's origin *as national* lies not in the sixteenth century but rather in the twentieth.

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[99] See Robert W. Rydell, *All the World's a Fair: Visions of Empire at American International Expositions, 1876 - 1916* (Chicago and London: University of Chicago Press, 1984) for an analysis of these tropes in world's fairs held in the United States.

[100] For one of the pioneering studies of this dynamic in literary studies, see Stephen Greenblatt, *Marvelous Possessions: The Wonder of the New World* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1991); for its elaboration in theatre and performance studies, see Jill Lane, "On Colonial Forgetting: The Conquest of New Mexico and its 'Historia'," in *The Ends of Performance*, ed. Jill Lane and Peggy Phelan (New York and London: Routledge, 1998), 52 – 69.

Divorced from a colonial French legacy, this New World would be discovered and ratified by international commercial interests.

That the manifestation of the *new* New World of a national Québec took the form of a world's fair and exposition is oddly appropriate. World's fairs are in the business of producing marvelous "New Worlds" as commercial zones and of reinforcing the facticity of the nation. Encapsulating and organizing exhibits from numerous countries in a single site, international expositions offer a miniaturized and extracted explanatory blueprint of the world. These symbolic universes function as alternate worlds. [101] In its choice of theme – *Terre des Hommes* – Expo '67 merely made this function of world's fairs more explicit. World's Fairs have been privileged sites for exploring the relationship of "man" to "his" world since their inception during the period of western industrialization in the mid-nineteenth century. They index these relationships through displays of manufacturing, industry, commerce, and cultural production. Expo '67 organizers drew the fair's theme from Antoine de Saint-Exupéry's philosophical treatise, *Terre des Hommes*. "Man"'s place in the universe and relationship to "his" world were developed in sub-themes which structured the exhibits: Man the Explorer, Man the Producer, Man the Creator, Man in the Community, and Man the Provider. [102]

World's fairs testify to humanity's desire to create new worlds not only via symbolic representation but also through altering geography. In keeping with the mythology of the discovery of the Americas, North American world's fairs have often

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[101] I draw "symbolic universes" from Rydell, 2.

[102] Paul Martin, "Les conférences," in *Man and His World/Terre des hommes: The Noranda Lectures Expo 67/Les conférences Noranda L'Expo 67*, intro. Helen Hogg (Toronto: University of Toronto Press, 1968): 5 – 6.

created land where none existed and/or memorialized acts of discovery and annexation that constitute the Americas. For example, the Columbian World's Fair of 1893 in Chicago was held on a landfilled swamp on the banks of Lake Michigan. The 1915 Panama Pacific International Exposition resided on reclaimed land on the south bank of San Francisco Bay and celebrated the completion of the Panama Canal. Although it did not create new land, the Louisiana Purchase Exposition of 1904 commemorated the addition of new land to the United States: the purchase of the French territory of Louisiana by U.S. President Thomas Jefferson. Expo '67's symbolic universe inhabited a *terre* that was likewise a new creation. Two islands were constructed in the St. Lawrence River out of 6,825,000 tons of rock and earth expressly for "Man and His World." Crews erected Île Notre-Dame along the wall of the St. Lawrence canal, raising 26,970 feet of external walls and 21,150 feet of internal protection walls. They doubled the size of Île Sainte-Hélène.[103]

The universe that world's fairs construct both symbolically and physically is one organized according to principles of nationality. They are displays of what Immanuel Wallerstein calls the world-system, or the division of the planet into national political units that jockey for position in the world market, for the symbolic universe of the World's Fair is segregated into national units.[104] Each participating nation houses its goods in a replication of national surroundings, a simulated national environment – its own pavilion (or, occasionally, area of a pavilion). Each nation's goods – be they

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[103] http://naid.sppsr.ucla.eduexpo67/maps-docs/buildingexpo.htm

[104] Immanuel Wallerstein, *The Modern World-System.* vols. 1 – 3 (New York : Academic Press, 1974 – 1980).

industrial, technological, or artistic – can be compared to others'. World's fair historian John Allwood writes the exhibitions have been used "as gigantic vehicles for international public relations and the rivalry of whole life styles."[105]

In the symbolic universe and altered geography of *Terre des Hommes*, Québec rewrites its story of origin and asserts a different, aggrandized location in the new New World order. With its own pavilion, distinct from Canada's, and an additional, separate pavilion showcasing Québec's industries, the province is symbolically promoted to nation-state status, a peer among fellow nation-exhibitors competing for priority on the world market. Québec's efforts to prove its *fait national* are apparent in the location of Québec pavilion and the pavilion's.

Expo '67 was a "first category" world's fair; each participating country (more than fifty in all) designed its own pavilion to contain its exhibits. The Québec Pavilion occupied its own promontory, jutting out from Île Notre-Dame into the interior lake used for regattas and other water sports during the exposition. It was flanked on one side by the Ontario Pavilion and on the other by the France Pavilion. (See figure 2) The Québec Pavilion's location on the fairgrounds evokes the story of Canada's confederation in 1867 and analogizes Québec's cultural-political location as a nation within another nation-state. 1967 was, hence, Canada's centenary year. Ironically, given Québec's bid for recognition as a discrete nation, separate from Canada, Expo '67 was the centennial's most visible and visited celebration. In its role in Canada's centenary celebrations, Expo '67 might have become another Louisiana Purchase Exposition, a celebration of the

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[105] John Allwood, "Madison Avenue and the Computer," in *The Great Exhibitions* (London: Studio Vista, 1977), 161 - 175; here; 168.

annexation of French New World territories by anglophone nations. Instead it modeled re-annexation, the discovery and colonization of Québec by its own people. Its new New World was not discovered (nor then lost) by French explorers, but rather symbolically and physically created by Québécois.

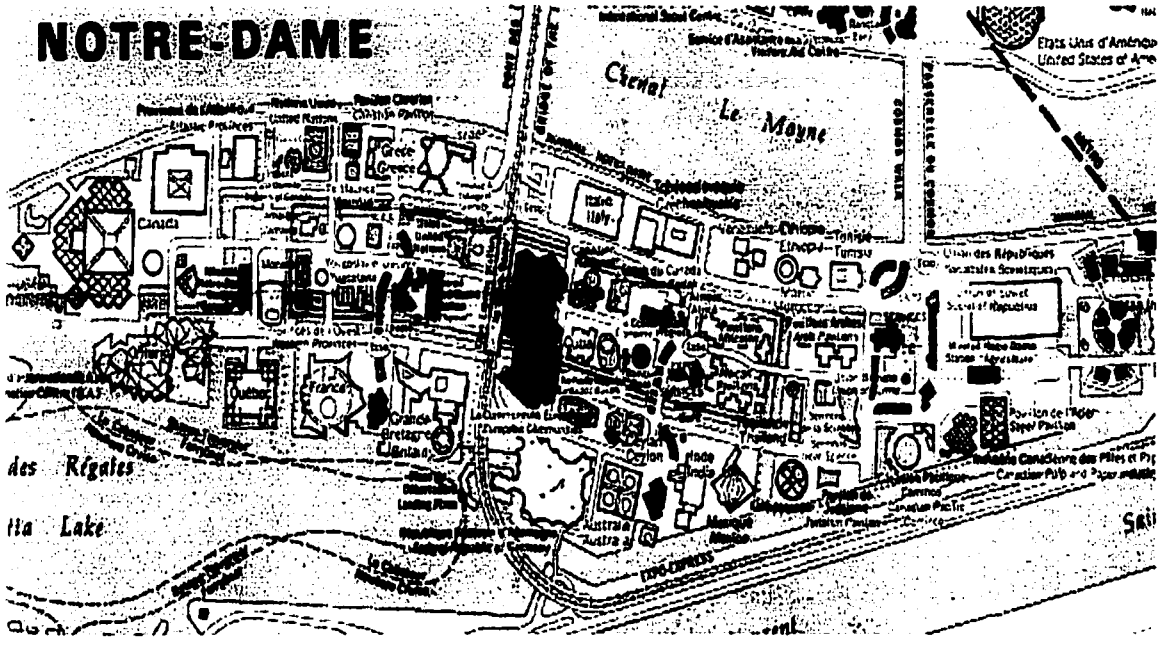

Figure 2: Official Souvenir Map of Expo '67's Île Notre-Dame. Reprinted by permission of Jeffrey Stanton

Theatre-Nation

In a society in which theatre has played such an important role in the formulation of a distinct nation, what could reading that nation through a theatrical lens and methodology add to the ongoing debates about identity (or, *québécité*) and nation? What is the potential of theatre to style the nation differently, along more inclusive and pluralistic lines? How might a theatrical methodology shift criteria for citizenship from a focus on being québécois to a focus on performing québécité? These questions seem

important, even pressing, in the current climate of québécois nationalism and the troublingly restrictive conditions of belonging to the québécois collectivity articulated by provincial leadership following Quebec's most recent referendum on sovereignty (October 1995).[106] This dissertation is yet another story of *le fait national*'s creation through the apparatuses of the theatre. It attempts to rewrite the narrative of the québécois nation as a performative act of imagination and persuasion, instead of as an emergence either into the modern or into the true self.

It proposes an alternate lens for reading the nation, in particular the state-less nation of Québec – one that draws on the anti-mimetic and performative theories of theatre scholars and practitioners outlined in the first chapter. I look to the theatre as an active participant in proving *le fait national*: as a documentor, a cultural and linguistic archivist, a memorian, and an innovator. An inquiry into the cultural politics of *québécité* since 1967, the dissertation examines exemplary styles of performing Québécois identity in the québécois theatre. It focuses on four representative performances – a realist drama, a dance/image-theatre company, a postmodern circus, and two manifesto-poems – in the formation of distinct paradigms of *québécité* developed in pursuit of defining and producing a québécois nation. I query the theatre's various contributions and challenges to the *indépendentist* national project and examine the theatre's potential for modeling new forms of québécité.

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[106] In brief, then-Parti Québécois leader Jacques Parizeau blamed "money and the ethnic vote" and "les immigrés" for the "oui" side's defeat at the polls. For a more elaborate analysis of this moment and of the impact of immigration on notions of *québécité*, see the Epilogue.

I argue that theatrical performance in Montréal from 1967 to 1997 is a powerful site for the conceptualization of various models of the nation and that it experiments with extending official conditions of belonging and criteria for citizenship in their representations of *québécité*. The politics of *québécité* – official and marginal, theatrical and political – are best understood as performative: they do what they say, i.e., in the assertion of national culture and identity, *le fait national* is created. On a more intimate level, they produce a persuasive sense of Québec-ness through practices that engender incorporated feelings of belonging.

I have chosen a series of performances through which to read the models of the nation and the definitions of *québécité* in theatrical production. My reflections on the World's Fair and Exposition, "Expo '67: Man and His World" are included in this chapter. These are followed by the critical reception of André Brassard's production of Michel Tremblay's *Les Belles-soeurs* in August 1968; image-theatre troupe Carbone 14's cycle of productions interrogating Québec/québécois history and culture; Montréal's post-modern, animal-free circus, Cirque du Soleil; and finally Michèle Lalonde and Marco Micone's manifesto-poetry. I have chosen these sites for both their generic diversity and for their temporal coincidence with crucial moments in the ongoing determination of *québécité*. The range of performance forms these instances represent — a world's fair, a canonical play, an avant-garde image-theatre troupe, a circus, and manifesto-poetry — allow me to interrogate how different kinds of performance codes figure *québécité*. How do they build, consolidate or challenge community? What are their modes of address? Who is their audience?

Each of these performances is based in Québec's financial and cultural, though not governmental, capital city of Montréal. I have chosen to focus on the stylizations of *québécité* and conditions of citizenship as they manifest themselves in Montréal-based performances because of Montréal's peculiar positioning in Québec's history, culture, and self-concept. As is the case with many large urban areas, Montreal is imaged as at once the "place to be" and as a "den of sin."[107] In the post-Quiet Revolution québécois imaginary, Montréal is employed as a positive example of the new, modern Québec with its industry, banking centers, diverse populations, and cultural attractions. By others, more attached to the mythology of French-Canadians as popularized by Duplessis, Montréal is viewed more negatively as exceptional, as not representative of the truly québécois/Québécois. As Québec's most populous and immigrant-attractive city, it lacks a critical mass of "*québécois de souche*" or "*québécois pure-laine*" — Quebecers who can trace their ancestry to Québec's original French settlers. Montréal was also the lynchpin in the "no" vote on sovereignty in October 1995's referendum. As a result, Montréal is the key site for interrogating Québec's self-concept — both historically and in the present — and the place where discussions of belonging and citizenship are the most intense. As James Holston and Arjun Appadurai write,

> cities remain the strategic arena for the development of citizenship . . . . [W]ith their concentrations of the nonlocal, the strange, the mixed, and the public, cities engage most palpably the tumult of citizenship . . . . Like

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[107] Raymond Williams, *The Country and the City* (New York, Oxford University Press, 1973).

> nothing else, the modern urban public signifies both the defamiliarizing enormity of national citizenship and the exhilaration of its liberties.[108]

How is this "tumult of citizenship" performed and, through those performances, practiced and negotiated or contested on Quebec stages? How are the nation's conditions of belonging structured and articulated according to different "signs" of citizenship — race, gender, sexuality, and national origin? How do theatrical performances at crucial moments in the narration of the Quebec nation figure or image paradigms of the nation alternative to the official story?

This dissertation is comprised of three central chapters and framed by this introduction and an epilogue. While each of the chapters will be organized around specific theoretical concerns, each focuses on a particular time period and an exemplary form of *québécité*.

As indicated in the literature review above, one of the greatest boons to the development and dissemination of a recognizable *québécité* was a two-act play written by a 26 year-old former linotypist in 1965. Enlisted in the cultural struggle over the features of *québécité* in the theatre and on the streets, *Les Belles-Soeurs* (The Sisters-in-Law) by Michel Tremblay provided documentary evidence of a language, culture, and world-view distinctive of Québécois. It was celebrated as the first truly "québécois" play by scholars, critics, and theatre professionals. Chapter two, "Vive le Bingo! Fantastical Nation-ness in *Les Belles Soeurs*" analyzes dramatic realism as the preferred style of *québécité* during the cultural nationalist period of the late 1960s and early 1970s. However, that this most

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[108] James Holston and Arjun Appadurai, "Cities and Citizenship," *Public Culture* 8:2 (Winter 1996): 187 – 204; here, 188.

"québécois" of plays was exclusively populated by *Québécoises* (Québécois women) substantially expands the play's social and national visions beyond its usual interpretation as a transparent social document of the time. In the effort to identify *Les Belles-Soeurs* as "québécois," many emphasized its genre classification – realism – over the *genre* (gender) of its characters. In this chapter, I plumb once again the riches of *Les Belles-Soeurs* for an alternative national imaginary. I argue that the structure of the play and the content of the soliloquies delivered by its all-female cast style an alternative model of the nation based on equal access to the public sphere and "*l'fun*" (fun).

The furor around *Les Belles-Soeurs* was met and ultimately bested by a new, young public increasingly enthusiastic for all products "québécois." They were accommodated by a remarkable growth and diversification of the theatre industry itself.[109] Interest in realism as a form and as a political weapon also waned and was eventually supplanted in avant-garde theatre circles by other techniques including that of the *théâtre repère*. *Théâtre repère* is a practice of collective creation in which an ensemble creates a performance from a couple of central images. Utilizing this technique in the smaller theatres of what in Québec is called "*le jeune théâtre*" (young/youth theatre), Montréal-based Carbone 14 first took to the stage.

Carbone 14, a dance-theatre troupe founded in 1984 by its artistic director Gilles Maheu, built its now-international reputation during this decade of political quietude with

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[109] Québec theatre scholar Gilbert David notes that between 1967 and 1980 more than fifteen new theatres of different kinds were built or refurbished. The governmental sponsors of Expo '67 provided funds for Montréal's premiere mainstream theatre, Place des Arts, and the Expo-Theatre at the Cité du Havre, the Montréal promontory used as part of Expo's site. Gilbert David, "Un nouveau territoire théâtral (1965 – 1980)" in "Un Théâtre à vif: écritures dramatiques et practiques scéniques au Québec, de 1930 à 1990" (PhD. Diss., University de Montréal, 1995): 38 – 64.

the creation of spectacular productions concerning Québec history: *Le Rail* (The Rail, 1984), *Le Dortoir* (The Dormitory, 1987), *La Fôret* (The Forest, 1994), *Les Âmes morts* (Dead Souls, 1996), and *L'Hiver-Winterland* (1998). The troupe's *concepteur*, Gilles Maheu, developed a unique corporal language and visual dramaturgy called "*écriture scénique*" (scenic writing) in his creations during the 1980s and 1990s. Carbone 14 shifts the mode and the emphasis of québécois theatre's work from documentation of a new identity to investigation of that identity's multiple alluviations. Carbone 14's work alters the cultural discourse defining *québécité* by shifting the focus from linguistic style to physical style. Its "text" is visual/physical, instead of verbal/written; its performers dance in lieu of speaking. It likewise moves the generic location of "exemplary" and celebrated *québécité* in the theatre from popular realism (like that of Michel Tremblay) to avant-garde mixed-genre performance.

Chapter three, "Dead Souls," focuses on Carbone 14's image-based spectacles and their reflections on the histories of Québec's identitarian positions. Their productions establish spatial, corporal, and imagistic bridges between present-day québécois identities and pre-Quiet Revolution French-Canadian identities. They engage issues in Québec's history such as Catholic boarding schools, political violence, and *les habitants*. However, the "stories" they tell are not structured along familiar, realistic, narrative lines. Fantasy, dreams, and recollections frame the performance, functioning both as point of entry and historiographical method. This chapter interrogates the reflective history Carbone 14 performs and its altered evidentiary procedures for proving *le fait national*.

Chapter four, "Exporting *Québécité*: Locating Québec in the Performances of the Cirque du Soleil," returns to the performance of québécois identity in the glare of the tourist gaze, turning to Montréal's globetrotting, postmodern Cirque du Soleil (Circus of the Sun) and its transnational style of national identity. Cirque du Soleil shows feature a loose narrative structure, live "world music" accompaniment, and fantastically costumed performers demonstrating their technical mastery of the circus arts in a single ring big top. Since 1991, Cirque du Soleil has received worldwide acclaim. Its success is such that politicians invoke the Cirque as a positive example of québécois ingenuity and financial success. The Canadian Ministry of Foreign Affairs has likewise recognized the Cirque's public relations potential; the Ministry now funds the Cirque's international tours because the Cirque is "advantageous to the image of the country."

I argue that the Cirque du Soleil's institutional structure and performance codes deconstruct a lynchpin of traditional Western nationalisms – the correspondence of a nation-state's territory with a national culture. Indeed, the kind of community the Cirque practices and projects via its far-flung, multinational organizational structure and its performance codes is more closely allied with a *trans*nation than a nation. With headquarters in Montreal and Amsterdam, permanent installations in two Las Vegas casinos, one in Disney World, and one in Berlin, its international company of performers, and its three different companies who tour the world simultaneously, Cirque du Soleil poses problems for all who want to claim it. Cirque du Soleil raises questions about what being a québécois cultural product means. Does one need to be local in order to be national? And how does a Cirque du Soleil maintain (or not) its *québécité*? Creating its own pseudo nation – its self-described and widely promoted "land of imagi-nation" –

Cirque du Soleil reduces *le fait national* to a marketing ploy. It raises questions of what being a québécois cultural product means in an era of transnational capitalism.

The Epilogue, "From 'Speak White' to 'Speak What'" examines the stresses of immigration and the pressures of linguistic assimilation on national style through two manifesto-poems. "Speak White" (1971) by Michèle Lalonde was a rallying cry to cultural nationalists for the protection of *le fait français* (the French fact) in Québec written, in part, in response to conflict over language laws in a heavily Italian quarter of Montréal. "Speak What?" is its palimpsestic rejoinder written by Italo-Québécois playwright Marco Micone (1989). The Epilogue considers the outcomes – actual and potential – when Québec's new New World receives immigrants from the Old World.

The symbolic universes of Expo '67, *Les Belles-Soeurs*, Carbone 14, the Cirque du Soleil, and manifesto-poems propose differential New World models of the nation form. Invented and reinvented, discovered and rediscovered, the new New World of Québec as national is indebted to the power of performance.

"Vive le Bingo!"

Fantastical Nation-ness in *Les Belles-Soeurs*

Les Belles-Soeurs (The Sisters-in-Law) by Michel Tremblay opened at Montréal's Théâtre du Rideau Vert on 29 August 1968. Celebrated as the first truly "québécois" play by scholars, critics, and theatre professionals, *Les Belles-Soeurs* serves as a convenient and largely convincing point of origin for *le nouveau théâtre québécois* – a theatre that was explicitly and self-consciously québécois in form, theme, and language. The critical literature surrounding the play is dominated by arguments proving its nationalist credentials in the form of its *québécité*, or "Québec-ness." Most frequently the national vision attributed to it is coincident with that of the prevailing reading formation of the late 1960s and early 1970s, anti-colonial cultural nationalism.[1] During that period, the majority of Tremblay's critics discuss *Les Belles-Soeurs* as a transparent social document reflecting the political, economic, and cultural marginalization of *les Québécois*.

However, *Les Belles-Soeurs* holds a more complicated vision of *québécité* than its cultural nationalist critics allowed. With regard to genre, most saw social realism. I

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[1] The notion of the "reading formation," culled from historian Tony Bennett's influential article "Texts in History: The Determinations of Readings and Their Texts," is meant to convey the complexity and dynamism of cultural production's relationship to society. Tony Bennett, "Texts in History: The Determinations of Readings and Their Texts," in *Post-Structuralism and the Question of History*, ed. Derek Attridge, Geoff Bennington, and Robert Young (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1987).

suggest that *Les Belles-Soeurs* is closer to a fantasia on national themes. With regard to the other *genre*, gender, contemporary critics assumed that the all-female cast stood in for an all-male polity. I maintain that *Les Belles-Soeurs* manifests an alternative model of *québécité* in the dramaturgical and political "problems" its all-female cast poses for critics. This model is articulated in the dual structure of the drama itself and in the series of extended monologues delivered by the five central characters. Ultimately, I suggest that the kind of instantiation of nationalist models available in theatrical production (both textual and performative) is at odds with a cultural nationalist project aimed at coherence, transparency, and closure. By focusing instead on *Les Belles-Soeurs*' explicitly theatrical elements, I will reveal the largely unacknowledged feminist critique within the play and the "fantastical nation-ness" that a realistic reading submerges.

Every interpretive school has its limitations and exclusions. In the case of *Les Belles-Soeurs*' early interpretations, the exclusions include non-realistic dramatic elements and gender. By re-considering how *québécité* is styled in the foundational québécois play, I hope not so much to "correct" the play's most compelling and long-lived interpretation as to extend cultural nationalist insights into the political and social interventions of *Les Belles-Soeurs*. My difference with these critics is not with their insistence on the efficacy and importance of cultural production to an independence movement. Rather, it is with their insistence that the theatre's efficacy resides in its ability to faithfully copy the minutiae of social reality. So, instead of taking the political context as primary – as the original of which theatre is a derivative copy – I take the theatrical context as primary. Following Tremblay's example of a dual structure, I

propose theatre as a more encompassing explanatory grid for nationalism, which allows for doubleness and contradiction in structure, character, and plot. In so doing I hope to demonstrate the value of introducing a theatrical vocabulary to nationalist discourse.

Les Belles-Soeurs is the story of Germaine Lauzon, a working-class housewife in Montréal's East End — the city's most densely francophone area and, not coincidentally, one of its poorest. Germaine has won a million trading stamps in a contest. Trading in these million stamps will allow her to redecorate her whole house. Pasting a million stamps into booklets is a big job, however, so Germaine invites her daughter, Linda, her sisters Rose Ouimet and Gabrielle Jodoin, her sister-in-law, and some friends and neighbours to help her. Before their arrival, Germaine enumerates all of the new things she will buy with her trading stamps to Rose on the phone.

> Oui, j'vas toute prendre ça. . . J'vas avoir un *set* de chambre style colonial au grand complet avec accessoires. Des rideaux, des dessus de bureau, une affaire pour mettre à terre à côté du litte, d'la tapisserie neuve . . . Non, pas fleurie, ça donne mal à tête à Henri, quand y dort . . . Ah! j'te dis, j'vas avoir une vraie belle chambre!
>
> (Yes, I'm gonna take all of it. . . I'm gonna have a complete colonial style bedroom *set* with accessories. Curtains, dresser-covers, a thing to put on the floor next to the bed, new wallpaper. . . No, not flowered, that gives Henri a headache when he sleeps. . . Ah, I tell you, I'm gonna have a really beautiful bedroom!)[2]

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[2] Michel Tremblay, *Les Belles-Soeurs*, intro. Alain Pontaut (Ottawa: Éditions Leméac, 1972). All further references to the play will appear in the text. Two notes on translation: First, I will present text from *Les Belles-soeurs* first in the *joual* in which it is

For a short while, all goes according to plan as the five central characters sit around Germaine's kitchen table drinking warm Coke, swapping stories of their recent activities, sharing strongly-held moralistic opinions, and pasting stamps. In time, however, the stamp-pasting activity and Germaine's too frequent references to her new buying potential tap each character's longings for something more than what they have. In a series of monologues, more or less evenly spaced throughout the two-act play, the five central characters articulate a post-scarcity vision of a different life. Different from the "*maudite vie plate*" (damned boring life) about which they complain in the opening choral ode, the life they envision is better and more "beautiful," like Germaine's red and gold kitchen appliances. A spotlight captures each monologist, picking her out from the crowd of fifteen on stage. During the monologues, all other characters remain immobile; they do not hear the monologues. Each breaks decisively with the action of the play and, in the play's original 1968 staging by Tremblay collaborator, director André Brassard, each is delivered soliloquy-style directly to the audience.

Honest stamp pasting breaks down fairly early in the play; Germaine's guests start to steal the booklets they have filled. Arguments among the women increase in both volume and vitriol. Germaine's realization that her friends are stealing her stamps provokes a battle over the remaining booklets. The play ends with the Germaine's plaintive cries of "*Mes timbres, mes timbres*" (My stamps, my stamps) and the group

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written and then in English in the text of this document. All other French-language sources will be appear in English translation in the text and in their original French in the footnotes. Second, following the practice of translator Ray Ellenwood, I put in italics any English word used in English in the French text of *Les Belles-Soeurs* to indicate that usage. See Ray Ellenwood, "Translating 'québécisme' in Jacques Ferron's *Le Ciel du Québec*," in *Culture in Transit: Translating the Literature of Quebec*, ed. Sherry Simon (Montréal: Véhicule Press, 1995), 101 – 109.

singing "Ô Canada". As they sing the Canadian national anthem, trading stamps fall like snow from the sky, littering the stage.

Cultural Touchstone

Tremblay's depiction of fifteen women drawn from three generations garnered a remarkable amount of critical, political, and public scrutiny, catapulting the play and its 26-year-old author into the spotlight. Set in Montréal's East End and populated by working-class women who discuss their daily lives in their native idiom, *Les Belles-Soeurs* pointedly reintroduced local sites, issues, and dialects to the theatre. First performed in a political and cultural environment actively searching for ways to represent and promulgate a newly politicized québécois identity, *Les Belles-Soeurs* re-kindled debates among artists, intellectuals, politicians, and clergy regarding the features of that national identity and its relationship to cultural production. The intensity of focus on *Les Belles-Soeurs* and the wide range of institutions weighing in on its merits (or lack thereof) signal the importance of its role in this identitarian project. So central was his play to the québécois national movement that the former linotypist has been credited with launching "the biggest strike of québécois politico-cultural liberation."[3] This comment from Robert Lévesque – Montréal's chief theatre critic of the 1980s and 1990s – might be viewed as a theatre professional's aggrandizement of his métier as influential beyond its own community. However, Lévesque's hindsight judgement regarding the impact of

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[3] (le plus gros coup de la libération politico-culturelle québécoise) Robert Lévesque, "Le debarquement des Belles-Soeurs" *Le Devoir*, 27 August 1988.

Tremblay's first foray onto the major metropolitan stage is supported by a review of press coverage of Tremblay's work from 1968 to 1976 conducted by Lorraine Camerlain and Pierre Lavoie. Camerlain and Lavoie's bibliography of works about Michel Tremblay lists over 150 articles or books that reference *Les Belles-Soeurs*.[4] Their review reveals not only the impact of *Les Belles-Soeurs* on public consciousness, but also the major parties involved in the constitution, definition, and circulation of a hotly-contested *québécité*. By 1970, Tremblay's celebrity was such that Canada's francophone monthly magazine, *Le Magazine Maclean*, had interviewed him twice.[5] By 1971 Tremblay was "the playwright that theatre directors fight over, badger and pursue with all their diligence."[6] The range of publications in which analyses of the play appeared is likewise indicative of the play's place in public consciousness. Articles appeared in all of the daily Montréal newspapers, in québécois and Canadian theatre and literature reviews (*Études françaises*, *La Scène au Canada*, *Canadian Theatre Review*, *Livres et auteurs canadiens*), cultural journals (*Relations*, *Perspectives*, *Voix et images du pays*), popular magazines (*Le Magazine Maclean*, *Allô Police*, *Sept Jours*), and activist political reviews (*Action*, *Action Nationale*, *Chroniques*).

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[4] Lorraine Camerlain and Pierre Lavoie, "Études sur Tremblay et son oeuvre" *Voix et images du pays* VII:2 (1982): 226ff.

[5] Fernand Doré, "Michel Tremblay, le gars à la barbe sympathique," *Le Magazine Maclean*, June 1969, 60; Marc-F. Gélinas, "Michel Tremblay: je pense en joual", *Le Magazine Maclean*, 1970, 46.

[6] (l'auteur dramatique que les directeurs de théâtre s'arrachent, talonnent et poursuivent de leurs assiduités) Martial Dassylva, "Michel Tremblay et sa nouvelle cantate 'cheap'," *La Presse*, 1 May 1971, D2.

The authors of the above publications and their opinions of the play's merits varied as widely as the venues in which they appeared. But despite their different disciplinary and ideological points of view, their active involvement in the debate demonstrates how *québécité* – producing it, defining it, distributing it, and authorizing it – was becoming an institutional project. Among those institutions jostling for pride of place in the *Belles-Soeurs* debate were the theatre (via its critics), the university (via its scholars), the government (via its ministers), and a new, leftist intelligentsia (via its journals).[7] On the whole, however, those involved in the debate can be divided into two positions: 1) politicians and clergy who advocated either incremental reform or a return to traditional French-Canadian values of isolationism and *la survivance* and 2) theatre and literature critics and professionals who espoused a revolutionary cultural nationalist position. Underlying both positions was the assumption that theatre reflected society, that it was a derivative discourse. Each was concerned for the image of Québec and the Québécois being projected in Tremblay's work. For both constituencies, *Les Belles-Soeurs* would serve as a cultural touchstone for the incipient québécois identity. However, each had different notions of that identity's preferred characteristics. Both understood Tremblay's depiction of Québécois in the play as "negative" or unflattering.

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[7] A note on the use of "intelligentsia" in this context. The early 1960s witnessed a sea-change in educational policy in Québec when the Liberal government of Jean Lesage introduced the collèges d'etude générales et professionelles (CEGEPs). Formerly the best *lycée* (roughly, high-school) students were chosen to continue their education at *collèges classiques* in which they received a classical higher education. Traditionally, therefore, there existed a gap between the educated classes who attended the *collèges classiques* and the rest of the population, which justifies the use of the term "intelligentsia" in this context. Michel Tremblay was offered a place in the collège classique but turned it down.

However, each understood the value of that depiction to the independence movement differently.

The reformists subscribed to the modernization program of the Quiet Revolution, generally associated with Premier Jean Lesage's term of office (1960-66). They advocated an incremental movement toward Québec independence via industrialization, the nationalization of natural resources, the secularization of the educational system, and the Frenchification of the school and the workplace. In demographic terms, reformists were generally of the professional middle and upper classes and represented the interests of capital (banking) and government. The new québécois identity they proposed was modern, secular, professional and French-speaking. The French-Canadian identity depicted in Tremblay's play was just the opposite: working class, nominal Catholics whose spiritual zeal had been diverted into consumerism and who spoke *joual* – an English-inflected sociolect of French. Because *Les Belles-Soeurs* painted an unflattering portrait of French-Canadians, the reformists responded to the play with shock and disgust; they disavowed its portrayal of *québécité* and positioned it as an obstruction to the sovereignty movement.

