The Oral Stage:
A Comparative Study of Franco-Ontarian Drama from 1970 to 2000

By

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fulfillment of the requirements for the degree of

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Abstract:

Title: The Oral Stage: A Comparative Study of Franco-Ontarian Drama from 1970 to 2000

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This dissertation involves the study of the relationship between orality and Franco-Ontarian Theatre and more specifically the way in which elements of oral practices (such as story-telling) have been adapted and transformed by Franco-Ontarian playwrights, actors and directors, to produce a specific poetics of performance that evolved exclusively within Franco-Ontarian society during the last 30 years. The corpus is drawn from those plays written and/or performed between 1970 and 2000 which exhibit characteristics of oral culture, as defined by the works of such scholars as Mircea Eliade, Arnold van Gennep, Richard Turner, Walter Ong and Richard Bauman.

Our study begins by analyzing the structural and thematic links between the oral-based 'People's Theatre' of the 1970s and the text-based dramaturgy of the 1980s and 1990s. This dissertation is therefore an interdisciplinary study which takes into account a comparative approach to theatre studies, integrating notions borrowed from theatre anthropology, dramaturgy, theatre history and the study of identity forming practices which could be linked to post-colonial studies, although we have not taken into account current post-colonial theories in this thesis.

Firstly, we have identified the plays performed in the 1970s by the Théâtre du Nouvel-Ontario (TNO) and the Théâtre d'la Corvée as part of an existing Western

trend called “People’s Theatre.” As a form of performance that echoed the themes and strategies of this “People’s Theatre,” Franco-Ontarian drama of the 1970s was a decentralized, corporeal, oral-based theatre that appeared in non-traditional spaces and was aimed almost exclusively at a local Francophone, non urban public who were, for the most part, unfamiliar with the theatre.

Some changes took place in the following decades. The theatre of the 1980s and 1990s, represented by the work of directors, writers and actors such as Jean Marc Dalpé, Brigitte Haentjens, Michel Ouellette and Robert Marinier, is neither oral-based nor is it intended for an exclusively Franco-Ontarian audience. However, as it shares elements which one finds in the earlier tendencies attributed to “People’s Theatre,” it therefore exhibits discursive and thematic categories that suggest traces of orality, more appropriately designated as “oraliture” by Maximilien Laroche, a concept that suggest a transitional state of literary and/or dramaturgical production that lies between written and oral culture. It is this ‘residual’ orality which constitutes the main body of our analysis.

The thesis concludes by suggesting that current transformations of the Franco-Ontarian population, the arrival of French speaking immigrants from many non-Western countries, will no doubt contribute to a renewal of the expectations and creative possibilities of audiences and artists alike, opening the way not for the ‘death’ of Franco-Ontarian culture, as some critics have suggested, but for the flowering of new forms of artistic expression, of which the theatre will no doubt be one of the most important.

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INTRODUCTION:

This dissertation examines the relationship between orality and Franco-Ontarian Theatre and more specifically the way in which oral strategies have been adapted and transformed by Franco-Ontarian playwrights, actors and directors, to produce an exclusively Franco-Ontarian poetics of performance. It first locates a new Franco-Ontarian Theatre of the 1970s within the rubric of an existing Western trend of “People’s Theatre,” an oral-based theatre that was mandated with the goal of inciting a political and cultural consciousness within its target audience. Franco-Ontarian People’s Theatre, however, maintains its originality, not only through its cultural specificity, but also through the incorporation of various elements of “orality” handed down from its rich tradition of story-telling. In the 1980s and 1990s, the practitioners veer away from the politically charged People’s Theatre movement to create a text-based dramaturgy that deals exclusively with Franco-Ontarian themes and issues. However, the later practitioners nevertheless maintain a structural and thematic link with their predecessors by transposing the oral elements of story-telling to the dramatic texts.

The thesis examines a corpus of fifteen plays from French speaking Ontario spanning the period from 1970 to 2000. A relatively small body of work such as this equally involves a similarly small body of critical reaction. The re-birth of Franco-Ontarian Theatre in the 1970s in Sudbury and Vanier has been well documented in works by Paul-François Sylvestre (1999), Robert Dickson

(2000), Joël Beddows (2001, 2002), René Dionne (1991, 1997), Marcel Fortin (1986), Paul Gay (1978, 1986), Allain Mathé (1990) and Michel Courchesne (1987). These writers discuss the socio-political circumstances surrounding Franco-Ontarian culture in the 1970s, and how these conditions illustrated the need for a new type of dramaturgy that would both define that culture and provide a theatre that the Franco-Ontarians could truly call their own. In their discussion of this “new theatre” the writers also credit André Paement as its founder; Michel Courchesne, in fact, goes so far as to declare that Paement is the “father of Francophonie in Ontario” (Courchesne 145). However, none of these writers, as of yet, has located this manifestation of Franco-Ontarian artistic endeavour within the category of oral-based People’s Theatre that emerged at that period in various areas around the Western world.

Other works such as Gaston Tremblay’s *Prendre la parole* (1995), Fernand Dorais’s *Mais qui a tué André* (1978) and François Paré’s *Théories de la fragilité* (1994) and *Les littératures de l’exiguité* (1992), along with essays appearing in various anthologies, discuss Franco-Ontarian theatre, not as an object of study in its own right, but rather as a means of analyzing the question of Franco-Ontarian identity. In these cases, the Franco-Ontarians are viewed as a minority people and their theatre constitutes one of the environmental conditions which inform the questions of individual and collective identities.

Mariel O’Neill-Karch’s *Théâtre franco-ontarien: Espaces ludiques* (1992), on the other hand, analyzes seven representative plays in order to demonstrate how the Franco-Ontarian playwrights have used and defined their

geographical space as a means of identifying their specificity within the perimeters of theatre. Similar structural and/or thematic analyses have been conducted by Dominique Lafon and Stéphanie Nutting in *Les théâtres professionnels du Canada francophone* (eds. Joël Beddows and Hélène Beauchamp 2001). Lafon discusses the development of Michel Ouellette's drama in terms of how the collective is defined via the representation of the individual. Nutting, for her part, discusses how in Dalpé's *Le chien*, characters and animals are symbolically hybridized via their actions and language. Thus the "mad dog" is a representation of the characters depicted in the play.

Joel Beddows's Ph.D dissertation, *L'institution théâtrale franco-ontarien (1971-1991): Entre mission communautaire et ambition professionnelle* (2003), along with his interviews and essays that appear in *Les théâtres professionnels du Canada francophone* (2001), discusses how Franco-Ontarian theatre has evolved from a poorly funded amateur endeavor to a dynamic and successful professional institution. His thesis thus necessarily deals with theatre as a social structure, emphasizing the struggles in adapting stage practices and performance aspects that have veered away from the local concerns of the early dramatists towards those that reflect the concerns of a professional theatre community.

It is both interesting and ironic that while François Paré, for example, mentions "orality" as a key defining feature of Franco-Ontarian theatre (1992, 1994), neither he nor anyone else has taken the time either to adequately define orality or to discuss how its concepts may be applied to these plays. Indeed, only one essay comes remotely close to doing so. Micheal J. Sidnell's "Mode narratif

et mode dramatique: réflexions à partir de la pièce « *Le chien* » de Jean Marc Dalpé” (1991), speaks of how oral narration is privileged over dramatic action. However, Sidnell’s essay speaks of narrative in terms of the text-based rhetoric of Aristotle and Bertolt Brecht as opposed to locating the drama’s narrativity within the rubric of the “traditional art of story-telling,” that is, as a facet of “orality” as defined by the proponents of “oral theory.”

In this thesis we attempt to remedy this apparent gap in the current research by framing our remarks within theories of oral culture. We will argue that Franco-Ontarian theatre underwent a “re-birth” in the 1970s that began as an oral-based theatre of the people. By the 1980s, this particular form of drama had eventually evolved into a text-based theatre that maintained various patterns of “residual orality,” by which we mean the appearance of various structural and thematic markers that may be categorized within the field of oral theory but are nevertheless transposed to the written dramatic texts. Thus, the oral-based People’s Theatre of the Théâtre du Nouvel-Ontario¹ and la Corvée provided the structural and thematic foundations for the Franco-Ontarian playwrights that worked in the 1980s to the present.

Although dramatic performance itself may be seen as closely related to an “oral” art form that is meant to be spoken, the “theory of orality” goes beyond the notion of the spoken word to include traditional art forms, such as folktales, myths, fairytales, and parables that do not have their genesis in a written text. Until recently, however, this classification has brought with it certain questions, one of which has to do with the very use of the locution “oral literature.”

¹Further references to the Théâtre du Nouvel-Ontario will appear as TNO.

“Literature” means that which is written; the addition of “oral” thus would appear to make the compound an oxymoron. More recently, however, Maximilien Laroche has coined the term “oraliture”² to indicate a process of transition; it identifies a form of literature that emerged from a culture that can no longer be called “oral” but which retains the traces of orality and it is these traces, these forms of “residual orality” that we are attempting to identify.

Furthermore, the term “oral” also has certain negative connotations. Oral cultures have generally been defined by Western scholars as those cultures whose language has not yet evolved into writing. In other words, oral cultures are “illiterate” cultures, and this further implies a certain lack of knowledge connoting primitive, uncultured and unlearned societies. Part of the problem lies in the Colonial prejudice that fosters the notion that written knowledge is the preamble to all other knowledge. Consequently, to be illiterate is to be excluded not only from reading and writing but also from all knowledge that the “literate” Western cultures impart through writing: geography, history, science and literature. Thus, nineteenth and early twentieth century scholars have chosen to see “oral

² Maximilien Laroche actually uses the case of theatre to demonstrate how orality and text-based literature are combined to create what he refers to as “oraliture.” As he explains: il faut distinguer l’oraliture de la littérature mais observer aussi dans l’un et l’autre cas une évolution parallèle qui n’exclut nullement l’utilisation des mêmes procédés techniques. Par le fait même il s’établit une relation entre ces deux types de production artistique qui invite moins à les opposer en les distinguant qu’à considérer dans une oeuvre particulière leur articulation, superposition ou surimpression, pour parler en termes de photographie [...] En fait oralité et littéralité, loin de s’exclure, se combinent. A preuve : le théâtre ! (1991 : 17)

[we must distinguish between “oraliture” and literature, but we must also acknowledge a parallel evolution in both cases where the same technical procedures are used. The very fact that there is an established relation between these two artistic productions implies that we should not distinguish them one from the other, but rather discuss how one is superimposed onto the other, to use the terms of photography [...] In effect, orality and literature, do not exclude one another; on the contrary, they are combined. The proof of this lies in theatre!] (all translations are mine unless otherwise indicated)

literature” as but an appendage to text-based literature and thus not worthy of serious consideration. As Richard Bauman explains:

Scholars in literature departments operate within a frame of reference dominated by the canons of elite, written, Western literary traditions and texts, which tends to restrict consideration of oral literature to a search for sources and analogues of more cultivated literature or to such forms as the prettified versions of traditional Child ballads rendered by such cultivated poets as Sir Walter Scott (Bauman 1-2).

