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TOWARDS INTERCULTURALISM: A CRITICAL
HISTORY OF CONTEMPORARY DRAMA IN CANADA

by

Lois Juanita Sherlow, B.A. (Hons.), Cert. Ed., M.A.

A thesis submitted to the School of Graduate
Studies in partial fulfillment of the
requirements for the degree of
Doctor of Philosophy

Department of English
University of Ottawa
April 1995

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ISBN 0-612-11602-6

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UNIVERSITÉ D'OTTAWA
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ABSTRACT

In the late sixties in Canada, the emerging alternative theatre adapted dramaturgical models, many of them from the international countercultural movement of the period, which served as means of challenging the primacy of the playwright and of creating a new decentralized iconography of the Canadian people. In the process of doing so, however, this theatre left many colonialist practices unexamined, and effectively succeeded in disseminating nationalist or centralizing mythologies of utopian populism. Thus, the suppressive effects of colonialism were ironically prolonged as the new nationalist theatre continued to produce marginalizing effects. This study reframes critical perspectives on contemporary theatrical values and practices in Canada by revisiting the ways in which colonialist representation inscribed subordination and marginality in the first place.

Since 1980, there has been a significant subversion and effacement of nationalist ideology by the very groups which had been suppressed by the universalizations of populism. In addition, the adoption by many practitioners of decentred, postmodern textuality combined with experimentation in interdisciplinary techniques has created performance modes more adaptable to cultural reality. In Canadian theatre of the nineties, it has become common practice to historicize unitary narratives of culture and self-identity and to construct, instead, intercultural texts which acknowledge the co-presence of universality and difference, and which assist in drawing spectators with diverse cultural expectations into communal experience.

ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

I owe more thanks than can be expressed here to my advisor, Dr. Camille La Bossière, for his extraordinary generosity and tact throughout my studies. His loyal friendship has been a great source of strength to me for some time.

To Marie Tremblay-Chénier, administrative assistant in the Department of English, my thanks also for her kind and careful assistance in preparing the final document.

Also necessary to the completion of this work, and much appreciated, have been the tolerance of my sons, Declan and Owain, and the consideration and support of Peter Thomas.

Finally, I owe a debt of gratitude to the School of Graduate Studies, University of Ottawa, and to the Ontario Graduate Scholarship program, for grants received during the doctoral program.

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INTRODUCTION

Theatre history and theatrical criticism are young fields in Canada, where indigenous theatre itself had hardly begun to establish itself until the mid-seventies. Commentators still frequently lament that the more controversial discipline, criticism, still lags behind the ever increasing diversity of contemporary theatrical practice. During the seventies, when alternative theatre exploded in cities and in rural areas across the country, monographs on the new developments were rare. What book-length writings did appear during that period tended to take the form of manifestos rather than critical studies.

Michel Bélair's Le Nouveau théâtre québécois (1973) and Don Rubin's Creeping Towards a Culture (1974) rank among the most influential manifestos of the seventies. From their own cultural perspectives Bélair and Rubin articulated the significance of the break with persistent post-war colonial trends in theatre which occurred simultaneously in Québec and English Canada. Both equated the new nationalism with the establishment of an aggressive populist theatre dedicated to displacing European and American dramatic canons and indigenous imitation of associated performance styles, and to exposing all established forms of theatre in Canada as élitist and colonialist. Only Laurent Mailhot and Jean-Cléo Godin, in their Le Théâtre québécois (1970), attempted a close critical analysis of the progress of modern indigenous dramaturgy in its ideological context from 1945 to the beginnings of alternative theatre. At a time when the most intense energy was devoted to the founding of a multitude of new companies, to the training of actors, directors, and technicians, and to the development of new playwrights and scripts on Canadian subjects, criticism was rarely a dispassionate discipline: more often it was a pretext for ideological engagement in the assertion of Canadianness against other cultural orthodoxies and influences.

Journals and reviews provided what forums there were for critical debate on contemporary theatrical issues in Canada: the most influential were Canadian Theatre Review (founded in 1974), Canadian Drama/L'Art dramatique canadien (in 1975), amalgamated in 1991 with Essays in Theatre/Études théâtrales), and Jeu (in 1976). Canadian Theatre Review, like Jeu, was founded to serve not only as a critical review but as a professional theatre journal. Don Rubin's definition of Canadian Theatre Review, in his inaugural editorial, as "a magazine about Canada today which means, to some extent, that it is also a magazine about Canada as it existed in the past and as it may exist in the years to come," has proved to be a fair description of the critical debate in all the journals mentioned above: the development of the critical discourse on theatre in Canada has been inseparable from a profound questioning of the origins and future options of the cultural identity of the country itself.

As the nationalist period peaked and waned at the end of the seventies, the historical narrative and analysis of the new alternative movement began slowly. Renate Usmiani's Second Stage: The Alternative Theatre Movement in Canada (1983), together with Alan Filewod's Collective Encounters: Documentary Theatre in English Canada (1987), remained the only monographs in which this task was attempted in English Canada until the late eighties. Pierre Gobin's Le Fou et ses doubles (1978) provided an important thematic analysis of Québécois drama which linked the past to the present; and Godin and Mailhot produced a second volume of critical studies of Québécois playwrights, Théâtre québécois II (1980), which concentrated on the playwrights of the seventies. Elaine Nardocchio's Theatre and Politics in Modern Quebec (1986) furnished English-speaking readers with a survey of the main theatrical developments in Québec in the context of the history of ideological change since the Duplessis era. In the early stage of publication on theatre, collections of interviews and biographical

profiles (particularly of novice playwrights) or of general essays on aspects of Canadian theatre, served as convenient means of exploring new developments: notable examples are Geraldine Anthony's Stage Voices: Twelve Canadian Playwrights Talk About Their Lives and Work (1978), The Work: Conversations with English-Canadian Playwrights (1982), compiled by Robert Wallace and Cynthia Zimmerman, and Anton Wagner's edition, Contemporary Canadian Theatre: New World Visions (1985). A few critical monographs devoted to individual playwrights also appeared, among them Renate Usmiani's works on Gratien Gélinas (1980) and Michel Tremblay (1981); studies of Claude Gauvreau by Janou Saint-Denis (1978) and Jacques Marchand (1979); and Geraldine Anthony's profiles of John Coulter (1976) and Gwen Pharis Ringwood (1981). In this category, Christopher Innes's monograph on George Ryga (1984), for all its potential to serve as a model for the critical study of an individual playwright, subsequently failed to set a trend in English Canada. In Québec, too, dramaturgical analysis in the eighties was somewhat restricted. The republication, in 1988, of Godin and Mailhot's two-volume study of dramaturgical developments from 1945 to 1980, Théâtre québécois, appeared to be a gesture of institutionalization rather than exploration. The generally limited interest in dramaturgical criticism may readily be accounted for by the strong anti-textual bias of the contemporary theatre of that time, and the equally strong tendency to collective creation, particularly in the sixties and seventies.

A second phase of critical publication on theatre since the sixties was opened by Robert Wallace's Producing Marginality: Theatre and Criticism in Canada (1990), the only monograph to date fully to acknowledge postmodern, postnationalist developments in Canadian theatre. But the publication of Producing Marginality should not be taken to indicate that a critical revolution has taken place in Canada. Other works published since 1990 have avoided

the new aesthetics and cultural politics in Canada, by concentrating instead on further engaging in examination of the alternative theatre's institutionalization and methodology. While Denis W. Johnston's documentary history, Up the Mainstream: The Rise of Toronto's Alternative Theatres, 1968-1975 (1991) and Diane Bessai's Playwrights of the Collective Creation (1992), a natural successor to Filewod's Collective Encounters, both consolidate the foundations of English-Canadian theatrical territory, neither advances a critical interrogation of the nature of the cultural assumptions of the nationalist movement. These two works reinforce the hegemony of the dominant postcolonial culture, albeit one which, in its theatrical expression, has most often intended to be countercultural. The critical analysis of nationalism has not been neglected altogether in other quarters, however. Ideological history and the canonization and institutionalization of texts associated with that history have been examined since 1990 in several articles by such commentators as Filewod, Richard Paul Knowles, and Denis Salter.

The critical history of Canadian theatre to the mid-nineties has been consecrated almost exclusively to the determination of the point at which the Canadian postcolonial subject--and the forms in which it was presented--succeeded in displacing the traditions, plays, and performance styles of Europe and the United States. What remains to be more fully addressed is the relationship between the utopian and romantic construction of images of a postcolonial Canadian collective identity in theatre and the historical suppressions and cultural marginalizations which facilitated it. In order to determine what kind of cultural transaction can be enacted in the Canadian theatre of the future, it is necessary to undermine the orthodox fixation on the late sixties and early seventies as the point of emergence of authentic national cultural life, and to identify some of the historical underpinnings of the nationalist, postcolonialist movement.

The evolution and expansion of theatre in Canada have been so rapid and extensive from the sixties to the present that to undertake any form of evolutionary history of theatre in Canada during that period is now to be presented with an overwhelming body of scripts and performance history, from which works must be selected as representative of significant trends. Such a selection will inevitably show evidence of personal interests, but these must be balanced by the necessity to acknowledge, and the desire to understand, the rapid changes in the Canadian mapping of its own cultural composition during the contemporary period. It is no longer possible in the postnationalist period to promulgate the existence of a theatre which is authentically Canadian, at least in the sense that the pioneers of the alternative movement upheld. On the contrary, the current suspicion of such presuppositions should be the context itself for the examination of recent cultural history. This is not to suggest that the danger of perpetuating old cultural assumptions rooted in the colonial situation is by any means over in postcolonial countries. Quite the contrary. Leonard Radic's The State of Play: The Revolution in the Australian Theatre Since the 1960s (1991), for instance, has been justifiably criticized for its marked privileging of the theatre of the Anglo-Australian culture.

In Canada since the seventies, there has been a steadily increasing public interest in the theatre of so-called marginal groups. Nevertheless, the main body of the published work on theatre in Canada to date has not only privileged, but confined itself to, productions from the two 'official' cultures. Few works have even attempted to correlate those two dominant cultures in one critical survey; and only Robert Wallace has addressed the difficulties built into the exchange of theatre between English- and French-speaking Canada. The persistence of efforts in various quarters to promote cultural integrity (if not pure nationalism) is more remarkable than it may at first seem, when it is remembered that, as soon as assumptions

inherent in the nationalist identities attempted in English Canada and Québec were articulated, they came under attack from dissenting sectors of the imaginary whole(s). Two salient instances are: (1) the major challenges to political nationalism offered in the early seventies by feminist theatre groups, and (2) theatre created by aboriginal groups and a variety of cultural minorities, which, since the mid-eighties, has further called into question both Canada's contemporary conception of its colonial history and its construction of a postcolonial identity. It is too easily assumed, in criticism as in politics, that, provided such cultural dynamics occur within the country's boundaries, they are between Canadians of differing viewpoints, and that there is thus some level, consequently, at which consensus can be achieved, despite difference. Whether such a consensus would be humanist or nationalist in provenance, and whether it could only be achieved by the assumption of universal values are basic questions in many postmodern debates.

The complexity of cultural dynamics in Canada, as in any other country, can no longer be viewed as limited to the country's internal political boundaries. This is not merely because of the obvious impact of contemporary developments in media and information technology, but also because persistently colonialist narratives produced and canonized in the contemporary period continue to oversimplify the cultural texture of the personal experiences of past Canadians. International influences, it is pertinent to recall, have never been absent from the development of Canadian culture at any stage in its past--even at the height of nationalist sentiment in the late sixties and early seventies. The notion, which was common at that time, that the Canadian culture, including theatre, could or should develop independently of international traditions and modern developments, was an unrealistic and very temporary oppositional strategy to ensure a vantage point for a new vision of history and society (Filewod

"Viewing"). While the assertion of Canadian nationalism established a matrix for a renewed cultural life, it did not veritably encompass the content of the culture. Since the seventies, the combination of increased migration, the influence of media, and the cultural exchanges orchestrated at international festivals of the performing arts has made interculturalism, transculturalism, and difference itself as fundamental to theatrical life as they persistently have been to social life in Canada.

At the same time, it has too often been forgotten in revisions of postcolonialism that the cultural diversity of Canadian life is not a postmodern phenomenon: it is, in fact, an intrinsic feature of the development of the country in all its stages. Although the activities of cultural minorities in Canada have been obscured by the dominance of colonialist traditions, these activities have variously performed the same function--to sustain the sense of community. In Canada since 1900, theatre, the most communal of the arts, has been performed in numerous languages (and not only in English and French). Canada's lack of awareness of its own cultural past must therefore be considered as an important, if negative, factor in the development of its contemporary iconography, which, it becomes increasingly obvious, has been created by extensive exclusions, perhaps even suppressions.

Most contemporary studies of Canadian theatre have also been firmly tied to a framework of postcolonialism. Wallace alone has consciously attempted to depart from this framework, but only to the extent of marrying some theories of postmodern aesthetics with the cultural politics of the postcolonial period. None of the published theorists in the Canadian theatrical discourse has explored the necessity to envision a path to postpostcolonialism. This study will undertake such an exploration by tracing developmental lines which delimit postcolonial ideologies in Canadian drama, characterizing them, basically, as responses to the past. It will

attempt to assemble dramatic evidence on which to base some formulation, grounded in the pervasiveness of interculturalism in life as well as the arts, of present and future sources of theatrical innovation and social function.

I. Theatre, Nationalism, and History

A fundamental purpose of any history of modern theatre is to gain new perspectives on the movements and transformations which have led to current forms from the vantage point of an as yet unassimilated present. To achieve this, the works of playwrights and influential directors must be related to such contextual factors as political events, ideological changes, social conditions, and changes in theatrical institutions which reflect socio-political trends. By the end of such a contextualizing, the present will be seen as having been arrived at by a readily identifiable pattern of dominant and recessive practices and ideologies, both social and artistic. These are common basic features of the now numerous histories of modern drama, though each deals with a different cultural and historical framework.

Some historians of modern drama, such as Christopher Innes, David Bradby, and C.W.E. Bigsby, achieve the unification of the narrative of diverse processes of change and of artistic responses to sometimes devastating socio-political events by identifying writers whose influence has survived through changing times (Shaw in England; Brecht in Germany; Adamov, Ionesco, and Beckett in France; O'Neill and Williams in the United States; and, in the international avant-garde movement, figures such as Jarry and Artaud). Canadian historians of emergent modern movements (Usmiani, Filewod, Godin and Mailhot, for example) have also attempted to evoke tutelary spirits of later developments (Voaden, Mitchell, the Worker's Theatre, G  linas, for instance). Canadian theatre history differs from that of older countries,

however, in that, for the most part, no long-standing canon has existed, and there has been little actual contact between the early practitioners and their successors. Nevertheless, even in the absence of accepted canons, it is necessary, for an historical subject to be defined, not only to narrate a chronology, but to identify some ideal which persists in one transformation after another. This ideal may define either the source of further, future developments in a movement (as in Innes's avant-garde, or Bigsby's United States), or, conversely, it may signal that a long-sustained modern theatrical institution has been superseded by new developments which simply do not bow to that tradition but develop apart from it (Innes's Britain, or postcolonial theatre in Canada itself). The investigation of the nature of a pervasive ideal as well as the characteristic features of that ideal informs Canadian theatre's historical narrative itself and so far, to excess, defines its closure.

A theatrical movement of any kind, though, cannot be defined solely by the presiding genius of past playwrights, as if art were altogether autonomous from life. It must be studied in terms that also include the changing relations within society. Whether an historical narrative predominantly defines the end of a line of development, or rather lays the groundwork for the future through close analysis of the present state of affairs, it will inevitably identify and estrange those dominant trends of the past which no longer reflect current socio-cultural conditions. The recent proliferation of histories of the modern stage is one of many indicators that social change both in Europe and North America has advanced so rapidly since the fifties that many long-held assumptions have lost their power to govern developments in both writing and performance. There is, then, a widespread critical need to identify and to historicize modernist ideals, whether realist, socialist, populist, existentialist, or absurd, as they relate to the drama as well as to other genres. Above all, as has come to be recognized, the

displacement, in the sixties, of such assumptions about theatrical practice as the primacy of the playwright, or of the director, is not a passing phase but an enduring one, reflective of the nature of shifting societal structures themselves (McGlynn; Blau).

Recent histories of modern drama suggest that the more strongly a stage has been dominated by a canon expressive of national cultural or ideological unity, the less likely it is to be adaptable to postmodern, nomadic cultural conditions. Innes, for instance, in his account of British twentieth-century drama, depicts a stage dominated since the rise of naturalism by the Shavian spirit, a spirit perpetuated by a succession of (mostly male) playwrights. He strongly implies that this modernist tradition has reached entropy, and that the only remaining source for redemption and renewal resides in the collective creations of feminist and minority groups. Elsewhere, Innes has identified that the true source of the revitalization of drama in various countries throughout the twentieth century has not been nationalist fervour as such, but rather the marginal experimentation which often follows crisis and social breakdown: "Where a nation's official culture had been destabilized by political events, the alternative values of primitivism moved over into centre-stage--as with expressionism in Germany. In America, where nineteenth century theatrical traditions lingered on . . . until the establishment stage was almost completely discredited, the very roots of modern drama . . . --[as in] O'Neill's early plays--came from the avant garde" (*Avant Garde* 215). Innes clearly indicates that only the avant-garde movement, whose roots he traces to Bakunin's revolutionary aesthetics, is capable of renewing itself constantly, and that this capacity stems from its independence from nationalizing cultural and ideological constraints. He finds that, now as much as ever, avant-gardism, as in, for example, the intercultural experiments by Peter Brook, Robert Wilson, Eugenio Barba, Ariane Mnouchkine, and Richard Schechner, is the most important source of

renewal of performance values, not only at the margins, but ultimately in the mainstream. It cannot be surprising, then, that in the sixties and early seventies in Canada, the artistic policies of federally established regional arts centres and festivals, based as they were in demonstrating competence in reproducing the internationally established core of traditional and modern theatrical vehicles, proved quite inadequate to revitalize the country's culture, or to change the image of theatre itself from that of an élitist diversion for the bourgeoisie.

Unequivocally, the renewal of Canadian theatre has been achieved through the initiatives of the avant-garde. The revolt of the theatrical avant-garde during the sixties and seventies was first and most fundamentally against the cultural alienation imposed on the population by existing theatrical institutions. Its immediate intention was to rectify the pervasive absence of theatrical engagement with Canadian realities and to confront the establishment's unwillingness to abandon the perpetuation of colonialism in the current repertoires. Only secondarily--and out of necessity--was it a nationalist movement, and that primarily for the purpose of creating its own texts and mythologies. Until the seventies, Canadian playwriting had been very limited; and thus the theatrical past, providing such a scanty basis for an alternative, indigenous repertoire, played little part in influencing directions taken by postcolonial movements. The momentum of contemporary theatre in Canada emerged, as seems clear enough now in retrospect, out of a powerful amalgam of nascent nationalism and receptivity to those avant-garde influences from American and European theatre which were being felt in Canada's large urban centres, particularly Toronto, Montréal, and Vancouver.

The history of these postcolonial developments raises many questions which can only partially be resolved by reference to developments in other countries with longer theatrical histories. In general, the lessons of political instability are more valuable to the study of

postcolonial Canadian culture than is the example of the canonical continuity of the colonial parent, Britain. The development of postcolonial Canadian theatre, with its underlying cultural uncertainty, bears less resemblance to that of theatre in Britain than to the reconstruction of theatre in post-war Germany on a virtual 'tabula rasa' (Innes, Modern German 14), or to the evolution of French theatre since the thirties, with its existentialist period, subsequent decentralization, and widespread populism. In contemporary British theatre, on the other hand, aesthetic radicalism has been mitigated by the continuance of the social realist tradition, and by the survival of a widely recognized code of cultural differences and class distinctions. By contrast, Canada, whether in its colonial or postcolonial phase, has consistently resisted definition by any such universally recognizable code of culture and class as that which has survived in Britain.

There are, though, some important ways in which Canadian theatre defies comparison with that of any European country. The marginality of the individual in a pluralist society built largely on immigration is of a different order from the existential alienation of the late modern European. For this reason, the example of the history of the modern stage in the United States provides a more reliable model and precedent when charting the patterns of development in Canadian contemporary drama.

The nationalism of American theatre is arguably founded in a sense of cultural excentricity rather than in a well-defined vertical structure of class relations. This absence of hierarchy, as reviewed by Bigsby, for example, prefigures the cultural developments of the postmodern period. Bigsby finds in the marginality of the characters and voices of O'Neill and Tennessee Williams the identical spirit which continues to inform the developing cultural pluralism of American theatre. He also finds it basic to the ongoing creation of the national

image. This close identification of nationalism with populism and cultural diversity which Bigsby identifies in American theatre is seen again in the contemporary drama of Canada, as it breaks from the domination of English and French colonial cultural institutions. Where Canada differs from the United States in its theatrical history is precisely in that its struggle to free itself from the domination of external traditions and influences is more recent and more urgent (facing as it does the threat of American culture itself). Theatrical nationalism in the United States originated soon after European modernism, and thus drew its energy from other national dramas. In Canada, on the other hand, modernist movements had only minimal influence, resulting in the isolated experiments associated with Hart House Theatre in Toronto in the twenties and thirties, and little more. Because of Canada's isolation from modernism in literature and theatre, there had been no real establishment of a national iconography before the sixties. The task facing Canada as it rejected colonial cultural dominance has been complex: it has involved simultaneously reinventing nationalism (inevitably by continued reference to old-world models), coming to terms with all the internal cultural contradictions of postcolonialism which mitigate against the use of such models, and also adapting to the postmodern global environment. In Canada, the modernist and postmodernist periods have been effectively conflated, as only occurs in postcolonial countries.

The paradox of postcolonial culture is that it must establish its bearings in relation to history even as it attempts to move beyond it. Although a postcolonial nationalist movement declares independence, it also imitates the parent culture from which it is trying to separate. A distinct culture cannot easily be envisioned, initially at least, without reference to nationhood, and thus, at first, the process of iconizing the culture and the process of iconizing the nation are inextricable (Filewod, "Undermining"; "Viewing"). "All nationalisms," in the words of

Seamus Deane, "have a metaphysical dimension, for they are all driven by an ambition to realize their intrinsic essence in some specific and tangible form . . . a political structure or a literary tradition" (8). The idea of a national theatre has long been held to be an important locus of this "metaphysical dimension." From the beginning of the twentieth century in Canada until the sixties, playwrights, colonial administrators, and politicians have articulated unrealizable visions of a national theatre as an antidote to the as yet undefined cultural environment, in which they failed to find a sympathetic audience or institutional endorsement for the arts. Even though it was anti-establishment, the alternative theatre too announced as its agenda the ushering in of "a Golden Age of Canadian Drama" by the founding of a canon (Rubin, Creeping 28). Even as regionalism mitigated against the totalitarian possibilities of nationalist ideology and as collective creation countered the installation of canonical playwrights, the seventies were devoted to the establishment of a culture--and a theatre--which could be identified as exclusively Canadian, or as Québécois.

Whether postcolonial nationalism creates anything more than a mirror of its colonial past is debatable, of course. Many choices in subject matter, characterization, and staging techniques made during the nationalist period of the seventies in Canada would no longer be considered adequate to reflect Canada, or Québec, because they were either heavily influenced by, or highly responsive to, the preconceptions of the colonial past. Perhaps even more importantly, the nationalism of the early alternative theatre strove to express the ideal of a unitary Canadian or Québécois identity, with little regard for pluralism (Filewod, "Undermining"; Bélair). As Deane observes, the postcolonial revision of history in any country can be more oppressive than the history it aims to supplant:

The problems created by [nationalist] ambition . . . are intensified to the point of absurdity when a nationalist self-conception imagines itself to be the ideal model to which all others should conform. That is the characteristic of colonial and imperial nations. Because they universalize themselves, they regard any insurgency against them as necessarily provincial. In response, insurgent nationalisms attempt to create a version of history . . . in which their intrinsic essence has always manifested itself, thereby producing readings of the past that are as monolithic as that which they are trying to supplant. They are usually . . . under the additional disadvantage that much of their past has been destroyed, silenced, erased. Therefore the amalgam they produce is susceptible to attack and derision. (8-9)

In Canada, when the new theatre movement undertook to revise history, often privileging stories of populist insurrection and celebrating the endurance of pioneers, it also created many restraints against subjects which did not uphold its own orthodoxy. Having created marginalities, it almost immediately found itself subject to attack and derision from those quarters.

The national narrative which some contemporary writers and performers in Canada have attempted to create, with its pretensions to revealing an "intrinsic essence," has readily been undermined by the plurality of the alternative narratives being constantly generated. "We had forgotten," Filewod notes, "Massey's admonition that . . . there are several Canadas"; thus the generation of a national narrative in spite of plurality had been merely a necessary anachronism designed to span the empty space between the colonial past and the present and allowing Canada to create a new image of itself as a country equal to other nations--in other words, to

"reconsider the field of our possibilities" ("Viewing" 16). Robert Kroetsch provides useful insights into the relation of postcolonial nationalism to that of older countries. Canada, he argues, is "a postmodern country" which grew out of the breakdown in the forties of modernism, with its "longing for unity of story or narrative" (22). He defines a moment at the end of modernism when Canada became capable of envisioning its own future: ". . . [When] the stories that gave centre and circumference to the modern world were losing their centripetal power . . . this very decentring . . . gave new energy to countries like Canada . . . supremely a country of margins. . . . The centredness of the high modern period--the first half of the twentieth century--made us almost irrelevant to history. . . . In a high modern world, with its privileged stories, Canada was invisible" (22). The breakdown of old empires, as Kroetsch goes on to observe, did not release Canada from a relationship with external metanarratives, but rather made way for new orientations: "The movement away from the European-centred empires to the current domination by America and the USSR has had an . . . impact. . . . I suspect that those two empires, in attempting to assert or reassert their meta-narratives, turn all other societies into postmodern societies" (22-23).

Kroetsch's comments serve as an apt reminder that Canadian nationalism and the narratives it has recently appropriated unto itself cannot be viewed solely as a response to the colonial past: they also serve as means of resistance to assimilation by more versatile contemporary forces. Nor could Canadian nationalism remain untouched by postmodern "scepticism about the metanarrative's great voyages," and by "doubt about our ability to know" (Kroetsch 23). As E.D. Blodgett likewise cautions, the attitude appropriate to interrogating "Canadian" identity should be "contingent, fragile, unwilling to accept, finally, the illusion of the universal solution, self-absorbed, unguided by the enigmas of the other

presence" (Configuration 35). Kroetsch believes that Canadians are called to resist the "consuming power of the new places with their new or old ideas that now want to become centres" and should consequently hold to the margin as the place "where the action is" (23). A postmodern country, it would seem to follow, can only espouse nationalism as an impulse to be negated rather than as a unifying force.

The new theatre movement did not begin with the objective of awakening the margins, despite its regionalist expansion. It expressed itself most clearly in terms of the break with the Canadian past; and, certainly, it defined its mission as the overthrow of colonial culture (identified strongly with the playwright and the text) through a collective drive to uncover Canadian voices and language, which by definition had been suppressed by European high culture. Don Rubin's manifesto, Creeping Toward a Culture (1974), like Michel Bélair's, Le Nouveau théâtre québécois (1973), indicated that the energies of the new movement were engaged in an opposition to the cultural establishment, with no exception made for the literary or dramaturgical productions of past Canadians. Alternative theatre recognized the overwhelming presence in the past of almost exclusively European and American vehicles for performance and knew that it still dominated both professional and amateur theatre. A nationalist theatre was inaugurated at the point in time when Canadian theatre professionals, if not amateurs, rejected and divested themselves of the travesties of European cultures most forcibly, recognizing and accepting their own marginality rather than lamenting it, or denying it and disguising it under borrowed accents.

While marginality implies a relation with an establishment or a greater social structure conditioned by disregard, disapproval, and even oppression, it also implies a freedom from some, if not all, governing orthodoxies. Theatre itself often thrives on the freedom of the

margins, which is, in Kroetsch's words, "where the action is" (23). The stage has proved to be an excellent vehicle for expressing the cultural marginality of Canada itself, by representing the marginality of most Canadians to any notions of national identity inherited from the past. But having grasped this freedom, Canadian theatrical innovators used it, somewhat paradoxically, to create a new nationalism.

The first sign that awareness of marginality could and would be converted into nationalist ideology is evident in the rhetoric of early calls to action. Rubin's famous pamphlet, Creeping Towards a Culture, opens with an invocation of Brunetière's emphatic statement of 1894 that "it is always at the exact moment of its national existence when the will of a great people is exalted within itself, that we see its dramatic art reach also the highest point . . . and produce its masterpieces" (5). The pamphlet concludes with a sly juxtaposition of a grandiose national vision with a parenthetical reference to Canada's cultural status as a dark continent: ". . . if Canadians from coast to coast continue to look at themselves and their country with pride, the Golden Age of Canadian Drama may well be at hand. And if it doesn't produce a Sophocles, a Molière, a Shakespeare, or a Calderón, it may nevertheless produce some few works which will have helped to illuminate a rather large corner of the world at a rather fascinating period in its cultural and political history" (28). It is wholly pertinent to the beginnings of the alternative theatre, Rubin himself has asserted more recently, that his own central involvement in promoting Canadian culture in 1974 arose from his being "angry and arrogant, a theatre critic from the States who had only been in Canada since 1968, an intellectual casualty of the Vietnam war . . . inspired by Robert Brustein, committed to the very American notion that art had to have social relevance" ("Conception" 5). Rubin adds a reminder of the power of anger to motivate, and also draws attention to the significant number of other "non-indigenous

Canadians" who were involved in founding the influential Canadian Theatre Review. He poses a question in "CTR: The Moment of Conception" (1994) which, in the seventies, would have been impolitic: "Would this all have gotten so far if only Canadians were involved? It was most often Canadians who had to be convinced of [CTR's] viability in those early days" (5). What Rubin neglects to remember is that Canadians did get involved in a most necessary way--by funding new theatrical enterprises quite generously through the agencies of a federal government which was strongly dedicated to promoting nationalism.

What Filewod has called the "post-imperial narrative" of Canadian theatre demonstrates, in his view, that it "has been both a site of postcolonial definition and the material expression of changing ideologies of nationhood, and has been institutionalized--funded promoted, and studied--precisely because it has legitimized those ideologies" ("Post-Imperialism" 4). He remarks that the new nationalism, which he admits owed much to the influence of American experimentalism, at first challenged the criteria of the government funding agencies, which had hitherto reflected "an enduring investment in the idea of 'showcase' culture" (10). Artistically marginal as the new Canadian theatre may have been, however, as Filewod notes elsewhere, its ideology fully reflected "Trudeau's vision of a bilingual and unified state with strong . . . regional cultures" ("Undermining" 180). The very nature of the "statist nationalism of the 1970s" ("Undermining" 180) upheld and encouraged the compatibility of marginality with political unity; thus the so-called alternative theatre, intending to be radical, was also an important agent for the dissemination of the prevailing political orthodoxy, "institutionalized out of [its] underground beginnings by the cultural policies of Trudeau's government . . . and . . . easily obtained grants" ("Post-Imperialism" 10). He further notes, as does Wallace in Producing Marginality, that the relations between theatre and arts councils has become

increasingly problematic since the legislation of multiculturalism in the eighties; also like Wallace, Filewod shows great concern for the degree to which government controls the direction which cultural developments take, especially as it affects marginal groups (11).

The difficulties inherent in the relationship between culture and the state have been inescapable in the postcolonial period. Successive discourses have been generated to impose structure on the central dialogue between these two elements of national life. These are the transient attempts at metanarrative which have succeeded the colonial discourse in structuring Canadian boundaries to some extent, especially the forty-ninth parallel. That each has so far been relatively shortlived, that each next theory of nationhood has been developed fairly rapidly out of engagement with the limitations of governing structure, whether in federal and provincial government initiatives, or in the arts, supports Kroetsch's view of Canada as a nation sceptical of metanarratives. It may also indicate, of course, that Canada is still a nation which is neither fully at ease with the power of artists nor with a fullness of cultural diversity.

II: National Scripts

Given the centrality, and also the economic importance of the relationship between the federalist national vision and the development of the arts, Denis W. Johnston's very recent account of the self-mythologizing tendencies of the early alternative theatre (Up the Mainstream 251-52) can only provide a partial explanation of the nationalist narratives created by the early postcolonial theatre. The expansion of theatre did not occur until almost two decades after an implicitly totalizing cultural agenda had already been designed for Canada by its federal government. The scripts engendered by the new movement might be called a form of translation of that federal script into the language of the Canadian people. Even Rubin

credits the Massey Commission with the founding vision of Canada's cultural future, although at the same time he opposes the way in which that vision was actualized in the new regional arts centres and at the Stratford Festival. In particular, Rubin cites the Commission's warning to Canadians that they not be complacent in the face of American culture: ". . . a vast and disproportionate amount of material coming from a single alien source may stifle rather than stimulate our own creative effort" (Creeping 7). The Massey Commission, by his reckoning, provided the mandate which was only fulfilled by popular engagement in the arts in the seventies: "We are now spending millions to maintain a national independence which would be nothing but an empty shell without a vigorous and distinctive cultural life. We have seen that we have its elements in our traditions and in our history . . ." (qtd Rubin 7). The implication of the Massey Report was that valuation of European tradition distinguished Canadian culture from that of the United States, and that this tradition would serve in the future to combat Americanism. To this end the federal government encouraged excellence in performing classical repertoires in the regional arts centres, and made the Stratford Festival the centrepiece of Canadian theatre.

Subsequent to the implementations of the report of the Massey Commission, Stratford ironically became the target for the new theatre's rejection of the imperialism of European culture itself. Referring to the initiation of a new Canadian dramatic canon by Canadian Theatre Review in 1974, Filewod states that Stratford was "the Other against which CTR centred its definition of Canadian theatre" ("Undermining" 180). The central political issue at Stratford at the time of CTR's birth was the appointment of the British artistic director, Robin Phillips; but Filewod believes that "the real issue wasn't Phillips, it was Stratford's role in the Gestalt of Canadian theatre" (180). What Stratford lacked was what Rubin calls "Love of

Place" (qtd Filewod, "Undermining" 180). Its failure "in the imperative task of reflecting the Canadian community" (180) was the spur to the new alternative theatre professionals to commit themselves precisely to supplying that lack, even though they had little idea of the definition of 'Canadian community.' Canadian theatre before the mid-sixties, according to Rubin's calculation, had failed to create any sense of community and had not encouraged Canadian scripts: "[By 1967] . . . most of the theatre being produced in Canada was not Canadian . . . not a theatre of Canada but merely a theatre which existed in Canada. The element that was obviously missing was the playwright . . . who could speak clearly . . . in a native voice. . . . There had been attempts Unfortunately, [they] were, by and large, depressingly derivative and dreary" (Creeping 12). Ironically, the more evolved feature of Toronto theatre in the mid-sixties, so Rubin implies, was its critics, among them Nathan Cohen and Herbert Whittaker, both of whom contributed greatly to the establishment of professional standards and a broadened vision of Canadian theatre (11-12).

In Québec, too, the new theatre needed to define its 'other' in order to grow and define itself. Bélair, in 1973, named it 'French-Canadian theatre,' thus asserting that the Québécois struggle was against the cultural and political past, rather than against domination by a remote cultural centre. French theatre had ceased its domination of Montréal before the Second World War, while the theatre of Britain continued to dominate English Canada. Bélair could thus identify a post-war indigenous theatre in Québec better developed than was apparent in Toronto, but he labelled it colonial in its mentality. Dismissing all predecessors of the new theatre, he states: "Il ne saurait en effet être sérieusement question d'une tradition théâtrale québécoise remontant aux élucubrations aquatiques du Théâtre de Neptune de Marc Lescarbot. Tout au plus cet ouvrage fait-il preuve d'un certain intérêt manifesté pour le théâtre dès les

débuts de la colonisation française; 325 années de quasi-imitations disparaissent donc du panorama théâtral québécois" (19-20). Bélair assesses the ten modern playwrights represented in the first edition of Godin and Mailhot's Théâtre québécois and relegates eight of these--namely, Gratien Gélinas, François de Grandmont, Yves Thériault, Marcel Dubé, Françoise Loranger, Anne Hébert, Jacques Ferron, and Jacques Languirand--to the status of prehistory: "[à] l'exception de Réjean Ducharme et de Michel Tremblay, surtout, [ces] . . . dix dramaturges . . . renvoient à une sorte de pré-histoire du théâtre québécois, à un théâtre canadien-français se posant comme une essentielle et inévitable phase introductive . . . se contente-on de reconnaître certains classiques canadiens-français" (21). The 'official' theatre of Québec--that is to say, the companies which benefited from government grants--was likewise sidelined by Bélair, much as Stratford was scanted by nationalists in English Canada.

The new narrative of Canada staged in the seventies was, in general, a politically idealistic representation of the formerly colonized population of Canada, hitherto marginalized (so it alleged) by colonial high culture, by bourgeois values, and by literary, theatrical, fictional, and historical texts which, for the most part, had been European in style, diction, and attitude. The presupposition of commentators such as Bélair and Rubin was that no theatre or literature free of European conventions had been produced in Canada. Thus, the articulation of the voices of the people--parole in opposition to langue--was the desired goal of the new theatre. The regional accent, the culture of work, and the resonances of generations became the main subject of the drama; and, consequently, the nationalist theatre movement was often engaged in ethnography as much as it was in creating mythologies. Although many of the new theatre companies operated at a local level, and developed scripts rooted in regional culture, history, and politics, they were ideologically unified by nationalism. Bélair's comments on

Tremblay's Les Belles-Sœurs (1968), the play which he used to define the political and aesthetic agenda of the new theatre in Québec, exemplify the identification of nationalism with a populist revolt against cultural oppression, and with the recuperation of the ordinary:

Cette pièce . . . représentait à elle seule une sorte de révolution; pour la première fois quelqu'un mettait en scène des personnages que le théâtre officiel s'efforçait de ne pas trop montrer parce qu'ils étaient à l'image d'une société que l'on espérait sauver par l'importation d'une culture étrangère. Les personnages de Tremblay ne connaissaient rien du 'français international', ils n'ont rien d'élégant, et les conflits qu'ils traduisent rendent compte d'une tentative d'affirmation d'une manière d'être québécoise par rapport au contexte culturel ambiant. (56)

Bélair confirmed the central relation between culture and nation: "partout dans le nouveau théâtre québécois, l'affirmation culturelle va de pair avec l'affirmation de l'identité nationale" (56). Although his rhetoric issues from a strongly separatist point de repère, Bélair's statement could equally define the nationalist and federalist theatre of English-Canada. As to the relationship between Québécois and Canadian nationalisms in the seventies, Hubert Aquin's correlation provides an useful overview: "Ce qui différencie le Canada du Canada français, ce n'est pas que le plus grand soit polyethnique et le second monoethnique, mais que le premier soit biculturel et le second culturellement homogène (ce qui n'exclut pas, Dieu merci, le pluralisme sous toutes formes!)" ("La Fatigue culturelle" 309-310). The central project in theatre, as in the country itself, in the decade following the Centennial, was precisely to align the cultural and political aspects of nationhood.

In practice, theatre in Canada during the seventies was constructing a new image of the country. Lee Breuer has defined the social/historical function of theatre thus: "The idea of

being theatrical--of theatre, in the abstract sense--is in itself the idea of adding energy to an image so that it will cross over and re-imbed itself in another individual. Theatre is the business of constructing icons, and icons are the semiotics of societies" (60). Whereas in Québec language was in the seventies the single most important element in the new theatre's sign system and in the common view of nationhood, in English Canada the recovery of language was only one element in a larger operation of reclaiming, mapping, and selecting images of the territory of Canada. In Québec, the sounds of joul on stage evoked a powerful shock of recognition for audiences united by a common cultural environment. In English-Canada, on the other hand, it often took minimal Canadian references to surprise English-Canadian audiences into new perspectives. Rick Salutin's record of the opening night of 1837 in Toronto, for example, indicates the simplicity of the initial breakthrough of the new theatre: "When [the actor] started Act II with 'Bay and Adelaide, the northwest corner,' the audience laughed. If an actor said, 'Montmartre, 4 a.m.,' or 'Piccadilly Circus, twelve noon,' no audience would laugh. But we are so imbued with self-denial, so colonized, that the very thought of something historic happening here, at Bay and Adelaide, draws laughs" (1837 200). The audience's unease with the familiar and local on stage was the means to estrange the prevailing assumptions about well-made theatre based on productions of non-Canadian plays. Having established its own professional status, thus doing away with the stigma of colonial amateurism, the alternative theatre set about promoting national pride by recreating the country's history in terms that would be comprehensible to a postcolonial generation whose historical consciousness was quite shallow. Salutin comments in his journal of the rehearsal period of Theatre Passe Muraille's early collective, 1837: The Farmers' Revolt, that, as documentary materials relating to nineteenth-century Toronto were brought to rehearsals, the

group experienced the enormity of the lack of a sense of their own past: "Great stir at finding the history of places we've all lived around. We're starting very far back: other countries may have to relive or reinterpret their past, but they know they have a past. In Quebec they may hate it, but it's sure as hell there. English Canadians, at least around here, must be convinced there is a past that is their own" (186).

The new generation, understandably then, had little trouble in believing that they had a clean slate on which to write their own new narrative of Canada. The historical subjects chosen „ were intended to mythologize not only the nation but also "a radical . . . nationalist theatre . . . a popular uprising . . . fuelled by revolutionary rhetoric" (Salutin 251-52). The contribution of theatre history to the creation of the new Canadian mythology was nominal indeed: Ken Gass's The Red Revolutionary, a loose adaptation of Charles Mair's Tecumseh produced at the Factory Theatre Lab in 1971 (Johnston, Mainstream), Richard Plant's production (the first in the play's history) of Merrill Denison's Marsh Hay at Hart House in 1974 (Anthony, "Denison"), and Popular Projects Society's 1982 staging of Eight Men Speak in Halifax (Adams, "Halifax") are the only evidence that theatre and theatre history converged. The remaking of the country's narrative, clearly, did not involve the reinterpretation of its past artistic aspirations, but instead centred on privileging narratives of workers and settlers dispossessed by colonialism.

The nationalist theatrical enterprise imaged the idea of the nation by bringing the concrete locale into a meaningful relationship with abstract ideas and historical events. How important a role theatre played in the transformation of the nation's consciousness (in relation to politicians' use of the more powerful media) remains unquantifiable. As Innes makes the point: "The imaginary world of literature can mirror reality, call new orders into being--yet any

actual change it brings is frustratingly indirect, since it remains on the level of ideas, intangible. If politics is the art of the possible, art is the politics of idealism" ("Politics" 60). Whether it is possible to create political ideals in art autonomously of the agendas of governments is surely a question much older than the state of Canada. The very naïveté of artistic idealists may well ensure that the images and rhetoric which they create contain some power to subvert those which are designed to support well-defined political agendas.

It may well also be this same naïveté which permitted those developing the new theatre of the seventies to avoid noticing the exclusions which defined their early work. While the alternative theatre viewed itself as nationalist, its professed political stance was overridingly leftist. It rejected as intrinsically élitist the idea of a national theatre, which, as Filewod argues, has always been derived from external models, like nationalism itself:

It is an obsession . . . impossible to gratify because its primary term of reference, the idea of nation itself, is taken entirely from another country.

‘National theatre’ is a rhetorical idea that expresses particular values of nationhood and the theatre’s place as a nation’s ‘shining glory’. . . . The national drama is the summit of the national culture, which takes its vertical structure of ‘low’ popular culture and ‘high’ educated culture from the historical arrangement of wealth and power. . . . The very idea of a national theatre rests upon the hegemonic idea of a nation that can be expressed in simple cultural codes. . . . The rhetorical proposal of a national theatre in effect means the canonization of a theatre and drama that reflects the national ideals of the governing élite. ("National" 10)

This definition would imply that cultural élitism had been left behind with colonialism. Such a

sharp line between the élitist past and the populist, postcolonial ideal of Canadian culture, however, is more than a little imaginary. Filewod's admission that the alternative theatre was informed by "the ideology of a unified national community [advanced] in its narrative of a colonialist historiography in which the evolution of the theatre was in fact a metaphor for the evolution of the state" surely indicates the element of self-deception involved in the nationalist/populist position of the seventies ("Undermining" 182). Filewod admits too that "the idea of a canon was crucial" to the movement, and that Rubin, as the first editor of Canadian Theatre Review, even believed that "a dramatic literature was the proof of nationhood defined in terms of cultural unity" (181-82). Although Filewod now accepts that "the legitimization of Canadian drama has engendered a canonizing process that erases difference" (179), he often still appears to be convinced that the alternative theatre's canonization process was not that of a governing élite.

In the long run, the canon established in the seventies has proved to have considerable power, not only because of anthologization but also because it informs the standards applied by government bodies to new companies seeking funding (Wallace, Producing; Knowles, "Voices"; Robert, "New Quebec"). The belief that the colonialism of the alternative theatre's drive to establish a Canadian theatre was necessarily less élitist than that of its predecessors, on account of the presence of populist ideals, is a persistent historical mis-taking. The postcolonial/colonial narrative which Filewod defines in "Undermining the Centre" remains as the metanarrative of contemporary Canada with which pluralist, marginal, and postmodern theatres engaged, as he himself has subsequently acknowledged ("Post-Imperialism" 11).

Since the sixties and seventies, changes have occurred in the aesthetic expression of identity and social dynamics, reflecting both increased interculturalism in Canadian society and

also the greater emphasis on international cultural exchange. At the end of the seventies, Mavor Moore underlined the necessity for Canadian theatre to find a way between the pretensions to universalism of an international repertoire and the chauvinism of exclusive nationalism: "We are a pluralistic society in which no really 'national' theatre can exist nor should be expected to. . . . Nationality will scarcely do as a criterion of merit or acceptability. . . . There is not one universal set of values or practices but many--and so far as I can see, the more the merrier" ("An Approach" 16). In the wake of unitary nationalism, theatre has diversified progressively, representing an ever wider spectrum of cultural groups and aesthetic approaches. Wallace, almost alone in English Canada in having published extensively on the political and critical problems facing marginal theatre of the present, identifies the inadequacy of the aesthetic criteria employed in the allocation of funding as a central problem facing marginal groups at present (Producing). The criteria in force, so he argues, are based excessively in the nationalism of the seventies; and they are often applied in such a way as to alienate and discourage minority cultures and experimental groups from developing works which appear, in the eyes of funding adjudicators, to fail to conform to an assumed notion of excellence.

Because nationalist ideology has established such a close relationship with the articulation of artistic values, then, it is important not to view postmodernism or the diversification of representation of minorities in theatre as evidence of the transcendence of nationalism, but rather as further evidence of a continuing process of engagement with it. At the same time, it is also important to recognize that issues of identity within the Canadian construct do not completely define the scope of artistic experimentation, and that, indeed, some artists do take pains to posit and explore experience outside conscious reference to the political.

III: Theatre and Community

The definition of identity in Canada has been, for the most part, a political act. In contemporary theatre, when drama has represented the position of the individual in relation to the state, it has often been in terms of the individual's belonging to a class as well as to a geographically or culturally determinable community. This tendency has often been supported by the preference for collective creation of scripts--which preference has characterized the development of drama in Canada since the sixties--and by the concomitant suspicion of the authority of the absent author or playwright. The collective creation in Canada, though initially adopted as a result of the influence of American and European theatrical movements of the sixties, owes its popularization to factors in the Canadian environment itself. The lack of experienced playwrights in Canada in the seventies only partially explains the enthusiasm for collectives: it was an expression of the mistrust of the primacy of any individual's interpretation of politics, culture, and history, and of the widespread utopian desire for ideological consensus. The collective representation of the vitality of community in Canada, the proof of the country's power to disburden itself of colonial interests, continues to be the expression of a fundamental and recurring political desire for cultural validation.

The history of drama in Canada is the history of the problem of representation itself. Theatre, or more accurately, theatricality, is intrinsic to the playing out of the tension between national essence, or totality, and otherness, as well as to the derivation, from this dramatic confrontation, of provisional maps and categories. The history of representation of Canada, and in Canada, can only be viewed fairly as a continuum from the foundation of the colony, all periodization being merely a shift to new patterns in the distribution of power. The history of colonial drama is one of the creation of glaring exclusions; but so too is that of the nationalist

postcolonial theatre. Herbert Blau has observed that representation has become the object of profound critical suspicion since the revival of interest in Artaud's The Theatre and Its Double in the sixties (Eye 189). Blau himself, as a result of long reflection on the nature of theatre, is suspicious, but nevertheless ambivalent, about representation: he describes it as "that deceitful doubling of an originary division which makes of life a deceit to begin with, the contaminated supplement, re-presentation, serving as a model for more of the Same, 'inscribed in the structure of representation, in the space of the stage'" (190). He casts doubt on the possibility that the audience, in its responses, can ever escape "reproduc[ing] the system"; likewise, he draws attention to "the repetitive enclosure of the discourse, with its doxology of open-endedness, a sort of politics of Derridean deferral of other people's politics" (190).

Representation, he adds, has been allegorized as "a selective monolith" creating uniformity on a global scale, "far more uniform than it appears in our theoretical deference to other cultures or in the discovery of alternative prospects in the indeterminate Other--the alienated, the marginal, the dispossessed--valorizing differences which, with the slightest prompting from chance or history, narrow their own distance to the regrettable Same" (190). Theatre itself, of course, in such a monolithic scheme as Blau implies that theorists envisage, must be viewed as no more than one form of the signifying practices which make up the production of identity.

If Blau's assessment of representation as a two-edged sword is accepted, it follows that representation is potentially both capable of obliterating otherness with "more of the Same," or, equally, of redeeming reality from the grip of "the globalizing hegemony . . . which wants to crush all difference" (190). The relevance of Blau's argument in the context of postcolonial Canadian theatre is clear. The post-war conception and creation of a national or nationalist theatre, viewed from Massey onwards as a resistance to American influence (Filewod,

"Viewing" 16), required first the establishment of a primary boundary, then the transformation of the initial idea into an ever more complex process of splitting or doubling. This progressive representation of the country's diversities, which can seem to be increasingly locked in to the play of difference, may indeed well be described as "a sort of politics of Derridean deferral of other people's politics."

Filewod, in recent reflections on the early seventies, argues that Canadians had no reason to problematize the question of nationhood in any real depth, since nationalism was no more than an "ideological device . . . a strategy rather than a passion . . . a false epistemology" ("Viewing" 16). (He does not exempt Québec from that statement, as arguably he should. Filewod's characteristic view of Canadian political and artistic life rarely allows for the problematization of Québec nationalism.) He concludes that, in the absence (in the country at large) of a sense of nationhood deeper than that provided by "an ideological construct bound by legislative agreement," nationalism was difficult to assert, and that "we began looking for supporting theories: this is a nation of regions, a nation of nations, and so on" (16). This view is justified, in that, during the seventies and early eighties, before Canadian theatre became concerned with the discourse of Otherness, it tended to found its reflective representations of the unwieldy nation in a relatively simple system of binary oppositions. Regionalism, localism, and populism were the most pervasive ideologies used to distinguish postcolonial nationalism from its predecessor. But none of these were means to problematize the historical complexity of Canada's cultures. The majority of the historical narratives (mythology was the popular term) developed by the alternative theatre during the initial period of "post-colonial recuperation" (Filewod, "Community" 173) tended to express a class struggle, that of 'the people' against the ruling classes. Filewod implies that, until it was more apparent that

"nationhood is a construct of historical narratives," the possibility of determining a "collective psychology" was still considered (16). In spite of the national obsession with defining a Canadian people during this early phase, the notion of a collective psychology was no more viewed as totalizing than was the concept of a nation. Furthermore, neither was considered to be totalitarian. The struggle for nationhood was represented, on the contrary, as the struggle against totalizing ideologies. Thus, any recasting of history on the stage during the seventies was viewed by practitioners and critics alike as serving to estrange totalizing colonial narratives, and as substituting for those old narratives the version originating with the people themselves.

Any possibility of a totalizing notion of the Canadian people as 'the masses' (which notion would naturally have been inimical to producers and audiences alike) was held at bay in the seventies by concentration on reproducing the particularities of local culture. The popular documentary drama played an important role in this aspect of theatre, functioning not only as a useful, post-Brechtian vehicle for dramatizing historical events, but, equally importantly, as a form of ethnographic polyphony. The sense of common national interests was communicated in expressions of the coherence of the local community and its culture, usually framed in geographical and historical terms. As Filewood recollects, the activities of the early alternative theatre "presupposed the equation of culture, community, and state" ("Undermining" 180). There was a strong motivating desire to define Canadian nationality in cultural terms, but little sense of what Canadian culture actually meant: "As long as it was the articulation of a national struggle to define a post-colonial culture, the actual definition of that culture could be deferred as a dehistoricized quality. . . . Rubin's formula of 'Love of Place' is a metaphor for this undefined metaphysics. Frye's famous 'where is here' was answered by 'Here is where we

are.' And who are 'we'? 'We' are the people who are 'here'" (Filewod, "Undermining" 181). But theatre cannot define itself by essentialist metaphysics; it exists as a set of practices. In the seventies, these practices amounted to the creation of a new national dramatic subject through the retrieval and rearticulation of the narratives that appeared to bind 'real' communities together, as well as the building of new forms of theatrical organization. The new theatrical methodology and organization--characterized by the general rejection of external authorities, hierarchies, and traditions, and the substitution of collective organization and creation for older forms of theatrical production--became as much a metaphor for the Canadian people as the subjects of the plays themselves. The new theatre thus naturally equated the sense of community with engagement in common tasks, and, by extension, with the alienation of labour.

In theatre as in politics, a fundamental metaphor for the representation of 'the people' is 'voice.' In Canada in the seventies, as in Ireland or the United States in the early part of the century, or in England in the fifties, the representation on stage of local voices announced the extent of the previous masking of the powerlessness of the marginalized by rhetorical conventions. Spoken language, as distinct from writing, became as politically important in Canadian theatre as it had ever been elsewhere, as a shock tactic for redirecting audiences' attention away from their cultural illusions. In Québec, Tremblay's use of joul in Les Belles-Soeurs (1968) proved to be the turning point for the cause of cultural nationalism, its importance proportionate to the degree of controversy it aroused. The point was not only that Tremblay's play provided an occasion for self-recognition, but that dialect had become theatrical, thus transforming audiences' understanding of theatricality itself: "Playwrights sought . . . to write voice into text, to give it movement and breath. Popular language was used

to create collective recognition, a sense of identification that would destroy standards of both language and literature, and make any form of Canadian-style bilingualism impossible" (Robert, "New Quebec" 117). Tremblay's Les Belles-Soeurs provided a powerful reminder that the suppression of culture was no less than the shaming of a population by the assertion that theirs was not a culture at all. It recalled, furthermore, that such a suppression had been a conscious strategy of the British colonial government.

Spoken language was the single most important theatrical element in establishing that the cultural struggle of postcolonialism was also a class struggle. The articulation of voices previously outlawed from the stage informed the dramatic mythology and typology which theatre sought to create in the sixties and seventies. Bigsby, writing of the marginalization of drama from the American literary canon, indicates that theatrical speech is of a different order from literary language, conveying as it does the silence and the incoherence beneath itself: "In so far as language is power, the absence of language is an index of powerlessness" (3). Theatre in Canada in the seventies, as in other countries in the process of claiming cultural independence, became a powerful means of delineating the boundaries between the languages of power and of powerlessness. The linguistic boundaries themselves, however, proved to be more complex than had been envisaged at first. In some cases, they could not be fully articulated in the representations of external conflict, since many of them were so completely internalized within individual histories as to play little part in public transactions. Furthermore, the concept of bilingualism was not adequate to convey the cultural intersections which formed part of the experience of many Canadians. Joul and the other regional dialects of Canada could be employed on the stage to designate the basic power division based on 'them' and 'us,' or, occasionally, the temperament of a hard country (Ryga, "Contemporary" 6), but their use

continued to restrict and suppress other voices, defining them as exterior to the community characterized by dialect.

Most theatre of the seventies was presented in either English or French. If characters of other ethnic origins were presented, as in, for instance, Ryga's Indian plays or such documentary dramas as Paper Wheat (first produced 1977), they usually spoke English with an accent. Thus ethnic origin was blurred into regionalism and populism; and the documentary form itself, the most popular means to represent the history of Canadian communities, was most often less objective than it pretended to be, selecting its elements primarily to dramatize the struggle of the community against outside political and economic forces (Bessai, "Documentary" 12-18; Filewod, Collective 182-85). In defining communities as social units defending themselves against or resisting centralist, capitalist powers, Canadian theatre neglected to record the presence of most cultural minorities. When they did appear in the form of Métis (in several Riel plays), or Native characters such as Ryga's Rita Joe, or as Doubhkobhors (in a 1971 collective of that name), for example, they tended to be symbolic underdogs rather than culturally distinct, as Innes, commenting on Ryga's Indian, explains: "The Indian is there not only as the representative of his people but as . . . an image of all those near or below the poverty line whatever their ethnic origin. . . . This reflects Ryga's criticism that the establishment retains a 'frontier mentality,' in whose view 'the bum, the Indian, the Newfoundlander, they're all interchangeable.' . . . The audience--almost by definition bourgeois, like any conventional theatre's public--are incapable of seeing any distinction. . . . It is also a standard Marxist perception: one proletarian group can stand for all, since what they share as workers overrides any differences of colour or creed" (Politics 26). Not only ethnic groups, but also women suffered from absorption into the mass of the

proletariat oppressed. This is evident even in Les Belles-Sœurs, where the common feature of the women, their powerlessness, overrides all other legitimate gender distinctions. Tremblay's play need only be compared with such subsequent feminist plays as the collective La Nef des sorcières (first produced 1976) or Denise Boucher's Les Fées ont soif (first produced 1978) for the dissolution of gender in the signifiers of class to be obvious.

In view of the alternative theatre's repression of difference under collective representations defined by the official languages of Canada, it is ironic that theatrical activity in the colonial past had so often been a means to maintaining minority cultures. The new theatre, in its concern with creating a new national culture, overlooked the long history of communal, collective performance which preceded its own emergence. Had it researched the past, it would have found that, in the twentieth century, many immigrant communities held together not only by shared cultures but sometimes by political affinities external to the British Empire or Canada used theatre for the communal perpetuation of old narratives and for cultural resistance to the 'other' (Berger, "A Coat" 216-17). One play at least, Henry Borsook's Three Weddings of a Hunchback (1926), produced at Hart House Theatre, went so far as to depict the confrontation of immigrant and local cultures in Toronto: "Since the turn of the century, and at the time of mass immigration, immigrants gathered in church basements and ethnic community halls to watch dramas performed in their own language. This sharing of culture in one's own tongue was the greatest buffer the newcomer had between himself and a country which was still alien and represented a possible destructive force to his own culture. While . . . much theatre performed . . . [expressed] the nationalist or socialist beliefs of key individuals . . . immigrants also welcomed sacred and folkloric theatre as well as comedies which spoofed their own situations as newcomers" (Berger "A Coat" 216-17). Certainly, theatre had a high priority

even before World War I among Ukrainian immigrants, who have been credited with "incredible cultural dynamism" (Balan, "Ukrainian" 35). Active well before the Second World War too were Chinese performers of opera in Toronto (Berger, "Multicultural" 355); there was also a Yiddish theatre in Toronto at the same time (Careless). The theatre of immigrant groups, like that of aboriginal communities, received little attention from mainstream critics before or even during the seventies. It began to resurface, in renewed and politicized form, when theoretical postmodernism and legislated multiculturalism facilitated its inclusion (still most frequently as marginality, though) in the new framework or metanarrative of the Canadian nation.