The uproar regarding the image of francophone Québécois presented by Tremblay was swiftly relocated to the literary and editorial pages of *La Presse*, one of Montréal's two major French-language daily papers, and focused on Tremblay's use of *joual* – the Montréal sociolect of French that is associated with the urban working-classes.[8] In his

[8] The theatrical and editorial pages of La Presse would host a series of these "*crises de joual*" (joual crises): first, during the summer and fall of 1968; second, upon the opening of Tremblay's dark family tragedy *À toi pour toujours, ta Marie-Lou* in the spring of 1971; and then again, in the spring of 1973, coincident with the production of his transvestite tragedy *Hosanna*.

review of the 1968 production, theatre critic Martial Dassylva lamented what he considered the waste of Tremblay's obvious talent on an exercise in dramatic *joual*. After remarking on Tremblay's "extraordinary gift of observation" and his "sometimes ferocious humour," Dassylva writes the following:

> I'm not a bigot by nature, but I must admit that this is the first time in my life that I have heard so many blasphemes, swear words, such toilet-filthy words . . . . In other circumstances I have already said how very artificial and detestable an attitude of "preciousness" toward the "depths" can be . . . . And in that vein, it is difficult to go farther than Michel Tremblay. . . . Let us hope that after "Les Belles-Soeurs" our playwrights – and also the troupe directors – will see the futility and inanity of the process. [9]

When the journal of the Centre d'essai des auteurs dramatiques, "Théâtre vivant," published the play text that fall, Dassylva had not substantially changed his opinion of the play's worth. "For my part, reading these two acts caused me suffering that a punishingly laborious book could only rarely cause."[10]

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[9] (Je ne suis pas bigot de nature, mais je dois bien avouer que c'est la première fois de ma vie que j'entends en une seule soirée autant de sacres, de jurons, de mots orduriers de toilette . . . . J'ai déjà dit en d'autres circonstances combien la préciosité vers le bas pouvait être artificielle et détestable . . . . Et dans cette voie, il est difficile d'aller plus loin que Michel Tremblay. . . . . Espérons qu'après "Les Belles-Soeurs" nos auteurs dramatiques – et aussi les directeurs du troupe – s'apercevront de la futilité et de l'ineptie du procédé.) Martial Dassylva, "L'amour du 'joual' et des timbres-primes," *La Presse*, 29 August 1968. For more of Dassylva's criticism on *Les Belles-Soeurs* and other staples of Québec theatre see his *Un théâtre en effervescence: Critiques et chroniques 1965 – 1972* (Montréal: Éditions de La Presse, 1975).

[10] (Pour ma part, la lecture de ces deux actes m'a fait souffrir comme rarement pensum avait pu le faire.) Martial Dassylva, "Revue de Tremblay (Michel) 'Les Belles-Soeurs'," *La Presse*, 7 September 1968, 41. As a respected theatre critic Dassylva's

Reformist concern about *Les Belles-Soeurs*' "negative" representation of Québécois intensified when Jean-Louis Barrault's Théâtre des Nations in Paris invited Montréal's Théâtre du Rideau Vert to perform the play for Parisian audiences in 1972. The Québec government refused to fund the excursion. When eighty-three artists protested to Secretary of State Mitchell Sharpe, he approved the grant. However, Québec's minister of cultural affairs, Claire Kirkland-Casgrain, remained deaf to the protests, insisting instead on the value of a different play which was "written in French." *Les Belles-Soeurs* would not travel to Paris until the following season where it found an enthusiastic audience. [11]

Where reformist critics saw the play's negative image of Québécois as detracting from the cause for independence, revolutionary critics saw in its depiction a spur to independence. Despite the condemnatory attacks on *Les Belles-Soeurs* by some critics and politicians, anti-colonial cultural nationalist critics set the terms for interpretation of *Les Belles-Soeurs* as well as those which would determine its efficacy in the ongoing struggle for independence. Literary historian Robert Schwartzwald has written that the

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opinion of new works carried significant weight with the theatre-going public. In this case, however, Dassylva's invectives may have done more to attract the curious to the Rideau Vert than to deter them. *Les Belles-Soeurs* was the biggest success of the 1968 Montréal theatre season; it attracted 16,000 spectators – a fact Tremblay was sure to point out when interviewed in Dassylva's paper almost exactly one year after its opening. Claude Gingras, "Mon Dieu que je les aime, ces gens là!" *La Presse*, 16 August 1969.

[11] See "L'affaire des 'Belles-Soeurs': Protestation de 83 artistes du Québec auprès de M. Sharp" *Le Devoir*, 30 March 1972, 11; Martial Dassylva, "Les 'Belles-Soeurs': Protestations auprès d'Ottawa" *La Presse*, 30 March 1972, A16; Christiane Berthiaume, "'Les Belles-Soeurs' ne peuvent répondre à l'invitation de Paris (Michel Tremblay: 'On passe pour des fous!')" *Dimanche-Matin*, 9 April 1972, 49. See also Lucie Robert "The New Quebec Theatre," trans. David Homel, in *Canadian Canons*, Robert Lecker, ed. (Toronto: University of Toronto Press, 1991), 112 – 123; here, 117.

"'historic memory' of the Quiet Revolution of the early 1960s is, in fact, the vigorous *critique* of that 'revolution' from this broad anti-colonial perspective."[12] Much the same could be said of the "historic memory" of *Les Belles-Soeurs*. In the theatre, the revolutionaries won the struggle to determine the key features of a theatrical *québécité*. The play's *québécité* coincided with the key features of their proposed québécois identity: a secular, radicalized proletariat divorced from all colonial influence. *Québécité* – the incorporation of a decolonized, "native" style – would be the assertion of Québec's difference from Canada, the United States, and France. This school of thought produced a useful but ultimately reductive interpretation of *Les Belles-Soeurs* as a realistic play demonstrating the colonization of *les québécois* (male gender implied) which has, since this period, become the canonical reading of the play.

The clearest and most influential expression of this political faction's philosophy was the journal *Parti pris* (1963-68). Founded by *engagé* writers and political activists, *Parti pris* espoused some of the most rigourous leftist arguments in favour of a secular, socialist, and sovereign Québec. The *Parti pris* generation developed their political and cultural programs through their readings of anti-colonial theoreticians and activists including Jean-Paul Sartre, Albert Memmi, Aimé Césaire, Jacques Berque, and Frantz Fanon. *Partipriste* editorials consistently linked Québec's independence with Québécois' self-realization. The fight for political, economic, and cultural liberation was also a fight to "dis-alienate the everyday life of the nation's people."[13] Thus producing "true"

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[12] Robert Schwartzwald, "Literature and Intellectual Realignments in Québec," *Québec Studies* 3 (1983): 32 – 56; here, 32.

[13] (désaliéner la quotidienneté des membres de la nation.) Paul Chamberlain, "Aliénation culturelle et révolution nationale" *Parti pris* 1:2 (November 1963): 13 – 22 ;

Québécois required revolutionary action in all of the spheres in which they had been colonized – in the political sphere (by English Canada), in the economic sphere (by a combination of English Canadian and American business interests), and the cultural sphere (by the French).[14] They advocated breaking with past traditions through a process of demystification. "Demystification is a positive weapon in the hand of the oppressed class or nation: it aims to destroy the values imposed by the dominant class, in order to recognize oneself and to realize oneself in the face of one's true needs, one's true desires."[15] Only when the colonial conditions under which Québécois lived were exposed *as colonial*, as foreign, could Québécois forge a better reality based on their true identity, *as national*. Truth served the insurgent national, falsity the colonial.

This emphasis on national truth based on an accurate understanding of present conditions carried over into the *partipriste* cultural program; truth in representation was highly valued for its personal/political efficacy. Reality would be both understood and represented in realist terms. In "Dire ce que je suis" (To speak what I am), poet Paul

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Reprinted in *Le Québec en textes* Eds. Gérard Boismenu, Laurent Mailhot, Jacques Rouillard (Montréal: Boréal Express, 1980), 351 – 357; here, 355.

[14] According to Lise Gauvin, "The *partipristes* were among the first to consider literature as a system as grafted onto other institutional systems and to consider literature in relation to the global socio-political context." (Les partipristes seront parmi les premiers à considérer la littérature comme système greffer sur les autres systèmes institutionnels et à penser la littérature en fonction du contexte socio-politique global.) Lise Gauvin, "Le théâtre de la langue," in *Le Monde du Michel Tremblay*, ed. Gilbert David and Pierre Lavoie (Montréal: Cahier de théâtre Jeu/Éditions Lansman, 1993), 335 – 357; here, 336.

[15] (La démystification est une arme positive entre les mains de la classe ou de la nation opprimée: elle vise à détruire les valeurs imposées par la classe dominante afin de se reconnaître et de se faire exister face à ses véritables besoins, à ses véritables désirs.) Chamberlain, "Aliénation culturelle," 356.

Chamberland correlates the cultural program of realist expression to the political one of demystification. He writes, "There is no significant literature except that which is rooted in a reality, a common life – and the writer, the poet is rooted in it only by first basing him/herself in the language of the everyday."[16] Fellow *partipriste* and poet André Major concurred that cultural production's role in political independence would be to reflect the era of which it was a part. "Revolutionary works are born of a revolutionary moment. A literature *represents* its era; it lives the era's contradictions and its movement."[17] In the mirror of literature, the Québécois would see themselves as they truly were. Seeing themselves as they truly were – colonized and alienated – would inspire them to political action.

This focus on revealing the truth of Québécois' colonized existence in a body of literature which would reflect life's realities substantially affected the critical response to *Les Belles-Soeurs*. In accordance with this reading formation and in an effort to enlist the play in a larger nationalist project, cultural nationalist critics looked to *Les Belles-Soeurs* for its truth-telling ability and its attendant contribution to the awakening of a national québécois consciousness. As a result, the central critical concerns with the play circulated around the accuracy of its depiction of East End life and the authenticity of that life's expression. The play's accuracy would be proven by analyzing it as a realist drama. Its

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[16] (il n'ya pas de littérature signifiante qu'enracinée dans une réalité, une vie commune – et l'écrivain, le poète ne s'y enracine qu'en se fondant tout d'abord sur le quotidien langage) Paul Chamberlain, "Dire ce que je suis," *Parti pris* 2:5 (Reprinted in *Le Québec en textes*, 380 – 4; here, 383.)

[17] (Des oeuvres révolutionnaires naissent d'un moment révolutionnaire. Une littérature représente son époque; elle vit des contraditions et du mouvement de cette époque.) André Major, "pour une littérature révolutionnaire," *Parti pris* 8 (May 1964): 56 –7; here 57.

authenticity of expression would be proven through its use of the urban québécois dialect of French, the *joual*. The play served as a pedagogical tool in the cultural nationalist school of self-knowledge.

Truth in Representation

This reflective relationship established between theatre and society during the creation of a "national" theatre is certainly not unique to Québec. As Ann Wilson points out, "That a project of creating a national theatre is predicated on a nation's search for its identity suggests a particular sense of theatre as mimetic: what we see on our stages is a mirror-like reflection of who we are."[18] In Québec, the positivist imperative for accuracy and authenticity in cultural production called for by cultural nationalists seemed to be best fulfilled in the theatre by *Les Belles-Soeurs*. Much of its writing indicated a realist aesthetic, one interested in representing the concrete realities of the social world.[19] For example, the bulk of the play consists of a series of conversations and arguments in which the characters discuss their lives and their disappointments in vivid detail. Their reality is one of dissatisfaction, self-pity, and fixity. They wait for something else to lift them out of their situation — be it the serendipitous windfalls of bingo, crossword contests and trading stamps, or God. The performance codes employed in the original 1968 production likewise conform to the theatrical conventions of realism. The set at the

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[18] Ann Wilson, "Notions of Nationalism," *CTR: Canadian Theatre Review* 62 (Spring 1990): 3.

[19] Definition adapted from Raymond Williams, "Realism," *Keywords*.

Rideau Vert was littered with "real" kitchen paraphernalia and the characters appeared clothed in garments recognizable to the audience as appropriate to their social class. The novena, transmitted on the radio, provided a soundtrack to the women's arguments and ribald jokes. These dramatic elements facilitated interpretation of Tremblay's stage as naively mimetic of the social. Stage reality was perceived as directly indexical to social reality.[20]

In terms of theme, many cultural nationalists saw their theories of French-Canadian marginality, colonization, and alienation acted out on stage. The milieu it depicted was economically depressed, politically ignorant, and culturally vacuous – symbols of a "backward" French-Canadian society morally dominated by the Church and economically and politically dominated by the Anglophone. André Major wrote that *Les Belles-Soeurs* uncovers "the real everyday poverty, the impoverishment and submission, the animality and egotism, all there is in an embryonic existence, narrow and joyless."[21] The play portrayed everything cultural nationalists worked against in their fight to reform French Canada into the state of Québec and French-Canadians into Québécois. In his 1977 assessment of the *nouveau théâtre québécois*' political efficacy, theatre scholar Pierre Lavoie asks "In how great a measure did the québécois theatre participate in the will to transform the social contract, to refurbish political ideologies?" He answers his

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[20] For further discussion of indexical and iconic relationships in the theatre see Marvin Carlson, "The Iconic Stage," *Journal of Dramatic Theory and Criticism* (Spring 1989): 3 – 17.

[21] (la misère réelle, quotidienne,, la pauvreté et la soumission, l'animalité et l'egoisme, tout ce qu'il y a dans une existence larvaire, étroite et sans joie.) André Major, "Un exorcisme par le joual," *Le Devoir*, 21 September 1968, 14.

own question with "We will never know. One thing is sure, that it actively helped to bring about Québécois' consciousness-raising by its constant denunciation of social inequalities, of cultural and political myths which had profoundly marked our society."[22] According to theatre scholar Jacques Cotnam, *Les Belles-Soeurs* in particular denounced racist and social prejudices and the myths of the submissive mother who hides behind religion and the drunken and brutal father.[23]

In terms of structure, the structural device of the unity of time utilized in the play provides a good example of how *Les Belles-Soeurs* could be used by cultural nationalists as a mirror of québécois life. The action of *Les Belles-Soeurs* transpires in "real" time. Laurent Mailhot, one of *Les Belles-Soeurs*' earliest academic critics wrote: "The action of *Les Belles-Soeurs* is of exactly the same duration as its performance: dramatic time equals real time. No moment in the textual or sub-textual conversation of the fifteen women is skipped." [24] Stage time and audience time are the same; the action of the play transpires in two hours and the audience watches it for the same length of time. There is an act-break but Tremblay's stage directions indicate that the last six lines of Act One shall be repeated at the beginning of Act Two creating the illusion of unbroken action

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[22] (Dans quelle mesure le théâtre québécois a-t-il participé à cette volonté de transformer le contrat social, de renouveler les idéaux politiques? On ne le saura jamais. Une chose est sûre, c'est qu'il a concouru de façon active à la prise de conscience des Québécois, par la dénonciation constante des inégalités sociales, des mythes cutlurels et politiques qui ont marqué pronfondément notre société.) Lavoie, "québec/bilan tranquille d'une révolution théâtrale," 47.

[23] Cotnam, 93 – 4.

[24] (L'action des *Belles-soeurs* a la durée exacte de sa représentation; le temps dramatique égale le temps réel. Aucun moment de la conversation ou de la 'sous-conversation' des quinze femmes n'est escamoté.) Laurent Mailhot, "*Les Belles-Soeurs* ou l'enfer des femmes," *Études Françaises* VI:I (1970): 96 – 104; here, 100.

(75). Mailhot calls it "pure convention." The continuity of time within the stage-world and the stage-world's synchronization with the audience's world lend themselves to an understanding of the play as a kind of documentary. This correspondence of theatrical time with audience time enables *Les Belles-Soeurs*' recuperation into cultural nationalist positivist imperatives and procedures.

The play's truth in representation was linked to a burgeoning sense of national truth in cultural nationalist discourse. In his review of *Les Belles-Soeurs*' opening night, Jean-Claude Germain called the play the "birth of the *québécois* Theatre" and hailed it as a "theatre of liberation," part of a broader program of liberation akin to that outlined by the *partipristes*.[25] Adopting Germain's nomenclature but lacking his nuanced reading of Tremblay's oeuvre, *Le Devoir* Michel Bélair recognized in *Les Belles-Soeurs* the origin of the "*nouveau théâtre québécois*" (new québécois theatre).[26] This new québécois theatre was deemed the theatrical instantiation of a cultural nationalist Québécois identity. Reiterating cultural nationalism's interest in realism's pedagogy, critic Rudel Tessier wrote that the "new québécois theatre" was one where "the public could not only know itself, but where it might learn to know itself – to know itself better."[27]

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[25] Jean-Claude Germain, " 'Les Belles-Soeurs': une condamnation sans appel," *Le Petit Journal*, 8 September 1968, 10. "J'ai eu le coup de foudre," Reprinted in *Les Belles-Soeurs*, 121 – 125. See also "'Les Belles-Soeurs': un événement capital," *Le Petit Journal*, 10 March 1968, 46. Emphasis added.

[26] Michel Bélair, *Le nouveau théâtre québécois* (Ottawa, Éditions Leméac Inc., 1973); Jean-Claude Germain, "J'ai eu le coup de foudre," in *Les Belles-Soeurs*.

[27] (Où le public non seulement peut se connaître , mais où il peut apprendre à se connaître – a se mieux connaître.) Rudel Tessier, "Afterword," to Gratien Gélinas, *Hier les enfants dansaient* (Montréal: Leméac, 1968), 151 – 2.

According to these critics, this new theatre inaugurated by Tremblay shared the goals of the *partipriste* revolutionaries and the attributes of their cultural program. Like the québécois identity proposed by *partipristes*, the new québécois theatre broke with all signs of foreign cultural domination in an effort toward self-realization. *Les Belles-Soeurs* innovated *misérabiliste* realism on the Quebec stage, focussed on québécois working-class life, and was written entirely in *joual*.[28] The *nouveau théâtre québécois* was "native" in "its form, its language, and in the problems it confronts" and, as such, "is one of the most essential factors in the affirmation of our identity."[29] Distinguishing the authentically "québécois" from that which disguised or veiled it was taken on as a project of *engagé* critics including theatre critics like Jean-Claude Germain and Michel Bélair; like the *partipristes*, they were actively engaged in raising the national consciousness of the Québécois through their criticism.[30] By facilitating interpretations of the play as accurately reflecting the situation of Québec in Canada (i.e., marginal, economically oppressed, and linguistically distinct), cultural nationalists hoped *Les Belles-Soeurs* would occasion "*prises de conscience*" ("consciousness-raising") in the audience. They would recognize and wake up to their reality which would "scare them to death. Scare

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[28] All dialogue was written in *joual*; didiskalia was written in French.

[29] (Québécois par sa forme, par son langage et par les problèmes qu'il aborde, [le nouveau théâtre québécois] est une des données les plus essentielles de l'affirmation de notre identité.) Bélair, *Le nouveau théâtre québécois*, 11.

[30] On the subject of the critics' involvement in political action, *partipriste* André Brochu wrote of his predecessors' work, "Literary criticism in Quebec is ignorant of what literature really is. [It is] party to a literature of evasion, a literature which is an accessory to the established order." André Brochu, "L'Oeuvre littéraire et la critique," *Parti pris* 1:2 (November 1963): 23, quoted in Jean-Marc Larrue, "Theatre Criticism in Quebec, 1945 – 1985," in *Contemporary Canadian Theatre: New World Visions* Anton Wagner, ed. Toronto: Simon and Pierre, 1985), 327 – 337; here, 331.

them so much that they might rediscover, in that fear, the desire to live."[31] In other words, people would not like the depiction they saw on stage and would not want to identify with Tremblay's characters. As a result, they would set out to create a better reality with which they could wholeheartedly identify.

This same goal of distinguishing the truly national from the falsely colonial was attributed to Tremblay and his work. For instance, in the article that opens *Nord*'s inaugural issue, René Berthiaume writes that Tremblay's shares a goal with a significant proportion of contemporary québécois authors which is

> to distinguish the purely québécois reality from the mistaken appearances which veil it; in one word, to make public certain facts, certain situations that we had previously turned into chimera, hidden so long behind the screen of shame and ridicule that we no longer even glimpsed their survival.[32]

Of Tremblay in particular Berthiaume writes, "Michel Tremblay must be primarily situated in the perspective of the revelation of the true 'québécois animal'."[33] During this period, Tremblay himself saw his theatre as political in as much as it contributed to the

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[31] Germain, 124.

[32] (démêler la réalité proprement québécoise des apparences trompeuses qui la voilent, en un mot rendre publics certain faits, certaines situations qu'on a avant eux volontairement tournés en chimères, cachés depuis si longtemps derrière l'écran de la honte et du ridicule qu'on n'en soupçonnait même plus la survie.) René Berthiaume, "À propos de l'oeuvre dramatique de Michel Tremblay: un cri d'alarme lancé au peuple québécois," *Nord* 1 (Autumn 1971): 9 – 14; here, 9.

[33] (Cest dans cette perspective de révélation du véritable 'animal québécois' qu'il faut d'abord situer Michel Tremblay.) Ibid.

revelation/consciousness-raising dynamic outlined by Bélair et al. In two different articles published one year apart, Tremblay explicitly links his theatre's political-ness to its reflection of current conditions. In the first he says, "*Les Belles-Soeurs* is a political play. It is obvious that when you show people how they are, it is in order to change them."[34] The second article quotes him saying, "My theatre follows current events and it is in that that it is political. It tells people what they really are, it reflects their own image and aims essentially at a consciousness-raising for an eventual unblocking."[35] Tremblay and his critics presumed their audiences would understand *Les Belles-Soeurs* as a realistic depiction of current conditions and would not like nor want to identify with what they saw on stage. This dis-identification would inspire them to create a decolonized québécois reality they could wholeheartedly embrace.

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[34] (*Les Belles soeurs* est une pièce politique: c'est évident que quand on montre aux gens comment ils sont, c'est pour les changer.) Quoted in Micheline Handfield, "Fou ou génie? Michel Tremblay travaille en 'joual' pour éveiller le people québécois," *Sept-Jours* 26 (March 1970): 27 – 8; here, 27.

[35] (Mon théâtre suit l'actualité et c'est en cela qu'il est politique. Il dit aux gens ce qu'ils sont vraiment, il leur renvoie leur propre image et vise essentiellement à une prise de conscience pour un éventuel déblocage.) Tremblay quoted in "Michel Tremblay: '. . . les bibittes des autres'," *Magazine Maclean*, September 1972, 20. In a 1969 interview with Claude Gingras, Tremblay assigned a consciousness-raising purpose to his theatrical writing in general. He says that he is prompting this response in his audience through the kind of theatre he writes, his "truth-theatre, slap-in-the-face theatre, 'descriptive' theatre." (du théâtre vérité, du théâtre à claques sur la gueule, du théâtre 'descriptif') Gingras, 26. It is important to note that Tremblay's definition of the kind of theatre he writes has changed significantly over the years. For instance, in 1982 Tremblay said of his plays that "everything is done technically in such a way that no 'realist' interpretation is possible . . . . lyricism remains my main means." Roch Turbide, "Michel Tremblay: Du text à la représentation," *Voix et images: littérature québécoise* VII:2 (1982): 213-224; here, 217. Nonetheless, during the period under discussion (1968-1976), Tremblay repeatedly asserted the realism of his theatre and its goal awakening the Québécois to their own lives.

Truth in Expression

The other proof of *Les Belles-Soeurs*' authentic *québécité* was its use of the *joual*. The characters in the play sounded like people on Montreal's streets. Bélair writes that the *joual* is a "true mirror of the popular québécois milieu."[36] This second coincidence bound the stage world to the real one ever more tightly for cultural nationalist critics. Although Tremblay was not the first dramatist to write dialogue in *joual*, he was the first dramatist to write a play in its entirety in *joual*. Predecessors like Gratien Gélinas and Marcel Dubé had both employed the *joual* to indicate lower-class characters and introduce local colour. Tremblay, on the other hand, set his play in its entirety in a working-class milieu populated by characters who only speak *joual*. Artists outside the theatre had also performed works in *joual*. *Partipriste* Jacques Renaud wrote the controversial novel *Le Cassé* in *joual* in 1965. Popular *chansonnier* Robert Charlebois was known for his mixture of rock music and *joual* in songs like "La Boulée" (1965) and "Ordinaire" (1970).[37] Fellow *chansonnier* Gilles Vigneault's "character-song" "Jos Monferrand" had been banned from the radio for its shocking and vulgar language.[38]

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[36] (Miroir fidèle du milieu populaire québécois) Bélair, *Le nouveau théâtre québécois*, 112.

[37] "Robert Charlebois, biographie" www.mlink.net/~49e/chanson/bio/charlebo.html, 1.

[38] "Gilles Vigneault" *Dictionnaire de la musique populaire au Québec, 1955 – 1992*, ed. Robert Thérian and Isabelle d'Amours (Québec: L'Institut de recherche sur la culture, 1992).

Why then the uproar over *Les Belles-Soeurs*? A brief foray into *joual*'s history provides a possible answer.

The *joual* is a vernacular stemming from oral culture performance traditions. It is a contact-language – a "[variant] which [results] from the transformation of language through local use."[39] In socio-linguistic terms, *joual* is a sociolect – a language system (*langage* in French) which is developed in contact with and response to a dominant language which encompasses it (in the case of Québec, the dominant language is English). In Jean-Claude Germain's terms, *joual* "bears in its flesh the scars of life and history." Its existence "proves that after 200 years of co-habitation with an English-speaking ruling majority . . . the natives are not deaf."[40] For Germain, *joual* is evidence of Québécois' continued – if embattled – existence and resilience.

The work on *joual* – its features, uses, meanings, and relationship to national identity – is legion and impressive, extending from the *Partipriste* era to today. It has been analyzed as a national language, as a symbol of cultural alienation, a sign of contamination, a *renversement* of linguistic codes, a literary style, and a dramatic effect.[41]

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[39]Chantal Zabus, "Language, Orality, and Literature," in *New National and Post-colonial Literatures: An Introduction*, ed. Bruce King (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1996), 34.

[40] Jean-Claude Germain, "Théâtre Québécois or Théâtre Protestant?" *Canadian Theatre Review* 11 (Summer 1976): 8 – 21; here, 18.

[41] See, for example, "Tremblay in Translation: Interview with John Van Burek," *Canadian Theatre Review* 24 (Fall 1979): 42 – 46; Lise Gauvin, "Le théâtre de la langue" in *Le Monde de Michel Tremblay*, ed. Gilbert David et Pierre Lavoie (Montréal: Cahiers de théâtre Jeu/Éditions Lansman, 1993), 335 – 357; Robert, "The Language of Theater"; Annie Brisset, "Language and Collective Identity: When Translators of Theater Address the Québécois Nation," in *Essays on Modern Quebec Theater*, ed. Joseph I Donohoe, Jr. and Jonathan M. Weiss (East Lansing: Michigan State University Press, 1995): 61 – 80; and Kathy Mezei, "Speaking White: Literary Translation as a Vehicle of Assimilation in

For the purposes of this discussion, the significance of *joual* is twofold. First, that it is a language created out of the exigencies of contact with – indeed domination of – another language. Second, that its distinctiveness from French is communicated through rhythmic and pronunciation idiosyncrasies, not a separate grammar or dramatically different vocabulary.

Joual combines Québécois with urban influences – most notably, English. (Québécois is the dialect of French developed after French colonial rule over what was then "Lower Canada" ended. Severed from spoken continental French, Québécois retains some of the stylistic characteristics of *ancien régime* French. It augmented French vocabulary with new words for natural phenomena encountered in the New World – flora, fauna, weather systems, and the like.) The population shift in the 1950s from the farm to the city is reflected in the shift from Québécois to its urban variant, *joual*, which was formed in the linguistically and ethnically mixed urban neighbourhoods of Montréal during the mid-twentieth century. In that environment, its vocabulary expanded once again – this time with urban and workplace references (largely industrial) and with English and English-inflected words. As Lucie Robert explains, *joual*'s "[l]exical references are mostly work-place and city-oriented."[42]

Equally inflammatory as what the *joual* "is" – i.e., a mixed sociolect – is how it functions. *Joual* functioned as a kind of self-image for Québécois. Different from French and English, the *joual* was taken as a sign of resistance to French cultural colonialism and

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Quebec" in *Cultures in Transit: Translating the Literature of Quebec*, ed. Sherry Simon (Montréal : Véhicule Press, 1995), 133 – 148.

[42] Robert, "The Language of Theater," 118.

English linguistic domination. Sherry Simon writes that during the period under discussion, québécois literature "was written in large part in confrontation with or in dialogue with English." She continues, "interlinguistic expression of this period of 'decolonization' took the form of a triangular confrontation between the franco-French (the imperial norm), québécois-French (the language of vernacular authenticity) and English (the agent of linguistic pollution)."[43] It is significant that its distinctiveness from French is communicated largely through its rhythmic and pronunciation idiosyncrasies, not a separate grammar or dramatically different vocabulary. On the page, *joual* and French are almost indistinguishable – slang, region-specific vocabulary, and idiomatic phrases give them away. However, when spoken, *joual* and French – though still mutually intelligible – sound quite different. *Joual* often replicates the iambic rhythm of English, making it a more accented and melodic language than French.

Therefore, what makes *joual* distinctive is not so much its idiosyncratic vernacular – neologisms, altered syntax, etc. – but rather, the ways in which they are performed. What finally marks this language as resistant (to colonial power) is its performance. In as much as it is only in its performance that *joual* is different from French, it is only in performance that *joual* asserts its native-ness, its *québécité*, and thereby retains its de-colonizing effect. Seen in this light, on the level of language *Les Belles-Soeurs* is a revelation of true *québécité* from beginning to end.

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[43] (La littérature québécoise s'est écrite très largement en confrontation ou en dialogue avec l'anglais . . . ; L'expression interlinguistique de cette période de 'décolonisation' prend la forme d'une confrontation triangulaire entre le franco-français [norme impériale], le français-l québécois [langue de l'authenticité vernaculaire] et l'anglais [agent de pollution linguistique]). Sherry Simon, "Introduction: La traduction inachevée," in *Le Trafic des langues: Traduction et culture dans la littérature*

Tremblay's realistic touches and his use of the language of vernacular authenticity neatly coincide with cultural nationalism's desire to reveal the truly native québécois identity. In this convergence of interpretations of a new theatrical form and a new national identity, non-realistic elements are elided. Both realism as a theatrical form and the new québécois identity are predicated on the ability to know and represent the truth of a people's identity and experience, and on the politics of visibility this desire for recognition through representation assumes.

Travesty

Although convincing arguments could be made regarding *Les Belles-Soeurs*' *québécité* in terms of the play's dramatic realism and its use of the *joual*, when it came to the sisters-in-law themselves, cultural nationalist arguments asserting the play's *québécité* foundered. That this most québécois of plays was populated entirely by Québécoises (québécois women), proved rather more difficult to assimilate to a cultural nationalist movement searching for a generic symbol of alienation and false consciousness. On stage, the characters were slightly exaggerated images of a class of French-Canadian women. They bore common French-Canadian names – Lisette, Gabrielle, Linda – and often referenced their large extended families – the Tremblay's, the Campeau's and Beaudry's. They wore house-dresses and spent most of their time in the kitchen. The older women were scandalized by the sexual experiments of the younger generation; the younger women were impatient with their elders' naiveté. All spoke *joual*. However, the

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québécoise, ed. Sherry Simon (Montréal: Boréal, 1994), 15 – 34; here, 29.

gender specificity of the image, the gender of the characters and the gender-specific nature of their fantasies expressed in monologues were not reflected in the cultural nationalist critical literature of the period. (Neither, it should be noted, were they reflected in the press nor in the majority of scholarly treatises at the time.) Consequently, it is over the figure of the woman that cultural nationalism's realist reading of *Les Belles-Soeurs* breaks down. That this most québécois of plays was populated entirely by Québécoises proved decidedly problematic. To resolve the critical crisis, critics risked a non-realistic reading of *Les Belles-Soeurs*. To be consistent in their political theory of colonialism, they were forced to be inconsistent in their interpretation of *Les Belles-Soeurs* as realistic. This critical inconsistency over the sisters-in-law themselves opens up the possibility for re-reading the play as supporting a doubled structure and, perhaps, a doubled message.