This has led to an inability to understand the true complexity of what we might call “oral” structures, since these structures have not been studied in and of themselves; rather, they have been placed within the framework of text-based literature. As Bauman further explains, the nineteenth-century conceptions of “folk” society

have established an image of oral literatures as simple, formless, lacking in artistic quality and complexity, the collective expression of unsophisticated peasants and primitives constrained by tradition and the weight of social norms against individual creativity of expression (Bauman 7).

Bauman, to give one example, has attempted to remedy this misconception by not limiting his research to the printed text. For example, Bauman deals specifically with what he calls the “narrative performance”-- a verbal act which unites text, narrated event and narrative event (Bauman 7). In doing so, he discovers inherent structures that are exclusive to the story-telling event. Thus, as he explains, he succeeds in “discovering and elucidating the essential artfulness of oral literature, finding elegance of form in the ‘formless’ and the complexity in the primitive” (Bauman 8).

By re-examining Franco-Ontarian drama in light of Bauman’s theories of orality, as well as others, we hope to shed new light on the plays and the evolution of their recurring structural and thematic elements that were formerly understood as either various modes of theatricality or artistic license.

The thesis is divided into three chapters. The first chapter defines the “re-birth” of Franco-Ontarian theatre in the 1970s by locating it within the context of an oral-based People’s Theatre that appeared to be taking place at the same time in various areas in and around North America and Europe. This is followed by an analysis of the corresponding theatrical elements (akin to People’s Theatre) found in the early Franco-Ontarian plays.

The second and third chapters involve a detailed study of the structures and themes of what is now referred to as “orality” and how they manifest themselves as recurring elements in the Franco-Ontarian plays. The second and third chapters thus take the form of a comparative study between the oral

elements of People's Theatre and those found in the later text-based theatre of the 1980s and 1990s.

Chapter Two concerns the structures of orality that are grounded in the complex notion of time. It begins with a discussion of oral temporality using the theories of Ellen Basso (1985) and Serge Ouaknine (2003). On the one hand, Basso explains that the conception of oral temporality is cyclical in that the past tends to repeat itself rather than follow a teleological course, progressing to a form of finality. On the other hand, as Ouaknine explains, oral time is also transcendent rather than horizontal, meaning that the past, in various ways, often invades and imposes itself upon the present, manifesting itself through an immaterial presence that surpasses the material world. In the plays, this is reflected in three ways. We have divided the cyclical notion of time into two apparently similar but nevertheless distinctive modes of representation that we refer to, solely for the purposes of this thesis, as "cyclical recurrence," when events from the past are repeated in the present; and "cyclical return," when characters are forced to return either physically or psychologically to the past in order to revisit its events. The transcendent notion of time, furthermore, is reflected in what we call "manifestations of the past." These are either living or dead characters that emerge from the past and interact with the living characters that occupy the present.

The discussion of time is followed by a discussion of story-telling. Using the theories of Richard Bauman, the thesis discusses the act of story-telling as a performance event which contains its own distinctive structures that differentiate

it from conventional/Western dramatic performances and from written texts.

While Bauman limits his discussion to the traditional story-tellers of rural Texas, his theories may be easily applied to the performances conducted by the traditional “conteur” in French Canada as well as in other parts of the World such as Louisiana, Brittany, the Antilles, and the Maghreb. In Franco-Ontarian drama, the story-telling act is presented in three modes: “personal anecdote,” “oral history” and the traditional story or “conte.” We eventually come to understand that the act of story-telling, as it appears on the Franco-Ontarian stage, functions within the parameters of oral temporality as defined by Ouaknine and Basso. Time is again cyclical and transcendent since living characters are forced to revisit the past and dead characters invade the present through the narration and enactment of events.

Chapter Three concerns the oral theme of regeneration as it is reflected in the plays. This chapter is subdivided into two parts. The first concerns the appropriation, desacrilization and theatricalization of the Catholic oral ritual of “confession.” It further discusses the “manifestations of the past” and the stories they tell in terms of their dramatic function: their symbolic role in the development of the plot. This section explains how time may be temporarily stopped through an act in which an individual purges him or herself of the past through the process of retelling its events. Thus, the telling of stories is provided with a function in which the characters are given the opportunity to free themselves of the past that haunts them and, in turn, regenerate themselves. In the plays, this symbolic act of confession is represented in three ways. The first,

which we refer to as “failed confession,” demonstrates a failure on the part of the characters to purge the past. The second, which we refer to as “confession and absolution,” demonstrates how other characters succeed in doing so. Finally, the third way, which we refer to as “confession as therapy,” demonstrates how the ritual of confession is further transposed from its traditional setting and transformed into its modern counterpart, psycho-therapy.

The second part of Chapter Three discusses notions brought forth by Mircea Eliade and Victor Turner concerning the cyclical patterns of traditional myth and how these are adopted by the Franco-Ontarian dramatists. These are divided into two categories that include “rites of passage” and “cosmogony and eschatology.” On the one hand, “rites of passage” present an individual’s separation from the community. This separation takes the form of a psychic journey in which he/she undergoes a symbolic transformation that causes him/her to re-evaluate the ties to the community that was left behind. In turn, this prompts a return on the neophyte’s part in which a re-integration is sought. While rites of passage involve a cyclical journey of an individual, “cosmogony and eschatology” reflect the circular patterns of a community. In effect, they represent what may be seen as the symbolic end and subsequent renewal of the Franco-Ontarian people.

The thesis is also complemented by four annexes. Annex I involves a synopsis of all the plays discussed as well as all the relevant information concerning the plays’ staging and their critical reception. It is provided as a reference so that the reader may consult a given play’s narrative, and place it within the historical and theatrical context of its author. Annexes II and III include

interviews conducted with Robert Marinier and Michel Ouellette. Among many other possibilities, these two practitioners were chosen to illustrate two contrasting approaches to the creation of this particular type of dramaturgy. Marinier defines himself, first and foremost, as a performer while Ouellette is primarily a writer. Thus, among other things, Marinier discusses the challenges he faced when transposing his stories to the theatrical stage. When discussing his one-man performance of *L'insomnie*, for instance, Marinier explains the difficulties of portraying several characters in an empty space in such a way as to not confuse the audience because there is no recourse to costume changes or props. In essence, Marinier thus describes the processes undertaken by the storyteller.

Ouellette's interview, on the other hand, reflects the approach that a writer must take in order to transpose oral time and history to a written text. He thus discusses "oral time" in his plays in terms of "dramatic situations" where the present is put "on hold" in order for the past to be heard. Furthermore, the interview also reflects a writer's approach to the appropriation and dramatization of oral history, the undocumented history of the Franco-Ontarian people.

Annex IV presents a theatrical bibliography or "theatrography" that traces the theatrical activities of the Théâtre du Nouvel-Ontario from its founding in 1970 to the present. On the one hand, this research traces the career paths of the key players in Franco-Ontarian theatre. André Paiement, Brigitte Haentjens, Jean Marc Dalpé, Michel Ouellette and Robert Marinier were all involved, at some time during their careers, with TNO. On the other hand, this chronology of

productions enables readers to see TNO's three-fold evolution: from People's Theatre, as seen in Paiement's work in the early 1970s, to a continued commitment to orality, as exemplified in story-based productions such as *Ti-Jean de mon pays* (1976), *Ti-Jean fin voleur* (1977); along with dramatized poetry readings by Dalpé in 1982, 1983 and 1984, to the text-based theatre of Dalpé and Ouellette in the 1980s and 1990s. When seen in this context, the influence of the early oral structures upon the later text-based practitioners is very clear.

As a whole, the thesis reflects a multidisciplinary approach to the subject. On the one hand, it is historical in that it traces the evolution of Franco-Ontarian theatre from what we call its "rebirth" in the 1970s to the present. Furthermore, it is a dramaturgical study that discusses the theatrical techniques used in the presentation of the written plays. It also has a two-fold comparative element. On the one hand, it compares Franco-Ontarian theatre to the various People's Theatre practices of the 1970s that emerged throughout the Western World; and on the other hand, it compares elements of the 1970s "oral-based theatre" with the later text-based theatres of the 1980s to the present. It is also anthropological in that "orality" is a question that has traditionally been examined as a manifestation of cultural practices throughout the history of human beings. In this thesis, orality is thus seen as a thematic reflection of the Franco-Ontarian people. And finally, it is socio-political for the very fact that it discusses how this theatre emerged as a direct result of political and social issues faced by the Franco-Ontarians.

Chapter One:

Franco-Ontarian Theatre of the 1970s: An Oral- Based People's Theatre

1) An Overview of Franco-Ontarian Culture in the 1970s

Until the Quiet Revolution in Québec in the 1960s, francophones in Ontario saw little distinction between themselves and their eastern neighbours. While the Franco-Ontarians had their own difficulties concerning their minority status, culminating in a long struggle to maintain their own schools, they nevertheless shared with Québec a common history, language and culture, and thus identified themselves under the umbrella term “French-Canadian.” This was facilitated further by the fact that many Franco-Ontarians originated from Quebec (Savard, “Relations avec Québec” 231).