IV: Difference

By the early eighties, the ideological, cultural, and sometimes aesthetic simplifications of the first phase of theatrical expansion had become evident to many artists, critics, and audiences. In the wake of the strongly ideological seventies surfaced a tendency to diversification, fringe activity, and multicultural awareness in theatre practice, which in turn attracted new audiences and further redefined the social role of theatre in Canada. From the vantage point of the mid-nineties, with an awareness of cultural changes over two decades, it is becoming conventional to re-assess and historicize the initial phase of contemporary theatre in terms of a single goal: to establish itself and its audiences by resisting colonial and American influences through strategic nationalism (Filewod, "Viewing," "Post-Imperialism"; Knowles, "CTR"). The redirection of Canadian theatre beyond its initial cultural and aesthetic assumptions has been characterized by a conscious rejection of simplistic nationalism(s) in favour of the exploration of marginality and a redefinition of community. In recent articles

periodizing the development of Canadian drama since the sixties, however, both Filewod ("Undermining") and Knowles ("CTR") have attempted to determine the points of change through identification of critical revisions, while limiting their examination of the diversities of practice, in which, it may be presumed, it becomes increasingly difficult to identify a pattern.

Theatre, particularly in a country as self-conscious of its evolution as Canada, as Filewod, Knowles, and Wallace have rightly pointed out, cannot exist without engaging in inquiries into the nature of community. Theatre recreates and redefines community behaviour not only in choices of subjects and approaches, but also in the definition of its working methodology and the performance environment. Although collectivity and community were already fundamental emphases during the seventies, it is important to recall that at that stage they were formulated in the context of strong ideologies, and that their definition reflected the common theatrical goal of resistance to the theatrical and social past. Both the theatrical collective and the community it represented symbolized in quite literal ways the postcolonial repossession of territory. Through its regionalism and populism, the nationalist alternative movement set out to provide its audiences with images of a ready-made context of belonging.

Since the mid-eighties, by contrast, community has ceased to be an a priori, and has become instead a site of inquiry and problematization. Both postmodern narrative techniques and the greater flexibility in performer/audience relations created through interactive and forum techniques have transformed community from a 'bounded text' into a continuing practice or process of creation, recreation, and validation of behaviour. A definition of the postmodern community, then, can be more readily achieved by reference to the processes of self-creation than to the older model of a structure of cultural resistance to external powers and orthodoxies as denoted by Rubin's phrase, "Love of Place," with all the connotation of

sameness that that phrase carries. The increasing emphasis on pluralism since the early eighties also demands that concepts of community become deterritorialized, provisional, and inclusive, with aspirations to cultural homogeneity being countered by structures of difference.

The discourse of difference has attained dominance in the theorization of theatre in Canada since the mid-eighties, and it now also pervades theatrical practice. Clearly, the development of government multiculturalist policies in the eighties has facilitated the growing interest in investigating and representing difference. Equally, the international impact of theory in theatre since the early eighties has been a major factor in the subversion of the centre by the margins. Gerald Rabkin, for one, links the impact of poststructuralist theory on theatre--relatively belated, in his opinion, in comparison with its effect on other art forms--with the influence of the feminist movement, "to whom it became increasingly evident that theatre's double text--both verbal and corporeal--was particularly needful of new scrutiny" ("Waiting for Foucault" 91). Rabkin considers that the most important effect of feminist politics on theatre was to draw attention to the ways in which "patriarchy works through modes of discourse and imagery as [well as] through legal subordination"--that is to say, to draw attention as well to the possibilities for subversion the discourse of power (91). Also of great importance to theatrical practice, he adds, are the many ways in which theory has stated the importance of interpretation in the production of meaning: "No text can be read without mediation [All theory] accepts . . . a 'dialogic' model . . . in which meaning is never absolute and univocal" (92). Rabkin argues that the espousal of theory by theatre has led to the revaluation of the text which had previously been so forcibly rejected by the 'anti-literary' theatre of the sixties. He cites Michael Vanden Heuvel's argument that, in contrast to the experimental theatre of the sixties and seventies, "more and more, playwrights and performance groups are investigating

the political nature of theatre itself, as well as theatre's complex relations to other discourses. . . . By destructuring the orders of representation in order to critique and re-inscribe them, avant-garde theatre eventually rediscovers its social context" (100).

The destabilization of textual assumptions, together with the opportunities which theatre, as performance, allows for restatement of the relationship of text to actor, permits theatre to embody and promote forms of subversion of the social order more subtle than those practised in the sixties and seventies, and more likely to permit audience members to re-assess their place and their power in the social fabric. Theatre since the seventies, as Rabkin suggests, permits the audience more critical engagement than its predecessor did in the process of destabilizing old meanings and constructing new ones (101). While he regrets the relative absence in contemporary theatre of the "reciprocal creative energy, a shared community of dissent, between experimental artist and audience in the sixties and early seventies," he considers that theory plays an important role in maintaining an anti-conservative stance and in empowering audiences against oppressive forces: "marginalized theorist/scholars find common cause with other marginalized groups . . . [and] posit, in opposition to the conservative proclamation of an End to History (by which is really meant an end to socialism), exactly the reverse: a defiant assertion that history--even if fractious and destabilized--is by definition in constant motion" (101). Since feminist, poststructuralist, and postmodern theory tends to extend its influence and to create exchanges across national and cultural boundaries, it goes without saying that Canadian theatre, as it has increasingly engaged in such theoretical exchanges, has radically shifted from its early identification with unifying, statist ideologies.

There are no grounds, however, for stating that there has been a radical break from nationalism in Canadian theatre. In fact, the early postcolonial theatre laid the groundwork for

a continuous interrogation of political and social relations. With its emphasis on a leftist espousal of populist causes, class confrontation, and the exposure of colonial oppression, it opened a territory and established a matrix which could accommodate a broadening discourse and the articulation of the politics of emergent groups. In the seventies, populist theatre groups were already beginning to define communities, not simply in terms of class struggle, but in terms of specific issues of contention or subjection to injustice (Filewod, "Community"). As well, the internationalism of the populist theatre movement--that is, the dialogue which was established between Canadian and third world theatre groups during the seventies--assisted in the redefinition of theatre's function as both interventionist and representational (Barnet).

Prominent among the many international movements influential in Canadian theatrical practice has been Augusto Boal's interactive forum theatre technique (Theatre of the Oppressed), which requires a radical alteration to performer/audience relations. In addition, changing awareness of linguistic issues in Canada since the seventies has influenced the representation of community significantly, to the extent that not only has bilingualism been represented (Fennario's Balconville, first produced 1979), but also plays expressing the marginalization of minority linguistic groups, such as Italian-Canadians (Marco Micone's Les Gens du silence [1982], later staged as Voiceless People [1984]) began to be produced. Such plays as Rick Shiomi's Yellow Fever (1983) set out to dramatize the difference between the ethnic stereotypes of the dominant culture and the reality which was concealed by them. In 1984, the Québec group Théâtre Repère developed and produced Circulations, an exploration of the nature of interactions involving three different languages. The intercultural strategies initiated with Circulations were developed in several subsequent productions by Robert Lepage, one of the founders of Théâtre Repère--notably La Trilogie des dragons (1985-87) and Les Plaques

tectoniques/Tectonic Plates (1990). Finally, new playwrights in the eighties and nineties who have envisaged the expression of their own cultural isolation have had Canadian models available to them for inspiration and reference: a striking example is the clear allusion which Tomson Highway makes to Les Belles-Soeurs in his early play, The Rez Sisters (1986).

Scepticism concerning the authenticity of all cultures has increased since the early nationalist enthusiasm for attempting to define Canadian culture. On the whole, the issue of cultural definition and authentication has become less important than the validation of the practices of the group or community, regardless of issues of authenticity. Often such self-validation, artistic or otherwise, is at the same time an overt subversion of conventions or power structures. In theatre, this has manifested itself since the early eighties (1) in the rise of the fringe festivals, which have operated across the country as a countercultural, carnivalesque response to the growing conventionality of Canadian theatre; (2) in the growing number of groups defined by gender issues; and (3) in the development of certain forms of theatre which invite the cooperation of performers and spectators. In sum, strategies for the restructuring of social interactions have often come to replace conventional scripts: interventionist groups, such as Catalyst Theatre in Edmonton, work on a wide range of issues, many having to do with power in communication, with audiences more usually defined by common interests than by cultural or gender homogeneity (Lise Ann Johnson 43). All of these changes in performance and audience relations imply significant shifts in the conception of identity as a social and linguistic construction.

Postmodernists have been effecting radical reinterpretations of theatre, social structures, and the relations between them for over thirty years now, by attempting to reclaim them from the dominance of master-texts and the absent author, and subjecting them to active

participation in a boundless play of intertextuality. The radical theatre of the sixties, influenced by Artaud's ideal of an immediate theatre--that is, one freed from representation--wanted to restore the relationship between performance and community by sacred and secular rituals. As Fred McGlynn recalls, such experiments in ritualized theatre as those of The Living Theatre, under the Becks, and Richard Schechner's Performance Group were doomed to fail in their intent because of the limitations of the contemporary context: "The ritual theater of the Greeks, the Japanese, and Artaud's beloved Balinese was supported by a shared ceremonial cultural consciousness which is profoundly lacking in this postmodern era of dispersed meanings" (144). Likewise, radical attempts in France during the sixties to create a workers' theatre liberated from texts failed in its aim to serve as "a thorough deconstruction of the complex power of sociopolitical space" (146). In McGlynn's opinion, the postmodernists who have most nearly succeeded in reconceiving theatre are the French director, Daniel Mesguich, known for his interpretation of the classics, and the American theorist, Blau, because both acknowledge that theatre, like social identity, can escape neither from representation nor from mediations by language and text. Mesguich's theatre proposes itself as "the very space where the critical play of cultural interrogation takes place . . . [and] the play of representations and simulations which is postmodern culture can be called into question" (150). McGlynn states that Mesguich has created a theatre which "recognize[s] the complex of inscriptions which is the text of our culture and which is our culture itself . . . [and] does not assume the need for a site of communal understanding . . . [but] acknowledges the play of differences which is the site of both the theatrical and cultural experience" (150). In the kind of theatre proposed by Mesguich or Blau, the negative valorizations of dissimulation and role-playing common in the sixties are not applicable: "Blau, like Mesguich, understands the self of the actor to be no more

or less dispersed than the social self . . . the actor as against the social self . . . is forced to confront the problem of the apparency of the self" (151). Given the indeterminacy of the self engaged in the play of difference, and in acts of self-representation, McGlynn concludes that theatre continues to be an effective mirror of social being in the postmodern era precisely because of the fact of the actor's physical presence, which is not identical with the performance text: "It mirrors that site where the body of the social self is divided by the intertextual play of the culture and the intertextual play of the culture is divided by the body of the social self" (154).

The postmodern theories of theatre which McGlynn reviews are mirrored in some current theories of modes of social being in the contemporary context of the breakdown of values, particularly those theories which are influenced by the works of Gilles Deleuze and Félix Guattari. Eleanor Godway and Geraldine Finn, in a recent assessment of the failure of "family" and "neighbourhood," find that communities are now little more than the subject of "crisis management" (Gayatri Spivak's term) and that their "overriding logic is the protection of the status quo" (2-3). In response to the perception of such inadequacies, Barend Kieffe argues that desire, as defined by Deleuze and Guattari, is the postmodern replacement for identity with community in its literal and utopian senses: "Desire emerges in the absence of community in which social identity, if it ever exists, is always created only to be challenged. We are created by our desire for ourselves and others. . . . This 'we' changes, depending on our relationship to ourselves and others, depending on our position in the field and flux of social particles. Desire's origin and destination are uncertain because it circulates in the space of the absent community which never will be fully present. . . . [It] forges a community which remains unformed and unforeseen. Deleuze and Guattari would not encourage the desire for

community as a romantic return to a lost paradise. Yet they are utopian only in so far as their community would be one that existed no place in particular" (165-66). Kiefte stresses that desire, "never personal and individual, but always social," according to Deleuze, is the single producer and determinant of society: ". . . desiring-production is a factory or workshop in which desiring-machines operate through breaks and flows to create social reality" (165-166). Deleuze's "ethics of difference," associated with desire and social production, is "a practice involving the simultaneous and continuous production of ourselves and others in a way that challenges the sense of Self and Other" (167).

Deleuze and Guattari's ethics of desire and difference promote resistance to the Freudian, oedipal construct of identity or subjectivity, and, by extension, to all identities imposed by the political state and by capitalism. But this position becomes problematic, as Kiefte points out, when one considers whether it is possible to form any group, for any political purpose, that excludes all repression (176). In spite of the potential pitfalls of the absolutism of Deleuze and Guattari's theories, the idea of a desiring-machine as the producer of social reality affords a clear image of the relationship between the postmodern self and the text of culture. In the context of theatre, the 'desiring-machine' is a useful model for the production of narratives of self as (inter)cultural text, which production has become an increasingly important part of contemporary theatre, both in the form of conventional scripts and as performance art. The model is equally relevant to the postmodern enclosure of metatheatre, itself arguably a form of desiring-machine. The notion of a desiring-machine as producer of social reality supports the very notion of the theatricality of social existence and the "apparency of the self" which theatre exists to demonstrate (McGlynn 151).

Postmodernism, in its challenge to outmoded notions of identity and social structures, and

in its expanded vision of the production and potentiality of cultural texts, advances beyond old political, ethical, and aesthetic structures. But in doing so it poses a multitude of problems whose solutions it defers indefinitely, to nihilating effect. Daryl Chin has argued that the aesthetics of difference, rejecting grounding in single meanings, promotes the evacuation of meaning:

[Postmodernism] is a crisis in categorization, resulting in equivalence. . . . The effect is the lack of hegemony in perspective. This break in unity has . . . [caused] a crisis in cultural practice. . . . Aesthetic enterprise is fraught with suspicion, haunted by the possibility of misinterpretation. . . . To grapple with even the most momentary meaning, art now has been occupied by the pastiche, the parody, the appropriation, on the assumption that nostalgic meaning is better than no meaning at all. . . . The result is the depletion of the centricity of artistic endeavour. Irony, reproduction, and simulation have become central to contemporary art, with all the distance that implies. (163)

As Chin views them, "marginality" and "pluralism" evince, not egalitarianism, but a degree of alienation: "When pluralism is invoked, the assumption is that alternative perspectives are being permitted into the discourse, displacing the dominant hegemony. . . . Marginalism is an accreditation of these additional perspectives by defining a dominant, and ceding territory to the sidelines" (164). Chin's argument calls to mind Wallace's criticism of Canadian funding practices in Producing Marginality and Mark Gauntlett's account of the same problem in Australia.

As to "recognition of difference" in postmodern theory and practice, Chin states that it often indicates "complete indifference," particularly on the part of western cultures: "The

Eurocentric ego declares that, if recognition of the validity of 'otherness' must be accorded, then there is total equivalence, an absolute breakdown of distinction . . . if it can no longer claim dominance and superiority, if equity must be awarded, if [it] can no longer presume on self-importance, then nothing is important" (165). Chin adequately illustrates his proposition that indifference and the maintenance of "the same balance of power" undermine "the status of 'the other' as an equal" by citing the failure of Roland Barthes' The Signs of Empire to recognize "that, for a Japanese person living in Japan, the culture is not 'other'" (165). A change in attitude to other cultures can only be brought about, as Chin asserts in agreement with Frederick Turner, if theory and practice accept that "there must be accountability for alternatives . . . [and] recognition of specificity, not just the accounting of equivalence" (166). Those who believe, like Chin and Turner, that postmodernism and pluralism are not in themselves concerned with solving problems which arise in recreating relations with 'the other' must turn their attention to the theory and practice of interculturalism. Although internationalist theory and practice attempt to redefine relations between dominant cultures and those of others, the inquirer who approaches their apparently unlimited offers of solutions to problems of alienation must maintain an awareness that they offers further opportunities for moral double-dealing and cultural misrepresentation (Chin 167-75).

V: Interculturalism

Interculturalism may be embodied in the most esoteric or the most popular forms of artistic production. Basically, it is the combination, juxtaposition, or translation of elements from two or more discrete cultures to create a new synthesis. The purpose of the combination may be to revitalize one culture by the incorporation of others, to alter perceptions of the

power relations between cultures, or to make apparent some underlying principle common to all the elements present. To suggest that interculturalism can be viewed as separate and distinct from postmodernism, though, would be misleading, and would imply the possibility of identifying a play or a performance piece as clearly one or the other. Interculturalism is, to some extent, part of the postmodern pluralist agenda, or, in Chin's words, "a rubric to cultural inclusiveness" (166).

Aware of the dangers of cultural imperialism, Chin warns that intercultural enterprises initiated in the context of the dominant cultures of the West have little chance to succeed when their intentions are to overcome marginalization, or to avoid appropriation and domination of borrowed cultures: "The idea of interculturalism is one which is, in a sense, duplicitous. . . . In the context of the United States, the cultural power structure . . . is dominated by the ideology of a specifically white, Eurocentric, specifically capitalist establishment. In addition, all questions regarding interculturalism must be complicated by the pervasiveness of a commercialized popular culture" (167). The context of capitalism, Chin implies, inevitably imposes some degree of cultural hierarchy on any intercultural activity, whether originated as academic research, artistic experiment, or purely commercial cultural production. Numerous critics have expressed concerns similar to Chin's--namely, that, even in such celebrated intercultural experiments as Peter Brook's The Mahabharata and Robert Wilson's version of Heiner Müller's HAMLETMACHINE, a dangerous degree of aesthetic and ideological distortion occurs, and that interculturalism often amounts to no more than an ill-considered syncretism, resulting in further depletion of meaning (Chin 167-69; Wirth 177-85; Weber, "AC/TC" 13, 18-19).

Cultural hybridization is usually considered by interculturalists to be the norm of human

activity, and cultural essentialism, on the other hand, a fallacy. Carl Weber defines two processes by which cultures are transformed. On the one hand, the colonization of the Third World by western ideology is described as "acculturation . . . the inscription of a preserved foreign code in a native structure . . . [and] the concomitant gaze of the white patriarchal culture" (19). In contrast, "transculturation" is used to define the non-political process whereby cultural elements are adopted and transformed by a second culture: "Transculturation [is] the deconstruction of a text/code and its wrenching displacement to a 'historically and socially different situation'" (19). The latter process, Weber argues, is as old as cultures themselves, and has nothing intrinsically to do with imperialism.

Such recognition of continuous influence and transformation in all cultures is essential to the deconstruction of modernist, colonialist, and postcolonialist narratives of nationalist ascendancy and homogeneous cultural identity. "What is meant by 'culture,'" in the words of Richard Schechner, "is actually a snapshot, a stop-frame of an ongoing historical action. . . . Attempting to fix cultures or stop them from changing is like trying to end or annihilate history" ("Intercultural" 151). As described by Schechner, culture is too complex and dynamic a process to be identified with the historical construction of colonialism or nationalism: "No culture is 'pure'--that is, no culture is itself. Overlays, borrowings, and mutual influencings have always made every culture a conglomerate, a hybrid, a palimpsest. So much so that we probably should not speak of 'culture' but of 'cultures.' Racism is basically a myth of desired cultural purity played out against 'others' who are perceived as being not only different but inferior" ("Intercultural" 151). Far more fundamental than the creation of cultural distinctions, Schechner believes, is the tendency to absorb what is required for survival: "As far back as we can look in human history peoples have been deeply, continuously, unashamedly intercultural.

Borrowing is natural to our species . . . Syncretism and the making of new cultural stuff is the norm of human activity" (157). Everybody who is familiar with the canons of western literature is aware, of course, that such borrowings have occurred. Nevertheless, appropriations of texts and styles are most usually read as the transformations of a national canon or tradition: thus reinforcing belief in the possibility and desirability of the integrity of cultures, or, more properly canons. Such readings of literary and theatrical history, begun in Europe, have been replicated in the United States and Canada. Contemporary interculturalism, by contrast, requires that canons be forgotten, and that, instead, the processes of transfer and transformation be given attention, with the fundamental intention of knowing the culture of others as well defining our own (Schechner "Intercultural" 158).

Underlying the theory and practice of interculturalism in the performing arts is a belief that the acquisition of knowledge of the culture and technique of the other is the source of greater self-knowledge. In theatre anthropology, for instance, the study of the carefully cultivated techniques of the actor is held to provide a means to deeper understanding of social being. Eugenio Barba, the founder of the International School of Theatre Anthropology (ISTA), defines the discipline simply as "the study of human behaviour on a biological and socio-cultural level in a performance situation" (*Floating* 115). Barba's method has involved extensive observation and understanding of the clearly defined laws and pedagogical processes governing the techniques of oriental performers. Barba believes that the acquisition of oriental techniques can lead the less disciplined western performer to a deeper understanding of the nature of performance itself: "The challenge . . . is for each of us to learn to apply these laws within the framework of his own scenic tradition and creative imperatives. . . . My wish [is] to unmask . . . [the] fortuitous . . . the laws as yet undiscovered" (121). Schechner, too, believes

that the acquisition of performance techniques is an important means of accessing the experience of the other. Furthermore, like Barba he emphasizes that the learning and translation processes themselves are the site of the most important intercultural contact: "The more we, and everyone else too, can perform our own and other people's cultures the better. . . . It takes a knowledge, a 'translation,' that is different, more viscerally experiential than translating a book. Intercultural exchange takes a teacher. . . . The translator . . . is no mere agent, as a translator of words might be, but a culture-bearer. . . . That is why performing other cultures becomes so important. Not just reading . . . visiting . . . or importing them--but actually doing them. So that 'them' and 'us' is elided, or laid experientially side by side" (158). Schechner is convinced that the cultural transactions which can be effected in the context of performance disciplines are an important antidote to the process of world unification by industrial powers and to "national and ideological fervor" (157-58).

The revaluation of ritual through intercultural research has already influenced western theatre practice radically. The experiments of Schechner, The Living Theatre, Grotowski, and many other groups during the sixties depended on the findings of theatre anthropology, as well as the research of theatre history, to reconceptualize the principles of performance and the social function of theatre. The visitation of primitive religious practices and the derivation of new performance models from them, is, Innes comments, as old as the avant-garde movement itself, and it stems from the technological outlook of western culture: "In avant garde drama, as the widespread use of a term like 'theatre laboratory' in the 1960s and 1970s indicates, primitivism goes hand in hand with aesthetic experimentation designed to advance the technical progress of the art itself by exploring fundamental questions: . . . 'What is a theatre . . . a play . . . an actor . . . a spectator . . . the relation between them all?' . . . The scientific ethos of

the modern age parallels the return to 'primal' forms, equally signalling an attempt to replace the dominant forms of drama--and by extension--the society of which they are the expression--by rebuilding from first principles" (Avant Garde 3). Although interculturalist performance anthropology and aesthetics benefit from scientific investigation of laws and principles of interaction, they are not bounded by systematic approaches. Ideologically, contemporary interculturalism moves beyond the categorization of both scientism and postmodernism, seeking, in Schechner's words, "celebrations of cultures within the framework of planetary systems" (160).

Interculturalism projects a new universalism, and attempts to propose common ground on which both ethnocentrism and the "absent center" of postmodernism can be opposed (Birringer 22). Theorists and practitioners of the eighties and nineties continue, like Schechner, to search for ways to express 'first principles' through a return to the primitive. Increasingly, the primitive is identified in contemporary theatre with nature. Environmental concerns provide a context for the new universalism, in which common human concern is more than human, as in Robert Wilson's The Forest (1988), where the texts of natural and human history come together in a theatrical environment: "Animal and human metamorphoses, and reptiles, birds, fish, people, and rocks settle into narrative. Words are . . . sedimentation. In this new theatrical enlightenment natural history shares the scene with human history, for an alternative view of culture. Aesthetics is a branch of natural science. . . . Not since surrealism has there been a new visual ethnography" (Marranca 36). The cultural inclusiveness idealized by the Wilshires is co-signed by Wilson's intertext, whose mythic and mystic dimensions conform to the notion of a planetarism grounded in the goals of overcoming duality and renewing community.

Wilson's The Forest, however, like surrealism itself, may equally be construed as an extreme statement of alienation. Postmodern interculturalism is likewise paradoxical in that its very inclusiveness may be construed in certain instances as evidence of extreme alienation. Marranca argues that Wilson's work reflects his own condition as an artist: "He inhabits the cosmopolitan's kind of homelessness, the capacity to live anywhere and nowhere. The natural state of his work is translation. If the idea of 'dispersed' describes the lives of texts, Wilson's own manner of working only stylizes this general condition of literature" (38). The expression of artistic alienation is nothing new or strange; its substitution for true visions of social change, however, can render its imagism sterile at times. Birringer is more sceptical than Marranca of Wilson's interculturalism, seeing there "the formalist aestheticism with which [he] constructs, expands, and repeats the dream images of his complete alienation from the subjects of his work" (124). Birringer sees Wilson's alienation as consistent with the contemporary "representational crisis, a crisis of visual space" characterized by the decay of urban structures, and consequently also of the ideology and myth which cities embody" (121). The loss of the physical representation of cultural centres in cities has transformed culture and performance, completely disrupting their traditional relationship with the "clearly boundaried polis" (125).

If Kroetsch's observation that "Canada is a postmodern country" is correct, it has been such until recently in a way consistent with the sense of Turner's image of a "grid of black boxes . . . whose external form is safely measurable but whose contents are incommensurable and thus unknowable" (96). The advances of multiculturalism and pluralism have not necessarily rectified these isolations, pluralism being, to use another of Turner's metaphors, "a sort of oil, a liquid medium that merely holds its contents in suspension, and does not allow them to transform each other chemically" (96). Transculturation and transformation happen not

in acknowledgement of difference but in the "doing" which elides "the 'them' and 'us'" (Schechner 158). As J.J. Healy observes, participation in such processes is enacted in North America in the multiple cultural border territories which have succeeded the old frontier ("From Adam" 14-20). Such postmodern borderlands, he suggests, are often "subversive, repressive nomad space, good for both revelation and revolution" (18). Cultural borders are not an aesthetic playground, in Healy's view: on the contrary, they are, he suggests, potentially hostile territory, inhabited by the postcolonial articulations of "a bitter, barbed anger-script that speaks from the humiliations of powerlessness and a hatred of power" produced by members of cultures formerly unrecognized and disenfranchised (18). In the Canadian context, Healy's view is easily corroborated by the example of the perhaps surprising intercultural appeal of Tomson Highway's play, Dry Lips Oughta Move to Kapuskasing (1989). Highway's play, unquestionably a "barbed anger-script," throws uncomfortable light on the internalized inscriptions of such repressive and totalizing institutions as Deleuze and Guattari warn against. It is only one instance of the strident and shocking aesthetics required to represent and subsequently exorcise remnants of old processes of acculturation, and a reminder that history is not submerged by the play of difference, but rather thrown constantly to the surface.

In Canada during the postcolonial period, it has certainly been the case that theatre which rages in the manner of Highway's plays has often gained a greater influence with audiences than apolitical, postmodernist explorations of the aesthetic margins. This should not be surprising, since repressed cultures have only recently begun to penetrate the accretions and repressions of colonial metanarrative. Healy would argue that just as Euro-Americans have been threatened by the emergent discourses of the other, subjected to the "fear . . . of

dispossession" by the "foundering of Adam and the melting of the mosaic," so also are Euro-Canadians are being threatened by the breakdown of their "very late-blooming [mythologies] . . . their garrison mentalities, bush gardens of modest survival, and shared figures of outrage and victimage" (19, 20). Less presumptuous than Americans in their mythic claims to territory though European Canadians may be, yet all too easily has their postcolonial nationalism of the seventies, institutionalized as the mythology or the cultural centre which defines margins, occupied the space formerly defined by colonialism. Furthermore, contemporary Canadian nationalism tends to reassert itself with every new challenge from regional dissent and from the emergent narratives of the suppressed cultures of the country: old cultural hegemonies may transform themselves in the interests of survival, but do not readily concede real territory.

The chapters which follow are arranged as a succession of narratives which attempt to throw light on the colonial content of postcolonial culture and the processes of transformation by which, since the sixties, performance and performance texts have been modified (1) to address the persistence of historical exclusions in the present, and to give voice and presence to the formerly suppressed; (2) to overcome those aesthetic modes of production which reflected repressive ideologies. The first chapter will examine the phenomenon of the postcolonial emergence of theatricality in Canada in the light of the ways in which colonial culture and values had suppressed indigenous performance. In the late sixties, models of collective creation borrowed from the international countercultural theatre movement were adapted by Canadian theatre, not only as a means of challenging the primacy of the playwright, but for the creation of a new, decentralized iconography of the Canadian people, expressed in terms of a communal struggle against oppression. It will be argued that, while the collective creation of theatre generated a mythology of utopian populism, the early postcolonial theatre created its own

suppressions, so that the expression of experience was inhibited by the collective.

The second chapter will address theatre's role both in the creation of power relations and in their subsequent dismantling. It will investigate the use of theatre in the construction of colonial authority in Canada, and then proceed to examine the narratives of contemporary theatre through which the effects of colonial history and its power structures in the present have been called into question. There will be a particular emphasis on the establishment of two colonies, the French and the English, and subsequent relations between the two, as well as on the construction of the aboriginal as the Other, in colonial theatre as well as in contemporary theatrical mythology.

The third chapter will examine the contemporary theatre of those whose perspectives were initially excluded from the postcolonial engagement with colonial history. Contemporary works of the dominant culture which project powerlessness as the condition of women and aboriginal peoples, and the answering dramas from these groups will be examined, with special attention to the structural and linguistic differences between those scripts which promote and those which resist centrist and unitary ideologies. The question which informs this examination of texts is whether it is possible to subvert the dominant culture without substituting a new dominant ideology (as the nationalist theatre did).

The fourth and final chapter will address postmodernism and interculturalism in Canadian theatre. This chapter will raise questions relating to the possibilities offered by performance and representation for the restructuring of the self and relations with others. It will be demonstrated that intertextuality and interdisciplinary creation have been used by postmodern theatre in Canada to historicize unitary narratives of culture, and that the performance of subjectivity and self has superseded the collective construction of unitary identity. It will be

proposed that the postmodern project of constructing intercultural myths which acknowledge the co-presence of universality and difference permits theatre to subvert the old notions of territorial entitlement which informed the nationalist period of postcolonial theatre, and to re-invest performance with its fundamental power to draw spectators into a communal experience.

CHAPTER ONE

AUTHORITY, PERFORMANCE, AND TEXT: A THEATRE DIVIDED AGAINST ITSELF

I: Contexts of the Foundation of Theatrical Nationalism

The existential condition of performance, as Herbert Blau figured it in the early sixties, is precisely rendered by "the elemental image of the actor in the center of the acting area," a public place (Impossible 183). The singular figure of the actor and the gaze of the audience to whom he/she is present is the fundamental dyad of drama: in the shared time of theatre a subversion of the distance between subject and object occurs. The fact of the audience's presence requires the actor to establish a condition of existence, whether or not he/she appears to take action on a social plane: "He can choose to act out of some rationalized sense of responsibility, or he can waive responsibility as irrelevant and act to stake out an existence, creating himself out of nothing. The motives are not always clearly separable, and in the highest drama they merge in curious ways. Who am I? Who says so? (Maybe even, Who cares?) The actor may try to deny it, but in his most religious inwardness he knows that someone is watching" (183). The interaction of the gaze and its object, the performer, is all that exists in the theatre. For all the actor's subjectivity, as Blau points out, "the presence of the actor keeps the theater objective" (184). Thus, whatever the form of the theatrical performance, from the most solipsistic monologue to the objectified historicity of epic theatre, the distinctions between subjectivity and objectivity, and between the individual and the communal consciousness are subverted in the space and time shared by actor and audience in performance. Blau's pronouncement of the existential nature of theatre typifies the mission of the revolutionary American theatre of the sixties, a theatre committed to recreating that sense of community which, it was held, had been buried under rationalism, guilt, and "the

repressive order of civilization" (298).

Theatricality lay at the centre of the crisis which in the sixties decisively separated the modern and the classical from the postmodern. In substance, the crisis was a desire to reconstitute a sense of community liberated from the old cultural, moral, and intellectual discourses or texts. It was the time of the revival of Artaud, both in Europe and in the United States. While the theatrical revolution was identified in its early stages with the radical leftist population (especially in France) a strong interest in revivifying community through ritual rather than political ideology inspired an international theatre movement, which in the sixties invaded all western cultures. Such companies as The Living Theater and The Performance Group, both founded in the United States, were dedicated to reinventing "the 'sacred theater' which Artaud argued should replace the dead theater of representation" (McGlynn 142). At the heart of Artaud's argument for the efficacy of theatre as ritual was the belief that the proper content of theatre was myth. Through the collective expression of intensified spontaneity, combined with the invocation of spirituality from ancient religious texts (usually non-Christian), such companies as The Living Theater and The Performance Group intended to free performers and spectators from the limitations of individualism. Although Artaud believed that theatre should dispose of texts and language itself as obstructions to pure communication, he stopped short of doing away with all signification, viewing myth as the true means to the reawakening of the human spirit. Theatre existed properly, Artaud averred, "to create Myths, to express life in its immense, universal aspect, and from that life to extract images in which we find pleasure in discovering ourselves" (75). Myth, he hoped, would rescue humanity from the constraints of civilization and its traditions. For one form of grounding in the past--history--he wished to substitute another, whose natural expression, in his view, was theatrical: "May

[theatre] free us, in a Myth in which we have sacrificed our little human individuality, like Personages out of the past, with powers rediscovered in the Past" (75). As Pavis puts it, the new interest in myth was intended to integrate the diversity of modern social life, as well as its interethnic tensions: "la production théâtrale de l'avant-garde cherche à dépasser le modèle de l'historicité par une confrontation des cultures les plus diverses, à recourir (non sans risque de folklorisation) au rituel, au mythe, et à l'anthropologie comme modèle intégrateur de toutes ces expériences [sociaux] (Barba, Grotowski, Brook, Schechner)" (9).

The validity of the universalist aspirations of the cultural and ideological practices of the sixties has since been called into question repeatedly. Certainly, the aspirations of the theatre of the time to recreate community through sacred ritual and myth have been noted to be incongruous within the context of late modern capitalism. Fred McGlynn, in concert with Julia Kristeva, observes that any attempt at a modern semiology or mythology which would "hold up any longer faced with the crises of State, religion, and family," or at a discourse "which would provide for the actor's and audience's recognition of themselves in the same Author" is doomed to fail "to constitute a communal discourse of interplay" (141-42). Furthermore, the credibility of the ideological libertarianism which spawned the theatrical experiments of the sixties has suffered from subsequent exposure of its bourgeois origins. Allan Bloom in particular has thoroughly attacked the bases of the anti-repressive morality of the American students' movement of the sixties as self-indulgent and histrionic: "Moderation . . . had become 'repression' of nature, one of the forms of domination, the buzzword of the advanced thinkers. . . . All that was needed were the heroes willing to act out the fantasies the public was now ready to accept as reality; the hero, the hedonist, who dares to do in public what the public wants to see. It was épater les bourgeois as a bourgeois calling" (328). The allegedly

new morality of the sixties was "derived simply from the leading notions of democratic thought, absolutized and radicalized," and too informed by both selfishness and "a covert élitism" to effect a genuine deepening of community values (326, 329). On the other hand, Bloom reaffirms the value of "ritual and ceremony" (57), as well as myth (37)--not, however, the Artaudian view of myth as an expression of the universal but rather as an expression of the ethnocentric: "A father must prefer his child to other children, a citizen his country to others. That is why there are myths--to justify these attachments. And a man needs a place and opinions by which to orient himself. This is strongly asserted by those who talk about the importance of roots" (37). Cultural values, Bloom argues, must be constrained to place if they are to be meaningful: "A very great narrowness is not incompatible with the health of an individual or a people, whereas with great openness it is hard to avoid decomposition" (37). While Bloom's disparaging of cultural relativism and his revalorizing of ethnocentrism invite the challenge of most postmodern thought, they nevertheless point to the dialectical element which is often obscured in contemporary cultural mapping, the desire for identity and values, which is the concomitant of the desire for freedom from colonization by alien cultures.

The founding of a postcolonial theatre in Canada occurred as the result of the coincidence of the country's readiness to define cultural identity with the availability of a wide range of external theatrical models, American and European, together the means for the recreation of the collective will outside the terms of atrophied traditions and in opposition to the constraints of the prevailing moral authorities. Before nationalism became the defining ideology of the new Canadian theatre, counter-cultural attitudes and practices provided the framework for its articulation. As Denis W. Johnston notes, in the first of the decisive stages in the foundation of an alternative theatre movement in Toronto "new quasi-professional companies such as Theatre

Passe Muraille and the Studio Lab presented the best plays of the American counter-culture." (Mainstream 6). The wave of American influence which pervaded Canadian cities was decisive for the creation of the new alternative companies: "The movement begun in the late 1960s when American counter-cultural values were at their zenith, with alternative lifestyles publicly flaunted at Toronto's notorious 'free university' of Rochdale College and in the 'hippie' district of Yorkville. Theatre Passe Muraille's production of Futz in 1969 and the Festival of Underground Theatre in 1970 were the most important landmarks of this stage" (27). At the same time, a strong theatrical counter-culture developed in Vancouver, inaugurated in 1966 by John Juliani with the creation of a student avant-garde company at Simon Fraser University, *Savage God*, which later achieved professional status (Usmiani, Second 74-79). Juliani's influences were eclectic, and representative of the strongest currents in both the American and European avant-garde. His ambitious challenges to the basic tenets of traditional theatrical practice owed much to Artaud, Grotowski, and Schechner.

In Québec, too, the full emergence of nationalism in theatre was preceded by a period of counter-cultural preparation. Not the professional stage, but college theatre, a venerable institution in Québec, was the source of the first productions which undermined the authorial presence of the cultural establishment and introduced the fundamental tool of counter-culture, the collective creation (Villemure, "Aspects" 57). In Québec, as in the rest of Canada, the co-existence of receptivity to counter-cultural models from both the United States and Europe with the project of overturning traditional theatre from the same cultural sources remains striking. Bélair, for example, finds no serious contradiction in noting that the 1968 production by Théâtre du Même Nom (TMN), Les Enfants du Chénier dans un grand spectacle d'adieu, constituted "un refus global des formes théâtrales importées, qu'elles soient françaises ou

américaines" (Nouveau 32), even as he frankly asserts that the establishment of a new alignment of theatre and "le milieu collectif" depended on the appropriation of new American models: "C'est ainsi qu'on a vu surgir, s'inspirant en cela des démarches les plus modernes, un théâtre politique, un théâtre revendication-sociale, un théâtre global ou théâtre d'environnement de même qu'un théâtre de provocation quasi-révolutionnaire. Le Grand Cirque ordinaire . . . s'apparente par son utilisation de la fabulation, au Bread and Puppet Theatre; le TMN lui se rapproche de la position du teatro Campesino même s'il n'est pas arrivé à un activisme de type militantiste alors que le nouveau réalisme de Michel Tremblay s'apparente au nouveau théâtre 'social' américain et les expériences de Maurice Demers aux principes de la dynamique de groupe, de la prise de conscience et du défolement collectif préconisé par le Living Theatre" (Nouveau 33-34). Bélair does not apologize for the apparent contradiction. On the contrary: in listing these alignments, he rightly points out that theatre in Québec had begun to identify itself with a "refus global" broader than that delineated by Borduas in 1948. At the same time, he denies that the new Québec theatre derived anything more than models of militant dynamism and collective methodology from the American and European models, asserting instead the primacy of the cultural specifics of the Québec context over the universals of revolutionary culture in determining the new theatrical aesthetic and ideology: "De fait, même si certaines démarches sont communes, et le fait est indéniable, elles se différencient par suite du contexte dans lequel elles s'expriment; le théâtre québécois tendant, par définition, à mettre en relief une situation québécoise, il y parviendra à travers une langue et par des formes théâtrales directement rattachées à cette même situation" (34).

Bélair's accurate assessment of the intercultural origins of cultural nationalism is no less applicable to the foundation of alternative theatre in the rest of Canada than it is to the

collective dynamics in Québec.

Pavis proposes that contemporary theatre no longer identifies itself simply as art, but rather as the site--or crossroads--of cultural representation: "Ce croisement [des cultures] où passent en coup de vent les cultures étrangères, les discours étranges et les mille effets artistiques de l'étrangeté est un lieu bien incertain, mais il pourrait s'affirmer, dans les prochaines années, comme celui d'un théâtre de Culture(s), relayant ainsi ce qu'on a nommé le Théâtre d'Art et se substituant à la mise en scène historicisée des classiques" (7). In the light of this definition of the project of the contemporary avant-garde, or the postmodern, it is apparent that developments in Canadian theatre in the late sixties and early seventies arose from impulses basic to the cultural life of the capitalist world and not from simple nationalism, which until recently has been given too much credit as artistic inspiration.

Nationalist ideology, as Filewod has suggested, was thereby the pretext for the primary project of investigating the idea of cultural identity, initially only roughly defined: "The [nationalist] narrative presupposes the equation of culture, community, and state. As long as it was the articulation of a national struggle to define a postcolonial culture, the actual definition could be deferred as a dehistoricized quality" ("Undermining" 180). Usmiani has suggested that Canadians viewed their position at the intersection of the international countercultural movement and the recession of their colonial dependency as if they were behind a starting line: "Canadians have a tendency to see themselves as isolated and utterly cut-off from other cultures and previous developments: having denied a colonial past, they feel they must necessarily start from a cultural zero-point" (Second xii). She cites Jean-Claude Germain's assertion that "[nous] on a reinventé le théâtre" (180). This reinvention, however, only defines Canadian theatre if viewed from the perspective of the historical break with colonial culture. In

the context of international developments, Canada was in fact participating in a greater movement to reinvent theatre outside the linearity of history and associated performance traditions. Bélair's assertion of the primacy of local cultural and linguistic context over the appropriation of external models, taken together with Usmiani's identification of "a cultural zero point," leads to the conclusion that revolutionary disengagement from the colonial past opened an imaginative space which could be transformed into the ground of cultural mythicization. Filewod's admission that the initial nationalist definition of culture "erased difference" ("Undermining" 179) does not alter the fact that what was happening in the early alternative theatre was the first phase of Pavis's transition from a theatre of art (identified with the government-funded arts centres and festival theatre, the international repertoire, and the classics) to a theatre of culture(s), identified with populism, regionalism, localism, and the indictment of historical suppression by colonial institutions.

Theatre holds a powerful position at the intersection of tradition and the creation of new cultural representations and myths. As Pavis points out, the theatre acts as a laboratory for the exploration of cultures: "D'un tel croisement [des cultures], la mise en scène théâtrale est peut-être aujourd'hui le dernier refuge et le plus rigoureux laboratoire" (7). Theatre provides the arena not only for the recombination of cultural elements, but also for the interaction of a variety of disciplinary perspectives on cultures--aesthetic, socio-economic, anthropological, sociological, and semiological. Perhaps most importantly, the primary element of theatre--the presence of the actor before the spectator--functions as the means of representing the distinctions between the collective and the texts which claim authority over it. Its very "suspicion of its own apparency," as McGlynn speculates, may make theatre "the ideal site for the postmodern era to rethink the density of its inscriptions and the ambiguity of its margins

among the clamour of our time": the objective of performance is always to place before the spectator in the bodily presence of the actor the possibility of a truth hidden at a centre beyond "the dispersions of culture and social space," but not beyond the confines of the playing space (154).

The postcolonial aversion to the power of the author, the text, and, in the most radical contexts of production, to the director--"Dieu-l'Auteur, son Fils-le texte et l'Esprit-Saint-Metteur en Scène" (Villemure, "Aspects" 62)--cannot simply be accounted for by the rejection of colonial history and cultural hegemony. On the contrary, colonial cultural and institutional authority become symbolic in postcolonial theatre of the domination of the actor by the text itself. While the engagement with text--by collective creation, documentary representations of objectivity, satire, physicalization, mime, and language games--which characterizes much alternative theatre from the seventies to the present, is at one level the exorcism of the cultural inscriptions inhibiting cultural expression, it also serves to re-instate the actor, as representative of the social self, to his/her full powers, freed from enslavement to the task of merely speaking the text--"la parole soufflée," in Derrida's words.

The alienation of the physical presence of the actor entailed by the repetition of the words of an absent author under the guidance of an ultimately absent director nevertheless corresponds closely with consciousness of colonization. This theatrical consciousness of the alienations of text, enacted on the stage in the symbolic overturning of the institutions of colonialism--the classics, colonial historical iconography, family and church as sources of moral authority, the clichés of American popular culture, for instance--communicates to the audience images of its own condition, making the difference between the cultural text and simple presence visible and audible. Such theatrical acts as Le Grand Spectacle d'adieu of Les

Enfants du Chénier, Hosanna's Hallowe'en masquerade as Elizabeth Taylor's Cleopatra, the satirical depiction of Susanna Moodie in Theatre Passe Muraille's 1837: The Farmer's Revolt, as well as public utterances of outrage at the appointment of the British director, Robin Phillips, at the Stratford Festival, are all directed to the purpose of clearing the theatrical and social space of images and linguistic constructs which can invite nothing more than mimicry and reproduction, and which suppress autonomy and feeling. John Hirsch indicated the scope of the problem, when he observed in 1974 that "from the Shaw Festival to the Manitoba Theatre Centre one finds Canadians speaking with English accents" (31). Hugh Faulkner, the then Secretary of State, succinctly pointed to the other side of the cultivation of English theatrical style, the underdevelopment of any other form of cultural representation: "Culture in Canada . . . is not as real, as vital, as living a thing as it should be. It has no real roots in the country" (31). Thus, in the seventies in Canada, Artaud's famous cry of "no more masterpieces" (74-83) was no mere slogan for the theoretical and theatrical avant-garde, but rather an accurate expression of the pre-condition to creating the future of the country's culture.

II: The Colonial Text as Absent Author/Father

A clear sense of the division between the logocentric and the hierarchical, on the one hand, and the spatial, visual, and anarchic, on the other, was the first prerequisite to the creation of a new Canadian theatre capable of developing a renewed social vision. Although the apparent goal of antitextual theatre in the seventies was to replace logocentrism with anarchy, in practice it was more usually concerned with finding new ways to view the relationship between order and freedom. Thus, at the very moment when Canadian theatre asserted its independence of the texts of history, ideology, and theatrical tradition, it found

itself appropriating them to demonstrate that they could be subverted or reordered.

From the late sixties to the mid-seventies, the Canadian alternative theatre defined its implied audience as populist. Spectators were assumed to be either inexperienced in theatrical reception, or, if educated in the dramatic canon and raised with conservative views of theatre and culture, no longer enslaved to received ideas. The media had already altered popular perceptions of culture and society as well as the practices of social institutions, thus subverting the power of old political orders. Consequently, linearity, rationality, authority, and hierarchy had already been somewhat displaced from their accustomed centrality before the deconstructionists and cultural revolutionaries of the sixties began their attacks on tradition. An audience prepared for a theatre estranging familiar texts with spatial, imagistic, and linguistic disruptions was consequently available. As Max Dorsinville recalls, in Québec during the sixties "McLuhanism [was] a metaphor for the larger cultural changes that occurred" (189). Signs of such changes included the new Ministry of Education's revision of highly conservative rhetorical teaching systems, the replacement of collèges classiques by junior colleges, the adoption of new participatory management techniques, the development of television and radio drama, the growth of a commercial film industry from the activities of the National Film Board, the political rise of René Lévesque from a media background, and the important role assigned to such popular celebrities as Gilles Vigneault, Pauline Julien, and Robert Charlebois in defining the new nationalism. The influence of media was, of course, no less instrumental in changing social perceptions in the rest of the country. A new theatre which strongly preferred images and action to speech, and which rejected domination by the printed word was thus easily accessible to its audience. The "reinvention" of theatre announced by Jean-Claude Germain in 1970 was not simply the work of political and artistic visionaries, but

rather a symptom of an already transformed culture marked by the diminished authority of the word and its writer.

Although television, radio, and film were important factors in cultural change in the sixties, broadcasting in Canada was not radical in its own programming, nor had it fully disrupted colonialist notions of high culture. While it popularized dramatic scripts by Canadian writers, the CBC also perpetuated a colonialist approach to national culture by reproducing and valorizing the international artistic repertoire. As Dorsinville points out, television drama in Québec reflected "the divorce between high art and low art--the one viewing culture in an elitist frame and the other seeing it essentially as a product of communal experience," as exemplified in the distinction between the téleroman, or serial, and téléthéâtre, or the play produced for the medium (183-84). Government preference for the transcendent values of high art over the deeper structures of indigenous culture was also evident in the programming of the regional arts centres and established theatre companies, to the chagrin of the cultural nationalists of the early seventies. In 1973 Bélair characterized the enemies of indigenous theatre as the myths of "[le] Comédien, [le] Grand Théâtre, et [les] Grandes Troupes," which still haunted the theatre of Montréal in the early seventies, and which designated the continuing pretensions of members of the theatrical establishment to the status of bearers of a great tradition (21). Many politically conscious Canadians were confronted with the necessity of completely rejecting the values associated with the performance of 'high art' as being too closely bound to a vision of nationalism rooted in colonial attitudes which presumed the superiority of European cultures. If a recovery of collective, indigenous culture was to be effected, it was deemed necessary by the alternative theatre of the late sixties to reject participation in the reproduction of colonial artistic values, to assume identification as the

culturally colonized, and, from that position, to subvert, challenge, or deconstruct the universalisms of the traditional repertoire through symbolic confrontations on the stage.

To assume the position of the colonized is clearly a matter of political choice for many members of an affluent postcolonial society, who are equally free to identify with institutional inscriptions of moral and cultural superiority. Nevertheless, it is a political alignment which, although it may sometimes be duplicitous, is often necessary to the untangling of the texts of history and to articulating the culture and language which those texts have suppressed. In 1962 and 1967, George Ryga put the Canadian Native at the centre of his dramas to represent the condition of the colonized. But in the sixties, particularly in Québec, Canadians also found their cultural leanings by aligning themselves with the postcolonial struggles of the third world elsewhere. Hubert Aquin, for instance, in *"La fatigue culturelle du Canada français"* (1962), looks to Africa (Léopold Senghor) and the Caribbean (Aimé Césaire) for wisdom in redefining relations between culture and state (304, 312). Dorsinville in *"Drama in Quebec"* (1972), draws parallels between the type of engagement found in Québec theatre and that expressed in the drama of Césaire, Wole Soyinka, Derek Walcott, or Amiri Baraka (188). In the view of Dorsinville, such identifications helped to define the intentions of postcolonial political drama-- ". . . political assertiveness . . . the purgation of fears and repressions, the attempt at psychic liberation by the delineation of events" (188). There is no new cultural or political condition to be realized without the drama described by Dorsinville, that of self-liberation through confrontation with history.

The first step towards a postcolonial drama of commitment in Canada was the recognition that there is no real theatrical tradition to provide the context for revolt. In modern theatre in Canada, references to indigenous drama of the past have been rare. The patriotic dramas of

Louis-Honoré Fréchette--Félix Poutre (1871) and Papineau (1880)--and Antoine Gérin-Lajoie's Le Jeune Latour (1844) provided inspiration for Jacques Ferron's Les Grands Soleils (1958) and Marcel Dubé's Un Simple soldat (1958) respectively. But, generally, it seemed advisable to the alternative theatre to avoid the Canadian drama of the past, since most of it was imitative and laden with colonialist attitudes. Instead of engaging with canonical drama, as American, French, or British playwrights might do, Canadians of the sixties also abandoned the international classics as the evidence of cultural colonization, instead referring themselves to new, imported counter-cultural forms. Radical reinterpretation of Shakespearean texts, for instance, a favoured pursuit of European and American directors and critics in the sixties and seventies, was apparently inconceivable in Canadian theatre at that time. Shakespeare might provide the substance of satiric political allegory, as in Gurik's Hamlet, Prince du Québec (1968); and Corneille, the pretext for linguistic deconstruction, as in Réjean Ducharme's Le Cid maghané (1968). But beyond their potential for such parodic appropriation, classical texts were too deeply identified as symbols of colonial cultural occupation to be taken seriously during the early postcolonial period.

Secondly, theatrical change at the end of the sixties entailed the recognition and rejection of the moral constraints which had rendered the drama so marginal, underdeveloped, and often sterile. In Canada, such a confrontation with the marginality of theatre produced two responses, one conservative, the other radical: on the one hand, a strong belief in professionalization and competence as a solution to past failures (as typified by Robertson Davies's recommendations to the Massey Commission ["The State" 32-34]); and, on the other, open defiance of moral and aesthetic attitudes which repressed native self-expression. Seen in retrospect, the former response clearly implies that worthy playwrights can only come to the

fore when a fully fledged theatrical institution has been developed to accommodate them. Until the end of the colonial period such a view had often been the expression of an older generation's despair at ever attaining any recognition themselves. Playwrights such as Davies, John Coulter and Merrill Denison, in the process of articulating their scepticism of the acceptability of Canadian plays, all affirmed the notions that the theatrical centre must always be elsewhere, and that Canadians themselves must be at fault for rejecting the efforts of their dramatists. The Massey Commission too visualized professionalization and the social acceptability of the artistic product as prerequisites for creativity. The second, more defiant, attitude, on the other hand, recognizes that art is marginal, by its nature opposed to the conventional moral code, and subsequently exploits alienation by the establishment as a potentially fruitful strategy. It is the second approach, the exploitation of the social and moral marginality of theatre, which has founded postcolonial drama, by cancelling the power of the taboos against its production.

Michael Tait, of a mind with Arthur Phelps, rightly observes that the main impediment to development of indigenous Canadian theatre in the colonial period was the incompatibility of even the most serious theatre and "Puritan" respectability (Tait 2:144). Few Canadians of the early twentieth century would have concurred with Phelps ("Canadians have an innate distaste for the kind of spiritual self-discovery serious drama affords;" (144)) that the theatre could provide a spiritual experience, any more than the early puritans would have accepted that a dramatist could present at least something of the truth. It has been more common in Canadian history, on the contrary, to restrict indigenously produced theatre to the service of social stability and colonial ideology. The governing élite of the early twentieth century in Canada shrewdly recognized the value of propagating amateur community drama, through the Dominion Drama Festival, as an excellent tool for encouraging national unity, and for

inculcating the values of a strictly European code of aesthetics, even while encouraging the production of Canadian plays (Betty Lee, Love and Whisky; Salter, "Declarations"). The degrees of organization, competitiveness, and conformism to standards required by the Festival all mitigated against originality and against the grounding of theatrical expression in actual cultural conditions.

In Québec, dramatic performance has often been subject to controls more severe than those imposed elsewhere in Canada. In the eighteenth century, the clergy banned theatre absolutely from the colony. At other times, theatrical production, both by amateurs and professionals, has been subject to intense scrutiny, and the faithful have been warned of the sin inherent in attending certain performances (Laflamme and Tourangeau). Archbishop Bruchési's repeated public condemnation of Sarah Bernhardt's performances in Québec and Montréal in 1905, together with the diva's unrestrained responses to the censure, is a notorious instance of the antagonism between the pulpit and the popular stage (Laflamme and Tourangeau 235-246; Béraud 107-121). Nevertheless, the clergy did not prevent Montréal citizens from becoming enamoured with theatre during the earlier part of the twentieth century. Most productions offered in the city until the sixties were the work of visiting companies from France, Belgium, England, and the United States, but as well a lively popular indigenous theatre flourished in cabarets at the margins of imported culture (Béraud; Mailhot and Montpetit). Given the overwhelming number of professional productions, an attitude of pragmatic tolerance to them was perhaps inevitable.

The Church and the theatre have seemed at times, on the other hand, to be very closely allied in Québec. Parochial pageants celebrating historical and religious themes have thrived in rural areas. Passion plays on the grander scale, including those mounted by Père Gustave

Lamarche, drew crowds in the tens of thousands, during the thirties (Béraud; Laflamme and Tourangeau). As Dorsinville assesses it, classical drama performed in colleges, for much of the province's history the only form of theatre permitted by the clergy, was a useful tool for perpetuating intellectual tradition and class privilege (180). The extension of the standards of college classical drama to the public realm effected the greatest advance towards an adequate professional theatre in the history of Québec. From the late thirties to the fifties, Père Émile Legault and his Compagnons de Saint-Laurent (originally a college drama society and, after a decade of amateur status, eventually professional) ensured that theatre produced in Québec was both artistically improved (their repertoire included contemporary French plays as well as classics), and also clearly distinguished from imported theatre in its commitment to consistency with Catholic moral teaching. Despite the attention of Les Compagnons to preserving public standards of morality, even their exploration of the contemporary repertoire evoked clerical opposition when Cardinal Léger publicly voiced disapproval of their production of André Obey's Lucrèce, because the play dealt with suicide (Laflamme and Tourangeau 338-46).

Such powerful constraints against public expression of undesirable opinions and attitudes marked colonial theatre off from the modern theatre of England, France, or the United States, which had usually enjoyed privilege and licence as the public forum of opinion and taste. Theatre in colonial Canada might well be viewed as a locus of all that moral ideals of self-control, and the garrison mentality itself, existed to subdue. Continued social and institutional disapproval of theatre as a popular activity, and subsequent attempts to contain it within the acceptable framework of high culture, have carried the implication that self-expression in itself is detrimental to the integrity of the community and to personal survival. Thus, the counter-cultural theatre of the sixties and seventies found that its first task was to undo previous taboos,

to legitimate self-expression, and to redefine the possibilities of community outside codes of obedience to puritanical conformism. Given the history in colonial Canada of the use of religious and literary textual authority to limit self-awareness, the satirical spontaneity and antitextuality of the early alternative movement provided a much needed form of liberation from internalizations of an increasingly self-estranging social code.

As important as the alternative theatre's challenge to colonial hegemonies was, it should not be forgotten that the movement was more immediately an ideological and cultural response to the post-war homogenization by capitalist culture, particularly in cities and suburbs. Despite its oppositional stance, the alternative theatre was in fact as closely linked to the economic system as were the regional arts centres which it deemed bourgeois and colonialist: the proliferation of autonomous alternative groups throughout the country in the early seventies was contingent on the easy availability of government funding for their operations (Johnston, Mainstream 7). These grants, together with federalist Centennial fervour, were the two major factors in creating the peculiar combination of cultural nationalism and neo-Marxist populism which distinguished the developing alternative theatre of Canada from its American and European artistic models (Johnston 6-7, 250-52). Arguably, the alternative theatre was a government-licensed double of the political and economic aspirations of the country in the early seventies, its populist utopianism a mythological counterpart to the unifying agenda of federalism. The theatre movement of the seventies, engaged as it was in the double-work of reaching non-traditional (preferably working class) audiences and propagating cultural nationalism, was in part a somewhat unconscious agent of a totalizing vision of culture (Filewod, "Undermining" 179). The old patriarchal texts which it so aggressively opposed were, in effect, replaced by new orthodoxies.