The female characters were interpreted not as realistic reflections like the rest of the play, but rather as symbols or stand-ins for something else. To one critic they represented the "triumph of the tribe over the individual, of frustration over pleasure." To another, they were symbols of revolt.[44] To many others, they were symbols of 1968 Québec's marginality: working class and female to the anglos' bourgeois comforts and male privilege. In the myriad interviews he granted in the years following *Les Belles-Soeurs*' opening night, Tremblay frequently referred to his characters as "marginals." He explains, "I write about marginals . . . in my plays because the Québecois [*sic*] are like

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[44] Madeleine Greffard, "Le triomphe de la tribu," Centre d'essai des auteurs dramatiques (CEAD), *Les Belles-Soeurs* dossier; André Turcotte, "Les 'Belles-Soeurs' en révolte," *Voix et images du pays* III: *littértature québécoise* (1970): 183 – 199.

marginals. They are a people fighting and dreaming of the right to be who and what they are, dreaming to be free."[45] In other words, the Québécois were female in position, in historical circumstance, but not in gender. They occupied a woman's position – secondary, marginal, unsatisfied – but not necessarily her body.[46] To all they were symbolic substitutes for the typical (read: male) Québécois.

Like many of his contemporaries, Tremblay expressed Québec's situation in gender-specific metaphors. The economically marginal, sexually repressed, and culturally backward Québec of the 1960s was figured as female. Often, "she" was allegorized as an unhappy wife, forced to suffer the indignities and abuses of power of her husband, English Canada.[47] In its revaluation of its own position, Québec's liberationist project took on some of the trappings of the women's liberation movement which was just beginning in Québec and was in full-swing in the States. The same year as *Les Belles-Soeurs* opened at the Rideau Vert, women's rights won two important court battles.

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[45] Quoted in Patrick Pacheco, "Montréal's Michel Tremblay and his 'Hosanna'," *After Dark* (November 1974): 55.

[46] For an example of interpreting *Les Belles-Soeurs* as marginal, see Renate Usmani, "The Tremblay Opus: Unity in Diversity," *Canadian Theatre Review* 24 (Fall 1979): 12 – 25. Jennifer Harvie's inquiry into Scots translations of *Les Belles-Soeurs* highlights the perceived ties between Scotland and Québec based on their common geopolitically marginal status. Jennifer Harvie, "The Real Nation? Michel Tremblay, Scotland, and Cultural Translatability," *Theatre Research in Canada/Recherches théâtrales au Canada* 16:1 – 2 (Spring and Fall 1995): 5 – 25.

[47] See, for example, Hugh MacLennan's classic *Two Solitudes* (Fitzhenry and Whiteside, 1996 [1945]), the allegorical tale of an English-Canadian man and his long-suffering French-Canadian wife. For more recent inquiries into this topic, see Elspeth Probyn, "Love in a Cold Climate: Queer Belongings in Quebec" in *Outside Belongings*, 63 - 92; and Robert Schwartzwald " 'Symbolic' Homosexuality, 'False Feminine,' and the Problematics of Identity in Québec," in *Fear of a Queer Planet: Queer Politics and Social Theory*, ed. Michael Warner (Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press, 1993): 264 – 299.

Divorce was legalized in Québec and abortion was de-criminalized across Canada by the Supreme Court that year.[48] The abortion debate was part of the manifest content of *Les Belles-Soeurs* in the characters of the pregnant teen, Lise Paquette, and the wizened prostitute, Pierrette Guérin. The possibility of divorce – women from men, Québec from Canada – was inferred through the insistent heterosexualization of majority-minority relations circulating in public culture.

As feminist scholars like Diana Taylor, Anne McClintock and Inderpal Grewal among others have made clear, figuring the nation as female is not unique to Québec.[49] In the context of the anti-colonial imperative driving the predominant interpretation of *Les Belles-Soeurs* and its *nouveau théâtre*, this commonplace symbol assumes a different form. In a revealing 1971 interview printed in the first issue of the cultural journal *Nord*, Tremblay himself critiques colonialism for distorting Québécois' self-image declaring: "We are a people who disguised ourselves for years in order to look like another people. It's not at all funny. We were transvestites/drag-artists for 300 years."[50] The emphasis on disguise and unveiling in quotes like the above, repeated often over the years by

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[48] Dickinson and Young, 323 – 4.

[49] Diana Taylor, *Disappearing Acts: Spectacles of Gender and Nationalism in Argentina's "Dirty War"* (Durham: Duke University Press, 1997); Anne McClintock, "'No Longer in a Future Heaven': Gender, Race and Nationalism," in *Dangerous Liaisons: Gender, Nation and Postcolonial Perspectives*, eds. Anne McClintock, Aamir Mufti, and Ella Shohat (Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press, 1997), 89 – 112; Inderpal Grewal, *Home and Harem: Nation, Gender, Empire and the Cultures of Travel* (Durham: Duke University Press, 1996).

[50] (On est un peuple qui s'est déguisé pendant des années pour ressembler à un autre peuple. C'est pas des farces! On a été travestis pendant 300 ans.) Rachel Cloutier, Marie Laberge et Rodrigue Gignac, "Entrevue avec Michel Tremblay," *Nord* 1 (Autumn 1971): 49 – 81; here, 64.

Tremblay, reprises decolonization rhetoric derived from *partipriste* writings and circulated in the cultural and political journals like *Nord* and *Chroniques*. It also clarifies the "we" Tremblay was interested in representing – a male-gendered "we" who, under colonization, had dressed up in women's clothing. In fact, Tremblay found his transvestite metaphor so apt that in his next several plays, including *La Duchesse de Langeais* and *Hosanna*, homosexual male cross-dressers displace working class, married women from center stage.[51] The result of colonization is to be forced to play a woman. Distorted self-images are, apparently, images of the self as female.

The cultural nationalist realist interpretation of the *Sisters-in-Law* founders on the sisters-in-law themselves. This offers the possibility of an alternate interpretation of the play grounded in the female characters' expressed fantasies instead of in the presumed concordance between stage world and real world. Instead of a realistic drama, *Les Belles-Soeurs* is a fantastical drama; instead of understanding the *belles-soeurs* as *hommes-manqués*, they could be read for their gender specificity. Cultural nationalists assumed that it was only through the rigourous analysis of the present situation's alienating effects that one could subsequently forge a new, better reality based on one's true identity. Tremblay's fifteen female characters seem to think that it is only through diversion from one's present situation, through the imagining of better realities based on one's secret desires, that a better reality is created. The shining worlds they imagine are the subject of many of the extended monologues which disrupt the smooth temporal coincidence between stage time and real time, the stage world and the real one. Although the play-in-

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[51] Michel Tremblay, *Hosanna suivi de La Duchesse de Langeais* (Ottawa: Leméac, 1973). *La Duchesse* was first performed in 1969, Hosanna in 1973.

production may take place over two hours, the actual narrative action of the play is at least forty-five minutes shorter than that. It is from the moments of *Les Belles-Soeurs* which are not assimilable to a pre-existing notion of the nation that the play manifests its potential to alter the operative model of nation-ness.

For instance, a similar attentiveness to the question of time in *Les Belles-Soeurs* reveals that the play is not as neatly coincidental with cultural nationalist visions of the nation as has been argued. Although the play is broadly structured in accordance with the unity of time, five extended soliloquies and two choral odes interrupt the narrative action of the play. Critics interested in *Les Belles-Soeurs* as social realism largely ignored these secondary structural elements, these unruly interjections that do not easily integrate themselves into the narrative action of the play.[52] Each soliloquy is bounded by blackouts. When the spotlight comes up on the monologist, she is no longer a part of the continuous movement of time in the rest of the play. These monologues are temporal gaps or absences in the narrative of the play. They are a time out of time; as soon as they are over continuous time and narrative resume exactly where they left off, as though the stage-clock stopped during the monologue. Alternatively, they could be theorized as temporal gaps or folds, which are an extended or enlarged present moment. One "real," present moment might contain within it this heightened, romantic experience and lyric extension of time. Shooting out of the present into a temporal bubble, the monologues do

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[52] Indeed, Jean-Claude Germain lamented in particular Bélair's lack of interest in elements of Tremblay's work other than the narrative in "Quand un ex-critique critique le critique du Devoir," *Le Devoir*, 11 March 1972, 15. A notable exception to this rule was J.-P. Ryngaert, "Du réalisme à la théâtralite," Livres et auteurs québécois (1971): 97 – 108, cited below.

not fit neatly into the rest of the narrative structure. J.-P. Ryngaert has noted that "[c]ontrary to classic dramaturgy where the monologue comes after an exit and where the character is generally alone on stage, [Tremblay's monologues in *Les Belles-Soeurs*] appear in the form of a *flash*, and hence in breach [*rupture*] of the action."[53] The smooth link between stage-reality and social-reality propagated by critics like Bélair is likewise ruptured in these moments. They preserve the experimental, liminal space between the two by interrupting the narrative and by foregrounding the characters' desires for something different.

On the level of form, the monologues' function in the drama is to disrupt; they make a significant intervention in the narrative drive of the play. Their obvious theatricality breaks the realist frame and highlights the distance and difference between the "real world" and the stage world. The made-up worlds they articulate remind viewers and readers alike that the stage-world is likewise a created and creative alternative reality, regardless of its resemblance to quotidian reality. About the monologue's role, theatre scholar Laurent Mailhot writes that "[the monologue] constantly draws attention to that which could have not been, to that which could be otherwise . . . . . Complication without denouement, its structure is a wait, a new beginning (hence, hope), even if its theme is fatality, powerlessness, imprisonment, anguish."[54] *Les Belles-Soeurs*' dystopic/realist

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[53] [Mais, contrairement à la dramaturgie classique où le monologue vient après une sortie et où le personnage est généralement seul en scène, il se présente ici sous forme de "flash", et donc en rupture par rapport à l'action.] Ryngaert, 100.

[54] ([le monologue] déporte constamment l'attention vers ce qui aurait pu ne pas être, vers ce qui pourrait être autrement. . . . Noeud sans dénouement, sa structure est l'attente, le recommencement (donc l'espoir), même si son thème est la fatalité, l'impuissance, l'emprisonnement, l'angoisse.) Laurent Mailhot, "Le Monologue

monologues – those of Rose, Lise Paquette (the pregnant "fille-mère"), and Pierrette – contemplate what they wish had not been. In each case, they regret their relationships with men because of those relationships' lamentable outcomes. The play's utopic/fantastical monologues – those of Lisette, Des-Neiges, Angéline and Germaine – point to a life which could be different, more in line with the women's needs and wants.

Tremblay's use of the monologue form in *Les Belles-Soeurs* is significant not only for its disruptive function internal to the drama, but also for the form's historical use in Québec. The monologue – spoken, written, or sung – was the choice means of expression for generations of *soi-disant* québécois writers. Citing the tradition of anti-colonial poetry of Gaston Miron and the Hexagone school, the comic monologues of Yvons Deschamps, and the songs of the *chansonniers* as examples of *le monologue québécois*, Mailhot foregrounds the politico-cultural history of the monologue. More recently, drama translator Linda Gaboriau has affirmed the political history of "holding forth" in the form of the monologue. She writes that this "love of holding-forth" in québécois theatre "is an indirect way of communicating the importance that Québécois playwrights give to the '*prise de parole en français*' in North America today."[55] In a period when educational, governmental, and work-place regulations had not yet assured the *fait français* in Québec, the importance of speaking was that much more acute.

On the level of specific content, the women's monologues break with cultural nationalist visions of *québécité*. Where cultural nationalists valorized the working class,

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québécois," *Canadian Literature/Littérature Canadienne* 58 (Autumn 1973): 26 – 38; here, 36.

[55] Linda Gaboriau, "The Cultures of Theatre," in *Culture in Transit*, 83 – 90; here, 87.

the sisters-in-law envied a bourgeois lifestyle with all its accoutrements. Where cultural nationalists advocated class solidarity through the alliance of intellectuals and professionals with the working classes, the sisters-in-law fantasized about class mobility.[56] Where the cultural nationalist vision was of unity (of the Québécois people) and autonomy (for Québec), the sisters-in-law's vision was of multiplicity (material plenty) and connection (sexual pleasure). Their vision of plenty and pleasure is perhaps best collectively articulated in Act II's passionate "l'Ode au bingo."

The Ode to Bingo is an ecstatic hymn involving nine of the fifteen women – the youngest generation of women (Linda, Lise, and Ginette) and the outcast sister, Pierrette, do not participate. In the choral ode, bingo seems to take the place of a lover and the game itself the place of sex. The women describe their preparations for the game in stereotypical lover's language: "J'me prépare deux jours d'avance, chus t'énarvée, chus pas tenable, j'pense rien qu'à ça" (I get ready two days ahead of time; I'm all worked up, I'm unbearable. I think of nothing but bingo.") When the day arrives, they dress to the nines and go to the game. Once installed at tables, bingo cards in front of them, their language takes on a decidedly sexual tone. "Là, c'est bien simple, j'viens folle! Mon Dieu, que c'est donc excitant, c't'affaire là! Chus toute à l'envers, j'ai chaud, j'comprends les numéros de travers . . . chus dans toutes mes états!" (Once there, it's very simple, I go crazy! My God it's exciting! I'm all out; I'm hot; I get the numbers all wrong . . . I'm in a real state!") From this moment on, all sentences are short, repetitive, and

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[56] See Thérèse Arbic's Marxist analysis of Les Belles-Soeurs for a critique of the sisters-in-laws class envy, "Le théâtre de Michel Tremblay et la dégradation de la personne humaine en milieu ouvrier," *Chroniques* 1:1 (January 1975): 54 – 57.

exclamatory; they build to a climax: "Vive les chiens de plâtre! Vive les lamps torchières! Vive le bingo!" (86-7) When the lights come up after the ode, the women need to refresh themselves with Cokes.

Their fantasies are avowedly not "political" in any self-conscious, activist way. Where many Québécois would exclaim "Vive le Québec libre!" with Charles DeGaulle in his 1967 Québec address, the sisters-in-law wish long life to ceramic dogs, floor lamps, and a game of chance. In fact, most of the characters' monologues are the stuff of heterosexual bourgeois fantasy, deemed more *revanchiste* than liberationist by the critical standards of both 1968 and today. Their fantasies are largely populated with attentive men and/or nice things. Yvette Longpré, for example, soliloquizes at length about the top layer of her daughter's costly six-tiered wedding cake with its red velvet-covered stairs and its miniature dolls to represent the happy couple and the priest. Germaine's opening monologue likewise focuses on nice things and their beauty – her impending catalogue purchases. However, the coincidence of "Vive le bingo" and "Vive le Québec libre" suggest that the *belles-soeurs*' words are more closely aligned with an *indépendentist* project than has previously been explored.

In *Le Théâtre québécois: instrument de contestation sociale et politique* (1976), Jacques Cotnam links the content of the women's monologues to a political and nationalist orientation, locating it in the characters' collective denunciation of outdated images of mothers as submissive and hiding behind religion.[57] Québec theatre scholar Louise Forsyth also defines this kind of denunciation in first-person monologue form as a significant political trend in québécois dramaturgy. Indeed, the monologue form,

[57] Cotnam, 93 – 4.

employed as a means of self-exploration and socio-political critique, would become the staple of québécois feminist theatre of the 1970s.[58] Reprising decolonization rhetoric *au feminin*, Forsyth writes, "Frank response on the part of a character to her own sexual desire has great significance in these plays. Suppression of such desire is an unambiguous sign of alienation."[59]

Moreover, the women's rhapsodic interludes posit a more egalitarian model of society and foreground their own desires. They break with religious and cultural norms. For example, Des-Neiges Verrette, a middle-aged single woman, soliloquizes about her secret infatuation with a door-to-door brush salesman. In her fantasy her "nice man" is "toujours sur son trente-six, pas un cheveu qui dépasse . . . Un vrai monsieur! Pis tellement bien élevé!"(52) (always dressed-up, never a hair out of place. A real gentlemen! And so polite!) Angéline Sauvé reveals her secret pleasure of going to a club. "Mais sitôt que j'ai été rendue là, par exemple, j'ai compris c'que c'était que d'avoir passé toute une vie sans avoir de fun!" (But as soon as I arrived, I understand what it was to have spent an entire life without having fun!) (81). Even during the late 1960s, going to a club (otherwise known as a "den of sin") or inviting the traveling brush-salesman into your home were taboo activities for women. Both of these women indicate their

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[58] See, for example, *La Nef des sorcières* collectively created by Luce Guilbeault, Marthe Blackburn, France Théoret, Odette Gagnon, Marie-Claire Blais, Pol Pelletier and Nicole Brossard at the Théâtre du Nouveau Monde in March 1976 and published by l'Hexagone in 1992, and Denise Boucher's *Les Fées ont soif* (Québec: Fairies Éditions Intermède, 1978).

[59] Louise Forsyth, "First Person Feminine Singular: Monologues by women in several modern Quebec plays," *Canadian Drama/L'Art dramatique canadien* 5:2 (Fall/Automne 1979): 189 – 203; here, 193.

awareness that their fun pass-times were serious transgressions of the Catholic, French-Canadian moral code. In the French-Canadian, Catholic world of the 1960s, women were assigned the role of culture-bearers and transmitters. To guarantee the survival of the religion and the language, women were often restricted to parish and family life where they would not be "contaminated" by outside influences. Des-Neiges describes her fear of letting the brush-salesman inside the door: "J'laisse jamais renter d'homme dans la maison! On sait jamais c'qui peut arriver." (52) (I never let men into my house. You never know what could happen.) When discussing her visitor with Germaine's party guests, Des-Neiges (a name which significantly means "of the snow") is careful to protect her upstanding reputation. She takes dramatic offense at Rose Ouimet's lewd insinuations of what she and her travelling salesman do and refers to herself as "a very respectable lady." Angéline expresses her own guilt about going to the club, saying "Mais y fallait que ça m'arrive un jour! J'le savais que j'finirais par me faire poigner! J'le savais!" (But I was bound to get caught one day! I knew I'd end up screwing myself! I knew it!) (82).

Rose Ouimet considers herself similarly "screwed," not because she got caught indulging in an illicit pleasure, but because she got caught in the entirely licit and sanctioned trap of marriage.

> Pis a [ma fille] finira pas comme moé, à quarante-quatre ans, avec une p'tit gars de quatre ans sur les bras pis un écoeurant de mari qui veut rien comprendre, pis qui demande son dû deux fois par jour, trois cent soixante-cinq jours par année! Quand t'arrive à quarante ans pis que tu t'aparçois que t'as rien en arrière de toé, pis que t'as rien en avant de toé, ça te donne envie de toute crisser là, pis de toute recommencer en neuf!

> Mais les femmes, y peuvent pas faire ça . . . Les femmes, sont poignées à'gorge, pis y vont rester de même jusqu'au boute! (102)
>
> [My daughter] won't end up like me, forty-four years old, with a four year old kid on her hands and a stupid slob of a husband who doesn't understand anything, who demands his "rights" at least twice a day, three hundred and sixty-five days a year. When you get to be forty, and you realize you've got nothing behind you and nothing in front of you, it makes you want to screw the whole thing and start all over. But women can't do that . . . Women get grabbed by the throat/screwed to the wall, and they've gotta stay that way right to the end!

Angéline's secret and transgressive club-frequenting ("Bonyeu! On devrait pourtant avoir le droit d'avoir un peu de fun dans'vie!" [82]) likewise underscores this theme of the double standards regarding men and women's access to the public sphere and their overall conduct. Although women were morally barred from clubs, the sisters-in-law make reference to the fact that their husbands are in a club drinking their paycheques.

The monologues provide examples of where narratives of gender play differently depending on the point of view from which one builds the story of the nation. In a reading like Bélair's, these proto-feminist articulations are interpreted as an inassimilable time-out-of-time because they happen in the "theatre space/time" of the monologue which resists the smooth suturing of theatrical and social realities. As such, these desires for a more egalitarian model of social relations do not get incorporated into that nationalist vision. The subordination of women's liberation to national liberation (or feminism to nationalism) is certainly not unique to Québec. R. Radhakrishnan's essay,

"Nationalism, Gender, and the Narrative of Identity," suggests "Why is it that nationalism achieves the ideological effect of an inclusive and putatively macropolitical discourse, whereas the women's question — unable to achieve its own autonomous macropolitical identity — remains ghettoized within its specific and regional space?"[60] Cultural nationalist critics exactly recapitulate this trajectory in their elevation of the narrative/nationalist vision at the expense of the proto-feminist/national vision. Like the women's question, it remains segregated from the nationalist vision, enclosed within its specific, theatrical space. The women's various plights which, in their estimation, are a direct result of their status as women, are interpreted by cultural nationalists as symbolic of the how *le Québécois* is "screwed" by his colonizers.

In a cultural nationalist reading, the sisters-in-law were interpreted as placeholders for the (male) Québécois, articulating the people's growing dissatisfaction with their lot. Symbols of Québec's marginality, they were working class and female to the anglos' bourgeois comforts and male privilege. What this means is that to cultural nationalist critics, Tremblay's fifteen female characters represent not *les Québécoises* (Québécois women), or even *les canadiennes-françaises* (French-Canadian women) but rather, *le canadien-français* (the French-Canadian [the generic term, "male" is implied]). They were not exactly women, but nor were they "real" men. They were transvestite men, theatricalized versions of men. To be precise, they were symbols of colonized (hence, feminized) *arrière-guard* French-Canadian men. They were symbols of Québec's self-deception, all about French-Canada which was regressive and which blocked

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[60] R. Radhakrishnan, "Nationalism, Gender, and the Narrative of Identity," in *Nationalisms and Sexualities*, 77 – 95; here 78.

forward political and cultural movement. To have a role in the drama of québécois cultural nationalism, not only were the women interpreted as metaphorical men, they played also played the antagonist – the unreconstructed French Canadian. As such, their desires for a more egalitarian model of gender relations do not get incorporated into that nationalist vision.

Theatrical Metaphors

Shifting the focus of interpretation from reading for correspondences which can be incorporated into pre-existing models of the social, to plumbing the play's most explicitly theatrical moments which are not replicated in social reality conjures an alternative notion of *québécité*. For instance, if these soliloquy moments are the starting points for re-thinking the nation, they force a consideration of gender equity and power relations. It is the forty-five minute time-lag created by the monologues which makes *Les Belles-Soeurs* a compelling site to re-think the québécité of the play, the *nouveau théâtre québécois*, and the burgeoning Québécois identity. What if that forty-five minute period of *Les Belles-Soeurs* which is only "theatre-time" — i.e., out of synch with audience/"real" time and, as a result, unassimilable to the narration of the nation — is used as the grid through which to read nationalism as it manifests itself in Quebec? How might an insistence on theatrical double-consciousness, on the productivity and pleasure of desire as a force for social change, combat the exclusions of a cultural nationalist reading?

In her article "Writing the Absent Potential," Sandra Richards theorizes the potentialities of the dramatic text's absences. She argues that the absences have the possibility of being (only ever partially) filled by any number of things — acting or directorial choices, props, lighting effects, vocal non-fluencies, etc. Her astute considerations of why dramatic literature is overlooked in anthologies of African-American literature speak to my interests in theatre as a practice that disrupts homogeneous and restrictive notions of the nation. The reasons for excluding dramatic literature from anthologies are consonant with the fears concerning theatre and performance in Quebec's anti-colonial nationalist project: fears of violation, contamination, incompletion, and doubling. (Recall that the "disaster" of Quebec was to end up like women – contaminated, porous, marginal, subject to linguistic diglossia and a poor imitation of a man. The cultural nationalists' main objective was to uncover the true Québécois identity, to strip it of its foreign and distorting accoutrements.) Richards cites C.W.E. Bigsby's thoughts on why drama is overlooked; he writes that "[t]he text has already been violated by others in the process of its transmission . . . . the text announces and displays its necessary incompletions — necessary because the text has to allow for the impress of performance and the interaction of the audience."[61] Bigsby's rather vivid language of the perils of incompletion and vulnerability, and overdetermined in its gender implications, finds a counterpart in cultural nationalist discourse in which the contamination by the colonizer renders *les Québécois, les candiennes-françaises.*

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[61] Quoted in Sandra L. Richards, "Writing the Absent Potential: Drama, Performance, and the Canon of Africa-American Literature," in *Performativity and Performance*, eds. Andrew Parker and Eve Kosofsky Sedgwick (New York and London: Routledge, 1995), 64 – 88; here, 66.

In a feminist reading that reads *québécité* through the theatrical signs of *Les Belles-Soeurs*, women do not need to be false stand-ins for men, nor do textual gaps need to signify impurity. Instead, the monologues are zones of possibility. They allow for the irruption of difference – women's voices and desires – into the national narrative. According to this reading, the doubled structure of *Les Belles-Soeurs* evinces a dialectic between banality and moments of fantasy. Cultural critic Richard Dyer describes this as movement in which a sense of an alternative is kept alive. He contends that this movement between banality and fantasy is "an essential dialectic of society, a constant keeping open of a gap between what is and what could or should be."[62] It is through this movement of desire in the contradictions, gaps, and temporal folds of Tremblay's monologues, and not through the clean narrative and its reflection of an everyday reality, that the nation is re-theorized – not as a space of "true" *québécité*, but as a zone of differential *québécité*.

Tremblay's fantastical monologues are the spaces in which alternative vision of the nation is articulated within the framework of an *indépendentist* program. Appearing in the form of a flash, a breach of the action, they interrupt the narrative action of the play on the level of form and, on the level of content, foreground the desire for something different. Although these monologues may express common desires for beauty or surplus or men, they also keep alive the sense that an alternative system of belonging exists — one predicated on an egalitarian gender politic, equal access to public space, and, as Angéline might say, "l'fun." Focussing on the gender of the characters and their struggle

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[62] Richard Dyer, "In Defense of Disco," in *Out in Culture: Gay, Lesbian, and Queer Essays on Popular Culture*, eds. Corey K. Creekmur and Alexander Doty (Durham and London, Duke University Press, 1995), 407 – 415; here 414.

for self-actualization expressed in monologue form expands the cultural national definitions of "*québécois*" at a time when the identitarian designation first came into widespread usage. This, for me, is the critical use-value of *Les Belles-Soeurs* and the reason to plumb it once again for nationalist visions in the pressing post-coloniality of the 1990s. "Vive le bingo!"

Dead Souls:

Carbone 14's Re-membered Nation

Carbone 14's 1996 production of *Les Âmes mortes* (Dead Souls) is a visual meditation on the history embedded in a house and the ghosts that linger in its boards. Performed primarily by six dancer-actors (three women and three men) in a succession of visual impressions separated by blackouts, the show traces the movements of three generations of the house's inhabitants – turn-of-the-century *paysans*, a 1950s married couple, and a contemporary young couple. Each couple's movement vocabulary is distinctive and, in the course of the performance, juxtaposed with the others'. The generations do not communicate directly with one another. However, the spatio-temporal disruptions of each generation's choreography register in the others' physical movements. When the contemporary couple tears frantically across the stage, the *paysans* are literally thrown off-balance – they lose their equilibrium and wind up on the floor.

The final image of the production is executed in the silence and half-light of a memory. Three of the performers lie prone on the house/stage floor as if felled by the incursion of others into their domestic space. The remaining three dancer-actors perform mouth-to-mouth resuscitation on them. The dyads thus formed are, for the first time in the performance, intergenerational. Some are mixed gender, others, also for the first time

in the performance, are same gender. The already dim lights fade to black as the performers give and take breath, attempting to revivify inert bodies by the influx of what, in ancient theatre, was considered "soul."[1]

This image of giving and taking breath in an effort to reanimate the bodies of other periods crystallizes the central questions of this chapter: How does québécois theatre reanimate and represent the pre-Quiet Revolution era? Moreover, which elements of past eras are remembered through performance? In what modality? How is the past transmitted and for what purpose? And why are dancing bodies and theatrical spaces the means of this transmission? *Les Âmes mortes* provides not only an evocative image of intergenerational conflict and collaboration, but also a crucial insight into the question of *québécité*, which is to say, the *style of being Québécois*. Carbone 14's work alters the cultural discourse defining *québécité* by shifting the focus from linguistic style to physical style. Its "text" is visual/physical, instead of verbal/written; its performers dance in lieu of speaking. It likewise moves the generic location of "exemplary" and celebrated *québécité* in the theatre from popular realism (like that of Michel Tremblay) to avant-garde mixed-genre performance. Most crucially for this analysis, however, it is through visual text and mixed-genre performance that Carbone 14 explicitly engages and resurrects the traces of historical periods prior to the Quiet Revolution and its introduction of the québécois identity. Carbone 14 performances resuscitate the use-value of a "French-Canadian" past to the evolving Québécois identitarian formation(s) of the 1980s and 1990s.

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[1] For a more complete explanation of the breath/soul dyad in ancient theatre see Joseph Roach, *The Players Passion: Studies in the Science of Acting* (Cranbury, NY: Associated University Presses, 1985).

***Carbon-14** is the **radioactive isotope** of the element carbon-12 (the most common form of carbon). It is produced by cosmic rays bombarding carbon-12 in the earth's upper atmosphere, changing carbon-12 into carbon-14 by adding two extra neutrons. Carbon-14 can be found in all living things.*

*A **radioactive isotope** is an **unstable element** whose nucleus can be converted into the nucleus of another element. For example, as carbon-14 decays, it loses its two extra neutrons and reverts to carbon-12.*

The work of Carbone 14 might well be considered an unstable isotope to the *nouveau théâtre québécois* initiated by Michel Tremblay and his compatriots, discussed in the previous chapter. Incorporating the neutrons of dance and music (and, to a lesser extent, mime, architecture and electronic media), Carbone 14 practices a new form of québécois theatre – a hybrid performance form some call "image-theatre," others "dance-theatre." Since 1980, Carbone 14 has innovatively performed some of the plays of Heiner Müller and Peter Weiss including *Hamlet-machine*, *Rivage à l'abondon*, and *Marat/Sade*. However, the bulk of its creative output, and that for which it is best known both nationally and internationally, are its own non-text-based creations. Since 1984, these are: *Le Rail* (1984), *Le Dortoir* (1988), *La Forêt* (1994), *Les Âmes mortes* (1996), and *L'Hiver – Winterland* (1998). Gilles Maheu, the troupe's *concepteur* and *metteur en scène*, constructs image-based spectacles around particular themes through the shifting combinations of movement, light, environmental design, and music. Use of spoken text is minimal. When used the words are drawn from "found" texts, not original ones, and are

delivered in at least two, if not more, languages. French and English are always employed; German, Spanish, Italian, and Hungarian have also been used.

With *Les Belles-soeurs* (1968), Tremblay invented a new written language and dramaturgy that documented and fantasized the incipient québécois identity. By documenting the spoken language and the rhythms of everyday life, Tremblay's play provided (or indeed, created) evidence of a québécois identity distinct from Canadian, French-Canadian, or French identities. By contrast, Maheu has developed a unique corporal language and visual dramaturgy called "*écriture scénique*" (scenic writing) in his creations during the 1980s and 1990s. These innovations serve to remember and reactivate the layers of a more densely sedimented (but still unstable) québécois identity. Carbone 14 shifts the mode and the emphasis of québécois theatre's work from documentation of a new identity to investigation of that identity's multiple alluviations. Its productions date the anthropological remains of Québec as a colony, a province, and a nation through each stage's associated cultural objects and the vectors of dancing bodies.