However, the rise of Québec nationalism in the 1960s would change this perspective. The very notion of nationhood and Québec necessarily excluded those living outside of its borders. As Pierre Savard states, “la nouvelle vague des nationalistes québécois affirme résolument que le salut du Québec ne peut s’accomplir en même temps que le sauvetage des francophones hors

Québec” (Savard, “Relations” 247).³ As a result, he further states that, “[e]lle fait des Franco-Ontariens des Canadiens français de seconde zone qui, avec les autres minorités hors Québec, ont soudainement le sentiment d’être abandonnés par les Québécois” (Savard, “Relations” 248).⁴

The Franco-Ontarians were thus deprived of an identity since they were now excluded from Québec’s quest for nationhood. As Danielle Juteau-Lee explains: “Le ‘nous les Québécois’ renvoyait donc à une communauté d’appartenance d’où étaient exclus tous les Canadiens français vivant à l’extérieur du Québec” (Juteau-Lee 38).⁵ Thus, the emergence of the “Québec nation” necessitated a redefinition of the Franco-Ontarian community. As Fernand Carrière affirms, “Pour la première fois de leur histoire, les Franco-Ontariens doivent définir qui ils sont” (Carrière, “La métamorphose de la communauté” 320).⁶

A cultural discourse was thus born that was centered on a new “Franco-Ontarian identity.” However, the national upheaval surrounding the political events taking place in Québec coincided with regional developments that also affected the Franco-Ontarian collective consciousness. As Gaétan Gervais states:

La rupture du Canada français, l’éloignement grandissant entre
les Franco-Ontariens et les Québécois, l’« ontarianisation » de

³The new wave of Quebecois nationalists affirms, without a doubt, that Québec’s salvation cannot coincide with that of the Francophones living outside of Québec.

⁴The Franco-Ontarians are thus French Canadians of a secondary zone who, like the other minorities outside of Québec, suddenly have the sentiment of being abandoned by the Quebecois.

⁵The “we Quebecois” implies the existence of a community where all the French Canadians living outside of Québec are excluded.

⁶For the first time in their history, the Franco-Ontarians had to define themselves.

la vie franco-ontarienne, la fin du leadership clérical qui a toujours eu à Ottawa des assises très fortes, enfin les nouvelles conditions faites à sa minorité française par le gouvernement ontarien, tous ces facteurs ont donné une nouvelle direction à la société franco-ontarienne (Gervais 163).⁷

The polemic was brought to a head by Roger Saint-Denis in 1969.

Commissioned by the Ontario Advisory Committee, by the request of l'Association canadienne-française d'éducation de l'Ontario, Saint-Denis drafted a report on the question of life and culture in French Ontario. What is now known as *Le Rapport Saint-Denis* presents its findings in a two-fold manner. On the one hand, it laments the extremely poor state of affairs concerning cultural life in French Ontario; and on the other hand, it projects an encouraging hope and confidence in the future (Choquette, *L'Ontario français, historique* 206):

La vie culturelle des Franco-Ontariens [...] est tellement anémiée, elle accuse tant de retard qu'on serait presque excusé d'abandonner la partie avant le début du match. Et cependant, si l'on procède avec sagesse, prudence et force, d'ici quinze ans l'Ontario français pourrait prouver au monde qu'il se trouve sur ce coin de pays des

⁷ The rupture of French Canada, the increasing distance between the Franco-Ontarians and the Quebecois, the "ontarization" of Franco-Ontarian life, the end of the clerical leadership that always had strong ties to Ottawa, and finally the new conditions placed upon the French minority by the Ontario government, all of these factors forced Franco-Ontarian society to take a new direction.

gens qui ont réussi à se définir à eux-mêmes et qui pourront dire avec élégance qui ils sont (*Rapport Saint-Denis* 5-6).⁸

The publication of *Le Rapport Saint-Denis* in 1969 marks an important stage in the development of Franco-Ontarian culture since, as Georges Bélanger explains: “cette première enquête culturelle d’envergure provoque une crise de conscience déterminante : elle est animée par la recherche d’une identité et le désir d’une affirmation de soi”(Bélanger, “La vie culturelle” 72).⁹

The Quiet Revolution in Québec had consequently, and perhaps inadvertently, given the Franco-Ontarians a new reason and direction for creative expression. As François Paré claims: “ce n’est pas tant la littérature franco-ontarienne qui prenait naissance (puisqu’elle existait déjà amplement), mais plutôt son institution sociale, entièrement axée [...] sur le combat identitaire” (Paré, “Repères pour une histoire de l’Ontario français” 278).¹⁰ And, as Fernand Carrière explains: “C’est une collectivité qui commence à affirmer son existence et qui, par la voix de ses jeunes créateur, a entrepris de cerner les contours de son devenir” (Carrière, “La métamorphose” 328).¹¹

⁸Franco-Ontarian cultural life [...] is so anemic and so backward that we are tempted to abandon the project before we even begin. However, if we proceed with intelligence, prudence and strength, within fifteen years French speaking Ontario may prove to the world that in this corner of the country there exists a people who have succeeded in defining themselves and are able to elegantly express who they are.

⁹This first cultural endeavor provoked a determining cultural crisis which was animated by the search for an identity and the desire to affirm the self.

¹⁰It is not the birth of Franco-Ontarian literature per se (since it already existed), but rather its social institution which was entirely grounded on a struggle for identity.

¹¹A collective began to affirm its existence and, through the voice of its young artists, endeavoured to shape its future.

The Rapport Saint-Denis was consequently seen as a challenge for Franco-Ontarian artists, and the undertaking of this challenge would have its roots in Sudbury, Ontario in 1971 with the emergence of CANO: Coopérative des artistes du Nouvel Ontario and TNO: the Théâtre du Nouvel-Ontario. However, while they appeared to be geographically isolated, these artists were not working in a vacuum. In effect, the unique brand of theatre that was being performed in French speaking Ontario appears to be directly linked with an international movement that began in the 1960s, which we will refer to as People's Theatre:¹² a specific genre of performance that arose in and around the Western world as a result of various aesthetic, cultural and political influences (Benson & Conolly 85). While separated geographically, the various People's Theatre troupes all shared distinctive commonalities connecting them with the prevailing socio/political discourses of the time.

The purpose of this chapter is thus to locate what we might call the re-birth of Franco-Ontarian theatre within the rubric of the People's Theatre movement of the 1970s. It will involve a short history of the People's Theatre movement followed by a selective analysis of three representative French language plays from Ontario in order to show how the early playwrights from the TNO and la Corvée laid the foundation for a later theatre that would become exclusively Franco-Ontarian. It is important to note, however, that there is little if no evidence indicating that Franco-Ontarian practitioners were even aware of the

¹²Patrice Pavis, for instance, designates it as "popular theatre" (1998: 278), while Eugene Benson and L.W. Conolly call it "alternative theatre" (1987: 85), and Eugène van Erven refers to it as "radical Political theatre" (1988).

People's Theatre movement.¹³ In effect, much of what was taking place in the U.S.A. and in Europe was happening simultaneous to the Franco-Ontarian productions. Consequently, this is not an examination that shows influences; rather, Franco-Ontarian theatre will be seen as one of the various voices in the prevailing discourses of the 1960s and 1970s.

2) People's Theatre in the Western World

One can identify two streams in the development of People's Theatre. Whereas the first stream involves troupes that performed primarily in urban centers, the second involves a decentralized theatre where its practitioners chose rural settings as their venue. While both streams were similar in form, they had slightly different functions that pertained primarily to the expectations of their target audience.

The first stream came about as a result of the turbulent events taking place in and around the Western world. In the most general sense, the rebellious spirit that surrounded the May 1968 strikes and student uprisings in France may be seen as one of the backdrops to the events that took place elsewhere. In the United States, the arms race and the Cold War, an increasing awareness of the tensions over military involvement in Vietnam, and finally the growing concern over other

¹³In fact, Marc O'Sullivan, in his 1982 article entitled "el Teatro Campesino: Un Théâtre minoritaire semblable au notre" (*Liaison* no 24, 1982), appears surprised to find a similar minority theatre simultaneously taking place elsewhere.

unresolved social, economic and racial tensions all contributed to an increase in political and social unrest. Canada, furthermore, had its own rebellion that reached its pinnacle in the October Crisis and the culmination of the events that led to what is referred to as the Quiet Revolution in Québec. As Gérard Sigouin explains, the Quiet Revolution may very well be seen as a reflection of the events which occurred on an international scale:

De 1960 à 1970: au Québec, une révolution d'abord dite tranquille mais qui le sera de moins en moins. Octobre 1970 : *dead line*. Un peu avant, en 1968, on atteint un premier sommet dans l'affrontement des générations et des idéologies : la jeunesse d'après-guerre arrache son droit de parole ; toutes les révoltes étudiantes d'Occident, y compris celle de Mai en France en témoignent. Le théâtre est de la partie (Sigouin 23).¹⁴

In short, revolution was already in the air. And in many cases, theatre practitioners saw the possibility of playing their own part in this revolution by providing a voice for cultural and political enlightenment. Before doing so, however, the dramatist needed to politicize the theatre.

¹⁴ From 1960 to 1970: in Quebec, a so-called “quiet” revolution will become less so. October 1970: *dead line*. Shortly before, in 1968, the first summit is reached in the confrontation of generations and ideologies: the post-war, younger generation affirms its right to speak out; all of the student protests in the West, including that of May 68 in France reflect this, and the theatre is a part of this movement!

In the United States, talk of a political theatre was taking place even before 1968. Indeed, by the 1960s, the continuing point of debate had been over whether the theatre should be viewed primarily as a committed social phenomenon or as a politically indifferent aesthetic artifact (Carlson 454). These debates, coupled with the aforementioned socio/political events soon revived an interest in the political theatre of Piscator and Brecht (Carlson 466).

The result was a revolt against what was then the “established theatre” of the United States. In 1964, for instance, Herbert Blau wrote *The Impossible Theatre: A Manifesto* in which he condemns contemporary American theatre as essentially a “strong-hold of non-ideas” (Blau 7), evading and minimizing the dangers and conflicts of its period, thus failing to fulfill its true role as “Public Art of Crisis” (Blau 16). In contrast, he claimed that theatre should be a forum for the suppressed or ignored civic and civil side of man (Blau 102).