The source of the success of the alternative theatre--and it was outstandingly successful both in expanding the audience for and transforming the image of theatre, and in reinterpreting the country's cultural iconography--lay in its commitment to the value of performance and direct communication as the primary means to overcoming audience alienation and what Artaud calls "the idea of culture as distinct from life" (10). The cost of emphasizing performance and visual experience was inevitably the undervaluation of the playwright and the author's command over speech. At the extreme, Fernand Villemure's characterization of the playwright and his text as shadows of the authority of God and the religious hierarchy, or of the absent monarch of a colony, conveys the degree to which language had become suspect by the seventies (62). In the 1978 Marxist-Leninist manifesto of *Théâtre Euh!*, playwrights are characterized as decadent parasites: "Tremblay vole le monde qu'il écrit; Antonine Maillet pille les gens de son village : en retour, ils ne leur donnent rien qui puissent les sortir de leur misère" (116). In more moderate alternative theatre contexts, collective creation processes of improvisation and research conducted by the actors tended to marginalize or even exclude the writer. In general the private command of language, the preserve of the writer, was suspect as a source of control of the actor and the spectator, capable of rendering both passive to alien ideas. While the alternative theatre did seek to develop the skills of new playwrights through workshops and staged readings, it also ensured that the primacy of performance was sustained in new works by privileging collective processes and improvisation. In effect, the alternative theatre entrenched a deep division between language and the visuo-spatial dimension, in its efforts to achieve theatricality. The conscious exploration of this division, like the play of difference between written text and speech, or absence and presence, has, of course, subsequently become the very stuff of postmodern theatre.

In the subsections which follow, collective creative processes and the language and structures of the playwright's text are examined separately from each other. It will be shown that, in the modern Canadian context, contrary to the assumptions of alternative theatre, collectivity expressed by the performance group and that expressed by the individual writer are often complementary. It will also be shown that the writer, whether playwright or performance artist, who resists identification with class and ideology, often has more power than the group itself to explore the complex imaginary structures or myths which govern social behaviour.

III: Collectives and Collaborations

Collective creation processes of the alternative theatre have received considerable critical attention since the late seventies. In English Canada, the genre has often been accepted as the source of a Canadian dramaturgy and theatre aesthetic more authentic than any so far identified in the singly authored works which account for the majority of productions in theatres across the country, and, as Knowles points out, for the entire content of most anthologies ("Voices" 94-106). Knowles and Wallace agree that collectively and collaboratively created theatre has suffered from the prevalence of conservative, logocentric attitudes among critics and academics (Knowles, "Voices" 100; Wallace, Producing 107-76). The situation exists in Canada that, while the collective creation process has consistently evolved from the sixties to the present, becoming increasingly disciplined and self-reflexive in some cases, and in others more politically engaged, still the institutional and critical views of drama centre on the playwright.

The common ideal of collective theatre groups of many ideological casts corresponds in substance to Jerzy Grotowski's belief, that, before all else, "the function of the actor [is] not to tell a story or create an illusion but to be there in the present, denying the fact of alienation and

incompleteness and negotiating a unity between the individual and the collective. The objective . . . to experience and discover the real. Art and life . . . the theatrical act and the social act were . . . to become one" (Biggsby 232). The successful collectives of the sixties and seventies were naturally those which discovered styles and images which reflected the experience of their audiences in the present time, at the level of collective awareness. To this end, the working methods of the collectives, their subject matter, styles, and performing locations were chosen to reduce the distance between performer and spectator. Implicit in their work was a new sense of civics, inherited to some extent from American and European sources, and adapted to the Canadian social context. According to Stefan Brecht, in his chronicle of the Living Theater in 1968, "the two schools of socialism, anarchism & communism, provide the alternatives for civic theatre" (49). Similarly, while many groups in Canada (and, especially, in Québec) professed an orthodox Marxism (Théâtre Euh! being the most prominent of such groups), many others merely exhibited a tendency to communal anarchy in their organization. Beneath any such socio-political concerns in all but the most orthodox groups, however, was a dedication to loosening social constraints, and to undermining the distance between art and life, by pitting marginalized ordinariness and daily life against unrealistic ideals, and by imaging play as an alternative to socially scripted behaviour. The spontaneity and improvisation of such American groups as The Living Theater (a major source of inspiration for Canadian alternative theatre) were designed not so much to assail social and political institutions, according to Brecht, as to overcome "repression in the individual--the original repression, the source and origin of repression in society" (48). Likewise, members of Canadian collectives of the sixties and seventies exploited a variety of performance techniques to undermine the internalizations of authority which constrained their own behaviour and that of their audiences.

The popularity and effectiveness of collective creations usually lay less in the precise nature of the content than in the assumption that the performance took place in a communal space in which both actors and audience were assumed to be completely and freely at home. Whether it was a question of street theatre or a performance in the most conventional theatre space, alternative theatre groups defined the locale as communal by dispensing with the appearance of fixed character, time, and place, and by substituting more direct forms of communication. Although an element of the carnivalesque dominated certain performances, particularly in street theatre, anonymity rarely excluded the generation of a sense of a stable community. Audience participation, a much valued aspect of collective creation, tended on the whole to be more a function of a performance mysticism, and of direct address, than of such actual intervention in the direction of the script as the later interactive and forum theatre methods came to permit.

The audience for collective creations in the sixties and seventies was invited to play an active rather than a passive role in creating the text of performance, as the members of Le Groupe de planification des dérives urbaines, founded in Montréal in the early seventies, indicate: "Nous pensons toutefois que [le spectateur] pourrait avoir la possibilité de CHOISIR entre regarder une situation et la vivre, ce que le théâtre tel qu'on le conçoit ne permet pas" (Beauchamp, "Seize manifestes" 91). More highly scripted performances, such as documentary dramas, required the audience to 'live the situation' by critically negotiating the ironic difference between alleged facts and visual contradictions of them, thus remaining alert to the distinction between fact and fiction (Bessai, "Documentary" 14). In sum, the audience for alternative theatre was expected to abandon the bourgeois, capitalist aesthetic, "la soi-disant culture occidentale," in the words of Théâtre Euh!, and to employ instead their senses, feelings

and, on occasion, their critical faculties (Beauchamp, "Seize" 115).

That the populist, nationalist, countercultural cast of the alternative theatre, together with its provisional performance values, effectively challenged prevailing aesthetic standards is evident in such criticism of new Canadian works as that of Brian Parker, who wondered, in 1977, on what possible grounds the new theatre could be taken seriously:

The quality of the work is uneven, usually evanescent, and often quite silly. Moreover, other countries had a similar flood of theatre in the sixties. For whatever complicated reasons, it was part of the times and was international, not especially Canadian; it is therefore slippery ground on which to build one's hopes for a national tradition. . . . More disturbing still, from a scholarly point of view, the new drama has become involved in a shrill, self-conscious nationalism. . . . The militant dramatists have demanded that the government . . . impose a "Canadian content" quota of 50 percent on all theaters receiving a public subsidy. . . . Dramatists in Quebec . . . write only for their own people and wish to be intelligible only to them. . . . Joual . . . has . . . the same political cachet in Quebec as have the American blacks' "jive" and "soul" in the United States. (159)

Parker is moved by such infractions of literary value as the theatre of the seventies insisted on to revisit the cultural issues raised by Douglas Bush's distinction between "local and parochial" and "local and universal," and to conclude from his considerations that "it is justifiable to defend mediocre drama as 'culture' in the wider, anthropological sense . . . [since] in all great art the universal rises from the particular; good literature, like good wine, needs a specific locality" (159-60). Parker does not appear to be aware of self-consciousness of the strategic

deconstruction of universality on which the new theatre founded its activities, nor of its calculated disregard for such critical standards as those by which it could be judged to be "mediocre" or "silly."

Since the performance strategies and styles of the alternative theatre of the seventies have been documented in detail by Usmiani, Bessai, Filewod, and Johnston, only a brief survey need be undertaken here to indicate the range of creative possibilities which were explored, the degree of success which was attained in generating new audiences through such strategies, and the degree of influence which they had on subsequent developments in Canadian theatre. In practice, the thousands of alternative theatrical projects mounted between 1965 and 1979 varied widely in the degree of spontaneity and skill they exhibited, and in their political orientation. Most of these projects were performed on stringently limited budgets, and, as a consequence, they normally relied on the activities of the performers themselves to create effects. The most popular techniques employed were circus routines, mime, occasional puppetry, improvized games and scenes, direct address to the audience, and documentary materials relating to historical and current social issues. These elements were combined through the collective processes conducted in rehearsal, in which actors, rather than directors, initiated solutions to the problems of developing a usually provisional (and often unscripted) performance text. Some groups addressed themselves to children, while others developed a style which could engage both children and adults. There were groups, particularly in Québec, which addressed women's issues exclusively, while others, such as Théâtre Euh!, sought a specifically proletarian audience for their propagandist theatre.

The highest density of collectively created performance in Canada occurred in Québec, where between 1966 and 1974, "plus d'un million de Québécois ont assisté aux 5 000

représentations qui se sont données des quelque 415 créations auxquelles ont participé environ 1 500 comédiens-auteurs" (Villemure, "Aspects" 68). In Québec, alternative theatre tended to be more radical than that in the rest of the country (with the possible exception of Mummers' Troupe in Newfoundland, a group marked by its militant socialist agenda and its use of agit-prop performance for intervention in disputes between the community and government agencies) (Usmiani Second 90-131; Filewod, Collective 112-51). The "nouveau théâtre québécois," as defined by Bélair, and represented by figures such as Tremblay and Germain, was not considered sufficiently detached from the theatre establishment by many collectives in Québec. Consequently, the "jeune théâtre" was formed, together with its organization, AQJT (Association Québécoise du Jeune Théâtre), the member groups dedicated to "decentralization, regionalism, research, and original creativity" (Usmiani Second 113). Jeune théâtre groups, characteristically composed of amateurs, performed in all parts of the province, concentrating primarily on presenting strongly propagandist performances to audiences in schools, factories, and other institutions (114-15). As Usmiani points out, the strict adherence of many jeune théâtre groups to Marxism, and in some cases (such as Théâtre des Cuisines) to feminism, led to a split between ideologists and groups more interested in aesthetic experiments in environmental theatre, such as Le Grand Cirque Ordinaire, L'Eskabel, and Les Enfants du Paradis, some of whom reorganized themselves to form the ATAQ (Association des groupes autonomes québécoises) (Usmiani 116-17; Des Landes, "ATAQ" 12-13). Whereas in English Canada many alternative groups conducted playwriting workshops, in Québec CEAD (Centre d'essai des auteurs dramatiques) was founded separately to serve the needs of developing writers, thus "leaving the jeune théâtre groups free to exercise their own creativity" (109). In their rejection of text and theatrical hierarchy, which corresponded to their rejection of the social and political

past, the jeune théâtre groups of Québec demonstrated a clearer affiliation with the radical theatre of the United States (such as Schechner's Performance Group) than most alternative theatre which developed in the rest of Canada. The institutionalized separation of aesthetic exploration from propagandism was peculiar to Québec; elsewhere in Canada, a variety of processes of theatrical experiment and research tended to be combined in many productions, especially in what came to be the dominant alternative form, the documentary drama.

The alternative theatre of English Canada, often less radical in its politics than that of Québec, took as its primary project the research and presentation of dramatized narratives based in the regional cultures of Canada. The narratives which were developed contributed to the development of a sometimes romanticized, utopian mythology of the struggles of the working population of the colonial past, and occasionally of the present, as in Buchans: A Mining Town, by The Mummers' Troupe (1974). The collectively created documentary drama, which gained popularity across the country following Theatre Passe Muraille's 1972 creation of The Farm Show, proved to be an important means to particularize the idea of a national culture, through the definition of regions "which have traditionally perceived themselves as colonies subordinate to centralized economic and political power in Ontario," in populist terms (Filewod, Collective 22). The documentary drama has usually been localist as well as regionalist, a distinction which Filewod makes at the level of political concerns: "If localism can be defined as the expression of issues relevant to a particular community, then regionalism may be the expression of issues relevant to a community defined in the more complex terms of geography, language, and political history" (22). At the level of the local community, the documentary drama further exemplifies the cultural strategies used in the Canadian past for translating "shared experience" into artistic form (21-22).

The roots of the Canadian documentary drama are usually traced to the theatre of Piscator in the twenties, the American Living Newspaper of the U.S. Federal Theatre Project in the thirties, to the work of Joan Littlewood in London from the thirties to the seventies, and to the regionalist documentaries of Peter Cheeseman, in Stoke-on-Trent (Bessai, "Documentary" 13-17; Usmiani, Second 10-18; Filewod, Collective 16-18). As a result of such research, Canadian documentary drama has sometimes been ascribed an objectivity it clearly did not fully aspire to practice. Bessai, for instance, warns against "the carelessness in usage which fails to distinguish between historically based works which mask the barriers between fact and fiction--in effect which treat fact as fiction or myth--and those in which the presentation and appreciation of evidence is an important part of the form itself" ("Documentary" 12). Like Filewod, Bessai is ill at ease with Dorothy Livesay's definition of the Canadian long narrative poem as documentary, since that definition implies subjectivity and interpretation of fact. The dilemma here appears to be whether to adhere to the strictest traditions of political theatre as criteria for judging contemporary works of the genre, or to accept that theatrical intervention in the body of fact selected inevitably produces another text, a form of fiction, and that the presence of the actor is most usually likely to produce structures of feeling.

Filewod, in particular, is reluctant to recognize the majority of documentary dramas as fictions. The collective creations of most English-Canadian alternative companies have, in fact, been strongly narrative, usually based in the dramatization of specific historical incidents, from printed sources, the anecdotes of local oral traditions, and the combination of both. An example of the failure of objectivity at the service of ideology is Theatre Workshop Productions' Ten Lost Years (1974; also produced by Northern Light Theatre, Edmonton, in 1977). The highly popular production on the subject of the Depression was an adaptation of a book of

the same name by Barry Broadfoot, whose collection of oral histories provided a ready-made ethnographic text for theatricalization by actors and directors, the result of which was "a polyphonic collage which combines monologues, representational dialogue, overlapping music, and mime to link the sequences" (Filewod, Collective 63-64). For George Luscombe (the director of Ten Lost Years), as Filewod asserts, "politics is an intellectual framework which defines the meaning of an historical event;" and yet, because of the structure of the play, the director's intended didacticism effectively produced the effect of "a nostalgic sentimentalism" at odds with the socialist message intended: "To counteract . . . nostalgia, the play relies on a form of alienation. Typically, a series of overtly sentimental memories culminates in a graphic description of exploitation or death. Such irony, however, reinforces the sentimental appeal of the play. Luscombe's didactic ideology combines with the intensified emphasis on survival inherent in the memories to suggest a sense of collective pride in heroic endurance. Without a critical analysis, in both text and performance structure, capable of relating the miseries of the past to the present reality of the audience, the play isolates history from political context" (78). The documentary drama, founded as a genre for moralistic purposes, has become in Canada in many cases (that of Ten Lost Years prominent among them) more memorable for its presentation of local history and folklore than for its didactic content.

Although Filewod would suggest that such documentaries as Ten Lost Years, The Farm Show, Paper Wheat, and Buchans: A Mining Town separate "history from political context" (Collective 79), it is certain that most plays which in the seventies documented rural life appealed to audiences at precisely the level of "collective pride in heroic endurance." Because regional documentaries reflected shared experience or shared history, and because the presentation of such subjects on the stage was new, political responses, except in the case of

agit-prop, were often secondary to the basic level of recognition. Actors often defeated the alienation techniques proper to documentary drama in their creation of their roles, "their personal (often romanticized) responses" to history affording the audience opportunities for emotional empathy (Filewod, Collective 22). Above all, however, the importance of the documentary drama lay in affording actors the opportunity for conveying "authentic perceptions" of their own culture, and thus locating audiences within the framework of the new theatrical experience (Bessai, "Documentary" 20).

The collectively created documentary drama was not far removed from the larger theatrical project of dramatizing and mythologizing regional history, as represented in the works of playwrights such as Carol Bolt, Rick Salutin, Sharon Pollock, John Murrell, and Rod Langley. The construction of communal, populist history was not the only aim of all collective theatre, however. The deconstruction, or demythologizing of official versions of Canadian history also played an important role in the activities of the alternative theatre. In English Canada, 1837: The Farmers' Revolt (Rick Salutin and Theatre Passe Muraille, 1974) simultaneously presented and demythologized history of the Ontario rebellion, combining satirical depictions of historical figures with political interpretations of the events of 1837. In Québec, the productions of Théâtre du Même Nom, Théâtre d'Aujourd'hui, and the Grand Cirque Ordinaire (1969) all exploited a variety of comic and farcical techniques and theatrical metaphors to dispel as many commonly held cultural myths as possible.

The marginality of alternative theatre permitted it the freedom to subvert cultural institutions and to establish its own creative ground, but also proved to be the limiting factor in the development of most companies. The carnivalesque and subversive element in collective theatre, street theatre, happenings, and even documentary drama required the continued

presence of an official culture for their validation (as now the fringe festivals which have grown up in turn as an alternative to what is now mainstream Canadian theatre does). Even in English Canada, where the subversive element in alternative theatre was less pronounced during the seventies, the commitment to non-traditional working methods and audiences posed to most groups the problem of maintaining their marginal status in the face of more traditional theatre. The autonomy of collective theatre groups from their subversive function could only be achieved by a dedication to evolving a self-sufficient aesthetic. Few companies of the early nationalist period survived their alternative status, and yet others have developed by defining more specific and organic bases for their own survival. The difference between the two groups has been in the willingness to abandon initial anarchistic, collective ideals in favour of a more disciplined and exploratory approach to the development of the craft.

The example of the closing of the popular and experimental Grand Cirque Ordinaire serves to illustrate the internal problems which faced collective theatre groups. La Famille transparente (1970) was the company's vehicle for an attack on power relations within the family, between genders, between classes, and between artists and non-artists. "Si la famille s'écroule, c'est foutu," stated the actress Paule Baillargeon, referring to the traditional social structures which the group attacked (qtd Usmiani, Second 121). Nevertheless, the collective itself aspired to be an ideal family, with each of its members "perfectly tuned in to each other" (123). That members of a company committed to satirizing and demythifying the social family considered themselves an idealized alternative is a telling indication of the egalitarian illusion which often informed alternative theatre, particularly its collectives. After five years of sustained creativity, Le Grand Cirque Ordinaire began to express its own entropy in its productions. Its rock opera, L'Enfant prodigue (1975), contained the line, "nous sommes des

oiseaux de cabaret. Voilà que le spectacle nous ennui" (qtd Usmiani 125). The group's creative energy had diminished, and the consensus of its members was marred by dissension, resulting in the departure of the women of the group to produce their own work separately (125). The consensus which had permitted creative processes to flourish eventually proved inflexible in the face of the need to evolve.

In trying to escape from the structures of society, the many collective theatre groups of the seventies created difficulties which mirrored those they were trying to escape. Terry Eagleton, analysing the traps of what he terms the "premature utopianism" basic to nationalism, points out that one cannot wish away social identifications, but that "the forces or fault lines within the present" must be addressed in order to create the future (25). Class identification, like national identity, he argues, is "a form of alienation, canceling the particularity of an individual life into collective anonymity"(23). Class must be analysed and understood, however, if it is to be overcome and not overwritten by other identifications or perpetual spontaneity: "To wish class or nation away, to seek to live sheer irreducible difference now . . . is to play straight into the hands of the oppressor" ("Irony" 23). The utopian anarchy of the collective creation process in its purest forms, and the vertiginous exercise of artistic spontaneity among alternative groups are clear examples of the attempt to by-pass the more analytical and reflective approach required to effect radical social and artistic change. The failure of many groups to make the transition to these more analytical levels of creation marked them for eventual stasis.

But the advantages of the collective process proved to be too useful to the development of artists and texts not to have survived the first stage of the alternative theatre. The collective process, by its very nature, invites interdisciplinary work of a kind that allows for the develop-

ment of performance texts suited to the capacities of group members, and it engages the audience in those processes of creation which are always exposed in performance. Collective creation has continued to evolve in Canadian theatre since the seventies, resulting in some of the most important artistic developments of the present time. There has been a general tendency to overcome the problems of uneasy consensus and lack of leadership by adopting processes as collaborative as they are collective. This change is well illustrated in Jacques Lessard's development of a creative matrix at Théâtre Repère, in Québec, whose productions have received much attention in Canada and elsewhere.

In 1980, Lessard gave up teaching at the Conservatoire d'art dramatique de Québec to found a new company, one of the first whose work could be qualified as postmodern (Larrue, "De l'expérience" 9). Lessard brought to this new venture the theatrical insight he had acquired from various sources since the late sixties. From 1970 to 1976, he had gained extensive experience of the problems involved in collective creation--as a founder of Le Circuit Temporaire and as an animator and director to jeune théâtre groups whose collective organization was insufficient to produce satisfactory results. He concluded that the lack of internal organization of the earlier groups had impeded the individual growth of their participants: "Sous ses apparences démocratiques et égalitaires, [les tenants de la création collective] cache un système répressif, qui force les individus à concéder mais ne produit consensus . . ." (Larrue 14). Behind Lessard's rejection of democracy (something viewed in the late seventies as controversial and apparently reactionary) lay the recognition that each member of the group had a unique function, and that their work must develop from their own personality. He also emphasized the importance of discipline: "[La] création artistique nécessite un véritable travail et ne peut pas tenir de la pure spontanéité" (15). Such an attention

to the discipline of self-development has tended to restore the importance of the director, and to place more emphasis on arts other than those of the performer (especially that of the scenographer). In addition to Théâtre Repère, other companies which have succeeded in developing highly innovative and critical methods of creation include Carbone 14, under the direction of Gilles Maheu (Montréal), DNA, under Hillar Littoya (Toronto), and One Yellow Rabbit, under Blake Brooker (Edmonton).

Collaborative creation processes are often closely related to the development of the full resources of individual members of the group, as human beings and not merely as skilled performers. Thus, a well-defined context for exploration and self-revelation is required. Lessard has drawn on and adapted the methodologies of Anna Halprin at the San Francisco Dancer's Workshop, and those of her husband, Lawrence Halprin, an architect, both of whom have explored collaborative creation in their fields with a view to circumventing the pitfalls of excessively goal-oriented production methods (Larrue 15-20). Jean-Marc Larrue, contrasting the methods of Théâtre Repère with the spontaneous style of international theatre collectives of the sixties, which he views as akin to Action Painting and Pop Art (11), views Lessard's process as a series of interrelated, clearly demarcated cycles of development leading to performance. These cycles involve (1) a co-ordinating of "ressource sensible (les participants, leur personnalité, leurs attentes, ainsi que les objets, les mots auxquels ils attribuent un pouvoir évocateur) et . . . ressource matérielle (contraintes de temps, d'argent, équipement disponible, etc.)"; (2) "scoring," in which the exploration which leads to the performance takes place; (3) evaluation, which allows the group to criticize its own work "en fonction de critères les plus personnels et de la réaction spontanée des membres"; and (4) performance (21-23). A facilitator animates the group in the early stages, but during the scoring phase, a dramaturge

proposes the elements of the composition, and finally, the director prepares, or facilitates the preparation of the results of the process for performance. The process, as Larrue points out, is modifiable and reversible because it is cyclic, and because it can lead into the inception of new creations (25). Larrue emphasizes the integrity of the company's working continuum: "Le concept de circularité implique également que le projet n'est jamais terminé, d'où l'idée de 'work in progress' perpétuel" (20). In companies such as Théâtre Repère, which cultivate collaborative exploration and the methodical finding of results, the conventional distinction between professional training and professional practice is often partially erased.

A new degree of commitment is required to work in companies with unconventional methods, since performers and other practitioners are often extended in these situations beyond the skills they have acquired in theatre school. Often, the disciplines practised are designed to undermine the primacy of text and written language, a goal which has survived the sixties and seventies to become foundational in much experimental theatre of the eighties and nineties. At PRIMUS Theatre, in Winnipeg, where the methods practised follow those of Barba's Odin Teatret, the performance is constructed through "total artistic control [which] shifts the balance of artistic power away from the text and into the hands of the performers" (PRIMUS press release, qtd Skene 32). To this end, the company integrates training in movement, mime, vocal techniques, and music into the development of its product. The autonomy of its performers is the goal of PRIMUS's training process. Such an approach is clearly distinct from that of the collectives of the sixties and early seventies, not least in that both the artistic detachment from the audience and the extreme de-emphasis of words imply a strong rejection of ideology and a desire to express dimensions of human experience which cannot be defined in strictly social terms. The assiduous attention to subverting performance conventions is implicitly anti-

authoritarian.

Interdisciplinary collaborations have also advanced the capacity of theatre to alter audience perceptions of the demarcation between form and content, performance and environment. Multimedia and scenographic experiment has developed to the point where the visual arts are often the primary source of performance semiotics. Contemporary dance and drama are now frequently indistinguishable genres, as dramatic performers use more non-verbal expression, and dance companies combine choreography with text, images, and non-traditional sound. Opera, always conscious of scenographic possibilities, has likewise become the site of non-traditional interdisciplinary possibilities: R. Murray Schafer's The Alchemical Theatre of Hermes Trismegistus, for example, exploits space and media in ways which require audience members to move among the performers, occasionally interacting with them, so that they enter into the conceptual world of the work in a way reminiscent of the less technological ritual theatre of the sixties (Hood and Malcolm).

The effect of such complex interdisciplinary collaborations is most commonly to deprive the audience of all sense of linearity, and thus to reflect contemporary experience in terms of its discontinuities. Since theatre exploits the senses of the audience, it often produces a more advanced subversion of notions of textuality than writing can effect. Savannah Walling, of Vancouver Moving Theatre, defines interdisciplinary collaboration as the breaking of as many taboos as can be identified with regard to preconceptions of audience behaviour, accepted relations between previously distinct artistic communities, fundamental notions of narrative, and venturing outside European tradition. Most fundamentally, though, Walling believes that cross-disciplinary work challenges the deep-rooted belief that creativity can only come from "the minds of individualistic geniuses, bold individuals who rupture tradition and

singlehandedly change the course of history" (15). Since productions of individually authored, scripted works still outnumber collective and collaborative works in all centres of theatrical production, then interdisciplinary experiment remains the work of the theatrical avant-garde--appreciated internationally, and at the fringes of theatrical activity, but generally invisible to conventional audiences, and marginalized by funding bodies.

The alternative theatre of the seventies, the mainstream of Canadian theatre today, laid the foundations for developments in social and regional collective processes, as well as for a second wave of subversive theatre, in the form of fringe festivals. Interactive theatre has replaced propagandism and agitprop intervention as a popular and effective application of theatre in addressing social problems. Leading companies in the use of interactive theatre are Catalyst Theatre (Edmonton) and Passionate Balance (Ottawa). Such companies are committed to changing consciousness of issues of power at the social margins: "Our understanding of power . . . and how power is acquired and distributed . . . is influenced by how we depict it on television, in theatre, and in song. . . . The centre does not desire change and the margins are unable to change" (Johnson 43). Interactive theatre has become increasingly accepted as a medium for educating marginalized groups and as "a means to build collectivity" (44). Its development has been encouraged by the widespread interest in the forum techniques of Augusto Boal's theatre of the oppressed: in essence, the audience is presented with situations in such a way that they may intervene in the action and 'rewrite' the outcome of a dramatic situation, which is created to reflect the problems facing the particular audience. Thus, forum theatre engages the spectator in rethinking and restructuring social transactions: the 'script' exists only insofar as it provides a framework for disruption and change.

The regionalist impulse of alternative theatre has resulted in the foundation of theatre in

all parts of the country. Often, however, those groups which define their regional territory by touring have become important cultural mediators for isolated communities. The well-established Mulgrave Road Co-op Theatre, run from Guysborough, Nova Scotia, for instance, is often cited as an example of a successful collective committed to the community (Knowles, "Voices" 108-09). The group deliberately restricts itself to rural audiences, playing in any community facilities available. Its organization is firmly democratic, its artistic directors rotated by elections at annual general meetings. Furthermore, the company's productions are original and grounded in local culture and concerns. Jenny Munday, a past artistic director of the company, states: "Life for people in the region, in the non-urban areas throughout the country . . . is difficult, inconvenient, and apparently unimportant to the powers that be. People and their lives here have become marginalized . . . How appropriate to . . . create the art of the place under the same conditions . . . which affect the life from which it springs" (91). Despite the rigours of performing conditions and a restricted budget, the Mulgrave Road Co-op has continued to produce shows of high quality which combine serious attention to the interests of the community with entertainment.

Some of the second generation of collectives which must work hardest to preserve and reflect a cultural community are those based in Native cultures. De-Bah-Je-Mu-Jig of Manitoulin Island, which develops plays exclusively by and about people of Native ancestry, tours its productions as far as remote communities in Northern Ontario, where no theatre of any kind has ever been seen. Melvin John, of Four Winds Theatre, in Hobbema, Alberta, states that that Native company has toured in three provinces: "We've taken the shows North to High level, as far East as Carry-the-Kettle in Saskatchewan, down South to Brockett and West to Kamloops" (Goffin 23). The object of such tours is to entertain and to educate: Out of the Silence (first

performed 1991), a forum theatre play on the subject of family violence, co-produced by Headlines Theatre, Vancouver, with the Urban Representative Body of Aboriginal Nations (URBAN), has toured to Native Friendship Centres, Band Councils, and women's groups in 28 cities (Diamond 21). Tunooniq Theatre, in Pond Inlet, one of a number of primarily Native theatre and performing arts groups in the North, must tour by air, and thus, because funding is limited, not all communities can be reached. The group's best-known production, Changes (first performed 1986), is a bilingual dramatic representation of the traditional way of life and the way it has been eroded. The production is written for the education of both Inuit and also southern audiences (Qamaniq 18-21). These groups, although they are the most challenged in linking cultural communities, are, of course, far from the only ones which have relied on touring to disseminate theatre in Canada.

The subversive function of the alternative theatre of the seventies has since passed to the fringe festival. In the oldest traditions of the carnivalesque, the fringe festival affords a symbolic means to overthrow the codes of authority and order: "Official festivals celebrate representations of fixed social reality. . . . Popular festivals celebrate the sea of indeterminacy—they revel in exploring an unfixed social reality" (Paterson 51). As Erika Paterson suggests, the "crisis in the 'normal' order of things is . . . the 'raw material' of contemporary dramatic performances," since whether they uphold or undermine order, "the process involves playing with the elements of culture" (51-52). She argues that the fringe restores to the audience the power traditional theatre withholds: "Norm-governed theatre conventions . . . severely restrict the possibility for the audience to both critique and react. The job of critiquing has been appropriated by the authority of the critic and academic, and the possibility of new cultural meanings is restricted by imposed artistic criteria and theatre-going conventions. The social

and aesthetic conventions of Fringe festivals, which are . . . generated by event, essentially by the audience, empower the audience . . . to critique and react to the normally invisible structures and symbols of their cultural beliefs and imperatives" (52). In the convention of fringe theatre, then, "the audience is the agreed-upon authority" (52). Clearly, if the audience is to be empowered over conventional authorities, the company must have laid the groundwork for that dimension of theatrical change by first empowering its own members to undertake not only performative functions but also critical and reflective positions with respect to their own group work and to the assumptions those positions intend to subvert.

Fringe festivals have encouraged experimentation in form, particularly in interdisciplinary performance, by providing a critical but sympathetic milieu. This critical function is the key element which forms a continuum from the internal stages of conscious creation to audience reception. Erika Paterson has pointed out that the fringe theatre exploits the fact that its public may well also attend mainstream productions (58; Czarnecki 6-11). The fringe reflects an important shift in Canadian avant-garde theatre from intense ideological commitment to a more reflective process shared with audiences. In the words of Leah Cherniak, of Theatre Columbus, which uses techniques based on the use of Jacques Copeau's neutral mask to comment on social and political issues, "We don't want to tell anyone how to live" (qtd Allen 24). Collective creation, then, has evolved dynamically from the sixties to the nineties, on the strength of its will to subvert unitary narrative, dramatic convention, and authorial privilege. Its evolution from the sixties to the nineties indicates that it has maintained the artistic privileges of marginality, while becoming more sophisticated in its techniques, more inclined to self-questioning, and less concerned with the definition of culture and national identity than with more specific cultural and social issues.

It should be remembered, though, that playwrights in the same period have attended to the subversion of convention, tradition, and authority (including their own) and have in the process exposed new structures of experience to the view of the audience. Fully scripted works, of course, continue to be usually easier to produce, and to reproduce, than collective creations. They are also easier to publish, because a more or less finite text can be established. For these reasons, the work of playwrights has gained more ground with Canadian audiences than has antitextual theatre. The playwright usually explores the tension between society and the private, individual vision or predicament, and continues to offer the opportunity for some degree of identification with defined characters. But stage writing is now no longer confined to the creation of character, scene, and totalizing plot: it has also become an element among others in collaborative processes, which, although they displace the word in relation to sensory and imagistic elements, result in a performance text as certainly as does the privately originated script. While old oppositions of text and performance have been transformed into new ones, the authored script continues to play an indispensable part in reflecting the position of the individual in the world.

IV: Textuality and Theatre, Self and Authority

The foundation of playwrights' organizations in both English Canada and Québec was an important political watershed for theatre in the seventies, providing the focus for nationalist sentiment which prompted the rapid theatrical developments that followed. The organization in Ontario in 1971 of the Playwright's Circle led in turn to the foundation of the Playwright's Co-op, which, by 1973, had "published more than 130 plays, had more than 4,500 copies of their scripts purchased and had assisted in nearly 40 productions of scripts they handled" (Rubin,

Creeping 26-27). The corresponding organization in Québec, the Centre d'Essai des Auteurs Dramatiques (CEAD), founded in Montréal in 1965, published 17 of the 150 scripts it received during its first six years, including works by Tremblay, Robert Gurik, and Jean Barbeau (Usmiani, 109, 135). Rubin estimates that between 1971 and 1973, "more than 200 new Canadian plays received full-scale productions" (Creeping 28). The lack of production opportunities suffered by Canadian playwrights since the twenties was effectively remedied as new alternative companies anxiously sought new scripts on Canadian subjects. Since 1970, thousands of Canadian scripts have been performed and many of them published.

In the early seventies, Rubin supported the creation of a canon, through publication of scripts in Canadian Theatre Review, since he believed that "a dramatic literature was the proof of a nationhood defined in terms of cultural unity" (Filewod, "Undermining" 181). Whether that culture could be considered a unity was (and remains) profoundly questionable, since it had only begun to (re)define itself. Nevertheless, dramatic canons came to be institutionalized on the basis of works produced for the most part during the seventies (Knowles, "Voices;" Robert, "New Quebec"). The result of such "premature utopianism" (Eagleton's term) has been the subsequent questioning of the implicit values of these canons. Knowles argues that the majority of the dramatic works anthologized are excessively literary, and that they represent almost exclusively the point of view of the white male ("Voices" 95-106). This over-representation of a single, dominant cultural position is hardly surprising given the context of national unity which encouraged the production of the now canonical drama. It is also Knowles's view that the realist play has been given excessive attention, because it is presented more easily in the educational context of literary values than collective creations, which are rarely fully scripted and not conventionally plotted (98-101).

While Knowles's points are well taken, it is worth remembering that realist drama has assisted greatly in defining the social and mythic structures of experience in colonial as well as postcolonial Canada. There is more in common than might at first be apparent between realist plays and certain collective creations of the seventies, notably documentaries, since both forms centre on the division between the imaginary space of theatre and the symbolic order defined by text, or patriarchal authority. Realist drama, like classical drama, has also lent itself to hybridization with Brechtian epic form and to stylization as hyperrealism; in certain forms of metatheatre, it supplies conventions of speech and action against which other levels of signification can be played, so that the audience is disengaged from its accustomed privileged position and forced to question what it experiences from the stage. Thus, to dismiss realism when evaluating evolutionary lines in either Canadian or Québécois drama because it has been challenged by antitextual theatre is out of the question.

In the development of an alternative drama in Canada, especially in collective creations, conventional dramatic language has often been subverted by parodic or ironic countercontexts of gesture, movement, and image. Character is usually provisional, or reduced to type, while deeper structures are usually absent from dialogue and action. The surface quality of documents and recorded anecdotes precludes identification with one single point of view over others in favour of polyphonic compositions. An illusion of factual objectivity is often created to preclude more conventional illusions of subjectivity.

Documentary forms, according to Filewod, use such techniques to "reorder the . . . relationship between artist and society . . . and [propose that] conventional dramatic forms no longer express the truth of . . . society, usually because [they] . . . cannot accommodate rapid social change" (*Collective* 14). Certain dramatic losses are incurred in the reliance on the

"illusions of actuality" created in such works, however. As Rick Salutin argues, the "documentary is the curse of Canadian culture . . . a style for people who have trouble taking their own experience seriously. . . . Our works of the imagination seem to require the perpetual reiteration--through documentary style--that this is about something real" (qtd Filewod, Collective 4). Salutin hits the mark here: the overvaluation in of apparently verifiable fact as a dramatic medium evinces a mistrust of the individual imagination and an unwillingness to articulate subjective feeling or to create the self in speech. The willingness of so many performers (and not only writers) to alienate subjectivity in the earlier collectives of post-colonial theatre also suggests this same reluctance to expose irrational, subjective aspects of personality. During the seventies, then, spontaneity in performance tended to take precedence over self-revelation in such collectives. This is not to say, however, that the exploration of the languages of self and imagination has been left unexplored in Canadian drama. On the contrary. A strong line of works can be traced, which exploit speech and dramatic situation as resistance to, and not reliance on, verifiable reality. Usually the product of a single author's imagination, or of collaborators attuned to the separateness of individual existence, such works are on the whole more effective than collective creations in conveying the condition of division between the social persona and the marginalized internal world which it excludes.

IV: Past and Present. Dialogue and Monologue

The dramatic exploration of personal experience, and of actual conditions of existence and culture, was impeded by overwhelming obstacles until after World War Two. Obviously, there was little opportunity for Canadian playwrights to reach audiences beyond a parochial circle. Nevertheless, the language and diction of ordinary experience were, for the most part,

excluded from the stage, in favour of dramatizations of colonial patriotic themes intended to promote a proper identification with the British and French languages and literatures. The few writers who did dramatize local subjects between the wars often failed to realize their technical potential. Gwen Pharis Ringwood, for instance, prefigured postcolonial theatre by engaging with the "historical underpinnings of national cultural liberation from two overlapping colonizations . . . [and was] one of our earliest writers in theatre to recognize and explore the validity of intensely regional sources of story, language, and setting, as opposed to the 'consciously national'" (Ryga, preface, Ringwood Collected xviii). Despite her depiction of cultural diversity and her experiments with presentation, her dialogue is homogenized, whatever its ethnic source, and structures of conflict are lacking, rendering her plays descriptive and lacking in tension: "[She] never resolved the inherent contradictions of formalism and the demands of character, situation and time arising out of the dynamics of regionalism and an exciting new mythology ill at ease with choruses and frozen postures" (xvii).

Playwrights who entered plays on regional Canadian themes in the Dominion Drama Festival between the twenties and the mid-sixties often found themselves ill-advised by adjudicators, who seemed to consider it their duty to educate Canadians in the conventions and diction of the British stage. Canadian speech was thus to be corrected, and attempts at regional realism were sometimes discounted as uncivilized. In 1935, having seen Elsie Park Gowan's prairie drama, God Made the Country, one adjudicator complained of the tendency of Canadian dramatists to depict their country "as a land of kitchen stoves . . . [where] the air outside held death waiting to claim a victim before the curtain fell" (Malcolm Morley, qtd Wagner, "Elsie" 70, and Salter "Declarations" 14). The Dominion Drama Festival's arbitration of standards of Canadian playwriting continued until 1967. In a rearguard colonialist gesture,

the selection committee for the last final competition, among Canadian scripts only, rejected Tremblay's Les Belles-Soeurs, on the grounds of its language, one year before that play became the cause célèbre of the new Québécois theatre.

Dramatic productions subversive of colonialism were scarce between the wars. At Hart House Theatre (Toronto) the influence of Edward Gordon Craig, Appia, and early modernist drama prompted experiments such as Herman Voaden's symphonic expressionism, a multi-disciplinary approach to creating images of its Canadian subject. For a while, too, the Progressive Arts Clubs, located in Toronto, Halifax, Montréal, and other large cities, mounted agit-prop, using texts from the international workers' movement, from American sources, and, as in the case of Eight Men Speak (1933), scripts of Canadian origin. In Montréal, additionally, a genuinely popular subculture had existed in cabarets and boîtes à chanson since the late nineteenth century. Prominent among the entertainers in these cabarets were comic monologists whose material reflected as it satirized Québécois culture, language, and politics. The monologists gained influence when radio and television provided wider audiences for such artists as Gratien Gélinas and, later, Yvon Deschamps, whose creations expressed the comic, and often tragi-comic perspective of the underdog. As Laurent Mailhot has eloquently argued, the monologue tradition has supplied the ground, language, form, and substance of contemporary Québécois and Acadian drama (Introduction, Mailhot and Montpetit). The monologue tradition is especially of interest here because its language is more intrinsically theatrical than that of any other drama which preceded the postcolonial period.

Truly dramatic language, in the modern period at least, is always divided, even if not in the form of dialogue, by the intersection of thought or feeling with speech. Even in a monologue, the dramatic writer scores pauses for the actor to produce meaning superadded to

that of the words themselves. To exploit this 'play of difference,' the dramatist as well as the actor must be conscious of conflict between the structured world and chaos--that is, of the difference between the speakable and the unspeakable--both of which are simultaneously present in the necessity of silence to speaking: "In the theatre silence is not merely kinetic potential. It may teem with meaning" (Bigsby 3). The exploitation of silence, and the accompanying displacement of meaning from words to the actor's gestures, as C.W.E. Bigsby argues, are the causes of marginalization of drama by literary critics (in the United States), since silence is foreign to the literary text, which, by its very nature, demands a different reception process (3). Silence indicates powerlessness, "insofar as language is power," as is evident, for instance, in the plays of Beckett and other absurdist (3-4).

The loquacious character may betray underlying powerlessness by virtue of the need to speak, as in the case of Erie Smith, the hotel guest in O'Neill's Hughie, who tries to secure the attention of a new clerk: "[His] articulate accounts of personal triumph merely serve to underline the social silence which is his life. What is spoken betrays the centrality of what is not. The truth of his life is what can never make its way into language. . . . He keeps alive by the stories he tells . . . a down-market Scheherazade . . . [His invented dramas] are his defense against the world and his own insignificance . . . all that stands between him and despair" (Bigsby 3). O'Neill, in his role as the first playwright of the emergent national drama of the United States, like Twain and Whitman before him, was faced with a void within which identity required to be written in the language of the territory.

In turning from Bigsby to Mailhot's introduction to his anthology of monologues, it is interesting to note that it is subtitled "Le monologue ou comment la parole vient au silence." The speech and silence to which Mailhot refers are also those of the linguistically colonized,

lower classes of French Canadian society, and thus, in some respects, all the more marginal than those of O'Neill's characters. Although the monologues barely conceal the frustrations and deprivations of class, their writers use the knowing innocence of marginality to great effect as ironic commentary on the pretensions of power, thereby counteracting the powerlessness of speaker and listeners.

Only in theatre as "anti-discours (ou . . . autre discours)," Mailhot suggests, can the play of language be exploited (Mailhot and Montpetit 11). Logically, it must be a theatre despised and ignored by those whom it subverts. The boîtes à chanson where monologuists and 'revuistes' performed were, like music-halls and vaudeville, outside the world of the intellectual: "On ne sait presque rien d'eux, parce que les intellectuels crachaient dessus en attendant le Théâtre français" (Théâtre Euh! "Théâtre québécois"; qtd Mailhot and Montpetit 11). But the boundary might be crossed in the opposite direction, for the purpose of retrieving material for translation. Paul Coutlée, for instance, a monologist of the twenties, locates his own position (and that of his class) relative to 'le Théâtre français,' in a young man's narrative of a visit to a play:

Hier soère, j'ai été au thiâtre avec une créature . . . Vous parlez que c'était beau pas pour rire./ . . . En arrivant à mon banc, j'ai fait ane génuflexion, j'sais vivre . . . alors ma criature a m'a dit de baisser mon banc. J'avais oublié complètement. On ne peut pas penser à toute./ . . . Pis le rideau s'a levé. . . . C'est ben beau le thiâtre. Y avait un garçon qu'avait ane fille dans les bras pis y y disait qui l'aimait ben fort . . . y a dit à huit heures et demie qui l'aimait ben gros, pis, pis y l'a mariée à neuf heures moins quart. . . . C'est ben beau le thiâtre. Vous prenez le père de la fille, eh ben! a neuf heures y était condamné

aux travaux forcés pour dix-huit ans et à neuf heures et demie y avait fini son temps pis y revenait pour tuer le juge. . . . On sait pas où ça se passe. Su le programme, y disaient seulement: De nos jours à Paris. Y disent pas où, y disent pas dans quelle époque. . . . [V]ers dix heures et demie . . . la toile a baissé pour la dernière fois./La fanfare a joué le God save la couenne, pis tout le monde est partie chez eux. . . . Oh! j'ai ben aimé ça, pis j'y r'tournerai au théâtre, si m'man veut. "Première Représentation au théâtre"; Mailhot and Montpetit 128-29).

In this feigningly naive story, in the downhome language usual to the monologue, the narrator manages to target all at once the humourless sanctity, ritualism, and physical discomfort of the church-like environment, the absurdities of the plot and of the unities of time and place, the irrelevance (despite the programme note) of the play's plot to any known cultural context or period, the fact that the play is probably being performed by a second-rate group from France, and that the national anthem of England ends the performance. Coutlée's story is a cultural history of Québec from the margins, an exposé of its institutions and a dig at institutionalized reverence for the rather shabby cast-offs of French theatre. For the duration of the monologue, the colonial institutions it encompasses are recontextualized and forced to submit to the language of the oppressed, which is itself decontextualized.

The text of a monologue, like any other dramatic text, is actualized only in performance. The actor, argues Daniel Mesguich, divides the language of the text by his presence, and thereby actualizes a linguistic play of difference: "When the actor enters the scene [he comes]-- even for a Theater without a text--upon the difficult difference between speech and writing . . . the very subject of the Theater . . . called play. . . . He enters . . . into the locus of a

double-play: that of difference between 'written' writing . . . and 'spoken' writing . . . between direct and deferred . . . the very locus of the difference between writing and speech" (qtd McGlynn 148-49). Possessed rather than enslaved by the writing process (an enactment of difference from speech), the actor "no longer plays; he is played . . . is no longer an actor" (148). The text in performance is newly created, its meaning extended and amplified by the field of signification created by the play of the actor's attention in a given space, before a given audience, in the present time.

The language of the monologue is that of a self-exploration enacted in isolation from, and in the presence of, the other. This is to say that the monologue, ironically enough, has a dialogical function. Hence, in a monologue directly addressed to the audience (not to another dramatic character), a decontextualized or sometimes anonymous speaker invents a world through language and through the space between the performer and the spectator who completes the speaker's meaning: "Voix sans visages d'un pays sans nom, ils appellent, explorent, nomment. . . . Le personnage est encore seul, mais il est seul avec d'autres, solitaire-solidaire, puisqu'il jongle devant un public et qu'on découpe, qu'on organise sa jonglerie" (Mailhot, Mailhot and Montpetit 13). The monologist, as Mailhot emphasizes, is engaged in a process of self-creation. The language of this process of self-exploration is directed neither to any socially useful purpose nor to an artificial closure ("il ne connaît pas le mot FIN") but towards situating the speaker at the centre of his/her world: "Ils parlent pour s'entendre, pour se situer. Pour que les autres se taisent, un moment. . . . le monologue est d'abord le lieu d'un silence" (27-28). The monologue becomes the site which organizes the space and time shared by the speaker and the audience: "Son lieu imaginaire est un abîme à la crête, sa structure instable entre l'avant et l'après, une tension entre deux pentes. . . . L'aller

et retour horizontal vient compenser, composer le vertige vertical. Le monologue se trouve au centre d'un croisement d'axes" (29). The monologue implicates each member of the audience in the translation of its language, closing the distance between subject and object, so that the process of self-creation proceeds in concert with the creation of the collectivity.

It is because the speaker of the monologue is so self-centred that he/she can represent humanity and become a focal point for the collective unconscious. The relationship between monologist and the audience resembles that Greek tragedy of protagonist to chorus, of whom the protagonist is the representative. The monologist and the chorus-audience are partners in defining their culture, by making life and the representation of their shared context simultaneous: "le premier acte culturel consiste à tracer un cercle autour de l'événement scénique, et donc à séparer le jeu du non-jeu, la culture de la non-culture, l'intérieur de l'extérieur, le regardé du regardant" (Pavis, Croisement 13). In Québec, as Mailhot points out, the division between the performer and spectator pre-exists the theatre, being deeply associated with the contexts of home and community. Mailhot observes that, in modern theatre in Québec, dramatic structures, as well as diction itself, reflect the quality of domestic gatherings: "Une soirée de famille, c'est toujours un remue-ménage, un lavage de têtes et de sous-vêtements . . . des épanchements et des confidences, des retraites et des agressions, de longs silences brutalement rompus, des incompréhensions et des discours parallèles. Peu de véritables dialogues . . . On raconte des histoires et on raconte son histoire. Avec attendrissement et fureur, gêne et sans-gêne, de façon aussi drôle que pathétique" (25). The plays of Tremblay--most tellingly, Les Belles-Soeurs--clearly exemplify not only the orchestration of such rhythms and patterns of oral communication as Mailhot describes, but also the choral nature of the drama so practised.

In such plays, there is rarely a hero. And yet there is often a sacrifice of individuality, when the chorus turns upon its scapegoat, as is the fate of Germaine Lauzon in Les Belles-Soeurs. Most often, the meaning of the field of action and signification is completed in a silent moment of hesitation, in which the past (or the status quo) is estranged, challenged, and overcome by the speaking subject of the script, in a decision to reveal a hidden truth or otherwise to disrupt the dramatic tension which has been spread among all the characters and their associated significations. The world of monologue and chorus, like that of the collective, is isolated from the logocentric and the symbolic order even as that world is being defined by this isolation.

Rarely in English Canadian drama is the atmosphere of the 'soirée familiale' as evident as it is in Québec (or Acadia, in the case of Antonine Maillet's plays). Certain monologues of the Newfoundland playwright Michael Cook--Therese's Creed (1976), Quiller (1975), and Tiln (1973), for example--evidence the same sense of shared oral tradition as that of Québec. For the most part, however, the sense of an oral tradition in English-speaking Canada was initially more artificially constructed--as by the visits of members of Theatre Passe Muraille, to the small rural community of Clinton, Ontario, in 1972, to develop The Farm Show, and to Saskatchewan to develop The West Show (1975); and by the intensive research conducted by James Reaney in preparation for the collective creation techniques used in rehearsal for the Donnelly's trilogy to generate the sense of a community oral history (Bessai, "Documentary " 17-18).

It is clear, however, that a sense of the intersection of home and performance was sought by the alternative theatre in the process of developing its collective creations. The format of such productions as The Farm Show, for example, was designed to simulate "a Canadian

Sunday School or Christmas Concert where one person does a recitation, another sings, a third acts out a skit, etc." (Filewod, Collective 30)--in other words, "church basement theatricals new style" (Bessai, "Documentary" 9). The association of the communitarian, the choral, and spatialized theatre enacting the play of difference with images of the past could serve to invoke only one dimension of the more fundamental notion of the 'primitive.' No less a function of the play of difference was the globalism endorsed by McLuhanism. Retrospectively contextualized, the contemporary theatre's research of the communitarian past thus appears to correspond to the need to reflect the destructured present.

A paucity of playwrights skilled in constructing realist scripts and the opposition of the alternative theatre to text and convention account, at least in part, for the limited development of conventional scripts in Canada in the early seventies. What script development there was tended to be experimental and, it goes without saying, subject to the ideology and material conditions of the new theatrical milieu. Many works were developed through the collaboration of writers with actors and directors, a process which permitted a freer exploration of craft for all participants in the process. The craft of script construction, nevertheless, was not altogether marginalized. Of the scripts produced in the seventies, many--such as David French's Leaving Home (1972), David Freeman's Creeps (1972), William Fruet's Wedding in White (1973), Michael Cook's Jacob's Wake (1975), and David Fennario's On the Job (1976)--were conventionally realist or contained realism modified by Brechtian alienation techniques.

Although the accession of conventional plays from the sixties and seventies to canonical status is now the subject of criticism from Knowles and others, numerous realist works written, produced, and published since 1945 have played a significant part in establishing contemporary Canadian theatre. The very familiarity of the realist form permitted the audience

to be shocked by recontextualization in the Canadian cultural landscape: "The success of the [realist] project can be ascertained by the ecstatic 'That's us!' that . . . described the opening night audience's reaction to Leaving Home, or the sometimes wrong-headed praise for the 'slice-of-life' realism of Herbert, French, or Freeman" (Knowles, "Voices" 98). Like feminist critics such as Forte and Dolan, Knowles is certainly perspicacious in associating realism with the inscription of social norms. What he appears to miss, however, is the obvious point that the element of recognition intrinsic to conventional dramatic plots is the theatrical means by which Canadians at the end of colonialism became conscious of the norms which governed society.

By their very nature, conventional scripts define the social order through the representation of conflict and its resolution. Although much postmodern drama has aptly challenged the artifice of such plot resolutions, the fact remains that they have often been used in the past to dramatize some of the effects of cultural and personal oppression. The fact that realist drama often proposes no solution (the sacrifice of a scapegoat excepted) to the problem of closure has been thought to lead to further reflection by the audience on the decadence of systems needful of sacrifices. Knowles, from his materialist perspective, considers the problem of closure to be negative, however, since audiences are encouraged to be mere "voyeurs or self-congratulatory liberal 'concerned spectators'" ("Voices" 99). He affirms Raymond Williams's analysis of realist drama: "The audience witnesses a crisis. . . that is interpretable as deviation from a social norm that is restored at the play's resolution. . . . The discourse of the play may be urging change, criticism, rebellion; but the . . . forms . . . enforce . . . a sense of the unalterable solidity of this social world" (99). Knowles argues that, in the context of realist plays, those who do not conform to the norm can be benevolently categorized as "psychological 'case studies,'" or neurotics whose redemption would be assured by their acceptance of personal

responsibility for their problems: "The answer to any problem, then, is not to change society, but to grow up" ("Voices" 100). Such a premise effectively endorses social stability by containing dissent under the rubric of inadequate adaptation to the prevailing code which, if accepted, would ensure happiness and security. Arguably, such social stability was precisely what Canadian audiences, at least from the end of World War II to the early seventies, hoped to be assured of as the postcolonial period began, even if it had a negative aspect.

Knowles's opinion stands in sharp contrast to Georg Lukács's, which tends to promote the notions of integral social order and a definable personality, both of which would support the postcolonial notion of the possibility of 'Canadian identity': "True great realism . . . depicts man and society as complete entities, instead of showing merely one or the other of their aspects. . . . The central aesthetic problem of realism is the adequate presentation of the human personality. But . . . art . . . is saturated with social and human problems" (*Studies* 6-7). The ideological shift of the past two decades in Canada is well illustrated by Urjo Kareda's endorsement, in 1971, of the value of realist and naturalist drama in defining national identity. In his introduction to French's *Leaving Home*, Kareda points out that, although realist plays of the early nationalist theatre were somewhat anachronistic, they permitted the past to remain visible in the present, unerased by new ideologies: "these plays were political only in the crucial sense that they sprang from, and returned to, a specifically Canadian experience. In *Leaving Home*, . . . nothing is generalized, everything is specific, and yet from a personal reminiscence comes a universal--dare I say national?--experience" (ix).

Kareda makes a useful point in that he accepts that knowledge, Aristotelian style, of the past is useful to preparing the way for change. The establishing of the realist play in the context of early colonialism has naturally led to its subversion by postmodernist theatre, which

uses the coercive rules and conventions of western theatre tradition against themselves to challenge "[le] principe de l'internalization de l'autorité [qui] consiste à faire accepter la fonction répressive et expressive de la culture" (Pavis, Croisement 16). It might be valid to suppose the necessity of inscribing the dominant form of the logocentric dramatic script so that aggressive challenges to the form as it appeared on Canadian ground (that is, not as a mere colonial import) might lead to the finding of alternative theatre aesthetics.

In Canada, realist drama has in practice served to represent the tensions underlying both the outdated colonial order and contemporary society. Such plays, in themselves, often centre the structures of social interaction around a central character inhabiting the blind spot of the state, like Antigone. This may be generally observed in such diverse variants on realist form as Tit-Coq, The Ecstasy of Rita Joe (1967), La Charge de l'original épormyable (1958; performed 1972), The Crackwalker (1981), Being at Home with Claude (1956), Les Belles-Soeurs (1968) or The Rez Sisters (1988). In each of these plays, the central conflict of the individual with authority or the social norms structures an interplay between the ordinary surfaces of social personality and private structures of internalizations. The last moment of Leaving Home, for instance, when Jacob Mercer takes off his belt and uses it to strike the son who is about to go to university, is memorable (even though dated) because it connotes patriarchal authority in such oldfashioned terms. In the plays of Tremblay, on the other hand, the symbolic values of familial relations and the interplay of differential dimensions of personality--the dynamic of the concealed and revealed--has been the source of constant structural development and refinement throughout the writer's career. Despite the virtual erasure of the family and close kin in the collective creations of the seventies, patterns of fundamental social relations continue to surface in new plays, simply because they are necessary to the dramatic structuring of myth, which

structuring belies the surface of social convention.

The reception of the first influential realist drama of the post-war years, Gratien G  linas' Tit-Coq (1948), represented a turning point in Canadian theatre history in that it not only became an institution in Qu  bec, but was also very popular with English-speaking Canadian audiences. That G  linas wrote the character, Tit-Coq, to be acted by himself, ensured that the play would appeal to audiences and engage them, since he was already widely established as Fridolin, his revue character. G  linas' Fridolin was known for his sometimes biting irony in the sketches Qu  bec social life and politics written for Fridolinons and Les Fridolinades between 1938 and 1947 (Usmiani, G  linas). Among such sketches was "Le Retour du conscrit" (1946), from which the character, Tit-Coq, was subsequently developed. The returned soldier of that monologue is submissive to his fate in society, but, in the manner also characteristic of Fridolin, acutely ironic: "Y a le gouvernement qui nous offre de retourner    l'  cole, pour nous perfectionner dans notre profession. Mais moi, dans la ligne de 'shoe-shine', je sais pas mal tout ce qu'il y a    savoir. . . . Je sais que les soldats apr  s la guerre, c'est des emmerdants. Ce qui fait que je vais entrer dans le ni-vu, ni-connu. Parce que, moi, j'avais une job    faire, je l'ai faite. . . ." (162). In developing the character Tit-Coq, G  linas adds to the conscript a depth of emotional isolation that reverberates beyond the immediate circumstances of the aftermath of the war, thereby establishing his role as "an embodiment of the alienation and lack of identity felt by the Qu  b  cois" (Usmiani, Tremblay 10).

In that G  linas was both the writer and actor, as well as the producer of his material, his understanding of the effect of such direct communication was the greater. Godin affirms that G  linas was attuned to the collective soul of Qu  bec: "Or qu'est-ce que 'comprendre l'  me du peuple', sinon percevoir et exprimer, dans une peinture r  aliste, un   quilibre humain parti-

culier à un milieu donné?" (Godin and Mailhot (1988) 57). Such theatrical directness, based in common experience, whether in the hands of Gélinas, or Tremblay, is sufficiently calculated and ironic, however, to allow the audience to identify closely with the fate of the central character, and to question tacitly the justice of the system which oppresses him. Tit-Coq is an orphan and a bastard, who, throughout the play, is engaged in a desperate search for identity. Mavor Moore comments: "Gélinas did more than tell a story about a love-lorn little Canadien bastard. He told the Canadien story, about a people cut off long ago from their fatherland, trying to find an identity in a bewildering world in which others hold the strings of power" (Four 35-36). It is important that Gélinas, according to Moore, "denies that any such parallel was on his mind" (36). The influence the play has on its audience, as in later realist works by writers such as Dubé, Tremblay, Fennario, and French, is achieved because the writer/actor appears to divest himself of political consciousness, but displaces it to the spectator, at the level of the simple act of social recognition, thus, in Moore's words, "uniting the stage with its audience" (35).