The time that it takes for half of the radioactive nuclei in a sample to ***transmutate*** *into something else is called the element's* ***half-life****. Carbon-14's half-life is 5,730 years. Carbon-14's lengthy half-life, combined with its presence in all living things, makes it an ideal tool to date* ***archaeological sites*** *and* ***anthropological remains****. When an organism dies, the carbon-14 in the organism begins to decay and transmutate into carbon-12. By comparing the amount of carbon-14 to the amount of carbon-12 in the dead organism*

scientists can estimate the date of the organism's death. This process is called ***carbon dating.***[2]

Carbone 14-Dating

The darkened auditorium of Carbone 14's new, large, black-box performance space in Montréal's east end, Usine C, is filled with the sounds of a rain-shower and cars passing in the night.[3] The audience – predominantly young, urban, and francophone – waits in the dark for the show to commence. Three rows of institutional, metal-framed beds extend across the stage, four columns deep. Blackboards cover much of the stage right wall; high above the floor, large multi-paned windows puncture upstage and stage left walls. Institutional lighting hangs from the ceiling. The setting for *Le Dortoir* (The Dormitory) is a disused dormitory.

A man with a flashlight enters, his footfalls crumbling dried leaves on the floor. He turns on the lights, walks to the blackboard and writes, "Léa a avalé la pillule amère"

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[2] For this and the previous epigraph, I drew on the following sources: Jay M. Pasachoff and Marc L. Kutner, "Inside the Nucleus," in *Invitation to Physics,* (New York: W.W. Norton & Co., 1981), 428 - 446 and the encyclopedia.com entries for "dating" and "carbon" http://www.encyclopedia.com/printable/03452.html and http://www.encyclopedia.com/printable/02292/html.

[3] Carbone 14 inaugurated Usine C, a multidisciplinary Research and Performance Center, in March of 1995. Carbone 14 refurbished this turn-of-the-century factory with $7.1 million. It houses a performance space seating 450, a lobby, a café and bar, production and administrative offices, and rehearsal halls. http://www.culturenet.ca/citt/stageworks/vol23/carbone.htm. All dollar amounts are in Canadian dollars unless otherwise noted.

(Lea swallowed the bitter pill). He sits on a bed, recounts the story of his wife's suicide, withdraws a handgun from his pocket. He lies down on the bed. Blackout.

Commence a series of slow-motion images, separated by blackouts. Women float into the dormitory reaching through the high windows, their arms extended away from their bodies and toward the ceiling. Upstage center, a man rhythmically punches a speed-bag. Upstage left, two women play catch in the lavatory. A nun in full habit crosses the stage dreamily. Women in the windows reverse their course, as if rewinding. Upstage right, four men sit on the cloakroom bench, flush with the upstage wall; two more book-end the group, standing relaxed at either end of the bench. They are lit in sepia-tones. A hula hoop rolls slowly from stage left to stage right.[4]

The sequencing of *Le Dortoir*'s opening is emblematic of the way in which Carbone 14 productions conduct their "dating" work. Instead of the quantitative accounting of inorganic remains of carbon-dating, Carbone 14-dating enacts the revivification of historical remains according to the following process: the space itself is established; a person enters; a suite of images ensues. I will argue that Carbone 14's theatrical spaces serve as material environments of memory specific to the social group

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[4] This sequence has been recreated from my notes from the original 1988 production, the February 1996 revival, and the viewing of the televised version of *Le Dortoir*. Niv Fichman (producer), *Le Dortoir/The Dormitory* (Toronto: Rhombus Media, 1991). In the original production, it was a women who entered the dormitory; she wrote on the blackboard, "Jean a avalé la pillule amère." For two academic-journal reviews of the original production see Jill MacDougall, "POLYGRAPH. By Marie Brassard, Robert Lepage, and the Théâtre Repère of Quebec and LE DORTOIR (THE DORMITORY). By Gilles Maheu and Carbone 14 at BAM Next Wave/Next Door Festival, Brooklyn, New York. 26 October - December 1990," *Theatre Journal* (1990): 252 - 255; and Pierre Lavoie, "le dortoir," *Jeu* 52 (September 1989): 201 - 205. The ensuing analysis of Carbone 14's scenography, movement vocabularies, style, ideal body, and images draws

of Québécois; its dancing bodies reactivate the intimate histories of the memory-environment; the productions' ever-changing images, results of space-body intersections, reflect and reinvent national history.

Each stage of the Carbone 14-dating work moves back and forth between memory and imagination, conservation and invention. In this dynamic space, which might best be described as "performance," Québec's history is both retained and reinvented. *Québécité* will not be limited to post-Quiet Revolution Québécois, nor *joual*-speaking urbanites willing to reject a French-Canadian past. Rather, Carbone 14's work demonstrates that the ideological and persuasive force of *québécité* stems from its capacity for change and adaptation to changing conditions of possibility. Its enduring and palpable presence results from centuries of invention and reinvention across the spaces, bodies, and images of Québec and its nation-ness.

Figure 3: Carbone 14's performance space at Usine C, Montréal.

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primarily on my multiple viewings of the productions (both live and on video) and on my

A Space is Established

Most often, what comes to me first is a place.

Gilles Maheu[5]

Carbone 14's self-generated creations "date" anthropological remains in and through the archaeological sites in which they were discovered. Maheu's scenography indicates that he conceives of theatrical space as more than a setting in which the more important tale will unfold. As *memoria*, or "memoried spaces," sets are key components of the tale. As sites steeped in cultural significance, they are its shelter and its teller's catalysts. They actively participate in the recounting, presenting themselves as both obstacles and allies to the performers. Moreover, space is the mode in which the tale is told: the "narrative," such as it is, is communicated in kinaesthetic relationships – those dictated by the scenographic environment and its dancing bodies.

Each Carbone 14 spectacle establishes at the outset the spatial parameters and environmental atmosphere in which the whole of the drama will be enacted, regardless of its characters' or events' temporal locations. None involve set changes, nor even the introduction of additional set-pieces.[6] Use of props is infrequent and deliberate. As a result, the stage space is fairly constant, altered only by the introduction of people and their occasional accoutrements. Instead of trying to represent the location's meanings and

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notes.

[5] (Ce qui me vient d'abord, le plus souvent . . . c'est un lieu) Quoted in Gilbert David, "L'inquiétante étrangeté de Carbone 14," *Le Devoir*, 21 April 1996, n.p.

histories through set decoration, Carbone 14 chooses instead to draw out of the spatial environment what is already embedded through movement. Carbone 14's work reveals the past in and through "memoried" spaces and their reactivation by dancing bodies.

Carbone 14's emphasis on space is apparent in the titles of its pieces and in the "stories" they tell. With the exception of *Les Âmes mortes*, the titles of Carbone 14 productions refer directly to the environment in which the show will be performed: at the railroad tracks, in a dormitory, in the forest. If *L'Hiver-Winterland*'s title seems to indicate a period of time (the season of winter), its conjoint English title, "Winterland," foregrounds the season's territorialization in Québec as a "land" of winter. The "stories" of the shows are those of the spaces identified in their titles.[7] This rapport between space and story is most apparent in *Les Âmes mortes*, which tells the story of the house, of what it has seen, and how it has been used. The stage space in the other productions is used more allegorically. The dormitory is the memory-space of a generation of Québécois youth who came of age during the Quiet Revolution of the 1960s; it narrates/houses their generation's stories. *Le Rail*'s railroad track is the meeting ground of (male) soldiers and (female) travelers during the World War II era; the site of their encounters, the track also symbolizes the schism between men and women depicted in the play. *La Forêt*'s forest witnesses time's passage in the four ages of life (childhood, youth, middle age, and old age) and in fairy-tales (Sleeping Beauty and Little Red Riding Hood among them). *L'Hiver-Winterland* (1998) investigates the binary codes that have composed the story of

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[6] An exception to this is *Les Âmes mortes* in which a table and chairs are added in blackouts after the opening image.

this land of winter including French/English, male/female, speed/languor, traditionalism/modernity, Québec/Canada.

The shows' opening sequences are equally revelatory of the company's concern with establishing space. All open in the dark with either encompassing music or complete silence. When lights come up, the stage is set but devoid of actors. *Le Rail* (1984) begins with a train whistle sounding and a train track laterally bisecting a dirt-covered stage. *La Forêt* (1994) opens in the dark with children laughing and calling to each other; lights reveal a forest composed of about 50 trees covering the stage.[8] With *Les Âmes mortes* and *L'Hiver-Winterland*, the audience enters a fog-filled auditorium. The sound of a lone trumpeter and the illumination of a single exposed lightbulb hanging from the ceiling open the former. The latter begins in silence and a description of Lower Canada (Québec) attributed to Voltaire projected on one of the downstage scrim: "*Pour quelques arpents de neige*" (for several acres of snow). In each case, the audience's primary impression is of the stage environment itself as indicated by atmospheric sounds and the discovery of the unpopulated set. Its human elements appear in second place.

To establish the spaces which will divulge their histories, Maheu (also the troupe's primary set designer) creates suggestive, unadorned stage environments that welcome multiple uses by the performers.[9] Maheu seems to take what he needs from both

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[7] I place "stories" in scare-quotes to indicate the company's unwillingness to enact a linear narrative and to underline the difficulty of recounting what a Carbone 14 show is "about."

[8] For more on the opening of *La Forêt* see Brigitte Purkhardt's review, "La Forêt," *Jeu* 70 (March 1994): 162 – 164.

realistic and minimalist scenographic practices. From the detail-laden realist stage he draws the power of a specific locale; from the minimalist, black-box stage he reaps flexibility.[10] Responding to the exigencies of his own choreography, most of his designs maximize the available stage space for the actor-dancers' movement. Maheu's interior settings for *Le Dortoir* (1988) and *Les Âmes mortes* are essentially large box-sets (without ceilings) with open central spaces, small upstage recessed areas, and variously decorated walls. The dorm's beds and the house's table and chairs are frequently removed to the sides or back of the stage to accommodate group choreography. Unlike the flimsy, painted box-sets used in early domestic-realism plays, these box-sets are constructed to be interacted with, catapulted off of, run through. The set is not intended

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[9] Maheu designed the sets for *Le Rail* and *Le Dortoir*. Stéphane Roy, one of Québec's premier set designers, designed *Les Âmes mortes*; Maheu designed *L'Hiver-Winterland* with the assistance of Catherine Granche.

[10] The simplicity of Maheu's sets should not be interpreted as participating in a "poor theatre" aesthetic. Rather, his technically sophisticated, difficult-to-transport sets more closely resemble those of other image-theatre artists like Pina Bausch and Robert Wilson who also strive to create suggestive environments through the use of natural elements (in the case of Bausch) and technology (in the case of Wilson). Production budgets for Carbone 14's shows are unavailable. However, the sizable provincial government subsidies the company has received for operations and touring indicates not only the financial resources required for these sets but also how cumbersome they are to tour. In 1991 Carbone 14 already had an annual budget of $1.3 million, twenty-five percent of which was allocated to its world tours of *Le Rail* and *Le Dortoir*. Together the tours had 18 actors and 8 tonnes of material to transport. " 'Je rêve d'un théâtre populaire abstrait' -- Gilles Maheu," *Le Devoir*, 5 May 1991. In 1997 – 1998, the company received a $360,000 operations grant and a $38,000 Québec touring grant for Les Âmes mortes from the Conseil des arts et des lettres du Québec. The following year, they received $340,000 for operations and $60,000 for the international tour of *Les Âmes mortes* from the same funding source. Conseil des arts et des lettres du Quebec, "Subventions versées en 1997 - 1998," www.calq.gouv.qc.ca/fr/pdf/bourses/orgthe97.pdf; Conseil des arts et des lettres du Conseil des arts et des lettres du Quebec, "Subventions versées en 1998 - 1999," www.calq.gouv.qc.ca/fr/pdf/bourses/orgthe98.pdf.

solely to be descriptive of place, but also to "become an actor itself."[11] For example, in *Le Dortoir* when the students learn of U.S. President Kennedy's assassination from a radio broadcast, they vent grief and rage on the classroom blackboard. Initially, the students scribble the names of conflicting ideologies, political figures, social movements. As competition to write one's message on the blackboard stiffens, the students physically remove each other from their places at the board. In the ensuing mêlée, students' backs are used as human erasers; others scale the blackboard-covered wall and catapult themselves backwards off of it.

Both of these box-set designs contain a range of different periods, events, and people, thereby dismissing the notion of the stage-space as singular. They also evoke particular relationships between the interior world created on stage and the external one surrounding it. In *Le Dortoir*, there is only one way in or out – the downstage left door. The windows are, as dance critic Sally Sommer notes, "a grotesque safety design that makes them impossible to jump out of."[12] They prevent escape as much as they prevent entry. Lavoie locates in the window's architectural elements "the cathedral and the factory, those places where men's and women's dreams were stranded/ran aground over the course of centuries."[13] The dorm's design fosters a sense of hermeticism, which is both a refuge and a source of repression for the students. Student life is punctured by the

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[11] (le décor devient lui même acteur . . .) Danièle de Fontenay, "une écriture de silence," *Jeu* 24:3 (1985): 107 - 109; here 112.

[12] Sally Sommer, "Something Reckless, Something French," *Dance Magazine* (March 1991): 90 - 92.

[13] (ces verrières . . . rappellent tout à la fois la cathédrale et l'usine, ces lieux où les rêves des hommes et des femmes se sont échoués au cours des siècles), Lavoie, 202.

societal traumas which have come to stand for the turmoil of the 1960s; the students' movements recall scenes from the Algerian war of independence, President Kennedy's assassination, street violence and public demonstrations, and the torture of prisoners. However, the only person seen to enter or leave through the set's single door is the man whose monologues frame the spectacle. In his combination of scenography and choreography, Maheu explodes the carefully constructed dormitory space by forcing it to accommodate foreign wars and more local tragedies. By contrast, the unfurnished house set of *Les Âmes mortes* is almost excessively porous to the outside world: two tiers of three pink-coloured doors line stage right and stage left walls. They are swung open and slammed closed during the young couple's almost constant entrances and exits; they open and close themselves to let in or restrict shafts of light and for no apparent reason. Structurally, the play is a series of incursions into a single domestic space. Unlike the dormitory's self-destruction, the result of a too restrictive border policy, the porous house of dead souls endures, accommodating the contemporary couple as easily as it did the *paysans*. In both cases, however, Maheu's explosion of singular spaces in his sets' capaciousness expands the concept and use of décor beyond "setting" to environment. His sets are examples of what Gaston Bachelard calls the "poetics of space": "In its countless alveoli, space contains compressed time."[14]

Le Rail (1984), *La Forêt*, and *L'Hiver-Winterland* take place in outdoor environments. The outdoor scenography furnishes not only an indication of environment and location, but also another performer. In many cases, the set seems to have its own

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[14] Gaston Bachelard, *The Poetics of Space*, trans. Maria Jolas (Boston: Beacon Press, 1994), 8.

personality or affect. Maheu covered the stage floors of these productions with natural elements – dirt, moss, and fog respectively. Of these, only *L'Hiver* did not have anything permanently set on the covered stage floor. (*Le Rail* had a stretch of Canadian National train track running across the earth and *La Forêt* had upwards of 50 trees, a small house, and a treehouse installed in its moss.) Instead, it had a series of scrims covering the proscenium opening on which was projected "scenery."

As with his interiors, Maheu's exterior sets are actors in their own right to be wrestled with, overcome, or capitulated to by the actor-dancers. For example, during *Le Rail* performers do battle with the wall, throwing themselves head first against it, flames from the floor light performers' pants on fire. Falling against the train track or climbing the small hill topped by a dead apple tree, performers are "marked, dirtied, struck, injured [by the décor]."[15] *La Forêt*'s dirt floor likewise ends up on the actors who roll about on it; its trees serve as means to sexual satisfaction for characters who gyrate against them. Both *La Forêt* and *Le Rail*'s dirt and moss floors absorb all sounds of movement – footfalls, dance-steps. While erasing the sonic evidence of the actor-dancers' movement, their dirt floors retain the visual impressions of the performers' presence. (*Les Âmes mortes*, on the other hand, capitalized on the sounds produced by contact between body and floorboard – creaks, thumps, heel-clicks.) *Le Rail*'s walls "sweat filth"; its 60 tonnes of dirt humidified the air. Elements of the set belch smoke and fog, others burst into flames. [16]

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[15] (Dans le Rail, les acteurs sont marqués, salis, heurtés, blessés.) Fontenay, 112.

[16] (Les murs suintent de saleté) Robert Lévesque, "*Le rail*, un théâtre de l'intuition et de l'urgence," *Le Devoir*, 27 October 1984.

In the sets' explosion of spatial and temporal boundaries and in their active role in performance, each set functions as an environment of memory,[17] or, more aptly, a *memoria*. In his article, "*Mémoria* et imaginaire dans la culture québécoise," literary critic Gilles Thérien defines *memoria* as "the place in which the story produced from the interaction of memory and imagination is performed."[18] *Memoria* is a performance space. Thérien understands that performance space as mental – a Platonic cave of the mind. While that is certainly a crucial dimension of *memoria*, anthropologist Maurice Halbwachs relocates *memoria*'s place of performance beyond the mind and the individual into material spaces and social networks.[19] Halbwachs insisted that the functions of individual memory – acquisition, retention, and recall – are dependent on social frames provided by the groups with which the individual is affiliated. These social frames, formed by the interests and needs of the group, indicate where to localize memories, in what associative network to place discrete past experiences. In other words, individual memory always already has a social component. Moreover, memory has a material

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[17] French historian Pierre Nora calls these "*milieux de mémoire*" and contrasts them to "*lieux de mémoire*" which are artificial, constructed sites of national and/or ethnic memory (like monuments, archives, museums, and the like). Pierre Nora, "Between Memory and History: *Les Lieux de Mémoire*," *Representations* 26 (Spring 1989): 7 - 25.

[18] (La memoria est le lieu où se joue le récit produit de l'interaction de la mémoire et de l'imagination.) Gilles Thérien, "*Memoria* et imaginaire dans la culture québécoise," in *La mémoire dans la culture*, ed. Jacques Mathieu (Québec: Les Presses de l'Université de Laval, 1995), 331 - 341; here 338.

[19] See Maurice Halbwachs, *Les cadres sociaux de la mémoire* (Paris, 1925); and Maurice Halbwachs, *La mémoire collective* (Paris, 1950).

component as well because the mental space of memory is supported by the social group's material spaces. Paul Connerton explains:

> We conserve our recollections by referring them to the material milieu that surrounds us. It is to our social spaces – those which we occupy, which we frequently retrace with our steps, where we always have access, which at each moment we are capable of mentally reconstructing – that we must turn our attention, if memories are to appear.[20]

Because memory is localized in material milieu, tapping it requires infiltration of the spaces in which it resides.

By constructing material environments of memory specific to the social group of Québécois, Carbone 14 facilitates the recollection and transmission of a québécois collective memory. Its performance environments represent material locations of memory associated with particular moments and/or events in Québec's history. *Le Rail, La Forêt,* and *L'Hiver-Winterland* situate themselves in culturally meaningful but unspecified locations. *Le Rail*'s exploration of palpable and imminent danger is situated during the World War II era in a no-man's-land, an unclaimed territory where social norms and convention do not apply. *La Forêt*'s woods is a space of transformation where "everything is possible, everything is permitted, anything could happen."[21] Populated by *coureurs de bois canayens* (French-Canadian foresters), somnambulists, and characters

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[20] Paul Connerton, *How Societies Remember* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1989), 37.

[21] From the programme.

out of Grimm's, it is a forest where the passage of time is marked in performance by rites of passage and voyages of self-discovery. *L'Hiver-Winterland* is an attempt to represent the space of Québec, its timeless landscape. Crisscrossed by *habitants*, Catholic *curés*, Santa Claus, Inuit shamans, mod-styled youth, and 1980s break-dancers, *L'Hiver*'s landscape exhibits some of the more densely layered temporalities of Carbone 14's environments. Journalist Marie Labreque writes, "*L'Hiver* is interested in our national mythology, in our deeply-rooted collective symbols: religious education, *cabane à sucre*, referendum."[22] The interior spaces of *Le Dortoir* and *Les Âmes mortes* are more specific in their locations but equally capacious in their interpretive meanings. *Le Dortoir* is performed in the imaginative recreation of the Marieville convent school Maheu attended for several years during the early 1960s.[23] Symbol of the power of the Catholic church, its stranglehold on provincial education, and its personal and sexual repression, the dorm hosts its political and social opposites as well: revolt in Algeria, student demonstrations, sexual experimentation, and the assassination of John F. Kennedy among others. The social space of the dorm, both a symbol and an experience for many Québécois, compresses in its layers a paradigm shift from *canayennité* to *québécité*, with its traumas

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[22] (Sous sa facture onirique, *L'Hiver* s'intéresse à notre mythologie nationale, à nos symboles collectifs très enracinés: éducation réligieuse, cabane à sucre, référendum.) A "cabane à sucre" is a cabin situated in or near a maple forest used to distill sap from maple trees into maple syrup and maple sugar. The action of "sugaring off" the maple trees (drawing out their sap) has become a season unto itself in Québec, opened by the first day the sap runs in the maple trees (generally in very early spring). The cabane is its privileged location. The referendum to which Labreque refers is that which took place in 1995 on the question of whether to begin negotiations with the Canadian federal government to create a sovereign Québec. The referendum failed by less than 1%. For more on its implications, see the Introduction and Epilogue. "L'hiver de force: Louise Robataille," *Voir*, 28 April 1998.

[23] From *Le Dortoir* programme.

and tumult. As was previously mentioned, *Les Âmes mortes*' house shelters couples from the turn-of-the-century, the 1950s and the 1990s simultaneously.

In its function as *memoria*, however, Carbone 14's stage environments do not merely retain collective memories through the reproduction of memory's material locations. In Carbone 14's performative recollection of québécois social memory is an element of invention as well. (As Thérien points out, *memoria* is composed of both memory and imagination; thus, it has retentive and inventive capabilities.) Using Richard Schechner's definition of performance as the "restoration of behaviour," Joseph Roach locates this overlap of memory and imagination in performance. Roach argues that because no action (or behaviour) can be performed exactly the same way twice, the action is not merely repeated by also reinvented in its performance. "In this improvisational behavioral space, memory reveals itself as imagination."[24] This dovetailing of memory and imagination is evident in the recreated environments of memory, and, more complexly, in the performance of memory as danced by Carbone 14.

A person enters

Through these 12 bodies of boys and girls in underwear and camisoles, memory is going to enter into action.

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[24] Joseph Roach, *Cities of the Dead: Circum-Atlantic Performance* (New York: Columbia University Press, 1996), 29.

Robert Lévesque regarding *Le Dortoir*[25]

Having established the performance/memory space, Maheu and his collaborators populate it with actor-dancers. It is on and through their bodies that the cultural histories of "memoried" spaces are reactivated. *Le Dortoir* provides the most transparent example of this transaction. The suicidal man enters, reminisces aloud about his youth, his life, and his desperate present circumstances. When he falls asleep, the former boarders return, ghostlike, through elevated broken windows and in brief illuminated images. The impression, supported by the play's frame, is that the dormitory inhabitants are ghosts summoned by the man's sleeping presence in the dorm. The man recognizes the dorm as *memoria*; the dormers' bodies reactivate its intimate histories. To secure transmission of cultural memories these spaces require a conscious mind to recognize its cultural significance, and a body to ensure its performance and transmission via its mnemonic systems.

In *memoria*, experiences and impressions are retained and reinvented in the form of "images which will be put on stage in the theatre of memory."[26] Through the capture of past experiences in these images, memory acquires a social dimension and can be transmitted from one individual (or group) to another, via systems of representation.[27] (Thérien cites *The Iliad*, *The Odyssey*, and *The Bible* as fundamental repositories of an

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[25] (Par ces 12 corps de garçons et de filles en caleçons et camisoles, la mémoire va entrer en action.) "Que reste-t-il de nos cauchemars?," *Le Devoir*, 23 November 1988.

[26] Thérien, 338.

[27] The memorial images Carbone 14's works transmit will be discussed in the third section of this chapter.

occidental *memoria.*) However, memory also becomes social and transmissible in its sedimentation in the body as well, in what Connerton calls "habitual memory." Habit memories are internalized corporal responses and attitudes; they might also be described as "motor memories" or "kinaesthetic memories." Anatomical deposits, habit memories are acquired over time and by force of repetition and are executed with little conscious reflection.[28] Examples of habit memory include culturally specific postures or comportments, the unthinking execution of piano scales and finger exercises, the proper displacement of one's body during Mass – stand, sit, kneel. They are learned cognitively and viscerally, made part of the body, and contribute to its construction. (In theatrical parlance, this physical expression of values, status, categories, and reflexes is called "period style.") In this way, the body is an intimate site of collective memory, conserving as it does in postures, manners, and reflexes the community values.

The body and its mnemonic systems are used as the primary conveyors of meaning and transmitters of cultural memory in Carbone 14 productions. Given the paradoxical relationship between post-Quiet Revolution québécois national identity and pre-Quiet Revolution French Canadian history, it is significant that Maheu's troupe attempts to maintain and convey a version of québécois cultural memory through the singularly elusive dancing body. As repository, the dancing body is not particularly trustworthy – it is unreliably ephemeral. In other words, the cultural "artifacts" or "evidence" provided by dancing bodies is available only in their movement, in their movement ability (presumably diminished over time), or in the transmission of the dance

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[28] Connerton, 72.

to another body.[29] Corporal memories convey meaning only in and through bodies and then only during the time that the bodies sustain the "incorporated practice" (of holding oneself appropriately, of shaking hands as a greeting). There is nothing other than the body to trap or hold the information conveyed by the incorporated practice. Like the breath in mouth-to-mouth resuscitation, dances too are transmitted through "a kind of oral-and-bodily tradition."[30] Breath is transmitted from one person to the next through its expulsion from the giver's mouth into that of the receiver. Dance choreography is transmitted from one person to the next by the giver's words and movements. The transmission of breath is accomplished when, through the force of repetition, the receiver incorporates the giver's breath in a way that triggers her own motor-memory of breathing. The transmission of dance is accomplished when, again by force of repetition (or rehearsal), the receiver incorporates the giver's choreography to such an extent that the movement sequences become a memory stored in the body – in its muscles, joints, reflexes. The evidence of a dance's existence lies in its reproduction on other bodies.

Somewhat paradoxically, these transmitters which provoke and inculcate memory, breath and dance, exist only in and through perishable bodies. Their precarious and ephemeral housing situation in corporal envelopes would seem to circumvent the maintenance of memory – individual or cultural, cognitive or motor – over time. Nonetheless, and like many modern and postmodern creator/directors, Maheu eschews

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[29] See Barbara Browning, *Samba: Resistance in Motion* (Bloomington and Indianapolis: Indiana University Press, 1995) on dance as a form of "cultural record-keeping," especially chapter one, "Samba: The Body Articulate."

[30] Ellen W. Goellner and Jacqueline Shea Murphy, "Introduction: Movement Movements," in *Bodies of the Text: Dance as Theory, Literature as Dance*, ed. Ellen W.

the inscribed or spoken word, favouring instead a corporal index of signs. Carbone 14 has been called a "gestural [or action] theatre,"[31] one in which "the spoken word is unimportant; body language creates what is essential to the work."[32] Verbal expression, when present, is employed more for its sonic effect or emotive appeal than for its discursive sense. For instance, in *Le Rail*, an aria from *La Traviata* is sung neither to forward the plot, nor to delineate character. Excerpted from its original context, the aria punctuates the menacing atmosphere of the soldier/traveler encounters with its lyric sadness.

L'Hiver-Winterland also makes use of sung text. In the first instance, a woman sings to French techno-pop. The music itself is assaultive; her delivery likewise. Both sacrifice melody for volume and pace. In the second instance, the text itself is rendered almost incomprehensible in its vocal performance. Two *danseuses* rap an Émile Nelligan poem set to a throbbing bass beat; each sings into a microphone, amplifying their sound, one in French, the other in English. Moreover, their songs overlap one another. The net effect is urban noise pierced by shards of bleak imagery ("*L'hiver est la douleur que j'ai*" [Winter is my sadness]). Employing a similar overlapping technique in *Le Dortoir*, three students recount the history of the nation, again into a microphone. The first history lesson is the story of Canada, recited in English. Shortly after it is begun, a second history

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Goellner and Jacqueline Shea Murphy (New Brunswick: Rutgers University Press, 1995), 1 - 18; here 5.

[31] (un théâtre gestuel) Gilbert David, "sur un théâtre traumatique," *Jeu* 28:3 (1983): 89 - 110; here, 95.

[32] (La parole y est peu importante; l'essentiel de l'oeuvre est fait de la gestuelle.) Benoît Laplante, "l'homme rouge," *Jeu* 24:3 (1982): 107 - 109; here 108.

lesson, the story of Québec, is introduced in French. As the English and French students increase the volume of their recitations, a third student tells the story of "America" in Spanish. The net effect is twofold: first, the deep ties to different stories; second, the meaninglessness of the words themselves. What is most important to note about how Maheu uses spoken and sung text is that the text is almost always overwhelmed by the physical activity of vocal production – whether that be speaking or singing. Even in his use of text, physical signs overcome verbal signs.

Given Maheu's own training and his research interests, it comes as no surprise that Carbone 14's original productions are not text-based and that much of the "found text" used in performance is obscured. In fact, it was not until five years after founding what would become Carbone 14 that text of any kind was introduced to their shows. Maheu founded a company of mimes in 1975 as "Les Enfants du paradis," after the Michel Carné film of the same name.[33] Maheu describes its goals in a 1978 issue of *Jeu* as follows:

> To recreate a theatre where movement, dynamics, and form would have predominance over literature. A theatre of mimes, acrobats, jugglers where action would have predominance over acting. To create a naïve theatrical language which would address itself equally well to children and adults.[34]

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[33] One of the troupe's co-founders, Michel Barrette, would go on to be the Cirque du Soleil's first "ringmaster." See the following chapter of this dissertation, "Exporting Québécité," for a lengthy discussion of the Cirque's work.

[34] (Recréer un théâtre où le mouvement, la dynamique et la forme auraient prédominance sur la littérature. Un théâtre de mimes, d'acrobats, de jongleurs où l'action aurait prédominance sur l'interprétation. Créer un langage théâtral naïf qui s'addresserait

He goes on to say that they are striving to create an "organic theatre that would be the expression of our own life-experience, not the interpretation of a text that has already been performed."[35] During its "Les Enfants du paradis" period, the troupe performed at festivals and fairs, in public buildings, and in the street for varied crowds of passers-by. In 1980, the troupe was reconstituted as "Carbone 14," quit public venues, and began experimenting with theatrical apparatuses and spaces.[36] Nonetheless, the kernel of their mission remained unchanged; in a 1985 article, de Fontenay articulates a similar set of goals: "to create a theatre where the language of the body occupies the primary place."[37] Carbone 14's aesthetic goals reflect Maheu's training as a mime. He trained with Etienne Decroux and Yves Lebreton, and worked extensively with Eugenio Barba, all of whom emphasize the autonomous and distinct language(s) of the body. Antonin Artaud is a major influence on his work "because he writes words in the body and I am a man of movement. It's a writing which penetrates me."[38] Incorporating the body's language with

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aussi aux enfants qu'aux adultes.) Gilles Maheu, "les enfants du paradis," *Jeu* 8 (Spring 1978): 79 - 82; here 80.

[35] (Nous désirons par la créer un théâtre « organique » qui soit l'expression de notre propre expérience de vie et non l'interprétation d'une écriture déjà réalisée.) Ibid, 82.

[36] An undated brochure from Les Enfants du paradis indicates that for a period of time Les Enfants alternated street and theatre performances. CEAD, "Carbone 14" dossier.

[37] Fontenay, 111.

[38] (Parce qu'il écrit les mots dans le corps et que je suis un homme du mouvement. C'est une écriture qui me perce.) Maheu quoted in Jean Basile, "Sens – Vie – Beauté" CEAD, "Carbone 14" dossier, n.p.

the "languages of the stage."[39] Maheu has developed his own form of *écriture scénique* (scenic writing).