Blau’s more general humanist commitment was soon overshadowed by calls for the theatre to undertake and deal with immediate and specific social causes. The theatre thus began to be considered as a forum for political statement. For example in 1966, *The Drama Review* published an article by R.C. Davis, the director of the San Francisco Mime Troupe, that echoed Brecht’s assertion that the only way for art not to be political is for it to support the ruling powers. Since the ruling powers in the U.S. were “debilitating, repressive, and nonaesthetic,” he claimed that theatre was challenged on both social and artistic grounds to “teach, direct toward change, and be itself an example of change” (Davis 132).

Thus, an alternative antiestablishment theatre was born. However, the troupes soon realized that their message was better suited to the class of people that was, for the most part, unfamiliar with the theatre. They thus endeavoured in various ways, to appeal to an alternative audience: the working class. Davis and the San Francisco Mime Troupe grew ever more politically conscious and disgusted with main-stream theatre productions that they likened to a “bourgeois theatre” which catered to the expectations of the dominant middle class. Consequently he and his troupe eventually “drifted toward an alternative culture or a culture parallel to [that of] the powerful middle-class” (Davis 28).

Another troupe literally took their productions to the streets. Like the San Francisco Mime Troupe, Bread and Puppet Theatre moved away from the middle-class audience and towards the working classes by performing social protest plays in the slums of New York and confronting the problems of bad housing, rats, and high rents (van Erven 54). They produced larger than life puppet shows to create a non-narrative theatre which addressed contemporary issues through disturbing visual images rather than words (Banham 121).

While these and various other troupes were performing in the U.S., similar people’s theatre troupes were appearing in France. Like their American counterparts, the French troupes performed alternative, anti-establishment plays that appealed to working class audiences. One such troupe was le Théâtre du Soleil, founded in 1964 by Ariane Mnouchkine. A distinguishing feature of Théâtre du Soleil was its commitment to the more democratic system of *création collective* in which all responsibilities of running the theatre were shared

collectively, thus creating the performances as a group rather than through one individual.

The commitment to democracy was further reflected in le Théâtre du Soleil's most famous production, *1789* (1970). It told a story about the first year of the French Revolution from the point of view of the people using traditional forms of popular theatre such as Circus techniques, puppets and theatre of the public fair. Furthermore, the troupe was committed to establishing closer relationships between themselves and their audience through the use of Antonin Artaud's theories that reject the traditional notions of theatrical space.¹⁵ *1789*, for instance, was performed simultaneously on five different stages that were placed in and around the audience, allowing the spectators to freely move about as though they were at a public fair. Further productions, *1793* (1972) and *L'Age d'Or* (1975) attempted to prolong the lessons of *1789* while continuing to search for a performance style that was appropriate to their message and key audience.

Finally, in Québec, the Quiet Revolution brought with it an unprecedented flourishing of theatre arts. However, in Québec's established theatre, themes were already inherently political.¹⁶ The most revolutionary play of the decade, for instance, was Michel Tremblay's *Les belles-soeurs* (1965). Although it has no direct reference to political events, its theme of economic and cultural dispossession struck a lasting chord in Québec society. But most

¹⁵ Artaud rejected the traditional concepts of theatrical space in order to allow the actors to relate more closely to their audience and to give greater emphasis to theatre as experience or event.

¹⁶ Françoise Loranger's *Le chemin du roy* (1968), for instance, satirizes, in the guise of a penalty-filled hockey game between Ottawa and Québec, the turmoil caused by French President de Gaulle's statement, "Vive le Québec libre" during his centennial year visit. Similarly, Robert Gurik's *Hamlet, Prince du Québec* (1968) parodies the same federal-provincial antagonism. In it, each of Shakespeare's original characters assumes the persona of a real-life participant in the Quiet Revolution and subsequent events.

importantly, Tremblay manipulated the use of *joual*, the working class Québécois vernacular, in his play. The very use of this language became a metaphor of collective frustration and individual solitude (Banham 156).¹⁷ The play's success soon led to a proliferation of other plays that would use *joual* as the standard language.

Running parallel to the more established dramatists, however, was a body of young performers who explored political questions but, at the same time, rebelled against Québec's established theatrical institution. These troupes joined forces via the "Centre d'essai des auteur dramatiques," a loose organization of young theatre professionals established in 1965 (Banham 156). The CEAD, along with another organization, the "Association québécoise du jeune théâtre," assembled the many discordant voices of those opposed to the direction taken by the established theatre. This opposition expressed itself most noticeably in an attack on supremacy of dramaturgic texts and on the iniquitous 'star system' which excluded new young actors (Banham 156).

The movement generated by these institutions would come to be known simply as "Jeune Théâtre." Providing an alternative to the theatre that was being performed in Québec, the "Jeune Théâtre" attempted to forge a Québécois culture through the rejection of what it saw as a culture that was forced upon them by French colonialism. As Alvina Ruprecht explains:

¹⁷It is important to note that while Tremblay introduced *joual* as a political tool of specificity, it was nevertheless used beforehand in comic settings, often relegated to minor characters as caricatures.

C'est donc ce "jeune théâtre" qui devient, à l'instar du Living Theatre, le porte-parole de la dissidence culturelle, une des voix importantes de la contre-culture québécoise, à l'époque où lutter contre la culture dominante signifie non pas s'opposer à la culture occidentale, bourgeoise, tel que le faisait le Living Theatre, mais plutôt rejeter la domination culturelle de la France, perçue comme une présence coloniale qui empêchait l'épanouissement d'une culture québécoise authentique. La dissidence des artistes québécois se situe dans la logique fanonienne des mouvements anticoloniaux alors que la contestation culturelle de Beck repose sur le rejet global de la société occidentale, de la culture capitaliste et matérialiste qui a produit la guerre (Ruprecht 42).¹⁸

Le Théâtre du Même Nom was the first of these troupes to have a significant impact in Québec. Its principal co-coordinator and *animateur*, Jean-Claude Germain, began producing performances with his group in 1969. In the beginning, TMNs main strategy was to parody and ridicule the cultural and political elite in Québec in order to break down the esteem in which they were held by the populace. Even its name was adopted to indirectly poke fun at the established company the TNM, Théâtre du Nouveau Monde.

¹⁸ This "jeune théâtre" became, through the example of the Living Theatre, the voice of cultural dissidence, one of the important voices of the Quebecois counter-culture, at a time when doing battle against the dominant culture did not signify, as it did with the Living Theatre, an opposition to Western, bourgeois culture, but rather a rejection of the cultural domination of France, perceived as a colonial presence which impeded the development of an authentic Quebecois culture. The dissidence exhibited by the Quebecois artists was thus located in the Fanonian logic of anti-colonialism, whereas Beck's cultural protests lay in the global rejection of Western society, capitalist culture and the materialism that produces war.

Between 1969 and 1971, Germain and his troupe produced several productions which at first ridiculed and rejected traditional theatre plots and formats and denounced the preponderance of the classical and foreign canon in Québec's official culture. In doing so, as Jean-Marc Larrue points out, TMN succeeded not only in attacking Québec's established theatre institution, but also in positing its own vision of what Québécois culture should be (Larrue 158). Furthermore, it offered a new dramatic form via the use of a theatricality that involved audience interaction, music, and pantomime.

Later, the productions attacked and satirized the province's religious, social, political fetishes and anomalies. *Le grand rallye de canonisation d'Aurore* (1969), for example, attacked the traditional Québécois family through a series of burlesque-style sketches. And later, *Aurore II ou la mise à mort de la Miss des Miss* (1970) used music and stock devices of vaudeville comedy to overtly satirize the social and political institutions of the Duplessis era (Nardocchio 83).

Although TMN was the first major troupe in Quebec to fall under the rubric of "création collective," it distinguished itself from the others that would follow in two significant ways. First, the productions were dominated by a writer, Jean-Claude Germain. And second, it performed primarily in a permanent theatre space in Montréal's Théâtre d'Aujourd'hui. This is particularly significant since part of TMN's mandate was not only to attack the established theatre institution, but also the audience that supported it. As François Paré points out:

Mais en 1970, le jeune théâtre québécois s'inscrivait en faux contre une entreprise théâtrale bien établie, une tradition dramatique implantée depuis le début des années 40 et un important répertoire de productions des grands classiques du théâtre français et même québécois. En outre, il s'était déjà constitué au Québec un public assez fidèle, assez nombreux, qui avait permis la fondation du Théâtre du Nouveau Monde [...] c'est contre ce public éduqué, nanti et politiquement conservateur que le théâtre québécois des années 70 s'est insurgé (Paré, "Autonomie et réciprocité" 392).¹⁹

While TMN attempted to politicize its audience that was already made up of regular theatre-goers, other troupes opened themselves to other audiences that were not part of Québec's cultural elite. One example is le Théâtre EUH! This troupe was founded in 1970 by Clément Cazalais, graduate of the Montréal Conservatory, and Marc Doré, former student of L'École Lecoq in Paris and one of the pioneers of improvisation in Québec (Larrue 162-3).

Théâtre EUH!, from the beginning, was more localized than TMN as it dealt with the more specific concerns of women, labourers, immigrants, people from regional or rural areas, and the unemployed (Larrue 163). While dealing

¹⁹ But in 1970, the young Quebecois theatre rose up against a theatrical enterprise that was well established, a dramatic tradition that had existed since the early 1940s with an important repertoire of French and even some Quebecois classics. Furthermore, there was a theatre-going population in Quebec that was large enough to permit the founding of Théâtre du Nouveau Monde [...] it was thus against this educated and politically conservative audience that the Quebecois theatre of the period was protesting.

with nationalist issues, Théâtre EUH! was also marked by a preoccupation with theatrical experimentation (Sigouin 51).