Godin has rightly pointed out that it was the protagonist, Tit-Coq, rather than the quality of the dramatic script, which made the play such a success (Godin and Mailhot (1989) 56). The very limitations of Tit-Coq, however, have tended to assist its reflection of the social constraints which mitigated against Tit-Coq's integration, and to increase its appeal to a wide audience. The setting of Tit-Coq represents the elements of a family milieu so average that its initial audiences were engaged from the first moment: ". . . for a Canadian, whether French or English-speaking, the most striking aspect of the play was its recognizability. . . . In Toronto . . . the first scene was greeted with applause . . . from the sheer shock of familiarity. The room in a military camp, with its cedar walls, and Quebec heater, was neither American nor

European but decidedly Canadian. The family parlour . . . with its walls of grooved planks decorated with family portraits; old-fashioned stuffed furniture with small crochet-work doilies; plaited rug and all, confirmed the unaccustomed identification" (Moore, Four 34-35). The plot is conventional. Tit-Coq falls in love with Marie-Ange, the sister of an army friend, who invites him to visit the family home, and, while he is serving again in France, he dreams of marrying her and having a child. In Tit-Coq's absence, Marie-Ange marries another man, and on his return, the army padre who has been his confidant, dissuades him from pursuing his dream against the laws of the church. The play concludes as Marie-Ange tells Tit-Coq to leave and forget about her, and Tit-Coq summarily obeys. The characters, other than Tit-Coq himself, are drawn in little depth, conveying no more than the type of conventional family structures and attitudes. Within these somewhat simplistic restraints, however, the story of Tit-Coq, the outsider, serves to estrange the familiar behavioural code.

Tit-Coq doubly divides the social order from the imaginary or the mythic. For the first audiences, his knowledge of military service overseas, as well as his status as an orphan and bastard, placed Tit-Coq outside social structures. Tit-Coq himself creates a third order of reality by nurturing his dream, shared with his platoon padre, of marriage with the celestial Marie-Ange. When the padre recognizes Tit-Coq's need to belong, and encourages him to realize his dream, Tit-Coq resists taking action out of shame for his own lack of family. At the end of the play, the padre emphasizes to Marie-Ange that Tit-Coq's wanting to marry her, even after she has married, is no more than a narcissistic desire to give the love which he himself had never received to the child he wishes to father: "Il voulait embrasser dès le premier jour l'enfant qu'il aurait de toi; il ne voulait pas le priver une heure d'une tendresse qu'il n'avait jamais éprouvée, lui. Et cette passion-là, Marie-Ange, était plus forte, à elle

seule, que tout son désir de te posséder" (*Tit-Coq* 191). The *padré* clearly points out to Tit-Coq that he may realize his dream with another woman, but that the consequence of running away with Marie-Ange could only be to produce another bastard like himself. The absolute clarity of the position with which the *padré* confronts Tit-Coq before the latter disappears, "tel un homme harassé qui commence un long voyage" is the mark of the play's closure (197). Moore notes that, when the play was performed in New York, the critics found "the . . . resolution--the acceptance of the impossibility of divorce--'contrived' and 'theatrical,'" adding that "in the play's context any other resolution would have been contrived and theatrical" (*Four* 35). It is not his 'real' condition as an orphan and bastard which forces Tit-Coq's retreat, after all, but his having asserted his own imagination to the limit against the authority of a social code defined by Catholic teaching. The intended audience would have recognized that it was because their choices were safely circumscribed that they were permitted to empathize with Tit-Coq's predicament, but prohibited to travel in imagination beyond the closure of the plot.

The resolution of the plot reflects with extreme clarity the nature of the social condition of the audience, while avoiding any provocation to action. It is this very feature of the play which engenders a minatory response from Godin, from his critical vantage point after the Quiet Revolution. It is not simply the realistic convention of resolution which provokes such a strong reaction, however, but the ironic application of those conventions by Gélinas. For Godin, the play represents "le Canadien français prisonnier de ses impératifs sociaux et moraux, prisonnier même de ses évasions . . . l'image d'un homme voué à tous les échecs, d'une société incapable d'élans véritablement libérateurs" (Godin and Mailhot (1988) 58-59). For Godin, Tit-Coq's idealism, his passivity, and his frustration endow him and the society he represents with the qualities of tragedy: "Cette hostilité que Tit-Coq retourne contre lui-même

fait de lui, plus qu'un personnage pathétique, un héros tragique, en même temps qu'elle exprime d'une manière bien reconnaissable la tragique alternance d'élans et d'échecs d'un peuple aux multiples soumissions" (54). That realism, despite its specificity, can rise to the depiction of tragic suffering, Godin believes, justifies its usage: "Le réalisme, au théâtre, n'a donc rien de péjoratif ou de méprisable; dans l'établissement et la définition d'une littérature nationale--laquelle est forcément celle du peuple!--il est même essentiel" (60).

A preoccupation with submission to the power of patriarchal morality is far from exclusive to the works of Gélinas. It surely marks as well the majority of Canadian drama produced between 1945 and the seventies, suggesting that the tragic impulse has central symbolic value in the transition to postcolonialism. The growing awareness of colonialist repression, as in *Tit-Coq*, required extensive reflection on the immobilization of the creative forces of society. The growing attention to exposing the collective fears holding the colonial social order too firmly in place began to be expressed in tragic myths which accurately defined the condition in the present preventing the creation of the future. As Eva Figes, in her account of the social value of tragedy, observes, "The more helpless human beings are in the face of a hostile environment, the more they need to believe that they can control that environment by their own conduct--by not sinning, and by assuming that personal or communal disaster can be averted or mitigated or driven away by ritual action" (11). Tragedy offers a symbolic means to control the elements through the sacrifice of the central character, "who, either deliberately, or by accident, offends against the most fundamental laws of his society, those laws which are so basic as to be considered divine" (12). Thus, the scapegoat of tragedy in Canadian theatre came to symbolize the despair of a younger generation whose vision of their future in the post-war world was obscured by prevailing fears of the unfamiliar, which

were deeply grounded in the colonial experience.

The severity of the transgression of the protagonist is a function of the degree of repression in any given society. Thus, in colonial Canada, a tragedy could be created out of relatively trivial offences, or simply out of capitulation to the forces of the moral order, as in Tit-Coq and Bousille et les justes (1959). Marcel Dubé sees tragedy not only in rebellion, such as that of Tarzan in Zone (1956), but also in the alienation of Joseph Latour, in Un Simple soldat (1958), whose despair at his loveless existence and apparent lack of a future drive him to return to military service, only to be killed in the Korean war. Dubé is interested in depicting the inarticulate sufferings of the ordinary citizen, which to him are more truthful than inherited folkloric images of the "gai luron": "Le canadien français qui m'a intéressé jusqu'ici ne sait pas nommer ses passions, ne sait pas crier ni sa révolte ni sa souffrance" (Tragédie 14). The proper mode in which to depict such people is tragedy, "impitoyable parce qu'elle dépeint avec rigueur des être pitoyables" (15). Tragedies of pure submission ultimately do not differ in substance from tragedies arising from hubris, however, since both assume the surrender of a protagonist to fate. Both types of narrative assume the impossibility of escaping the power of the symbolic castration imposed by entry into the social order, and both imply the existence of a higher power than that of the state or the patriarch. On the whole, then, tragedy in Canadian theatre is more characteristic of late colonialism than of secularized postcolonialism, although figures such as Louis Riel, the Donnellys, and Norman Bethune have gained a central place in nationalist drama and myth as scapegoats. But it is also possible to trace the dramatization of the tragic sacrifice as mythic structure in Canadian drama from the realist drama of the forties and fifties to some postmodern drama of the late eighties: the tragic sacrifice retains its value as an expression of the conflict between social and individual values.

VI: Family Structures and Identity

Plots centring on self-sacrifice and the sacrifice of the son by the father often indicate, on the one hand, the beginning of the conscious reach for identity of various communities in Canada, and, on the other, a recognition of the weakening of patriarchal, usually rural family structures. The tragedy in Éloi de Grandmont's Un Fils à tuer (1950), for example, like that in Yves Thériault's Le Marcheur (1950), is presented as the responsibility of the family itself, not solely of the father. In de Grandmont's play, Jean, the son who wishes to leave his family farm for Paris, is murdered by his father, while, in Le Marcheur, every family member sacrifices personal happiness to the will of the concealed and obsessed dying father. In these plays, and in comparable situations depicted in Leaving Home (1972) and Michael Cook's Jacob's Wake (1975), none of the characters overcome their bondage to the status quo. In Robert Gurik's Le Pendu (1970), in contrast to the plays of de Grandmont and Thériault, the role of the scapegoat is examined in isolation from any family relationship except that between father and son. The protagonist, Yonel, postures as a blind man, repeatedly performing an illusory public act of sacrifice by hanging, under the command of his greedy father, and thereby gain a false reputation as a prophet and saviour in the communities which believe in the efficacy of his death. The plot of Gurik's play contains a true tragic irony in that when Yonel abandons the fraud and announces his own desire to extend his love to helping mankind, his listeners put him to death, preferring superstition and materialism to spiritual redemption. The theme of filial bondage and sacrifice recurs in many community contexts in Canada, with varying results. In Ann Chislett's Quiet in the Land (1981), the enlistment of an Amish son for service in World War I challenges the values of his father as well as of the community, while in Patrick Friesen's The Shunning (1990), the central character bears the burden of his own crisis

of faith, in increasing isolation from his Mennonite family and community.

Women are also often dramatically implicated in conflicts with authority, both as tyrants and as victims. Agnès, for example, the tyrannical and priest-hating mother of Anne Hébert's Le Temps sauvage (1967), forces her children to seize freedom, leaving her grasping for her old illusion of power: "Agnès: Qui pourra empêcher que je reprenne en main, à la source même de ma vie? Rétablir l'ordre saccagé par les fuyards. Organiser à nouveau une forte saison sans fièvre ni évasion. Etre ma maîtresse absolue. . . ." (78). In the early plays of James Reaney, The Killdeer (1962) and The Easter Egg (1972), tyrannical mothers bind their children, particularly sons, in a pathologically infantile state. The fate of daughters and young women at the hands of authority has also been the subject of many plays. The power of the father and subsequently the husband in the life of an Italian girl is realistically depicted, for instance, by Marco Micone, in Addolorata (1983). More violent encounters have also been dramatized. Betty Lambert's Jennie's Story (1984) concerns the collusion of a priest and family members to sterilize a girl; the girl commits suicide when she learns the truth of what has happened to her. Marie Laberge's L'Homme gris (1986) results in a conclusion which stands in stark contrast to that of Lambert's play. After an intense and lengthy verbal confrontation in a claustrophobic motel room, a daughter finally murders her father, and, by extension, his egotistical power over the women in the family, as the only way to save herself from suicide. In the action of Tomson Highway's Dry Lips Oughta Move to Kapuskasing (1989), ecclesiastical authority is depicted, as in Lambert's play, as a violation of the female, but in this case, the violation symbolizes that of the colonized aboriginal land and culture.

Acts of patricide and self-sacrifice frequently symbolize the position of the writer in a given society as much as they structure the social order itself. According to Derrida, the ex-

ploration of mythic family structures is the necessary subject of both theatre and writing itself, and the writer is a patricidal son: "Writing is the miserable son. Le misérable. . . . a wayward son, an immoderation or perversion . . . a son abandoned by his father. In any event . . . lost. His impotence is truly that of an orphan as much as that of a justly or unjustly persecuted patricide" (Dissemination 143-44). The figure of the pharmakon or scapegoat, in Derrida, is the figure for writing itself, which exists outside the bounds of the social contract. The writer, living in imagination, often seizes freedom prematurely, thus risking self-annihilation. In 1967, the playwright Marcel Dubé stated the historical position of his society in terms befitting tragedy: "Il ne s'agit plus d'amour et de liberté à la petite semaine, tels que permis par les bulles et les encycliques à retardement du dernier Concile, tels que prescrits par la morale dérisoire et pourrie 'd'avant le chaos', mais d'une liberté dure, vraie, à conquérir, à protéger chaque jour, non plus comme un privilège mais comme un droit absolu" (Tragédie 45).

Such an attitude as that expressed by Dubé--and it is one characteristic of the climate of the sixties--presumes that the only alternative to action is silence. The risks involved in breaking the silence, confronting established moral authority, and seizing the territory of signification for one's own purposes, not that of tradition--those risks which present themselves as a duty to the revolutionary writer--are often figured dramatically in a criminal act. The assumption of the role of fatherless son or orphan by which Derrida designates the writer is translated into living as an outlaw. In his early play, Zone (1956), Dubé prefigured his own revolutionary sentiments in Tarzan, the adolescent gangleader who pursues his love of his fate like a tragic hero, even though he is not of tragic stature. The brutally nihilistic and sociopathic Kent, another gangleader, in Marie-Claire Blais' L'Exécution (1968), on the other hand, displaces the role of tragic hero to his more human comrade, Stéphane, who has killed under

Kent's command, and who cannot escape the guilt. George F. Walker has extensively exploited to great effect the analogy of crime and art--melodramatically rather than tragically--in many of his plays, among them Zastrozzi (1977), and Theatre of the Film Noir (1981). A gentler confrontation with authority is evident in his adaptation of Turgenev's Father and Sons, Nothing Sacred (1988). In modern drama, the primary use of tragic structure is to signify alienation from the social order. Whether a play actualizes its potential to be tragic depends not merely on the presence of hubris, which may well be either absurd or melodramatic in itself, but ultimately on whether the central character(s) is capable of surrender to his/her fate.

The tragic sacrifice in Canadian plays is occasionally most effectively revealed, not in action, but in the protagonist's utterance of a concealed truth. In the final speech of Sandy, the retarded woman who has murdered her baby, in Judith Thompson's The Crackwalker (1981), and that of Lui (Yves), the homosexual prostitute who has murdered his lover, in René-Daniel Dubois' Being at Home with Claude (1984), there is certainly the intention to depict the power of fate: in each of these characters, there are forces at work which nothing could have overcome, and which in each case render love and killing inseparable. Yves (Lui), after being the object of a long interrogation by a police officer, during which he resists talking, concludes the process by the extraordinary power of his long final speech, which locates the murder as the death of the speaking subject's entire existence, thus totalizing his self-understanding and destroying both illusion and the interrogation process. This extended monologue is evidence that theatrical language in Canada can still embody tragic fate and make the idea of catharsis useful (Ruprecht, "Voix").

Tragedy tends to decline in the absence of a society unified by its religious beliefs. Lionel Abel has clearly associated the "simplification and purity of vision that tragedy requires" with

faith in the divine (29-31). He admits, however, that since Shakespeare himself, for example, rarely projects "a necessary order beyond nature's," another definition of the tragic attitude might be more apt: "Let us put it the matter this way: the single view necessary for the tragic poet cannot go without a certain humiliation of the mind, through its acceptance of an inflexible order" (31). In many plays where the tragedy appears to fail, as in Hamlet, Abel sees a tendency for the characters to display a dramatic imagination. From this observation he develops his theory of metatheatre, or plays in which "life [is] seen as already theatricalized" (60). In such plays, he argues, characters are aware of their own theatricality before the playwright produces a script: "What dramatized them originally? myth, legend, past literature, they themselves" (60). Such self-consciousness precludes tragedy: "Metatheatre [rests] on two basic postulates: (1) the world is a stage and (2) life is a dream" (105). Whereas tragedy gives a sense of "the reality of the world" and its structure, of "an ultimate order," and of fate as powerful, metatheatre shows the world as "a projection of human consciousness" and fate as conquerable (113). Referring to Lukács's statement that God is the main witness of tragedy, Abel observes: "I cannot imagine God present at a play of Shaw, Pirandello, or Genet [nor] Godot enjoying Waiting for Godot" (113). While God may be absent from the theatre of modern countries, other 'watching institutions' are implicit both in the unfolding of post-colonial national autonomy, and in the enactment of personal dramas. In a sense, metaplays (or self-conscious theatre) are continuously evident in the development of Canadian theatre from the early post-war period to the present. Postmodernism in effect insists on self-reflexivity, and thus the metatheatrical has arguably become the dominant form in the contemporary theatre. Increasingly the symbolic elements of dramatic structures may be found to have been isolated and juxtaposed against another dimension which is the theatrical equivalent of the real.

The subject of fate, or the daemonic--that is the spirit which possesses the artist or the community itself--remains important in drama, even though secular humanism, technology, and postmodernism have intervened in the practice of old forms of communion. Mythic consciousness and the unconscious tend to co-exist in most modern dramatic forms with realist and rational dimensions of representation. The plays of Robertson Davies, most of them written between 1945 and 1955, are the first in Canada to exhibit a clear distinction between heightened, even parodic, stage and literary diction, and speech of the ordinary world. Their subject is usually self-referential in that they explore the place of art and desire in the real world. In Overlaid (1947), Davies characterizes the life-spirit as an elderly farmer who dresses to listen to the regular Metropolitan Opera radio broadcasts in an opera-going outfit made from handy household items. Such personification in the manner of morality plays is common in Davies' work. The secret life of desire is dramatized in At My Heart's Core (1950) through such Canadian literary figures as Susanna Moodie and Catherine Parr Traill. A diabolical interlocutor, Cantwell (whose name places him in the Restoration and eighteenth-century stage tradition) works to expose what lies beneath the costumes and diction of the other characters. Question Time (1975) explores structures of personal and Canadian identity through Jungian symbols: a fictional prime minister is isolated in a symbolic Arctic, while in Ottawa a dynamic involving members of his family and heraldic figures symbolizing aspects of Canada's political life is enacted.

James Reaney's work is also metatheatrical in its combination of literary and poetic diction with eclectic staging techniques, and its reference to a wide range of traditional and modern narrative and dramatic conventions. In Colours in the Dark (1969), Reaney centres the theatrical narrative on the metaphor of a play box: "When you sort through the play box you

eventually see your whole life--as well as all of life--things like Sunday school albums. . . .

The theatrical experience in front of you now is meant to give you that mosaic-all-things-happening-at-the-same-time-galaxy-higgledy-piggledy feeling . . . but underneath the juxtaposition[s] . . . there is a backbone of a person growing up, leaving home . . . making home and identity come to him wherever he is" (qtd Moore, Four 58-59). Like Davies, Reaney uses theatre as a symbolic world, "seeking a break-through to what Jung called the 'collective unconscious': not only to a private preserve but also to a park we all may share" (Moore 59). In that both Davies and Reaney seek to found a theatrical poetics which totalizes the stage world as a mythic space, both preclude political conflict, preferring a somewhat literary form to express the dynamics of personality. The tendency to eliminate conflict arising from interior impulses is likewise prevalent in the collectively created works of the alternative theatre movement.

Metatheatre, in its splitting of the social persona from an interior reality, often deals in doubled identities. Among the most interesting examples of such plays of doubleness is John Herbert's Fortune and Men's Eyes (1967), whose characters are inmates of a reformatory. Herbert's play, although it has been categorized by Knowles as a strictly realist play, also performs, in a manner reminiscent of Genêt, and which prefigures later developments in postmodern theatre, theatricalized power relations, gender identity as mask, and the mirroring confrontation of crude theatrics and high culture (in this case Shakespeare) ("Voices" 99). Tremblay's transvestites and performers, among them Hosanna, Sainte Carmen de la Main, and the Duchesse de Langeais, all wear the masks necessary for self-invention. Hosanna's triumph is not, as he expects, to silence the crowd at the Hallowe'en party with his Cleopatra, since all the others have come as Cleopatra to ridicule him: it is afterwards, when he

surrenders the mask and accepts his own nature. Several scripts use a predetermined context for the exposure of doubleness. In Fortune and Men's Eyes, it is a prison. In Double jeu (1969), Françoise Loranger uses a psychology class as the framework within which an assorted group of students assume second identities and play out these assumed identities in psycho-drama exercises.

Alan Stratton's Nurse Jane Goes to Hawaii (1980), a rare Canadian farce, is based on the premise that the central character, a writer of Harlequin romances, turns everyone she meets into characters in her current plot, dictating her novel into a tape recorder as the dramatic plot unfolds. Ann-Marie MacDonald's Goodnight Desdemona/Good Morning Juliet (1990) is a postmodern version of a similar impulse, in this case, that of Constance Ledbelly, an academic researcher, attempting to prove, with the aid of a "mysterious arcane manuscript" that Othello and Romeo and Juliet were originally intended to be comedies: "Constance's hypothesis is that the errors are the vestiges of a Fool that Shakespeare eliminated from two earlier comedies by an unknown author--a wise Fool capable of turning tragedy into comedy" (Dvorak 130). The plot of MacDonald's play proceeds by a complex series of interpenetrations of the real world and the worlds of the two Shakespeare plays. In Sharon Pollock's Blood Relations (1981), Lizzie Borden's murder of her parents is reconstructed as if in a dream by Lizzie Borden herself and an actress, but with the actress playing Lizzie, and Lizzie herself playing the maid. In Tremblay's Le Vrai monde (1987), the author as a young man orchestrates a drama in which his 'real' parents and sister, who object to the depiction of themselves in the writer's script, are counterpointed with their dramatized selves, as the playwright poses the question of the morality of appropriating personality. Pollock, too, has used herself doubly, as adult persona, and also child-writer, in the reconstruction of the family scene in Doc (1986; also

produced as Family Trappings in 1987).

In René Gingras' Le Facteur réalité (1985) a character opens the play by directly addressing the audience, and announcing he is at once the actor and the actor playing the character. He announces a convention of doubled realities, and explains himself as a caprice of the author:

"André: Pour en revenir à moi-même, et à notre caprice d'auteur, c'est lui, justement, qui me demande de vous dire de ne pas faire trop d'attention: c'est une idée comme ça, qui a quelque chose à voir avec une démarche à lui, très personnelle, 'philosophico-formelle', autour de la problématique de la vérité et de l'illusion au théâtre, un questionnement qu'il traîne après lui comme un boulet depuis qu'il a lu un certain Pirandello dans une douteuse traduction française" (17). The Pirandellian plot of Gingras' play takes place partly on film and partly in real time on the stage. It involves the intersection of the lives of the characters with recent historical personages such as Hubert Aquin. The audience is also aware that the actors, who are named, are distinct from the characters they play. The object of the complex plot is to find truth: "De quelle vérité s'agit-il? De quelles vérités, devrait-on dire. . . . Derrière toutes ces vérités, c'est le 'facteur réalité' qui se cache. Ce facteur qui modifie les faits, la portée des gestes et leur insertion dans la vraie vie. Ce facteur qui invente le théâtre et les drames qui s'y jouent. Ce facteur qui attire les spectateurs et les maintient sous le coup de ses charmes, de ses illusions soigneusement entretenues" (Gingras Facteur viii). In such metatheatrical plays as Le Facteur réalité, the action thus becomes a quasi-philosophical investigation into the doubleness of both fact and fiction, and into the very methods by which they are produced in theatre, which methods are usually concealed (Pavis, Croisement 16).

The transformations of the world view of Canadian theatre since World War II express a constant questioning of the place of the country's culture in relation to the cultures of others.

From the forties to the sixties, a pessimistic view of the state of development of the collective and individual imagination is usually represented. The oppressiveness of the moral code which persisted in the late colonial period had begun to provoke expressions of frustration and increasing readiness for cultural autonomy, more often depicted in a tragic, fatalistic mode than in comedy, which would depend on a relatively clear sense of social solidarity. Following a period of assimilation of revolutionary and spontaneous theatrical forms, which coincided with the intensification of nationalist sentiment at the time of the Centennial, the theatricalization of Canadian culture expanded suddenly and with great élan between 1970 and 1972. In this brief period, theatre spontaneously 'reinvented' itself in its Canadian context, supported by what Urjo Kareda has called a "ritualized recreation of the history of modern drama, all-encompassing if not chronological" (Introduction, Leaving vii). The simultaneous rejection during the seventies of traditional notions of theatrical textuality in favour of collective organization and creative methods, and the comprehensive appropriation of existing formal models for the creation of new naturalized texts has in turn produced the postmodern Canadian theatre, which began to evolve in the early eighties.

While the collective creation, together with populist and nationalist ideology, had become the new orthodoxy of Canadian theatre in the seventies, displacing realist and classical texts associated with European traditions, subsequent demands for more formal and sociological precision in defining the cultural character of the country have led to close questioning of the nature of theatrical textuality, language, and performance values. The cultivation of spontaneity, nationalist enthusiasm, and provisional script values in the seventies suited a theatre which was in the early stages of acquiring both its beliefs and its techniques. As experience has led to discipline and reflection, and as Canadian theatre has established itself

within international patterns of aesthetic experiment and cultural exchange, contemporary theatre has increasingly shown a tendency to explore relations between text(s) and non-verbal semiotic elements in performance. What had come to be an ideological rejection of literary theatre in the seventies has evolved into a new synthesis of language, the physical resources of the performer, and visual and sound media (enhanced by technological advances). The intensified opposition of theatre to authorial dominance of the seventies, furthermore, has led to the postmodern project of recontextualization, which permits a new continuity between traditional and emerging cultures and technologies.

CHAPTER TWO

HISTORY/PLAY: THE INVENTION OF MASTERY AND DISPOSSESSION

Although a national theatre in the traditional and expected sense has never emerged in Canada, the nationalist theatre which did come into being in the seventies spontaneously undertook historicist and civic functions, with little overt prompting from government (other than the close relation between theatrical ventures and the availability of government funding). The promotion of both nationalist feeling and a strong sense of culture as determined by community during this period implies that the state and the people were necessary partners against the threats of foreign domination. The promotion of the arts by the federal government in contemporary Canada, together with the historicizing function performed by the new Canadian theatre, followed in the western tradition of using theatre, poetry, and rhetoric to promote national self-consciousness and collective solidarity. George Woodcock points out that, in the earliest days of Athens, the arts of drama and historical narration were developed as aids to unifying the people:

The glorification of Athens . . . affected the development of history and historical views. . . . [both by] the remythification of the Greek past . . . and the definition of epic values. . . . [and] linked to the emergence of more populist gods . . . [by] the use of drama not only to celebrate human—even if mythical—heroes but also the amazing triumphs of the Greeks in . . . their conflict with Persia./[The tyrant exercised] . . . a skilled populist hand when he deliberately and extensively encouraged manifestations of the arts that, by involving all classes, would reflect not only the greatness but also the cohesion of Attic society. (Monk 19-20)

The development of drama and history were so closely allied for centuries that they retained equal importance in creating heroic examples. (The modern distinction of myth from fact did not appear until the nineteenth century.) Aristotle's formulation of the distinction between the historian and the poet has remained constant in western theatre until the recent objectivization of dramatic form: "The [historian] describes the thing that has been, and the . . . [poet] a kind of thing that might be. Hence poetry is something more philosophic and of graver import than history, since its statements are of the nature rather of universals, whereas those of history are singulars. By a universal statement I mean one as to what such or such a kind of man would probably do . . . by a singular statement, one as to what, say, Alcibiades did or had done to him" (43; emphasis added). Dramatization, and rhetorical heightening have consistently played a greater role than authenticated facts in conveying the lessons and examples of history to citizens of the state.

The classical rules of rhetoric governing historiography and dramatic poetry were of central importance in the foundation of the modern period: "The Reformation found history necessary to the establishment of the positions towards which it was moving. . . . History, indeed, became one of [the Reformers'] major concerns" (Campbell, Shakespeare 33). Reminders of the rhetoric of Renaissance nationalism which led to the establishment of European rule and culture in North America continue to be highly visible in postcolonial Canadian culture, in spite of progressive Canadianization. Shakespeare and Molière serve modern culture to some extent as the classics served the Renaissance.

The necessity of legitimating the authority of new states in the sixteenth century was, of course, the impetus to evoking the example of the past through history and poetry, not merely for its educational value but as political propaganda in support of the monarchistic state. While

poetry, to which category historical drama belonged, was widely opposed by puritans, it was justified by Francis Bacon as giving shape and meaning to events, revealing the reward of virtue and the punishment of vice, as well as the workings of providence as true history could not (Campbell 101). The discomfort with invention is evident even in the recent present in Canada, in the preference for legitimating historical drama by documentary form, to create what amounts to an illusion of non-fiction (Filewod, Collective; Bessai, "Documentary"). The feeling has persisted under colonialism that art, or high culture as it came to be called, belonged to élites, whereas fundamentalism belonged to the people. At the same time, theatre, as a public art in an affluent country, has served the postcolonial state well in disseminating an imaginative construct of the nation.

I: The New World: European Authority, Conquest, and Alienation

The colonizers of North America, in conveying the political and rhetorical structures of the sixteenth and seventeenth centuries to the new territory, laid cultural foundations which demanded perpetuation and remembrance in isolation long after Europe itself had undergone sweeping political changes. According to new historicist critics such as Stephen Greenblatt and Paul Brown, the early colonizers reproduced the power structures of their home society, substituting native populations for the classes which were seen as potentially subversive to the state in the home countries. The very construction of the text of colonial power, in both its secular and ecclesiastical dimensions, required, as Brown has pointed out, the production of subversive elements both inside and outside the perimeters of the governed territory.

Greenblatt remarks that "middle- and upper-middle settlers in the New World regarded the American Indians less as another race than as a version of their own lower classes; one man's

tinker is another man's Indian" (36). Brown, in contrast to Greenblatt, categorizes two distinct discourses of subversion identifiable in literature and in colonial records: 'masterlessness' and 'savagism'" (50). The former, Brown states, refers to "wandering or unfixed and unsupervised elements located on the internal margins of civil society," while the latter refers to "alien cultures on the external margins of expanding civil power" (50).

Brown's distinction of two discourses is pertinent to the drama of Canada, which has shown a preoccupation with defining and containing both classes of potential subversives. While the native has been a constant figure in colonial drama since the first settlements, the masterless also gradually emerged as figures in colonial discourse, often becoming, in the nineteenth and twentieth centuries, representative figures in a counter-discourse opposing colonialism. The rebels (both English and French) of 1837, Louis Riel, Gabriel Dumont, the Donnellys, and even the Doubhkobhors have figured in drama as both as the masterless and as the victims of oppression by the dominant culture. The discourse of colonial power and its potentially subversive others has been firmly inscribed as the dominant discourse of Canada throughout its history. It has been theatricalized repeatedly by the dominant cultures, and as nationalist sentiment has gained ground with conquered populations--French Canadians in the nineteenth century, and recently Native Canadians--it has been dramatized also from the point of view of the colonized.

In 1886, Pascal Poirier depicted the early history of Québec as a grandiose ancestral tragedy of the struggle to uphold French, Catholic culture against the British, played out "en face du public européen" (qtd Cotnam, *Théâtre* 16-17). At the centre of colonialist conquest was a strong theatricality, which presumed what Brown describes as "the power of the royal gaze

. . . able to transmute hitherto recalcitrant elements of the body politic, engendering . . . a desire to serve" (53-54). In the absence of the king, the colonizer assumes regent powers, and attempts to imitate the power of the monarch to subdue rebellious elements, but always playing the role in the knowledge that he is observed as an actor by the king himself. Greenblatt's arguments (based on Henry IV and Henry V) that moral authority depends on hypocrisy, and that the ideal of monarchical power is an illusion or fantasy created by spectators of a play, are doubly apt in the colonial context, where the king is always absent: "[A]ll kings are 'decked' out by the imaginary forces of the spectators, and a sense of the limitations of king or theatre only excites a more compelling exercise of those forces" (44). The use of theatre and role-playing, viewed by early puritans as fantasy or lies, was, both in Europe and in the colonies, effective magic for the production of submission: "Theatre . . . is not set over against power but is one of power's essential modes" (33). Theatrical images of heroes, gods, and historical figures represent real power in the real world, thus investing the actors of the drama with the power both to subdue the people and to impress the monarch and the state.

The theatre of the early colonial period in Canada, scant as it may be, was intended for just such a double purpose. The first recorded dramatic production in the colony, Le Théâtre de Neptune en la Nouvelle-France, was a masque by Marc Lescarbot, who was also the author of the first history of the colony, L'Histoire de la Nouvelle-France. It was performed on the water at Port-Royal, Acadia, in 1610, to celebrate the return of Baron de Poitrincourt, the Lieutenant General of New France, and Samuel de Champlain, his navigator, after a voyage of exploration. The masque follows the form of the 'entrée royale' popularly used in Europe to welcome royalty or their representatives; it centres around the figure of Neptune, and includes six tritons, and four Indian characters, to be played by French colonists, with a speech for de

Poitrincourt himself at the end of the performance (Wagner, "Colonial" 6-10, 35-44; Doucette 3-9). Leonard Doucette points out that the play's imagery reflects the status of the governor and the playwright alike: "Lescarbot and Poitrincourt, steeped in Greco-Roman culture through the privileged education they had both received, would have felt at home among the Tritons, Neptune, and the otherwise recondite mythological allusions with which Lescarbot's poetry is replete" (8). Commentators on the short script have noted that it serves several functions, which together affirm the constitution and the security of the colony. Anton Wagner emphasizes the strong elements of "sympathetic magic," and "wish-fulfillment" in the masque (9); and Gilles Girard, the element of "festivity"--the "preferred means of exorcizing misfortune through illusion and laughter, of reviving this nascent colony at the prey of all its difficulties, of reaffirming the ties of solidarity, of underlining its unfailing obedience to established authority, of reviving faith in common social and political and religious objectives" (qtd Wagner 9). The masque balances the forces of nature with the power of the state, depicting Neptune and the natives alike paying homage and allegiance to Poitrincourt, the representative of the King, thereby reproducing the symbolic order of the old country and defining the structure of the new colony. Doucette affirms that, although the masque "counterbalances" classical references with "another, new, Canadian mythology," it is clearly intended to gain the interest of the King in Paris, since Lescarbot was politically engaged in promoting the cause of colonization (8, 9).

Drama was also used by the early Jesuit missionaries as a means of replicating European temporal and spiritual authority, and of impressing colonists and natives with a suitable degree of awe. The reports by the missionaries often show a lively sense of theatricality. Paul Le Jeune, for one, describing his first impression of natives wearing face paint, likens them to sunburned French beggars: "It seemed to me that I was looking at those maskers who run

around in France in Carnival time. . . . These colors are bright and shining like those of our masks . . . It might have been truly said of them that they were masquerading. . . . I have seen some of them dressed in Bear skin, just as St. John the Baptist is painted" (Le Jeune (1632), Mealing 17-18). Le Jeune's remarks show an instinct to impose alienation, anonymity, and depersonalization on the natives through the metaphor of masquerade. They also bear out Greenblatt's observation that the European colonizers tended to regard natives as if they were the lower classes of their own countries.

What Brown calls Prospero's problems in "maintain[ing] . . . his power," which are those of "representation[,] of his capacity to 'forge' the island in his own image" (59) are clearly evident in the Jesuits' accounts of their attempts to establish their power: "[W]hen we preach to them of God . . . of Hell and Paradise and of our other mysteries, the headstrong reply that this is good for our Country and not for theirs; that every Country has its own fashions. But having pointed out to them by means of a little globe that we had brought, that there is only one world, they remain without reply" (Brébeuf to Le Jeune (1635), Mealing 44). The Jesuits' first priority in "acquir[ing] ascendancy over our savages" was "to check the progress of those who overthrow Religion, and to make ourselves feared by the Iroquois, who have killed some of our men . . ." (29). Although Le Jeune vilifies the Huron sorcerer --"this pretended Magician . . . the Sorcerer, whom I know as a very wicked man . . . [one who enjoys] act[ing] the Prophet and Magician"--he himself resorts to techniques kin to those of his adversary (33-34). He himself recollects the use of "mistère" to terrify his native audience: "We had the soul of an unbeliever pursued by two demons, who finally hurled it into a hell that vomited forth flames; the struggles, cries, and shrieks of this soul and of these demons, who spoke in the Algonquin tongue, penetrated so deeply into the hearts of some of them, that a savage told us, two days

afterward, that he had been greatly frightened that night by a horrible dream. 'I saw,' said he, 'a hideous gulf whence issued flames and demons. It seemed to me that they tried to destroy me, and this filled me with great terror'" (Doucette 10). It may be assumed that a similar theatricality was employed in preaching, since the need to instill fear was, for the Jesuits, a necessary part of their mission.

Numerous dramatic performances and ceremonials were used in establishing social relations in the colony before, and even after, clerical bans against theatre in 1694 and 1699. But, as Doucette points out, theatre was relatively unimportant in the colony; certainly the Jesuits considered it "trivial" in comparison with their serious tasks (15). Baudoin Burger suggests that the lack of theatre in New France naturally followed from "a lack of commitment to the Canadian nation on the part of the nobles, administrators, and clergy who represented the only social and intellectual élite of the country" (qtd Doucette 37). Doucette endorses Burger's contention that the coherent ideal of social structure represented in early dramas and receptions had receded by the eighteenth century. The colonial population consisted, on the one hand, of "transients" who were interested only in making a fortune and returning to France, and, on the other, of the permanent settlers, who were, for the most part hardly literate, and who had, in any case, little time for literature and theatre (Doucette 39). Theatre did not reappear until the British began enact in turn their own theatricals of colonialist conquest and cultural superiority, with not only natives, but French Canadians, to impress and subdue.

The British military, like their French predecessors, knew the value of theatricals to promote their presence to the inhabitants of the country, and to give themselves the status of conquerors. While British occupation encouraged the first visits of professional theatre to the colony, it was in the more intimate theatre of British garrisons and French societies and clubs

that the political aspirations of the colonizers and the now colonized were expressed: "British colonial officials apparently encouraged public theatricals as a means of creating public stability and asserting--albeit unobtrusively--British cultural and political supremacy" (Rewa 223). The military not only built theatres but initiated productions designed to provide the context for community relations between soldiers and civilians, including the French-speaking population. Among the garrison productions were Le Bourgeois Gentilhomme and Le Médecin malgré lui, performed in French by British officers in Montréal in 1774. French-speaking performers were sometimes included in British garrison productions, although there is no evidence they appeared in the Molière plays (Rewa 224; Lieblein, 67).

In the early stages of the conquest there is little evidence of the sense of cultural oppression which was later so keenly felt. Initial relationships between the conquerors and the conquered suggest a controlled spirit of co-operation and mutual respect in the face of the American threat. In 1789, Joseph Quesnel attempted to establish a 'théâtre de société' after the model of French private amateur theatrical groups, but he met with strong opposition from the Montréal clergy, which continued to limit theatrical activity in French (Doucette 53-54). Quesnel's L'Anglomanie, ou Dîner à l'anglaise (of which there are no recorded performances) is the first play to be set in Lower Canada. It satirizes "the current mania among French Canadians for all things British, with the concomitant rejection of traditional French culture" (63). The script indicates that it is the younger generation, represented by the central character, de Primenbourg, an aide-de-camp to the Governor, which is prone to Anglicization (63-66). Quesnel's play prefigures the growing marginalization of French Canadians during the nineteenth century.

As colonial power matured in Canada, devaluation of native peoples increased, as

witnessed by plays of the colonial period. Depictions of natives become, on the whole, progressively shallower and more unconscious as the colonizers' dependence on their skills, and fear of their otherness decreases. By the early twentieth century, natives were usually reduced to the status of the folkloric, and otherwise depicted as irremediably inferior and altogether marginal to the historical events. At the same time, after the British conquest, the native occasionally figured as an heroic, mythical figure in literary drama. In George Cockings's patriotic tragedy after Dryden, The Conquest of Canada: or The Siege of Quebec (1766, 1772, 1773), the Indian bands are marginal to the action, almost certainly included for historical accuracy and possibly stage effects rather than as characters (Thomas; Plant, "Drama in English" 149). In Major Robert Rogers' Ponteach: or The Savages of America (1766), another five-act verse drama, the author depicts the noble savage provoked to an uprising by the unscrupulous cheating and exploitation of British traders and hunters: "Honnyman: Curse on the Law, I say, that makes it Death./To kill an Indian, more than to kill a snake./What if 'tis Peace? these Dogs deserve no mercy;" (qtd Lister, "Canada's Indians" 57). This dialogue from Rogers indicates the complete alienation of feeling with respect to Indians, even as it conveys the awe which the tribal warriors inspired in Europeans.

Rota Lister has noted the similarity between Rogers' drama and Charles Mair's later heroic depiction of an Indian chief, Tecumseh, in that both plays are frank in their portrayal of European wrongs against North American natives, although the authors themselves participated in destruction of native rights and life: "It is interesting that Rogers, who fought the French and the Indians between 1755 and 1760, who destroyed the Indian village of St. Francis and took possession of Detroit, should draw such an unvarnished picture of his fellow Englishmen's treatment of the Indians . . . [as did] Mair, Canadian nationalist, who opposed Louis

Riel bitterly in the interests of expanding and consolidating Confederation (58)." Lister goes on to remark that although Mair blamed the Americans heavily for "wrongs suffered by the Indians," yet he "reserved his most savage scorn for the enemies within. . ." (61). By whatever dissociative process Rogers and Mair may have created their heroic native chiefs, it is clear that both Ponteach and Tecumseh, betrayed by the Europeans and by their own, represent ideals of courage, fortitude, and skill in battle which relativize the commonplace behaviour of colonial soldiers and politicians as either beyond the pale (that of 'masterless men') or merely inept.

Such mythicized native figures as Tecumseh are exceptional in Canadian drama from the conquest to the present. In the absence of war, natives become minor supporting characters in the scripts of nationalist self-definition. In the many plays written in the early twentieth century on the subject of Dollard des Ormeaux, for example, the Indian is often present as a companion to the hero but does not have any independent motivation or passions (Cotnam 49; Doat). In Betty Sandiford's The Bone Spoon (1930), set at Georgian Bay, a contemporary character, Prudence, who wants "to write something great and romantic and brave like the country," fantasizes a reenactment of the times of the Huronia mission, complete with characters who speak in a generalized imitation of archaic English (Voaden ed., 20). The mention of a 1921 tercentenary celebration of peace between the Huron and Iroquois inspires laughter at the expense of the modern natives, who, with neither irony nor compassion, are depicted as unheroic and "dumb," in contrast to heroic images conveyed in literary and historical romances (14). In T.M. Morrow's folkloric Manitou Portage (1930), the prowess of a braggart riverman is finally defeated by an apparition of 'the manitou,' which he has undertaken to fight, and which turns out to be a gigantic physical presence apparently on liberty from Mount

Rushmore.

Of the earlier twentieth-century playwrights, only Gwen Pharis Ringwood depicts native characters with any sense of their real existence, partially because she draws on her childhood experience of living near a reservation. Ringwood lacks political perspective on her characters, however. Not until Ryga's The Ecstasy of Rita Joe (1967) does the subject of the effects of cultural oppression on native peoples become an issue in theatre. Rita Joe is a representative figure for the colonized--a modern inversion of Ponteach and Tecumseh, in that, although she is unheroic and all but anonymous, she too serves the playwright as a device to challenge and estrange the ineptitude and impersonality of the dominant culture's application of its values. It is Louis Riel--positioned between native and French colonial cultures--who has emerged from history to become, for English Canadians at least, the dominant locus, on stage and in fiction, of the subject of Confederation's unknowable and recalcitrant other. Even in the 1880s, both English-Canadians and Québec nationalists recognized in the rebellions--especially the second, in 1885, for which Riel was hanged--the potential for propaganda and spectacle. This interest, unprecedented in Canadian theatre, resulted in four dramas on the subject of the North-West rebellion of 1885. In the plays written in French (Charles Bayer and E. Paragé's Riel (1886), and Elzéar Paquin's Riel (1894), Riel is a political martyr for the cause of French-Canadian nationalism. Two military spectacles produced in English to celebrate the victory of the troupes over the rebels (George Broughall's The 90th on Active Service: or, Campaigning in the North West (1885), and Sergeant L. Dixon's Our Boys in the Riel Rebellion (1886)) naturally represent Riel as an outlaw.

There are important distinctions between the cultures of English-speaking Canada and Québec in the nineteenth century, stylistic as well as political, which have affected

contemporary approaches to history. English-speaking Canadians, unlike the Québécois, showed little taste for creating heroic dramas from colonial history, and less inclination to use the stage for earnest expressions of patriotism. The majority of historical dramas produced in Canada between 1880 and 1945 are romances, with little political significance. The tone of most theatrical material written in English Canada is lightly satiric, and the style of such works produced for the stage, rather than to be read, were in the current Victorian theatrical fashion. An influx of imported theatre, from Britain and also from the United States, made the generation of domestic historical icons the less necessary. Whereas in Québec, plays on the subject of the rebellion appealed to at least a part of the population, the leaders of the rebellion of 1837 in Ontario never figured in nineteenth-century drama. Patriotism for English Canada meant allegiance to Britain above all, until after the First World War, when the need for a Canadian culture began to become more pressing, although difficult to achieve. In English Canada, before the Second World War, the majority of published plays on historical themes used European settings.

Most historical romances of the period rely on a vaguely romantic or neo-classical literary tone for effect, rather than on relevance or even Canadian content. Community pageants, particularly popular between the wars in English Canada, and a continuing tradition in Québec, have in the past often better served to celebrate Canadian history than literary drama (Filewod singles out Denzil Ridout's United We Serve (1927), on the history of the United Church, and Minnie Harvey Williams's The Romance of Canada (1923) (*Collective* 6). However, Hilda Mary Hooke's collection, One-Act Plays from Canadian History (1942) (clearly suitable for classroom use, and popular enough to be reprinted eight times) contains eight scripts, which, although stylistically unremarkable, are exceptional examples of imagina-

tive research. Hooke's subjects include Molly Brant at the home of Sir William Johnson in New York (Brown Lady Johnson), Colonel Thomas Talbot, an early colonist of western Ontario, (On the King's Birthday, The Princess of the Snows, Here Will I Nest), Champlain's bride (Hélène of New France), and Doctor Troyer and the witchcraft at Long Point, Upper Canada (The Witch-House of Baldoon, Widow's Scarlet, and More Things in Heaven). The Troyer plays appear to have served as sources for James Reaney's Baldoon. J.F. Macdonald notes of her characters: "They did not lose their national characteristics in the Atlantic crossing and thus suddenly become mere colonials. They were English, Scotch, and Irish still. But the new land of their hopes . . . laid hold on their imaginations and began the slow process that was to turn their grandchildren into Canadians" (Introduction, Hooke, One-Act). Until the Second World War, in English Canada, the dramatic use of history usually represents an attempt to sustain the link to a romanticized Europe, and only occasionally do scripts (other than those of pageants) memorialize the ancestral character of the Canadian population itself.

The culture of Québec was strongly defined, in contrast to that of English Canada, by a tradition of communal and literary nationalism established at the time of the rebellion of 1837, and still extant at the outset of the 1960s. The remotest concern of the emerging contemporary theatre of Québec was the severing of ties to British history and culture: the primary issue was disengagement from the colonial cultural fabrications, ideals, and national mythology of Québec itself, which connoted a history marked by repression. The obligation to the colonial past, with the qualified exception of its patriots, did not begin to be perceived as a barrier to cultural self-acceptance until after the Second World War. The myth of France as a mother country, for instance, had been perpetuated since the conquest in defence against assimilation, although it had no foundation in political reality. Antoine Gérin-Lajoie's Le Jeune Latour

(1844), the tragedy of a son in seventeenth-century Acadia, who is loyal to his country and at odds with a father who has chosen to collude with England, is representative of the use of history to define Canadian patriotism in terms of allegiance to France. The passionate defence of French culture and Canadian territory is declaimed in the play in the manner of Corneille: both stylistically and historically, Le Jeune Latour removes itself too excessively from topicalities of the period following the rebellion of 1837 to be theatrically effective as a nationalist play.

Quite different in the tone of their nationalism are Fréchette's two historical dramas on the subject of the patriots of 1837, the popular and much-performed Félix Poutre (1862) and Papineau (1880). They were theatrical and playable, if dramaturgically imperfect, and their version of patriotism was more recognizable to contemporary audiences than that of Le Jeune Latour, in that they were revolutionary rather than conservative, and related to history within living memory. Although Fréchette's melodrama Papineau includes such absurdities as Papineau himself praying like Christ in the garden before he leaves Canada for America, the land of liberty (III, x 119), and a contrived betrothal between the French-Canadian heroine, Rose, and the Englishman, Sir James Hastings, it contains enough heartfelt republican fervour combined with historical substance that, together with Félix Poutre, it became the basis for one of the first modern history plays of Québec, Jacques Ferron's Les Grands Soleils (1958, first produced 1972). In Papineau, Fréchette also clearly argues the distinction between an English-Canadian notion of politics (viewed as oppressive), and French Canadian patriotism (elevated to a quasi-religious status) (I, iii 41-43). Despite a contrived marriage between the heroine Rose and an Englishman at the end of Papineau, the play conveys a strong sense of the polarization of values which lay at the heart of the colonial period in Québec.

The early twentieth century produced many minor dramatic works in French on historical themes. Cotnam notes that the favourite historical hero in Québec was Dollard (in seven extant plays), followed by Montcalm (four), and Carillon (two) (Théâtre 49; Doat). The plays which depict these heroes are generally very static, poetically imitative, and more concerned with the preservation and glorification of French culture than with dramatic innovation or insight. Such historical dramas were performed in parish halls, and at the Monument National on occasion, during the Soirées de famille of the early twentieth century.

Until the seventies, radio and television were more influential than theatre in establishing the national historical sense. The most important medium for dramatized history was radio. The series, "The Romance of Canada," written by Merrill Denison and produced between 1929 and 1932 for the Canadian National Railway by Tyrone Guthrie, was the first major contribution in this field (Anthony, "Denison" 136; Bryden, "Guthrie" 251). John Coulter later made important contributions to historical drama on radio, with scripts on early Québec, and The Trial of Joseph Howe, which was "broadcast in 1942 to remind Canadians that the freedom they were fighting for in the Second World War had been hard won" (Anthony, "Coulter" 112). National Film Board documentary films also played a role, often propagandist, in the development of Canadian culture during the forties. More recently, such television series as The National Dream and The Newcomers (both partially scripted by Timothy Findley) have familiarized audiences with the broader movements of colonial history (Miller and Legris, (519-24).

After World War II, Canadians gradually began to define their national aspirations, and to examine their nature more closely. In 1947, Robert Charbonneau observed: "C'est en étant lui-même, en acceptant avec sa terre, son histoire, sa vie et son temps qu'un écrivain produit

des oeuvres humaines d'une portée universelle" (qtd Cotnam 61). The initiation of "la quête de soi" was not confined to Québec after the war, but was equally apparent in English Canada (61). It has been in the service of this ongoing process of definition, assertion, and transformation of national identity, and not for merely nostalgic purposes, that historical subjects have been evoked since the war. In English Canada in the forties and fifties, dramatists such as Robertson Davies, Lister Sinclair, and John Coulter began to examine the history and literature of Canada for traces of origin and possible indices of the future. In Québec, however, it was not until Jacques Ferron's Les Grands Soleils, the original version of which was written in 1958, that history was reread dramatically in terms of the present.

From the sixties to the present, the dramatic treatment of history has served to shake off European authority and the monarchical gaze of the past. In English Canada, the absence of any real binding myths other than those associated with empire-building begged the construction of populist histories as the first stage towards a coherent sense of autonomy. In Québec, on the other hand, the more unified and widely disseminated literary nationalism, constructed under British colonial rule to ward off assimilation and to sustain the authority of French culture, became the site of a concerted clearance of the atrophied symbols of the perpetual reproduction of French colonial origins which presupposed permanent submission to British rule. With the initial business of deconstructing colonial authority out of the way, playwrights have progressed beyond the original postcolonial strategies of disengagement--populist documentary, in the case of English Canada, and satirical demythification in Québec--to less nationalist, more inventive and intertextual experiments with historical texts.

II: Decapitating Lord Durham [or] Manufacturing Revolution

The drama of the colonial period reflects a society regulated by clearly defined institutional loyalties and ties. Even in realistic plays of the twenties and thirties, which deal with the economically and culturally marginalized, a sense of social and personal identity simplified and constrained by necessity is indicated. In the interests of survival, stability, and economic growth, nonconformity and rebellion had been carefully restrained for centuries, by local elders as well as by colonial representatives. France and England had consecutively asserted their own cultural supremacy as a fundamental necessity for political control of the territory. Other cultural groups, the Scots and Irish, were, of course, politically important by the time of Confederation, but their relationship to the Crown remained a reflection of the cultural constellation of the British Isles. The later wave of immigrants, including Ukrainians and Scandinavians, found a place in prairie literature, but were otherwise marginal; the Chinese population was all but ignored by writers. By the late colonial period, the arbitrary cultural dominance of the British had encouraged an artificial illusion of dependency and a blindness to the necessity for growth of cultural difference and dialogue.

During the period following World War II, when the illusions generated by British cultural authority began to recede, the prospects of generating an autonomous future evoked in some Canadians a sense of being cultural orphans. Victor Turner has stated: "Where historical life itself fails to make cultural sense in terms that formerly held good, narrative and cultural drama may have the task of poesis, that is, of remaking cultural sense, even when they seem to be dismantling ancient edifices of meaning that can no longer redress our modern 'dramas of living'--now evermore on a global and species-threatening scale" (87). As the process of "remaking cultural sense" began, questions as to what exactly 'culture' meant had not yet been posed, because colonialism had subsumed all elements of Canadian life to its ideology. The

process of discovering what Canadian culture could mean in practice began with the intuitions of individuals close to the cultural establishments of the country before it gathered momentum as a political matter of national scope.

Charbonneau's observation that self-acceptance and the acceptance of history and the land are the proper aims of the contemporary writer is exemplified in the post-war years by two English Canadian playwrights, Robertson Davies and Lister Sinclair. Neither is radical, and neither places collective cultural identity before self-identity; both are content dramatically to explore the emergence of Canadian identity dramatically in terms of the effects of a confrontation between the European past and the Canadian present within a specific set of characters, without overtly generalizing the meaning of the dramatic conflict. In Davies's At My Heart's Core (1950) and Sinclair's the Blood is Strong (1948), both historical dramas, the playwrights interrogate their characters' past to determine the emotional nature of cultural identity and the relation between the personal and the social.

The theme of At My Heart's Core is one which has been extensively explored by Canadian critics--the isolation and sense of exile of the colonial immigrant. "The colonial effect [in fiction]," as John Moss, for instance, remarks, "is in the superimposition of responses to an alien or alternative reality upon indigenous experience. The alien alternative, in this duality, is distant in space and, usually, in time. Exile from it is in the sense of irretrievable loss imposed by the separation" (55). Davies, through the devious inquiries of Cantwell, who acts as interlocutor, exhumes the possible longings behind the textual facades of Susanna Moodie and Catherine Parr Traill, as well as those of a third woman, Frances Stewart, and meditates on the moral meaning of the women's sense of lost opportunity. By choosing two famous colonial writers, Davies also suggests the artistic compromises and personal deprivations occasioned by

immigration: "Mrs Moodie: I, the peer of Maria Edgeworth! . . . / Cantwell: Yes, why not? / Mrs. Moodie: But I have never attempted a work of any length: I have had no opportunity to do so. / Cantwell: Ah yes; you are in your sister's position. You must play second fiddle to the incompetence of Lieutenant Moodie" (60-61). Susanna Moodie's husband is here meant to be more than the failed settler depicted in her works: the play suggests that he and his class of colonialists are, albeit genteel and politically moderate, philistines.

The revelation of the women's discontents in At My Heart's Core is paralleled by the account of the rebellion at York, which is given by Stewart, Frances's husband, on his return from the scene, where he has been on military service with Moodie and Traill (Wilmott 49). Stewart is relatively tolerant in his views of the rebellion. When Mrs. Moodie indignantly suggests that Methodism caused the uprising, he responds, "One can pay too dearly for unity of any kind. I don't really think that rebellion is such a very bad thing. . . . There was once a rebellion in Heaven, you know . . ." (Heart 71). Moderation, reason, and marital accord prevail over wanton ambition and desire in the resolution of the play, as they do (with the exception of hangings) in the political arena. Rod Willmot points out that "[to] the double question--should the nation live by its heart? or should it change by revolution? Davies answers [both questions] . . . in the negative" (49). At the personal level, too, the play implies that, for those of Anglo-Saxon background, the Tennysonian opposition of love and duty can only be resolved in favour of the latter, but at the expense of art.

The implicit valorization of the works of Moodie and Traill as inferior to those of Maria Edgeworth in At My Heart Core bespeaks a point of view with which some Canadian critics might contend. Davies's argument is that their British patriotism stood in the way of the ability of Moodie and Traill to respond adequately to their Canadian experience. It should be

remembered that they had more cause than Edgeworth to cling to patriotic attitudes, given the greater lack of cultural definition in their Canadian environment. In any case, since the time of Davies's somewhat reductive characterization of Moodie and Traill in At My Heart's Core as repressed colonialists, cultural criticism has vindicated the value of their records of their experiences. Furthermore, in postcolonial writing, in Canada as elsewhere, the wide publication of narratives of immigrants and children of immigrants has made cultural duality a norm of their condition, not a failure to acculturate.

An important feature of Davies's play, consistent with the typing of his other works, is the stylistic division between the literary diction of the women and their husbands, and the oral vitality of Phelim Brady, the Irish neighbour, an artist-figure without inhibition. The contrast suggests that there is a strong link between colonialism, emotional restraint, repression, and literariness. It is not only the Anglo-Saxon heritage which Davies indicts, for in Hope Deferred (1948), he also depicts the repressiveness of the banning of Tartuffe by Bishop Saint-Vallier. Davies clearly defines the heritage of colonialism itself as "restrictive on the growth of art and literature in Canada; organized virtue . . . unfriendly to freedom of expression" (Wagner 3: 175). As Richard Plant points out: "The picture of a graceless Canada, a kind of fallen Eden in need of cultural redemption, pervades Davies' work from these early years" ("Cultural Redemption" 38). In that Davies aligns all authority--moral, spiritual, and political--on the side of textuality and Anglo-Saxons, and (in the manner of Shaw) all aesthetics, vitality, and creativity on the side of the oral tradition, Celts, and other colourful nomads, he is the precursor of alternative theatre, which clearly identified the difference between the past and the present by the opposing textual authority through the valuation of oral, emotional, and physical elements of culture.

Lister Sinclair's The Blood Is Strong (1956), one of the most popular Canadian plays of the fifties, uses realistic dialogue, interspersed with songs, to dramatize the cultural adaptation of a family of nineteenth-century settlers from Skye to Cape Breton. The plot centres on the resistance of Murdoch MacDonald to his new environment: "I want to go back, because a man can emigrate every part of him, except his heart" (27). As in At My Heart's Core, authoritative textuality, in this case that of the central character who persistently quotes from the Bible, is complemented by the poetic proclivities of a bardic character, Hector Morrison, another Scot. In Davies's play, the native presence is signalled only by a minor and highly unrealistic character, Sally, a servant; in Sinclair's, the native character, Joe Threefingers, together with his close companion, the local hunter, Barney Hannah, is used to demonstrate that it is possible to be fully at home in what the Scot perceives as a hostile environment. The romance which develops between Murdoch's daughter and the hunter, and her teaching him to read signify the cultural reconciliation which will be realized in their children.