That Carbone 14 privileges the body in performance is a fact worthy of investigation for it reveals certain assumptions about the body, its communicative abilities, and its relationship to culture. This choice assumes that the body is an adequately communicative vessel that does not require further elaboration or interpretation by spoken or written text. This assumption underscores the role of the body in *memoria* as an intimate site of cultural memory, a culturally inscribed "document." Movement is used primarily to evoke time/spaces of memory, not to deny time and space's effects. It is on this point that Maheu's work differentiates itself ideologically from that of Barba or Artaud, both of whom deny (or at least minimize) the impact of culture on the production of the body and its systems of movement. By placing the trained dancing body in environments of memory, Maheu stresses its participation in cultural processes, its inscription by outside factors, its location at the nexus of historical change. Carbone 14 relies on its dancing bodies not to bypass specific cultural discourses to discover a "universal" bodily language, but rather to revivify and re-present them as cast in their "corporealities."[40]

Nonetheless, foregrounding corporal rhetoric does facilitate Carbone 14's excavations into pre-"Québécois" cultural history. For physical signification provides an

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[39] Patrice Pavis, *Languages of the Stage: Essays in the Semiology of the Theatre* (New York: Performing Arts Journal Publications, 1982).

[40] "Corporealities" is taken from the edited volume of the same name, Susan Leigh Foster, *Corporealities: dancing, knowledge, culture, and power* (London and New York: Routledge, 1996).

alternate entrée into and route through a cultural/national history fraught with linguistic conflict. Electing to develop an *écriture scénique* over *écriture* proper, Maheu skirts, if only briefly, the vexed issue of which language (French, English, *joual*, etc.) québécois theatre artists use.

Maheu's *écriture scénique* is a body and image-based creative process. Carbone 14 builds their spectacles around a set of images, drawn from specific yet generous themes chosen by Maheu. Some of Carbone 14's generative themes have included "soul," "duality," and "urges." Themes are usually inspired by Maheu's own eclectic reading list. (For example, *Le Rail* was inspired by his reading of D. M. Thomas's *L'hôtel blanc* and Jack Henry Abbott's *In the Belly of the Beast*.) The company then improvises based on their own responses to the chosen images. Maheu says of their creative process, "The actors improvise from images, born of these [pre-selected] themes, they are confronted with discrete objects, and afterward, we keep what is most meaningful."[41] Carbone 14's creative process is similar to the *théâtre repère* technique developed by Jacques Lessard of the Conservatoire d'art dramatique de Québec and most famously employed by his protégé, Robert Lepage. Lessard adapted Anna Halprin's RSVP cycle for dancers to the theatre in 1980, innovating the creative process call the *repère* cycles. (*Repère* means landmark or reference point.) The cycle includes the following stages: ***resources***, ***partition***, ***évaluation***, ***représentation***. "*Resources*" (resources) comprise all elements of creation, i.e., objects, light, costume, emotion, music, character, scene. "*Partition*"

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[41] (À partir d'images qui naissent de ces thèmes les acteurs improvisent, se confrontent avec des objets retenus, et l'on retient par après le plus signifiant.) Quoted in Robert Lévesque, "*Le rail*, un théâtre de l'intuition et de l'urgence," *Le Devoir*, 27 October 1984.

(scoring) is the exploration and organization of the resources, often conducted through improvisation. In the *évaluation* (evaluation) stage, resources and their scoring are evaluated according to the creative goals and objectives. The *repère* cycle's final stage, *représentation*, is the public performance of the created work.[42] The similarities of his creative process to that of the *repère* cycle notwithstanding, Maheu distinguishes his approach saying, "Contrary to traditional *écriture (scénique)*, the show unfolds little by little, without text and without a firm plan."[43]

Available definitions of *le théâtre d'images*, or "image theatre," often contradict each other. For some *le théâtre d'images* is a distinctive theatrical aesthetic emphasizing visual spectacle and minimizing spoken language. Of *Le Rail* Lévesque writes "We see in it the first evident signs of a new theatrical aesthetic which, in Pina Bausch's generation, rediscovers the sense of the sign, distances itself from rational discourse, finds at the heart of the space's magic a modern sensibility."[44] For others, it is a technique akin to sculpture. Pavlovic invokes sculpture in her description of Maheu's image theatre: "These productions are highly choreographed and visually impeccable: the bodies of the actors are molded like sculptures or plastic elements – shaped, moved around,

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[42] Hélène Beauchamp, "The Rèpere Cycles: From basic to continuous education," *Canadian Theatre Review* 78:Spring (1994): 26 - 29 For more information on the Théâtre Repère's work, see Denis Salter, "Borderlines: An Interview with Robert Lepage and Le Théâtre Repère," *Theater* 24:3 (1993): 71 - 79.

[43] (Le spectacle s'élabore au fur et à mésure, sans texte ni plan ferme, ce qui est le contraire de l'écriture (scénique) traditionelle.) Jean St-Hilaire, "La vie des ombres: Gilles Maheu et *Les Âmes mortes*," *Le Soleil*, 23 November 1996.

[44] (On y voit les premiers signes évidents d'une nouvelle esthétique théâtrale qui, dans la génération de Pina Bausch, redécouvre le sens du signe, prend ses distances avec

synchronized and integrated into carefully created spaces."[45] Writing about processional productions outside of Québec, Sarah Hood defines image theatre as "the technique of 'sculpting' a human body to create an image expressing a state or situation."[46] Still others emphasize its desired effects. Québécoise theatre scholar Louise Vigeant defines *le théâtre d'images* as a theatre of "occasionally cathartic 'effects', rather than effects of 'sense' resembling logos or rational discourse."[47] Despite the differences in emphasis, most of the criticism privileges the role of the body in the technique and production of images. The body is understood as the primary sign among stage-signs whose goal is to create a strong sensory impression. For example, Bonnie Marranca describes the actor's function in the U.S.-based "theatre of images" as "media through which the playwright expresses his [*sic*] ideas; they serve as icons and images."[48]

Given its predominance in Carbone 14's theatrical work and in their creative process, and its privileged relationship to cultural memory, it is important to consider what kind of body Carbone 14 creates; this warrants analysis of Maheu's choreographic

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le discours rationel, trouve au coeur de la magic de l'espace un sense moderne.) Robert Lévesque, "Carbone 15 se surpasse," *Le Devoir*, 9 May 1984, 8.

[45] Diane Pavlovic, "Gilles Maheu: Corps à Corps," trans. Roger E. Gannon and Rosalind Gill. *Canadian Theatre Review* 52 (Fall 1987): 22 – 29; here, 27.

[46] Sarah B. Hood, "Theatre of Images: New Dramaturgies," in *Contemporary Issues in Canadian Drama*, ed. Per Brask (Winnipeg: Blizzard Publications, 1995), 50 – 67; here 51.

[47] (un théâtre d'images [donc d' 'effets', parfois cathartiques plutôt que d'effets de 'sens' tenant du logos, du discours rationnel] . . .) Louise Vigeant, "du réalisme à l'expressionisme," *Jeu* 58 (March 1991): 7 – 16; here, 7.

[48] Bonnie Marranca, ed. "Introduction," *The Theatre of Images* (New York: Drama Book Specialists, 1977), ix – xv; here, xi. Included in Marranca's listing of theatre of images practitioners are Richard Foreman, Robert Wilson, and Lee Breuer.

style. For it is via "style" that the body and the dance become carriers of cultural identity. Dance styles grow out of "the most fundamental assumptions about the subject and the body."[49] For example, modern dance styles conceive of the body as conduit for the expression of internal forces. That assumption plays itself out in movement vocabularies which stress the dynamic struggle between internal compulsion and external resistance: "The modern dancer's body registers the play of opposing forces, falling and recovering, contracting and releasing."[50] Like habit memory, style is the incorporation/corporealization of identificatory categories like value, position, and gender. Every dance style requires and, in its technique, creates a "specialized and specific body, one that represents a given choreographer's or tradition's aesthetic vision of dance."[51] As such, each style has certain "techniques of the body" – in dance, those techniques are communicated and practiced during a dancer's training and rehearsal processes. The purpose of training in a particular style – be it Graham or Duncan, Laurin or Maheu – is to ensure the full incorporation of the style's movement vocabulary, syntax, and lexicons of meaning in the neuromusculature of the performer. Style also gives a dance its particular identity, distinguishing it from others. It exhibits a certain

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[49] Susan Foster, *Reading Dancing: Bodies and Subjects in Contemporary American Dance* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1986), 88.

[50] Elizabeth Dempster, "Women Writing the Body: Let's Watch a Little How She Dances," in *Bodies of the Text*, 21 – 28; here, 28.

[51] Susan Leigh Foster, "Dancing Bodies" in *Meaning in Motion: New Cultural Studies of Dance*, ed. Jane C. Desmond. (Durham: Duke University Press, 1997), 235 – 258; here, 241.

quality of movement, establishes relationship of bodies and body parts to each other in movement patterns, and directs the relationship of the performer to the audience.

In the most general terms, Maheu's choreographic style is firmly rooted in the "postmodern dance" tradition. The meaning of the movements is generated from the context of the dance itself. The bodily signs, apprehended over the course of the show, gather symbolic force over time and in relation to themselves, not to an external interpretive grid. The mnemonic systems deployed across Carbone 14's dancers do not cohere into plot, character, or narrative. Like mime, the "narrativity" of Carbone 14 dances is what Patrice Pavis calls "gestural narrativity." It is "organized syntactically rather than semantically – for example, by systems of thematic or meaningful oppositions."[52] Interfering with narrative fluidity is the fact that most Carbone 14 shows are divided into small segments – short scenes, images, tableaux which investigate and elaborate the shows' themes in various ways. For instance, *La Forêt* concerns itself with the passage of time, its vagaries, and humanity's responses to it – looking forward, looking backward. Its scenes are organized nonsequentially around the stages of a lifespan: childhood, youth, maturity, and old age. Each scene is attributable to one of life's stages. In the life-stage scenes, each of life's stages is represented by a person – childhood by a rebellious boy in his tree-house, youth and maturity by group of young men and women, and old age by a decrepit elderly man. Often, representatives appear in the same sequences, foreshadowing future actions, reenacting past ones. Even on the level of staging, Brigitte Purkhardt writes that *La Forêt* is organized like a "game of mirrors": "Sometimes the action is repeated. What is performed stage right seems to be

the perfect reply to what is transpiring stage left. Or, it is upstage and downstage which are projected in each other."[53] Other scenes involving fairy-tale characters present a different perspective on time's movements. Little Red Riding Hood acts out a gleeful sexual initiation with the wolf. Sleeping Beauty is awakened by a prince; he then replaces her on the bier. What unites the scenes despite the blackouts that separate them and their non-sequential order, is not plot-line but their mutual, if varied, reflections on the production's theme. This theme-and-variations approach to organizing movement, called "parataxis," dominates Carbone 14's work; it forms the super-structure of Carbone 14 shows, dictating the order of scenes. Within that super-structure and on the level of movement phrases appear other syntactic choices.[54]

Nor do Carbone 14's mnemonic systems "make sense" in relation to a readily interpretable dance language. Indeed, unlike ballet or, to a lesser extent, modern dance, postmodern dance lacks such a unifying language system.[55] Maheu's demonstrates little interest in the lifts, turns, or *pas de deux* characteristic of ballet and modern dance, preferring instead to plumb the expressive possibilities of movement drawn from other cultural repertoires and from pedestrian activities. His choreography quotes such diverse styles of dance as Native American, Javanese, Indian, and English "mod," creating a pastiche of unreconciled movement vocabularies. Some of the movement vocabularies are not recognizably "dance." Maheu's choreography often blurs the boundaries between

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[52] Patrice Pavis, "The Discourse of the Mime," trans. Susan Melrose and Barbara Behar, *Languages of the Stage*, 51 – 65; here, 58.

[53] Purkhardt, 164.

[54] Foster, *Reading Dancing*, 93 – 94.

dance movement and everyday movement; stage movements are lifted from everyday activities which are then elaborated and transformed.[56] In *Le Dortoir*, the movement vocabulary is drawn largely from children's games and play activity. In the first half of the piece, the quality of the choreography is light, innocent, fluid. For example, two girls play a relaxed game of catch, tossing the ball, underhand, in easy arcs to each other. Their central torsos lift and open in the toss, contract and stoop in the catch. In the second half of the piece, the play-like movements are distorted into those of violent conflict. The girls extend and contract their mid-sections in response to torture, their tossing hand tied to the top of an up-ended bed. The boys appear behind them, slightly elevated; their bodies open and close in response to self-flagellation. (This movement sequence is "mimetic" in its syntax, repeating a pivotal movement in time and across a number of different bodies.) In *L'Hiver-Winterland*, the movement vocabulary draws on that of agricultural work (e.g., harvesting) and, later, other forms of physical labour which respond to the harshness of the environment in some way (e.g., breaking up ice). By venturing into international dance traditions and quotidian movement, Maheu expands the movement repertoire of his troupe/choreography. This move also confounds to some extent the modernist understanding of the body as expressive of internal states or inner forces. Maheu's postmodern body is available to a number of discourses, not only that of its inner life. It presents a range of movements, from the intimate terrain of childhood play to the social terrain of plural cultural influences.

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[55] See Dempster, "Women Writing the Body".

[56] Maheu shares his investigation of the resonance of quotidian movement with German choreographer Pina Bausch of the Wuppertal Tanztheater. See Susan Kozel,

Carbone 14 "style" also bears the earmarks of a more culturally and historically specific style called the "Montréal style," or, "*le nouveau bouger montréalais*" (the new Montréal groove). Developed by dancers and choreographers during the 1980s, the *nouveau bouger* is inventive in its choreography and imagery, high-risk in its physicality, personal in its themes, and theatrical in its structure and use of apparatuses (scenery, text, props).[57] This kind of cross-genre performance blossomed during the 1980s. Some of its most innovative and familiar proponents in the dance world are Édouard Locke's La La La Human Steps and Ginette Laurin's Ô Vertigo Danse. (Laurin performed in the 1984 productions of *Le Rail.*) Regarding the québécois theatre of that period, André Ricard writes that the "unlocking of genres in the mid-1980s expanded the usage of mixed or composite forms." Loosening the generic boundaries affected dance in a way that is reminiscent of Carbone 14's work: "the body left rhetorical concerns behind"; instead, it would be caught up in "an energy which tended toward an expression more 'impulsive' than narrative."[58] Maheu likewise eschews traditional narrative, preferring instead to present a series of thematically-related scenes, tableaux, and striking images, often separated by blackouts. Commenting on the same crossover trend, André-G. Bourrassa

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"'This Story is Told as a History of the Body': Strategies of Mimesis in the Work of Irigaray and Bausch," In *Meaning in Motion*, 101 – 110.

[57] Iro Tembeck, *Danser à Montréal: Germination d'une histoire choréographique* (Québec: Press de l'Université du Québec, 1992), 231.

[58] (Le décloisonnement des genres répandait l'usage, au milieu des années 80, des formes mitoyennes ou composites . . . . À la danse le corps quitte le souci rhétoric pour se déployer dans une énergie qui tend vers une expression moins proche du narratif que du pulsionnel, une énergie que modélera une grammaire aussi éloignée du naturel que peut l'être le mime, mais dont la projection est spectaculaire et conjoint au son.) André Ricard, "Pratique actuelle de la scène au Québec," in *Nouveaux regards sur le théâtre*

writes, "If dance and mime steal the text from the theatre and attribute more than ever an actantial function to the object . . . the theatre steals from dance and mime the exclusivity of body language for 'phrases', even entire scenes."[59] As a trained mime interested in expanding its idiom, Maheu gravitated toward this kind of cross-genre performance, focusing on poses, tableaux, and group work. Although his work is exemplary in many ways of the *nouveau bouger*'s theatrical expression and formal concerns, it retains a distinctive style of its own.

Susan Leigh Foster suggests that "[s]tyle results from three related sets of choreographic conventions: the quality with which the movement is performed, the characteristic use of parts of the body, and the dancer's orientation in the performance space."[60] Using these three rubrics of analysis, the Carbone 14 style might be described as follows:

1. *Quality with which the movement is performed:* Maheu's choreography is generally organized in abbreviated, even abrupt, phrases. They accumulate force not via their extension in time, but rather through their extension in space. The movements are grounded, their flow more horizontal than vertical. The sense is of

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québécois, ed. Betty Bednarski and Irène Oore (Montreal: ZYX éditeur, 1997), 11 - 21; here 13 – 14.

[59] (Si la danse et le mime ravissent au théâtre le texte et attribuent plus que jamais une fonction actantielle à l'objet . . . le théâtre, lui, enlève à la danse et au mime l'exclusivité du langage corporel pour des 'phrases', voire des scènes entières.) André-G. Bourassa, "Scène québécoise: permutations de formes et de fragments en danse, mime et théâtre," *Études littéraires* 18:3 (1985): 73 - 85; here 76.

[60] *Reading Dancing: Bodies and Subjects in Contemporary American Dance* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1986), 77.

snapshot – memories captured in the small square of a photo. The quality of the phrases themselves varies widely, alternating between elegiac and "punk." His choreography demonstrates little interest in the middle-ground of expression. pacing is rarely moderate, quality of movement infrequently "usual." Movement is generally either arranged in sustained poses or slow motion phrases on the one hand, or frenetic expenditures of energy on the other. The contrasts juxtapose lightness and heaviness, languor and speed, repression and expression. Whether composed or excessive, movements are virtuosic; they display the precision and technical mastery of the dancers.

2. *Characteristic use of parts of the body:* Movement is generated from all different parts of body – there is no one center from which movement flows. In his use of parts of the body too Maheu experiments with opposites or extremes; physically quiet from the waist down, a dancer's upper body will erupt into volumes of movement (or vice-versa). In the more contemplative or lyric sequences, full body extension is common; however, there is little emphasis on "line" in the balletic sense of the term. The quality of the extension is more athletic or gymnastic than balletic, demonstrating physical strength not the body's conformation to geometric patterns. One of Maheu's choreographic signatures is the complex movement by many body parts at once – its quality is ornate, almost baroque. These movements do not generally require full extension of the limbs; the focus is more on a kind of rippling, moving bits and pieces of limbs. It emphasizes articulate extremities, the ornamentation of already intricate movement.

3. *Dancer's orientation in the performance space:* As Diane Pavlovic has noted, "With the exception of L'Homme rouge [1983], Maheu has created group spectacles."[61] Given the emphasis on group choreography, Carbone 14 shows employ the full performance space in its breadth and depth. In the group scenes (of wandering sleepwalkers, pillow-fighting boarders, resting tundra-dwellers), movement tends to be expansive and performers fan out to fill most pockets of the stage environment. Group movement patterns are laterally organized: dancer-actors move across the stage (from stage left to stage right, or vice-versa) in profile. Less frequently, group movement appears random and less geometric in its orientation. Performers dancing by themselves or in pairs are usually more confined in their movement patterns; restricted to precise areas, they are held in place by overhead spotlights. These are display sequences; the dancer-actors face the audience directly. Sometimes during these display sequences performers will have their backs turned to the audience. This kind of presentation generally demonstrates a complex articulation of the back musculature.

From this analysis of Carbone 14's style, the following conclusions regarding the kind of body produced by/for it can be drawn. The Carbone 14 body is open to the play of many influences, a responsive instrument that can embody a wide range of emotions, situations, classes, and moments. It is able to express extremes (of emotion, of rhythm, of quality of movement). Youthful and energetic, the body's muscles are more fast-twitch

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[61] (À part L'Homme Rouge, Maheu a créé jusqu'ici des spectacles de groupes . . .) Diane Pavlovic, "Gilles Maheu: l'espace vital," *Jeu* 63 (June 1992): 16 – 30; here 17.

than slow-burn, more suited to sprints than long distances. Physically, the Carbone 14 body-type exhibits muscular legs and visible, all-over body strength. It is often exhibited – topless, naked, in form-fitting clothing. Maximizing "*l'effet vidéoclip*" (the videoclip effect) of which the *nouveau bouger* has been accused,[62] the Carbone 14 body exerts itself completely, utilizing an excessive amount of energy for short amounts of time. Relieved by blackouts, it disappears to recuperate until its next turn on stage. It appears, in place, often already moving, out of the darkness of the stage, discovered *in medias res* by the lights. It returns to that darkness (and, presumably, an off-stage area) when its turn is completed. It cannot leave the stage area by any other means; the dancer-actors do not make visible entrances or exits through doorways or openings in the curtain. Through this use of the theatrical lighting, the dancing bodies are presented as magical dream-products that appear and disappear on command. The Carbone 14 body is a responsive body, articulating the petrified layers of cultural memory/habit and a pastiche of choreographic traditions, and being manipulated by the theatrical apparatus. Yet, it is also an intelligent body whose intelligence can be tapped both in the creative process (in improvisations) and in the performance event (in its execution abilities). It generates its own lexicons of meaning (movement vocabularies) and establishes axes of signification (parataxis, mimesis, pathos) which can be read within individual productions and across the troupe's entire *oeuvre*.

It is the consistency of the Carbone 14 body, its techniques of the body, and its deployment in the production of images that produce a recognizable Carbone 14 style, a carrier of cultural identity and a means of dating Québec's past(s). Carbone 14 mines

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those pasts for their points of comparison and those of contrast. For instance, the movement vocabularies of *L'Hiver-Winterland* contrast an agrarian past with an urban present. The Native American dance vocabulary which opens the piece demonstrates a light quality: dancers turn bouncing on the balls of their feet; arms outstretched and palms turned up, their focus is skyward. Two scenes later, after an explicit reference to the 1995 failed referendum on sovereignty, two dancer-actors mimic contemporary club-dancing: the quality of the movement is closed and frenetic; their arms often rise to obscure their downturned faces drawing attention to their now revealed swinging, rocking hips; their focus is inward. Following a similar pattern, the next sequence of scenes opens with three self-mortifying curés, illuminated by top-spots. Two scenes later, after another reference to the referendum, two *danseurs* and one *danseuse* perform break-dancing moves which subsequently segue into boxing moves, again reflecting a contemporary urban aesthetic or style.

Those pasts are presented on stage by a body that is collective, part of an ensemble, participating more frequently in group choreography than in solos or duets. The scenes in which it partakes are composed of more than one body, and usually more than two. Pavlovic writes that the "actors, sacrificing the individual gesture, seem sculpted in the same way as the other scenic materials."[63] Emphasizing the unifying effect of Maheu's choreography, current *Devoir* critic Gilbert David writes that "the singularity of the characters, even if the physical work is modified by this or that actor, is

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[62] Tembeck, 216.

[63] (les interprètes, sacrifiant le geste individuel, semblent sculptés au même titre que les autres matières qui composent la scène.) Pavlovic, "Gilles Maheu," 17.

erased in the rigour of play/physical organization."[64] Even if the dancers are not executing the same movements, they are moving at the same time in the same space and, often, according to the same impulse. For instance, during the nun's center-stage passion in *Le Dortoir*, her quest for spiritual fulfillment is echoed in a boy and girl's quest for sexual gratification. The nun turns dervish-like center-stage, face turned upward, hands running along her own body, robes swirling about her. The young couple makes shadow-animals on the wall with their hands upstage left, circle each other, remove their shirts, and wrap their limbs around each other. In a sequence which directly compares past mores to present ones, the two *paysan* couples of *Les Âmes mortes* dance downstage left and downstage right under separate spotlights. The women are in red Edwardian-style dresses with tight-fitting, low-cut bodices, long sleeves, and a full skirt with hip pouf. The men are in black suits with white shirts. They dance a vague and languid dance of longing – shoulders rolling, upper chest lifted, all arms, articulate hands and back musculature. They attempt to devour the bare lightbulb hanging center stage. (See Figure 4) Suddenly, the music changes to a loud violin scherzo. The black leather-clad contemporary couple enter one after the other. Their dance of longing is much more explicit; they tear across the stage the through the doors, always just missing each other. In a kind of extended, desperate farce, the lovers slam the doors behind them and scream each others' names. Sequences like these demonstrate how influenced by culture and time a set of impulses or desires (in this case, longing) are.

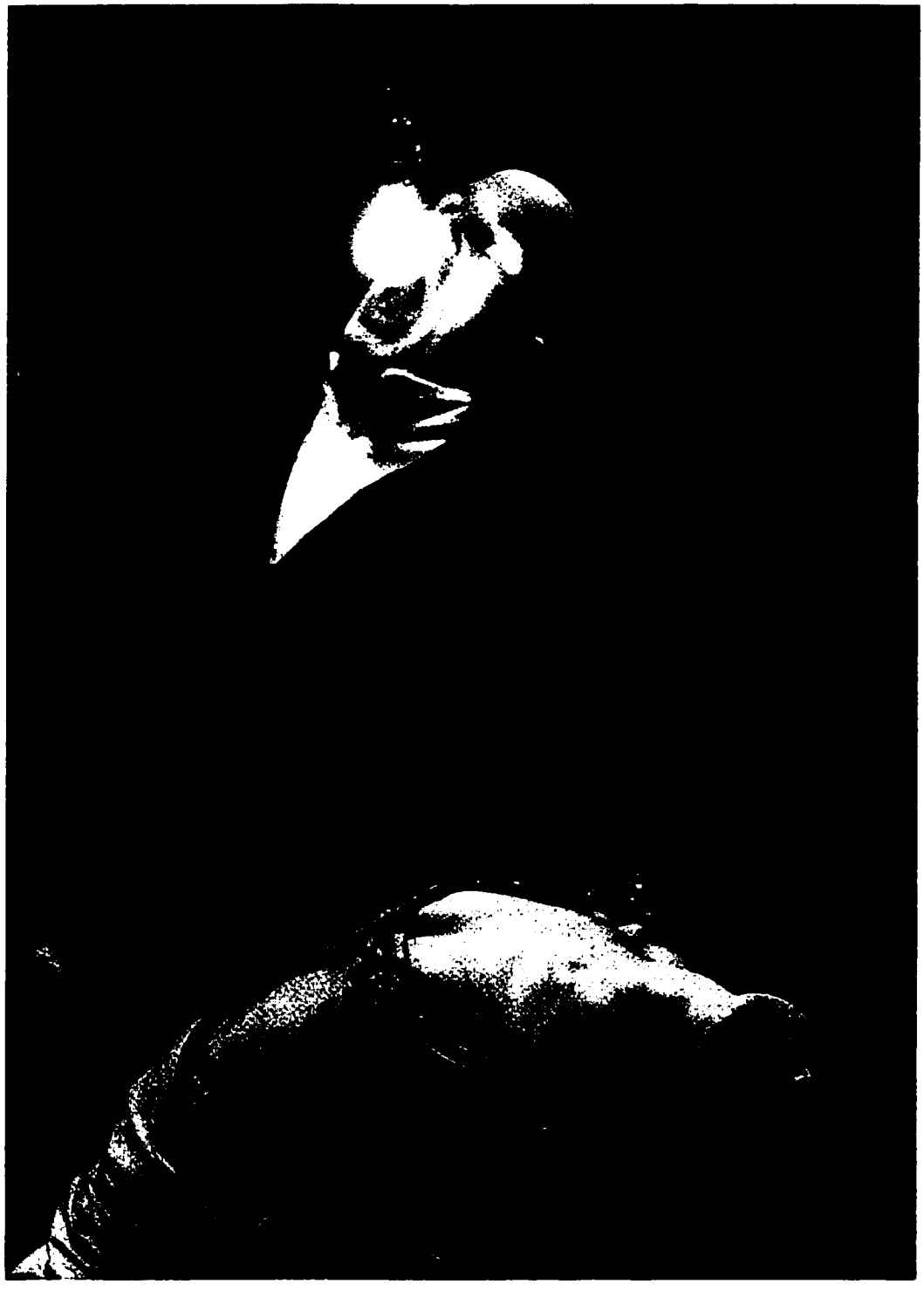

Figure 4: From the programme cover of *Les Âmes mortes*.

[64] (la singularité des personnages, même si le travail corporel est modulé par tel ou tel acteur, s'efface devant la rigeur d'un jeu proche de la choréographie) Gilbert David, "sur un théâtre traumatique," *Jeu* 28 (1983.3): 89 – 110; here, 95.

The Carbone 14 body repeats and elaborates the space's dance between memory and imagination. Just as Maheu's scenography expands the bounds of the performance space beyond the singular, his choreography extends the bounds of the dancers' movement vocabulary beyond the individual and its particular cultural inscriptions. Dancing in *memoria*, the Carbone 14 body at once conserves significant cultural values in its viscera and invents new configurations of collectivity in its various deployments and group dynamics.

A Suite of Images Ensues

Through the brilliance of an image, the distant past resounds with echoes.

Gaston Bachelard[65]

The final stage of Carbone 14's dating process is a suite of images that encapsulate and interrogate the multiple alluviations of québécois identity. They are produced by the intermingling of spatial environment and dancing bodies at the intersection of memory and imagination. It is in images that the space's embedded histories and the body's corporal memories merge. Like its space and its typical body, Carbone 14's images participate in the dynamic alternation between conservation and invention – transmitting cultural values and familiar national stories and, at the same time, inventing new ones in performance. Composed of spatial environments,

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[65] Bachelard, xvi.

choreographic sequences, and breathing bodies, their moving images memorialize the history of Québec's many and changing identificatory poles in visual language.

Vigeant writes that image theatre "often rests on cultural inscriptions of the past. Everywhere the theatre is materialization of a memory."[66] Analysis of the images provides answers to the important question of whose cultural inscriptions, whose memories, and which national stories does Carbone 14 resurrect? From the settings, bodily comportments, and "characters" outlined above, one might conclude that the cultural inscriptions and memories are solely those of a white, francophone québécois populace, or what some call "*québécois pure-laine*" (dyed-in-the-wool Québécois).[67] *Le Rail* depicts WWII era soldiers, evoking a fraught period when the Canadian federal government conscripted French-Canadian men into service, against the will of the Québec provincial government and the Québec people, as evidenced in the 1942 nationwide plebiscite on conscription.[68] *Le Dortoir* is set in a Catholic school dormitory

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[66] (. . . théâtre-image qui repose souvent sur des inscriptions culturelles du passé. Partout, le théâtre est matérialisation du souvenir.) Louise Vigeant, "Théâtre de la mémoire, mémoire du théâtre," *Jeu* 50 (March 1989): 200 – 205; here, 203.

[67] They descend from the habitants, the original French settlers, who carved out a life on the inhospitable northern-most territory of la Nouvelle France. In *pure-laine* or *québécois de souche* (Québécois born and bred) discourse, "true" Québécois are identified by blood-lines, mother-tongue (French), and religion (Catholic). My use of the gendered descriptor "mother-tongue" is intentional, as it is in *pure-laine* discourse where it links language-use to blood-line.

[68] This was, in fact, the second "conscription crisis" Québec history. Conscription had been imposed on Québec in 1917 and the army intervened to force the Québécois conscripts to go to war. Adding to Québécois frustration over conscription is that "the army was a means of Anglicizing Quebecers, and Francophone Quebecers were the first to be sent to the front lines during the war." Richard Desrosiers, quoted in Gougeon, 76 – 77. In dramatic literature, the conscription crisis is also referenced in *Tit-Coq* by Gratien Gélinas.

during the social and political upheaval of the Quiet Revolution. *La Forêt* depicts the *cabanes à sucre* and *coureurs de bois*, symbols of the *habitants* reliance on the land for sustenance, commerce, and trade. *Les Âmes mortes* incorporates all of these periods in its history of a house. Each of these examples references in their settings, characters, or themes flash-points in Québec's national narrative, from a territory of France, to its incarnation as "Lower Canada" under British colonial rule, through Confederation as a province, to modern clashes with the federal government. However, although many of the images are drawn from the *pure-laine* repertoire, they are not left unexamined or unmodified. While the images function as touchstones or *points de repère* for the evolutions of national identity in Québec, they also serve as leaping-off points for the creation of new images, of new identitarian permutations. Carbone 14 models this dynamic in presenting and re-presenting the basic images with which they begin over the course of the performance. Established and then transmuted in performance, Carbone 14's images of *québécité* are sculpted over and over again.

An elderly man with wiry, white hair sits at a small, wooden dining table center stage. A young girl of about 10 years old lies across its top. // A woman with a gas lamp crosses the stage, leaning into a strong wind. A man with a similar lamp follows. These habitants sit at the table, bow their heads in prayer, and begin to slurp the soup loudly from their bowls. // A young 1990s couple dressed in black sit across from each other at the table, arguing about their relationship in French, a bottle of wine between them. //

An anglophone, married, bourgeois couple from the mid-century sit at the table. She serves stew from a casserole in the middle of the table, extolling its virtues: "It's a great pot."