In 1970, Théâtre EUH! declared its political and theatrical intent through the publication of its *Manifeste de Théâtre EUH!*. This complex and ambitious statement brings forth various precepts that define their drama. Like TMN, it calls for the decolonization of Québec culture. But it also calls for the redefinition of the artist and his/her responsibilities towards the public; for a new aesthetic, which is admittedly still in the making; for a new style, which features the extended use of clowns; for the making of collective creations, “the only non-bourgeois mode of creation;” and for a rejection of the traditional theatre spaces (Sigouin 53-60). As the manifesto indicates, Théâtre EUH! played everywhere : “dans la rue, à l’université, dans les CEGEP, dans les sous-sols d’église, dans les salles paroissiales, dans les gymnases, dans les cafétérias, et aussi dans les salles de spectacles et partout où vous nous demanderez” (Sigouin 60).²⁰

In describing what we have referred to as the first stream of People’s Theatre we have seen how its multiple forms evolved out of a general dissatisfaction with the established theatre, a rejection of established society and a search for an alternative audience. In effect, they sought not only to inform and entertain their public but also to politicize the spectators to such an extent that they would eventually undertake a radical reformation of society. While these troupes adopted the working class as their key audience, this audience was nevertheless limited to the confines of the urban centers. Around the same time,

²⁰in the streets, at universities, in the CEGEPs, in church basements, in church assembly rooms, in gymnasiums, in cafeterias, and also in theatre spaces and wherever you will have us.

however, a process of decentralization began that offered alternative theatre productions to more localized rural audiences that beforehand had little if no access to the theatre. These troupes constitute the second stream of People's Theatre.

One example is found in the Southern U.S. In 1965, the *huelga*--the strike of migrant Filipino and Chicano farm workers in California--inspired the foundation of a number of politically oriented Chicano theatres, the most famous of which was El Teatro Campesino. Its director and chief playwright, Luis Valdez, came from the San Francisco Mime Troupe and brought with him that company's philosophy (Carlson 467). Like Davis, Valdez created a specific kind of realism, not naturalistic but symbolic and emblematic in theatrical terms (Carlson 467). The "dramatic situation, the thing you're trying to portray on the stage, must be very close to the reality that is *on* the stage" (Sainer 29).

Campesino identified itself with the political and cultural struggles of the oppressed Mexican-American minority. Luis Valdez was a cultural affiliate of the union organizer César Chavez. He toured with a company of actors recruited from among the strikers to convince the farmworkers to join the union and the "*huelga*" (the Delano grape picker's strike). Impromptu dramatic sketches were developed collectively in sessions led by Valdez, during which Mexican migrant workers acted out the types of exploitation they had suffered themselves.

Teatro Campesino further identified themselves with their key audience in two ways. First, they performed in their spectator's own language: the Spanish used by the Mexican immigrants and the Chicano farmworkers. And secondly,

they appropriated the so-called *corrido*, a traditional Mexican folk ballad. The *corrido* was incorporated in the drama as a narrative framework for a fast-paced collage of dramatic scenes (van Erven 47). The action was thus built on continuous music that gave the dialogue a metric quality and turned movement into dance. It was performed by the Corridista or folk singer who provided commentary and, like a cabaret performer, added political lyrics to the tune of well known songs.

Decentralized People's Theatre was also apparent in Québec. Perhaps the best example is found in le Grand Cirque Ordinaire's production of *T'en rappelles-tu Pibrac* (1971). Before and during the production, the troupe lived and interacted with its audience in the small village of Pibrac. For ten years, Pibrac suffered from a severe economic recession. Consequently, its people were forced to live almost exclusively on government social assistance. After listening and learning about the inhabitant's history, their discontent, their aspirations and the deceptions they suffered, the troupe transformed this information into a performance. Raymond Cloutier describes the experience as one in which the performer seemed to actually become its audience: "On n'est pas parti de notre nature, on est parti de la leur, on s'est effacé complètement" (Cloutier 48).²¹ The performance exhibited a unique symbiosis between the performer and the artist. As Jack Crompton explains:

Ce qui fait de "Pibrac" un spectacle subversif, c'est que les gens de Pibrac ont aidé à le créer eux-mêmes-eux qui commençaient peut-

²¹We were not part of own being, we were part of theirs, we completely erased ourselves.

être à croire qu'ils ne pouvaient même pas créer leur propre vie.
 Pour la première fois une troupe de théâtre est allée parmi le
 peuple pour en apprendre quelque chose, au lieu de lui apporter la
 Culture (Crompton 191).²²

And finally, the trend was also apparent in France. Le Théâtre Populaire de Lorraine, for instance, created original satirical plays that dealt specifically with the cultural and economic problems besetting the Lorraine region. In 1968, its first productions consisted of improvised, agitprop playlets that were designed to establish a close contact between actors and unsophisticated spectators who had little or no experience with the theatre (van Erven 67). As a further objective, these *spectacle d'intervention* served as an advertisement for the upcoming full-length play *Splendeur et misère de Minette, la bonne de Lorraine* (van Erven 67). The troupe's founder and main playwright, Jacques Kraemer explains how the play appropriated the Joan of Arc story and located it within the regional context of Lorraine:

We got the idea to do a satirical-poetic play on the problem of iron mining and the steel industry. We made a pun with the name *Minette*, which refers to iron mining but is also a proper name that is close to Jeanette, the nickname of Joan of Arc, Jeanette the good

²²What makes "Pibrac" a subversive drama, is the fact that the people from Pibrac helped in its creation—a people that began to believe that perhaps they were incapable of creating their own lives. For the first time, a theatre troupe came to them in order to learn something from them, instead of bringing culture to them from the outside.

woman of Lorraine. Thus Minette transformed into a young girl became the heroine of *Splendeur et misère de Minette, la bonne de Lorraine* (qtd. in van Erven 66).

The play is divided into two parts. The first half deals with the positive period of iron-ore mining in Lorraine. It covers the events that start with the discovery of iron in the late nineteenth century and those that end with the optimism of the 1950s when the region was expected to become *le Texas français*. The second half deals with the negative period: the growing exploitation of the work force, the ensuing unrest, and the dissolution of Lorraine's steel industry in favor of exploitation of more profitable foreign ore.

Another regionally based theatre troupe was Lo Teatre de la Carriera. It was mostly known for its use of the Occitanian language and its emphasis on regional cultural traditions in its plays. It began as an agitprop street theatre group called Théâtre de la Rue in 1968. After two years of impromptu appearances in and around Lyon, the troupe, led by Claude Alranq, decided to emphasize the politics of its Occitanian cultural tradition and moved to the Midi.

Lo Teatre de la Carriera was a theatre that was, on the one hand socio-educational, and on the other hand, militantly regional. It attempted to maintain a dialogue with labor unions and left-wing parties in order to convince them that Occitanian culture was indigenous to the region and not merely a variant of French culture (van Erven 77). It did so by incorporating the fertile Occitanian cultural material that had otherwise been abandoned. In *Pastorale de Fos*, for

instance, la Carriera used the traditional form of the Provençal pastoral play. This form had been designated as “folklore” but was still extremely popular in the villages and towns of the region. Traditionally, the villagers that produced these Christmas plays pretended to tell the story of the Nativity while actually commenting on contemporary life.

All of the troupes discussed share one common goal which is both political and aesthetic. On the one hand, they wished to offer the experience of theatre to an audience that was previously deprived of it; and on the other hand, they wished to politicize that audience. With regards to the second stream of People’s Theatre (as seen through the examples of Campesino, Lorraine, Carriera and Grand Cirque Ordinaire) this goal is taken further by creating a theatre experience that is exclusive to the concerns and aesthetics of a specific people. This, we will now argue, is also the case with the People’s Theatre that emerged in French speaking Ontario.

3) The Rise of People’s Theatre in French-Speaking Ontario

The theatre that was first envisioned, in the 1970s in French speaking Ontario, by the collectives founded first by André Paiement in Sudbury and second by La Corvée in Vanier, underwent a process that not only created drama, but also a culture and consequently a community. As Paré states: “Le théâtre était un rendez-vous emblématique, reproducteur d’espace, créateur d’identité”

(“Autonomie et réciprocité” 390).²³ Mariel O’Neill-Karch explains that in the 1970s the theatre played a major role in establishing a Franco-Ontarian identity that was not defined via a cultural or linguistic center:

Le théâtre a joué un rôle central dans le passage d’une culture d’emprunt, faite de créations venues d’ailleurs, à une culture originale, composée d’œuvres d’ici, disant l’âme du peuple. Cette évolution a aussi eu un effet sur le rôle social de l’artiste qui n’est plus tout simplement perçu comme interprète de la culture des autres, mais comme quelqu’un qui donne forme à une culture nouvellement consacrée, la sienne (O’Neill-Karch, *Théâtre Franco-Ontarien* 17).²⁴

As stated earlier, there was a body of Franco-Ontarian literature that existed before 1970. However, it was produced primarily by publishing houses in Québec and France and came to be classified under the rubric of “French-Canadian.” This would suddenly change when a group of Laurentian University students joined forces with Robert Dickson and Fernand Dorais, two newly arrived professors, to create what would be known in 1971 as CANO:

²³The theatre was a symbolic meeting-place that reproduced space and created identity.

²⁴ The theatre played a central role in the passage from a borrowed culture, made up of works brought in from the outside, to an original culture made up of works from the area that reflected its people. This evolution also had an effect on the social role of the artist who is no longer perceived as the interpreter of other people’s cultures but who is someone that gives form to a newly established culture, that of his or her own.

Coopérative des artistes du Nouvel-Ontario. In 1970, they jointly published an article entitled “Molière go home” in the student newspaper *Le Lambda*. The article had a secondary purpose of recruiting members of a newly formed theatre troupe, and underlines the fact that their culture had been, up until that point, one that was borrowed. As the article states:

Il semble superflu de le dire mais nous sommes franco-ontariens.

Wow ! Beding-Bedang! Hostie de calvaire! Mouman!

Je suis mineur, fermier, bûcheron, ouvrier. Je suis minoritaire et marginal dans ma province. J’ai des leaders que je n’ai pas choisis, tirés d’une élite qui pense me représenter et se soucie de mes intérêts les plus pressants en me parachutant des tournées d’artistes étrangers, en me chiant sur la tête avec des campagnes de mon parler.