Jane Chadder finds the content of The Blood Is Strong consistent with both Douglas LePan's poem, "A Country Without a Mythology," and with Frye's arguments on Canadian mythic patterns in The Bush Garden. She notes the tendency of immigrants to glorify the old country, and their failure to identify with what they encounter: "To paraphrase Atwood, what the stranger--or any exile, any immigrant--is looking for, is not there; what is there, is not seen" (103). Chadder notes that it is native culture and the landscape itself which are not seen: ". . . perhaps a man such as Hector Morrison, who bewails the stagnation of his poetic genius, simply fails to recognize what surrounds him, much less transfer the visual excitement and raw energy of the Canadian landscape into genuinely creative works of art" (103). Chadder sees in Sinclair's play the dramatization of a failure to acculturate; but her account

seems somewhat ingenuous in supposing that early immigrants could ever have abandoned "idealized experiences associated with the pastoral mythology of an established civilization" for what she suggests they might have responded to spiritually--totem-poles and the worship of Manitou, "who might be a symbol of Canada's own mythology" (102). Sinclair's play is, curiously, less dated than Chadder's critical commentary, in that it restricts itself to dramatizing life-long attachments and inner struggles to accept the new land, with considerable empathy, rather than taking to task hard-pressed immigrants from remote Scottish islands for their lack of aesthetic responses and what would now be called political incorrectness.

The tendency to view Canada as it emerged from colonialism as a country without culture appears to be contradicted by literature and drama itself. Canada, on the contrary, appears to have been a country with an overdetermined culture which guarded against destabilization by inner impulses and by alien social elements. In Davies's plays and in Sinclair's The Blood is Strong attention is drawn to examples of this puritanical constriction of social and psychic life in English Canada: both playwrights signal that it persists in modern Canada as a self-imposed condition, the residue of the nineteenth century no longer pertinent to contemporary needs and conditions. Neither At My Heart's Core nor The Blood is Strong is overtly political in its polemic, and no radical response to existing attitudes, either political or artistic, is envisaged by either playwright. Although Davies touches on the inherent hypocrisy of a society which demands that so much remain concealed, he tends not to extend the indictment to his contemporaries, preferring instead to concentrate on the subject of philistinism.

John Coulter's Riel (1950) is one of the first plays to undertake the task of exposing deliberate oppression in colonial Canada. While not a politically radical play, Riel opens the examination of colonial attitudes to charges more serious than mere puritanism. Coulter's

northern Irish background allows him to dramatize authoritatively the ongoing conflicts in Ontario politics as a continuation of vehement old country polarities, which distort the issues in Manitoba according to old prejudices. Partially as a result of Coulter's treatment, the Riel rebellions later became a favourite dramatic subject for the exploration of political motivation and cultural alienation.

In the sixties, in English Canada and French Canada alike, the urgency of rejecting outworn codes gathered momentum. In Québec, the political situation gave cultural issues an added significance. "In contrast to the almost obsessively mythopoeic approach of English-Canadian playwrights," as Renate Usmiani has stated, "the historical plays of Quebec are mostly plays of protest and demythification: protest against the facts of history themselves, and protest against the way these facts have been traditionally presented by the educational system" ("The Playwright" 118). It is worthwhile remembering, though, that the widespread demythification of history and culture in Québec during the seventies was preceded by a more tentative and considered representation of political issues in the sixties. Both Dubé, in his Les Beaux dimanches (1968), and Gélinas, in his Hier les enfants danseaient (1966), depict the disruptive effects of the radical politics of the younger generation on the established pattern of affiliation, particularly on the family. Gélinas' play, although very frank on this score, is also circumspect about the moral price of revolt: it includes the confrontation by a federal Liberal M.P. of his sons, who are involved in terrorism.

Other plays of the period prior to the emergence of the alternative theatre use historical subjects as a means of depicting the imminent break with history. Thomas McDonough's Charbonneau et le Chef (first produced in English by the CBC in 1968, first produced in French in 1971), unusual in that it deals with the Duplessis era, articulates a strong protest

against the injustices of the recent past. McDonough emphasizes the price of dissent under an authoritarian régime, but balances the losses against the moral gain. The play is a tragic treatment of the actions of Archbishop Charbonneau during the Asbestos strike of 1949, his conflict with Duplessis, and his eventual forced resignation. McDonough acknowledges the similarity of his play to Anouilh's Becket, but notes that Charbonneau was fighting for cause more fundamental than Becket--that is, not for clerical rights, but for "the Christian concept of justice" (Introduction, 7). The playwright considers his production more an allegorical "social drama" than a "historical document," and states as his purpose in writing it, "[t]o waken the Canadian conscience to its own poetry and drama" (8). When the play finally reached the stages of Québec in the seventies, it was well received in several productions (Noonan, "Charbonneau," 87-88).

Jacques Ferron's Les Grands Soleils (1958) offers the audience an approach to contemporary politics which mediates the issues through reference to historical precedent. This play, written before the death of Jean Lesage, but not produced until 1968, revalues the spirit of the 1837 revolt in Québec through the figure of Jean-Olivier Chénier. Here, as elsewhere in his work, according to Mailhot, Ferron writes in his own inimitable way "une vaste fable collective, nourrie d'une géographie redessinée, d'une histoire libérée des archives, des manuels et des théories" (Godin and Mailhot (1988) I: 227). But, in Les Grands Soleils at least, Ferron clearly does recognize the necessity of an historical sense to the active creation of a vision of the future. He finds in Chénier, a local doctor like the author himself, a sympathetic historical reflection of his own independent, nationalist sentiments.

Ferron draws on Fréchette's Félix Poutre and Papineau for the historical source material of Les Grands Soleils. The title of Ferron's play appears to refer to Rose's prophetic sentiment

in Papineau: "Oh! tant que notre beau pays subira le régime énervant qu'on lui impose, ni les arts ni les lettres n'y pourront briller sérieusement, soyez-en sûr. Ce sont des fleurs qui ne s'épanouissent qu'au grand soleil de la Liberté!" (I, iii 42). The setting of the play, parc Viger in Montréal, with its statue of Chénier, indicates the present day framework. The park's resident drunk, Mithridate ("roi du pont," a reference both to the King of Pontus, and to the function of the character in bridging the past and the present), is the play's chorus, and the representative of the writer (Mailhot, Godin and Mailhot (1988) I: 231). The home of Chénier overlooks the park, with sunflowers visible in the garden; Mithridate confers regularly with Chénier. Two characters in the play, Sauvageau, an Indian, and François Poutré, the son of the historical traitor Félix, provide the means to amplify the drama of the history of Québec beyond the story of Chénier, and to create an intersection between mythic and folkloric elements, documentary and literary material, and contemporary international political realities.

Ferron intends to challenge his audience to distinguish between pure revolutionary motives and mere war-mongering. The François Poutré of Les Grands Soleils is a twentieth-century antithesis of the spirit of 1837. In keeping with his father Félix's tendency to unprincipled action, he is a mercenary, and contrary to Chénier's example of sacrificial patriotism, always departing from Viger station for new wars. In the last act of the play, Mithridate's narrative of the death of Chénier and the burning of the church at Saint-Eustache is counterpointed with François' reminiscences of the comparable scenes he has witnessed in Europe and Asia (particularly the latter):

Mithridate: C'est le grand cérémonial qui commençait. . . . On ouvrit le corps
de Chénier: le coeur on lui arracha pour le mettre au bout d'un bâton./François:
J'imagine que les Chinois, ils s'en racontent, eux aussi, des choses

invraisemblables sur les morts de la pagode./Mithridate: . . . Étrange destinée et suprême honneur, c'est le premier peuple blanc qui cède au métissage et se lève avec le Tiers monde! Voilà des siècles que la force cherchait à s'imposer à la faiblesse: elle a obtenu pour résultat que le faible s'impose au fort. Le général Colborne marchait à la défaite. C'est Chénier qui triomphe et avec lui le Fils contre le Père. Petit, enlève ton battle dress: c'est la livrée de Barabbas. (537-38)

Mailhot has reason to suggest that the last act of the play, in which this dialogue occurs, is "un peu trop appuyée et didactique, de faire de lire Guevara par Chénier" (Godin and Mailhot (1988) I: 232). But it is likewise clear that revolutionary political sentiments prevalent in Québec during the late sixties are powerfully present in Ferron's play. At bottom, Ferron's exploitation of the analogy between Québec's history and modern colonialism in Third World countries exercises the tempero-spatial play of difference to draw the audience into a new relation with their own past and that of the wider colonized world.

The evocation of the spirit of 1837 led the Théâtre du Même Nom (TMN) to a different usage of Chénier. Jean-Claude Germain's Les Enfants de Chénier dans un grand spectacle d'adieu (1969) initiated the more typical mode of Québécois theatre's engagement with history—one characterized by satire and parody, a wholesale debunking of venerable texts and myths, both French and Québécois, which might tie the audience to an irrational glorification of the colonial past. As Caron, the master of ceremonies in Germain's A Canadian Play/ Une pièce canadienne (first performed 1980) says "Le ridicule tue la révérence!" (19). The Enfants de Chénier are an amateur boxing team pitted in a match against the theatrical legends of classical theatre, including Racine, Corneille, Molière, Musset, Claudel, and even Euripides. The result

of the match is, of course, the complete rout of theatrical tradition. "Pour la première fois," as Belair looks back, "le théâtre québécois obliquait résolument dans le sens d'une optique critique. . . . Alors qu'il apparaît presque impossible aujourd'hui de voir un texte québécois, d'imaginer une pièce québécoise qui ne soit pas fondée sur un regard critique sur le Québec et qui ne prenne de distance critique face à elle-même, les Enfants de Chénier étaient les premiers à donner le ton" (71-72). The cultural criticism of TMN was extended in numerous productions, among them Le grand rallye de canonisation d'Aurore l'enfant martyr or Si Aurore m'a été contée deux fois (1970), "qui attaquait de plein fouet le contexte mystico-religieux de la culture québécoise" (Belair 72-73). In his sequel to this production, Aurore II or La Mise à mort de la Miss des Miss (1970), and in numerous other productions culminating in 1980 in A Canadian Play/Une plaie canadienne, Germain prolonged his attack on the political myths which had persistently impeded national emergence.

The alternative theatre of the seventies in Québec specialized in carnivalesque approaches to national mythology and history. Le Grand Cirque ordinaire's T'es pas tannée Jeanne d'Arc? (1969), produced in the same year as Les Enfants de Chénier, combines circus techniques with references to Brecht's St. Joan of the Stockyards to make St. Joan symbolic of collective nationalist sentiment. Théâtre Euh!'s L'Histoire du Québec (1971), which was an international success, also tells the story of Québec by means of circus techniques. It should not be overlooked that Gratien Gélinas, as Fridolin, had himself undertaken to retell Québec history from the point of view of the clown, in his popular sketch, "L'Histoire de l'histoire" (Fridolinades). Fridolin's history, which involves the taking of tea on the Plains of Abraham, and a ballet divertissement, ironically emphasizes the absurdities of historical texts which ignore the impact of events on people.

Germain's perspective on Québec's history did not cease to be satirical during the seventies, but his plays begin to show more concern for the audience's remembering of myths (provided they are kept in perspective) and for the necessity of the historical sense itself. Germain's concern stems from his own awareness of deficiencies in the educational system at the level of the *collège classique*, and at the Université de Montréal, where he himself studied history: he "discovered . . . that Québec history was not being taught at all. . . . Academically speaking, it did not exist" (*Second* 134). Germain's educational experience in the fifties is not unique, but he remains unusual for his expression of cultural tastes in ways which allow for the combination of European texts with Québécois history and culture. While his dislike of the classical French authors is evident enough in *Les Enfants du Chénier*, his taste for Rabelais is nonetheless pronounced throughout his work. Added to the Rabelaisian model of the carnivalesque is his eclectic juxtaposition of historical characters from different periods. In his *Un pays dont la devise est 'je m'oublie'* (1976), Germain impresses upon his public the necessity of a sense of one's past to the creation of the future by presenting an assortment of characters from Québec history, as performed by a pair of travelling actors, against projections of pages from school history books. *Mamours et conjugats* (1978) is a satirical history of sex in successive periods of Québec history, which illustrates the moral contrast between the past and the present (144-45). But of Germain's plays, the one which strikes most accurately at political issues (rather than at cultural aspects of history) and which frames the historical genesis of separatism is *A Canadian Play/Une Plaie canadienne*. With the exception of Joseph Quesnel's *L'Anglomanie*, it is the only play in the Québec repertoire which accurately isolates the subject of the dependency of the culture for its identity on the existence of its other, English Canada (as in the 'Calvinist-Jansenist pantomime').

Structured by masonic ritual and the music of Mozart, A Canadian Play/Une Pièce canadienne represents a Lord Durham brought back from the dead to face trial for his famous pronouncement on Québec's (non) culture, to impersonate the French-Canadian federalist perpetrators of his assimilationism (Laurier, Saint-Laurent, and Trudeau), and finally to be decapitated. Several elements are combined in the play to give an integrated dramatic portrait of the dangers to Québec from within its own borders. Germain points out that Québec, in contrast to Peter Schemihl, who sold his shadow to the devil, has acquired "l'ombre de son double" (13). The first and most powerful double in the history of Québec history under British rule is described in fairy tale or folkloric terms which echo ironically throughout the play as "[le] Grand Croquemitaine de l'Assimilation, le Bonhomme Durham" (13). The element of the play which indicates the depth of the cultural doubling of Québec is its framework, a masonic ceremony. During the time of Lord Durham, French-Canadians founded numerous organizations--most notably the Saint-Jean-Baptiste Society--in response to the power of masonic lodges and for the promotion of national spirit. Thus, as Germain observes, they engendered their identity as the shadow of English-Canadian nationalism: "En dérobant le 24 juin, le banquet et le Saint Patron aux franc-maçons, l'homo quebecensis s'était approprié l'image de l'Autre, un peu comme on déguise en squelette le soir de l'Halloween pour faire peur à la mort" (Introduction, Canadian 22). Germain's metaphor of Hallowe'en disguise (also a metaphor for cultural alienation in Tremblay's Hosanna), defines the cultural status of Québec, as it was cast and so continued after the 1837 uprising: "[le québécois] se prendra pour un autre et n'existant que par l'Autre, il se condamnera du même souffle à n'exister que pour l'Autre: en somme, il s'apprête à devenir le double de son ombre" (23). The masonic ceremony of Germain's play takes place in the presence of "la Veuve Saint-Jean," a figure for

both Québec tradition and Mozart's Queen of the Night, who demands that the shadow stolen by "l'Étranger" be repossessed so that Québec may become whole (38).

Durham is depicted by Germain not as a mere caricature of a racist imperialist but as an astute diplomat and politician, a worthy adversary, and an influential figure in Canadian history. He represents "cet interlocuteur imaginaire britannique qui nous masque en permanence nos interlocuteurs réels canadiens" (26). In ironic homage to Durham's consignment of Québec culture to the status of folklore he is also depicted a fairy tale stepfather: "Au Québec, l'absence du père est proverbiale . . . [il] l'est précisément parce que nous l'avons remplacé par un père emprunt, une sorte de beau-père auquel notre inconscient collectif a conféré une autorité mythique et dont le Bonhomme Durham demeure . . . l'incarnation privilégiée" (24). The play's plot proceeds by the transformation of Durham into the three notable Québécois prime ministers, all of whom speak at times in the standardized French of the federal politician and, at other times, when addressing their Québécois stepchildren, in joul. Each of the prime ministers is courted by "la maumariée" of the folksongs, further to emphasize the unnaturalness of the liaison between Québec and Canada: "En imposant à l'homme d'ici . . . le trait d'union comme étant la base de sa nouvelle personnalité, la souveraineté-association . . . lui propose . . . [r]ien de moins que ce que Nicolas de Cuse a décrit dans sa Docte ignorance comme le nec plus ultra de la théologie négative rhénane, la réconciliation des opposés" (25). In response to the complaint of Monsieur Caron, the master of ceremonies for the play's proceedings, that Québec has suffered from an excess of translation during its history, it is Durham himself who provides the simple and obvious answer to the dilemma of perpetual alterity: "Alors, si s'est le cas, c-e-s-s-e-z de tra- dui-re! Il faut se dire soi-même, si l'on veut pas dire par les autres!" (23). The solution to be

sought through the confrontation of history, Germain thus proposes, is simply to be oneself.

Germain's play is striking for its isolation of the historical origins of possession by the Other, its methodical use of historical transformations, and, above all, its enacting of dialogue with the Other as a means to exorcise the source of impotence and fear, and to reclaim integrity. Germain's replaying of Durham is reminiscent of healing dances designed to incorporate the spirit of that which possesses rather than annihilates the subject. Lévi-Strauss's description of the shamanistic use of spectacle may aptly be applied to the ritual depicted in Canadian Play/Une Plaie canadienne: "It is necessary, through a collaboration between collective tradition and individual invention, for a structure to elaborate and continually modify itself; that is to say, a system of oppositions and correlations integrating all the elements of a complete situation where sorcerer, patient and spectators, the representations and the procedures each find their place" (qtd Cixous, 10). Germain's play, written at the end of the initial nationalist period of Québec theatre, reflects accurately the driving force behind the cultural revolution. Germain recognizes clearly that, as long as Québec conceived of itself in counter-cultural terms, it was yoked to English Canada, and dependent on it for a sense of identity. Although the political decisions in Québec did not reflect a readiness to convert an independent identity into separation, the process of cultural emergence, not only in Québec but in English Canada, did reach a point, by 1980, at which the assertion of otherness had been achieved, and new boundaries were being sought.

A radical change in theatre's treatment of history was effected by Jean-Pierre Ronfard in 1982, with his epic cycle Vie et mort du roi boiteux. While the cycle is centred in a familial history rooted in Québec, the limits of intercultural and intertextual reference, and the representation of time and space are stretched as far as the imagination of the participants

permits. Vie et mort was originated at the Nouveau Théâtre Expérimental de Montréal, and subsequently received a full production at the Expo-Théâtre at Terre des Hommes, when the six plays in the cycle, together with interludes, a prologue, and an epilogue were performed in one day over a period of fifteen hours (Lapointe 220-21). As Gilles Lapointe observes, Ronfard's epic cycle "renoue avec des sources antiques de la Célébration, qui en régénère en quelque sorte le sens premier, exprime avec conviction sa volonté d'un théâtre authentique, fondé sur l'émergence des forces vives de l'être, sur la puissance de participation du spectateur--expérience théâtrale globale . . ." (222). The canvas of the plays is extended to such a breadth that the theatrical experience itself, by including the history of performance, requires the audience to leave aside both ideological and aesthetic preconceptions and enter into the experience of theatricalized space in a manner reminiscent of Elizabethan theatre.

Ronfard had previously participated in several productions which involved the parody or adaptation of Shakespeare, including Garneau's joual version of Macbeth (Lapointe 221). The core of the cycle, the history of two Montréal families, is couched in references to Shakespearean characters (Richard III, for example) and to such Renaissance personages such as Catherine and Philip of Aragon. Lapointe suggests the analogy of Ariane Mnouchkine's productions of several simultaneous plays of Shakespeare at the Théâtre du Soleil, in Paris (224). The complex interaction of the families through several generations is reminiscent of Grass, Beaulieu, and also Marquez, in One Hundred Years of Solitude (223). Extending away from the family history, however, is an unbounded text of shifting signifiers. Lapointe describes it as "cette machine colossale . . . ce texte hybride, baroque, cyclopéen " . . . qui avale . . . une quantité incroyable d'emprunts historiques et littéraires," from the Old Testament and Greek tragedies to Molière and Ibsen (220). The references to historical

characters and writers of all conceivable periods are, in fact, even much wider than Lapointe's survey suggests.

As to the purpose in extending the theatrical text as a map of the world, a constant image in the cycle, Lapointe suggests, "[p]eut-être Ronfard a-t-il voulu faire valoir ici (comme dans le théâtre Nô) un signe vide, ébranlé dans sa référentialité au monde et à l'histoire"--that is, not a theatre of mimesis or representation, but a theatre of the sign itself (224). Vie et mort du roi boiteux signals a radical change of direction from the nationalist and localist theatre of Tremblay, Germain, and the first collectives, while continuing their fundamental assumptions of a theatrical space liberated from tradition and convention. Ronfard's cycle initiates the phase of interculturalist and postmodern referentiality and linguistic play subsequently extended by Théâtre Repère and Robert Lepage, René-Daniel Dubois, and others such as Normand Chaurette, and which continues as the dominant mode of theatrical textuality.

During the seventies, the deconstruction of received icons in Québécois culture proceeded at a pace far exceeding the analogous process in English Canada. Cultural uniformity and the highly traditional educational system in the collèges classiques combined with linguistic difference and political solitude to make it relatively easy for Québécois to divide the literary from the oral and play the latter against the former to satirical and humorous effect. By contrast, no such clearly defined structural context for relating national, colonial history to the present readily presented itself (in urban culture) to the English-Canadian alternative theatre. Thus, the characteristic vehicle in that theatre for identifying historical iconography and structural oppositions became the local subject. The establishment of context for historical deconstruction in English Canada required a more calculated approach than in Québec, resulting in a different and more objective approach to to material--most usually, the approach

of collectively created documentary drama. The early construction of regional and community histories by Theatre Passe Muraille, for example, involved the company's temporary relocation to research sites (Clinton, Ontario for The Farm Show, Saskatoon for The West Show) in order to isolate the process of research and selection. The artistic director of Theatre Passe Muraille, Paul Thompson, was influential in the construction of theatrical ideology in the seventies: he believed that theatre could "locate and define motifs and images which identify a culture . . . [and that] these motifs and images point to the formative myths of a society" (Filewod, Collective 24). Thompson initially relied on the actor's instincts to develop the mythic from the historical and factual, but soon also recognized the value of the writer in the process, as evidenced in the collaboration between Rick Salutin and Theatre Passe Muraille to create 1837: The Farmers' Revolt (1973), and Rudy Wiebe's contribution to the creation of Far as the Eye Can See (1977), a show about a protest against strip mining which utilizes as its chorus such characters from Alberta history as William Aberhart.

The example of "historical shows" produced by Theatre Passe Muraille in the seventies was followed by other companies concerned not with "recreating historical events or characters" but with trying "to demonstrate the political significance of past events in relation to the present and above all, to discover a national mythology within the material provided by Canadian history" (Second 47). Diane Bessai has argued for greater awareness of the distinction between "historically based works which mask the barriers between fact and fiction--in effect treat fact as fiction or myth --and those in which the presentation and appreciation of evidence is an inherent part of form" ("Documentary" 12). Only in the second form, as she states, is the reader/spectator invited to evaluate facts. She cites as examples of the confusion of documentary and fictional modes the history plays of Theatre Passe Muraille: "The

company's creative freedom often errs too much on the side of historical laxity to be properly categorized as 'documentary'. . . . It quite deliberately violates the first principle . . . that the interpretation serve the subject, not the subjective interests of the creator(s)" (18). Few collectively created histories in Canada in the seventies aimed at historical analysis. Rather, they tended, precisely as Usmani and Bessai indicate, to prefer the mythic, the creation of cultural iconography, and a somewhat generalized political stance sympathetic to victims of oppression. Such a combination tends to prefer theatricality over a clear delineation of the causes of and solutions to the situation depicted. Not surprisingly then, the illusions of the documentary form have often tended to mask self-indulgence with the pretence of reportage. And nowhere is the confusion of reportage with myth more frustrating of audience judgement, arguably, than in Reaney's trilogy, The Donnellys, a work founded on immense and painstaking research, as well as a fund of theatrical invention, but which ensconces a glaring and overt bias at its centre.

The Donnellys have been a favourite subject in English-Canadian drama, no doubt because many of their deeds are legendary rather than historically proven. Reaney goes to great lengths to prove their virtue by means of documentary evidence that the rest of the population was violent, thus suggesting that the Donnellys were victims more than perpetrators, and that society itself was to blame. In Sticks and Stones Reaney takes issue with Thomas Kelley's book, The Black Donnellys, including a play-within-a-play, a medicine show, which caricatures as malicious propaganda attempts to blacken the Donnellys. In the intricate network of documents, images, games, and song which Reaney creates, the audience, according to Gerald Parker, "is challenged to weigh not only a series of intellectual possibilities regarding the rights and wrongs of the whole Donnelly story, with its

entanglement of rumour, fact, prejudice, guilt and innocence, but also a series of creative possibilities, of alternative 'story-styles' (154).

Sandra Souchotte's argument that the plays "fail to take a single point of view," cuts through the cats-cradles and webs--Reaney's favourite images in the plays--of theatrical enthrallment to a fundamental problem: if documentary evidence is being used, why is an explicit bias stated in favour of viewing the Donnellys as virtuous Irish Catholic martyrs of corrupt, politically and commercially powerful Protestants who will stop at nothing to exterminate the ideological opposition (qtd Roberts 164). The problem is compounded by Reaney's emphasis on the moral strength and devotion of the Donnelly mother, Judith, whose presence distracts from a clear understanding of the motivations and passions of the men in her family. Reaney does not distinguish between the moral indifference of the scapegoat and the virtues of epic heroes. Thus, in spite of the mountain of documentary evidence presented, the plays suffer from a sentimentalism, a vision no less black-and-white for being reversed.

The purpose behind Reaney's trilogy is interestingly suggested by Eric Roberts in his commentary on Sticks and Stones: "By presenting the squalid aspects of Canada's annals . . . the playwright gives the audience something to deal with; he forces the audience to come to grips with this past. American literature often considers the ghosts from its history's past. Faulkner, for example, deals with the ghosts of slavery" (160). Here Roberts rightly points to Reaney's exposure of intolerance, hypocrisy, and political opportunism in nineteenth-century society. By his comparison of Reaney with Faulkner, he also highlights the similarity of Canada to the United States, rather than its coveted difference in its treatment of its others. A striking feature of Roberts's commentary, which appeared in 1978, is that it appears to minimize the existence of Canadian ghosts, as if it they might be corrected by a handful of

theatrical moral lessons: "If . . . playwrights dealt only with the positive aspects of this Dominion's history, the audience would see the play and forget it. There would be nothing to make the play stand out . . . no problem to consider; nothing to think about" (160). Roberts surely indicates here that the historical education provided in Canada had erased the questioning of the past, and his very use of the word 'Dominion' suggests the extent to which colonial propaganda had survived in school texts. If it is inferred from Roberts's comments that the implied audience of alternative theatre was assumed to have a sketchy image of a glorious and unblotted colonial past gained from school history books, it is easier to accept the somewhat simplistic reversal of the Donnellys to virtual sanctity in Reaney's plays. Such a projection would also assist in understanding the tendency in postcolonial theatre to cast the historical other as victim, since to do otherwise would require the deprivileging of notions of national superiority. Furthermore, it is one thing to identify the injustices of the colonialist, another to recognize that they have been perpetuated by one's own society (as Germain recognizes in A Canadian Play/Une Pièce canadienne).

While the Donnellys have been useful in developing an ironic perspective on colonial society, the more important locus of the problem of the other in Canadian drama has been the subject of the Riel rebellions. The subject lends itself to dramatic appropriation, since there is ample documentation from the press, parliamentary and legal transcripts, Riel's own writings, as well as biographical and historical studies. Innumerable scripts, poems, and other works have been produced on the subject, with varying degrees of insight and distortion. The literary and dramatic treatment of Riel is in effect a useful index of social attitudes in any given period.

The case of Louis Riel is an important one for illustrating the dangers in modern myth-making and the creation of collective heroes. In narrative investigations into his motivation, his

sanity, and his political wisdom, the majority of writers have neglected the Métis themselves, as well as their position in the broader political situation of the North-West. A few playwrights, on the other hand (Rex Deverell, Carol Bolt, Claude Dorge, and Ken Mitchell) have recognized the over-emphasis on Riel, and written with a view to altering perceptions. Howard Adams, in Prison of Grass, offers an important perspective on the subject of the rebellions, in that he emphasizes that they were to a great degree the result of government tactics to sow dissent among the various groups in the North-West, and to produce Riel, on his return from Montana, as a convenient scapegoat. To this end the government took control of the presses of the region for propagandistic purposes, and strategically increased the presence of police and military to intimidate potential insurgents. Thus, the production of Riel as the primary trouble-maker might more properly be viewed as the work of the government than of his own political and spiritual convictions: "Macdonald now had someone to blame personally for the agitation: if shooting began, the Métis would be the victims and Riel the made-to-order scapegoat. Propaganda was circulated that described Riel as an advocate of hostilities and a leader of the 'poor ignorant' Métis" (80). The production of the Métis and Indians as collective scapegoats in the rebellions, as Adams points out, obscures the fact that the struggle was that of the entire population of the North West.

Margaret Atwood's theory of Canadian mistrust for the hero and national devotion to law and order takes on a sinister aspect in the light of Adams's assertion that government agents instigated trouble in the North West to just such a degree that "Ottawa could justify troop movements to the North-West by saying that savages had created an uprising and were massacring innocent settlers" (Survival 170-174; Adams, 82). The federal treatment of the Métis and the Indian population of the North-West is one of the most clearly defined examples

in British history of Paul Brown's theory of colonial discourse: "[It] voices a demand both for order and disorder, producing a disruptive other in order to assert the superiority of the coloniser. . . . Colonialist discourse does not simply announce a triumph of civility, it must continually produce it, and this work involves struggle and risk" (58). What contemporary theatre on the subject of Riel deals with, then, is not simple oppression, but the effective and discrete stage-management of political spectacle by the federal government of the time, the production of blame, and also of lasting powerlessness at the margins. If this view is valid, then Riel is only a response to a federal prompter's cues.

The long-term effectiveness of federal strategies for the production of Riel as a scapegoat, and, except in Québec, the enhancement of the reputation of the government and its troops for effective administration of justice, is evident enough. The extent of the propagandistic production of law and order is affirmed by the production of the military spectacles of George Broughall (The 90th on Active Service: or, Campaigning in the North West, rehearsed at Fort Pitt, and produced at the Princess Opera House in 1885, "with a cast of 130 and a chorus of thirty") and Sergeant L. Dixon's Our Boys in the Riel Rebellion (1886) (Fraser, 65). According to Richard Plant, neither of these plays made much reference to "issues or people in the rebellion they had been sent to quell" ("Drama" 153). In 1908, the historian Frank Basil Tracy had few reservations in proclaiming Riel a villain, even after the first rebellion: "He richly deserved the fate, and it would have saved Canada much trouble in after years if this usual mode employed by Englishmen in dealing with rebels all over the world had been carried out" (3: 955, 979). When John Coulter decided to write his first play about Riel in the late forties, he may have been the first modern writer to develop his subject's reputation in English Canada beyond that of a troublemaker. Coulter was discouraged by the bias he found in much

of the material he researched, and finally resolved to pursue the topic because, during a conversation with a librarian at the University of Toronto, the latter called Riel "that infamous scoundrel" (Garay 297). The comment stimulated Coulter's imagination and turned him towards mythologizing Riel.

If the hanging of Riel had so much power to inspire propagandistic drama (in favour of the forces of law and order, on the one hand, and in Québec in favour of the French, Catholic cause) when it happened, it was naturally only a matter of time before modern myth-seekers discovered the potential in the event for their own nationalist scripts, especially in English Canada. Among these, Coulter's trilogy gave important impetus to theatrical interest in the subject, providing much documentary and structural groundwork for the subject, and offer a highly competent model for subsequent historical playwrights. A brief survey of dramatic approaches indicates that the mythicization of Riel gradually induces more concern for the subject of contemporary Métis than for the details of the rebellion itself, or for the power of myth and heroics.

Chris Johnson has compared the mythic status of Riel to that of Ned Kelly in Australia, whose hanging also inspired propagandistic plays during the late nineteenth century, and later, a resurrection of his reputation as a folk-hero. Both are viewed as having been treated as romantic bandits, who created their own legends, and also as the shadows of the national psyche. It follows for Johnson that the repetition of a central myth is valuable to cultural development: "[Kelly] is . . . a useful 'control,' an alternative example of the manner in which a new drama converts historical event and popular belief into theatre, and which eventually uses the event as the vehicle for exploring the transformational process itself, event to 'myth', or art, in which the way the thing is seen is as important as the thing itself" ("Ned" 319).

Coulter himself transformed his own subject through rewriting and the addition of a sequel, to create a trilogy. The first play, Riel (1950), was subsequently rewritten in simpler form as The Crime of Louis Riel (1976), with a chorus naturally inviting audience participation. The Trial of Louis Riel (1967), a documentary representation of court proceedings, was written as a Centennial commission for the Regina Chamber of Commerce (Anthony, "Riel Trilogy" 467). The first play creates Riel in mythic dimensions. It encompasses both rebellions, in a complex form that contains much of the formal basis of subsequent historical drama in Canada: "As epic it dramatizes the deeds of a historical hero in a series of events expressed in elevated language; as myth it is an allegory of a Christ-like prophet who symbolizes the larger and deeper beliefs of a nation; as legend it is the story of a Canadian hero who has assumed larger-than-life proportions; as pageant it is a procession of stylized events leading to a rich climax; as documentary it is a substantially accurate account of events and personalities; as a montage it is a composite picture of many elements produced through a rapid succession of scenes" (467). Inspired by both Shakespeare and Shaw, Coulter does not shrink from presenting Riel as a hero in both the epic and the tragic senses, and also Canada's history as epic.

Geraldine Anthony has carefully documented the references in Riel to Christ's life and that of Saint Joan ("Coulter's Riel" 321). There is so much textual support for the analogies to Christ and St. Joan that Anthony's argument is not unjustified, but she ignores the possibility that there is a difference between the dramatic and the historic Riel, and that the clear line between good and evil which she perceives in the play is somewhat overdefined. Having asked why Coulter, a northern Irishman with no personal religious affiliation should choose such a visionary as a hero, she gives this answer: "A native of Belfast, John Coulter had, early in childhood, witnessed the cruelty and hatred of Irish Protestants and Catholics. He therefore

sought seriously to explore the forces behind rebellion. . . . He was intrigued by the strength and depth of religious motivation in others" ("Coulter's Riel" 327). Anthony's conjecture is plausible. Coulter does indeed demonstrate an excellent ear for the tones of both Orangemen and English-speaking Catholics in the play: Manitoba could be Northern Ireland at times. Coulter constructs Riel in contrast to his dramatic context, however, by drawing on his diaries and trial defence (as other playwrights have also done); this results in his always being distanced by quoted, or quotable, speech. As in Reaney's Donnellys trilogy, where the territory is mapped in terms of the power relations between Protestants and Catholics, and where the Donnellys have the monopoly on piety, Coulter's play is structured around an obvious intersection of the socio-political and the spiritual dimensions. Both Reaney's and Coulter's plays are reminiscent of Shaw's St. Joan, and medieval passion plays, in demonstrating the capacity of the mystic to overturn the logic of the lawmakers and enforcers of earthly power. Whether such dramatic intentions can be attributed to Riel himself, or indeed the Donnellys, is another matter. Such visionaries and martyrs tend to remain inscrutable in their fictionalized forms, requiring the reader/spectator to participate in a mystery, rather than to understand the wider issues.

Claude Dorge's Le Roitelet was first produced at the Cercle Molière, St. Boniface, in 1976. According to Johnson, the play presents Riel as having created his own destiny, and finding himself "trapped by the behaviour 'legend' prescribes" ("Ned" 316). The end of the play, however, seems to indicate that, at least, Riel accepts the entrapment. Set in the asylum in Québec, which Riel entered in 1876, the play eliminates all but the simplest historical elements in favour of a presentation of a psychological dynamic. Riel is isolated at the centre of the stage, and visited by figures, both real and symbolic, who elucidate the nature of his

conscious and unconscious motivations. According to Ingrid Joubert, the play addresses the question of Riel's sense of mission: "La principale question que soulève la pièce pourrait être formulée ainsi: comment devient-on héros, comment arrive-t-on à croire à sa mission? Celle-ci s'impose-t-elle de l'extérieur, par ordre divin, ou naît-il de troubles de la personnalité? L'ambiguïté plane jusqu'au dernier moment . . ." (Introduction, Le Roitelet 11). The questions are answered, according to Joubert, by a process of transformations, "de multiples glissements d'identité, et de la signification," in which characters transform from exterior to symbolic meaning, and from good to evil (13).

In Dorge's script, characters called from Riel's past include his dead father and his sister, to both of whom Riel is shown as having excessive attachments, the latter incestuous. There is also a strong link between Thomas Scott, whose execution Riel ordered, and Riel himself. Scott is presented both as Judas and as an ironic St. John the Baptist (Joubert 13): "Riel: Tu cours vers la mort . . . Scott: Je dois mourir pour que tu meures. Riel: Non! Non! Je les empêcherai, je les arrêterai! Scott: Inutile, Louis. J'ai mon devoir!" (116) In the processes of transformation, two figures of Christ also appear, one alive and the husband of Riel's sister, the other crucified (80); St. Joan of Arc also guides him (63-67).

On the other side, are 'Le Métis,' a representative figure, and Archbishop Bourget, who did much to encourage Riel's mission. The women in the play, including Marguerite, Riel's wife, are all pure, with one exception: 'La Mort' is represented as a prostitute, avid to possess him. In the scene between Riel and 'La Mort,' Dorge makes use of Riel's poetry. As the crowd cries "Crucifie-le!," 'La Mort' returns Riel's own words to him: "La Mort: "C'est un faux roi, c'est un infâme/ Qui s'arroe la royauté!/C'est un bandit sans foi que la canaille acclame/Et qu'elle appelle majesté" (113). In the final moment of the play, all the duality or

ambiguity is resolved. Riel is alone: "On entend, en sourdine, un violon jouer une gigue métisse" (120). He speaks a poem of his own, which expresses his sentiments for his country: ". . . Je me couche dans la froidure,/triste et seul, au milieu des bois./Du vent, j'entends tout le murmure/Il me semble que c'est ta voix/Ma douce contrée!/Il me semble que c'est ta voix/Ma blonde adorée!" (120). While Le Roitelet explores all the seductions of false appearances, it resolves itself in Riel's complete submission to his destiny. Joubert comments that the metamorphoses of the play "interpelle le public, sollicitant chez lui des réactions personnelle. Ainsi, le traitement subjectif du thème débouche sur un appel à la subjectivité du lecteur" (13). The inevitable result of the exposure of so much ambiguity is that resolution can only occur in Riel's mind: the audience is left with the burden of more commonly human doubts.

In strong contrast to the interiority of Le Roitelet is the social realism of Carol Bolt's Gabe (1973), set in modern Batoche. Bolt locates the legend of Riel and Dumont in the fantasies of two Métis, Louis and Gabe, living in Batoche, Gabe's home town, having been recently released from Prince Albert Penitentiary. She intensifies the cheap gaudiness of the Tahiti Room, at the Empress Hotel, and Jackson's Super Shell, where Gabe works, to offset Gabe's compulsive production of comic-heroic historical fantasies about Riel and Dumont, played out for Henry, the gas station owner, and two girls, Rosie and Vonne. Chris Johnson comments on the sense(s) of that production:

Entrapment is a continuing motif in Gabe, as it is in The Ecstasy of Rita Joe. . . . Gabe and Louis, like Rita Joe, find themselves classified by racial stereotypes, and confined to their roles by those expectations. Gabe makes fun of the stereotypes, but finally finds that no matter what he does, the white community

will see the action in a way which confirms their expectation. 'Gabe: Us half-breeds are very wily in the woods./Henry: You half-breeds aren't responsible./Gabe: We're very close to nature./Henry: You drink too much.'
 ("Amerindians" 180).

Johnson emphasizes an important difference between Ryga's play and that of Bolt: "Unlike Rita Joe, Gabe and Louis are not passive victims. Unlike Jaimie Paul's, their resistance has style and dash, and their failure is therefore the more meaningful. Bolt realizes that the nature of the jail is too well-known to need more than shorthand evocation. Ryga concentrates on the prison, while Bolt emphasizes the prisoner" (181). While it may well be argued that Bolt, like Ryga, merely perpetuates the stereotypes by reproducing them, Johnson's view is also valid.

The relationship between Gabe and Louis, which began in prison, is based in a dialogue which has increased each character's awareness of his social position. Gabe is an imaginative talker, and a performer, while Louis, although an ex-rodeo clown is more philosophical. Their personalities complement each other in such a way as to reflect the image of the relationship between Gabriel Dumont and Louis Riel that Gabe cultivates. The stasis of the situation of Louis and Gabe makes them only verbal rebels: they are more like Vladimir and Estragon than they are like their historical namesakes. Although the play is realistic in style, Bolt exploits the free play of Gabe's bar talk as a means of locating the partners' self-conscious game of the production of identity in relation to its origins in the historical defeat at Batoche. Louis offers the political interpretation which complements Gabe's poetry:

Out of school with nothing to do but get in trouble. . . . Met me. I'm a rodeo hero, used to putting on a great amount of style. Gabe was listening. . . . I told him things he could be proud of. How the Indians lived before the whites came

and about their ideas of property, how property was held in common. And I told him what I thought that private ownership did to people. That some people had and others had not. And that set-up can get kind of like a jail outside a jail, so pretty soon people can be born and live and die, having not, and their children the same. . . . I been in jail a lot and I talk a lot in jail to pass the time.

(101-102)

Louis's commentary underlines the futility of talk where there is no action for economic and legal justice.

There is justice, then, in Bolt's declining to provide a solution to the stasis. At the end of the play, the frustrations of the impossibility of breaking out of the failure of Gabe and Louis result in Louis's assaulting of Henry, the gas station owner, and facing return to prison. Gabe and Louis revert to their historical personae to articulate the irony of their situation: "Gabe: You're crazy, Louis./Louis: I see Gabriel Dumont. He is afflicted and ashamed. He does not look at me. He looks to his future. His present. He is an outlaw. He has nothing and he blames me for it./Gabe: Okay. Sure. We'll go. We'll steal a car and drive. You want to? I've done it before./Louis: The Canadians must punish us before they can forgive. I will allow them to punish me again./Gabe: That's shit. That's Riel talking" (123). After Louis leaves, Gabe and Henry re-play the old litany of stereotypes which their relationship enacts (125). This time, however, Gabe recognizes that Henry's righteous accusations of irresponsibility have no more power to intimidate. Gabe recalls that when Riel and Dumont rode back from Montana, Riel saw himself on the gallows, an image of victory in defeat. Having correlated his images of the past with the circumstances of the present, Gabe declares that he can now visualize a future in which Henry is flattened like a comic-book cat. When Henry fails to understand, Gabe

responds: "Because you're stupid, Henry. Because you're not afraid of me. Or Louis. Because you think we're crazy. You don't have the brains of a rabbit, Henry" (127). Gabe has revelled in the satisfaction of knowing that, by evoking mythic time against Henry's work time (and the prison system's penitential time) he has gained a new perspective on his own power and that of the fraternity to which he belongs--one inaccessible to the dominant culture.

There are similarities between Gabe and A Canadian Play/Une Plaie canadienne, as well as Almighty Voice and His Wife, in that all three are based on the ritual repetition and exorcism of the historical origins of resistance to colonialism, and in that each ends with the silencing of the voice of the dominator. Henry, like Germain's Lord Durham, is made to represent that political state which imposed an image of powerlessness and exclusion on the Métis, aboriginals, and Québécois alike in the nineteenth century. In the three plays, it becomes obvious to the dominated that they, like their rulers, have been playing roles. Each play represents, in the words of Germain, the process of recognizing that "l'homme a de plus en plus tendance à devenir l'ombre de son double" (Canadian 13). As Germain also points out, the shadow has taken the place of an absent father (24). The recognition of the patriarchal role of colonialism inevitably instigates at once a collective revolt and the exorcism of the presence of the intruder.

As a source of mythic imagination, the subject of the Riel rebellions has come to outlast the nationalist period. Rex Deverell's Beyond Batoche (1985), for example, is an inquiry into the problems of representating and understanding the history of a community to which the writer does not belong. Deverell recognizes that his own play on the subject of Riel must historicize Coulter's epic version of the story, and consequently he focuses on "the present, and latterly, on the future," using history to make that shift in focus, and problematizing the

myth-making process as fully as he can within the dramatic action (Scholar 335). The characters in the play allow for a full exploration of conflicts in dramatizing the Riel story: Burns, the agent who wants a saleable story; Shane, the actor who understands Riel in terms of emotion and passion; Yvonne, a Métis teacher visiting Batoche, who offers the contemporary critical perspective on the play in progress; and Matt, the writer himself, who unsuccessfully attempts to attain objectivity. As in his play about St. Augustine, Righteousness (1983), Deverell portrays the writer's "inhumanity" and his "unalterable and dogmatic intransigence" when he seeks to express "unwavering certainty" of the possibility of knowing God's will (336). As Scholar points out, Matt hubristically rejects the perspective of Yvonne when she becomes critical, and tries to find the voice of Riel as prophet alone, with the result that "he discovers that his is the voice of John A. MacDonald [sic], not Louis Riel" (336).

Matt attributes his own sense of righteousness to Riel, and is checked by the actor, Shane, who is more interested in Riel's political power: "Shane: (breaking with the character): You want to make him in your own image./Matt: No. We think alike. . . ./Shane: Do you think alike?/Matt: Of course. He's the mystic who wanted to better the lot of his people. He heard the voice of God and acted on it. I'm an author who dreams stories and I want to change the lot of my people. . . ./Shane: Riel was a careful political strategist. He wanted to take power" (Deverell 393). As Matt and Shane collaborate in developing the script, the myth takes over from the contemporary frame: "In these moments, it is the actual words of Riel, and the presence of Riel's spirit, which fill the stage and echo in memory" (338). As Michael Scholar remarks, the enactment of the myth is identified by Deverell with the artistic struggle to articulate a vision of truth, a psychomachia or "symbolic battle with the elusive spirit of Riel" in which Matt "loses" (336). Matt finds himself dismissed from the project at the moment

when the Riel myth acquires life: "Riel's myth survives and transcends his execution, while Matt is condemned and exiled from his society . . . sent off into the wilderness alone" (338). At the end of the play, the dismissed writer is attempting to rewrite the first scenes of the play, reminding the audience that the entire play, and not only the play-within-a-play, have been written by Matt himself.

Deverell's play is more like Bolt's Gabe than appears on the surface. Beyond Batoche is self-conscious metatheatre, while Bolt's play, although also metatheatrical, creates a realistic illusion of casual encounters in a bar. But in both plays a Métis woman, in each case named Yvonne or Vonne (after Riel's wife), and a Canadian entrepreneur of sorts are temporarily rendered powerless by the action of the central myth. In each play, the myth is enacted through the collaboration of an ideologist with an actor: Matt and Shane correspond to Louis and Gabe. Both plays offer the possibility of the myth's being no more than a conventional western story enacted in the modern west. And yet both transcend the commonplace, and create an intersection between the contemporary and the historical. In both plays, too, the author is condemned: Matt is dismissed from the project, and Louis is to be sent back to prison. Scholar's evaluation of the action in Beyond Batoche is equally applicable to that in Gabe: "Chastised and rebuked for their manipulations, humiliated by their own failures to control the world about them, these characters are able to redeem themselves only by realizing that their lives can be changed by dedicating themselves anew to the pursuit of 'ultimate truth'" (337). Although the artists are scapegoats, their hubristic struggles expose the structures which could not be discovered by mere objectivity, nor by the study of the single dimension of the present.

The later the date of the Riel script, the more likely it is to contain an objectivized perspective on the myth of Riel himself. Howard Adams's view of the rebellion of 1885 finds

support in Ken Mitchell's The Plainsman (1985), a centennial production of Twenty-Fifth Street Theatre, Saskatoon. Mitchell addresses the issue of the overshadowing of the people's rebellion by the myth of Riel, by excluding Riel from the play and centring the life of the Métis around Gabriel Dumont instead. Mitchell's play views the rebellion as a struggle to sustain a way of life, and to maintain hope for the future. While The Plainsman is rooted in the pastoral myth, it is sceptical of the essentialism basic to insurgent nationalism and which Riel himself has usually represented. Mitchell's play presents a tragi-comic vision of history in place of the more usual tragic myth of the martyr: Dumont is the representative of the collective way of life. Mitchell signals his knowledge of Woodcock's biography of Dumont in his preface to the published script (no pagination), and his script clearly indicates that Mitchell is interested in Dumont for the same reasons as Woodcock.

The first act of The Plainsman begins in Dumonts' home in 1884, as the decision to send for Riel is being made elsewhere. The second act takes place after Riel's trial: the news of his execution is brought near the end of the play. By displacing the known historical events, Mitchell avoids reproducing the symbiotic relationship between the imperialist and the victim on which most plays Riel plays have been centred. The only characters in the play are Dumont and his wife Madeleine, Michel Dumas, and Charles Nolin. Dumas is Gabriel's companion, a fiddler, and, according to Mitchell, "a comic foil in this story of lost empires and pride, the commentary of a perplexed fool" (Introduction, Plainsman). Nolin is included because he is traditionally viewed as Riel's Judas, yet similar to Riel in education: "[Some] may raise their eyebrows at his depiction here as a tragic figure--Canadian mythology presents him as a devil to Riel's saintliness--but . . . he paid many times over for his thankless position on the fence, an educated Metis caught between two worlds" (Introduction, Plainsman). The contrast

between Dumas and Nolin is exploited for dramatic purposes: Dumas helps to re-enact Gabriel's own myth as a ballad, and thus develops the sense of the culture, while Nolin articulates the arguments for gaining political power by organization.

Mitchell calls The Plainsman "a domestic play, rather than an epic history--a speculative drama about the relationships of these two magnificent people [the Dumonts] with each other and with their compatriots, as well as the historical events which shattered their lives" (Introduction, Plainsman). Mitchell's depiction of Madeleine is perhaps the most distinctive element in the play. She is strongly contrasted with the women in most Riel dramas, who are longsuffering, pious, and loving, but helpless and unopinionated in the face of the political and military developments in which the men are engaged. Madeleine offers a dialectic on developing events, since she is the equal of Gabriel, argumentative and aggressive when historical events appear to her to be unreasonable and unwise. In Act One, before setting out to fetch Riel, Nolin argues: "The issues are bigger than her feelings--or mine. We have reached an historic moment. And not just us Metis. All the people--and thousands more. All of Europe is advancing on the prairie. We can't stop them any more than the buffalo could" (22). In Act Two, when the battle is lost and they are waiting for news of Riel's hanging, Gabriel and Dumas try to recall their few moments of victory, but Madeleine refuses to subscribe to the glory of it:

Madeleine: Yes. And the women of Batoche, they sat for two days while the smell of guns and blood drifted down the river. Riel striding up and down with his Bible and his cross, charming the army's bullets into water with his chants. No news of who was dead, and who was only dying. Terror--that's what I felt during your triumph at Fish Creek.

Gabriel: Louis was so damned hesitant!

Madeleine: He wanted to play the Christ, but he couldn't be a peacemaker. Only
the martyr. (40)

Madeleine's point of view estranges the accustomed masculine valuation of historical moments, valour, rhetoric, and martyrdom, thereby reinforcing the value of the people themselves.

Madeleine favours visualizing the future over dwelling on history: "Madeleine: What is it about the past, Michel? Why can't I interest you in the future?/Dumas: The future scares me. But the past--is glorious./Madeleine; The way you remember it. perhaps the way they'll remember your great victory at Fish Creek" (41). Despite her scepticism, Madeleine is a comrade: she joins with the men in singing the song of Middleton's redcoats as they came searching for Riel, only to be defeated at Fish Creek. Through her, the bravado of battle songs and stories is converted into the more deeply felt language of hope. As Mitchell has constructed the play, when the news of Riel's death is received, Madeleine herself is dying of consumption, the result of hardship and exile. In spite of her certain death, symbolic of the death of their way of life, Gabriel and Madeleine plan a journey towards a future. Together, they recall the past and, in glorious images, they visualize its return in the days of their grandchildren. When Carol Bolt's Gabe "walks off into a spectacular prairie sunset" at the end of her play, the effect is ironic (Bolt 127). In Mitchell's play, the image of buffalo with "hides like bronze--gleaming in the sunlight like smouldering fire . . . [whose] spirit will breathe through us again" is not received as irony at all, but as a figure for the resurrection of a real people, not of its representative myth (40).

Mitchell's The Plainsman is a modest script written in a fairly conventional realistic style, with the addition of a few songs and ballads. What makes it noteworthy is that it grounds its

characters so firmly in the land that the myths which developed so rapidly during the 1880s out of historical events appears to be fabrications in comparison with the real lives of the people. The oppositional or complementary cultural identities which usually characterize colonial and postcolonial drama are forgotten, as they are also in the first act of Moses' Almighty Voice and His Wife, because life and death themselves are more highly valued than exceptional deeds. The Plainsman succeeds through its strategy in becoming a myth of place for Saskatchewan, which might belong to any of its inhabitants, not only the Métis. Because its subject is the destruction of a culture, the play cannot be labelled utopian, although it may be seen as romantic. Filewod has stated that "the Canadian longing for a stabilized sense of nationhood is not an idiosyncratic 'identity crisis' but rather, the condition of postcolonialism: a perpetually renegotiated nostalgia for a sense of nation that may never be achieved because it was never more than a Victorian imperial fiction" ("Staging" 3). Nostalgia for "a sense of nation" is repeatedly expressed in The Plainsman, but because the nation is a minority, and the audience knows its history, nostalgia for the 'imperial fiction' of Canadian nationhood is subverted. Mitchell's play succeeds in being regional, rather than Canadian or even anti-centrist. In this, it is representative of the kind of regionalism which has developed, largely since the seventies, which rejects nationalist and postcolonial themes and also leftist populism in favour of community narratives. Theatre is not only used for counter-cultural histories, but for disseminating images of shared experience, and local cultural icons.

Since the sixties, the dramatization of regional and local history has provided companies and playwrights with an indispensable means of communicating with communities. The debt of Canadian theatre to the example provided by Peter Cheeseman's regionalist project at the Victoria Theatre, Stoke-on-Trent, has been widely cited (Usmiani, Filewod, Bessai, Johnston).

While not all local companies in England or in Canada have survived as long as Cheeseman's, the policy which he initiated and sustained has been expressed in the development of regional theatre in many smaller Canadian communities. Kershaw comments; "The central strand of the Victoria's work for the locality has been provided by the famous 'Stoke documentaries'. Based on local history, the theatre has produced almost one a year since 1964, making it 'one of the few reps in the country genuinely to have earned the title "community theatre"' . . .

Cheeseman's ideological orientation is no more than mildly radical, but his achievement at Stoke--on the fringes of the mainstream--shows how much local commitment has been lost to the rest of the repertory movement in the last three decades" (105). In Canada, on the other hand, local theatre, based on works which draw on local culture, issues, and history, has of necessity, become less exceptional.

In a general definition of the efficacy of performance, Kershaw argues: "To have any hope of changing its audience a performance must somehow connect with that audience's ideology or ideologies" (24). The use of local history, in addition to recognition of social roles in the present, is a means to elucidating the audience's attitudes, through narrative and symbolic action. The audience is required to stand outside themselves for the duration of the performance, if they are to gain a change in perspective:

Victor Turner . . . has pointed out that in some respects the [audience's] role is always similar to that experienced by participants in a ritual. It is a liminal role, in that it places the participant 'betwixt and between' more permanent social roles and modes of awareness. [It] . . . allows the spectator to accept that the events of the production are both real and not real. Hence it is a judic role (or frame of mind) . . . It enables the spectator to participate in playing around with

the norms, customs, regulations, laws, which govern her life in society. . . . It turns performance into a kind of ideological experiment in which the outcome has no necessary consequence for the audience . . . Paradoxically, this is the first condition of performance efficacy. (24)

The ritual action is necessary if the audience is to be liberated, or liminally disengaged, in Turner's terms, from reality. The local myth, historical narrative, or fiction provides the means to live both within the bounds of community ideology and culture during the performance, and also to stand outside it by identifying with the symbolic action, which itself stands outside the present.

The scope of the dramatization of community history in Canada from the sixties to the present day can only be suggested here through a range of supplementary examples. In Newfoundland, the name of the first alternative theatre group itself, the Mummers' Troupe, indicates that the ludic had always been a part of the island's culture (Brookes, Public). The company, which existed from 1972 to 1982, was politically radical, reflecting the history of mummering in Newfoundland. The title of Chris Brookes's history of the company, A Public Nuisance, refers to the wording of legislation passed in the nineteenth century, which banned mummering (Brookes). The company's first production was simply entitled The Mummers' History of Newfoundland, and, though marred by an excess of propaganda, it was "simply a history of the exploitation suffered by Newfoundlanders from the beginning" (Usmiani, Second 100). Among their later productions was Buchans: A Mining Town, which was much more successful. The collective creation of this play involved the cast members living with members of the community, to experience the life of a company town, before dramatizing the history of its labour relations (Usmiani, Second 100-01; Filewod Collective).

The history of Newfoundland has also been well served by Michael Cook, whose documentary research has given rise to numerous historical dramas for radio and stage. Cook's Newfoundland plays are unusual in the Canadian spectrum in that several address subjects from the eighteenth and early nineteenth centuries. Colour the Flesh the Colour of Dust depicts St. John's in 1762, when the French captured the town. The cast of characters bound together in the isolation of the conquered outpost includes military officers, local officials, and the poor. The play is primarily concerned with the effects of history on the poor: a choral character, The Spokesman, states, "Most of the things you do to us in the name of King and Country or Decency or Church or God or Right and Wrong, we accept with a minimum of protest--But one day, we'll kill you all, because there'll be nothing left to do" (15). On the Rim of the Curve uses circus techniques to address the problem articulated by the author at the beginning of the play: "Look! I never knew my grandfather but it would be easy to write about him. There's something of him in my father and ultimately, me, and we did, at least, share a common mythology of sorts./But how d'you write the history of a vanished people? out of a bone? A book? A lock of hair? A litany of lies? or simply honest confusion. Sooner write of Atlantis" (10). The Gayden Chronicles uses as source material the journal of a British sailor hanged for mutiny, desertion, and murder in St. John's in 1812. In the course of the action, Gayden meets and talks with William Blake and also encounters the ideas of Tom Paine. The play is a depiction of "the psychology and motivation of a rebel . . . and attitudes to authority and conformity" (Page "Cook," 114). Cook's dramatic location of Newfoundland in relation to impending revolutions in Europe and North America, and to ideas as well as events, result in an exceptional approach to a century which has been generally neglected in contemporary Canadian theatre.

Antonine Maillet's work is widely identified with the preservation of the history of place, and the narration of the web of kinship. Her plays La Sagouine, Les Crasseux, Don l'Original, as well as her novels, are informed by her knowledge of Acadian history, so that living people and local legends are overlaid. In Évangéline deusse, she evokes the legend of the first Évangéline in a contemporary setting. Jean-Cléo Godin comments on the play: "En dédiant sa pièce 'au peuple acadienne', l'auteur a plutôt voulu lui proposer un nouveau modèle, non pas une 'héroïne' comme Évangéline Bellefontaine . . . [mais] proche parente de la Sagouine, de Mariaâgêlas: 'exilée', comme l'auteur, non pas en Louisiane mais à Montréal . . ." (Godin and Mailhot (1988) I:223). The play begins with an account of the deportation, and echoing Longfellow's narrative, proceeds to dramatize the relationships of the modern Évangéline, an old lady, with the Breton sailor, a rabbi, and Gapi, her absent husband. Godin points out that the evocation of the myth invokes transition and renewal, symbolized by the little pine tree, reminiscent of Acadia, which Évangéline grows in her city park (236).