Les Âmes mortes

L'Hiver-Winterland provides the best example of Carbone 14's multivalent use of images and its reflection on national history. This "visual poem" employs familiar, even stereotypical, images symbolizing Québec, the most familiar of which was coined by Voltaire: "*Quelques arpents de neige*" (several acres of snow). This dismissive remark about the then-French colony opens *L'Hiver-Winterland,* appearing on the downstage scrim, flush with the proscenium line. However, the next set of projections explodes this image of Québec as an undifferentiated blanket of white. As reindeer shadow-puppets frolic across the scrims and *habitantes* work the land and grind wheat with mortar and pestle, dozens of Inuktitut words for "snow" are projected onto the front scrims.[69] Each is translated into French: "light snow," "sticky snow." Invoking the oft-overlooked pre-colonial "first nations" of Canada's indigenous peoples, and projecting the many ways of specifying that differences inherent in that which is most familiar, *L'Hiver-Winterland* begins its excavation of the many layers of *québécité*. The remainder of the performance

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[69] Inuktitut is the primary spoken and written language of Canada's Inuit population. The Nunavut government uses it, Inuinaktun, and English in their literature. Nunavut is the Inuit territory of 350,000 square-kilometers of land in the eastern Arctic established in April 1998. Nunavut, which means "our land," represents the settlement of the largest land claims agreement negotiated in Canadian history. http://www.tunngavik.com/site-eng/nti_role_in_the_development_of_t.htm

explores the variety of beings, attitudes, and expressions housed in and buried under those several acres of snow.

Following the Inuktitut renderings of "snow," a series of shadow-puppets representing indigenous Canadian animals float over the scrims – whales, fish, otters, rabbits, foxes, bison, polar bears, beavers, owls. The beaver, Canada's official national animal, is paired with a maple leaf, Canada's national symbol and used on the Canadian flag, on the stage-left scrim. A snowy owl is paired with the *fleur-de-lys*, a French heraldic emblem adapted as the symbol of Québec and used on the Québec flag, on the stage-right scrim.[70] From this point on, symbols associated Canada will be assigned to stage-left; those with Québec, to stage-right. This scenographic and choreographic dissection of the stage spatializes the land of winter's dualities, as outlined by Maheu in the program: "country of snow and of ice, country of yes and of no, country of north/south oppositions, country of 'shamans' and of priests, of whales and of moose, of solitude and of flags, of gold-diggers and of homeless people, of poetry and of lottery."[71] For instance, a *danseuse*, stage-left, and a *danseur*, stage-right, engage in a conversation. He asks questions in French about whether she likes different things, winter, ice, sand, the sea. She responds, alternating affirmative and negative responses in English. To his final question, "*Aimes-tu mon pays*?" (Do you love my country?), she responds "No." Reinforcing the divide, the image of a whale is projected on the stage-right scrim; that of

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[70] In 1948 Québec Premier Maurice Duplessis decreed by Order in Council that the fleur-de-lys would be the Québec flag.

[71] (pays de neige et de verglas, pays de oui et de non, pays d'oppositions nord/sud, pays de 'shamans' et de curés, de baleines et d'orignaux, de solitude et de drapeaux, de chercheurs d'or et de clochards, de poésie et de loterie.) *L'Hiver-Winterland* programme.

a crow is projected stage-left. Under the whale is the percentage of "oui" votes in the 1995 referendum (49.4%); under the crow is that of the "non" votes (50.6%). These projections fade and are replaced by two more divisive images: a *patriote* holding a rifle and the "FLQ" (*Front de libération du Québec*) is drawn on the stage-right scrim; a Mountie and the acronym "RCMP" (Royal Canadian Mounted Police) is drawn on the stage-left scrim. However, the binary story of Québec/Canada is interrupted by images referencing Inuit or First Nations peoples or activities. Unclassified, they extend over the full stage and their movement vocabularies are distributed across the whole corps of dancers.

The familiarity of the enacted and projected images elicits laughs of recognition from the audience. While the images are easily recognizable, they are also immediately identified with different moments in Québec's history. That the images of *québécité* are multiple and form a series indicates that identity symbols change over time and with the needs of the community. Lest the sequences be interpreted as solely an attempt to establish continuity among the different ways of representing Winterland, Carbone 14 introduces a parallel theme. The symbols' easy classification as either Québécois or Canadian, right or left, French or English, liberationist or colonialist is undermined by their exploration of illusion as it relates to identity. This theme is manifested in the narrative thread used to hold the web of images together and in the use of projections on scrim. The recurring narrative, recited in French at various points throughout the show, is the cautionary tale about the attractions and dangers of illusions — *la petite sirène* (the little mermaid). In the classic story, countless sailors succumb to the mermaids' siren-

songs which entice the men into the water and to their death. Not only are their songs misleading, so is their appearance. They look like women to the waist, below which they have fish-bodies. Significantly, an actor-dancer begins reciting the story right after the beaver/maple leaf and snowy owl/*fleur-de-lys* projections bisect the stage into Canadian and Québécois territories. Moreover, that these familiar identitarian images are projected on scrims underscores their construction and their evanescence. Images made of light and shadow, they appear and disappear without warning. The audience can see the shadow-puppets being manipulated by human hands. The *patriote* and the Mountie that appear on the scrim are drawn live on a backstage overhead projector. The audience sees their creation and, eventually, their erasure. The successive presentations of different images signifying Québec leaves open the possibility that more images will present themselves in the future, that the repertoire of *québécité* will not be limited to that which is already familiar.

Carbone 14 productions model this creative mixture between memory and imagination, familiar images and their new counterparts, in the manipulation of culturally significant objects on stage. Each Carbone 14 production employs a single object which transmutes into other kinds of objects in its use by the performers and its symbolic investments. (It is often the object with which spurred the troupe's early improvisations.) For example, in *Le Rail*, the railroad track on stage is first used as a means of transportation for railroad cars and their passengers. Later, it becomes a footpath to the travelers and, in the hands of the soldiers, a weapon. On a symbolic level, the railroad is a

symbol of Canada's conquest of its own vast space through modern technology.[72] In *Le Rail* it represents unresolved conflict and division. The single, exposed lightbulb which hangs from the ceiling in *Les Âmes mortes* functions literally as a light source and symbolically as a symbol of desire, constantly chased after by the *paysan* couples. For the little girl, it serves as a toy that she drags across the empty stage. To the young man in the throes of heroin detoxification, it is a swinging pendulum above his head, ticking away the passing seconds. From illumination to time-piece, the lightbulb acquires different meanings through its different functions in the play.

The most striking example of this kind of object-morphing is the iron beds in *Le Dortoir*. First and most strongly identified with the dormitory environment, they are institutional twin beds of utilitarian design. Only big enough for one person, they are to be slept in and rolled to the side during the day. In the opening scene, the bed is indeed used as a place to sleep: the man whose monologues frame the piece lies down on it to rest. Henceforth, however, the bed is used in "inappropriate" ways; the students extend its utility.

> *Twelve actor-dancers dance in unison around their beds, making it a place to play and dream instead of sleep. Grasping the headboard, they suspend their torsos and legs over the bed horizontally. They do split-jumps over the mattress, leaping slowly from one side to the other.*

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[72] English Canada's popular historian of the nation, Pierre Berton, mythologized the history of the railway as the ribbon that would unite a geographically disparate nation in *The Great Railway, 1871 – 1881* (Toronto: McClelland and Stuart, 1970). For a lucid deconstruction of this myth see Daniel Francis, "Making Tracks: The Myth of the CPR," in *National Dreams: Myth, Memory, and Canadian History* (Vancouver: Arsenal Pulp Press, 1997), 15 – 28.

Six beds are rolled into a horizontal line and upended so that their undersides are presented to the audience. Six students are forced up against the bed boards, their bodies outlined in chalk, as if corpses at a crime scene. Beds are transformed into a vertical sidewalk.

A danseur rolls one bed to center stage and spins it in a circle around him. Other students take turns jumping over it, sliding under it, riding on its end as it spins with increasing speed and force. The bed transmutes into playground whirl-around. Dancer-actors slip under the spinning bed, testing their athletic ability and good (or fortuitous) timing.

Upstage center, women stand in front of the remaining upended beds, one arm raised as if attached to the bed's foot. They twitch and moan as if being tortured; they are increasingly lifeless. The transparent bed boards reveal men self-flagellating.

Men wander the stage in a group. Mocking the women behind the window frames formed by the bed's underside, they throw coins at them.

Women fire handguns repeatedly and methodically toward the audience from behind firing range windows, again formed by the beds' undersides.

Downstage left, a boy and a girl are stretched out together on the same twin bed. They perform Act III, scene v of Roméo et Juliette, *awakening after their wedding night.*

Playground and frame, window and grave, the bed and what it means is divorced from its original environment. Imagining what different things the bed could be, the different ways the bed could be used, Carbone 14 extends its use-value beyond symbolic representative of a generation's boarding schools. The object most strongly identified with that milieu is the object which is most powerfully used against it. As was the case with the images of *québécité* employed in *L'Hiver-Winterland*, familiar cultural objects are de-familiarized as they are taken out of their usual context and used to meet different and varying needs.

Conclusion

"Theatrical tradition exalts the event. I believe in the object that lasts."

Gilles Maheu[73]

Despite the shared nomenclature and a common interest in tracing histories, Carbone 14 practices a different kind of dating work than that of carbon-14. Where carbon-dating's organizational pattern is time, Carbone 14's organizational pattern is space. Where carbon-dating's dating methodology is chronological Carbone 14's dating methodology is memorial.[74] Chronology's science of arranging time and ascertaining

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[73] (La tradition théâtrale exalte l'événement. Moi, je crois à l'objet qui dure . . .) Pavlovic, "Gilles Maheu," 18.

[74] Here I differ from Carbone 14's most assiduous chronicler, Diane Pavlovic, who writes, "A theatre that explores the more or less petrified layers of the world's memory, Carbone 14 enables us to date fragments, to determine the age of things." However, I do agree with her assertion that "Maheu's troupe tries to reactivate or recover

historical order is countered by memory's mental and corporal faculties of retaining and reviving impressions.[75] The former documents events, the latter re-members images. Where carbon-dating's goal is to pinpoint the moment of an organism's death, Carbone 14 is more interested in investigating what of the remains yet lives. Carbone 14's dancer-actors enact the elemental evidence of molecular life and death – carbon-14 and carbon-12, respectively. Acting as tracers, the performers illuminate the various paths these indicators have taken.

Writing of the paradox of tradition's position vis-à-vis group identity, historian Jean Du Berger writes, "On the one hand, tradition must assure the adaptation of social actors to the environment and, as a result, must be inventive, innovative, supple, creative; on the other hand, the processes which permit a group to define itself and to not dissolve also rest on tradition."[76] The overlap of memory and imagination in Carbone 14's performances binds past to present, *patrimoine* to modernization, "culture as heritage and culture as project."[77] In Carbone 14's imagistic and kinaesthetic investigations, it creates a space (the space of an image) in which cultural, collective memory might reside,

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the archaeological information contained within the human body." Pavlovic, "Gilles Maheu: Corps à Corps," 24.

[75] Definitions were adapted from the "history" and "memory" entries in *The Random House College Dictionary* rev. ed. (New York: Random House, 1988).

[76] (D'une part, [le dynamisme traditionnel] doit assurer l'adaptation des acteurs sociaux à l'environment et, à ce titre, être inventif, innovateur, souple, créateur; d'autre part, sur lui repose les processus qui permet à un group de se définir et de ne pas se dissoudre.) Jean du Berger, "Tradition et constitution d'une mémoire collective," in *La mémoire dans la culture*, ed. Jacques Mathieu (Québec and Ottawa: Les Presses de l'Université de Laval, 1995), 43 – 77; here, 72.

[77] (La mémoire établit des liens entre la culture comme héritage et la culture comme projet.) Jacques Mathieu, ed. *La mémoire dans la culture*, Back cover.

resurface and replay. By privileging the dancing body, its motor memory, and the visual images it creates, Carbone 14 performances rearticulate the relationships between history, document, and performance. They display a new means of conceptualizing québécois identity as less reliant on empirical evidence than on the ability to "enter into the memory of an image, to be imprinted by it."[78] As such, *québécité* is figured as multiple, elusive, and changing, personal and collective. Carbone 14 presents *québécité* as a created entity and a creative process, opening space in which other visions of that style, other models of nation-ness, might materialize.

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[78] (L'arret sur l'image permet au spectateur comme en photographie d'entrer dans la mémoire de l'image, d'en être imprimé.) Gilles Maheu, "laisser une empreinte, *Jeu* 50 (March 1989): 164 – 165.

Exporting *Québécité*:

Locating Québec in the Performances of the Cirque du Soleil

> But what exactly was this "reinvented circus"? Just what it said it was: A circus that came from nowhere but was looking for its roots. In the absence of any, it determined to create some.
>
> "The Quest," www.cirquedusoleil.com/en/odyss/quete.html

Within the past two years, Québec's most peripatetic and well-known performance troupe has set down institutional roots in its home province. In February 1997, the Cirque du Soleil inaugurated its new center of creation and production, "Le Studio," in a northeastern quartier of Montréal. However, as the epigraph above indicates, this troupe's relationship to its Québec location — and the significance of that location to its cultural product — is rather more fraught than its newly (re-)established roots might suggest. For the Cirque, the "nowhere" that is their Québec provides an empty space from which, *sui generis*, they create their own traditions and aesthetic forms: their "reinvented circus."

It is perhaps not surprising that the Cirque expresses its work's relationship to national territory in equivocal terms. After all, it is better known for its routes than its roots.[1] Since its inception in 1984, the Cirque's major products have been ambitious touring shows — *We Reinvent the Circus* (1987 – 89), *Nouvelle Expérience* (1990 – 1), *Saltimbanco* (1993), *Alegria* (1994-5), *Quidam* (1996 – 8), and *Dralion* (1999 – 2001). In light of its insistent touring, the Cirque's choice to institutionalize its Québec roots in a large-scale, multi-million dollar complex was not an obvious one.[2] The logistical requirements of global touring had already produced headquarters in Amsterdam (for the European tours) and Las Vegas (for the permanent casino installations) before the Montréal Studio was completed. It has since established a headquarters in Singapore for their Asia-Pacific tours and a business office in Tokyo. (Before the Studio's completion, the Cirque's creation and production sites were scattered throughout the greater Montréal area.)

As Paul Gilroy's work has shown, the tensions between the roots and the routes of cultural producers can result in unexpected creative forms, and even new

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Much of this chapter was conceived and written in conjunction with the writing of "States of Play: Locating Québec in the Performances of Robert Lepage, Ex Machina, and the Cirque du Soleil," *Theatre Journal* 51 (October 1999), co-written by myself and Jennifer Harvie. I would like to acknowledge Jennifer's significant contribution to these pages.

[1] The twinned concepts of roots and routes is drawn from Paul Gilroy's work in *The Black Atlantic* in which he defines "roots" as where one comes from/where one is situated, and "routes" as where one has traveled, how one got where one is.

[2] The Studio cost close to $40 million. http://www.cirquedusoleil.com/en/coulisse/index.html

models of national belonging. As mentioned in the Introduction, Gilroy posits a model of identity and the nation as deeply relational, modeled on antiphonal call and response patterns of black diaspora music. In the case of the Cirque – a globetrotting, Montréal-generated postmodern circus – the roots/routes tension has produced, in addition to their international headquarters, a variant on the circus form. Cirque du Soleil's hugely popular shows feature loose narrative structures, a live band playing music inspired by world music beats, and fantastically-costumed, masked performers demonstrating their technical mastery of the circus arts in a single ring big top. Its combination of a unified physical, musical, and visual vocabulary in a theatrical structure with strong directorial vision and an international repertoire of acts has resulted in what many celebrate as a new form of circus. For instance, Brian Dewhurst, the British-born artistic-director of *Saltimbanco* (1993), suggests that it is "a mixture of Broadway musical, opera, dance and circus." Arts critic Mattthew Gurewitsch recently wrote an extended comparison of Cirque shows and opera productions that favoured the Cirque. And *Dance Magazine* attributes the invention of the "medium of acrobatic dance-theater" to the Cirque via its longstanding choreographer, Debra Brown.[3]

The Cirque's successes have prompted successive Québec governments to embrace the company as "québécois," despite the Cirque's ambivalent relationship to the province. Federalist and *indépendentist*, Liberal and Parti Québécois, Québec governments have staked their claim on the Cirque.

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[3] Dewhurst quoted in Peter Freedman, "The greatest show on earth with a condom on?" *The Observer*, 17 December 1995, 11; Matthew Gurewitsch, "Lessons from a

employing financial and rhetorical means through funding structures and public relations efforts. Writing from and about Québec, Josette Féral comments on the nation's rhetorical efforts at recuperation: "[O]fficial discourses tend to identify geographical space with ideological space, claiming title to all theatre created in their territories, which becomes a source of national pride."[4] The Cirque questions the presumed contiguity of geographical and ideological space in the relationships it makes to its originary location and its tour sites as displayed in its organizational structure, the transnational networks in which it participates, and its performance codes. The Québec government's response to this dissociation of geography and national identity has been to use the Cirque's practices to buttress its own nationalist aspirations, incorporating their peregrinations into a revised definition of the place of Québec.

This chapter will show that in addition to creating a new theatrical form, the Cirque, like *Les Belles-Soeurs* and the works of Carbone 14, has produced an alternative model of national belonging. However, unlike the previous case-studies, the Cirque's model is not one that makes room for differential performances of *québécité*. In *Les Belles-Soeurs* the local dialect (*joual*) is evidence of the national (*québécité*); the Cirque du Soleil uses the national as "local colour," exporting *québécité* in a sales strategy aimed at seducing in the global marketplace. Carbone 14's image-based work figures shifting styles of

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Wagnerian Vegas," *The New York Times*, 12 December 1999, 41 and 46; Daniel Gesmer, "Ringmistress of Cirque du Soleil," *Dance Magazine* (July 1998): 50 – 52; here, 50.

Québec nation-ness across time: the Cirque's "reinvented circus" secures a single mode of *québécité* across space. Where *Les Belles-Soeurs* buttressed *le fait national* in its realistic form and its fantastical *québécité*, and Carbone 14 asserts *le fait national* in its deconstruction of that "fact" as an image, the Cirque du Soleil denies the necessity and value of that fact – whether proven or invented. Evidence of this denial lies in the Cirque's creation of what its marketing literature calls its "imagi-nation," a realm constructed as immaterial to socio-political processes or interests like nation-formation. Sequestered in the "imagi-nation," the Cirque reinscribes the ideology of the Kantian/Arnoldian aesthetic. It provides not a new imaginary but rather an updated version of an old one.

Anthropologist Marc Augé has written that the manipulation of space is one means to thinking "simultaneously about identity and relations," or what I have called here "roots and routes."[5] I contend that the Cirque's manipulation of space revises the idea of Québec's place as national. Instead, its space invokes a de-historicized and "geopathic" transnational sphere.[6] To examine this Cirque-space and its effects on Québec's place and on *québécité*, this chapter considers the following: how and why the Québec government invests in the Cirque as

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[4] Josette Féral, "There Are At Least Three Americas," trans. Shelley Tepperman and Gary Bowers, in *The Intercultural Performance Reader*, ed. Patrice Pavis (London and New York: Routledge, 1996), 51 – 58; here, 53.

[5] Marc Augé, *non-places: introduction to an anthroplogy of supermodernity*, trans. John Howe (London: Verso, 1995), 51.

[6] I take "geopathic" from Una Chaudhuri's reflection on modern drama's "characterization of place as problem" in *Staging Place: The Geography of Modern Drama* (Ann Arbor: University of Michigan Press, 1995). I will elaborate on how the Cirque and the transnational sphere evince their geopathology in the following section.

québécois; where the Cirque du Soleil is placed, both geographically and metaphorically, through its funding and in its fictions; where this company's placements in turn situate Québec, nationally and internationally; and what cultural and identitarian affiliations these placements and routes of funding produce. I will argue that in dissociating roots from national identity, the Cirque may avoid some of the atavism and isolationism sometimes associated with essentialist ethno-linguistic definitions of "québécois" identity. However, this dissociation produces other characteristics that might be equally or even more destructive, chief among them elitism and the assimilation of cultural difference.

Québécois Place

Between 1984 and 1994, the Cirque received an estimated five million dollars from federal and provincial government sources.[7] For their Studio, the Québec government granted the Cirque an additional $4.8 million, enshrining the Cirque in and as a "national" institution.[8] The monies were disbursed through the program of infrastructure work, indicating that the Studio's impact on Québec was presumed to be primarily economic — providing both short-term (construction) and long-term (administrative and artistic) jobs to Montréalers. In the urban web of Montréal, the Studio

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[7] Though not specified in the source-article, the $5 million presumably comprises both operations and touring grants. Louise Leduc, "Culture de l'image de la culture," *Le Devoir*, 30 November 1996, B1.

[8] "Le Cirque du Soleil profite du programme d'infrastructure," *Le Soleil*, 4 June 1994.

functions as the cornerstone project in a vast urban-renewal project concentrated in St-Michel. In the international arena, the Cirque provides an exemplary model for Québec of a successful enterprise able to derive national gain from the global marketplace. Awarding the 1997 prize for one of the fifty best run private companies in Canada, Québec's Minister-delegate of Industry and Commerce offered the Cirque and its fellow laureates as "proof that, in this new economy based on knowledge, innovation and openness to the world, Québécois companies are up to meeting the stimulating challenge of prosperity."[9] The Cirque also features as the representative québécois circus on the province's worldwide web homepage under the rubric "*La Vie culturelle québécoise*" (Québécois cultural life).[10] Cirque du Soleil's history of provincial funding and its use as a representative of Québec underscores the economic, political, and identitarian investments the Québec government has made in this self-designated "reinvented circus." While the capital and resources that Cirque du Soleil contributes to Québec's economy is fairly clear, its contributions to Québec's self-image and national imaginary is more obscure.

One of the reasons Québec governments have so readily invested in and identified with the Cirque might be that both institutions share an ambivalent relationship to the idea of territory defining a national or identitarian affiliation. The territorially-identified

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[9] (Vous [the recipients] êtes la preuve que, dans cette nouvelle économie, basée sur la connaissance, l'innovation et l'ouverture au monde, les entreprises québécoises sont en mesure de relever le défi stimulant de la prospérité.) Rita Dionne-Marsolais quoted in "Hommage aux 13 entreprises québécoises lauréates du concours des 50 entreprises privées les mieux gérées au Canada," www.newswire.ca/government/quebec/french/releases/February1997/25/c5262.html.

[10] "La Vie culturelle Québécoise," www.gouv.qc.ca/monde/culturef.html.

québécois identity arose out of a need to secure Lower Canada's status as one of two "founding nations" in the Dominion. As Annie Brisset notes, the very appellation "Québécois" "linked *territoriality* with the affirmation of collective identity."[11] The more expansive continental vision of *canayenité* that included francophones scattered all over North America could not provide the necessary political and economic backing that a government-supported *québécité* could. In other words, the territory of Québec was not the reason for the development of a québécois identity; the need for a politically and economically efficacious national identity required it be linked to the bounded territory of Québec. *Le fait national* has no necessary relationship to Québec as a landmass; there exists no territorial imperative.

Moreover, the Cirque and Québec both reveal the non-contiguity of geographical and ideological spaces: the Cirque in its global touring and multiple administrative outposts, and Québec in its status as a postcolonial proto-nation-state. Québec's geographical space is defined geopolitically as a province in the Dominion of Canada. Its ideological space is defined as a nation. As a result, the political and cultural status of Québec — as integral to Canada, as distinct within Canada, and/or as sovereign from Canada — is an ongoing subject of debate, both outside of and within Québec. In this context, the contiguity of Québec's geographical and ideological spaces are already contested; *le fait national* is revealed as fiction.

What is lost in these revelations of discontinuity between the geographical and ideological spaces of Québec – that there is no territorial imperative and that the national

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[11] Brisset, "When Translators of Theater Address the *Québécois* Nation," 63. Emphasis in original.

fact is a fiction – is Québec's purchase on national "entitivity." Suturing Québec's geographical and ideological spaces produces the Québec nation as a "thing" – a bounded entity with an origin, a set of characteristics, and possessions. What is at stake in Québec's "entitivity" is its claim to nation-state status and on cultural products emanating from its territory. As a thing, Québec can argue for its legitimacy as a nation-state; as a thing, Québec produces "québécois" cultural products. Most importantly, as a thing, Québec has roots, which can provide a counterbalance to the increasing importance of routes in the global economy

Since about 1960, québécois *indépendentists* have sought to "grow roots" for Québec by reconciling Québec's geopolitical and ideological states. They have tried to render the fiction of *le fait national* as fact in a number of ways. As discussed in the introduction of this project, within Québec, provincial leaders have bolstered a sense and practice of Québec's national status by maximizing its control over the policy sectors within provincial jurisdiction, including education, culture, and natural resources. Outside of Québec but within the Canadian federation, successive Québec governments have consistently sought constitutional recognition of the province's distinct cultural and linguistic status since at least the Quiet Revolution period.[12] However, it is outside of both Québec and Canada that Québec has most visibly succeeded in suturing geography and ideology: on the international circuit, Québec asserts the status of a quasi- (or proto-) nation-state. Québec has achieved this through implementing a form of "paradiplomacy," institutionalizing its powers in the

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international sphere, as granted by the Canadian federal government.[13] In the political sphere, the Québec government boasts representatives abroad in established foreign delegations. In the commercial sphere, it ratifies *ententes*, agreements which bind upon the province and a foreign government and pertain, for instance, to economic and cultural matters.[14] In the cultural sphere, Québec enacts affiliations to international peers through international cultural networks, particularly those traveled and provided by "its" cultural products and ambassadors (whether official or unofficial).

Former Culture and Communications Minister Beaudoin's two-pronged cultural policy advocates both global routes and national roots in the reconciliation of Québec's geographical and ideological spaces. Backing her diffusion mandate was, in 1997-98 for instance, a combined total of $1.5 million in grants disbursed by the Conseil des arts et des lettres du Québec to three areas of production: productions touring outside of Québec, international events (like the Festival de théâtre des Amériques), and foreign shows produced in Québec.[15] The Cirque has played important roles in Québec's commercial and cultural paradiplomactic efforts as one of the most recent beneficiaries of Québec's commercial diplomacy and one

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[12] For more information on the history of Canada's constitutional debates see, Jean-François Cardin, *History of the Canadian Constitution, from 1864 to the Present*, trans. Diana Halfpenny (Montréal: Global Vision, 1996).

[13] Jean-Philippe Thérien, Louis Bélanger and Guy Gosselin, "Québec: An Expanding Foreign Policy," in *Québec: State and Society*, 259 – 278; here, 260.

[14] Between 1964 and 1989, over 200 ententes were signed, over 60 percent with a sovereign state. Thérien *et al*, 262 – 3.

[15] www.calq.gouv.ca.qc/fr/pdf/bourses/orgthe97.pdf

of its most frequently employed cultural ambassadors. An *entente* valued at $1 million signed in November 1997 allowed the Cirque to open its Shanghai office.[16] The Cirque also features as the representative québécois circus on the province's worldwide web homepage under the rubric "*La Vie culturelle Québécoise*" (Québécois cultural life).[17]

The Québec government's willingness to claim this performance company as québécois indicates a new tactic for integrating Québec's geographical and ideological spaces. Québec will be both rooted and routed: it will secure its "entitivity" by marking its cultural possessions as "québécois" and then follow them on the routes of global commercial and cultural networks. In public statements and press releases, current and recent Québec governments glorify the Cirque's work as exemplary of both a uniquely québécois creativity and as a global commodity. For example, in a November 1997 press release from the Québec Ministry of Culture and Communications, Minister Louise Beaudoin was quoted as saying, "We ought to be proud of the successes Québec has known, like those that the Céline Dions, the Cirques du Soleil, and the Robert Lepages win on a global scale."[18] The definition of québécois, historically associated with the territory of Québec and, problematically,

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[16] "Mission Québec à Shanghai—Signature de onze contracts et ententes supplementaires pour des retombées directes de 63 million $ au Québec." www.newswire.ca/gouvernement/quebec/french/releases/November1997/11/c2242.html

[17] "La Vie culturelle Québécoise, " www.gouv.qc.ca/monde/culturef.html.

[18] (Nous nous devons d'être fiers des succès que le Québec y connaît comme de ceux que les Céline Dion, les Cirque du Soleil et les Robert Lepage remportent à l'échelle de la planète.) www.newswire.ca/government/quebec/french/releases/November1997/05/c0994.html.

sometimes limited to a white *francophonie*, is extended in its affiliation with the Cirque. Québec extends its geographical reach beyond Québec and enlarges its ideological parameters to include the characteristics it celebrates in the Cirque: harbinger of a "new economy" and being "pluralist, modern and open to the world."[19]

However, the new economy alluded to by the Minister of Industry and Commerce and in which the Cirque participates risks undermining the place from which Québec would be "open to the [rest of] the world." This new economy might be best characterized as "transnational," a global economic system that questions the notion of nation as à rooted thing and, hence, problematizes the nation's "place." Michel de Certeau defines "place" as "an order (of whatever kind) in accordance

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[19] In the press release announcing "La Saison du Québec en France" scheduled for Spring 1999, then-minister of Culture and Communications, Louise Beaudoin, said, "la Saison du Québec sera le reflet du Québec contemporain: une société québécoise pluraliste, moderne et ouverte sur le monde." (La Saison du Québec will be the reflection of contemporary Québec: a québécois society that is pluralist, modern and open to the world.) "Délégation générale du Québec — La Saison du Québec en France — Images de la modernité," www.newswire.ca/governement/quebec/french/releases/October1997/01/c0299.html. In the provincial government's first-ever white paper on the status of theatre in Québec entitled *Remettre l'art au monde*, Minister Beaudoin repeats this sentiment: "'Remettre l'art au monde' is the voluntary gesture of theatre and concert producers and distributers who, together, work to diversify and render ever more accessible the works of our creators who characterize us as a society and who recognize our openness to the world." ('Remettre l'art au monde', c'est le geste volontaire des producteurs et des diffuseurs de spectacles ou de concerts qui, ensemble, s'emploient à diversifier et à rendre toujours plus accessibles, sur le territoire, les oeuvres de nos créatures qui nous caractérisent comme sociéte et qui rendent compte de notre ouverture sur le monde.") Louise Beaudoin, "Mot de la Ministre de la culture et des communications," in *Remettre l'art au monde* (Québec, 1996), n.p. Given her perspective on Québécois identity, it is perhaps not surprising that in 1999 Beaudoin became the Minister of International Relations.

with which elements are distributed in relationships of coexistence."[20] Within traditional, western national ideologies, the national place would determine the relations of coexistence enjoyed by its constituent elements. For instance, the nation-state would determine who was, and if one could become, "national." National citizens would be enjoined to fully participate in national life; non-citizens would be given more limited and prescribed access to civic society. With a transnational economy, the need for national place is largely devalued.

In brief, transnationalism is a global economic system characterized by neo-liberal economic, political, and social policies that facilitate the free flow of capital across national borders. What most crucially distinguishes transnationalism from other taxonomies of economic culture, like internationalism, is its structure and its relationship to national territories.[21] The international economy is made up of multinational companies which manage economic exchange between nations from their corporate headquarters. Thus, its work can be seen as both identified with particular national territories and functioning on their behalf, as well as distinctly hierarchical, with the multinationals' headquarters dominating the other parts of their structures and benefiting most from their organizations' total work. The Québec government's assertions of its priority of "place" vis-à-vis the Cirque rest on an

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[20] Michel de Certeau, *The Practice of Everyday Life,* trans. Steven Rendall (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1988), 117.

[21] The international/transnational distinction which follows is culled from Pierre Veltz, "Mondialisation et territoires: une crise du futur," in *La Nation ébranlée: L'urgence de comprendre, Toulon, Orange, Marignane*, under the direction of Jean Viard (Chateauvallon: Éditions de l'aube, 1996), 113 – 126.

understanding of the Cirque's work as operating within an international economic sphere.