Je prends des cours universitaires de littérature où des profs européens s’acharnent à me déraciner en corrigeant ma prononciation, mon vocabulaire et ma pensée, et où ils achèvent de m’aliéner et de me dépersonnaliser.

Qui suis-je ?

C'est à cette question que nous voulons, par le biais du théâtre, répondre. C'est le dilemme que le théâtre doit monter sur scène. Et ce drame doit être monté *on our terms*. En 1970, en Amérique, au Canada, en Ontario, à Sudbury, avec nos corps, nos voix et nos personnages (Gaston Tremblay 21).²⁵

In response to this call for performers, André Paiement, Gaston Tremblay and Robert Paquette joined a newly founded theatre group that would be organized by Pierre Bélanger and would be later known, in 1971, as TNO: Théâtre du Nouvel-Ontario.

From the beginning, the troupe had a mandate: "produire des oeuvres qui illustrent la réalité que nous vivons aujourd'hui dans nos familles, nos paroisses, notre milieu franco-ontarien" (Gaston Tremblay 25).²⁶ In short, they wished first and foremost to create an identity which was purely Franco-Ontarian, and in so doing create a sense of community among its audience. As Lucie Hotte states:

Ainsi, le mandat que se donnait CANO était de produire des œuvres qui non seulement témoigneraient de la culture et du vécu

²⁵It may appear self evident to say so but we are Franco-Ontarians [...] I am a miner, a farmer, a lumberjack, a labourer. I am a minority and I am marginal in my own province. I have leaders that I have not chosen, drawn from an elite that thinks it represents my best interests but avoids the most pressing concerns by providing foreign artists and by campaigning against the way I speak. I take university courses in literature from European professors who attempt to displace me by correcting my pronunciation, my vocabulary and my way of thinking. Who am I? This is the question we wish to answer by means of the theatre. This is the dilemma that our theatre will present. And this drama must be presented on our own terms. In 1970 in North America, in Canada, in Ontario and in Sudbury with our bodies, our voices and our characters.

²⁶Produce works that illustrate the reality that we experience today in our families, our parishes and our Franco-Ontarian environment.

franco-ontariens, mais qui serviraient aussi à fonder une communalité, c'est-à-dire un sentiment d'appartenance à un groupe, et, par le fait même, une identité franco-ontarienne (Hotte 56).²⁷

Similar events were occurring at the same time further west in Ontario with the founding of le Théâtre d'la Corvée. Le Théâtre d'la Corvée (known as Théâtre du Trillium since 1988) was founded in 1975 by Jean Marc Leclerc, Daniel Chartrand, André Legault and Luc Thériault, with an agenda that was particularly political in nature. As Joël Beddows points out, the decision to found la Corvée in Vanier was not arbitrary:

Ce quatuor s'est donné pour mandat de créer un théâtre de revendication socio-politique lié à une identité spécifiquement franco-ontarienne à Vanier, là où il sentait que le besoin était le plus criant. Vanier, ville ouvrière majoritairement francophone entourée par Ottawa et Gloucester, était, à leur avis, sous-développée sur le plan socio-économique et culturel (Beddows, "Tracer les frontières" 62).²⁸

²⁷Thus CANO had a mandate that dictated that they would produce works that not only reflected Franco-Ontarian life and culture, but would also help in forming a community, that is a sentiment of belonging to a group, and by this very act, of creating a Franco-Ontarian identity.

²⁸ This foursome was mandated to create a theatre of socio-political vindication that was specifically tied to the Franco-Ontarian identity in Vanier where they thought that the need was strongest. Vanier, a working-class town with a Francophone majority, located between Ottawa and Gloucester, was, in their opinion, underdeveloped both socio-economically and culturally.

In 1979, Brigitte Haentjens joined la Corvée and offered the group her training and experience gained from l'École Jacques Lecoq in Paris and a strong commitment to Marxist socialism (Beddows, "Tracer les frontières" 64). Consequently, la Corvée went one step further than Paiement in that they were interested in dealing with questions of identity, but they coupled this concern with a political agenda. As Beddows further elaborates:

Haentjens, socialiste convaincue, croyait au pouvoir du théâtre pour appuyer l'émancipation d'un peuple, et elle a été en mesure de transmettre aux jeunes artistes [...] les techniques nécessaires pour mettre en scène une véritable prise de parole franco-ontarienne à la fois politique, culturelle et identitaire (Beddows "Tracer les frontières" 64).²⁹

It might be said that Franco-Ontarian theatre of the 1970s is a People's Theatre in the strictest sense since it was performed by its own people and exclusively for its own people. However it must be remembered that the Franco-Ontarian audience, like the audiences of all people's theatre, was primarily from the working class and consequently had little if no access to the established theatre. The practitioners therefore found themselves with a two-fold challenge. First of all, they had to literally create an audience out of a people who are not only unaccustomed to the theatre but perhaps even reluctant to attend a theatrical

²⁹Haentjens, a socialist, believed that the theatre had the power to emancipate a people, and she had the means of transmitting the techniques required to stage a Franco-Ontarian voice that reflected its politics, culture and identity.

event. And secondly, they had to find a means of appropriately entertaining that audience while conveying their often politically charged message. In other words, they had to first attract an audience and then make sure that this audience remained for the duration of the performance.

4) Theatrical Elements of Franco-Ontarian People's Theatre

a) Performance Space

In order to both attract and maintain their target audience, the performers first reconsidered conventional notions of theatrical space. In many if not all cases, the troupes purposefully did not perform in conventional playhouses; they often opted not to have a permanent space where they established a base. If they possessed their own theatre house, the groups usually built it themselves by converting buildings that formerly might have had some functional connection with their target audience: a neighborhood cinema gone bankrupt, an abandoned warehouse, etc.³⁰ In most cases, however, they toured through their region, presenting their plays in makeshift theatres set up in social meeting places that

³⁰Théâtre du Soleil, for instance, established a permanent space in a disused cartridge-warehouse at Vincennes on the East side of Paris.

were frequented by the target audience.³¹ In the U.S., as we have already seen, Bread and Puppet Theatre began by performing primarily in the streets of New York City (van Ervin 53). And in Québec, Théâtre EUH! played almost everywhere: “dans la rue, à l’université, dans les CEGEP, dans les sous-sols d’église, dans les salles paroissiales, dans les gymnases, dans les cafétérias, et aussi dans les salles de spectacles” (Sigouin 60).³² In this way, the performances were presented as an integral part of the working-class social atmosphere.

One reason for having chosen such locations is purely functional. As Eugène van Erven explains, the popular theatre troupes were aware that the working classes were largely excluded from most artistic experiences and did not attend the theatre on a regular basis (van Erven 173). They were often intimidated by the classical theatre buildings designed for the bourgeoisie: plush seats, thick red velvet curtains, ushers in official-looking uniforms, and exorbitant ticket prices. Furthermore, many workers were physically too tired to go out after a long day’s work: night shifts, overtime, and weekend jobs made matters even worse. Under these conditions, the convenience of having one’s own entertainment at home, especially in the form of television, effectively prevented workers from donning clean clothes and travelling to the nearest theatre.

Consequently, by performing in spaces that were already frequented by their key audience, the radical theatre groups had accomplished their first task, which was simply to attract an audience. Both TNO and la Corvée thus performed

³¹Such a mode of operation obviously had direct implications on elements of set, lighting, costumes, and sound. Moving about means that these elements are reduced to a minimum to facilitate transportation.

³²In the street, at universities, at the CEGEPs, in church basements, in church assembly rooms, in gymnasiums, in cafeterias, and in theatre houses.

in non-traditional spaces in which its audience felt most comfortable. As Joël Beddows points out, for instance:

la production [la Corvée's *La parole et la loi*] fut jouée dans des sous-sols d'église, des gymnases, des centres communautaires partout en Ontario ; bref, là où les Franco-Ontariens se regroupaient régulièrement [...] ce spectacle était joué le plus près possible du public pour établir un sentiment de communauté entre artistes et spectateurs (Beddows "Tracer les frontières" 65).³³

b) Language, Setting and Character

Having gathered an audience, the troupes then proceeded to nourish a collective bond between themselves and their spectators. In this way, they could be assured not to alienate them. One way in which the troupes established this bond with their key audience was through a specific use of local language. We already saw how, in Québec, Michel Tremblay paved the way for the use of joual in order to mark the specificity of the Québécois. This is also exemplified in the U.S. in Teatro Campesino which performed in the vernacular of Mexican immigrants and Chicano farmworkers. The most telling example, however, is

³³The performances took place in church basements, gymnasiums, and community centers everywhere in Ontario; in short, areas where Franco-Ontarians regularly met [...] the performances were presented as close as possible to the audience in order to establish a sense of community between the artist and the spectator.

found in France. Lo Teatro de la Carriera was best known for its use of the Occitanian language, which emphasized the regional cultural traditions.

The same technique applies to the early Franco-Ontarian plays. The audience easily identified with the language being used in the performance since it is clearly their own. In *Lavalléville*,³⁴ Paiement feels that this is important enough to include the following in the introduction to the published script:

Très important: Cette pièce fut créée et jouée dans le nord de l'Ontario. Le langage utilisé dans la mise en scène était celui de la région : le joual franco-ontarien. Il est très important que le texte de la pièce soit adapté à l'accent de la langue (quel qu'il soit) de la région où cette pièce est jouée (*Lav* 4).³⁵

Furthermore, in decentralized People's Theatre, the audience was often made to relate with what they were witnessing through the adaptation of recognizable settings and characters. Campesino, for instance, incorporated the well known *corrido* with its "Corridista," the traditional folk singer. Théâtre Populaire de Lorraine, furthermore, locates its themes within the context of the region's well-known local history. And finally, le Grand Cirque Ordinaire's

³⁴Paiement, André. *Lavalléville*. Ottawa: Prise de Parole, 1983. Subsequent references to this play will be cited as *Lav* followed by a page reference.

³⁵ Very important! This play was created and performed in Northern Ontario. The language used during the performances was that of the region: a Franco-Ontarian Joual. It is very important that the text be adapted to the local French dialect (whatever that may be) of the region in which the play is performed.

performance of *T'en rappelles-tu Pibrac* provides characters that may be equated with any member of the audience.