In Montréal, history has been dramatized in English as well as in French. Rick Salutin's Les Canadiens, produced at the Centaur Theatre in 1977 following the victory of the Parti Québécois, invokes the hockey team as the central myth of modern Québec, and uses hockey-playing actors to re-enact scenes from colonial history. The play reviews the history of the isolation of Québec from time of the defeat at the Plains of Abraham, and emphasizes that the cultural importance of the Canadiens was associated with domination by the English. As Ken Dryden, who collaborated with Salutin, and is also a character in the play, states: "If at one time the Canadiens acted as a focal point for otherwise submerged expressions of nationalistic feeling, they do no more. . . . Richard and Lafleur . . . are both 'just hockey players.' It is people and institutions from other parts of Quebec society--politics, the arts, literature--that are

now at the focus, and so be it" (Preface, Canadiens 9). Salutin's mythification of the team, and his representation of its relationship to history, like Maillet's treatment of *Évangeline*, dramatizes the renewal and transformation of the culture.

David Fennario has written several plays about his native Pointe St. Charles and other locations in Montréal, including On the Job (1976), Nothing to Lose (1977), and Balconville (1981). He has since created Joe Beef (A History of Pointe Saint Charles) (1991), using the owner of the famous waterfront tavern as the narrator of a stage history of the working class neighbourhood. As usual in Fennario's plays, French and English cultures are united by class interests. As André Loiselle states, "Fennario shows how the French and Scottish élites of Montréal have built their fortunes at the expense of the Irish and French-Canadian proletariat. At the end . . . when the workers decide to stand together and fight back, they all shout . . . 'Je Me Souviens!', thus proclaiming the precedence of class struggle over cultural antagonism" (79). Fennario has also undertaken a more problematic subject from recent history in The Death of René Lévesque, which is written to be performed by Francophone actors working in English (Salter, "Six" 87). The play breaks the taboo of Anglophone silence, as Denis Salter suggests (88). Fennario states: "My original desire was to do something about the failure of social democracies around the world to deliver on their promises. I then thought about Lévesque and the Parti Québécois: they seemed the best vehicle . . ." (qtd Salter 88). The play's political criticism caused much controversy in the French and English press of Montréal and was heavily condemned by the theatre critic of Le Devoir on the front page (87-88). Whatever the faults of the play, the response to it indicates the difficulty of dealing with recent history, especially when strong ideological passions can be stirred.

The history of Ontario was well served in the early days of alternative theatre by Theatre

Passe Muraille, James Reaney, and others. The dramatization of history has since been developed by communities themselves in ambitious ways, recalling the older community pageants, but often with the addition of greater degrees of invention and political engagement. The Spirit of Shivarree was produced in Rockwood, near Toronto, in 1990, under the direction of Dale Hamilton, with the collaboration of the Colway Theatre Trust, which had developed large-scale plays in England based on extensive community involvement (Little 99-100). As Edward Little notes, "[T]he Community Play project was a direct result of what its organizers described as a siege by developers'" (99). The involvement of hundreds of community members in the production became the means for a regenerated spirit of communication and solidarity in Rockwood. The play itself consists of episodes from the community's history, "from its European settlement in 1820 to the present," including events connected with local rebels in 1837, and scenes from the present overlooked by characters from the past (Little 100). Little comments that the "mix of politics and theatre resulted in a model which is at once locally produced, . . . empowering, . . . engaged, and of a high artistic standard while remaining relatively free of . . . destructive commodification . . ." (104). Other innovative community projects include Fourth Line Theatre's Moodie Traill at Millbrook, Peterborough, which requires the audience to travel to various outdoor locations to witness scenes from the lives of Susanna Moodie and Catherine Parr Traill and involves the use of livestock for farm scenes (review, Theatrum 36, 40). The Caravan Theatre, while it is professional, is closely connected through collaborative work with the rural communities around Armstrong, British Columbia, where it performs, usually in the open air. Although its plays are not specifically historical, they are often closely reflective of local life and legend (Anderson).

In the Arctic, developing theatre is usually created by communities. Tunooniq Theatre, at

Pond Inlet, has produced a history play, Changes, which dramatizes the colonization of the North, and the way of life which was lost in the process. While two Canadian locations could hardly be as different as Rockwood, Ontario, with its combination of commuters and farmers, and Pond Inlet, both are in effect using theatre for a similar purpose: to preserve and strengthen community and to inspire political power. The ground laid by alternative theatre in the seventies, and the models of interaction between performance and community which they developed has resulted in the independent, or collaborative, use of theatre for telling the stories which define the population.

The value of historical drama to the building and sustaining of communities has been continuous in Canada. Since the eighties, the theatrical representation of history has also been made to reflect the boundless world of the technologized and multi-cultural world. Postmodern theatre rarely views history in purely local terms. It is more likely to reflect an imaginative collapsing of political and cultural preconceptions, as in Ronfard's Vie et mort du roi boîteux. The influence of epic revisionings of history such as Howard Barker's The Europeans has altered the construction of the historical text.

Colonial history is a preoccupation of postmodern theatre, but it is more often than not constructed in terms of paradigms than of nations, or through cultural collaborations which extend the historical perspective through the Americas. A production of The Tempest may well serve to examine colonization, as Lewis Baumann's did (Peters). Produced by Skylight Theatre in 1987 and 1989 in Toronto, Baumann's version of Shakespeare's play is set on the West Coast of Canada in the eighteenth century, and uses Native actors in the roles of Caliban and Ariel, with extensive references in the staging to Haida culture. Helen Peters' account of Baumann's production suggests that it bears a close affinity to Paul Brown's interpretation of

The Tempest. Numerous productions, including those presented at pan-American festivals, have led to the revision and expansion of the theatrical view of colonial history. La Bruta Interference, by the Chilean-Canadian, Alberto Kurapel, for example, is an imagistic performance piece, largely in Spanish with some English, which uses video, film, voice, and movement to present a complex, surreal, and personal statement on the colonization of South America. The complexity of such historical texts is offset by the theatrical exploitation of intercultural and visual subversions of accustomed perceptions.

National history has not been ignored by postmodern theatre. One of the most important projects in Toronto theatre in the past decade is devoted exclusively to the retelling of Canadian history. Michael Hollingsworth's The History of the Village of the Small Huts has been produced in annual installments since 1985. The publisher's advertising for the complete script describes it as "[a] hyperbolic parade of Canadian history for a generation raised on rock music and television" (Hollingsworth). The productions, which are highly visual, combine an exaggerated, caricatured style of costume and gesture for actors playing historical characters in tableaux, often referring scenes to paintings and engravings. The style of each play incorporates the theatrical conventions of the time, even to the dressing of the auditorium: Part Three: The Mackenzie/Papineau Rebellion uses the form of a Punch and Judy show, for instance, while Part Four: Confederation and Riel uses melodrama and Gilbert and Sullivan (White, "History" 57). Tableaux are performed in an enclosed box, with brief flashes of video, and elaborate lighting cues (White, "History" 50-51, "VideoCabaret and Subversion;" Hollingsworth and Taylor, "Videocabaret Chronology.") The major documentary source is The Dictionary of Canadian Biography (White, "History" 50). The eight plays, which deal with periods of Canadian history from New France to World War Two, have been produced by

VideoCabaret with Theatre Passe Muraille, Toronto Free Theatre, and at the Theatre Centre, Toronto (Hollingsworth and Taylor; review, Theatrum 39, 41).

Hollingsworth's cycle is strongly satirical and parodic. He owes some of his style to "Monty Python, the Goon Show, and the British television show 'Splitting Image'" (White, "History" 50). According to White, "the dramatis personae are a raggle-taggle band of anti-heroes, vile and greedy, stupid and self-interested but never, ever boring in the way that we may have come to imagine them through the normal channels of absorbing Canadian history. In parodic form, they leap forward from the sanctified linear engravings and drawings of C.W. Jeffreys and Charles Manley McDonald that schoolchildren inherited as the visual key to Canadian history" (51). White defines the project as "a theatre born out of historical precedents and contemporary influences--a vast web of sources which includes Milton and Led Zeppelin . . . Less a process of appropriation than a synthesis of sources, it rises out of a generation's experience" (53). The key to Hollingsworth's presentation techniques is that he assumes an audience which is barely familiar with facts of Canadian history (53). White suggests that he is pandering to the audience when he relates historical events to present-day politics (51), but this in itself is the objective of most history plays. Hollingsworth's intensified irony and parody, expressed in the correlation of the visual and the factual, and in the discontinuities and incongruities of the text, are peculiarly postmodern: as White notes, they exemplify the theories of Linda Hutcheon: "Videocabaret epitomizes the position . . . Hutcheon takes in A Theory of Parody, where 'modern artists seem to have recognized that change entails continuity, and have offered us a model for the process of transfer or reorganization of that past. Their double-voiced parodic forms play on the tensions created by this historical awareness.' They have a 'desire to "refunction" those forms to their own needs'" (53). The

difference between The Village of the Small Huts and a play such as Fréchette's Papineau, for instance, which uses an existing genre to represent history without a trace of parody, may be only in the degree to which the playwrights can value and freely manipulate their own cultural environment.

The history play in its many forms may be said to serve one of four primary purposes: the establishment and promotion of the authority of the state, and the containment of subversion; the promotion of change and cultural vitality through the mythicization of historical events and heroes; the promotion of community consciousness and political activism; or, fourthly, the subversion of linear historical narrative and cultural tradition by theatricalization and vulgarization, in satirical and parodic forms. In colonial drama, the inscription of authority, and the mythicization of community ideals are the most prevalent uses of historical drama. In contemporary theatre, the engagement with and consolidation of the very idea of community through theatrical activity based on local and national myths, and the subversion of colonial narratives are the most frequent purposes of theatricalized history. In postmodern theatre, the notion of a national narrative is radically subverted by intertextual and intercultural interpretations of historical power structures, usually employing visual images and the structures of technologized consciousness against the authority of linear historical documents, chronicles, and fictions.

CHAPTER THREE

GENDER/LANGUAGE/NATURE: POSTCOLONIAL IDENTITY POLITICS

As postcolonial nationalisms came into being in the sixties and seventies, so, at the same time, did their others, the signifieds of the transcendental Canadian signifiers, a legion of difference waiting to defy the prospect of being subsumed into new metanarratives constructed in the image of the old ones. The coherent mythic structure of nationalism itself, with its illusionary projection of a common origin and a common destiny, "pastoral serenity serving as a prologue to the swelling act of the imperial theme" (Frye Bush 241), has been the source of its own subversion and transformation by those whose presence, cultures, and narratives have been overwritten by history. The theatricalization of this process of subversion and transformation of nationalist coherence is the subject of this chapter.

While postcolonial nationalism opposes colonial power, its historical origins make it intrinsically vulnerable to subversion. In Canada during the sixties, the political and artistic promotion of nationalism gave rise to challenges from many quarters of the population which considered themselves to be excluded by the assertion of an essentialist Canadian identity. These assertions of otherness themselves are not necessarily free of the characteristics of nationalism, however. According to Alan Filewod, there are parallels between "the simplistic nationalism of the 1970s . . . a postcolonial construct," and the subsequent "politics of diversity, in which marginalized groups sometimes claim a reductive essentialism (often encoded in the language of 'blood' and 'race') as a strategy of resistance" ("Viewing" 16-17). Rejecting essentialism, Filewod prefers the notion of a national "Imaginary" over identity because the former "implies that nationhood is a construct of historical narratives rather than collective psychology" (16). Filewod's terminology here provides an efficient definition of the

main thrust of postcolonial culture, in that it encompasses the progression from the collective narratives popular in the seventies to the highly individuated narrativization of identity prevalent in postmodern theatre. His struggle to articulate suitable metaphors for Canadian culture is only the most recent of a succession of critical attempts to distinguish the nation from the United States and from colonial parents.

The two metaphors basic in the definition of the national construct are the pastoral myth and marginality. Few can completely dismiss the pastoral myth from the Canadian construct: it is, after all, a figure for childhood, and the imaginary order, and thus fundamental to narrative creation. Frye defines the myth in strictly North American and rural terms; for him, it connotes "a world of peace and protection," as well as "a spontaneous response to the nature around it" (Bush 239). Robert Kroetsch notes the persistent fragility of the Edenic myth, in that immigrants have been obliged to leave old versions behind, and also to face disillusionment in the new world. As old stories dissipate and are lost, a new freedom to engage in a "larger story" becomes possible ("Disunity" 30). On the other hand, he recognizes that many writers resist entry into the greater Canadian metanarrative, preferring their stories to remain the negation of it.

In contemporary theatre, collectives and their representations of community have demonstrated the continuing attraction of the pastoral myth. Filewod notes the close ideological tie between collectivity in theatre and nationalism: "This was the time of The Farm Show and 1837, Ten Lost Years, and The Donnelly's trilogy. . . . The equation of this new theatre practice with the new nationalism was seductive, because the two parts of this ideological syntax seemed to explain and prove each other" ("Viewing" 15). The collectivity of the sixties and seventies figured an erasure of parental authority, both familial and colonial. Like Frye's

pastoral, it represented a safe space, in which a spontaneous relation to nature was possible. The family was frequently satirized by collective creations, especially in Québec, as antithetical to spontaneous creation. The dissent, for example, within *Le Grand Cirque Ordinaire*, which led to the separate foundation of a women's theatre group, indicates that the collective theatre company was based on gender biases reflecting the very patriarchal structures which they claimed to subvert. Thus, while the pastoral myth may superficially appear to be connected to maternal values in its valorization of home and nature, it generally erases both gender issues and sexuality.

The rapid emergence of feminist theatre in the wake of the nationalist collective movement attests to the artificial suppression of authentically gendered voice by collective concentration on community and class solidarity. As Filewod states, "the experience of the 1980s showed us that nations don't 'maturé', they change. . . . National evolution is the constant struggle between contesting groups for the power to define the terms of change" ("Viewing" 15). More fundamental to change than pluralism is the dialectic, contestation, and deconstruction of gendered images of social structures and individual roles. The signification of gender overlaps with political and semiotic issues of all kinds in contemporary theatre, not only in the nineties, but in the first plays of the alternative movement. Even though "women's cultural productions have moved from the periphery to the centre" (Dvorak 128), the question of women's social roles remains the site of the primary radical challenge to contemporary nationalist constructs.

Resistance such as that of feminists to assimilation by nationalist and totalizing constructs both expresses and legitimates marginality, the second of the pervasive metaphors of postcolonialism. In the first place, however, it is isolation itself, whether self-imposed or the

result of the prejudices of dominant classes and cultures, which marginalizes. Kroetsch describes narratives which address such isolation, whether rural or urban, thus: "At the centre . . . is zero. The story is decentred. All the reality . . . the speech against the silence, is on the circumference. The margin. We live a life of shifting edges, around an unspoken or unspeakable question. Or, at best, in asking who we are, we are who we are" ("Disunity" 30). The margin implies a distant centre, where power is supposed to reside, just as the Edenic myth implies a present, fallen reality, which history can redeem. Both imply a devaluation or marginalization of present reality. Kroetsch himself seems to suggest that there are only two choices in Canada: either one grows up and becomes a fully-fledged maker of history, creating a new, teleological world, or one does not, and creates instead a marginal mythic space, a sort of hell, in which one can explore the self, instead of enacting social being. Such are the polarities of totalizing political constructs: nationalism, whether colonial or postcolonial, offers identification with the patriarchal order of being, within which the Edenic myth functions, or, if one chooses to resist assimilation, self-castration. Thus, the postmodern construction of marginality is possibly no more than a pluralist version of the Calvinist-Jansenist pantomime, static rather than dynamic, a statement of ontological or political alienation, but not a response to the problems of the real.

Marginality is a spatial metaphor indicating exclusion from a boundary, or from a ruling narrative, the written or defined source of social legitimacy. The progress from nationalism, a modernist construct (Kroetsch, "Disunity" 30), to postmodernism has inspired numerous other spatial metaphors intended to be more ecumenical in their cultural definition. The metaphors have almost inevitably been geographical. In the early eighties, E.D. Blodgett introduced an array of such terms--"isotherm, magnetosphere, faults . . . marvellous methods we have for

mapping the apparently invisible and disparate regions of the earth"--to open the then current critical paradigms (Configuration 319). While the idea of faultlines is frequently useful for expressing discontinuity and unpredictability, the meteorological terms remove culture to a non-material, abstract, and thoroughly non-human sphere. William Westfall has also favoured a non-territorial mapping of the cultural regions of Canada, proposing an equally anti-materialistic construction, "regions of the mind" (231). Both Blodgett and Westfall are clearly motivated to counter the relative stasis of political structure, but, in doing so, they seem to feel obliged to absent themselves from those structures, either meteorologically or mentally, thus generating new marginalization rather than integrative processes.

The evolution of the image of the frontier since Frye's 'garrison mentality' has been centrally and graphically influential in Canadian writing. In 1982, Blodgett rejected the metaphorical use of the term, since "one might as well be talking about the forty-ninth parallel, thus transforming a difficult issue of intra-national studies into international terms" (16). Since this comment was made, postmodernist texts have almost obsessively exploited the ability of authors to cross international and intercultural boundaries freely. Canadianism no longer excludes pan-Americanism. Even the forty-ninth parallel, once an imaginary barricade against colonization, has been recognized to be less than an absolute cultural boundary. The very titles of such works as Janette Turner Hospital's novel Borderline, Thomas King's short story "Borders," and Guillermo Verdecchia's play Fronteras Americanas announce that internationalism and intra-nationalism are no longer separate. In thirty years, the idea of a national culture defined by its territorial boundaries (and somehow, for all its diversity, centred on two founding cultures) has been insistently challenged by globalism and multiculturalism. Furthermore, the self-protective and aggressive connotations of the notion of frontier have

been countered by interculturalist and environmental perspectives.

But the desire to preserve an integral national metanarrative into which marginal cultures can be worked as textual enhancements is, on the whole, more characteristic of the literary enterprise than of theatre. In 1965, Frye could still argue that Canadians should found their own literature in the great traditions ("Conclusion"). The construction of the English-Canadian literary canon certainly continues to reflect the desirability of following a European model of nationalist tradition, even though it permits the entry of pluralistic texts. In theatre, on the other hand, by the late sixties the European model of a national theatre was being overturned before it had been implemented, in favour of a model constructed in opposition to textual authority and literariness. While less canonical than literature, theatre also has been continuously challenged to evaluate the premises of its programming. As Robert Wallace and Richard Paul Knowles, among others, have observed, critics and institutions still fail to serve the diversity of theatrical practice by enlarging their terms of evaluation, rather than excluding that which does not conform to their outdated standards of excellence. In practice, it is often the work of small companies that best represents the close relation which theatre in the last three decades has had with cultural development and changing social relations in Canada.

C.W.E. Bigsby has argued that, in the United States, theatricality has, of its very nature, been closely allied to rapid social changes since the sixties, and to the abandoning of outworn self-images in favour of freer expression. His observation, which is equally applicable to the postcolonial period in Canada, provides the most useful governing metaphors, rooted in theatricality itself, for relating contemporary theatre to its social context:

The transformations of theatre, in which the actor can dissolve the self in the name of the role, became a clue to . . . a paradigm of, social transformations.

[Sixties theatre] was an exemplary theatre designed to show the freedom of becoming rather than the stasis of being. That is why character is so often smashed, presented not as a series of actions continuous with the self but as a range of performed gestures. Sometimes, as in gay . . . Chicano . . . black . . . or native American theatre, archetype is pressed in the direction of stereotype as evidence of the pressure of history, social prejudice or economics, as proof of the self's surrender of density. Sometimes . . . the stereotype becomes the mask to be torn away by the reborn self, or . . . as in gay theatre, consciously deployed by the rebel inhabiting and hence colonising an identity designed to demean. (260)

The association of masks with colonialism is very familiar, as in Fanon's works, or in the plays of Genêt. At the same time, the freedom bestowed on its wearer by the mask is also well-known in all cultures. Everything depends on becoming aware of the distinction between masks and potential: to theatricalize habitual behaviour is to escape from possession by it. Bigsby also draws a close relation between the intrinsic properties of performance and the rapid transformation of social roles since the sixties. He indicates, as does Herbert Blau (*Eye* 1-13), that postmodernism has been generated from the radical freedoms assumed in the sixties. The role of performance in the emergence of cultural groups, which have been habitually rendered invisible or assigned an inferior status by the dominant culture, and in the alteration of perceptions of power relations, has been continuously effective since the sixties in Canada. The paradigm of relations between the Same and the Other has shifted from the teleological metanarrative to the play of appearances and concealments.

The questioning of the construction of gender in the patriarchal order is a dominant

feature of the performance of identity by many social groups. The post-Lacanian theorization, by Irigaray and others, of the non-existence of woman outside the construction of the masculine has not only drawn attention to the extent to which all oppressed groups are constructed as functions of the dominant discourse, but also to the duplicity of living both within and outside that discourse. Feminist theory and writing, together with Derridean *différance*, further the linguistic and semiotic dramatization of existence outside the shell of hegemonic language, while exposing the difficulty of expressing any such existence. As Trinh T. Minh-Ha observes, "a social regulator and political potential for change, gender, in its own way, baffles definition" (116). Since the construction of gender is an issue contained in the representation of all social groups, changes in perception of gender relations are essential to changes in relations between any social group and the dominant discourse. The construction of gender in texts and performances, and the identification and positioning of their author(s), cannot be dismissed in evaluating writing and theatre of emergent national discourses, nor those of marginalized or minority cultures.

The recuperation of Canada from colonialism has simultaneously required the search for a national identity and the investigation of the identity's invalidity. Seamus Deane indicates the "self-contradictory" aspect of evoking notions of any kind of identity: "Such an identity is wholly unreal. It can be made manifest only by pretending it is the conclusion to a search of which it was the origin" (11). Deane strongly differs from Frye's position in The Bush Garden, seeing in invented national traditions "notions of national character, questions of the language appropriate to its proper expression and, by extension, to the stereotyping of groups, classes, races in relation to kinds of writing . . . that they may produce" (11). The more important part of the postcolonial enterprise, he states, is "to trace, within the rhetorics of

political and literary discourses, the forms and varieties of incrimination, subjection, insurgency, evasion and stereotyping that determine or are determined by our past and present interpretations" (10). Since historical narratives and literary traditions in Canada have been predominantly generated by men, not only in the dominant culture but in other traditions, the tracing of such inscriptions of deviance, oppression, and stereotyping are most effectively exposed by the narratives of those who have been historically inscribed as the deviant and oppressed. Such positioning is not exclusive to women, as much current political, literary, and theatrical discourse indicates; but, in the context of most traditional notions of gender, to have been deprived of political power or visibility by a dominant culture is to have been aligned with the feminine.

In contemporary theatre, women have found effective strategies for altering the historical perceptions of power relations. Since the artistic institutions of North America are younger than those of Europe, it has been somewhat easier in recent years for women here to acquire an influence in theatre, and to be subversive. As Sue-Ellen Case suggests, for women in countries with long-established state theatre institutions, it has been difficult for the woman playwright to be taken seriously; but, in the United States, "the proliferation of poor theaters [sic] along the fringe . . . has allowed her to sneak backstage and eventually make an appearance" (*Home/Land* 2-3). In Canada, where the state funded theatrical establishment is fairly new, and where the alternative theatre has presented a strong challenge to regional arts centres in the development of a postcolonial aesthetic, women have become prominent. And the processes of examining the inscription of women in masculine orders, and theorizing their exclusion, together with the development by women of unprecedented forms to express their negated experience, have come to provide models for the theatre of other groups excluded by

the dominated culture.

To find form and voice for experience which has been masked and negated by stereotyping and subjection is particularly difficult. Nevertheless, "Il faut parler, pour n'être pas dit par les autres," in the words of A Canadian Play/Une Plaie canadienne. The models for nationalist, collective narratives, as Deane points out, exist in history (9). There is no real formal precedent available for those writers who challenge their own negation. Lizbeth Goodman, in her study of feminist theatres, aptly appropriates the motto of the San Francisco Mime Troup--"We try in our humble way to destroy the United States"--and adds the dictum "Make it yourself" to indicate the task of feminist theatre and that of others likewise outside the dominant culture (4). While this positive attitude to production is certainly characteristic of contemporary feminist theatre (as it is indeed of most alternative theatre), it does not suggest the deeper implications of representing and voicing experience which has been excluded from the dominant discourse. If a male poet in a masculine tradition must experience the anxiety of influence, how much greater the anxiety for those who cannot enact the masculine construction of the oedipal struggle and look to patriarchal tradition for models to overcome.

The entire field of realistic narrative also poses a central problem for any writer interested in the "subversion of a patriarchal structure," because it is always, in its classic forms, "a reinscription of the dominant order" (Forte 116). Realism, as Jeanie Forte argues, exemplifies wider issues of conventional narrative's suitability for feminist purposes, in that it is both sadistic and oedipal. She cites the observation of the film critic Laura Mulvey that "sadism . . . demands a story, depends on making something happen, forcing a change in another person, a battle of will and strength, victory/defeat, all occurring in a linear time with a beginning and an end" (116). Forte also refers to the observation of Teresa de Lauretis that

conventional narrative oppresses women because it is centred on oedipal desire: "It operates within the system of exchange instituted by the incest prohibition, where Woman functions both as a sign (representation) and a value (object) for that exchange . . . woman's role constitutes the fulfillment of the narrative promise . . . the reward at the end of the Oedipal journey; a representation which supports the male status of the mythical, culturally-constructed subject" (qtd Forte 116). Forte herself adds that the reader is required to perceive the woman as "c h ject/objective/obstacle [of the governing] Oedipal desire: this is its sadism, that narrative repeatedly and necessarily positions women in the oppressed subjectivity (which is not Subject, but Object) of femininity" (116).

For all the vigour of her argument's intention, though, Forte fails to recognize, on the other hand, that the sadistic practice of positioning women in the oppressed subjectivity of femininity is common not only in conventional but also subversive narratives by male playwrights, which demonstrate all the characteristics which she lists. She further implies that women themselves do not engage in or represent sadistic practices, whereas in fact they continue to produce and consume conventional oedipal narratives, including gothic fiction, in vast quantities. Nevertheless, her argument concerning realism is useful in that it points directly to the difficulty of representation for those writing outside the dominant discourse, regardless of their gender positioning. She points out, for instance, that the "postmodernist version of subjectivity" is not necessarily an adequate answer to the problem of alternate representations of female experience, since it does not necessarily convey "its real dimensions" (125; emphasis added). This argument may be extended beyond exclusively feminist parameters. To write and perform outside the dominant discourse, and to challenge its assumptions are to risk critical censure for not having attained conventional standards. It is

also to incur difficulty in self-expression because of the guilt of entering discourse.

Trinh T. Minh-ha, whose work is concerned with both femininity and ethnicity, brings Derrida's theory of *différance* and difference into the realm of the real and feeling levels of the process of self-articulation at cultural margins. She characterizes the writing of the Other as theft, but, in doing so, goes beyond the Promethean myth to a more feminine view of the acquisition of language:

Can any one of us write like a man, like a woman, like a white? Surely, someone would quickly answer, and this leads straight back to the old master-servant's Guilt. . . . Women writers are both prompt to hide in [their] writing[s] and feel prompted to do so. As language-stealers, they must yet learn to steal without being seen, and with no pretense of being a stealer, for fear of 'exposing the father.' Such a reluctance to say aloud that the emperor has no clothes and therefore to betray or admit of an evidence comes perhaps less from a subjection to man than from an acute awareness of emptiness--through (his) power, through (his) language, through (his) disguises. Hence . . . compassion and the desire to protect . . . Double mischief: unspoken and unable to speak, woman in exile with herself. (19-20)

To recognize oneself as other to the dominant discourse, so it would seem to follow, offers only two alternatives: to remain silent, on the one hand, or to write and speak, in the belief that others likewise outside the dominant discourse will assent to the validity of one's utterance.

The discourse of *différance* is evidently closely linked to the articulation of positions outside the dominant discourse. Derrida argues that, to reclaim the speech of the subject from

its alienated state, it is necessary to reconnect to a state of "unity prior to dissociation" which is "historical in a sense which . . . can hardly be tolerated by the metaphysical concept of history" (Writing 174). Taking Artaud as his guide, Derrida pursues the necessity to reclaim the self, in the sense of "my Body, in my Life" from possession by "poetic inspiration and the economy of classical art, singularly the economy of the theater . . [and] the metaphysics, religion, aesthetics, etc. that supported them" (176). This process is omnipresent in the aims of the alternative theatre in Canada during the sixties. The first imperative of playwrights in the early stages of recapturing expression from a dominant culture in Canada was to free speech, and also the body, from the inscription of foreign scripts and training. George Ryga and, later, the founder of the Native Theatre School, Floyd Favel, have both argued for this as the starting point of theatrical revolution. In Québec, the power of the theatricalization of joul in liberating theatre from alienating traditions is the first, and possibly the most important, example in Canada of the Derridean proposition. As Alonzo Le Blanc has stated: "I don't believe that nationalism was the inspiration for the creation of a Québécois theatre. For years [under Duplessis] we had nationalism without theatre. . . . The explosion . . . is more due to the expression of a new freedom that we've had since the war. The birth of Québécois theatre occurred when Gélinas had enough courage and talent . . . to say aloud what others were feeling" (Winsor 32). Gélinas has been credited with finding a voice which exceeded subjective expression, and transcended the boundaries of culture to reach English-Canadians, despite linguistic differences.

The birth of the speaking subject, as described by Derrida, is strikingly similar to Mailhot's account of the same process in Monologues québécois. Derrida states: "As soon as I speak, the words I have found.. . no longer belong to me . . . I must first hear myself. In

soliloquy as in dialogue, to speak is to hear oneself . . . Henceforth, what is called the speaking subject is no longer the person himself, or the person alone, who speaks. . . . [he] discovers his irreducible secondarity, his origin that is always eluded; for the origin is always already eluded on the basis of an organized field of speech in which the speaking subject vainly seeks a place that is always missing" (177-78). According to Derrida, the "dispossession" and "loss" experienced by the speaking subject possessed by language can be overcome in the theatre: "the integrity of the flesh torn by . . . differences must be restored in the theater" (179). The reclamation of integrity can only be achieved by overcoming the division by language of mind and body.

A concrete, non-verbal theatrical illustration of the task of reclaiming existence from the power of the Other is provided by Louise Dubreuil's performance piece, Forces of Power (1992), which was developed and presented in the context of Ann Scofield's Transformative Theatre program. The work translates the destruction of the Other into emotion, violence and, above all, the body:

Before she began she asked the viewers to speak about their own anger and sadness, to participate. . . . [She lies] on her belly on the floor, with a hammer in her hand. Face down, she has a mask of her face on her head which looks at the audience. To the sounds of a ticking clock . . . [s]he speaks of the outside forces that have power. She pounds with the hammer. . . . The feeling builds until she takes off the mask and smashes it with the hammer. It is terrible, the destruction, and yet as she pounds away at the image of her face, there is a feeling of liberation. The viewers share the sense of empowerment from having faced the darkest negativity, destroyed the perfect face. (Poteet 11)

This physical representation of the overcoming of possession, in which both the perfect mask and the negative force behind it are overcome by the performer herself, demonstrates Derrida's proposition about the nature of "dispossession by language." The value of Derrida's "La parole soufflée" and Dubreuil's Forces of Power for the present argument is that both demonstrate by different but complementary means that the subject, whether it is represented by a mask, or by a speech act, is no more than an "elusion" (to use Derrida's term) of the prior and pure existence of the subject, which is not to be captured, even outside the dominant discourse, since it is life itself. Theatrical performance, like writing itself, succeeds in liberating its own subject and the subjectivity of its audience, when it contains within itself an image of its own destruction, and not merely that of an external structure or system.

In the following section, selected scripts will be examined, which have, in various cultural contexts, succeeded not only in evading the dictates of tradition(s) and the dominant discourse, but also in refusing to substitute themselves as a positive and authoritative alternative. The scripts are drawn not only from feminist theatre, but from Québécois, aboriginal, and other sources. The representation of gender by both male and female playwrights and collectives is to be examined, less as the literal representation of social roles than as the signification of self-difference.

I: The Male Playwright, the Female Dramatic Subject/Object, and Perceptual Transformation

The association of femininity and oppression by the dominant culture has resulted in three of the most influential and ground-breaking plays in contemporary Canadian drama: George Ryga's The Ecstasy of Rita Joe, Michel Tremblay's Les Belles-Sœurs, and Tomson Highway's The Rez Sisters. Two of these plays, one by a non-native and one by a native

playwright, also depict native women as the oppressed. The fact that each of these plays, in their earlier productions, was very successful in altering audiences' perceptions of their collective identity raises interesting questions as to why the spectacle of women as outside and separated from the governing system should evoke such a powerful response. Each of the three plays offers some insight into the role of spectacle in the process of social change, while each also invites speculation on the relation between the male playwright and the female subject. Ryga's play was the first highly successful play intended for a generalized English-Canadian audience, while Tremblay's, written at the same time as Ryga's, is generally regarded as the ur-text of the new Québécois theatre. Highway's The Rez Sisters, written almost two decades later, and deriving its premise from Les Belles-Soeurs, is the first Native play to have become widely successful with Native and non-Native audiences alike.

According to Christopher Innes, Ryga intended in the early stages of the conception of Rita Joe that it should be "a woman's 'odyssey through hell . . . in search of her name, her identity'" ("Politics" 31). Further details reported by Innes indicate that her character was at that stage not yet conceived as Native, but that the theme and strategies had been put in place first:

Its focus was on . . . questions about equality, racialism, the nature of personal identity, and whether liberty must indeed 'always be "given" by those who control it'--questions which the woman formulates in response to her various encounters . . . the fulcrum is 'the dichotomy between the proclaimed ideals of society/ourselves and its/our actual behaviour.' The accusation is that we are indifferent to the deprivation of those in our society who have other ethnic backgrounds . . . the case presented . . . such . . . that applying our general

principles to the particular instance will lead us toward the author's extreme political position, which we would normally reject. (32)

It is not surprising, then, that after Ryga had developed the script which was performed, he could assert that Rita Joe the prostitute's confrontation with the various agencies of the establishment is not specifically Native: "It's universal because it expresses the kind of general fear and reservation that people in any culture would have when coping with a new experience and trying to define it" (qtd Innes 48). While Ryga's Native characters are "the combined product of his poetic imagination and his social consciousness," according to Knowles, they remain "almost indistinguishable from the Ukrainian-Canadian characters in his other plays" ("Voices" 102). The casting of a non-Native actor in the role of Rita Joe in the early productions (even though her father was played by Dan George and Jamie Paul by August Schellenberg, both Native) also underlines that she is a function of the total presentation of the system rather than a culturally specific figure.

Ryga's play was widely praised for its exposure of the hypocrisy of Canadian society. Chief Dan George contributes this to its preface: "People came to us to say that now, for the first time, they understood a little of what the Native peoples have suffered" (5). While it is clearly the case that the play raised public awareness of previously ignored problems, it is also true that it did so by reproducing the stereotypes, not only of natives, but also of woman as object and victim of violence. The play's strategies do not necessarily engage the audience in resolving problems such as Rita Joe's; instead, the play relies on a tragic resolution that invites a conventional passive response.

In an essay on contemporary native women writers, Barbara Godard has extensively explored the politics of representation in counter-discourse. In Canadian discourse, as she

states, "the Native [is] an empty sign . . . bearing the burden of the Other, all that the modern white person is lacking. Identity for this white person is acquired through this encounter with alterity, knowledge of the self attained through the wisdom of the not-I, an identity both personal and national" (190). In the history of contemporary Canadian theatre, Rita Joe almost monopolized the function of this 'empty sign' for two decades before the opening of a Native theatrical discourse. Her role is doubly significant in that she is female, and thus more specifically the site for the "transference of the desiring subject" (Goldie, qtd Godard 190). A writer such as Ryga remains within the discourse of power and perpetuates such a transference, while at the same time accusing the dominant culture of injustice. In The Ecstasy of Rita Joe it is not difference which is represented but rather oppositional values. Since Ryga speaks for Rita Joe and Native people, his characters remain the object of the gaze of the dominant culture.

Writers who wish to escape or challenge their own inscription within the dominant discourse are faced with the following problems: "How," as Godard asks, "can what is positioned as object 'inside' discourse take up a position as subject 'outside' discourse? How can there be a position 'outside' what is a hegemonic, and hence totalizing, field?" (194). Her answer leads to another field, of paradox: "It is by exploring the fissures and cracks which paradox opens in the claims of the dominant discourse that an alternate logic may be constructed . . . grounded not on the binary codes of the law of the excluded middle, but in the logics of relativity and catastrophe theory with their serial or multiple interactions, their theorizing of chaos" (195). Here Godard makes a distinction between exactly the kind of representation found in Rita Joe and the more problematic writing of self-representation. Godard defines "resistance writing"--in Bakhtinian terms 'heteroglossia'--as engaged both

vertically and laterally in its struggle for existence: "Meaning exists agonistically: it comes from positions in struggle so that [as Michel Pêcheux states] 'words change their meaning according to the positions from which they are used within the discursive process. ' . . . In this way, 'red' means something different in the dominant discourse from what it does in the Native's discourse of resistance" (195-96). Godard explores a variety of possible positions which writers may assume in the process of reclaiming their subjectivity from discourse and disidentifying with rejected discursive positions. The most fundamental distinction remains that between discourse and counter-discourse (196). The appropriation of exclusively female discourse by male writers is a clear indication to the audience that what is being produced is a discourse counter to that of established power. The struggle between gendered discourses within a given community provides an accessible means to symbolize the struggle for change in cultural and political structures, and to produce contradictions which subvert habitual perception. Both Tremblay and Highway have employed this strategy, with powerful effects on the political engagement of their respective audiences.

The controversial feature of Tremblay's Les Belles-Soeurs, its use of joul, proved to be as striking to the French as it was to Montréal audiences. Jacques Cellard, for one, the theatre critic of Le Monde (Paris), commented: "Les Belles-Soeurs sont en joul comme Andromaque est en alexandrins, parce qu'il faut une langue à une oeuvre, et une langue forte à une oeuvre forte" (qtd Usmiani, Michel 31). Cellard's remark serves to emphasize that Tremblay's work succeeded not only because it was a political cause célèbre in Québec, nor simply because it challenged the conventions of bourgeois theatre by its use of the language of daily life, but because it was dramatically powerful in its construction, with exceptionally well-orchestrated effects: Tremblay's play does indeed reveal that the playwright had absorbed the musicality of

the structures of Racinian tragedy. Les Belles-Soeurs provided its audiences not merely with the shock of recognition of the ordinary, but with the spectacle of its own underlying passions, no less intense than those of Racinian tragedy for being repressed. Tremblay had effectively erased the imaginary line between the deprived sameness of "la maudite vie plate" (of which his characters complain in an almost Mozartian quintet) and the theatre, into which passion is traditionally displaced by conventional society.

The success of Tremblay's first major play lies in its intensity and enclosure. Fifteen working class Montréal women are brought together in the confinement of one kitchen on the pretext of the collective sticking into booklets of one million trading stamps. The single focus of the action, the constrained unity of place, and the common cultural and familial experience binding the characters together, are all determinants of the audience's response: they serve to exclude the distractions of the audience's expectations of conventional theatrical signs and surfaces, while fully gratifying its need for ritual. So much has been written on Tremblay's dramatic world within the Canadian and Québécois discourses that it may be useful to draw an analogy with another culture in order to review the importance of the dramatization of community in the displacement of the dominant literary and political discourses.

In an essay on the Irish literary revival, Seamus Heaney reviews the ways in which writers such as William Carleton and John Millington Synge sustained and reclaimed "the Irish Catholic sub-culture" from both the colonial discourse and the domination of "big house" culture." Heaney cites an essay by Carleton, "The Lough Derg Pilgrim," in which the writer describes the powerful auditory effects of communal devotions at the pilgrimage site, St. Patrick's Purgatory or Station Island, the subject of one of Heaney's own works. Carleton writes of the gathering of pilgrims in the Lough Derg basilica, interestingly referred to as the

'prison':

The strangest of all . . . without a parallel in the world, was the impression and effect produced by the deep, drowsy, hollow, hoarse, guttural, ceaseless, and monotonous hum which proceeded from about four hundred individuals half asleep and at prayer. . . . It was certainly the the strangest sound I ever heard, and resembled a thousand subterraneous groans, uttered in a kind of low, deep, unvaried chant. . . . Such a noise has something so powerfully lulling, that human nature, even excited by the terrible suggestions of superstitious fear, was scarcely able to withstand it. (11)

This hypnotic communal hum, states Heaney in a memorable phrase, is "the sound that world makes" (11). Carleton was a writer who, more than most of his Northern Irish compatriots, was caught between two cultures and two Christian faiths, since he had abandoned Catholicism for the Established Church: Heaney's comments on Carleton and the society he depicts therefore have interesting implications for a reading of Tremblay, the most influential writer of the new Québec theatre, who is at the same time tied to his territory yet estranged from it.

Heaney reflects:

Carleton's country Catholic being responds in complete harmony to the humbled melodies of his own debilitated tribe. . . . He writes of experiences not archetypal but historical, not ennobling but disabling. . . . What remains most potently in the mind is the substance of what is being condemned: the music of that underworld which made Carleton was the music of humanity. . . . [He] was writing from within the circle. . . . [His] ears and nostrils were full of the intimacies and exactitudes of poverty. (11-12)

In most respects, this account of Carleton could be applied not only to Tremblay but also to Highway, who has even expressed an interest in the parallels between Cree and Celtic cultures and their relations with Christianity (Highway, Mutz 90). To a lesser extent, Heaney's lesson in "the sound that a world makes" is also applicable to The Ecstasy of Rita Joe, with the difference that Ryga, unlike Tremblay and Highway, disguises his own sense of world under the mask of native characters.

The emotional content of the counter-discourse, underlying cultural particularities and language, and only indirectly articulable, is remarkably well-expressed by Ryga himself. Even though Ryga appears to differ from Tremblay and Highway in having appropriated a cultural mask of the Other in Rita Joe, in fact all three playwrights use the masks of women to articulate the emotions which are dismissed from the dominant, patriarchal discourse. As Innes observes, "Ryga himself believes that the rhythms and language [of his play] are both universal and correspond to a particularly Canadian experience" (49). While universality has limited credibility, it must be admitted that the ritualization of emotion, such as that which occurs in drama, is a fundamental human activity. Ryga makes a cogent point when he argues that "in Rita Joe . . . the point is not what she's saying. You're conscious . . . that it's not accepted and would not even be understood by other characters in the play" (qtd Innes 49). According to Ryga, it is the fear engendered by estrangement in unfamiliar of urban surroundings and in confrontations with the hostile system which is the important source of language, and not character or culture itself. Thus he can state that "the kind of lines I give to Rita Joe would not be different from [those] I would give a Polish or Finnish immigrant who is caught in the same conditions" (qtd Innes 49). While universality itself is not the issue here, recognizing the source of dramatic rhythm and sense and the characterological and linguistic masks used to

allow that musicality is crucial. A script for performance uses rhythm, pitch, and tempo to defeat the normally heard structures of social discourse: this is the source of the powerful appeal certain plays have for their audiences, and of their capacity to overthrow conventional dramatic and linguistic expectations and structured social perceptions.

The world of Les Belles-Soeurs is strictly that of women. The pretext of the play allows fifteen women of one neighbourhood to be confined in a kitchen (the rest of the house is being painted). On the surface, there is a great deal of argument and resentment among the women, but there is also a strong nexus of affiliation surrounding them and binding them together. André Brassard, the play's first director, lists over a hundred characters who are mentioned but never seen: these include a broad family network, and all the males, both adults and children, to whom the women are tied in various ways (113-17). Mailhot comments on the title of the play, "la catégorie belle-soeur--étrangère mais proche, alliée, ralliée, située à un point stratégique--permet un intéressant trait d'union entre l'univers social et l'édifice familial" (Godin and Mailhot (1988) I:278). The language of their universe is characterized by the simplifications which pertain among people within a limited world and a strong kinship system; it is also permeated with false values, the more commercial values indicated by anglicizations, others by the stringent moral judgements which are incessantly (re)produced. The hyperrealist exploitation of joul in Les Belles-Soeurs is achieved through a series of set pieces, including the recitation of the activities of the week by five of the women, and the final ode to bingo, a parody of Beethoven, by the ensemble.

Like Fennario in his Pointe St. Charles plays, On the Job (1976) and Nothing to Lose (1977), and David Freeman, in his Creeps (1972), Tremblay exploits the boredom, despair, poverty, and self-contempt of his characters for dramatic effect. Mailhot rightly notes that

Tremblay relies on the repetition of certain thematic words to orchestrate the characters, and that the catalogue which comes with the trading stamps is an image of the play's techniques:

"'Misère' est le premier et un des maître-mots des Belles-Soeurs, avec 'écoeurant', 'fatigant,' 'fatiguée', 'chus donc tannée', 'chus toute énarvée', 'bon-rienne' et l'ineffoyable 'catalogue' . .

. . Les croquis, les esquisses, l'absence d'intrigue logique et vigoureuse, la composition horizontale et excentrique, étaient exigés par le sujet et les personnages. Le véritable drame ici, ne saurait apparaître qu'au fil des petits drames, des travers, du ridicule, du joual" (283).

The play is composed of a series of games, built on the rhythmic intensification of the repeated communication patterns of the women. In this respect, it resembles Ducharme's Ha, Ha! (1982), in which patterns of boredom and confinement are transformed through gamesplaying into an uncontrollable plague of absurdity and terror. But in Ducharme's play, gamesplaying occurs on a stage with an exit: Mimi is permitted to throw herself into the orchestra pit at the end of the play. It is clear in Tremblay's play that no escape whatsoever is available. Pierrette Guérin, the 'bad' sister of Germaine Lauzon, has tried to escape by becoming a club singer, and has entered another trap, by following her 'maudit Johnny,' while Lise Paquette, the young girl, who finds herself pregnant, wants to escape but knows she will fail because of fear: "J'ai peur, bonyeu, j'ai peur!" (95). The pressures to remain tied to the territory are articulated in dialogue between the two sisters, Pierrette, the club waitress, and Rose Ouimet, the mother and housewife, on the subject of ways to avoid pregnancy: "Pierrette Guérin: . . . Oui, c'est vrai, j'en connais quequ's'uns. les pilules anti-contraceptives, par exemple . . . /Rose Ouimet; Y'a pas moyen de te parler, toé! C'est pas c'que j'voulais dire! Tu sauras que chus pas pour l'amour libre, moé! Chus catholique! Reste donc dans ton monde pis laisse-nous donc tranquilles! Maudite quidoune!" (100). The internalization of patriarchal values renders the

women in this play the authors of their own entrapment.

The play depicts poverty in all its senses. Tremblay's women "n'ont pas la tête métaphysique, ni esthétique, ni religieuse, ni morale, ni politique. Elles ont plus de cœur que de tête, et, pour la plupart, plus de ventre que de cœur" (Mailhot, Godin and Mailhot (1988) 1:284). As Alain Pontaut remarks, "un hermétique enclos les retient prisonnières, insectes vermineux dans un bocal clos" (Introduction, Belles-Soeurs v-vi). He, too, notes the lack of soul and spirit in the women, and relates it to their lack of men: "ces femmes . . . sans âme, comme sans homme" (v). Pontaut's remark is somewhat specialized, in that there are husbands, children, a few fantasy figures, and even a male corpse in the women's lives, albeit out of sight, and in that the excoriation of the male for his inadequacy is a favourite theme in their conversation. What Pontaut suggests is relatively obvious--that there is no love of or attraction to the opposite sex possible in the absence of self-love, and, by extension, there is no love of or attraction to anything outside themselves. There are plenty of false idols--dreams of winning competitions, consumer goods, film stars who make their husbands look inadequate--but nothing beyond the bingo which animates them, and nothing which may be allowed to excite their curiosity. André Major wrote in his review of the play, "On voudrait bien ne pas les voir, ces témoins de notre déchéance nationale. On voudrait que les créateurs nous fasse rêver" (Belles-Soeurs 141). Tremblay, of course, undercuts the audience's expectation of an escape in the theatre, and instead, intensifies the horror of the life they may seek to escape. As in all his early plays, he exaggerates the illusions which keep people, whether the women in Les Belles-Soeurs, or Hosanna and the Duchesse de Langeais, from finding the courage to make their own lives.

Les Belles-Soeurs is a powerful example of resistance writing. It forces the audience to

disengage equally from reality and from theatrical expectations, and to find other alternatives. Mailhot notes that, for Tremblay, "le réalisme et le fantastique semblent la face et l'envers d'une même non-réalité" (Godin and Mailhot (1988) I:285). By exaggerating the unconscious, narcotized living patterns of the characters, and forbidding any of the women to escape from their world, the play opens a new space in which the audience can disengage from the past. Jean-Claude Germain would argue that the play is effective in that the author himself is outside the hermetic world: "lui, a écrit Les Belles-soeurs de l'extérieur, tout comme s'il avait regardé Germaine et sa famille à travers une vitre. Il ne fait plus partie de la famille. C'est un étranger" (in Belles Soeurs 122). Germain contrasts Tremblay's realism with that of Gélinas and Dubé, to determine the difference in the effects on the audience--in the work of Gélinas and Dubé, the author is "omniprésent," and the characters are puppets operated from behind by the author: "Dans ce théâtre-là, la clé de l'enigme, la réponse aux conflits se trouve dans les coulisses" (122). Such plays delude (and possibly seduce) the spectator. Although the plays of Gélinas and Dubé deal with "l'impuissance autant individuel que collective," theirs is a theatre which leaves the audience with a good conscience (122). In Les Belles-Soeurs, by contrast, the harsh depiction of reality does not allow for compassion or pity. Standing outside the world of the play, Tremblay forces the audience to react angrily: "'Non! Je n'accepte pas ça ni pour moi ni pour personne'. . . . Personne n'en sortira avec une bonne conscience" (123). Because this is demanded of the audience, it is less easy to accuse Tremblay of misogyny in his offering the audience the 'ugly sisters' instead of the Cinderella they might have wished for, or the virtuous victim of the past, Aurore.

Critics have noted that Les Belles-Soeurs does not depict particular, real people but the archetypal Québec family and the typical mother. Germain would argue that it is better to

laugh at than to sympathize with it: "Des dépossédés qui s'apitoient sur eux-mêmes, se dépossèdent encore un peu plus. Rire de soi-même, rire de son impuissance, c'est reprendre possession de soi. C'est déjà posséder" (124). This association of the family with impotence is not found solely in Tremblay, but throughout Québécois theatre of the nationalist period. The family and domestic life are associated with entrapment and almost never with safety, or a healthy rootedness. At the heart of this debilitating family order is the mother, naturally. In Les Belles-Soeurs she is depicted in multiple--but especially in Germaine, the maternal body caricatured, encompassing the entire action, and in her sister, Rose, whose children consume her, and for whom sex holds no appeal because it is so strongly associated with motherhood.

Tomson Highway openly acknowledges his debt to both Tremblay and Reaney in his early works. Not only the title of The Rez Sisters and the premise--a group of women obsessed with winning the big prize at bingo--indicate the frank reference to Les Belles-Soeurs but even the particular number all the women seek, B14, is derived from Tremblay's second-act ode to bingo. The world of both The Rez Sisters and Dry Lips Oughta Move to Kapuskasing, which are closely related in content, is a fictional Cree reservation, Wasaychigan Hill (Wasy) on Manitoulin Island; like the world of Tremblay's early scripts it is oppressed by a dominant culture and by religion, and structured by kinship. Here, as in Tremblay, impotence and poverty often accompany each other.

Despite the theme of matriarchal and female domination common to Tremblay and Highway, their plays are marked by profound differences, not only in culture and language, but in the playwright's relation with his material. Cultural differences alone cannot account entirely for the different depiction of the women's approach to their problems; and in Highway's plays, it is the men who at first seem dispossessed, and the women who are capable

enough to undertake change, work, and confrontations with authority. Highway's plays explore gender politics and imbalances of power in controversial ways, unlike anything in Tremblay's work. There is much less stability in the internal order of Wasaychigan than in the world of Les Belles-Soeurs, and the ills of the reservation, attributed both to men and to women, are expressed with almost excessive brutality at times. There is no passivity which is not countered by some form of aggression.

Les Belles-Soeurs represents a world in which spirituality has been utterly suppressed by empty moralism, robotic performance of social duties, the substitute gratifications of dreams of winning prizes, and commercial debasements of romantic fantasy (reminiscent of those which occupy the young woman in Gorky's The Lower Depths). Highway recognizes that there is a spiritual existence which is neither the province of Christianity nor exclusively related to sexuality, and he draws on Cree and Ojibway tradition and language to represent this third term on stage as a present force for change. In The Rez Sisters and Dry Lips Oughta Move to Kapuskasing, Highway uses the figure of Nanabush (Cree)/Weesageechak (Ojibway), the trickster, to orchestrate the action, to confuse, to lure, and to effect transformations. In The Rez Sisters, Nanabush is the only male character, a danced role, but his gender is disguised in the outward form of a seagull. He shifts in form from a white bird to a black bird, the omen of death, and to the bingo master who transports the dying Marie-Adèle to her other life. In Dry Lips, in which the human characters are male, Nanabush is played by a woman, contrary to tradition, and appears in three female forms, the prerogative of the trickster, each with grotesquely exaggerated sexual characteristics--Gazelle Nataways, Patsy Pegahmagahbow, and Black Lady Halked. Highway's understanding of Nanabush's role in human affairs is indicated in a prefatory note to Dry Lips: "Essentially a comic, clownish sort of character, his role is to

teach us about nature and the meaning of existence on the planet Earth; he straddles the consciousness of man and that of God, the great spirit" (12-13). Highway also exploits the characteristics of native languages, which are freely used in the plays, although English dominates, for the gender transformations represented in the plays: "The most explicit distinguishing feature between the North American Indian languages and the European languages is that in Indian (e.g. Cree, Ojibway), there is no gender. . . . The male-female-neuter hierarchy is entirely absent. So that by this system of thought, the central figure from our mythology--theology, if you will--is theoretically neither exclusively male nor exclusively female, or both simultaneously" (13). That Highway also draws on other mythologies for his dramatic transformations is clear from the naming of certain characters, particularly Hera Keechigeesik, the captain of the women's hockey team in Dry Lips and her husband Zachary, presumably signifying Zacharias, the father of John the Baptist, and possibly also Zeus.

The immanence of Nanabush goes beyond the concrete disguises assumed by the trickster in each play. Nanabush is also, the audience feels, responsible for the constant presentation of characters of either gender assuming characteristics which contradict their sexuality. Pelajia Patchnose, the matriarch of The Rez Sisters wears overalls and wields a hammer (Vulcan/Thor?), not only to work with, but to threaten other characters. Correspondingly, Zachary Keechigeesik, who is discovered in the bed of the seductress, Gazelle Nataways, at the beginning of Dry Lips, and who has applied to the Band Council for assistance in starting a bakery, appears at the darkest moments of the play with freshly baked apple pies in his hands. Both Pelajia and Zachary are restored to their rightful gender roles at the end of the plays, and abandon the signs of the opposite sex. Among the other travesties represented are Spooky Lacroix, a male religious fanatic in Dry Lips, who is forever knitting booties for the hands and

feet of the Christ on his crucifix, first blue, then later pink, and Emily Dictionary, in The Rez Sisters, an aggressive leather-jacketed lesbian ex-biker with a black eye, who has also been an abused wife, and who eventually becomes pregnant by Big Joey, the reservation 'stud.'

The gender confusion in these plays is the means to expose the problems in the social structures of the reservation, which have been inscribed by combined colonial and native historical power relations. Like Ann-Marie MacDonald in Goodnight Desdemona (Good Morning Juliet), Highway deconstructs the signification of gender by decentring the text. Nanabush is the agent of this process, as Constance is in MacDonald's play. Highway and MacDonald have a common purpose with Tremblay, that is, to indicate that gender is a function of language, and that it is often counter to sexuality. The technique of Les Belles-Sœurs is to represent the emptiness of the signs imposed on the women, to indicate the absence of what Le Moyne calls "la vraie femme" in the culture, and to engage the audience in revulsion from entrapment in language. Highway, like MacDonald, decentres the cultural text, rather than evacuating it, so that the dominant discourse and that of the other may be played off against each other. MacDonald represents the dominant discourse through literature, using the male academic environment and as the starting point, and Shakespeare, the male canonical playwright, as the textual source for her inversions and reversals. Highway pits European, Christian language and culture against native language and structures.

The style of The Rez Sisters owes something to traditional realism and modernism; Highway cites Faulkner, Dostoevsky, Porter, Welty, McCullers, and Flannery O'Connor as literary influences, because they all wrote about "grassroots people" (Highway, Mutz 89). What is formally interesting about his work comes from the combination of European and North American literary traditions and a general interest in mythologies with Cree oral narrative

tradition. Johnston notes the important interplay of linear and cyclic elements in the plays:

In the Euro-Christian dramatic tradition, a cyclical structure tends to connote stagnation and failure. . . . [The existence of] Beckett's famous tramps . . . seems pointless; by contrast, Hamlet dies at the end of his long linear story, yet passes forward some hope for a new beginning. . . . In The Rez Sisters and Dry Lips . . . linear elements generally show characters becoming lost by stubbornly following a straight line, while circular elements signal regeneration. ("Lines" 255)

Highway himself points out, "This is the way the Cree look at life. A self-rejuvenating force. By comparison, Christian theology is a straight line. Birth, suffering, and then the apocalypse. . . . Human existence isn't a struggle for redemption to the Trickster. It's fun, a joyous celebration" (qtd Ferguson, "Native Son" 18, 20; Johnston, 255). There could be no clearer explanation than this to account for the differences between The Rez Sisters and Les Belles-Soeurs: while Highway seeks the trickster's path through all the contradictions and paradoxes to regeneration, Tremblay unifies all the feminine projections of the patriarchal order into a single discourse, and represents unbreakable circularity. If woman in Tremblay's play is "the bearer, not the maker of meaning" (Wilson 2), in Highway she is equally bearer and maker; Highway's women are destructive as well as regenerative. They are anything but impotent.

In The Rez Sisters the interplay of aggressivity and nurturing is the most striking feature of the women's interactions and transformations. In Les Belles-Soeurs, by contrast, aggression occasionally erupts in argument and insult, and it causes the final mayhem of theft from Germaine; but for the most part, it is suppressed, to emerge in the constant whining and complaining to which most of the characters succumb. In The Rez Sisters aggression takes

more physical forms. A distinction of Highway's plays is their use of physical action as a strong complement to dialogue and plot. Fights, for instance, are energetically charged so that the language carries only a fraction of the force of the play. Johnston notes that this characteristic comes from the Cree language, "which is visceral, in the sense that bodily functions are discussed openly and casually" ("Lines" 255). The play opens with Pelajia, dressed in her men's clothes, banging nails into her roof with an expensive hammer bought with bingo winnings (Rez 2, 16). Her sister Philomena, who joins her, wears correspondingly feminine clothing, and carries a pillow shaped like a heart. The hammer and the soft heart symbolize the two facets of women represented by Highway. The hammer is used to silence an argument between all seven women, in which each one insults every other. It is also used at the end of the first act to threaten the (unseen) chief who turns down the women's request to fund their excursion to Toronto for The Biggest Bingo In The World. Near the end of the play, Pelajia, as usual saying, "if I were chief around here . . .," is told by her sister, "You'll never be chief. . . . Because you are a woman." Pelajia answers, "Bullshit! If that useless old chief of ours was a woman, we'd see a few things get done around here. We'd see you women working, we'd see our men working, we'd see our young people sober on Saturday nights, and we'd see Nanabush dancing up and down the hill on shiny black paved roads" (Rez 113-14). Pelajia's transformation from aggressivity to wisdom is clearly seen by Highway as a key to cultural regeneration in the native community. Pelajia's domineering ways, which are gradually modified into wisdom, are only exceeded by the toughness of Emily Dictionary, the brutal and brutalized wanderer, who has returned to the reservation. Even Emily, however, is converted in the process of transformations, into an expectant mother, as well as the mentor and friend of the retarded adolescent Zhaboonigan.