The geography of the transnational economy, on the other hand, is a network wherein exchange operates among corporate bodies rather than between nations thereby producing de-territorialized archipelagos of economic activity. Although the outposts of transnational corporations are of necessity located on national territories, the logic of the network eclipses that of the national territory — relationships of exchange are privileged over relationships of governance.[22] In establishing a new order of networked archipelagos of economic activity, transnationalism's most pervasive effect has been to diminish the boundary-function and the signifying power of national borders in economic, political, and cultural spheres. Transnational networks no longer presume a proprietary relationship between nations and "their" cultural products. By emphasizing the fact that cultures, like economies, often exceed the geographic borders of nation-states, transnationalism opens up the possibility of trans-national, extra-territorial cultural forms. By deconstructing the co-extension of national territory and national culture, transnationalism makes available new resources for the construction of new imagined communities.

On one hand, the ascendancy of transnationalism's order is advantageous to Québec's sense of national place: the diminished importance of nation-states to transnational economic networks opens the door to sub-national entities willing to

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[22] For more on the transnational archipelago and its prioritization of network over territory see: Olivier Dollfus, *La mondialisation* (Paris: Presses de la fondation nationale des sciences politiques, 1997), 25 – 33.

participate and able to contribute. Québec is welcomed on the global stage as a sovereign player within certain spheres of activity. Moreover, the symbolic importance of Québec being placed in the company of sovereign states reinforces its own sense of place as fully national. On the other hand, transnationalism's prioritization of the network over the specificities of individual territories threatens an already fragile sense of québécois place.

The Cirque performs within what is perhaps transnationalism's most important revision of place — its uncoupling of national culture from its most profoundly associated form: national territory.

Cirque Place

Where Québec struggles to capitalize on the national-transnational conflict, asserting its roots in the face of the increasing importance of routes, the Cirque du Soleil removes itself from the national-transnational dynamic altogether. In the ongoing competition for priority of place between the Québec nation and the transnational network, the Cirque has entered not as an ally of one or the other, but rather as another contestant. Taking what it needs from the geographical and ideological spaces associated with the national and the transnational, the Cirque accomplishes what Québec cannot: it generates its own geographically and ideologically coherent space. The rooted "nation" to which Cirque du Soleil claims

allegiance is the one it produces — their non-territorial "realm of imagination,"[23] populated by an international cast of performers and financed by sell-out crowds and corporate investment. It is this new bounded entity — the "imagi-nation" — that the Cirque creates for itself and for its audiences each time it produces and tours a new show.

From the national sphere, the Cirque has derived an agreeable location for its headquarters, an incentive to innovate and expand, and a vague but marketable sense of difference. The financial and production benefits of headquartering in Montréal are apparent: money for construction, unification of the Cirque's artistic team under one roof, and consolidation of all production activities. The artistic benefits are less clear. According to artistic director Gilles Ste-Croix, Québec's influence on the Cirque's innovative artistry is limited to the challenges to expansion the Québec market posed. "In Québec," he explains, "the artistic community is obliged to try something new because the market is small." The Cirque's "québécois spirit" is evinced in its "audacity and ability to change, to call into question."[24] In an article dedicated to exploring the "cultural specificity of the Cirque du Soleil," the Cirque-designated producer for the 1993 US tour of *Saltimbanco*, Benoît Jodoin, attributes its artistic and commercial success to

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[23] Véronique Vial and Hélène Dufresne, eds. *Cirque du Soleil*, with the collaboration of Marie Beauchamp, Thérèse Mondor and Richard Coté (Montréal: Productions du Cirque du Soleil, 1993): 24.

[24] (Au Québec, la communauté artistique est obligée de se renouveler parce que le marché est petit. . . . Selon le directeur artistique, l'esprit "québécois" du Cirque du Soleil tient aussi à sa dimension communautaire, à son audace et à sa faculté de changer, de se remettre en question.) Quoted in Marie Labreque, "Alegría: Le rayon vert," *Voir* 8:21 (21 April 1994): 30.

"remain[ing] faithful to [it]self while opening [its] horizons." He continues, "We have always remained very determined to protect our identity. We have kept our name and are still called 'Le Cirque du Soleil' and not 'The Circus of the Sun.' Also, we always begin the show in French, here [in Los Angeles] as in Toronto or in London."[25] In the flux of the Cirque's transnational movement and elaborate funding structures, however, the specificity of that identity seems increasingly embattled.[26] That the Cirque's québécois identity rests on a name that does not reference Québec and the ten French words announced over loudspeakers at the beginning of each performance – "*Bonsoir, mesdames et messieurs, et bienvenue au Cirque du Soleil*" – is ample evidence of its diminution. Nevertheless, that Jodoin and the Cirque organization insist on retaining that identity, however tenuous, and to the point of adopting a defensive posture regarding their québécois credentials, indicates its use-value to their artistic/commercial project.

If the national sphere provides a comfortable resting place from which the Cirque can create, the transnational sphere provides the Cirque with its more dynamic elements: its inspiration, performers, some production finances, and

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[25] (S'il [the Cirque] connaît un succès boeuf, autant au plan commercial qu'artistique, "c'est parce que nous avons su rester fidèles à nous-mêmes tout en ouvrant nos horizons", explique Benoît Jodoin. . . . "D'ailleurs, on a gardé notre nom et on s'appelle toujours 'Le Cirque du Soleil' et non pas 'The Circus of the Sun'. Puis, on commence toujours le spectacle en français, ici [in Los Angeles], comme à Toronto ou à Londres.") Jodoin in André Guimond, "Le Cirque du Soleil charme Los Angeles 'à la québécoise'," *Le Soleil*, 4 January 1993, A10.

[26] Its tours have been sponsored by AT&T, English rock-promoter Harvey Goldsmith, Disney, Mirage Resorts, and German impresarios Dr Peter and Isolde Kottmaïr.

corporate structure. The cultural product innovated and distributed by the Cirque du Soleil is indebted to, even dependent on, transnational flows of capital, labour, and meanings. In the words of Jodoin, "The Cirque could not have been born elsewhere [than Québec] but it could not live only in Québec. We went elsewhere for inspiration."[27] Repeating the Cirque's promotional copy used in the epigraph to this chapter regarding its lack of roots, composer René Dupéré said, "We were not obligated to respect a tradition because there is no circus tradition in Québec."[28] Freed from the constraints of tradition associated with location, the Cirque can claim originality – both in the sense of being primary and in the sense of being unique. The Cirque has grown its own "roots," independent of Québec.

The transnational sphere with its diminished restrictions on the movements of labour increasingly provides the Cirque's performers. They are drawn from all over the world, recruited in almost constant audition-sessions held by the Cirque and at international circus festivals. Early Cirque productions like *We Reinvent the Circus* and *Nouvelle Expérience* counted on graduates of Montréal's École du Cirque (Circus School) and Québec-based talent to perform their numbers. Since then, and with their growing box-office profits, the Cirque has been able to outfit its productions with casts of international circus professionals. *Quidam*, for instance, boasts Slav acrobats, Russian hand-balancers, Chinese jugglers, québécois

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[27] (Le Cirque n'aurait pas pu naître ailleurs mais n'aurait pas pu vivre seulement au Québec. On est allé s'inspirer ailleurs.) Jodoin in Guimond, A10.

[28] (Nous ne sommes pas tenus de respecter une tradition, puisqu'il n'y a pas de tradition de cirque au Québec.) Quoted in Alain Brunet, "Alegria en tête du palmarès 'World Music' de Billboard: René Dupéré se taille son propre succès avec le musique du Cirque du soleil," *La Presse*, 10 December 1994, D3.

aerialists, and a Belgian director. The Cirque organization employs over 1,200 people representing 17 nationalities and 13 languages.[29]

Drawing on the national for its "authentic" marketing appeal and the transnational for its resources and distribution routes, the Cirque du Soleil endeavours to articulate its own place. In addition to growing its own roots by claiming its originality, the Cirque also establishes its place by capitalizing on the platial uncertainty of the travelling circus. As a travelling circus,[30] the Cirque du Soleil negotiates a complex relationship to place: complex not only because its production/reception sites change with each new leg of the tour, but also because, like most circuses, the Cirque brings its own place with it. U.S. circus historians Hoh and Rough argue that the first modern use of the word "circus" by the English Charles Dibdin for his Royal Circus in 1782 described the *place* in which the equestrian entertainment was held. They write, "it is more likely that Dibdin chose the name because 'circus' was a term in common usage for describing a place for riding horses around a circular path."[31] Thus, the place of travelling circus performance is double from the outset. Circuses at once establish their own locale (the big top and its attendant trailers, formerly the place to ride horses around a

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[29] Gillian Flynn, "The Big Top Needs Big HR," *Workforce* (August, 1997): 38 – 45; here 39.

[30] The Cirque has recently installed several permanent installations in the United States. I will discuss these and their relationship to notions of national and transnational place in the Cirque's work later in this chapter.

[31] LaVahn G. Hoh and William H. Rough, *Step Right Up! The Adventure of Circus in America* (Whitehall, VA: Betterway Publications, 1990), 44.

circular path) and participate in the social and cultural meanings of the site on which they rest.

Circus historian Paul Bouissac notes that the circus "is not only a range of feats of strength and skill, displayed in front of an audience, but also an experience of space. The circus first takes over a piece of civil land, fences out the city, [and] sets up its own inner geography, with reserved areas, prescribed itineraries, taboo *loci*."[32] When the Cirque arrives in Chicago, for instance, it pitches its tent in the United Center parking lot, fences out the city, cordons off its trailers behind the big top, and organizes audience pathways — from the ticket kiosk through two entry tents filled with Cirque du Soleil paraphernalia into the performance area. The results of these spatial manipulations are two-fold: first, circus-space is distinguished from city-space ("fences out the city") as the circus defines the borders of a zone dedicated to its own performance uses. Second, the circus establishes its own place ("sets up its own inner geography"). In this case, the circus "place" is the spatial order that organizes relationships of coexistence (through its reserved areas and prescribed pathways) within the boundaries of the circus-space (the zone reserved for circus use).

The Cirque du Soleil's handling of space while on tour does not substantially differ from the practices outlined by Bouissac. According to Ernest Albrecht, Cirque touring productions have a particular spatial order which is replicated at every performance site. Upon arrival at its performance destination, the Cirque paves the

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[32] Paul Bouissac, "The Circus's New Golden Age," *Canadian Theatre Review* 58 (Spring 1989): 5 – 10; here, 7.

area around its big top as well as the backstage area and then encloses the whole area with a fence. In front of the big top is a stand-alone, raised ticket booth with eleven windows. Directly behind the big top another tent is used as the performers' Green Room. Dressing room trailers radiate out from the Green Room. They, in turn, are surrounded by an array of trailers serving various needs: two provide showers, toilets and a coin-operated laundry; four "stateroom" trailers provide on-site accommodation for members of the technical crew; six additional trailers house technical staff. (Performers stay in local hotels.)[33] Like a traditional circus, the Cirque's manipulates public space into private/commercial space for the duration of its stay. It creates its own local(e).

However, the Cirque distinguishes itself from both its historical circus antecedents and its new-circus contemporaries in its particular manipulation of space into Cirque-place. In the Cirque's overzealous dissociation of its product from any and all places, the circus form's platial uncertainty, on which the Cirque capitalizes, becomes a "geopathology." Any place (or indicator thereof) that is not Cirque-place is positioned as a "problem" by the Cirque. The Cirque's geopathology is most evident in the assimilative relationship it makes to its touring locations and in the construction of its world as unlocatable and other-worldly via its performance codes.

When the Cirque must encounter particular local(e)s while on tour, it chooses its performance sites assimilable to their brand's characteristics: the sites are either associated with surpassing boundaries – particularly national boundaries – or with

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[33] Ernest Albrecht, *The New American Circus* (Gainesville: University Press of Florida, 1995), 94 – 5.

great moments in history which lead to something new. The Cirque's crossroads of choice tend to be ports — sites where the local and the global meet and exchange and that are increasingly visible in the transnational economy. Their home performance complex in Montréal is at the Vieux Port (Old Port).[34] (See Figure 5) In Toronto they perform at Harbourfront, a recently developed up-market commercial port on Lake Ontario which features performance venues, restaurants, shops, a skating rink, and condominiums. In New York City they pitch their tent on the water at Battery Park City — another recreational/commercial development next to one of the centers of international finance, Wall Street. In each of these examples, the Cirque situates itself at the sites associated with global movements of ships, people, and capital.

In landlocked cities like Berlin and Paris, they perform near sites of historical significance which reference a history of cultural contact via falling borders and/or the transition from one kind of régime and world-view to another. For instance, in 1995, *Alegria* was mounted in Berlin's Potzdammer Platz, the site of two different political transitions. Prior to World War II, Potzdammer Platz was "the bustling center of a metropolis." After devastating wartime bombing and the division of Berlin into West and East, the area was a wasteland and a contested border region. Since the dismantling of the Berlin Wall in 1989, the Platz has been bought by

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[34] With Dralion (1999-2001), the Cirque will relocate its Montréal big-top to the grounds of the Studio. In a telephone call on 25 March, 1999, Caroline Proulx of the Cirque's marketing department explained that not only is it good for the Cirque to consolidate its activities in one place but that the move will also save the organization money (presumably in city permits and site rental fees).

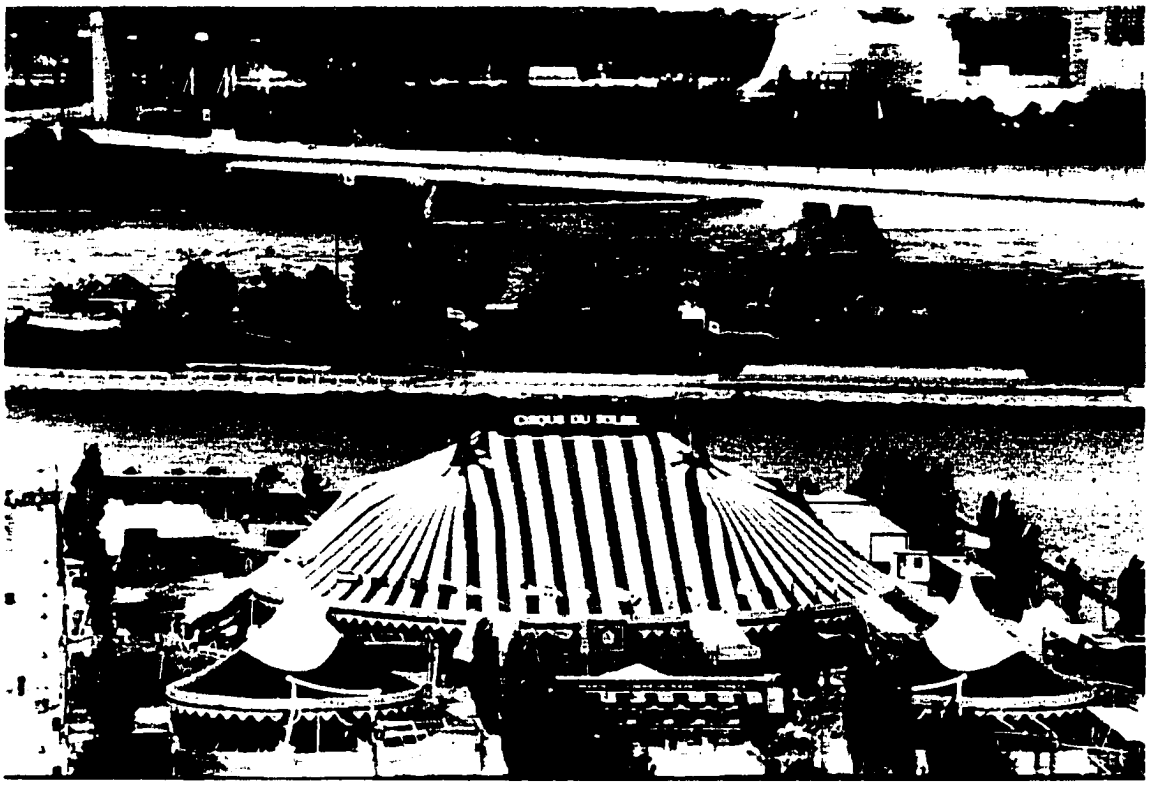

Figure 5: The big top at Montréal's Vieux Port. Photo: Eric Piché. Reprinted with permission.

commercial investors interested in developing it as a tourist haven.[35] Site of first a capital city then the dissolution of that city's nation-state, then of that nation-state's reunification and subsequent commercialization, Potzdammer Platz fits perfectly into the Cirque's ideological territory.

The Cirque's negotiations with the City of Paris for an appropriate performance location for their recent European tour are equally revealing of the Cirque's control over its territorial image. The Cirque's directorship wanted to perform at either the Parc de la Villette or on the Champ-de-Mars. (The Champ-de-Mars is one of Paris's historic royal-entry-ways, a military parade-ground, and the site of DeGaulle's return to Paris upon its liberation from the Nazis at the end of World War II.) When those sites were not

available the directorship specifically requested a site at the foot of the Eiffel Tower — meeting ground of international tourists and the symbol of modern progress in industry and steel construction at the 1901 World's Fair and International Exposition. When offered instead a spot in the Bois du Boulogne located on the western edge of the city and associated with the *ancien régime*, the Cirque's directorship balked, asserting that the site was neither prestigious nor sufficiently well-known. Speaking of the negotiations, the Cirque's director of marketing, Jean Héon, exclaimed: "We want a meaningful site!"[36]

The nature of their preferred sites reveals the kind of meanings the Cirque du Soleil is interested in associating itself with and integrating into its Cirque-place — those associated with transition moments in a progressivist model of modern Western history. The sites of Cirque performances are used to further the world of the Cirque. In the creation of its own world, the Cirque organization colonizes the spaces it enters – territorial and virtual – and assimilates it to its own corporate ideology. It "brands" its geographical space, producing a place that is consistent, recognizably theirs, replicable, and saleable all over the world.[37]

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[35] Roberto Rossi, "Times Square and Potzdammer Platz: Packaging Development as Tourism," *The Drama Review* 42:1 (Spring 1998): 43 – 48.

[36] (On veut un terrain qui ait une signification!) Quoted in Christian Rioux, "Le Cirque du Soleil sur le bunker de Hitler," *Le Devoir*, 2 August 1995, A1.

[37] Nonetheless, it is important to note two contributions Cirque du Soleil's transnationalism has permitted or produced in the cultural sphere. First, in collaboration primarily with Jeunesse du Monde (a pan-Canadian, non-governmental organization), and Oxfam-Québec, Cirque du Soleil combines its circus expertise, transnational coverage, and a small portion of its income to contribute to a programme which runs circus-skills workshops for youth on the streets around the world. In 1997, workshops were held in Europe, North America, and South America. "Currently," claims an 18 September 1997, Cirque web page update, "1% of potential box office incomes is earmarked for philanthropic activities, including the Cirque du Monde program." What

Commenting on the extensiveness of the Cirque's enterprises, journalist Marie Labrecque writes in *Voir*: "The sun doesn't set on the Cirque's empire."[38] With its far-flung headquarters, multiple companies, and near-constant touring, the Cirque's "location" is increasingly difficult to discern. The corporation's anticipated decentralization over the next year will further obscure its sense of place.[39] The Cirque organization's sheer size and financial resources and its product's global coverage, successful commercialization, and brand recognition enables its branding of other spaces into Cirque-spaces. These features combine to produce an experience of space markedly different from that provided by other circuses.

The Cirque has expanded to such a degree that it is able to carve out its circus-space, distinguishing itself from its surrounds, on multiple (local) sites simultaneously. For instance, in the spring of 1998, the Cirque had four shows running simultaneously over three continents — *Quidam* was touring North America; *Mystère* was based at the Treasure Island Casino in Las Vegas; *Saltimbanco* was touring Europe; and *Alegría* was touring Japan. Since then, *Dralion* has begun a North American tour and two additional Cirque permanent installations have opened: *O* is playing Las Vegas at Steve Wynn's

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this statement does not address is the ways Cirque du Soleil benefits through participation in this program (for instance, through tax breaks), nor the larger issues of who decides who should benefit and how from philanthropic money "earmarked" for social development, governments being perhaps a more obvious or, at least apparently, democratic answer than transnational corporations.

[38] ([L]e soleil ne se couche pas sur l'empire du Cirque.) Labreque, 30.

[39] "The biggest project on HR's plate for the upcoming year is continued decentralization. This year, for instance,the company hired an HR person to head up Las Vegas operations." Flynn, 44.

new Bellagio casino; *La Nouba* resides in Walt Disney World in Orlando.[40] Nor is its rapidly expanding empire limited to its live performances. At the same time as Cirque troupes are performing live around the globe, its space exists on video and audio recordings and on the Internet in the form of its award-winning web-site (www.cirquedusoleil.com). Its entry-page invites surfers to choose French, English, or German routes through its piece of cyberspace. The Cirque's simultaneous multiple locations extend the Cirque-space beyond the confines of any one blue and yellow big top. The Cirque's capacity for expanding its geographical space has also been criticized, prompting some critics to nickname it the "McDonalds of circuses."[41] The proliferation of Cirque-local(e)s across the globe, autonomous archipelagos of cultural commerce, renders the Cirque's colonizing of national spaces for its branding purposes transnational.

But what is the Cirque's brand, the characteristics of the "imagi-nation" to which all performance sites must assimilate? The Cirque's geopathology is such that it characterizes its self-contained world as "unearthly." Voided of any geographical space – like the "nowhere" that is Québec in their marketing literature – the Cirque's official, ten-year anniversary book describes its ideological space as dedicated to surpassing limits of all kinds.

> [The artists] are dedicated to the creation of an unearthly world, a world of spirit forces that defy the limits of physical reality. Their goal is to go beyond the confines of the ordinary and provide, in that ritual circle of the circus ring, a brief collision with dazzling feats that

[40] *O* opened in November, 1998; *La Nouba*, in December, 1998.

> so utterly overturn one's expectations of the possible . . . as to project us into the intense and liberating realm of the imagination.[42]

The conditions for entry into Cirque-space as a performer are thus clear: one must divest oneself of any and all trappings of other spaces and fully embody the other-worldly aesthetic of the Cirque. This "other-worldly" geography characterized by surpassing limits, the powers of the human body, and liberation is constructed in the shows' performance codes.

Each element of performance is either fantastic and hence a sign of the Cirque's "land of imagination" or a composite of nearly recognizable features of different cultures. Its performances revolve around acts demonstrating superhuman strength, bird- or lizard-like agility, or technical skill. For example, brothers Marco and Paulo Lorador first performed their hand-balancing act for the Cirque in *Saltimbanco*. (They are now *Mystère's* "two Portuguese musclemen."[43] See Figure 6) Dressed in white, ribbed, "muscleman" outfits, the brothers perform series of sustained hand-balancing positions incorporating hand-to-hand, hand-to foot, and, in one sequence, hand-to-head poses which demonstrate not only their visible strength but also their flexibility. Also performing in *Saltimbanco* were a Russian

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[41] Among those critics is Archaos' founder, Pierrot Bidon. Quoted in Brian Johnson, "Cirque du Success," *Macleans*, 28 July 1998, 36 – 43; here, 40.

[42] (Ils [les artistes] se consacrent à l'invention d'un monde extra-terrestre, un monde de forces spirituelles qui défient les limites de la réalité. Leur but est d'aller au-delà de l'ordinaire pour fournir, dans le cercle rituel de la piste, un choc rapide de prouesses éblouissantes qui bouleversent totalement les attentes du possible, exploits d'une audace telle, d'un raffinement tel ou mascarade burlesque, qu'ils nous projettent dans le domaine libre et intense de l'imagination.) Vial and Dufresne, 24.

[43] Brian Johnson, 41.

contortionist trio (one woman, one man, and one female child) whose act was to interweave the three bodies into increasingly intricate patterns. In acts like those of the Loradors or the Russian Tchelnokovs, the Cirque constructs itself as a "world" peopled by Superhumans and not-quite-mortals. Picking up on the Cirque's performative emphasis, journalists commonly employ descriptors like "fairly-like," or even "extra-terrestrial," in articles on the Cirque.[44] Defying the Québec

Figure 6: Marco and Paulo Lorador perform their hand-balancing act in *Mystère*. Reprinted with permission. Photo: Al Seib.

[44] See, for example, Viviane Roy, "Le monde féerique au Cirque du Soleil," *La Presse*, 27 April 1994, D1; Clive Hirschhorn, *Sunday Express*, 14 January, 1996, and Benedict Nightingale, *The Times* 8 January, 1996, both reprinted in *Theatre Record*, 1 – 14 January, 1996, 22 and 23 respectively.

government's hopes, the Cirque is not recognized abroad as Québécois, but rather as a land unto itself. Its super-space exceeds the national.

Building on their performers' supernatural qualities, the Cirque generally outfits its fantastical citizens in one of two ways: in revealing lycra bodysuits or in elaborate, carapace-like costumes. Strength and agility acts like the strongmen, trapeze artists, and contortionists are costumed in lycra. To be sure, this costuming choice is dictated at least in part by the range of motion required by such circus acts. In these acts, the "perfection" of the human form as exemplified by athletes or dancers is highlighted. Acts which require less freedom of movement like clowns, floor acrobats/tumblers and the band are the more imaginatively costumed performers. These performers' bodies commonly appear distended in encrusted layers of costume, makeup and, often, masks. For example, *Mystère*'s tumblers are catapulted through the air from the ends of seesaws wearing long-sleeved, full-leg, silver outfits padded around the middle to create the effect of large bellies. In addition, they wear identical skull caps attached to demi-masks over heavily made-up faces. *Mystère*'s ball-walkers present a similarly bulbous physique.

Although the aesthetic of these two kinds of costumes is quite different, the cumulative effect of both costuming choices is remarkably unified. Both occult individuating characteristics of the performers: lycra bodysuits by focussing the spectator's attention on the body's "typicality" (in the Platonic sense of the word) and distorting costumes by representing the body as something other than human. In both cases, the Cirque's "world" — dedicated to surpassing limits of all kinds — is upheld.

Although the troupes are composed of international artists with their own specialties, the shocks of these cultural differences — in expression, skills, technique, language, physique, and so on — are all but effaced in production not only in costuming but also in performance format. In breach of standard circus procedure, neither acts nor performers are introduced by a Master of Ceremonies. There are no visual or audio pauses between acts: artists' entrances and exits are choreographed into transition acts performed by tumblers or clowns; the band plays continuously. Since *Alegría*, the Cirque's production programs represent the acts in photographs without captions; to find out who the performers are or where they are from requires turning to the bio pages at the end of the program. The Cirque's press attachée Jennifer Dunne explains, "It's the show that's the star. That's why we don't announce the numbers. Everyone works together."[45] Cirque du Soleil's world is one in which citizens of various cultures, nations, and communities happily coexist, united in the anonymous work of producing pleasure and innovating new theatrical form. Instead of taking advantage of the differences afforded by the traditional circus narrative — structured around a series of isolated and unrelated turns — Cirque's precisely choreographed and fully sound-tracked spectacle has, in the words of one critic, "tamed performers into units in a seamlessly beautiful ensemble spectacle."[46]

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[45] (La vedette, c'est le spectacle. C'est pour ça qu'on n'annonce pas les numéros. Tout le monde travaille ensemble.) Quoted in Louise Lemieux, "Le Cirque du Soleil: Briller toujours et plus," *Le Soleil*, 4 June 1994.

[46] Gerry Cottle, "But Where's the Danger?" *Guardian*, 20 December 1995, 10.

The acts are deterritorialized from their originary location and then reterritorialized firmly within the logic of Cirque du Soleil's unified production aesthetic.

One of the more revealing examples of the integration and unification of differences into the Cirque's conceptual scheme is its musical language — a mix of indistinguishable romance languages set to "world music" beats. Scoring the show in its entirety is one of the Cirque's artistic innovations. Until *Quidam*, the Cirque relied on composer René Dupéré and his band "La Fanfonie" to help set the tone of each act and sketch the story of the show as a whole. (Benoît Jutras has since taken on this role.) Dupéré cultivated a world music style and developed a sung language unique to circus performance. The *Saltimbanco* score reflects the ascendancy of "New Age" music on international pop charts in the early 1990s. *Alegría* incorporates elements of French *chanson* and German cabaret. Continuing in his predecessor's tradition, Jutras' score for *O* plumbs musical styles from farther east incorporating North African, Indian and Eastern European inflections.

Consistent with the Cirque's expressed ideology, both composers' music focuses resolutely on the human voice and its expressive capacity. Singers employ a full-throated vocalization not unlike that of groups like the Bulgarian women's choir or Kitka. Regardless of the musical style being evoked, the vocal sound created is open, clear, direct and loud. It is also usually a mezzo-soprano or contralto sound. Indeed, *Quidam*'s is the first score to be sung by a man. Describing the intent and effect of Dupéré's score to *Alegría*, journalist Alain Brunet writes, "[T]he human voice is celebrated [in his music] at each moment; in this sense, Dupéré's music

embraces the whole spectrum of emotions from the surprise awakened by [the voice's] instrumental prowess to the warmth emanating from the body."[47]

Also consistent with the Cirque's interest in building and maintaining its own trademarked place, the singers sing in a unique language created for the Cirque by its composers. Striving for "universality" of address, the Cirque's composers have structured their language as much around singers' vocal requirements as stylistic demands. Less sing-able consonants (like the French "r," for instance) are kept to a minimum. The emphasis is on elongated vowel sounds; these allow for vocal colouration and they carry better. The language and its performance by Cirque singers is mostly strongly reminiscent of vocalization exercises — sung solely on clear, diphthong-less, generally Italian vowels.[48] Evocative of various Romance languages yet entirely devoid of semantic meaning, the Cirque's sung language, like their musical style, is of everywhere and nowhere at once.

While the nubile citizens of the Cirque's land of imagination circumvent the limits of the physical body (or, indeed, the human), the performance apparatuses developed by the Cirque facilitate the performers' circumvention of the territorial boundaries imposed by the natural world. Over the past four years, Cirque shows have incorporated the ecological signs that often mark geographical boundaries of terrestrial communities: earth, air, and water. In *Alegría*, performers conquered

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[47] ([L]a voix humaine y est célébrée à tous les instants; la musique de Dupéré embrasse, en ce sens, tout le spectre émotionnel, de la surprise suscitée par la prouesse instrumentale à la chaleur émanant des corps.) Brunet, D3.

[48] See, for example, the score of *Saltimbanco* (Mont-Saint-Hilaire, Qc: Publications Chant de mon pays, Inc. 1993).

"earth" with the help of hydraulic lifts, trap doors, and moving-sidewalk-like trampolines. The technology of *Quidam* allows performers to take over the "air" as well. An aerial conveyor (dubbed "*téléférique*" or "fairy-conveyor" by the Cirque's technical crew) traverses almost the entire length of the tent and flies performers, set pieces, and equipment above and across the ring.[49] (See Figure 7) Aerial entrances and acts dominate *Quidam*. Most recently, the Cirque has extended its world into water. *O* — its title simultaneously an exclamation and a homonym for the French word for "water" — is a permanent show performed in and above a 1.5 million-gallon tank of water at the Bellagio Casino in Las Vegas.[50] (See Figure 8) As the performers erase their own national placements and exceed the bounds of the human, the performance technology moves in that same direction, obliterating geographical constraints on free movement like bodies of water or obstructing landmasses.

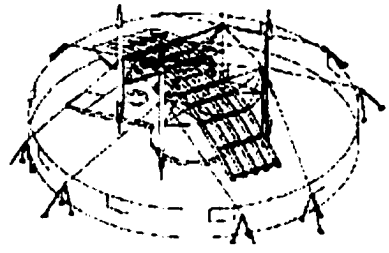

Figure 7: *Quidam*'s grid. Reprinted with permission from www.cirquedusoleil.com.

The irony of *O* is that in order to demonstrate the inability of bodies of water to restrict Cirque-citizens' movements, the Cirque must build a permanent performance space. Nonetheless, the Cirque is as choosy in where they build their

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[49] David Johnson, "Cirque du Soleil's *Quidam*," *TCI* (October 1996): 31 – 33; here, 33.