In a similar fashion, the performances of TNO attempted to establish a collective bond between the performance and the spectator. In the post-face to *Moé, j'veiens du Nord, stie*, for instance, Pierre Bélanger explains the efforts made in depicting characters and settings that were representative of the geographical location in which the play is performed:

L'effort d'authenticité se faisait bien sûr au niveau du thème, du langage et des décors. Nous poussions cette recherche jusqu'à la substitution de noms de rue et de restaurants selon la ville où se donnait le spectacle. A Sturgeon Falls, le Moulin remplaçait la mine!³⁶ (*Moé, j'veiens du Nord, stie* 124).³⁷

c) The use of Screen Projections

In *Moé, j'veiens du Nord, stie* Paiement uses the Piscatorian technique of projecting images on a screen in the back of the stage. Piscator first incorporated projections and film into his theatre in order to fully realize an “epic” quality which he defined “as an approach which not only portrays the dramatic action, but

³⁶Paiement, André. *Moé, j'veiens du Nord, stie*. Ottawa : Prise de Parole, 1978. Subsequent references to this play will be cited with *Moé* and a page reference.

³⁷ Authenticity was maintained with regards to theme, language and setting. We even substituted the names of streets and restaurants according to the town in which the play was performed. In Sturgeon Falls, for instance, the Mill replaced the mine.

also describes what social and political conditions determine modern fate” (Innes 102-3). The strategies of using projection and film may thus be equated with the classical Greek method of using choruses as commentators that accompany dramatic action (Innes 103). Piscator arranged the projections on the backdrop, on the surfaces of the stage construction or on an additional screen hung above the proscenium; smaller screens were also set on either side of the stage and could be lowered from the flies for the projection of stills, statistics, captions or quotations (Innes 104). As C. D. Innes explains:

This made it possible for Piscator to comment on the play through film, or on the film through the projection—or on any facet of the production through different combinations of the three elements (Innes 104).

Païement’s use of projections in *Moé, j’viens du Nord*, stie tightens the collective bond between the performers and the audience by foregrounding the fact that the protagonist represents a typical Franco-Ontarian from the spectators’ own city or town. For instance, before the protagonist, Roger makes his appearance, photos are projected of well known areas around the city in which the play is performed (*Moé* 5). Moreover, during his monologue, further projections are shown with texts that correspond to what Rog says and images that include him and his friends in the same well known areas (*Moé* 5). Finally, after his monologue, other projections are shown that include Roger in other parts of the

city. As the author explains in the didascalia: “*photo, du monologue mais aussi de Rog dans le bois, de Rog en ville dans des endroits très familiers*” (Moé 8).

Through a specific choice of theatrical space and a use of recognizable settings and characters the Franco-Ontarian performers (like the other People’s Theatre companies previously discussed) succeeded in attracting and maintaining an audience. The second task is somewhat more complicated because their key spectator was a non-theatre going audience for whom conventional theatre was a completely foreign artistic experience, an experience that often times alienated them. This was alleviated through the ways in which the performers created a collective bond between themselves and their audience. The first method involved a breaking of the imaginary barrier that usually separates the performer from the audience.

d) Eliminating the Barriers between the Audience and the Performer

Paiement’s *Moé, j’viens du Nord, stie* opens by immediately breaking down the barriers that separate the spectator from the performer, and consequently establishes a collective bond between them. First of all, Roger introduces himself, not as a character, but as a member of the audience. Indeed, his first lines imply a reversal of roles:

Comment? J’viens voir une pièce, pis c’est tout ce qui y’a

des rangées de gens assis ? A part de ça j'suis tout seul ?...
 ben, écoutez, si vous voulez rester assis là à rien faire...ben
 c'est de vos affaires, mais moé j'suis pas pour recommander votre
 pièce à personne (*Moé 5*).³⁸

In effect, the play opens with a subversion of the theatrical event since, as a member of the community who has come to witness a piece of theatre, he is disappointed by what he sees and consequently wants to leave. In this way, the character anticipates the audience reaction and identifies with the fact that they have never been to the theatre and do not know what to expect.

Emphasis is thus placed on the actor as opposed to the character. This is further punctuated as Roger leaves the theatrical space and enters that of the spectator. As the stage directions indicate, Roger, "*Se lève, s'avance vers l'avant peut-être pourra-t-il s'asseoir sur le bord de la scène. Il est timide. Il se regarde les pieds*" (*Moé 5*).³⁹ Roger then introduces himself as the character that will be performing in the ensuing drama. However, this *dramatis persona* is, in every way, a recognizable member of the audience's community:

En tout cas j'm'appelle Roger. Mes chums y m'appellent Rog. J'ai
 18 ans pis j'suis né à Sudbury, en plein Nord-Ontario...Ha...Ha...
 'It's great to be a Northerner.' *Rire jaune* J'sais pas parler

³⁸What? I come to see a play and all I see are rows of seated people? Apart from that, I'm all alone?...well, listen, if you want to sit there and do nothing...well that's your business, but me, I'm not going to recommend your play to anyone.

³⁹He rises and approaches the front, perhaps he may sit on the edge of the stage. He is shy. He looks at his feet.

l'français, ben comme y faut. Au moins pas comme en France
(*Moé 6*).⁴⁰

We notice, first of all, that he was born in Sudbury, the locale in which the play is performed. Secondly, we notice his feeling of insecurity with regards to his language, indicating indirectly that the play will be performed in the language spoken and understood by the audience. Roger then proceeds to further describe the dramatic setting which, in effect, is the same as the location in which the play is performed. While doing so, he maintains the initial bond with the audience by listing more recognizable settings via the local schools he attended:

Vous savez comme ça s'passe. J'ai commencé mon école
Secondaire au Collège Sacré-Cœur, que j'ai laissé après avoir failli
ma 10^e années. J't'allé au Collège Notre-Dame, pis les bonnes
sœurs m'ont fourré dehors...J'suis allé au Sudbury High School
pour un bout de temps pis comme c'est là, j't'à Mac-Jack en 13^e
année (*Moé 6*).⁴¹

Roger further maintains the bond by sustaining a dialogue in which he anticipates the spectator's questions and then immediately provides answers for

⁴⁰ In any case, my name is Roger. My chums call me Rog. I'm 18 years old and I was born in Sudbury, in Northern Ontario...Ha...Ha... 'It's great to be a Northerner' *Sour laugh*. I don't speak French very well, at least not like they do in France.

⁴¹ You know the story. I started High School at Collège Sacré Coeur where I left after failing grade 10. Then I went to Collège Notre Dame, and the good Sisters threw me out...then I went to Sudbury High School for a while and right now I'm in Grade 13 at Mac-Jack.

them. The locale in which he lives is also that of the Franco-Ontarian working class:

Qu'est-ce que j'fait? Ben, j'vis, pareil comme vous autres, peut-être un p'tit peu plus, peut-être un 'tit peu moins ! [...]
Voulez-vous savoir où j'reste ? J'reste dans le moulin à fleur, c'est là qu'y est ma famille et mes amis. Le moulin à fleur c'est pas pire, c't'une bonne place. Les gars sont ben l'fun... Les filles itou (*Moé* 6).⁴²

The audience cannot help but associate itself with the character since this is the first time that a Franco-Ontarian has been represented on a theatrical stage using the Franco-Ontarian 'joual,' speaking of locales and situations that they all have shared, and sharing the same apprehensions about, not only their language, but also about established theatre.

A similar recognisably Franco-Ontarian character appears in Paiement's *La vie et les temps de Médéric Boileau*.⁴³ This time, Médéric, the protagonist, is a typical elderly member of the community who tells his story directly to the audience. As in *Moé, j'viens du Nord, stie*, the protagonist uses the same speech forms as the audience and thus creates an intimate bond with its members:

⁴² What do I do? Well, I live my life like you do, maybe a little less, maybe a little more! [...] You wanna know where I live? I live in the moulin à fleur, that's where my family and my friends are. It's not bad, le moulin à fleur, it's a good place. The guys are a lot of fun...and the girls too.

⁴³ Paiement, André. *La vie et les temps de Médéric Boileau*. Ottawa : Prise de Parole, 1978. Subsequent references to this play will be cited with *Médéric* and a page reference.

Qu'est c'est que ça fait un vieux comme moé. Ben ça fait rien !
 J'ai pas de famille pis mes vieux chums, y sont tous morts. J'suis
 juste là, dans ma vieille carcasse, pis d'icitte à dix ans j'vais tomber
 dans l'enfance. Tout ce qui me reste à faire c'est de penser en
 arrière parce que le futur, ben, y est déjà passé (*Médéric* 13-14).⁴⁴

La Corvée's *La parole et la loi* opens in a similar fashion. In effect, during the introductory song, it remains clear to the spectators that the actors have not yet assumed their roles; on the contrary, the players appear on their own behalf with the suitcases that contain the costumes and props needed for the moment they assume the roles of their characters. They then introduce themselves as a performance group and state their intentions by addressing the audience directly: "C'est nous la Corvée on s'en vient vous jouer,/Un show qu'on a monté à Vanier"⁴⁵(*La parole et la loi* 9).⁴⁶ Thus a collective bond is created, much like that created by Paiement's drama, in which the performers are recognizable members of the francophone community, and in which the production is one of many that has already been performed elsewhere in recognizably Franco-Ontarian locations.

The song, furthermore, announces the production's exclusively Franco-Ontarian content and structure: "On va vous la raconter, notre histoire,/Des temps présents, des temps passés,/Des faits connus, p'is des choses cachées" (*Parole*

⁴⁴ What does an old guy like me do? Nothing! I have no family and my old chums, well, they're all dead. So I just sit here in my old carcass, and between now and ten years I'll fall back into my childhood. All there is left to do is think of the past since the future, well, it's already done.

⁴⁵ La Corvée, *La Parole et la loi*. Ottawa : Prise de Parole, 1980. Subsequent references to this play will be cited with *Parole* and a page reference.

⁴⁶We are La Corvée, we come to play/ a show that we did in Vanier.