A further indication that the aggression of the women is a powerful resource for their community is their demonic collective effort to raise money for their trip to Toronto. In an elaborately choreographed sequence, with the rhythmic accompaniment which is often heard in the play, the women hold garage sales, bake, and perform a variety of tasks, accumulating the money they need step by step (*Rez* 70-76). This business sense and capacity for work are transferred to some of the men in *Dry Lips*. Big Joey is working on a plan for a radio station, and Zachary plans to begin a bakery, talking constantly about the details of his plan, which has been approved by the Band Council. It is significant that he is providing food, thus taking over a traditionally female occupation. The energies of the women, who are never seen in *Dry Lips*, are meanwhile diverted into their hockey team, viewed by the men, with the exception of Pierre St. Pierre, their referee, as a perversion of nature. The passivity of the unseen chief in *The Rez Sisters* is magnified in *Dry Lips*, in which only Zachary among the men is capable of work and regeneration. The rest of the male characters fail to fulfil their potential, or hide in religion or alcohol.

Women as mothers and sexual objects are presented by Highway in some extreme and controversial ways. In *The Rez Sisters*, Pelajia's matriarchal domination is in counterpoise with Highway's depiction of Marie-Adèle Starblanket, whose story is central to the plot. Marie-Adèle is a faithful wife and devoted mother of fourteen children, who are symbolized by a picket fence with fourteen posts (*Rez* 17). She is dying of cancer: her treatments at a Toronto hospital coincide with the bingo trip. In the van, on the trip, Marie-Adèle is terrorized by Nanabush, in the guise of a night hawk (92). As she calms down from her hysteria, her revelation of her fears for herself and the future, and her anger at her husband's distance from her in her need, inspire Pelajia to reveal her understanding side, and Emily to reveal her own

experiences with death, in the only scene in which interiors are revealed to any extent. The final frenzy of the bingo game culminates in the death and transfiguration of Marie-Adèle, who, in front of the other women seated at bingo tables in an arrangement suggesting 'The Last Supper,' is danced away to the spirit world by Nanabush, dressed in rhinestones and tails as the bingo master. This Toronto scene, a combination of Christian and Hollywood images, is transformed through lighting into the reservation, with the sound of the women singing the Ojibway funeral song (104). Marie-Adèle's place in her home is taken by Veronique St. Pierre, the childless wife of the alcoholic Pierre, who revels in her opportunity to cook for and care for such a large family. The death of the madonna figure, Marie-Adèle, provides the occasion for the regeneration of the nurturing spirit and gentle qualities of the other women. If the maternal body in Les Belles-Sœurs suffers the symbolic fate of being torn apart in the stealing of the trading stamps, the cancer which destroys Marie-Adèle allows for the distribution of her maternity and spirituality to the other women. It would be difficult, then, to believe that Highway did not imply criticism of the values depicted by Tremblay in this reworking of the ending of Les Belles-Sœurs.

The importance of Marie-Adèle's role only becomes fully clear in the second play, Dry Lips, where motherhood is depicted in black and accusatory terms. Whereas in The Rez Sisters sexuality was only mentioned, it is present and at war with nurturing in the second play, which depicts a nightmare world in comparison with the generous, humorous, and mutually supportive community of women of the first play. The women involved in the hockey team are all mothers or are at least pregnant, leaving the men to bake and knit while they indulge their obsession. The roles of Nanabush, this time a woman, foreground an intensely ambivalent view of motherhood and female sexual power. Equipped with oversized breasts, she appears as

the seductress Gazelle Nataways, who almost ruins Zachary's plans for his bakery and a family life. She later appears as Black Lady Halked, the mother of the disturbed and mute Dickie Bird. The stage direction states: "The jukebox is playing Kitty Wells' 'It Wasn't God Who Made Honky Tonk Angels,' as though filtered through memory. . . . a giant luminescent hockey stick comes seemingly out of nowhere and, in very slow motion, shoots a giant luminescent puck. On the puck, looking like a radiant but damaged 'Madonna-with-Child,' sits Nanabush, as the spirit of Black Lady Halked, naked, nine months pregnant, drunk almost senseless and barely able to hold a bottle of beer up to her mouth" (76-77). Her son reaches out to the vision in terror, recognizing the mother who gave birth to him after spending three weeks drunk in a bar, and causing him to be born with foetal alcohol syndrome. The consequences of the actions of this grotesque parody of the madonna, as Nanabush demonstrates, are even more horrifying.

The third appearance of Nanabush is as Patsy (Big Bum) Pegahmagabow, this time wearing a false behind. She is the fiancée of Simon Starblanket, the dancer who believes in bringing back Native traditions suppressed by Christianity (65-66). Dickie Bird Halked (a parody of the infant Jesus), the protégé of Spooky Lacroix (the Holy Ghost?), having been disturbed by the vision of his drunken mother, runs away to the woods, and on meeting Patsy/Nanabush, rapes her with the large crucifix he has with him, leaving her distraught and bleeding while the crucifix itself also bleeds. The rape of Patsy is echoed in a speech by Big Joey about his experience at Wounded Knee: "'This is the end of the suffering of a great nation!' That was me. Wounded Knee, South Dakota, Spring of '73. The FBI. They beat us to the ground. Again and again and again. Ever since that spring, I've had these dreams where blood is spillin' out from my groin, nothin' there but blood and emptiness. It's like . . . I lost

myself" (119-20). Ironically, this speech is Big Joey's excuse for standing by passively watching the rape of Patsy by Dickie Bird.

The worse horror of Big Joey's watching the rape is in his answer to Zachary's question, "Why did you let him do it?" Big Joey replies, "Because I hate them! I hate them fuckin' bitches. Because they --our own women--took the fuckin' power away from us faster than the FBI ever did." Spooky adds, "They always had it" (120). As if to reinforce this view of women, God appears at the end of the play, after the accidental death (or suicide?) of a drunken Simon Starblanket. Zachary hurls agonized and blasphemous pleas to "God! God of the Indian! God of the Whiteman!" to stop "this stupid, stupid way of living." Nanabush appears from above as God; she is seated on a toilet, "dressed in an old man's white beard and wig, but also wearing sexy, elegant women's high-heeled pumps . . . nonchalantly filing his/her fingernails" (116-17). After this parade of misogyny and female monstrosities it is hard to accept the apotheosis which ends the play, an awakening from a dream, in which Zachary and Hera play with their new baby girl, a live baby, as anything but ironic and ambiguous. The last sounds of the play are the voice of Hera, who "peals out with this magical, silvery Nanabush laugh," and "the baby's laughing voice, magnified on tape to fill the entire theatre" (127-30). The laughter of the mother and the girl-child seem to presage generations of female temptation and evil; indeed, the playwright's vision, as Brian Loucks notes, seems to be that "there will be a time when the patriarchal chaos of the past will be replaced by a new cycle of chaos governed by matriarchy" (11). The vision of women in Dry Lips is so radically disturbing, in contrast to The Rez Sisters, that native women writers have wondered if Highway's apparent misogyny is not at odds with his devotion to the regeneration of native life.

Loucks's commentary on Highway's work suggests that the disturbing images in the plays are all related to the fundamental problems of colonization:

He is largely buried by colonization, scar tissue and the myths and taboos of contemporary society. Sometimes misunderstood, his visions plead for a more spontaneous world where there is room for looking deeply into the waters and the fire of our own experience, sensation and memory. Part of his project . . . is to aid in the decolonization of our minds and relationships through critical reflection. The sites . . . he has chosen to explore are located in the worlds of spirituality, nature and gender. . . . The once sacred relationships of land, women, men and children are revealed as disconnection and distortion through subjugation to a patriarchal society. Tomson calls for the rediscovery of the sacred woman in all of us, a woman and land who have been raped, distorted and abused by centuries of exploitation, oppression and victimization. . . . [He] does not offer an idealized vision of how the world could be but rather . . . purification through honesty, sharing and contradiction. Only by going through the flood of flames can we find strength. (11)

If Highway's images are taken to symbolize colonization and exploitation at every point, there is no question of misogyny. But the images operate in the context of a contemporary world, and it is hard to blame the grotesque depiction of the characters, especially the women, on the colonizer, since they are the product of the playwright's own imagination.

Beth Cuthand debates whether Highway or his characters are the source of the mistrust of women: "In Dry Lips . . . the misogyny is up front . . . the trickster is a woman, done up like a whore, manipulating the men. . . . One of the male characters says, "Fuck your

woman's power!" But, as a reflection of the reality . . . I think he is reflecting the misogyny of some Indian men. And we can't say, "Shut up! Don't talk about this!" (Mutz 36). Marie Annharte Baker expresses horror at the depiction of women in Dry Lips: "Some women look to . . . Highway to educate the public about racism and sexism in a community in transition. However, Dry Lips . . . silenced Aboriginal women . . . Native women are easily silenced . . . We even find excuses to praise our further degradation on stage or screen. Maybe it was the humour of the play that lead [sic] to the silencing of native women because we didn't want to appear as if 'we didn't get it.' . . . No, I do not identify with the women in this play" ("Angry" 88-89). Baker's commentary cuts honestly through the pretensions of the artistic work to detach itself from the real order in order to symbolize deeper structures. Here, it appears that Highway's informed, but also highly subjective vision elicits neither the penitence it appears designed to evoke nor compassion for the predicament of the women it depicts.

Exceptional though they are in their treatment of them, Tremblay and Highway are by no means the only male playwrights in Canada who have written plays about women only. Michel Garneau's Quatre à quatre (1979), John Murrell's Waiting for the Parade (1980), and Normand Chaurette's Les Reines (1991) all concern themselves with the preoccupations of women without men. Each of these plays relies on monologue to a great extent, perhaps in an attempt to represent language resistant to the logocentric discourse and the necessities of plot. In Les Belles-Sœurs and The Rez Sisters the focalization of the women on a goal--the filling of books and the winning at bingo--adds a motivated aggression to the language of the women's counter-discourse. The extent of the underlying aggression is made obvious by both playwrights: it becomes clearer that the repressed aggression is shared by men and women in Dry Lips; among Tremblay's plays, A Toi pour toujours, ta Marie-Lou (1973) serves as a

suitable analogy to Highway's second play, in that it shows the mutual destructiveness of men and women, and the impoverishment which results from strict adherence to relations dictated by authority. The effects on audiences of such depictions of impotence and self-destruction are naturally discomfiting. Not only do they represent, as Germain has noted, a state of dispossession of the self, but also the nothingness under the social code: "Tout ce qui avait pu être pittoresque, tout ce qui avait pu être savoureux, tout ça disparaît d'un coup pendant que sous les pieds de Germaine s'ouvre un gouffre qui donne le vertige: le néant québécois" (*Belles-Sœurs* 124). When, at the end of *Dry Lips*, Highway offers his audience the final spectacle of the happy trinity, Zachary, Hera, and their girl child, watching the Smurfs on television, far from the inversions and horrors of the women's hockey game, it is only proper that the tinkling laughter of Nanabush should be the audible evidence of the hollowness of the scene. What better symbol than Smurfs, denatured television trolls, of the denial of the unconscious?

Tremblay and Highway have undoubtedly attempted to bring their public to uncomfortable levels of consciousness beyond the intellectual defences of the audience. Theirs, in the words of Lacan, is a "psychodramatic treatment . . . which seeks its efficacy in the abreaction that it tries to exhaust on the level of play" (9). Highway and Tremblay succeed in mingling unconscious symbolism with real surfaces to confuse the two beyond the audience's control: this is the Nanabush effect. The object of such processes (as Lacan describes it) is to "feel the pressure of intention" (10). The aggressive intention, states Lacan, has identifiable causes and effects: "We constantly observe it in the formative action of an individual on those dependent on him; intended aggressivity gnaws away, undermines, disintegrates; it castrates; it leads to death" (10). Behind it Lacan sees domineering mothers (such as Highway's Pelajia,

with her hammer): "Her permanent aggressivity as a virile woman had had its effect" (11). In the course of abreacting aggressivity, as Lacan states, the subject recalls images emplotted in the psyche which represent "the instincts themselves" (11). His description of such images clarifies the process which is so visible in Les Belles-Soeurs, The Rez Sisters, and Dry Lips: "Among these imagos are some that represent the elective vectors of aggressive intentions, which they provide with an efficacy that might be called magical. These are the images of castration, mutilation, dismemberment, dislocation, evisceration, devouring, bursting open of the body, in short the imagos that I have grouped together under the apparently structural term of imagos of the fragmented body" (11). En pièces détachées, indeed.

The subjective expression of aggressivity, according to Lacan, is associated with the narcissistic construction of one's world: "Aggressivity is the correlative tendency of a mode of identification that we call narcissistic, and which determines the formal structure of man's ego and of the register of entities characteristic of his world" (16). The abreaction of the confused narcissistic images is associated with the process of "coming-into-being (devenir)" (22), but the process itself is disorienting. It gives rise to the delusions which accompany self-negation: "It is the especial delusion of the misanthropic 'belle âme', throwing back into the world the disorder of which his being is composed" (20). Here too, the importance of the depiction of the mother's body, "the internal empire, the historical atlas of the intestinal divisions in which the imagos of the fathers and brothers . . . , the voracious aggression of the subject himself, dispute their deleterious dominance over her sacred regions" (20-21). The psychoanalytic activity of dialogue is missing in the worst stages of abreaction, as is reason. What is glaringly absent in Les Belles-Soeurs, The Rez Sisters, and Dry Lips is the paternal presence, in what Lacan calls "the pacifying function of the ego ideal, the connexion between its libidinal normativity and a

cultural normativity bound up from the dawn of history with the imago of the father" (22). In these plays full of absent or feminized men, oppressive and distant patriarchal institutions, and virile mothers, a resolution to the chaos, both patriarchal and matriarchal, is desperately demanded. What should follow from the confusions of 'coming-into-being,' in the words of Lacan, is "the need to participate, which neutralizes the conflict . . . the identification with the paternal Totem. . . . [Individuation] constitutes a step in the establishment of that distance by which, with feelings of respect, is realized a whole affective assumption of one's neighbour" (23). No such step to right relations is achieved in Les Belles-Sœurs. It is interesting that in the first of Highway's plays, The Rez Sisters, fighting and competition are indeed transcended, after the death of Marie-Adèle, when the women rally to each other's needs, but that in Dry Lips, in which all characters but Nanabush are men, and sexual issues abound, the transcendent ending seems forced and ironic. What such plays achieve is the public acknowledgement of what Lacan calls "the undialectical mentality of a culture, which in order to be dominated by objectifying ends, tends to reduce all subjective activity to the being of the ego" (23). Simply, they expose the suffering caused by dominant cultures, and dominant egos also, at the level of cultural, gender, spiritual and sexual oppression. They demand change.

Such dramas, though, are not exclusively the productions of male playwrights. The recent plays of Judith Thompson, for one, The Crackwalker (1980), White Biting Dog (1984), I Am Yours (1987), and Lion in the Streets (1992) likewise strongly manifest the effects of repression: "They belong to that tradition where a surreal day-dream or nightmare spills into the naturalistic picture" (Adam 22). Thompson's plays, as Julie Adam comments, "deal with the walls people erect to keep out 'the monster that's hovering around the periphery of civilization'" (23). And her plays travel a good deal further than most into those instincts in

conflict with authority and civilization. "The wars [the characters] wage [in I Am Yours, for example] are not class or gender wars, but wars against the abyss, their personal darkness that threatens to engulf them" (Adam 23). Such plays cut against the trend to seek identity and subjectivity: they plunge beneath the symbolic order and the controlled imagination to the substructure of experience where differences are erased in uncertainty. There is often a more profound morality to be gained from such explorations, since they do not circumvent the dangerous and ugly. In "the magical zone" that Judith Thompson's plays explore--"the space that both separates and fuses illusion and reality" (27)--the probing of contradictions gives rise to solutions that go beyond the socially conventional to a deeper affiliation with society.

II: Women Inside/Outside the Patriarchal Order

The emergence of feminist theatre has more in common with the oedipal narratives of male writers than a feminist critic such as Jeanie Forte has been willing to perceive. In the context of Québécois culture, Patricia Smart has articulated clear relations between the struggles of such male writers as Saint-Denys Garneau, Aquin, and Victor Lévy-Beaulieu, to address their filial inscription in the patriarchal order, and those of women writers, from Conan to Théorêt, who are equally concerned to achieve a sense of subjectivity: "Tous . . . ont grandi dans la même maison, où sous le regard d'un Père sévère, les fils se sacrifient ou s'endurcissent à leur tour, tandis que les filles résistent, sachant comme par un instinct sûr que c'est à leur emprisonnement dans l'Image-Mère que le système doit sa perpétuité" (329). The narratives of both sons and daughters seek to overturn the perpetuation of fated self-sacrifice to patriarchal power. Smart's unifying metaphor of the father's house serves both to distinguish gendered subjectivities and to acknowledge that men, no less than women, are subjects of the

symbolic order: "Écrire est bien une activité qui se poursuit dans la Maison du Père; cette maison étant évidemment une métaphore de la culture et de ses structures de représentation idéologiques, artistiques et langagières, dont nous comprenons de plus en plus clairement depuis l'émergence du féminisme qu'elles sont la projection d'une subjectivité et d'une autorité masculines" (22). Those who seek to subvert what Lacan calls the 'cultural normativity' of the father, however, must address not only his power, but that of the mother too.

The site of the maternal in the patriarchal order is fearful for subversive male and female writers alike, according to Smart, since the traditional mother is a reification of the symbolic order, designed to uphold its authority: the mother is the abyss confronted by Nelligan, the ocean which swallows the words of Saint-Denys Garneau, and the void "qui sous-tend les structures langagières" of Aquin and Ducharme (22). While the cultural power of the maternal in Québec has been overwhelming, it is not peculiar to that culture, as the plays of Highway demonstrate. If the mother threatens to engulf her sons, her threat to her daughters is all the greater, since she represents the state of passivity to which the patriarchal order would doom them: "Quand elle n'est pas fantasmée comme immense et menaçante . . . , la femme se trouve immobilisée et réduite au silence dans les rôles féminins restrictifs . . . emprisonnement qui n'est que l'autre face et le résultat de l'immensité maternelle terrifiante qu'elle représente pour ses fils. Mais dans chacune de ces . . . manifestations . . . la femme-objet a été le fondement immuable qui a assuré la solidité de la Maison" (23). As Smart goes on to observe, it is when the object begins to perceive itself as a subject that order in the father's house is disrupted.

While Smart's vision of the oedipal narrative emphasizes common ground between the genders in the struggle to overcome oppression, she argues that the resistance of women to objectification is more revolutionary than the oedipal revolt of male subjects: "depuis Laure

Conan, chaque femme qui a écrit a inscrit dans le texte culturel les traces de sa résistance contre cette réification de la femme et de toute 'l'altérité' (la nature, les peuples, autochtones, les étrangers, les démunis, et plus généralement, la multiplicité du réel) évincée de la Maison par le regard du Père" (333). Above all, as she suggests, the achievement of a new intersubjectivity among women is the most radical subversion of the patriarchal order (334). Women's writing since the sixties has been part of the international exchanges of the feminist movement, which have politicized the articulation of female subjectivity to the point of global revolution. The emergence of feminist theatre in Canada so soon after the new wave of nationalism, then, must be seen as no less important than nationalism itself in the creation of the cultural and political map of postcolonial Canada. Though there is no exact moment from which one can date the emergence of feminist theatre in Canada, an actual defection by women does exist in theatre, and it is one which serves to mark the division of feminism from nationalism, and the beginnings of the formal and linguistic expression of difference from the oedipal inscription of nationalism in the mother tongue, jòal. The dissatisfaction of women members of the Le Grand Cirque Ordinaire because of gender politics in the company led to an independent production in 1974, Un Jour, mon prince viendra. Although this was not the first feminist play to be performed in the seventies in Canada, the defection of these actresses to perform independently did coincide with the beginning of the widespread theatrical interrogation of women's roles in the patriarchal order.

The earliest feminist theatre is often concerned with the politics of valuation of women's work, and also their bodies, in the patriarchal order, rather than with their private construction of the feminine subject. No clear line can be drawn between propagandistic feminist theatre aimed at altering social perceptions of gender and sexuality, and theatre which specifically

explores the language of private experience, since, as Nicole Brossard and other feminists have recognized, the private is political. It has generally been necessary, in women's theatre as in Native theatre, to challenge and disempower the objectifications of the dominant order before proceeding to the invention of a new language adequate to express difference. Both social activism and personal expression continue to occupy feminist writers, but each engages the writer(s) in somewhat different strategies, the first largely imagistic and intercommunicative, and the second more specifically concerned with self-referential language. In the pages that follow, the theatrical strategies for altering perception of women's social roles are examined separately from those which disrupt the silence of suppression with the language of difference.

Women's theatre groups have always made up a significant number of those engaged in community activism. Lucie Robert notes that Québécois women's theatre began in the context of the jeune théâtre movement: "As alternative theatre, jeune théâtre and women's theatre have been instrumental in the development of politically oriented cultural practices (from democratization to propaganda), criticism of the theatre industry and the aesthetic recognition of . . . joual" ("Changing," 44). Groups such as the Théâtre des Cuisines and Théâtre Expérimental des Femmes addressed women's issues in unconventional formats and local settings. Usmiani notes that the first show developed by the Théâtre des Cuisines, in 1973, was devoted to the subject of abortion: "The company grew out of several militant women's groups whose members decided to use theatrical performance as a means of propaganda for their causes. . . . Nous aurons les enfants que nous voudrions . . . proved an immediate success and was seen by over 3,000 people, mostly women. Ironically . . . the performances took place in an anti-abortionist stronghold: a parish hall" (Usmiani, Second 30-31). The group, which operated on "the principle of absolute democracy," employing the motto "Quand on a quelque

chose à dire, on trouve les moyens pour le dire," concerned itself primarily with addressing the forms of exploitation of women in society.

Filewod notes that community theatre projects have changed the working environment of theatre, breaking down, for instance, the distinction between amateur and professional activities ("Community" 173). Using a variety of techniques (notably those of Boal), such groups address issues "from women's health to environmental action, from Native land claims to alcohol and drug abuse" in settings which allow them to make close contact with their audiences (173-74). Among the women's shows to which Filewod gives attention is Side Effects, a project of the Great Canadian Theatre Company of Ottawa, developed in 1985 with two agencies, Inter Pares and Women's Health Interaction. The play was created through consultation with a wide variety of workers in related fields, and then, funded by the federal Ministry of Health, it was "offered to activist groups" across the country. As Filewod points out, "the tour included an outreach program and a follow-up assessment that solicited 3,800 responses" (178). As a distinctly educational project, Side Effects is comparable with the work of the Edmonton Company, Catalyst Theatre, which has become an important interactive tool in social education in Alberta.

One of Catalyst's projects is Women's Circle, a collective which uses participatory methods of research and improvisational workshops to engage community women's groups in exploration of issues of concern to them. The group represents an extreme of participatory engagement with the community, in that it is not designed for performance primarily, but for the collaborative finding of "new ways of voicing and analyzing issues and identifying and testing action . . . [assisting] people to acknowledge the emotional aspects of a circumstance and link them to behaviour and action" (Shirley Barrie, Philpott 7). In another respect,

Women's Circle attempts to break down as many boundaries as possible, by reaching out to the widest possible spectrum of women, in the awareness that "the category 'women' or 'women's issue' often seems too simple to reflect reality" (Jan Selman, Philpott 6). The group's respect for diversity reflects the authorless collectivity of much women's theatre, at one level, but in its deliberate exploitation of contradictions and in its methods of problem resolution, the group is a particularly advanced example of the potential of participatory theatre for social change and reconciliation (Selman, Philpott 6). It also confirms the proposition that working with "constituency audiences" is merely a form of "performing/preaching to the converted" (Bennett 13).

Lucie Robert has stated that in feminine writing, in the sense proposed by theorists such as Irigaray, "women say nothing about society, structures, laws, language because they have nothing to say about institutions which exclude them. They tell no story because narrative is another institutional form in which they have always been a projection of male desire" ("Changing" 47). This definition of feminine writing, which is the equivalent of the expression of difference, is a relatively restricted form of feminist theatre, which continues to be more often engaged in confronting the roles and uses of women in the patriarchal order. While the expression of difference continues to be explored, it does not now, nor is it likely ever to replace women's theatre which engages with the status quo through social confrontation. It is certainly easier to reorient an existing discourse from an alternative or marginalized view of one's place in it than to reinvent femininity entirely from the unconscious level upwards. The confrontation and renegotiation of women's traditional roles in the patriarchal order continues to account for the majority of feminist projects. The two most widely addressed issues during the period from the seventies to the present have been the exploitation of women's work and of

her sexuality.

The Théâtre des Cuisines' Moman travaille pas, a trop d'ouvrage (1976), one of the earliest feminist plays from Québec, demonstrates the exhausting reality of the dream of domesticity. The play proposes two solutions to the problems of overworked housewives and mothers: on the one hand, a general strike, which would bring the men home from their jobs, thus paralysing the country, or, on the other, and more realistically, fairer and more flexible distribution of housework and childcare within the family. A different approach to the issue of the unrecognized work involved in childcare is found in Louise Dusseault's Moman (1981), a monodrama, in which the author comically depicts in mime and words the rigours of a mother's long bus journey with her two small children. Ironically, the depiction of motherhood as unpaid, undervalued, and essential work in feminist plays contrasts strongly with the satirical depiction of the traditional patriarchy in concurrent plays of the early seventies in Québec.

The continuing need for critical presentations of the position of women in contemporary society is demonstrated by the subjects chosen by the Company of Sirens for their shows. Kym Bird describes the objective of the company as to "to heal their audiences with respect to social and political issues, history, and ideology" (35). Humour, satire, and song are important elements in the company's productions of the late eighties--The Working People's Picture Show and Foul Play, for example--which are strongly educational in their intent. The Working People's Picture Show offers a history of a representative woman, who has been exposed to negative gender stereotypes in school and in the workplace, but who reclaims herself by identifying with other women. Her story is followed by a history of women's work, including their roles in the second World War. While the history reviews the serious issues of inequity

and abuses in the workplace, it uses humour as a medium to educate its audiences. Foul Play is used to educate student audiences in sexual harassment, and the proper ways to take action: audience participation in problem-solving is invited, and the play is accompanied by discussion and information sessions. The company represents the second generation of a feminist theatre committed advancing women's issues in male-dominated contexts.

Several feminist productions have addressed the exploitation of women for pornographic purposes. Two of the best-known of these, from the early nineties, are Mademoiselle Autobody (1993), by Les Folles Alliées, and Janet Feindel's one-woman show, A Particular Class of Women (1988). Mademoiselle Autobody is an innovative, collectively created musical comedy concerning the efforts of the feminist 'Pink Brigade' to block the showing of pornographic films in a local bar. The play contains a number of scenes which illustrate the unrealistic images of women and sex cultivated by men. At the end of the play, the tone shifts from the deceptively innocuous to the dangerous, as the final scene closes with excerpts from the worst kinds of violent pornographic film, accompanied by a song about shame and the debasement of love (76). Because the play presents its lesson through a playful and inventive plot which saves the hard message for the end, and because it indicts the practice rather than the perpetrators, it remains unusual among feminist plays.

There is a measure of satisfaction in Lucie Godbout's statement that the women in the plays of Les Folles Alliées are never depicted as victims: "Whether they're waitresses, topless dancers, or married to consumers of pornography, our characters live their lives with their eyes wide open and they fight to be respected. Our plays are . . . for these women." She adds that dancers have asked for copies of their script as a guide to dealing with their "pimp or boss" (viii-ix). Janet Feindel, in contrast, shows women who habitually 'talk tough' but whose

victimization is obvious. She writes from several years' experience of working as a stripper herself between acting engagements ("Developing" 1); and, as a consequence, the language of her characters has an authentically brutalized crudeness about it. She intends that the world of the stripper depicted in her play should be

a microcosm of society in which the contradictions of the whore/madonna dichotomy are thrown into sharp relief. . . . The characters are inter-connected but each . . . is unique in her exploration of the many paradoxical issues resulting from the job and the role of the stripper in society. Like the Fool in King Lear who is in the rare position of commenting on the havoc in the court and the madness that results from it, the stripper is able to understand and comment on sexual hypocrisy by becoming a clown-like figure, an 'imp of the perverse.' ("Developing" 2).

In *Lil*, the most prominent of the characters (played by Feindel herself), the line between legitimate theatre and striptease is blurred. For *Lil*, who had acted in plays, "being a stripper was just another part" (Particular 15). Although *Lil* imagines herself as an entertainer, the world she and the other characters realistically narrate (and from which her work in *inextricable*) is evidently numbing and dangerous. *Lil*'s final speech, as she contemplates her retirement, simply conveys the annihilation of the woman by a fantasy of self which turned into possession by a mask: "Do you realize that this is the first time at forty-two years old I see what my face looks like without make-up? . . . The last time I looked . . . I was a young girl . . . but I can still turn on an eighteen-year-old, no problem. I got what it takes!" (59). In spite of her survivor's manner, her images convey all the emptiness and disempowerment of reification by the gaze of male desire. Because of the aptness of its subject, and Feindel's authority in

handling it. A Particular Class of Women is an effective statement of the essentials of the condition of female objectification. As long as she deludes herself into accepting identification by the male gaze, she renounces any condition of difference from the role she plays.

What has called "writing 'in the feminine'" is the attempt to recapture subjectivity from the masculine order. Women who are without a story of their own, as Lucie Robert observes, "write about silence, the particular silence to which their lives have been surrendered. . . . Speech must proceed by reversing repression, by going back to the unconscious. Voices replace characters" ("Changing" 47). An interesting contrast to Feindel's Lil, who has been defined by her mask for most of her adult life, is to be found in the two monologues of the actress in La Nef des sorcières (1979), the collaborative collection of monologues by Québécois women authors which deliberately attempts to extract the language of the female subject(s) from their silence. The actress, who appears at the beginning of both acts, has forgotten her lines, and appears to be approaching madness, a state between disengagement from authorial domination of language and consciousness of autonomy. The other monologuists in the play voice a range of conditions of feminine alienation and isolation, from positions of rigid conformism and intentional marginality. The entire piece challenges the norms of representation unified by the male gaze, and introduces a discontinuous audience response, mediated by an on-stage audience of passive non-speakers, whose composition varies every time their ranks are broken by another's narrative.

The authors of La Nef des sorcières are a distinguished group of writers and performers--Luce Guilbeault, Marthe Blackburn, France Théoret, Odette Gagnon, Marie-Claire Blais, Pol Pelletier, and Nicole Brossard--whose separate voices pierce the surfaces of a group of female stereotypes, emphasizing the need for women to emerge from isolation and repression to be

heard, not most urgently by men, but by each other. Lori Saint-Martin comments: "La pièce se termine sur ces deux petits mots en apparence anodins: 'je parle'. Les femmes ont toujours parlé, dira-t-on, elles les pies, les bavardes. Mais pas en public, pas toutes ensemble, pas de ces choses-là. . . . L'acte même de parler, l'acte d'extrême courage, constitue l'action dramatique de la pièce" (Introduction, Nef 40). La Nef des sorcières appeared in the mid-seventies, at a time when other playwrights, such as Caryl Churchill and Pam Gems in England, and Wendy Wasserstein in the United States, were also breaking the restrictions on feminine speech in the theatre. As Saint-Martin points out, the international feminist movement and the influence of texts by Irigaray, Clément, Cixous, Greer, and Millett provided the context for the development of such scripts as La Nef des sorcières (Introduction, Nef 25). Together with Denise Boucher's Les Fées ont soif (1978), which was the cause of intense scandal and debate because its feminism was construed by many as blasphemous, La Nef des sorcières revolutionized the scope of depiction of women on the stage in Québec. In both plays the characterization of women is distinct from that in the plays of male playwrights such as Tremblay, Garneau, and Barbeau, whose women characters are representatives of popular culture, attitudes, and tradition, by the uncertainty of expression: in contrast, intensity of repressed emotion, expression of the sexual, and, above all, politicization of the feminine itself characterize these scripts by women. However radical the social perspective of Tremblay and other male playwrights who specialize in the representation of women, their characters remain the objects of the male gaze, and are thus deprived of their subjectivity. The aim of feminist theatre is to liberate that subjectivity into language, thus distinguishing the projections of male objectification from the real and sensible.

Speech is more important than image in La Nef des sorcières. Mailhot's view of the

monologue as the vehicle for materializing the self out of silence is fully applicable to the pieces which compose the play: "Le monologue est d'abord une quête d'identité et d'unité, un arrêt devant ou avant l'action, une préparation au langage social. . . . Les sujets-actants . . . n'ont pas encore trouvé leur espace social, leur langage. Ils parlent pour s'entendre, se situer. . . . Le monologue est d'abord le lieu d'un silence" (Mailhot and Montpetit 27-28). The description of the women's monologues by Brossard and Théoret emphasizes the elements of risk, disobedience, and subversion in their discourse:

Réaliste ou délirante, le monologue travaille dans le quotidien des perceptions. Au vif du sujet. Pour être parlantes et discours circulantes, il faut aux femmes d'enfreindre la loi, l'entendement social. Ou, penser tout haut sans arrêt de manière à ce que le bruit de leur voix finisse par rendre impossible, inopérant le discours officiel, à l'usage des détenteurs et manipulateurs de pouvoir.

(Preface, Nef 12).

While Mailhot discusses monologues in terms of identity, language, and community, Brossard and Théoret specify that the alienation of woman's speech reflects the alienation of her body by male exploitation, but before all else, by the renunciation of her first love object, the mother, and with her, the mother tongue.

The phrase 'the mother tongue' in feminist contexts normally carries the sense of the imaginary, rather than the sense in which joual, for instance, might be so called. Brossard and Théoret differentiate between the mother tongue and the language of the other in this way: "La langue maternelle (s')ouvre à la jouissance à partir du lieu impossible d'où elle s'exprime et qu'elle exprime. . . . L'ordre symbolique annule le corps, la place de l'autre à partir de laquelle l'ordre du discours a toujours construit le savoir et les principes esthétiques" (14-15).

In her comments on the lesbian monologues in the La Nef des sorcières, Saint-Martin notes that it is the mothers themselves who alienate their daughters from the imaginary order by their own weakness (29). It is interesting, in fact, that there is no mother among the monologuists, only a woman who, having reached menopause, demands the destruction of the myths surrounding female fertility: she is, in effect, the negation of the maternal (Marthe Blackburn, Nef 51-66.) There appears to be a profound schism in much feminist performance between language and desire for the mother. The lesbian's nausea at the thought of her mother connotes hysterical disgust, which is usually a reaction against desire. It should not be discounted, though, that the repression of the maternal in feminist works is as misogynistic as that found in Highway's work. The hysterical performance of narrative is essentially a powerful disruption of the symbolic order, and thus has little to do with harmony with the maternal. The language of the mystic, as distinct from that of the hysteric, is the site of imaginary union with the mother.

The language of La Nef des sorcières, like that of many subsequent feminist plays, enunciates the experience and memory of the female body itself, which is the stage presence, as a narrative which has been repressed by the social and theatrical discourses of the symbolic order. The introduction of 'feminine' language into the theatre has effectively undermined the most common realist assumptions about the construction of character, motivation, plot, and dialogue, possibly even to a greater extent than the language of surrealist and absurdist drama. 'L'écriture féminine,' that of the female hysteric or the sorceress according to the categories which Cixous and Clément assign to women's writing, is a 'theatre of the body' played out (as it was in the Middle Ages by such figures as Margery Kempe) for an audience of men: "One must go through the audience of writers, psychiatrists, and judges to reconstitute the mythical

stage on which women played their ambiguous roles" (Cixous, Newly Born 5). In La Nef des sorcières, the male audience is implicit in the narratives themselves: the actress is playing a role from Molière, and she recalls only the names of male playwrights as she begins to lose her grip on the dominant discourse of the stage; the woman in menopause recounts a narrative which refers itself to the definitions by the medical profession and the church of female sexuality; and the working woman refers herself to her employer. Because of the construction of female narratives in terms of the symbolic order, the masculine replaces the feminine itself as the organizing principle of the body's history. For this reason, the personal history and the inscription of memory in the body has separated women from each other, instead of communicating and validating common experience. While woman may converse with each other, the deeper inscriptions fail to enter into social discourse, according to Brossard and Théoret. Answering criticism of the isolation of the women in their dramatic monologues as 'untheatrical,' they argue: "Chacune isolée dans son monologue, comme elle est dans sa maison, dans son couple, incapable de communiquer du projet à d'autres femmes, inapte à tisser les liens d'une solidarité qui rendrait crédible et évidente l'oppression qu'elles subissent et qui les fissure sur toute la surface de leur corps. Du dedans, du dehors" (9). This isolation is the fundamental distinction between such plays as Les Belles-Soeurs or The Rez Sisters, which dramatize a feminine collective but exclude interiority, and feminist theatre.

The fundamental strategy of La Nef des sorcières is to proceed from the existing alienation of women from each other in the dominant discourse, through the listening of the characters themselves, and the audience, to an apprehension of the common condition beneath the various alienations. The women in the play would be unlikely to know each other, or to have sympathy for each other's points of view, but, because of the structure of the piece,

judgements and dualisms are suspended in favour of a holistic synthesis. The inspiration of Cixous' work may well be behind this strategy. Sandra M. Gilbert's account of Cixous' theory also fully reflects the structure of La Nef des sorcières:

Reviewing the 'hierarchical oppositions' ("Culture/Nature, Day/Night, Father/Mother, Head/Heart, Form/Matter, Man/Woman) . . . [of Western philosophers] . . . she excavates the assumptions that have oppressed and repressed female consciousness, alienating woman from the 'dark continent' . . . of her own bodily self and channeling female desire into the flights of the sorceress and the fugues of the hysteric. The 'way out' of such a system . . . is . . . an escape that is also an attack: woman must challenge 'phallo-logocentric' authority through an exploration of the continent of female pleasure . . . Out of . . . repossession and reaffirmation of her own deepest being, woman may 'come' to writing, constructing an erotic aesthetic rooted in a bisexuality that is not a 'fantasy . . . which replaces the fear of castration . . . a fantasy of unity' . . . but rather . . . a delight in difference, in multiplicity, in continuous awareness of 'the other' within the self. (Introduction, Newly Born

xiv-xv)

"Bisexuality," "multiplicity," and "'the other' within the self" are the basic elements of the structure of La Nef des sorcières.

Brossard and Théoret claim to have created a new structure which subverts old patterns of female objects of the male gaze: by putting the writer on stage with the actress, the bisexual construction is established; and by allowing the monologuists to be each other's audience, multiplicity and difference become the substance of the theatrical experience:

Cellule double de la facture signée du couple écrivain-comédienne (à noter combien le couple traditionnel et oppositionnel de la production-reproduction s'inscrit dans le manque grammatical du mot écrivain à opérer au féminin) et qui interrompt les mimiques stéréotypées du désirant/desirée. . . . Le projet se forme entre pareilles longtemps isolées une par une dans la même chaîne. Le projet intervient. La parole touche la cible. Force à entendre les bruits fantasmes de l'internement . . . elles . . . se choisissent comme interlocutrices. Le théâtre bourgeoise n'aura donc trouvé là que son fond de vérité (son essentiel voyeurisme) . . . Sans loge ni comédienne. (13-14)

La Nef des sorcières is possibly the first Canadian feminist play cognizant of the close relation between performance and writing; since its production, many scripts have exploited that close connection, including several of Jovette Marchessault's plays La Saga des Poules mouillées (1981), La terre est trop courte, Violette Leduc (1982); and Ann-Marie MacDonald's Goodnight Desdemona/Good Morning Juliet. While the inscription of memory in the body, and hysteria itself are no more a female prerogative than writing *per se*, the attack on the logocentric by the hysterical narrative is of immense significance for feminist politics.

The question of the audience in feminist theatre remains somewhat vexed, since feminism is a diverse, not unifying, discourse. The implied gender and sexuality of audiences of both male- and female-generated performance are often themselves area of theoretical difficulty. "Feminist film and performance critics," as Jill Dolan observes, "have argued that representation is addressed to the gaze of the male spectator" (121). The female spectator, by such a reckoning, cannot experience art in the ways defined in traditional aesthetic theory; she is likely to lose rather than find herself in "the representational frame": "The positions of the

female performer and the female spectator are collapsed into one; they become prostitutes who buy and sell their own image in a male-generated visual economy . . . goods in the representational marketplace, commodities in an exchange by means of which they are both objectified" (125-26). It is possible to negate male desire by refusing to reproduce the ideal images, and substituting the antithetical, or the negation in its place, or by simply exposing the constructedness of the ideals, to avoid the collapse of the difference between the image and the real. La Nef des sorcières offers several such strategies, from those of the two different lesbians to that of the actress who forgets her lines. The image is replaced by the voice: in this way, the voyeuristic eye no longer frames the female object. The audience is required to be visually passive, but to be avidly engaged as listeners--in effect, to be eavesdroppers rather than voyeurs. Furthermore, because the subject position changes as the monologuists succeed each other, the spectators are required to suspend their own subjectivity, and to experience the contradictions and faultlines in the spaces between the monologuists as their proper space.

The male gaze, the authorial point of view, is replaced by the presence of both the actress and the writer. The actress begins both acts of La Nef des sorcières, and the writer appears at the end of the play. The point of departure is announced by the actress's first appearance: she is dressed as Agnès, from Molière's L'Ecole des femmes, and she is in the middle of playing a scene with Arnolphe (whose voice is heard offstage only). She announces that her memory of her lines has failed: "j'ai un blanc! Ca m'était jamais arrivée" (Luce Guilbeault, "Une Actrice en folie," Nef 45). Having stopped her lines from Molière, she recalls more, but now they are from the role of Pierrette Guérin, the outcast sister in Les Belles-Soeurs, and from other Tremblay characters: "Angéline, Marie-Lou, Carmen, mes petites belles-soeurs, où est-ce que vous êtes?" (45). She also remembers fragments of references to Gauvreau and to Jarry's Ubu,

signifying a rapid transition from the classical to the absurd and the surreal (45). Her name is "Désirée Désire," she says, and when she learns her lines, it is "Bam, bam, bam dans la tête, les mots/Avec le grand marteau pénis" (47). As an actress she has lines, but as a woman she has no voice: "Femme jusqu'au bout des ongles. Sois belle et tais-toi/Femme" (Guilbeault 47). Nor does she have a face, a self-image, or even a body: "Vous regardez mon visage./Vous voyez cent visages collés l'un devant l'autre./Mon visage?/Non./Je vous donne un visage trou. . . . Vous regardez mon corps./Mon corps? . . .?Non, un corps déguisé, corseté, creusé à la taille, allongé ou ramassé suivant l'emploi. . . . J'aime le corps que j'ai pour moi toute seule, dans le miroir de ma chambre,/Toute seule" (48-49). Her body, her sex in the mirror are her alternative to the audience's image of her: only in the mirror can she love herself.

In her second monologue, the actress recovers memories of her childhood, before the entry into the symbolic, in which she is constituted as an object for the social order, and a subject only for herself. Her story delineates the resolution of her oedipal complex by the consecration of her heart to Jesus only. Memories of her father's forbidding all self-knowledge and autonomy dominate her psyche: "'Mais il me semble, Agnès, SI MA MEMOIRE EST BONNE,/Que j'avais défendu que vous vissiez personne.'/Défense de sortir/Défense de jouir, défense, défense . . ." (99-101). The mother's memory remains vaguer than the father's. The actress recalls all the nagging little pains which plagued her body in childhood and the fear which dispossessed her: "Et parfois quand je me sens forte,/ je joue avec ma peur./Je me regarde dans les yeux, j'existe, la brosse en l'air, l'espace d'une seconde./Je penche la tête, je n'existe plus. J'existe, je n'existe plus" (101). Her uncertainty is resolved by her becoming an actress, so that she may have the reassuring mirror of the gaze. The male gaze of the theatre dominates and dispossesses her, just as her father's discipline once did. But she finds it

reassuring: until her memory for the lines fails her, at least, it saves her from self-discovery and the guilt of existence. The actress's condition is like that of Faulkner's Emily: "We remembered all the young men her father had driven away, and we knew that with nothing left, she would have to cling to that which had robbed her, as people will" (in *Fiction 100* 401). Having reserved her heart for Jesus and concealed her being behind the mask of submission to the male gaze, the actress has robbed herself of feeling, substituting the prompted passions of the stage and that sexual sensation which is evidently in conflict with love. The pitiful recollection, in the first monologue, that she has actually cried her own tears for the death of her dog, signals the degree of her habitual estrangement from herself (49-50). In the second monologue, she describes herself as as a small child, on the balcony, waiting for life outside the home: "J'étais sur le balcon/Ni dedans/Ni dehors" (105). Divided by the text of theatre from her own body and its feeling, she is nobody: "L'ACTRICE est morte d'un blanc, enfin" (49). It is only by the death of the actress that the woman can recover her own sense of herself.

Some of the other monologuists have found ways to sustain feeling and desire in isolation from what they perceive as social stereotyping. The two lesbian monologues, "Marcelle I," by Marie-Claire Blais, and "Marcelle II," by Pol Pelletier, though very different in tone, both bear witness to the urgency of sustaining sentiment and sensation. Blais's Marcelle is more concerned with the desire for intimacy and understanding: "beaucoup ont découvert qu'entre nous une sorte de sollicitude de compréhension pouvait exister. Nous parlerons simplement de nous-mêmes" (116). Pelletier's Marcelle, on the other hand, is possessed by sexual desire. She vehemently rejects feminine passivity and claims aggressivity as her right: "Mais oui, une femme est aggressive! . . . Les enfants le savent: le désir, l'envie de prendre, d'agir, d'aller au devant de, l'élan, l'instinct de puissance, le besoin de se manifester . . . le désir monte, la

grande vague, la chevauchée, ça galope, galope, tout mon corps, mon esprit, tendus vers un même point, ça gonfle, je suis pleine, je vais éclater" (124). The community of the lesbians is based on sexual preference rather than on gender: it excludes heterosexual women, just as the latter's discourse has excluded them.

Nicole Brossard's writer, in contrast to the other speakers, chooses isolation rather than relationships. She is the inverse of the actress, as well as the girl (la fille), the worker, and the mother, who exist for others as commodities, and in contrast to the lesbians in that she requires no sexual partner; the writer exists for herself firstly, although she wishes to be read by other women: "Je suis sans cheval et sans ombre. Sans cavalier. Et c'est bon, d'être à soi pour soi, sagement son propre déploiement./Je me déchiffre papier peau de mon âge./J'exhibe pour moi, pour nous, ce qui nous ressemble. J'écris et je ne veux plus faire cela toute seule. Je nous veux. Faire craquer, grincer, grincer l'histoire. La vie privée est politique" (131). The writer in this final statement expresses the main purpose of La Nef des sorcières--to return to the source of one's own history, and to make the private and subjective political.

As Lori Saint-Martin points out in her introduction to La Nef des sorcières, numerous critics, particularly men, have found the play to be non-theatrical or merely propagandist (Nef 31-37). Ironically enough, Yolande Bellemare has criticized the play because it was not a collective creation: "Les femmes de La Nef n'ont pas risqué la création collective; chacune est à sa place et suit sa track. Chaque auteur fait son petit trip que poursuit la comédienne. . . . Nous ne sommes donc pas face à un corps collectif de femmes. Mais à des femmes isolées dans leurs productions" (qtd Saint-Martin, Nef 37). Bellemare's comment is significant in that serves as a reminder that the collective process itself, in its premature stages, served to suppress the individual productions of women and to eradicate subjectivity in the generality of

women's 'issues.' The discontinuity and isolation of La Nef des sorcières is the more honest view, and the stronger for its breaking of the taboos of silence.

The broad trend of cultural and political change in the postcolonial era is characterized less by nationalism itself, than by resistance to it as a transcendental signified. The nationalist narrative, which instigated alternative theatre in Canada in the seventies, may be viewed as a male narrative in which the brothers collaborate to kill the father and possess the mother, or the country. Since this narrative lacked the authority of its colonial predecessor, it was more easily subverted by those who had been continuously silenced by the patriarchy. The discourse of difference, strongly associated with international feminist and deconstructionist theory, and political activism, have ensured that no patriarchal tradition, whether of the dominant culture or otherwise, remains unchallenged.

In the discourse of difference, theatre and history are closely linked. Those who have been forced to wear the masks of inferiority and subordination in the representations of the colonial signifying system have assumed those masks in the theatre and, working from within and behind them, have constructed new paradigms and languages out of their repressed experience. Jack Davis, the Australian Aboriginal playwright, has clearly stated the theatricality of subordination in the colonial power construct: "You see, we've always been acting. Aboriginal people are the greatest actors in the world . . . we've acted up before magistrates, we've acted up before the police, we've acted up before social workers; we've always done our own mime" (qtd Mitchell, "Colonial" 20). Women as well as Natives have played their roles since the inception of the European construction of Canada, accepting their submissiveness as 'natural,' and all non-conformity to their roles as deviant, or as 'acting up.' Theatre has offered the repressed subjectivities outlawed by the patriarchal signifying system

the opportunity to 'act up' in public without recrimination, if not without outraged response on occasion. Through the intervention of the trickster, the hysteric, the sorceress, and other subversive figures who defy the proscriptions against self-knowledge and self-possession of the agencies of power, masks and roles have thus been exposed as pure construction, concealing both rage and creative vitality.

The discourse of difference is not composed solely of either women or Natives. Homosexual theatre has appropriated the traditional role-playing of gendered discourse and turned it into a mirror of sexual power relations. The most basic levels of repression and disempowerment, however, are most powerfully articulated in the theatrical discourses of women of all ethnicities and Native Canadians, since the silencing of their own histories and languages has always been implicit in colonial discourse. It is not in government multiculturalist policies that the nature of change is reflected, but in the tentative expressions of voices emerging from these silences. Most unnerving in their discourse is the ubiquitous sense that to speak up is an infraction of the rules. The plays of Tremblay, Highway, and dozens of feminist writers rarely depict strength, virtue, or heroic martyrdom; on the contrary, they show weakness, pettiness, self-pity, and the violence of frustration. Often, because they counter ideals, they cause controversy, as in the case of Boucher's subversion of the image of the Virgin Mary, in Les Fées ont soif in 1978 (Lefebvre). The subversion of images sacred to the dominant discourse by the voices of those subjected through those images is naturally revolutionary. The genius of innovators is, as Le Blanc commented on Gélinas, and Saint-Martin on the authors of La Nef des sorcières, nothing more than the courage to say what everyone was thinking anyway.

The subversion of the signifying system of the symbolic order, and the discrediting of

authors whose work articulates it in conventional narrative forms have consistently generated new theatrical forms. The early collectives, which usually generated texts which expressed political unity, have been replaced by collaborative performance techniques, decentred texts by individual authors, and performance pieces devoted to the articulation of subjective identity. Realism and the male gaze have been thoroughly deconstructed by theatrical innovators, to be replaced, together with expressionism, by metatheatricality and self-reflexivity. Internationalism in performance and in theory has transformed verbal narrative into imagism, and the techniques of live performance frequently include the simultaneity of information provided by technology. The relation of contemporary theatrical experiment to the reality of experience and language often appears to be obscure. The future of theatrical practice rests with local, often non-commercial communities. The future of theatrical form, on the other hand, lies in the contingencies of the current explorations of the postmodern and the intercultural in performance theory.

CHAPTER FOUR

VIRTUAL METAFICTION OR COMMON GROUND?: POSTMODERNISM AND INTERCULTURALISM IN CANADIAN THEATRE

Since 1980, theatre in Canada has shown an increasing disposition to displace the nationalist and populist ideologies which informed almost every aspect of its expansion in the seventies by the substitution of a postmodern aesthetic characterized by intercultural textuality and avant-garde performance conventions. At its purest, contemporary postmodernism tends to refuse a meaningful connection to the specifics of the social context, preferring to reject the constraints of cultural, historical, and traditional ideologies on its signifying practices. In practice, however, postmodern performance derives from the cultural codes of its creators and the context of its production, however much it subverts them. In Canada, as in other contexts, postmodern techniques serve to subvert and reorganize the spectators' view of cultural norms and hierarchies. The need for such techniques is based on the complexity of cultural inscriptions and on the necessity to produce new and effective myths which subvert the limitations of national and local traditions to communicate in spite of differences.

The study of postmodern and intercultural developments in theatre must touch not only on aesthetic issues, but also on the sociological aspects of performance, since theatre reflects not only the imaginative impulses of its creators but also the need of the audience for specific kinds of cultural renewal. There is an increasing need to consider performance in a multidisciplinary context, on several grounds: (1) theatre itself is multidisciplinary, and (2) so are the issues which accompany the increasing ethnic diversification of Canadian society and the consequent complex patterns of transmission and acculturation which take place in social as well as artistic contexts. Critical perspectives in all disciplines which touch on intercultural

experience inevitably remain restricted, despite ongoing collaborative efforts to define the questions which produce the needed answers. Enoch Padolsky, for instance, interrogates the restricted application of the term 'ethnic' as practised in literary criticism and the centrist assumption implied by this practice: "Why, we should ask has 'ethnic' literature been narrowed to minority writing? Why is no attention given . . . to the ethnicity of Canadian majority writers such as Atwood and Davies? Is [it] . . . an innocent oversight . . . a mere question of terminology? or is it rather a significant absence with theoretical implications which provide the conceptual 'other' against which meaning arises?" (26-27). Padolsky's point is well taken in that it isolates that prior division between texts which are assumed to speak from a dominant national culture and their others, which are subject to separate consideration under the rubric of "ethnicity . . . a conceptual catch phrase for terms such as 'minority' (visible or otherwise), 'immigrant', or 'multicultural'" (Padolsky 26). It goes without saying that such issues as gender as well as ethnicity are also subject to presumptive categorization in the critical context. As Robert Wallace and Ann Wilson have pointed out, critical definitions of cultural 'otherness' profoundly affect cultural production, in that they reinforce normative judgments which frequently preclude such concrete recognition as funding from being conferred (Wilson, "Jury"; Wallace, *Producing*). Neither is group identity in itself the only form of cultural marginalization: a mere difference in aesthetic approach may be sufficient in itself to determine unacceptability or minority status when centrist critical and cultural criteria are applied (Wallace; Gauntlett). Theoretical questions as to the means whereby cultural hierarchies are determined are thus of central concern in postmodern and postcolonial contexts.

Postmodern texts are frequently a more fertile site of interrogation of the theoretical problem of perspective than are the intellectual disciplines in a contemporary world affected

simultaneously by global communication and unprecedented levels of cultural displacement. Culture itself tends to produce meaning which eludes the separatisms of disciplinary approaches, in that it is a symbolic system by which man confers meaning on existence (Geertz 250). Culture also intends a holistic, complex, and inclusive expression of being, whatever the specifics of the context of its production: "La culture est une espèce de tournures, 'd'infléchissements' déterminables que prennent nos représentations, sentiments, conduites, bref, de façon générale, tous les aspects de notre psychisme et même de notre organisme biologique sous l'influence du groupe" (Camille Camilleri, qtd Pavis 14.) Because the culture of most late capitalist countries is composed of a multiplicity of groups, the arts function amid such complexity to reflect the ways in which culture itself, rather than any specific culture, is inscribed in human behaviour in its various dimensions. Theatre, both as a set of practices and as the texts it produces, being the product of group collaboration, is especially apt to reflect the nature of culture, argues Pavis. The performer or actor, above all, carries the cultural code, while being capable also of subverting or undoing it: "Le texte dramatique comprend d'innombrables sédiments, qui sont autant de traces de ces infléchissements; le corps de l'acteur . . . est comme pénétré des 'techniques corporelles' propres à sa culture, à une tradition de jeu ou à une acculturation Une partie de son travail consiste, selon Barba, à se défaire de cette enculturation naturelle" (14-15). The actor's technical capability of representing the distinction between the artificiality of acculturation and a spontaneity closer to nature is in itself a cultural critique.

In theatre, as in other fields, the postmodern deconstruction of tradition is not always culturally specific. It interrogates the effects of cultural inscription themselves. When all ideology and tradition are subject to being questioned in the postmodern text, the only human

condition which can be represented in that text is one which is itself a site of questions concerning identity and the conditions of existence. Fragmentation of identity becomes the norm, and the margin become the perspective from which everybody must view the totality of differences exposed in the absence of a cultural hegemony. As Pavis states of Philippe Adrien's production in the late eighties, Les Rêves de Franz Kafka (which deals with questions of a national minority language and minority cultures in the context of Prague): "Le parti pris du spectateur, c'est d'aborder les matériaux de l'inconscient en les constituant selon les lois même de l'inconscient, plaçant le spectateur, être minoritaire malgré lui, dans une situation de destitution psychologique, sans qu'il sache, en quittant le théâtre, quel élément pertinent vient de lui échapper et quel est son sens" (121). In Adrien's play, the Kafkaesque dream of incomplete sense is linked with minority status, even at the national level, to become a metaphor for "cette déterritorialization d'un personnage et d'une culture, déterritorialisation due à l'impossibilité de s'appropriier un seul langage et un langage homogène, de vivre dans une langue majeure sans se sentir pour autant à l'aise dans la langue minoritaire" (121). The dreamlike state of deterritorialization (not unfamiliar to many Canadians of various cultural and linguistic groups) represents "l'expropriation du personnage, du sens, de l'énonciation individuelle" (121). Not only artists, but also theoreticians (such as Deleuze and Guattari) speak to the condition of deterritorialization. The close association of theory--especially semiology--and practice in theatre since the sixties, in the view of Pavis, produces a new dialectic between production and reception, somewhat limited in its influence, since it remains artistically marginal to dominant cultures, but nevertheless effective in countering privileged interpretations enforced by texts constructed to affirm an ideological status quo (122-25).

Indeterminacy, arguably, is both the virtue and the vice of postmodernism. Because

postmodernism is "suspicious of the very notion of final answers," Linda Hutcheon asserts, "the interrogative is [its] mode," even in the face of the danger of "bad faith" (Canadian x). This postmodern interrogation of norms is not without danger to the aesthetic enterprise, however, as Daryl Chin, following Lyotard, warns: "The context for postmodernism . . . is a crisis in categorization, resulting in equivalence. The effect . . . is the lack of hegemony in perspective" (163). The fragmentation which results from loss of hegemony, argues Chin, results in art which is "fraught with suspicion, haunted by the possibility of misinterpretation" (163). Having rejected meaning, art has allowed itself to be "occupied by the pastiche, the parody, the appropriation, on the assumption that nostalgic meaning is better than no meaning at all. . . . The result . . . is the depletion of the centrality of artistic endeavour. Irony, reproduction, and simulation have become central to contemporary art, with all the distance that implies" (163-64). The traditional ludic function of performance described by Kershaw as "a kind of ideological experiment [which] enables the spectator to participate in playing around with the norms, customs, regulations, which govern her life in society," can result, in the context of postmodern ex-centricity, in a detachment of the spectator from social reality rather than the creation of new relations with it (24).