[50] Ellen Lampert-Gréaux, "Ciao Bellagio," *TCI* (November 1997): 28 – 29; here, 28.

permanent installations as they are in where they pitch their tents on tour. Additional evidence of the Cirque's geopathology, so far it has established permanently located in the "nowheres" of Las Vegas and Disney World. In these simulated environments created to entice significant expenditures of money, the Cirque's realm of the imagination fits right in.

The well-being of the Cirque's realm depends substantially on the significant expenditures of money of its patrons. It is the well-financed and well-managed

Figure 8: The *O* theatre at Bellagio in Las Vegas. Reprinted by permission. Photo: Véronique Vial.

corporate side of the Cirque that enables it to operate as a circus "empire" and to continue to extend its reach.[51] An adult ticket for *Quidam* on its North American tour ranges from US$20.25 to US$46.25; an adult ticket to their Las Vegas show, *Mystère*, is US$69.85.[52] These high ticket prices are a sign of the Cirque's popularity; if people were not clamouring to see Cirque shows, the Cirque organization would not be able to command such high ticket prices. In a recent article on the Cirque's profitability in *Forbes* magazine, the author revealed that the Cirque sells an astonishing 97 percent of its house at every performance; break-even is 65 percent.[53] The high ticket prices are also a sign of the limits of the Cirque's putatively limitless imagination. The conditions for entry into Cirque-space as a consumer are clear: you must be able to afford the ticket price.

The Cirque has tapped a hitherto untapped upscale circus market who can indeed afford the ticket price. A 1990 demographic study of Cirque performance attendees conducted by Impact Recherche shows that a majority of Cirque consumers own their own place of residence, are between 25 and 45-year-old college/university graduates with an annual income of at least US$35,000. When asked to rate the quality of their Cirque experience to the ticket price exacted, the

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[51] In August, 1997, Cirque du Soleil, Inc. was awarded *Workforce* Magazine's Optimas Award in the "Global Outlook" category for its Human Resources department "that has created a program or strategy to help the company succeed in the world marketplace." Flynn, 44.

[52] Ticket prices taken from "Quidam" www.cirquedusoleil.com/en/ticket/quidam/atlanta.html and "Mystère in Las Vegas" www.cirquedusoleil.com/en/ticket/mystere/lasvegas.html

[53] Nina Munk, "A High-Wire Act," *Forbes*, 22 September 1997, 192 – 3; here, 192.

overwhelming majority of respondents put the ratio between 83 and 95%.[54] With approximately 32 percent of revenues left over as profit, the Cirque's expansion over the past two years has been phenomenal. It has grown from a one-time "fête forain" (fun fair) in Baie-Saint-Paul to what Ste-Croix tellingly calls "a multinational show."[55]

In its diegetic concern with surpassing limits, its organization and extension of its own place via global touring and new technologies, and its disavowal of any current or future need for Québec or any other place in its work, the Cirque du Soleil aims to generate its own non-nationally-aligned place. It establishes a non-relationship with its roots and an opportunistic one with its routes. It figures its Québec roots as limited — in terms of the market and funding it offers. In response, the Cirque creates its own place it calls the "imagi-nation" which is based on surpassing limits of all kinds. It figures its routes as extensions of its own place, choosing sites whose own performance genealogies can be construed as supporting the Cirque's aesthetic. In the case of both roots and routes, the specificities of place — whether at home or abroad — are deeply problematic to the Cirque. The Cirque's transnational model of the "imagi-nation" promises the end of limitations, unrestricted access to its world, and the endless possibilities of endless capital.

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[54] Impact Recherche, "*Nouvelle Expérience* 1990 Tour, Survey on Consumer's Profile: Resume for Montréal, San Francisco, San Jose, and Los Angeles" (Montréal: Cirque du Soleil Marketing Department, December 1990).

[55] Quoted in Labreque, 30.

Québec's Transnational Performances

The Cirque du Soleil performs a deeply equivocal relationship to its "home" nation, Québec. As its cultural industry outgrows the capacities of Québec government funding and support, it proliferates its markets (or sites and media of production) and diversifies its sources of funding, increasingly allying itself with transnational networks more than national locations. In this process, the nation is first exploited — for start-up and infrastructure funding — and then gradually disowned, as the companies' identifications shift to articulate non-nationally-aligned independence, transnationalism, and "imagi-nationality." The Cirque du Soleil has seized upon the new conditions of possibility occasioned by transnationalism, producing imagined worlds populated by international casts of performers and characters, and incorporating global cultural forms in their internationally-financed touring performances. The Cirque provides an archetypal example of transnational performance and production. Its creative processes feature bricolage and mosaic; the Cirque's performance codes are deeply urban, even cosmopolitan; its themes reflect current cultural concerns (with *Quidam* and *Alegría*, transnationalism in particular); its corporate logic resembles those of the transnational network (through alliances, co-productions, and corporate sponsorships, not to mention high ticket prices and vast budgets). Cirque du Soleil vies for the liberty of "displacement" apparently afforded by the transnational sphere. Moreover, in its processes of production and export, it repeatedly evacuates the specific, placed, nationhood of Québec.

Cirque du Soleil's narratives frequently speak of the construction of new worlds based on surpassing limits of all kinds (particularly those of the physical body). Were it not for the ultimately homogenizing effect, Cirque du Soleil might be interpreted as the kind of transnational cultural/linguistic/artistic network valorized by Édouard Glissant. His vision of a transnational network assumes processes of creolization that produce the new and the unexpected — new hybrid identities, new forms of expressive culture. This dynamic model of intercultural contact and *métissage* provides Glissant with a model for the new poetic imaginary to which he subscribes.[56] However, the Cirque's own self-definition as an autonomous, self-referential realm unconnected to politics, social processes, or governments undermines this more generous reading of its cultural politics. Instead of letting the local/international or roots/routes tension form the basis for a new hybrid model of national belonging or of identity, the Cirque cuts its ties to both local and global, roots and routes. This is an example of a cultural product which seems to rehearse some of the problems and limits of transnationalism: Cirque du Soleil self-promotes as being supportive of and interested in cultural difference and even cultural utopia, but in practice it mostly exploits cultural difference to produce a saleable homogeneous product.

Given its identitarian investment in the Cirque du Soleil, Québec also suffers from its rejections, although not as much as may at first be apparent. This Cirque-space of the "imagi-nation" proves both promising for and costly to Québec's sense of its place as national. Like its *coqueluche* (its favourite), Québec has long struggled

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[56]Édouard Glissant, *Introduction à une poétique du divers*, 15.

with reconciling its own geographical and ideological states into a persuasive entity – the nation-state of Québec. Indeed, the complexity of the relationships between the Cirque and Québec results not only from the performance troupe's circulation, but also from the shifting and embattled placements of Québec itself. Both have turned to the ill-defined space of the transnational, capitalizing on its ideology of plenitude and universal access, to buttress their own cartographic fantasies – the other-worldly Cirque; the independent Québec. Because the Cirque has distinguished itself from the nation Québec, it cannot precisely piggyback this company on their transnational migrations. However, Québec can exploit the Cirque's world-renowned identity through aligning itself with the Cirque in its own transnational self-promotion on the worldwide web. Thus, it places the Cirque prominently in its homepage on Québécois cultural life and in its culture and communications press cuttings webpages. Again, the nation is detached from territory and promoted internationally. And again, the ideological effects of this detachment are problematic not only for Québec aspirations to sovereignty, but also for hopes of an alternative nation form that accommodates cultural difference.

Epilogue:

From "Speak White" to "Speak What"

"Speak White," a manifesto-poem by author and playwright Michèle Lalonde, was first recited in public in 1968 during a cabaret performance. This French-language poem littered with English words is a pointed denunciation of linguistic colonialism in Québec, of English as the language of commerce and political power. Lalonde wrote "Speak White" during a period charged with linguistic conflict; the issue of the educational system's role in Frenchifying immigrant children had come to a head in the Montréal suburb of Saint-Léonard the year before. The population of Saint-Léonard in the late 1960s was approximately 40% immigrant, the majority of whom were Italian. In 1967, when the local school board proposed the elimination of bilingual (French-English) education for immigrant children, the immigrant community protested in court and, in some cases, in violence erupted between francophones and their Italian neighbours.[1] In this context, "Speak White" swiftly entered popular political consciousness. Chanted at rallies for a French McGill University and during the *Crise d'octobre* (October Crisis),

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[1] Peter Woolfson, "Language Policy in Québec: *La survivance*, 1967 – 1982," *Québec Studies* 2 (1984): 55 – 69.

the poem was a rallying cry for the protection of *le fait français* (the French fact) and, by extension, *le fait national* in Québec.

In 1989, Italo-Québécois playwright and novelist Marco Micone published his manifesto-poem entitled "Speak What" in the québécois theatre journal, *Jeu*.[2] Micone, who immigrated to Québec at age thirteen, wrote "Speak What" at another linguistically fraught juncture in Québec's history; Bill 178, which mandated French-only exterior signage and provided for bilingual indoor signs so long as French predominated, had just been passed by then-Premier Robert Bourassa.[3] The Bill was intended as another measure of protection against Québécois' and immigrants' assimilation into English. However, because it did not allow for signage in any language other than French, many business owners of Montréal's "*communautés culturelles*" (cultural communities: read ethnic/immigrant communities) protested. They contended that bilingual signage in French and Hebrew, Italian, Portuguese, or Vietnamese, for example, did not risk assimilation nor the dilution of *le fait français*. "Speak What," Micone's response to Bill 178 from the point of view of immigrant communities, self-consciously rearticulates the terms of Lalonde's infamous poem. Where she saw English as a colonizing force in 1968, in 1989 Micone turned that same accusation against French.

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[2] Marco Micone, "Speak What," *Jeu: Cahiers de théâtre* 50 (March 1989): 83 – 85.

[3] http://www.qesn.meq.gouv.qc.ca/history/hrp/m7u5l1.htm

Four years after Micone first published "Speak What?" he was accused of plagiarizing "Speak White" in *Le Devoir*'s editorial pages, sparking another controversy regarding national language, identitarian authenticity, and artistic originality.[4]

This epilogue departs from theatre proper to return to the contemporary moment's cultural politics of *québécité*. It considers the outcomes – actual and potential, fraught and utopian – when Québec's *new* New World receives immigrants from the Old World. It also considers the enduring persuasive power of the triumvirate language-authenticity-originality in Québec's national imaginary. The gulf between Lalonde and Micone, and the cultural politics they espouse, comprise the temporal and ideological arc of this project. In this way, they provide an opportune site for reflection on the various ways theatre has styled *québécité* since Expo '67 and inspire some projective comments concerning *québécité*'s future stylizations.

The 1980s and 1990s heralded another "discovery" of Québec that would force the face of *québécité* to change. Where Expo '67 crowds found that the *terre inconnue* had become a *terre des hommes*, a national territory, in these last two decades of the century theatre artists, cultural workers, and politicians have discovered another new Québec: *terre des hommes* has become *terre des autres* (land of others), or, what François Rocher and J.-H. Guay call "the other Québec."[5] The new New World of Québec as national harbours yet another new world – that of the *néo-Québécois* (neo-

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[4] Jacques Lanctôt, *Le Devoir*, 24 December 1994; Thédora Vassarvma, *Le Devoir*, 28 January 1994.

[5] (*l'autre Québec*) François Rocher et J.-H. Guay, "La culture au pluriel," *Possibles* 14:3 (Summer 1990): 65.

Québécois). The borders of this new world would be drawn not in the symbolic universe of a world's fair, but rather in the contested space of linguistic difference.

"Néo-Québécois" is the name given to immigrants to Québec. The prefix "néo/neo" indicates more than the immigrant's recent arrival in and newness to Québec. Indeed, the idea of recency is rather expansive in this terminology as the term is often used for adults who arrived as children and for second-generation immigrants.[6] As many scholars and demographers attest "Neo-Québécois" are not, in fact, new to Québec. Of the 9,000 people who settled the St Lawrence River Valley before 1760 "about 350 were not French natives."[7] Patterns of immigration have shifted over the two intervening centuries from predominantly French migrants until the early twentieth century to Italian and southern European migrants during the 1960s and 1970s to Middle-Eastern, southeast Asian, and Caribbean migrants in the 1980s and 1990s.[8] Despite the not-newness of the category "Néo-Québécois," their presence has taken on new meaning in the past two decades. On one hand, Québec relies on them to fill a demographic void and maintain the French-speaking population of Québec (and, by extension, Canada). On the other, the

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[6] Louise Vigeant in "Les dessous des préfixes . . . ," asks "Au fait, à partir de quelle génération les immigrants cessent-ils d'être 'néo-québécois'?" (In fact, starting with what generation do immigrants stop being "neo-Québécois?) *Jeu* 72 (September 1994): 39 – 48; here, 39.

[7] (Des quelque 9 000 Européens établis dan s la vallée du Saint-Laurent avant 1760, environ 350 seulement n'étaient pas originaires de France.) Hubert Charbonneau and Normand Robert, *Atlas historique du Canada, Des origines à 1800*, vol. 1 (Montréal, Presses de l'Université de Montreal, n.d.): 118, quoted in Marco Micone, "De l'assimilation à la culture immigrée" *Possibles* 14:3 (Summer 1990): 55 – 64; here, 56.

[8] Jean-Michel Lacroix, "Réalités démographiques et politiques de l'immigration au Québec: l'état des lieux au début des années 1990," *Études québécoises: Bilan et perspectives* (Tubingen: Max Niemeyer Verlag, 1996): 165 – 178.

presence of immigrants of colour – the majority of immigrants to Québec since the 1980s – further reduces Québec purchase on the racial metaphor of linguistic "blackness."

Social liberalization and women's advancements since the Quiet Revolution have resulted in a precipitous drop in the Québécois birthrate. It fell from an average of 3.4 children per woman in the second half of the 1960s to 2.0 in 1970 and then again to a nadir of 1.35 in 1987. Dickinson and Young report that since 1988 the Québec government has encouraged reproduction via incentives like "baby bonuses," monetary rewards for having children.[9] Even the government's pronatalist policies have not been able to reverse the slow decline of the francophone Québécois population. Thus, immigrants have become a secondary source of boosting the francophone population and, thereby, insuring the perpetuation of *le fait français* in Québec. Québec has stipulated a standing preference for immigrants from *la francophonie* in order to be sure that their immigrant population does, in fact, compensate for the dwindling birthrate. The presence of immigrants maintains Québec's falling population at approximately 25% of the Canadian population.

Moreover, with the preponderance of immigrants of colour, or, in the language of Canada's census, "visible minorities," Québécois cannot occupy a "black" identity position with the same impunity as they did during the 1960s and 70s. Lalonde ties English to colonial domination through the trope of whiteness, as Pierre Vallières did in the title of his *Nègres blancs de l'Amérique* (1965). In an interview with *Le Jour* just following the publication of "Speak White" she makes this connection explicit saying,

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[9] In 1991, the bonuses were $500 for the first child, $1,000 for the second, and $7,000 for the third. Dickinson and Young, 294 – 5.

"Speak White is the protest of the white Negroes of America. Here, language is equivalent to skin-colour for the black American. The French language is our black colour."[10] In Lalonde's opening stanza, white is the language of Milton and Shakespeare, whose roles in England's colonial enterprises has been extensively documented.[11]

Speak white

il est si beau de vous entendre

parler de Paradise Lost

ou du profil gracieux et anonyme qui tremble

dans les sonnets de Shakespeare[12]

[Speak white

it is so beautiful

to hear you speak of Paradise Lost

or of the gracious and anonymous profile that trembles

in Shakespeare's sonnets]

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[10] (Speak White, c'est la protestation des Nègres blancs d'Amérique. La langue ici est l'équivalent de la couleur pour le noir américain. La langue française, c'est notre couleur noire.) *Le Jour*, 1 June 1974, quoted in Lise Gauvin, "De *Speak White* à *Speak What?*: À propos de quelques manifestes québécoises," *Québec Studies* 20 (Spring/Summer 1995): 19 – 26; here, 20.

[11] See, for example, Ania Loomba, *Gender, Race, Renaissance Drama* (New York: St. Martins, 1989); Ashcroft, Griffiths, and Tiffin, *The Empire Writes Back*.

[12] I will quote "Speak White" and "Speak What" as I did *Les Belles-Soeurs*, first in the language in which they were written, then in English translation. I do this to preserve the significant interplay of French and English within the poems. My translations make no attempt to replicate the meter or rhyme-schemas of the originals.

In this metaphor, the colonized Québécois are "black." They speak a language darkened by menial and physical labours, "*tachée de cambouis et d'huile*" (stained with grease and oil). Their struggle is aligned with those of insurgent Algerians and African Americans: "*nous savons que la liberté est un mot noir / comme la misère est nègre / et comme le sang se mêle à la poussière des rues d'Alger ou de Little Rock*" (we know that liberty is a black word / like poverty is negro / and like blood mixes with dust on the streets of Alger or Little Rock). As Afro-Caribbean Québécois reclaim "black" in Québec, the metaphor of the Québécois people as "black" is challenged.

In addition, the status of French in Québec has changed substantially since that racial metaphor was first circulated. In 1977 the Parti Québécois provincial government passed the "*Charte de la Langue française*" (Charter of the French Language) which made French the official public language. Henceforth, French was the language of government, commerce, "labor relations, product labeling, contracts, bill-boards, signs, firm names and public advertising."[13] As a result, not only is French the language of the majority – as it always has been – but it is also now the language of political and economic power in Québec. The project of recolonizing Québec launched by cultural nationalists in the 1960s and '70s has, to some degree, been accomplished. To be Québécois now is in fact to assert majority status in the political, economic, social, and cultural spheres. The peripheral Québécois culture of the 1960s has become the hegemonic culture in the 1990s, spawning a new series of center-periphery relationships and tensions. The new "marginals" are néo-Québécois. Micone makes this power shift clear in the opening stanza of "Speak White."

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[13] Woolfson, 61.

Speak what

Il est si beau de vous entendre parler

de *la Romance du vin*

et de *l'Homme rapaillé*

d'imaginer vos coureurs de bois

des poèmes dans leur carquois

[Speak what

It is so beautiful to hear you speak

Of the *Romance du vin*

And of *l'Homme rapaillé*

To imagine your *coureurs de bois*

Poems in their quivers]

Micone recapitulates almost exactly Lalonde's scansion and diction but replaces her references to English "classics" with references to the Québécois literary canon and cultural history. For example, *l'Homme rapaillé* is the name of a collection of *poésie du pays* (national poetry) by Gaston Miron; the *coureurs de bois* are the French-settler hewers of wood who first explored the St. Lawrence Valley. By using Lalonde's poem as an explicit intertext for his own, Micone establishes that québécois culture is hegemonic, that a canon exists, and that it has, in turn, marginalized the cultures of Québec's newcomers.

One of the ways immigrant newcomers are marginalized is in how they are called. In common parlance, the prefix "*néo*" not only highlights a newcomer's landed

immigrant status, but also acts as qualifier to their claims on "authentic" *québécité*; it marks a temporal and spatial border between "true" or "original" Québécois and new interlopers. One cannot be fully Québécois if one is "*néo*." Moreover, it connotes falseness or derivation, a recapitulation of a past movement, idea, identity, style. In the language of anti-theatrical prejudice, neo-Québécois are mere copies of the original. In this schema, "Speak What," the poem of an *indépendentist*, francophone neo-Québécois, is deemed a plagiarized copy of Lalonde's.

However, the threat of neo-Québécois identities to a unified québécois identity runs deeper than the idea that they are copies. Neo-Québécois have no access to a unified national identity; not only are they not-Québécois, since becoming neo-Québécois they are also not-Italian, -Haitian, -Vietnamese, etc. Neo-Québécois are "pretenders" in the Deleuzian sense of the term: they are "simulacra-phantasms." Deleuze distinguishes copy-icons from simulacra-phantasms, or true pretenders from false, as follows: "*Copies* are secondary possessors. They are well-founded pretenders, guaranteed by resemblance [to the Idea of the model]; *simulacra* are like false pretenders, built upon a dissimilarity, implying an essential perversion or deviation." [14] In other words, the original possesses certain qualities; the copy possesses those qualities in a secondary way, by resembling the Idea of the original. Simulations do not possess any percentage of the original's qualities; they do not participate in the essence of the original, just reproduce its external appearance. The danger of simulations, according to Deleuze, is that they can pass as copies. Hence, as simulations, neo-Québécois are even more dangerous to the symbolic

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[14] Gilles Deleuze, "The Simulacrum and Ancient Philosophy," in *The Logic of Sense*, trans. Mark Lester with Charles Stivale (New York: Columbia University Press, 1990 [1967]), 253 – 279; here, 256. Emphasis in original.

order of a restrictive, ethnicity-based *québécité*. They might be mistaken for secondary possessors of *québécité* instead of as false pretenders.

In a nation aspiring to state-hood on the basis of its cultural-linguistic distinctiveness from the rest of Canada and whose success depends, in part, on the recognition of Québec as distinct by Québécois and the rest of Canada, false pretenders are particularly threatening. They threaten not in their socio-economic or political activity per se – there is little statistical evidence that they are "stealing jobs" or "increasing the welfare roles," evils of which they have been accused – but rather in their ability to adapt and take up the position of neo-Québécois. If they can pass as copies of Québécois, true pretenders, then they could hinder the recognition of Québec's true distinctiveness. What would be recognized is not the distinctive *québécité* of *les Québécois*, but the multivalent and differential *québécité* of the neo-Québécois. This is not to say that *québécité* as performed by Québécois cannot be differential; indeed, this dissertation has attempted to prove the opposite – that *québécité* varies over time, in response to changing conditions of possibility and the needs an d composition of the communit(ies). However, the status of the neo-Québécois is such that her embodiment of *québécité* is, by definition, differential. Hence her destabilizing (and, to some, threatening) position.

The role of these false pretenders in Québec's movement toward state-status became a lightning rod issue following the defeat of the 1995 referendum on sovereignty. The doubled figure of the neo-Québécois was vilified for preventing Québec from advancing toward statehood and for disintegrating the nation of Québec itself. The moment highlights both the urgency of analyzing how alterity is negotiated in narratives

of the nation and, more specifically, how entrenched are the genuine/false, model/copy dyads that this project is attempting to deconstruct.

On 30 October 1995 Québec residents went to the polls in large numbers. They were asked whether they wanted their provincial government to begin negotiations with Canada's federal government on the possibility of separation from the 128-year-old Confederation. The referendum failed, but barely. 49.6% of the electorate voted "oui"; a very slim majority of 50.4% voted "non."

In the days following the defeat Québec's political leadership outlined the renewed restrictive conditions of belonging in Québec. Then-Premier Jacques Parizeau vilified the "money and the ethnic vote," meaning Jews and immigrants, for preventing a "yes" win, for keeping Québec's natural nation-ness from styling itself in the form of an independent state. Ninety-five percent of immigrant "allophones" had voted against independence. "Allophone," from the Greek root "Allos," the Other, is the rather fraught word used to designate recent immigrants to Québec who speak neither French nor English as their first language. Close on the heels of Parizeau's speech, Lucien Bouchard, then leader of the federal separatist party the Bloc Québécois, exhorted Québécois women to have more children in order to counter the threat of national disintegration posed by the growing numbers of non-Québécois calling Québec "home."[15]

Parizeau and Bouchard's rhetoric following the referendum returns to a concept of the nation as a thing possessing racial qualities. Reprising one of the foundational conceptions of French-Canadian identity formulated by Abbé Lionel Groulx in the early

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[15] For more detail, see Daniel Salée, "Quebec Sovereignty and the Challenge of Linguistic and Ethnocultural Minorities," *Québec Studies* 24 (Fall 1997): 6 – 23.

twentieth century, belonging is tied to blood-lines, legitimate parentage, traditional gender roles, and a shared history and territory. Abbé Groulx described Québec history as "an incessant transfusion from the soul of the forefathers to the soul of the sons, which maintains a race unchanging at its core."[16] The transfusion of qualities from a father's soul to his son's assures that the father's reproductions (or, at least, his *male* children) are true pretenders; they participate in the essence of the father. Groulx's novel, *L'Appel de la race*, reinforces the idea of racial purity, the passage of an unchanging core from father to son, through its linguistic choices. Sherry Simon notes that "even though the novel concerns the problem of bilingualism in Ontario and some of the characters 'speak' in English, the text is written in a French that no English word could disturb. The ideology of purity triumphs over the concern for linguistic verisimilitude."[17]

Since these events, Parizeau has resigned his post as Premier without any reference to his remarks. The Parti Québécois issued no apology. Bouchard has assumed the leadership of the province as head of the Parti Québécois. He has vowed to hold another referendum only under "winning conditions." Under his tenure Québec's immigration quotas have been restricted and unilingual (French-only), outdoor, commercial signage is being reinstated after a hiatus in the early 1990s. Once again,

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[16]Quoted in Handler, 17. For further background on the rhetoric of Québec nationalism see Gougeon.

[17] (Alors que le roman traite du problème du bilinguisme en Ontario, et que certains des personnages 'parlent' en anglais, le texte est rédigé dans un français qu'aucun mot d'anglais ne vient perturber. L'idéologie de la pureté l'emporte sur le souci de vraisemblance linguistique.) Sherry Simon, "Culture et Imaginaire des langues," in *Le Trafic des langues*, 169 – 184; here 173.

Québec's leaders are asserting that québécois identity is founded on an ethnic core that can be protected, in part, through linguistic purity.

The hybrid identity of the neo-Québécois population negatively highlighted during the referendum might instead contribute to re-imagining *québécité* according to a different model. Instead if clinging to a besieged model of identity as unitary, undivided, and reproducible, the figure of the neo-Québécois might catalyze a shift to models of identity as hybrid and striated by difference. I have suggested that the prefix "*néo*" serves as a mark of distinction: first, it is a temporal distinction, marking immigrants as "new"; second, it qualifies the newcomers' claims on québécité by marking an Idealist conceptual border between "original" Québécois and their simulations. It is in this dialectic of renewal and falsity inherent in the definition of "neo" and in the work of performance that I wish to locate the potentiality of the neo-Québécois to refigure *québécité*.

In many ways the figure of the neo-Québécois, her role in the nation of Québec, is an instantiation of a theatrical subject. First, the neo-Québécois lacks self-possession; the neo-Québécois is an always unfinished project constituted in different social relationships, a work in progress. Second, they mark the failure of representation in their inability (according to official rhetoric and *pur et dur* nationalists) to either stand in for or reproduce themselves as Québécois. Given the current strictures of the Québécois national imaginary, they cannot reproduce themselves as Québécois, only as a simulation thereof, neo-Québécois. Demographically, they provide a kind of surrogate reproductive service for Québécois; their presence augments Québec's French-speaking population in

the absence of Québécois reproduction. In performance terms, they produce without reproduction. In Deleuzian terms, they are simulations.

The neo-Québécois' potential for restyling québécité according to a different model lies in her very theatricality, or falsity. In theatrical performance, no action (or behaviour) can be performed exactly the same way twice; hence, the action is not merely repeated by also reinvented in its performance. In this way, performance deconstructs model/copy/simulation models by highlighting the differential production of "restored behaviours." According to this model, neo-Québécois cannot reproduce an "model" *québécité*, but neither can Québécois. The "model" exists only in its performance, or what I have called "styles of québécité" throughout this dissertation. Moreover, neo-Québécois' lack (of self-possession) and failure (of representation) disrupt the story of the nation as an entity. As embodied in the figure of the neo-Québécois, lack and failure displace franco/anglo distinctions as a basis for "belonging" in Québec. It is out of this constitutive lack and the failure of performance to reproduce, that the nation of Québec can be reimagined as a hybrid space.

Micone proposes a model of the hybrid space already inhabited and elaborated by neo-Québécois that I would call "theatrical." He asserts that neo-Québécois participate in a collective culture that he calls "*la culture immigrée*" (immigrant culture). "*La culture immigrée*" is a bridge or transitional culture with an attendant new mode of nation-ness – a *néo-québécité*. Micone picks up on and extends the creative response to changing conditions of possibility evinced by the French-Canadian intelligentsia and political élite when they advocated changing their identification from "French-Canadian" to "Québécois" in his advocacy of *la culture immigrée*. If French-Canadian identity was

politically viable only as "Québécois" following *la grande noiceur*, recent demographics indicate that the québécois identity is, increasingly, only culturally and socially viable (and, indeed, valid) as "neo-Québécois." During a roundtable discussion with other neo-Québécois playwrights, Micone defined *la culture immigrée* as "a very mobile, moving cultural space."[18] *La culture immigrée* is a contact zone, "which, failing its ability to survive as it is, will be able, in a situation of true intercultural exchange, to transform québécois culture and perpetuate it."[19] In this contact-zone, language plays the role of producer, instead of reproducer. Simon Harel elaborates the ideal of a new "enunciative pact" in Québec. Sherry Simon paraphrases it as follows: the new enunciative pact involves "the proliferation of a plurality of enunciative places in the interior of the common French code. Rather than the symbolic expression of a single cultural identity, French becomes a 'language of exchange,' site of the circulation of a diversity of referential universes."[20] Micone proposes *la culture immigrée* as a dynamic, hybrid model of culture that encompasses the values of both continuity and change, retaining "Québécois" and augmenting it with "*néo*." To cast this definition in terms utilized

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[18] (un espace culturel très mobile, mouvant.) Marco Micone quoted in Michel Vais and Philip Wickham, "Le brassage des cultures: Table ronde," *Jeu* 72 (September 1994): 8 – 38; here, 34.

[19] (La culture immigrée en est une de transition qui, à défaut de pouvoir survivre comme telle, pourra, dans une situation d'échange interculturel véritable, transformer la culture québécoise et s'y perpétuer.) Micone, "De l'assimilation à la culture immigrée," 63.

[20] (la prolifération à l'interieur du code commun français d'une pluralité de lieux d'énonciation. Plutôt que l'expression symbolique d'une seule identité culturelle, le français devient une 'langue d'échange', lieu de circulation d'une diversité d'univers de référence.) Sherry Simon, "Les langues antagoniques de la ville," in *Le Trafic des langues*, 129 – 147; here, 141.

elsewhere in this dissertation, *la culture immigrée* inhabits the contact zone between memory and imagination, conservation and innovation, or "performance."

Each of the case-studies in this dissertation capitalize, in different ways, on the explicitly fictive nature of the postcolonial nation. Re-thinking the Québec nation through the matrix of theatre allows one to pose a series of questions to the current model of nation-as-thing, bounded, and, hence, insecure. *Les Belles-Soeurs* and the works of Carbone 14 and the Cirque du Soleil each propose alternate forms of *québécité* – linked to language and the national-popular, to a pre-Québécois past and a potentially post- or neo-Québécois future, and to a transnational commercial sphere. The performances of Expo '67, *Les Belles-Soeurs*, Carbone 14, and the Cirque du Soleil suggest various models of the social articulated in their bodies, spaces, and lines: the self-created, constantly renewing *québécité*; fantastical *québécité*, performative *québécité*, and transnational *québécité*. The national models vary according to the cultural moments in which they were produced, the shifting needs of the collectivity, and the theatrical forms themselves – world's fair, realist drama, dance-theatre, and circus. "Speak What" provides yet another model, a palimpsestic *québécité* that eschews the power of the model/copy and essence/appearance dualities for the power of producing an effect or sign of belonging.

In each of these examples, the theatre – or, more specifically, theatrical performance – acts as proof of *le fait national québécois* through their differential stylizations of *québécité*. It also acts as that fact's undoing. Its proof of *québécité* lies in its contributions to a palpable and persuasive *québécois* identity. Its deconstructive work

lies in its exposure of the nation form as a fiction that requires imaginative labour for its production and reproduction.

What must be engaged now is uncovering the theatrical space in society from which the allophone's interest in belonging in Québec can emerge and unravel the what Eley and Suny call the "positivity of the nation." The positivity of the nation "presumes the existence of a variety of unassimilated (or unassimilable) 'Others,'" thereby restricting the terms of belonging in the nation. This dissertation has argued that it is from this space of the other – *la terre des autres* of doubled identities and theatrical bodies – that the nation must be reimagined as a fluid and changing contact zone and in which participation in the styles of *québécité* guarantees belonging.

speak what
nous sommes cent peuples venus de loin
pour vous dire que vous n'êtes pas seuls.

[speak what
we are a hundred people come from afar
to tell you that you are not alone.]

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