The encompassing socio-economic reality in which postmodern art is created is not, of course, any national, local, or minority culture, but rather the multinational operations of late capitalism. There is a cultural contradiction inherent in late capitalism, as Terry Eagleton argues, in that it contains both bourgeois liberalism, with its valuation of "hierarchy, distinction, and unique identity," and what Eagleton terms "the cavortings of the commodity . . . transgressive, promiscuous, polymorphous . . . the ruin of all distinctive identity . . . transmut[ing] social reality to a wilderness of mirrors, as one object contemplates the abstract

essence of itself in the looking glass of another, and that in another" (Ideology 373-74). The evidence of the identification of the postmodern aesthetic with the Marxian commodity, according to Eagleton, is the "'integration' of culture and common life" (374). The commodity depends on all aspects of culture as it subverts them: "Traversing with superb indifference the divisions of class, sex and race, of high and low, past and present, the commodity appears as an anarchic, iconoclastic force which mocks the obsessive rankings of traditional culture" (374). Similarly, Fredric Jameson points to "the effacement . . . of the older . . . frontier between high culture and so-called mass and commercial culture" (2). Jameson emphasizes the importance of capitalist cultural productions to postmodern art: "The postmodernisms have, in fact, been fascinated . . . by this whole 'degraded' landscape of schlock and kitsch, of TV series and Reader's Digest . . . the late show and the grade-B Hollywood film, of so-called paraliterature . . . materials they no longer simply 'quote,' as a Joyce or a Mahler may have done, but incorporate into their very substance" (2-3). Jameson would also infer from postmodernism's break with cultural tradition and its dependency on capitalist culture, media, and information networks that it represents "a purer stage of capitalism than any of the moments that preceded it" (3). Jameson and Eagleton alike would regard postmodernism as essentially conservative in spite of its subversive practices.

Postmodernism, having rejected hegemonic ideologies as reliant on "apodictic truth, totalized system, transcendental signification, metaphysical groundedness, the naturalization of historical contingency and a teleological dynamic," substitutes indeterminacy and deferral or outright denial of meaning (Eagleton 379). Masakuni Kitasawa argues that postmodernism's operations are simply the inverse of those of modernism, a monistic reversal of modernism's dualism. The rationalized signifying practices of modernism, states Kitasawa, are tied to

referents in the "real world," and meaning or content "predominates over form" (167-68). He argues that the logocentrism of modernism depletes the expressive capacity of language: "If signs are . . . rationalized they lose their function of equivocation, their ability to truly represent the imaginary, the ambiguous, and the mythical. What results are inventions of ideologies, pseudomyths, and mystification. The lack which this produces in modern humans is experienced as . . . the 'thirst for signs,' or more exactly, the 'thirst for the meaning of signs'" (167). The postmodern response to modernist "signifiedism" is its opposite, "signifierism" without a signified, while in the place of the "old mind-body dualism" is an emphasis on "communication, especially electronic mass media where people can experience only the illusion of meaning" (168). In such a context of signification, "multi-level signs are reduced to a univocality--which is the way a digital computer thinks. By contrast, the human . . . [is] fuzzy and awkward and redundant" (168). Kitisawa calls for the revaluation of the "mythical mind which seeks the universal immanent beyond human beings and their specific culture" as the necessary antidote to the non-human univocality of postmodernism, and as the correlative of modern historicity (168-69). Theatre and performance in primitive or archaic cultures played an important role in uniting the real world and the immanent, he argues, and by some means they should be capable of a similar function in contemporary socio-cultural conditions.

Kitisawa's theory of postmodern performance strongly suggests the aspirations of the mythically conscious collectives of the sixties, which, as he notes, ultimately failed because "there were no conditions in the outer world--no performative structures in society--permitting them to continue" (170-71). Despite these failures, he clearly believes that the powers intrinsic to performance continue to provide the medium for "a dialectic relating the unitariness of potential structure with the non-unitariness of irreversible reality" (171). In other words, the

potential of performance--more specifically the performer's use of the body to sign to the observer--produces the intersubjective by uniting subjectivity and objectivity. Kitasawa's account of intersubjectivity in performance encapsulates the idea of the communal experience sought in most intercultural experiment in theatre, with greater or lesser success. Intersubjectivity, he asserts, is the means to change reality, by integrating the mythic with the historical: "Historicity is produced from subjectivity because in modernity an individual regards her/his life as unique and discontinuous. Modernity creates history with its exact dates and irreversible time. In archaic societies people think of their lives as born continuously and collectively from the ancestor's world. If people could step into the random field of subjectivity they would be able to integrate historicity and mythicity. History would then be a complex of both. Myth could change reality itself" (170). Kitasawa proposes that the mythicizing function of performance as a transforming power in historical time is contingent on a collective intention to behave as the performer behaves in the intersubjective field, "erasing our resistance, opening our beings and minds to what is immanent beyond human beings" (171). His unfashionable advocacy of the immanent in the postmodern context, where meaning is frequently a negative value, hints at the purpose which haunts even the most nihilistic of postmodern theatrical texts--the recovery of an integrated state beyond the alienations of the fragmented text.

Pavis, too, acknowledges the importance of remythologization in postmodern theatre. In contrast to Kitasawa, though, Pavis envisages the postmodern use of myths as ironic, their traditional meanings, together with all classical and historical texts, negated. In a comparison of postmodern works by German and French playwrights such as Heiner Müller and Michel Vinaver, he finds that the characteristic postmodern mythology occupies a space cleared by a

fictional catastrophe (natural disaster, or simple isolation) by which history, tradition, and culture are devastated, and only the traces of a golden age remain (90-92). In the post-apocalyptic space, old mythologies, their original meanings negated, are transposed to the conditions of contemporary reality. In Vinaver's L'Ordinaire (1982), for example, the myth of death and resurrection is displaced to the contemporary activity of multinationals, and scrupulously deprived of metaphoric and ideological significance. The transposed myth in the postmodern text characteristically resists meaning, remaining always ambiguous, opaque, and unamenable to privileged readings, a testimony to Lyotard's definition of the postmodern condition as "l'incrédulité à l'égard des métarécits" (103).

The differing approaches of Kitasawa and Pavis to the mythic suggest the two modes adopted since the sixties in postmodern performance, each of which is practised in Canada at the margins of commercial and conventional theatre, and which arguably overlap in certain cases. Kitasawa's notion of intersubjective performance, in which history and myth overlap, is essentially revolutionary in intent. It is exemplified in any theatrical text which tends to restructure the spectator's sense of social relations to form a new and intercultural mode of existence where cultural homogeneity and teleological history had been. In such theatre, the operations of "signifierism"--the play of difference--must be defeated in favour of an integration of disparate cultural elements into a functioning whole which resists a dominant discourse. The mythology defined by Pavis, on the other hand, resists meaning: its function is to deprivilege cultural history and conventional textual meaning as the means to interpret postmodern reality, and, frequently, to draw attention to the existence of an unconscious level of potential below the inscriptions of civilization. Such a mythology functions as a textual irony which changes perception and reception. In its direct address to communal or collective

needs for revelation it is, perhaps paradoxically, self-reflexive.

Experimental theatre of the late nineties might be construed as likely to belong either to the project of textuality and signification or to the revaluing of performance efficacy and communal participation. It would be too simplistic to suggest that the former is typically an urban and alienated mode, while the latter is characteristic of the remote cultural margin, in which performance is relatively unimpeded by aesthetic bombardment from a multiplicity of sources. The fundamental difference is more likely to be sought, on the one hand, between self-reflexivity as a strategy for resisting the dominant discourse of power, and, on the other, the willingness to erase resistance to the immanent beyond the human condition as proposed by Kitisawa. The spectator confronted by self-reflexive narrativization on stage may well be mesmerized, but is never invited to participate in the mystery of its production. The performance which values the intersubjective, on the other hand, makes of the performer a medium for a state which includes the audience. The more self-reflexive the text of performance, the more it naturally signifies resistance to intercultural and intersubjective communication. Theatre which relies on intercultural exploration as a means of making available the intersubjective, by contrast, actively seeks to transform relations with the 'other.'

The use of the term 'intercultural' varies widely, and the concept of interculturalism is subject to much questioning. At least two of its functions may usefully be distinguished from each other in the context of performance: (1) its service to signifying practices and the renewal of form--which might better be termed intertextuality, or transculturation, and (2) its service to intersubjectivity. The latter would seem to be an extension of the kind of collectivism which to some extent has been possible in Canada in homogeneous cultural contexts and at the height of nationalist populism. Interculturalist performance, however, can only be successful in

integrating history and myth to achieve the intersubjective insofar as it avoids bypassing cultural difference through overvaluation of stereotypes, and insofar as it seeks to appeal to imagination and feeling at a level deeper than "pseudomyth"--nationalism being the most obvious example of the pseudomyth in the postcolonial, Canadian context (Kitasawa 169).

I: From Nationalism to Postmodernism

In the narrative of post-war Canadian drama, the central action, it may be argued, is the "ritual recreation of the history of modern drama, all encompassing if not chronological" which Urjo Kareda identifies specifically as the process by which the alternative theatre of the seventies established itself (vi). This ritual recapitulation of western cultural history overcame the other enterprise of post-war Canadian culture--the naturalization of modernism, realism, and unitary narratives of cultural identity. From the mid-sixties until 1980, theatre worked energetically to realize the condition of postmodernism--a condition which, according to Robert Kroetsch, was Canada's in any case during the twentieth century, by virtue of invisibility in a "high modern world, with its privileged stories" (22). Having joined with the rest of the world in the project of overthrowing modernist metatexts, Canadians have found that their cultural preoccupations correspond in kind, if not in all particularities, with those of other (new and old) countries in which, during the sixties, the deconstruction of traditional practices and negation of dominant ideologies altered perspectives on history.

The foundations of postmodern deconstructive practice in Canadian theatre were laid by the activities of the alternative theatre, which founded itself in opposition to bourgeois, élitist theatrical practices. The first phase of such activity in postcolonial Canadian theatre was an expansionist movement to break with colonial history, by the recreation and deconstruction of

the governing myths of Canadian culture. In Canada, in the seventies, Frye's "unifying sense of what a mythic vision is" played a central role still in determining the deconstruction of colonial history, the totalizing--called nationalist--factor which fragmented the coherence of the historical narrative of colonialism (Kroetsch 24). The pastoral myth defined by Frye coincided with the communitarianism of international countercultural influences in theatre to produce the central nostalgic idea of a pioneer past ideologically defined in opposition to the values and interests of central economic and political interests. The pastoral myth or communitarian ideal was re-embodied in theatre in the collective, as in Theatre Passe Muraille's folkloric/historical early collective creations. In Québec, where the disidentification with history was less nostalgic, the collective myths of the past stood in greater contrast to the spontaneity of the collectives which satirized them. The nationalist, populist ideology of the seventies, however, mirrored old collective ideology in the strength of its totality. The underlying purpose of the historicization of colonialism was the creation, in populist terms, of a viable civics of culture which reflected the cultural values of the Canadian present instead of those of European tradition.

The first wave of experiments in postcolonial performance in the seventies demonstrates clearly that a more fundamental imperative than finding an aesthetic at that time was the narration and performance of history in order to disengage from it. Two kinds of history were simultaneously enacted in the seventies--colonial history and the history of performance conventions (as noted by Kareda). Cultural transformation was effected precisely by the appropriation of the documents of Canadian history as well as the styles of western theatre, from Greek tragedy (as in Tremblay's Sainte Carmen de la Main) to commedia dell'arte, expressionism, and even realism. The creators demonstrated to their audiences that they

mastered their cultural materials, rather than being mastered by them.

The questioning process of postmodernism is largely directed towards culture and history, motivated, as Hutcheon puts it, by the "awareness that all our systems of understanding are deliberate and historically specific human constructs (not natural and eternal givens), with all the limitations and strengths which that definition entails" (*Canadian x*). Kroetsch, also sceptical of modernist constructs, asserts that archeology has replaced history, which, "in its traditional forms, insisted too strongly on coherent forms of narrative" (24). Against the "overriding view" of Frye, he approves the positing of an archeological sense that "every unearthing is problematic, tentative, subject to a story-making act that is itself subject to further change as the 'dig' goes on" (24). The results of the archeological sense in theatre are evident (1) in the populist deconstruction of traditional iconography in the seventies, through the engagement of popular performance techniques with old mythologies, documents, and cultural hegemonies, and, (2) since 1980, in the construction of cultural intertexts "qui semble[nt] évacuer le réel social," even as they contain, "malgré tout, un 'récit commun' où peut se lire une représentation des valeurs qui travaillent et définissent la société" (Godin, "Textes" 117).

Since the seventies Canadian theatre's preoccupation with performing history and culture has continued, but it has been radically altered by the postmodern approach to creating the performance text. The postmodern text deprivileges the unifying ideological content of myth, making of the national space an 'empty space'--a site of signification. The shift from the post-colonial theatre of the seventies to that of the eighties substantially corresponds to Kitasawa's differentiation of "signifiedism," with its rationalist, dualistic insistence of the priority of meaning over form (nationalism), and "signifierism" with its spatialized play of difference

(global, or unbounded space) and its deferral or subversion of meaning. The first and most striking evidence of the theatrical shift to the postmodern is Ronfard's epic cycle, Vie et mort du roi boîteux (1980), in which the theatrical space is transformed into "(comme dans le théâtre Nô) un signe vide, ébranlé dans sa référentialité au monde et à l'histoire, apte tout au plus à signifier sa béance et sa perte" (Lapointe, "Vie" 224). The notion of a postcolonial Canada defined by nationalist ideology and a populist version of the pastoral myth, and prepared to sever its ties to the other (the British and French heritages) is inverted in postmodern theatre. The unambiguous social referents of the seventies, which establish the priority of Canadian popular culture over the classical and modernist traditions of bourgeois culture, are deprivileged in favour of a "reterritorialisation des oeuvres étrangères" which invites a reconsideration of "le rapport à l'Autre" (Annie Brisset, qtd Godin, "Textes" 118). Whereas, in the late sixties and early seventies, Shakespeare, Molière, and the rest of European canonical literature had been symbolically routed, the same authors have since been extensively subject to appropriation by Canadian playwrights (Lepage, Chaurette, and MacDonald) for the purpose of questioning the construction of Canadianness and "québécoisité" alike.

The postmodern interrogation of cultural otherness proceeds by creating a confrontation between the texts of cultural hegemonies and the popular culture of the present. Not only the classical canons but also the texts of colonial history are used for the postmodern purpose. As the theatre has identified with theoretical investigation, the paradigms of colonialism have become more important than neo-realist representations of local histories. Since the seventies, the relation of colonizer to colonized has become a more central issue for representation than the expression of colonial history in terms of the class struggle between settlers and government agencies. In all postcolonial countries, including Canada, theatrical experimentation,

originated both within the dominant culture and also in the context of aboriginal cultural activity, has been widely used to investigate and redefine relations between indigenous cultures and the inscriptions of the colonizer. Extensive cultural exchange between postcolonial countries as well as Native groups has assisted in divesting colonial history of contemporary nationalist ideology. Pan-American Native theatre festivals and the annual Festival of the Americas have contributed to the redefinition of colonial/postcolonial narrative in terms of performance (Leonard, "Redefining"). Monique Mojica has assessed the effect of the "Native theatre explosion" as "the possibility of offering an alternative world-view (one in which many worlds exist); the possibility of another interpretation of 'historical facts'; the validation of our experiences and our images reflected on the stage" (3). Such possibilities are envisaged by both Natives and non-Natives alike in investigations of history which, as Mojica puts it, encourage "de-colonized minds" (3).

Stagings and readings of The Tempest as a means to "jar the sensibilities of viewers who hesitated to acknowledge the validity of a postcolonial perspective on the relationship of colonizer and colony" have not been uncommon in the postcolonial period. In Canada, Lewis Baumander's production for Skylight Theatre (1987, 1989) was set in the Queen Charlotte Islands, at the time of Captain Cook's voyages, with Native cast members representing the Haida Indians whose culture became subject to European colonization at that time (Peters, "Towards"). Equally important for the decolonizing project, however, are such productions as Tunooniq Theatre's Changes (1986), which was developed not only for the education of young people in Pond Inlet, but, as David Qamaniq, a member of the company, states, "to show others--the whole world I guess--how we [the Inuit] used to live; how we used to be independent without the white man's help . . . even though we don't live the old way, any more"

(18). In the framework of narratives of colonization, it is remarkable how much common ground can be found between the contemporary theatrical representations of Native groups and those of postcolonial Canadians of European origin. Performed narratives are in each case at the service of coming to terms with historical processes. Assertions of independence by cultural groups are commonly accompanied by the recognition in the performance of history that the symbolic reinscription of the relationship between colonizer and colonized confers political power on the community, and that, although the inscriptions of history are irreversible, new solutions to cultural depletion may be enacted in the present.

II: Social and Narrative Space

In theatre the definition of the performance space always precedes the invention of narrative structures. Radical redefinition of theatrical space began in the sixties as the alternative theatre rejected the sites of traditional theatrical performance, the arts centres, the festival theatres, and the few older theatre buildings occupied by established repertory companies such as le Théâtre du Nouveau Monde. The theatre of the sixties and early seventies preferred non-traditional spaces--public places, streets, factories, community centres, and warehouses--in which to redefine performance as a function of life rather than art. Alternative theatre premises, when they were established, took theatre away from the centre of the city, often to unfashionable areas. Rural communities and smaller towns also became either home or host to theatre companies.

In the seventies, class was thus the primary locus of the definition of communal space in theatre. Change came in the eighties, however, as the increasing emphasis on pluralism

demanded a revised notion of community which acknowledged that neither class nor cultural homogeneity were the only determinants of group identification or political interest: "Classes are few; they come into being by slow transformations in the modes of production. . . .

Groups, on the other hand, seem to offer the gratifications of psychic identity (from nationalism to neoethnicity)" (Jameson 347). In postmodern space, communities, sub-cultures, and identities can be defined at will, according to need, and without any necessary affiliation with geographic location (Westfall 231).

As Jameson perceives it, the groups which replace classes in postmodern society often tend to erase their past, especially when it is marked by trauma and oppression, relying for their sense of identity and their recognizability, not on shared history, but instead on the media for their political power (347). Since the seventies, when regionalism and populism defined the politics of group identity, theatre has strongly reflected that 'parliamentary' function assigned to the media by Jameson, its constituents defined in terms of marginality to the centre. Whether marginalized groups gained worthwhile recognition and political power from such representation remains open to question. Chin, for instance, argues that "marginalism is an accreditation of these additional perspectives by defining a dominant and acceding territory to the sidelines" (164). At the same time, the presence of a plurality of groups before the public contributes to deprivileging the assumptions of the dominant culture.

The repression of memory and the loss of a close affinity with nature as a result of the modernist process of technologization and "homogenization of social space and experience" are inescapable factor in postmodern cultural production, argues Jameson (366). The repression of the memory of tradition and old ways of life ("precapitalist agricultures") disturbs the sense of temporality (366). Thus, he argues, the imaginative space of postmodernism is forced to

compensate for the fact that, under late capitalism, "neither space nor time is 'natural' . . . as ontology or human nature alike" (367). What Jameson calls the "uneven space" of modernity has been replaced by

some more articulated sense of postmodern space by way of postmodern fantastic historiography, as in wild imaginary genealogies and novels that shuffle historical figures and names like so many cards from a finite deck . . . all the precursors fall into place in the new genealogy; the legendary generational strings of . . . Asturias or . . . Marquez . . . the discovery, by the professional historians that 'all is fiction' (see Nietzsche) and that there can never be a correct version: the end of 'master narratives' . . . along with the recovery of alternate histories in the past (silenced groups, workers, women, minorities whose scanty records have been systematically burned or expunged out of everything but the police archives) at a moment when historical alternatives are in the process of disappearing, and if you want to have a history, there is henceforth only one to participate in. (367)

The new narratology, by employing "the untrammelled movement of invention," as Jameson observes, can "convey the feel of the real past better than any of the 'facts' themselves" (368). He suggests that the replacement of historical fact by fantasy indicates an attempt to recover lost political power through creative processes.

Precisely such historiographical narratives as Jameson describes have become, since Ronfard, a relatively common--and theatrically powerful--feature of postmodern culture in Canada. Typically, they are, as Jameson points out, "melodramatic . . . cinematographic . . . [like] the dynastic annals of small-power kingdoms very far from our own parochial 'tradition'

. . . offer[ing] postmodern writers the . . . untrammelled movements of invention" (368). Such historical fantasy, while it privileges play, avoids political commitment: "It mimetically expresses the attempt to recover that power and praxis by way of . . . fancy rather than imagination. Fabulation--or . . . mythomania and outright tall tales--is no doubt the symptom of historical impotence, of the blocking of possibilities that leaves little option but the imaginary" (369). It may be inferred from Jameson's assertion that fantastic and mythical approaches to history, which have become common enough in Canada, are the response to the loss of old metanarratives. Jameson would also suggest that they are a reflection of the postmodern psyche, its experience fragmented and compartmentalized in different zones of time and space.

III: History, Myth, and Interculturalism in Canadian Theatre

The narratives produced in the space of postmodernism are naturally various in form, although identifiable in the broadest terms by the play of difference. Historical and cultural texts employed by playwrights are frequently referred to the context of the present to varying purposes. In Highway's Dry Lips Oughta Move to Kapuskasing (1989), for example, the actions of Native characters in the present (Dickie Bird, Big Joey) symbolize the historical actions of the other, the colonizer. In Moses's Almighty Voice and His Wife (1990), the man who died at Duck Lake and his wife reverse roles in the second act to perform the ghost dance according to the conventions of vaudeville, as the means to exorcise the linguistic inscriptions of the European other. In Germain's A Canadian Play/Une plaie canadienne (1980, 1983), a symbolic action in the present time of the action of the play is also used to determine the workings of history on the present. Each of these plays uses theatricality to identify the

internalization of the other, by reference to negative consequences in the present, thus suggesting change. In each of these examples, the workings of memory and the recapitulation of cultural structures convey the possibility of social action outside the internalized other. Other scripts, such as Ronfard's Vie et mort du roi boîteux, on the other hand, aim to deterritorialize culture, and the script is then auto-referential, excluding the real conditions of the historical present.

In many postmodern texts, performance pre-empts textual meaning. The bounds of the space of signification are often clearly defined, while conveying the impression of boundlessness. The performers are located at the centre of the text, their identity defined only in terms of the intersection between imagination and culture--the former implying the mythic dimension of space, and the latter, historicity. In contrast to the scripts of the seventies, which exploited myths based in Canadian history and community culture, or, as in the hyperrealist scripts of Tremblay, in the family nexus, the self-reflexivity of the postmodern script tends to isolate performance from psychological constructs of personality in favour of abstractions and reifications of the interplay of power and individual imaginative resistance to power. It is no longer necessarily problematic for theatregoers (as for readers) to interpret a magic realist kind of textual world in which group and personal memories are erased, and in their place, fragments of historical texts are substituted as displacements or replacements of the lost elements--both ancestral and personal--of feeling memory. The audiences of the nineties have adapted to the task of translating the metonymies of imagistic theatre as well as collaborating in the restructuring of the histories and cultural constructions which theatre systematically defamiliarizes and disrupts. The incentive for abandoning accustomed realist expectations is simply that in productions such as those of Théâtre Repère, the invention employed in

exploiting the tempero-spatial limits of performance is, at its best, compelling, restoring the magic of complicity in theatrical illusionism, while the restructured vision of history and culture presented by the text renders realism sterile.

The first full production of Jean-Pierre Ronfard's Vie et mort du roi boiteux (Nouveau Théâtre Expérimental, 1982, at the Expo Theatre, Terre des Hommes, Montréal), "ce texte hybride, baroque, cyclopéen . . . qui avale . . . une quantité incroyable d'emprunts historiques et littéraires" marked the beginning of a new era in theatrical historiography in Canada (Lapointe 220). Ronfard's cycle, first produced at the end of the nationalist period of Québec theatre, appeared to accuse attempts by a generation so unfamiliar with its own history to define nationalist coherence and cultural unity of prematurity, by indicating that the process had to be begun all over again from the other side of the problem, and exclusivity converted into inclusivity. Ronfard's project broke the pattern of engagement with tradition through collective creation and improvization which typified the alternative theatre of the seventies. Its emergence tends to support Kitazawa's argument that logocentrism, and even the engagement with it through ideology and "pseudomyths" produces "a thirst for signs" and a need for "the imaginary, the ambiguous, and the mythical" (167-68). If such narratives as Ronfard's point to a sense of powerlessness in their creators, then such apparent powerlessness may indicate a voluntary surrender of the nationalist project as the primary motivation for artistic production.

The problem of getting outside ideology and the rationalized conception of the individual has led to totalizing theatrical practices, which, as in the case of Ronfard's play, often revert to a renewed performance ritual which challenges linear history with the spectacle of "une sorte d'univers barbare et grandiose" (Lapointe 224). Such a theatre, as Lapointe recognizes, depoliticizes spectators, and returns them, through the force of globalized signification, to a

deeper level of emotional response (222). An abstract notion of power replaces ideology in Ronfard's totalizing projects, thematically reproduced many times over in a broad canvas of action which alludes in its scale and the style of some of its action, as well as the title, to Shakespeare's history plays. Power informs the relationships between members of the two houses in Montréal, the Ragones (the mother is Catharine, the son, Richard, the image of Shakespeare's Richard III) and the Roberges (the son, Roy, destined to managed a meat packing plant and shroud factory, the intending usurper of Richard's throne). The innumerable historical characters and textual references suggest the epic at every turn, as the text traverses time and space to a greater extent than does Marlowe's Tamburlaine. The figures of power in Ronfard's play, in contrast to the more sinister, violent, and precisely placed images of power in Howard Barker's plays, for example, seem to accumulate as fictional displacements of the issue, while the melodramatic activities of the two Montréal families are parodic.

Godin, interrogating the affinity for intertextuality inaugurated in Québec by Vie et mort du roi boiteux, finds that the new valorization of the classics signals a redefinition of identity by reference to the other and by minimizing the social referent of the text. He notes that in Québec, during the eighties, English sources (especially Shakespeare) and German culture, whose influence became widespread in theatre, predominated over French sources ("Textes" 122; Pavlovic, "Cartographie"). In contrast with Annie Brisset, who asserts that "sur le marché québécois des biens symboliques, l'étranger est un anti-valeur," Godin maintains that, while this may have been true during the nationalist period, the foreign text became highly important to Québec culture during the eighties (118). He links the interest in foreign texts with reflexivity, narcissism, and metatheatre, in all of which the artist achieves identity by erasing social reality and by using the text(s) as a means to assert instead the values of fiction, artifice,

surface appearances, and even lies (120-24). In the eighties, for the first time (with the possible exception of Gauvreau), the figure of the artist or writer, the self-conscious creator, became central in culture, inverting or negating the collective persona in favour of the creator of fiction.

René-Daniel Dubois, in Ne blâmez jamais les bédouins (1984), like Ronfard in his epic, draws on "les lieux communs de la littérature ou l'histoire occidentale," and like Ronfard, he enunciates the barbarism which attends on the exploitation of the 'empty sign' (Godin, "Textes" 122). The carnivalesque textualizing 'machine' of Vie et mort du roi boiteux moves from its central Montréal plot through time and space to Azerbaijan, Alaska, Africa, and the Amazon, in defiance of linearity, touching on the violent elements which threaten the outer borders of known constructions of western imperialism and tradition. Dubois' Ne blâmez jamais les bédouins is in some respects the inverse of Ronfard's script, in that it was first produced as a solo performance by the playwright himself, although it contains a full cast of fantastically assorted characters, and its effect is as compressed as Ronfard's play is sprawling. It too, however, stages wars between the great powers, and confronts the barbarism of signification. Set in a desert, Dubois' play (a polyphonic monologue, in effect) enacts a non-realistic confrontation between representatives of American and European civilization with the Beast. The language of the play is somewhat reminiscent of that of Gauvreau's "langue exploréen": it combines pastiche of accents with transmutations of normal inflections, and heavily rhythmical incantations to convert ordinary signification into a score of spatialized force. While the play is superficially disconnected from its context, it signifies the composition of the American as the product of European cultures (or, perhaps, more accurately families of languages). As Jean-Marie Lelièvre comments in his preface to the translation:

Rarely has there been such perfect fusion of form and content; rarely has a play gone so far in making a universal statement. For once we are shown what makes the inhabitants of the American continent tick, putting into perspective both their modernity and their historicity. The inhabitant of America (. . . Flip) is a man with a double heritage, Teutonic and Latin (Wulf and Micaela), who by his sojourn in the new world becomes heir to the native peoples (the legend) and in his modernity connects with the Orient (the Japanese tale of the road to Kyoto), so as to renew an affiliation that is more ancient or perhaps still to come. This fosters the sense of global unity of the new man who is emerging. This new man, the inhabitant of America, now finds himself in a (cultural?) desert that was thought to uninhabited.

(Quebec Voices 108-09)

The process of the play is the overcoming of the void and the loss of memory and history. The three characters are required to overcome their separations, which symbolize the division of mind, emotion, and body; and by abandoning their differences of language and belief, they come together to overcome the threats of the cruel Fighting Group Belvedere. Their inspiration comes from a Native legend, signifying the entry of the mythic into history (in Kitisawa's scheme of performance). With the unification of the characters the Beast appears, perhaps signifying the possibility of a regenerated American soul (Lelièvre 109-10).

Like Ronfard's cycle, Dubois' play is a game generated from the play of children in a Montréal street (Godin, "Textes" 119). Alvina Ruprecht comments: "Dubois peuple son monde de voix dont l'essence est justement le jeu, dans tous les sens du mot: les héros et les héroïnes du cinéma, du théâtre et de l'opéra. Le théâtre n'est-il pas par définition jeu, simulacre,

médiation d'une réalité par les comédiens en train de faire semblant, de devenir 'autre'?" ("Voix" 362). Furthermore, the game consists in the invention of languages which transform the source languages through false accents and the vocal effects of the performer into a glossopeia peculiar to Dubois, "qui déjouent les contraintes systématiques de la langue" (363). According to Ruprecht, Dubois' play is a gesture of refusal of cultural hierarchies: "ce brassage de langues reflète l'hétérogénéité linguistique qui caractérise le contexte culturel québécois" (365). In effect, Dubois, in extending his imagination into play in a manner which appears to depart from all social referents, actually conveys "l'essence de son ambiance socio-culturelle" (363). What he represents in his milieu, however, is that which nationalism had concealed under the appearances of cultural and linguistic homogeneity--the complexity of the American, including the Québécois.

Robert Lepage and Théâtre Repère similarly have developed numerous productions which explore the deeper structures and contradictions of culture, and which usually centre their extensive explorations around the base of ordinary Québécois experience. Otherness is of central importance in the works of Lepage, whether manifested in his fascination with Shakespeare, or in the cultural doubleness of all his texts. In Lepage's work, intersubjective exploration is also used as a means to relocate the Canadian, or Québécois subject. Lepage also uses European, Oriental, and Native cultures in his spatialization of Canadian history and culture. The patterns formed by Lepage can be traced back to the Théâtre Repère collaborative production, directed by Jacques Lessard, Circulations (1984), which uses French, English, and Japanese languages, and takes as its starting point a bus station. Lepage and Théâtre Repère have since explored the cultural nexus of Québec in relation to the European past and the American present in Vinci (1986), The Dragons Trilogy (1987), Tectonic Plates (1990), and

Alanienouider (1991).

The Dragons Trilogy (collaborative text) begins with the story of a Chinese family isolated in Québec City before the First World War, "au coeur d'une société fermée pleine de préjugés raciaux, religieux, et autres" (Pavlovic, "Trilogie" 43). The stories of two sisters from the same neighbourhood are added to the narrative, as one marries the son of the Chinese family, and other characters enter the play to provide the simple, novelistic plot around which the history of the twentieth century is woven, to create "les croisements fructueux de la petite histoire et de l'Histoire" (Solange Lévesque, qtd editorial, Jeu 45 (1987) 5). The process of the drama is more complicated, however. Lepage creates a mythic universe defined by Chinese symbolism (the three parts are each defined by different dragons, with different elemental properties). When the cycles are completed, a later generation returns to Québec, to find no trace of the original homes. The cultural encounter between oriental and occidental opens two worlds to the spectator: "Les déplacements d'une famille chinoise au Canada à travers le siècle permettent de suivre le parcours de la pensée orientale en Occident, et d'éprouver concrètement les phases qui ont mené d'une fermeture d'esprit empreinte de naïveté à un partage ouvert avec l'autre et à une réelle rencontre entre deux mondes désormais reconnus comme complémentaires, à l'image des deux parts de soi qu'il s'agit d'harmoniser; visant une plénitude aussi bien artistique que spirituelle, la Trilogie nous entraîne dans un voyage intérieur" (Pavlovic, "Trilogie" 40). The creation of The Dragon's Trilogy, like other works by Théâtre Repère developed in the cyclic method of creation of the company, begins with objects from which the collaborators draw the meaning of the piece. The result of this exploratory method of creation is a text in which the word is relatively unimportant, and the languages of gesture, objects, visual metaphor, and spatial relations are exploited for the representation of cultural, mythic,

historical, and personal encounters.

In Alanienouidet, Lepage draws together Native culture and the European theatrical tradition around the historical facts of the installation of Edmund Kean as a Huron chief. Kean, by the time of his visit to Canada was perpetually drunk and near the end of his career. He recounted later that his meeting with the Wyandot chiefs near Québec was followed by a few days of madness. The Wyandots, for their part, misunderstanding the nature of Kean's power, hoped to have Kean act as their representative in matters of land settlement in London. The climax of the play is the encounter of Kean and a single Wyandot hunter in the wilderness, both in extremes of emotional torment, but of different kinds. Marianne Ackermann, Lepage's collaborator in this project, states that the issues surrounding the meeting between Kean and the Wyandot hunter were extrapolated with some difficulty: "As a theme, madness had long since gone. . . . 'How to die' moved ahead, to be overtaken . . . by the search for identity. In exploring Kean's state, we went to the wretched conditions of his birth in a whorehouse; civilization versus purity" ("Alanienouidet" 34). The cultural confrontation dramatized in Alanienouidet seems to erase, and substitute for, the search for origins as the site of cultural redemption.

In his Tectonic Plates, Lepage explores the Celtic substructure of French culture, as the mythic correlative of American and European historical and cultural relations. The play, co-produced with the Tramway Theatre, Glasgow, is intercultural in both its creation and content: "The idea of Tectonic Plates was about these drifting continents, and that our culture, which is a continent in itself, was going to smash into another culture. . . . They were going to collide, crack up, overlap each other, provoke some earthquakes, some separations. . . . It's still a very mysterious thing hidden inside the earth. And this was also a metaphor for ourselves--who

we are, as French Canadians, as Celts--our identity deep inside'" (qtd Feldman 9). The randomness suggested in the idea of such a collision corresponds with Kitasawa's sense of the field of theatrical performance itself--the unpredictable, and unrepeatable contact between performer and spectator--which results from the strength of forces within the actor. The idea of the movements of culture, expressed in geological terms, is intended to work against the fixed notions of culture which Canadian and Québécois politics alike would impose.

While the artist may intend to escape from ideology, however, the interpretation of the work is beyond his/her control. As Denis Salter notes, the exact nature of the text of Tectonic Plates depends on the "cultural/political contexts in which audiences have sought to define it. Art and ideology have indeed proved inseparable" ("State" 27). Tectonic Plates explores, in numerous dimensions, the presence of Europe in American culture, given concrete significance by powerful spatial illusions. A large reflecting pool in the middle of the stage creates remarkably effective possibilities of depth and height, as well as of the deceptiveness of surfaces. A Scottish critic comments: "There's a wonderful fluency in the way he uses images, aural and visual. . . . There's a sequence where someone gives a lecture about European art while icons of European art, particularly pictures by Delacroix [of George Sand and Chopin], are being projected onto sheets of white material that are actually under the surface of the water, so they acquire this shifting quality and you can just imagine the whole of Western culture being submerged and a new continent appearing" (Joyce MacMillan, qtd Feldman 11). The perspective of this critic indicates the polyvalency of Lepage's work. She interprets as a European looking towards America, yet not envisioning the kind of cultural separations which a Québécois audience would find in the imagery of the production. On the other hand, the Canadian as well as the Scottish audience might fail to notice that the alliance of Québec and

Scotland here recalls 'the Old Alliance' against the Vikings, and later against the English (11). The multidimensional experience of the play is also related to the Romantic aesthetic. Instead of an air by Chopin, at the end of Tectonic Plates, there is Jim Morrison, the American contemporary equivalent of the Romantic, and an icon of artistic self-destruction.

Postmodern interculturalism and intertextuality have come to be dominant modes in Québec since 1980. The new aesthetic has effaced old ideological intensities with equally strong reverberations. While there is today considerable experiment in English Canada with imagism, dance theatre, and other interdisciplinary forms of performance, the dramatization of the encounter with the other, which has become a characteristic mode of performance in Québec has less aesthetic significance, it seems, for English Canadians. Among English-Canadian postmodern texts which exploit the play of difference, Frank Moher's The Third Ascent (1988), is of interest here, not only for its exploitation of history and myth, but because, although it is more conventional in its language and creates an illusion of being closely tied to linear history and fact, it explores similar patterns to those which underlie Dubois' exploration of 'the North American.' Moher, like Dubois, uses the Native American and the Oriental to supply the mythical complement to the historicizing Euro-American. The play centres on three climbs at Chief Mountain, Montana, by Henry Stimson, the American Secretary for War at the time of the bombing of Hiroshima. Accompanied by Thomas, an Indian, Stimson makes his final visit to the mountain the occasion to revisit his personal history and its intersection with the history of the United States before and after Hiroshima. Set against the historical content of the play is Stimson's recollection of the eternal spiritual pull to the mountain, on which Thunderbird is supposed to reside, and at the base of which lies a sacred bison skull. Although Stimson had once hoped that the spirit of the mountain would give him

strength in his patriotic duties, it is clear from his insistent rationalization of history that he has failed to assimilate that strength, and that he has also avoided full acceptance of moral responsibility for the events of the war.

Towards the end of Moher's play, the distance of the Japanese perspective on America alters the course of Stimson's process of self-recollection. A flashback scene in which a trusting Japanese boy asks Stimson, visiting Tokyo during the war, if he can return to the United States with him as his servant is followed abruptly by effects which announce the bombing of Hiroshima. All Stimson can do as he confronts the fact of the bombing is to acknowledge his powerlessness in the face of the system: "There is . . . in every system . . . an inertia . . . whereby the possible becomes the inevitable . . . a power in the universe we have not mastered, which masters us" (Moher 74). As Stimson waits for Thunderbird judgment's of history, it is left to Thomas, the Indian, to explain what has happened; and he does so in terms beyond the reach of Stimson's reasoning mind: "But if you go in an' you kill a bunch of people, including the old ones and the children, an' you do it just 'cause . . . just 'cause you can, Stimson. . . . Well, that's another thing. An' that's what hapened to you. You got yourself in a bad war" (65). At the end of the play, Stimson, having accepted his limitations, offers a sacrifice of the sacred bison skull to Thunderbird (who seems to correspond to the Beast in Dubois' play--a sort of pure spirit or soul that holds some promise of regeneration after destruction).

Arguably, the most innovative postmodern English-Canadian theatrical approach to an aesthetic of historical narrative is Hollingsworth's cycle, The History of the Village of the Small Huts (1985 et al.). Hollingsworth attempts no cultural purification or redemption through his aesthetics, but rather uses parodic subversions of historical document and theatrical

tradition through modern media techniques as a form of anti-aesthetic. As Michèle White points out, the staging eliminates all "physical reference to time and place on the stage," concentrating on tableaux vivants staged within a black box (signifying interior space) to intensify the artifice of the theatrical experience of documented historical figures and events: "Hollingsworth uses parody to package centuries of historical fact and personages for present-day consumption. . . . When [he] puts the audience into the middle of the language rights, separatist, federal/provincial powers and free trade issues of Laurier's day, his ironic commentary forces us to associate it with the same issues that face us now" ("History" 53). Hollingsworth's work illustrates Hutcheon's arguments that "modern artists seem to have recognized that change entails continuity, and have offered us a model for the process of transfer or reorganization of that past. Their double-voiced parodic forms play on the tensions created by this historical awareness . . . they desire to 'refunction' those forms to their own needs" (qtd White 53).

If Hutcheon is correct, and 'refunctioning' the past is an important agenda for the postmodern artist, then arguably there is little to choose between the parodist and the kind of romantic irony which is found in the work of Lepage. Both forms of postmodern performance aim to appropriate the master-texts of history and mythology in order to subvert them and to privilege the power of the imaginary shared in performance by the actors and their spectators.

The perspectives of most Canadian playwrights engaged in intertextual explorations of culture and history are naturally North American. The expatriate playwright in Canada, however, may choose to proceed from an external point of view, and to introduce languages other than English and French to the text. Such is the case with the work of Alberto Kurapel, a Chilean expatriot, founder of Teatro d'Exilio, whose work has been performed in Montreal

since 1974. His performance text, La Bruta Interference (1994), in Spanish and only secondarily in English, concerns the history of colonialist invasion of Peru. Kurapel's text uses mime, video, and slide projections to dramatize the destruction of pre-Columbian civilizations. The piece is a narrative of dispossession intended to have personal as well as historical dimensions.

Kurapel uses a prefatory quotation from Arthur Kroker which admirably describes the postmodern historical space: "An apparent self whose memories can be fantastic reveries of a past that never really existed, because it occupies a purely virtual space--the space of an accidental topology and seductive contiguity of aesthetic effects. No longer a private subject in a public space, but a public self in a private imaginary time: a parallel self among many others drifting aimlessly, but no less violently for that, in parallel worlds" (qtd Kurapel 135). In effect, the virtual space of most Canadian postmodern historical explorations can be said to be the private fantasies of writers and performers, made public through reference to "accidental topology." The attachment to the objectivity of the document and the polyphonic voices of history, which characterized the seventies, has, for the most part, come to be rejected in favour of the subjective aesthetic of intertextual, highly spatialized explorations of historical time.

IV: Postmodern Performance of Self

The performance of the self has become an increasingly important genre during the eighties and nineties. In order to avoid the pitfalls of self-indulgence, as Ann Wilson has cautioned, the practice of this form of representation requires a fine sense of the conventions of performance: "In . . . auto-performance, the otherness which allows for identity--the process of recognizing the distinction of self from other--involves two elements, the performer who

becomes her own other by creating a character out of the self, and the audience which will watch this character performed by the person. What is at stake in auto-performance often seems to be the sense of personal authenticity: "I am because you are watching me be" ("Bored" 5). If there is anything in Wilson's account which distinguishes 'auto-performance' from the old monologue (as anthologized by Mailhot), it is the issue of authenticity. The postmodern performance of subjectivity demands a more assiduous questioning of the self/audience relationship; and such performance is worthwhile only when it becomes the occasion to question the very notion of how the self can be represented at all.

In the case of Dubois' Ne blâmez jamais les bédouins and Lepage's Vinci, there is such a keen sense of self-invention and such a full exploration of cultural contradiction that there is little to divide these exceptional performance pieces from the dramatic script which calls for a full cast. Each explores cultural landscapes by means of a fully dramatized exploitation of the actor's resources--in Dubois' case, the emphasis being on voice, while in Lepage's, the play of appearances on the surface of the body is of primary importance. Both plays defy the limitations of the social self to convert the performer into the narrative which is enacted.

The performance of self often engages in the exploration of the dislocations produced by cultural displacement. Michael M.J. Fischer writes:

Contemporary ethnic recreations are given impetus by the fear not merely of being levelled into identical industrial hominids, but of losing an ethical (celestial) vision that might serve to renew the self and ethnic group as well as contribute to a richer, powerfully dynamic pluralist society. . . . What . . . seem initially to be individualistic autobiographical searchings turn out to be revelations of traditions, re-collections of disseminated identities and of the divine

sparks from the breaking of the vessels. These are a modern version of the Pythagorean arts of memory; retrospection to gain a vision for the future. . . . The searches also turn out to be powerful critiques of several contemporary rhetorics of domination. (198)

Such ethnographic narratives as Fischer refers to are relatively common in Canada, expressing as they do the condition of many individuals who have lost links to the communities and the languages in which they first learned values. For some individuals, the losses have accrued over many generations of successive displacement. The relation established between a performer who explores those elements of subjectivity erased by the dominant culture and the audience is often the site of the recovery of power to overcome the silence which the dominant culture appears to exact of the individual. Finally, the alienation of subjectivity, while it is often related to cultural otherness, is (as Beckett was fully aware) a matter more fundamental than any cultural specifics. Many of the best narratives of self dramatized on the contemporary stage, however, derive from the act of performance a new sense of integration based on a reconciliation of subjective and objective poles which the audience receives as a renewal of the contract between the individual and the community.

Among the most prominent of narratives of the culturally divided self which have been created in the theatrical context are Djanet Sears's Afrika Solo (1990), Maria Campbell and Linda Griffiths' Jessica (1989), and Guillermo Verdecchia's Fronteras Americanas (1993), each of which explores the self in relation to the dominant culture and to ethnic background. Sears describes her play as follows: "Afrika Solo falls into the category that Audre Lorde calls auto-mythography. The play is both fictional and autobiographical, loosely based upon a year long journey that I took across the breadth and some of the length of Africa. A journey that

changed my perceptions of the world . . . that changed my perception of me in the world" (Afterword, Afrika 95). Sears, born in England of a Jamaican mother and a Guyanan father, and now a Canadian citizen, could not claim either of her parents' countries as her own, and wished to reclaim a relationship to the common culture of both, that of Africa. Each stage of the journey to Africa is dramatized so that the audience shares the sense of her distancing herself from one cultural context in order to arrive at the knowledge she seeks. After she recounts her experiences in Africa and faces a return to Canada, she says, "I was going home--to Canada. Yeh. I had all my history on my back. The base of my whole culture would be forever with me. And funny thing is, it always has been. In my thighs, my behind, my hair, my lips" (91). This is not the form of the self-recognition which she has acquired from Africa, however; what emerges from the script is the sense that she has acquired her own heart and soul, which in being hers, and not the property of the dominant culture, she can call African, because it is her own subjective affections which make them so.

Jessica contains less overt optimism than Sears's play, and considerable self-hate. As described in The Book of Jessica, the collaboration by which Griffiths converted Campbell's autobiographical Halfbreed into a dramatic script brought considerable difficulty, intersubjective and intercultural communication constituting something of a battlefield. The integration and cultural reconciliation of Jessica, whose story parallels Campbell's own, are effected through a shamanic process under the guidance of an old woman, in which her various spirits are represented both animistically and dramatically as masks of transformation. Among the spirits is a white one, a female who appears as a unicorn. The others are more traditional animal spirits. All appear both as spirits and as characters, so that the interaction of the soul of Jessica and her behaviour and circumstances is apparent to the audience. Joanne Tompkins

writes, "The process of accessing the power is an exercise in controlling the spiritual 'bundle' . . . and learning how to balance it with the non-spiritual side of life. When Jessica learns to control her powers, she understands that until now she has just been 'a face with no soul', a spiritual vacuum, and the spirits' presence in her life introduces her to a larger identity" (37). Like Sears's play, Jessica is a spiritual autobiography before it is an ethnographic statement: although ethnicity is clearly the source of the sense of alienation in both plays, it is converted ultimately into the true identity of the self. Both Sears and Campbell retreat from identification with the other--that is, with their inscription in the dominant culture--to move towards self-possession.

In her account of Afrika Solo and The Book of Jessica, Joanne Tompkins refers to Wilson Harris' novel of postcolonialism, The Infinite Rehearsal, to affirm her view that both scripts "exploit the metaphor of theatre and rehearsal in their plays, which infinitely rehearse the construction of personal and national selfhood"; in addition, both plays "force a revision--or re-acting--of the traditional paradigm(s) of Canadian identity" (35). The theatrical metaphor of identity as a self-conscious performance for the other rather than for oneself is equally applicable to Guillermo Verdecchia's Fronteras Americanas. Verdecchia, also known for his work as Daniel Brooks's collaborator in The Noam Chomsky Lectures, explores his own identity here as an Argentinian living in Canada, through the narrativization of himself in terms of cultural clichés about Latin Americans. As in The Noam Chomsky Lectures, slides are an important part of the performance: "Slide: The West is no longer west. The old binary models have been replaced by a border dialectic of ongoing flux. We now inhabit a social universe in constant motion, a moving cartography with a floating culture and a fluctuating sense of self. Guillermo Gómez-Peña" (70). Voluminous factual and pseudo-factual material

figure in this play, a text dense with cultural references.

Verdecchia uses two personae, one himself, the other a comic stereotype of the Latin-American, with the appropriate accent, called Wideload, who provides satirical commentary on relations between Latins and Saxons: "Now I doan want you to get the impression that I'm picking on you Saxons. . . . I have de greatest respect for your culture . . . and you know, every culture has its own fertility dances, its own dance of sexual joy--you people hab de Morris Dance, . . . and hey, you go to a Morris Dance Festival and it's de Latinos who look silly" (42). Verdecchia's own process is somewhat like Sears's, in that it involves a journey to South America: "After an absence of almost fifteen years I am going home. Going Home. . . . my mantra: I Am Goin Home--all will be resolved, dissolved, revealed. I will claim my place in the universe when I Go Home" (36). He parodies his own elaborate preparations for the journey, depicting himself less as a native than as a tourist. The conclusion to his process, as might be expected, is hardly the finding of a soul country, but rather the acceptance of the border as the real metaphor for existence. Wideload appeals to the audience: "I want you please to throw out the metaphor of Latin America as North America's 'backyard' because your backyard is now a border and the metaphor is now made flesh" (76). Together the two characters contemplate the totality of the Americas, before Verdecchia announces his position: "I am learning to live at the border. I have called of the Border Patrol. I am a hyphenated person but I am not falling apart" (77). As Urjo Kareda states in his foreword to Fronteras Americanas, "it is the border within himself that must be crossed" (11).

In contrast to the self-referential narratives which explore ethnicity as identity, Daniel McIvor's House ignores all such external matters, to concentrate on a purer, if madder self-referentiality. Victor, the sole character, tells tales of his tedious job, his ordinary family, and

his (therapy) 'group.' He also tells stories which are moral fables separate from his own personal narrative. The term house refers not only to his own enclosure, but to the theatre house before which he performs. As Wallace comments, "House draws attention to the way in which interpretation figures in the construction of human subjectivity by addressing the audience's overt participation in the creation of Victor's character . . . [but] he resists their interpretation . . . by refusing to accept the subject positions traditionally assigned to theatrical characters. Concomitantly, he forces the audience to question its own position in the performance matrix" (Introduction, House Humans 10). Wallace places considerable emphasis on the innovative techniques which he perceives in McIvor's "disruption of audience expectation, [his] reliance on reversal, the decentring of the speaker, the subversion of traditions, the use of self-referentiality, a refusal to end," and asks if these "constitute a new set of theatrical techniques" (14). The distinction which Wallace detects between "performance and prose" in the play raises the question whether indeed postmodern narrativization is as innovative as it would like to appear to be (14). None of the techniques listed by Wallace seem to be anything that Hamlet cannot be found doing, let alone Beckett's characters, or even the monologists in Mailhot's anthology. Resistance to interpretation in performance is as old as stand-up comedy and older.

V: Interculturalism

Camille Camilleri states, "L'ordre culturel est artificiel' au sens propre du terme, c'est-à-dire qu'il est fait par l'art de l'homme. Il est distinct de l'ordre naturel" (qtd Pavis 15). Lévi-Stauss succinctly defines the opposition which culture inscribes in human behaviour: "tout ce qui est universel, chez l'homme, relève de l'ordre de la nature et se caractérise par la sponta-

néité, tout ce qui est astreint à une norme appartient à la culture et présente les attributs du relatif et du particulier" (qtd 15). Neither Camilleri nor Lévi-Strauss extends his theory to the definition of only certain cultures as 'spontaneous' and others as 'constrained'; however, it is evident that the practice of projecting the attributes suppressed in one's own culture onto that/those of others is common enough. Culture thus divides the individual from his/her own nature, and creates barriers to accepting the other. In a society composed of people trained from childhood in divergent cultural and linguistic practices, "il y a soi et il y a l'Autre, mais ne sommes nous irréductiblement l'Autre de quelqu'un" (Vigeant 42). The single cultural issue common to all members of a heterogeneous society, as Louise Vigeant argues, is the question of what factors one chooses to employ in creating a self-image and an image of the other. For most people, it is a vexatious problem, fraught with other issues which come to bear on cultural relativity, the most pressing being that of power. When culture is the predominant defining factor in self-identity, social relations tend to become hierarchical, and the division between private and public behaviour may become excessively incisive. At the same time, nature, though denied, is always present and potential in cultural relations. The arts of performance are a public reminder that behaviour consists not simply in the operations of cultural codes, but in the interplay of culture and spontaneity, or nature itself: "Au théâtre, la scène et l'acteur jouent sur cette ambiguïté du milieu naturel et de l'objet artificiel construit" (Pavis 15). At the centre of performance is the actor, the crucial element of the ambiguous text. To the extent that the actor can behave in contradiction to his/her own training and can undo socially prescribed repressions, the body of the actor is capable of being the site of the undoing of acculturation. In viewing the actor who dissolves cultural inscriptions, spectators are made aware that their own nature is concealed beneath acquired habits. Furthermore, one

becomes aware that the other, too, is 'constructed' in a cultural code, and is possibly concealing as much as he/she reveals.

The more complex the communication problems of cultural diversity appear to be, the more it is necessary to be able to represent the common ground on which all members of the greater group stand. "Mere pluralism," as Frederick Turner argues, is not the answer to integration: "It requires no change in one's own or one's neighbour's perspective; indeed it is threatened by change, especially by any attempt to understand and imagine, and thus incorporate the contents of another box. . . . Its tolerance of other world views could well be described as neglect or even as a kind of intellectual cowardice. At its worst . . . [it may be] an abdication or shirking of the great human enterprise of mutual knowledge, communication (literally, 'making one together'), and mutual transformation" (96). It is necessary to social change and integration to look beyond pluralism for ways in which human powers "beneath all cultural difference" can be activated (96).

Such powers are not mysterious--they exist already in any environment. According to Turner, they are "language, the fundamental genres of the arts (musical tonality, the dramatic/performative ability, poetic meter, visual representation, dance) . . . moral instincts, religious/mystical ability, and the scientific rationality by which we learn to speak the language of nature" (96-7). Instead of the series of "black boxes" which is pluralism, Turner envisages "all culture and all world views" participating as characters in an "ongoing drama," in which there are marriages and offspring--ideally, the fundamental condition of mankind (97). Turner's rhetoric is typical of the interculturalist perspective. Idealistic as it may be, it mirrors the form of the representation of cultural processes which is to be found, for example, in The Dragons Trilogy, or even Vie et mort du roi boîteux, despite its derisory melodramatics.

Theatre and the actor's performance are not the equivalents of life and social behaviour but their reflections and representations, structured by the combination of convention with the imagination and understanding of the creators of the text. Where there is freedom from the constraints of a rigid performance tradition--and in Canada, the work of the past thirty years has been to oppose the value of the framework of such a tradition--it is the values of artists themselves which determine the social vision presented on the stage. Where there is inflexibility or division, there may be other possibilities in the realm of representation. The rejection of the constraints of nationalist ideology in the eighties in Canada, after a decade of its being used to define culture and theatrical practice, is evidence enough that the imaginative flights of the theatre which has since been developed are not mere escapism, but a striving after a means to overcome the cultural restraints on thought as well as invention. The postmodern theatre which avows that it is anti-ideological is nevertheless political, in that, at its best, it aims to find a new basis for civic unity. It is not merely nationalism which is rejected as the basis for unity, but ideology itself, which is viewed as the source of division.

It was recognized by Artaud, and again by the counter-culture of the sixties, that language oppresses when it obscures the pure gesture of being. As Kitasawa reflects, strictly rationalized language is capable only of "the inventions of ideologies, pseudomyths, and mystification" (167). The questioning of language, text, authority, and reasoning aims low, on occasion, providing nothing more profound than a justification for avoidance of the problems of communication and commitment. At its best, the project of disrupting conventional structures of meaning is a sign, perhaps, of a humility which permits receptivity to thought. The recurring postmodern figures, the Oriental and the North American Native, tend to signal such humility in the face of rationalism and drives to power, and to assist in defining the balance

which is necessary for survival. The rejection of the word in favour of the image, or the danced or mimed gesture--even the revival of interest in opera--are all means for actors and other creators of performance text to undo culture in order to recreate it. And, after all, if there is to be any truth in expression, performers cannot falsify themselves by speaking in a language which denies nature. The first priority of English-Canadians, Québécois, Canadian Natives, and women, too, as they have approached the possibilities presented to them by self-representation in performance, has been to throw off the images cast upon them by the language of the estranging other. For the 'group' the recreation of language is inevitably ideological. For the individual isolated by cultural difference, the short circuit provided by ideology is less available. For each individual, the uncertainties inherent in the decision to communicate across cultural boundaries are founded in personal matrices of value and experience.

Postscript

In 1994, Michel Vaïs and Philippe Wickham, of Jeu, conducted a round table discussion with five theatrical writers of various national origins who live and work in Montréal: Pan Bouyoucas (Greece), Abla Farhoud (Lebanon), Khaldoun Imam (Syria), Alberto Kurapel (Chile), and Marco Micone (Italy). Also present was Eva Michailoff, a Bulgarian, and the coordinator of the program of intercultural activities instituted at Théâtre d'Aujourd'hui, under the direction of Michelle Rossignol. The meeting of these writers to discuss their concerns is an index of the changes which have occurred, not only in Montréal, but in the country as a whole. While each sustains a sense of cultural isolation, they create their texts now in an artistic milieu sympathetic to intercultural work. Like the Théâtre d'Aujourd'hui (one of the cradles of Québécois cultural nationalism), the renovated Salles du Gesù, under the direction of its Jesuit proprietors, has become prominent in the city-wide movement in Montréal to encourage interculturalist artistic projects (Wickham).

The discourse of these Montréal playwrights, of diverse cultural origins and equally diverse artistic attitudes, is itself a drama of cultural change and self-questioning. The questions that define their work do not necessarily warrant final answers. Why does one write? Would one have written had one stayed in one's own country? Does one use the mother tongue, or French, or English, or all of them? Does one suppress cultural attitudes associated with the original language? Does one address the political issues of the original country which may have caused the writer's exile? Does one criticize conditions and attitudes in Québec? Does one locate a script here or there? Every choice is an act of self-definition. It is, at the same time, a definition of the other: every decision to suppress experience for the sake of the

dominant culture implicitly endorses an aspect of that culture's limitations.

Possibly the most probing question raised in this discussion among playwrights is that concerning the distinction between artistic self-creation and the process of social integration. The two are often in conflict with each other, regardless of the writer's origins. The resolution of the conflict is itself perhaps the very subject of intercultural drama, as Khaldoun Imam's account of the process of cultural passage suggests: "A mon avis, l'intégration passe par quatre étapes: l'exorcisme, la confrontation, le dialogue intérieur réfléchi et finalement, l'adoption d'un nouveau système de valeurs" (Vaïs and Wickham 14). Imam's recitation of these stages of self-creation affirms that integration is the contrary of the attempt to falsify oneself in the image of the dominant culture: "je crois qu'on ne peut jamais devenir Québécois pure laine, c'est vraiment impossible" (14).

Interculturalism resists definition. It is practice only, completely dependent on the moral and aesthetic sense that individuals bring to their projects. Cultural origins, as Alberto Kurapel rightly observes, do not define the individual consciousness (Vaïs and Wickham 16). Memory and experience are the true determinants of processes of self-creation. The lived life, too individual to be defined by any combination of cultures, is the resource which gives rise to the form of the work, and, in consequence, to the nature of the change that the work effects on cultures.

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