9)⁴⁷. We note the use of the possessive pronoun “notre” which is intended not only for the performers but for the audience since the history to be presented pertains to both groups that are part of the Franco-Ontarian community. Furthermore, the verb “raconter” is used rather than “présenter.” This indicates the oral nature of the performance. In effect, rather than a conventional drama, the spectators will witness and take part in what may be likened to a theatricalised “conte.” (The traditional Franco-Ontarian conte will be dealt with in greater detail in later chapters)

A collective bond is also maintained with the audience through the use of a narrator, M. Loyal, who speaks directly to the audience and mediates between it and the performers. However, M. Loyal is not the only performer to break the barrier between the performer and the audience during the performance. Mid-way through the production, the performance is literally stopped by the scene entitled “Non!” This scene is of particular significance since it subverts both the story and the theatrical conventions of the entire play. In effect, we are told that the actors are playing in “leur propre rôle”: “Bob, Daniel, la Troupe” (*Parole* 43).⁴⁸ It begins when Daniel literally puts a stop to the performance by saying, « Non ! Non! Non !, j’en peux p’us, j’en peux p’us” (*Parole* 43).⁴⁹ He then explains that “C’est plus que ça, Ah, j’déprime, c’tte maudite scène-là, a’m’déprime assez, j’en peux plus” (*Parole* 43).⁵⁰ At that point, Daniel literally leaves the area of performance

⁴⁷We will tell you our story/of times present, of times past/ known facts, and secrets kept.

⁴⁸their own roles, Bob, Daniel, the troupe.

⁴⁹No, no, I can’t go on.

⁵⁰It’s more than that, I’m depressed. That god damned scene depresses me so much , I can’t go on.

and joins the audience: “*Il va s’accrocher à un spectateur*” (*Parole* 43).⁵¹ Thus, the audience is invited to participate in the discussion surrounding the events depicted in the play.

e) The use of the half-mask

We have just seen how a collective bond is established between the performer and the spectator. However, how does the performer maintain this bond while he or she is depicting the play’s antagonist? La Corvée found the answer to this dilemma through the use of the mask. In People’s Theatre the mask has two functions. On the one hand, the mask immobilizes facial expression in order to create a caricature of the character portrayed. On the other hand, it destroys the illusion of theatre by foregrounding the actor who is performing. As Patrice Pavis explains:

The mask denaturalizes the character by introducing a foreign body into the relationship between spectator and actor. It is therefore often used when the *mise-en-scène* seeks to avoid emotional transference and defamiliarizes the character (Pavis 202).

⁵¹He leaves the stage and latches onto a spectator.

In *La parole et la loi* this two-fold function is manifested in the use of the half-mask. As we recall, the play adapts the history behind the “Règlement 17”⁵² into a type of theatricalised “conte” that pits the Franco-Ontarian “heroes” against the Anglophone “villains.” The spectator is never allowed to lose sight of who is the villain because of the fact that the villains are foregrounded by a half-mask that covers the upper part of the face. While this punctuates the role of the villain by freezing the face into a stereotyped caricature, it also simultaneously maintains the bond that has already been established with the audience.

Seeing that a bond has been created between the players and the spectators, it is important to maintain that bond while those same performers are playing the roles of villains. It must be continually obvious that their transformation, from a protagonist (who is simultaneously a performer and a member of the community) to an antagonist, is a temporary one, and that underneath the half-mask, the young actor, who is part of the community, is still there. When a performer dons a half-mask, he or she is thus simultaneously a member of the community in which he or she is playing and the character that he or she is portraying. Behind the half-mask the audience will never forget “ces jolies demoiselles et ces beaux jeunes hommes” that will re-create “par la magie de l’illusion théâtrale, l’histoire de notre histoire” (*Parole* 10).⁵³

⁵²“Règlement 17” was a law that the Ontario government passed in 1912 in an attempt to restrict the teaching of French in public schools. For more information see André Lalonde, *Le Règlement XVII et ses repercussions sur le Nouvel-Ontario*. Sudbury : Société historique du Nouvel-Ontario, 1965 ; Robert Choquette, *L’Ontario français, historique*. Montreal : Etudes Vivantes, 1980, p. 177-195; and Louis-Gabriel Bordeleau et al. “L’éducation en Ontario français” in Thériault, Joseph Yvon. *Francophonie minoritaires au Canada*. Moncton: Les Editions de l’Acadie, 1999, p. 442-445.

⁵³these pretty young women and these handsome young men [...] by the magic of theatrical illusion, the story of our history.

f) Popular Song

Paiment entertained the younger members of his audience with popular rock melodies,⁵⁴ many of which would later appear on the musical albums he recorded with CANO. Paiment used popular song as a mode of entertainment and as a form of chorus. While these songs express universal moods and feelings, they also reflect opinions shared exclusively by the Franco-Ontarians. For instance, in Paiment's *Moé, j'viens du Nord*, *stie* one song reflects upon the dramatic situation while simultaneously providing a point of view that is reflective of the rebellious spirit of the sixties:

Tu travailles tes shifts à journée longue,
 Tout le temps à même place, pas plus riche, pas plus
 Pauvre.
 Partout règne la confusion, tout le monde parle de
 révolution.
 On achète ton âme, on vend du nickel,
 Partout de bombes, on s'en va au ciel.
 La mine t'enterre, ferme-la (*Moé* 24).⁵⁵

⁵⁴Robert Marinier states that, when he was a teenager in Sudbury, the music is what first drew him and his friends to Paiment's plays (see interview in Annex 2)

⁵⁵You work your shifts all day long./Always the same place, no richer, no poorer./There is confusion everywhere, everyone talks of revolution./They buy your soul, they sell nickel/Bombs everywhere, we go to Heaven./The mine is burrying you. So shut up.

Païement also uses song as an avenue in which to express his opinions concerning various dilemmas faced by the Franco-Ontarians. In *Lavalléville*, for instance, Albert sings a song that reflects a people that are trapped within a state of minoritization:

On peut pas se transformer
 Savais-tu qu'on est poigné
 On est tous des prisonniers, et
 On est obligé de rester [...] (*Lav* 23) ⁵⁶

Later in *Lavalléville*, Diane sings a song which reflects the central dilemma faced by many young Franco-Ontarians in the seventies: whether to stay within a rural community whose traditional values and lifestyle are quickly disappearing, or leave the community in hopes of a new beginning:

Oui Je sens que mon pays
 Ne vivra plus, plus tellement longtemps
 Oui Mon pays désuni
 Je l'ai connu
 Je l'ai vécu longtemps
 Et quand je pense à tous les bons moments
 J'ai envie d'y rester

⁵⁶We can't change/Did you know that we are trapped/We are all prisoners, and/
 We have to stay that way

Mais quand je pense à tous ce temps perdu

Je dois m'en aller (*Lav* 51).⁵⁷

While Paiement entertained his younger audience with rock melodies, he also entertained the older members of his audience through nostalgic adaptations of traditional folksongs. In *Médéric Boileau*, for instance, he incorporates an adaptation of the traditional French Canadian song “Les maringouins” which was made famous by a recording from the Québécois singer La Bolduc.⁵⁸ In Paiement’s version, the song becomes part of the protagonist, Médéric’s story that he relates to the audience:

Les maringouin, c’est des bibittes
 Pour se grater quand ça nous pique
 Moé, j’veus dit, c’est bien souffrant
 C’est cent fois pire que le mal de dents
 J’ai la peau toute arrachée
 Parce que j’m suis trop gratté
 J’ai les jambes toutes en morsures
 Comme un vrai morceau de fressure

⁵⁷I feel that my people/Will not last for very long/Yes, broken people/I knew them well/
 I lived with them a long time/And when I think of all the good times/I want to stay
 But when I think of all this wasted time/I feel that I must go

⁵⁸While La Bolduc is now known as a Québécois folksinger, she sang during the 1930s, before the Quiet Revolution in Quebec. Thus, her fame reaches back to a time where French Canadian culture was not informed by geographical barriers. La Bolduc thus belongs to Franco-Ontarian culture as much as that of Quebec.

A trente ans j'bûchais du bois
 Dans la neige jusqu'aux oreilles
 A trente ans j'bûchais du bois
 Gelé de la tête jusqu'aux orteils
 Même si j'aimais pas ça
 J'men irais jamais de là
 Parce qu'en hivers dans le bois
 Les maringouins, y sont pas là (*Médéric* 36-27)⁵⁹

g) Pantomime

In Franco-Ontarian People's Theatre "pantomime" is adopted from its classical Roman form in which text and gesture were separated: the actor mimed scenes while being accompanied by verbal commentary provided by a chorus and/or musicians (Pavis 247; Lust 1). In his political theatre, Bertolt Brecht sometimes used pantomime as a means of an effect of estrangement. To prevent the audience from becoming emotionally involved with the events or characters, Brecht would have one actor mime the action while another read the lines or would interrupt the dialogue with mimed action and vice versa (Lust 54).

⁵⁹The mosquito is a bug/You have to scratch when you get bitten/I can tell you how they make you suffer/A hundred times worse than a tooth ache/My skin is torn apart/Because I've scratched it far too much/My legs are full of bites

When I was thirty I cut logs/In the snow up to my ears/When I was thirty I cut logs/Frozen from my head to my toes/Even if I didn't like it/I would never leave that place/Because in the winter time/There are no bugs in the bush

Franco-Ontarian People's Theatre sometimes incorporated pantomime for a similar purpose. However, as well as inciting a political consciousness, as was Brecht's aim, the Franco-Ontarian practitioners also used pantomime as a way to incite a collective cultural consciousness. In *La Parole et la loi*, for example, a pantomime is performed depicting an historical sketch in which a group of French Canadians is pitted against a group of Irish lumberjacks in a way that foregrounds the exploitation suffered by the Franco-Ontarians. As the didascalia explains:

Ils coupent du bois ensemble, se lancent des injures sans se comprendre, chacun dans sa langue. Une dispute éclate sur la manière de couper, et finalement le Canadien français décide de couper l'arbre lui-même. L'Irlandais lui donne des conseils, puis des ordres, et peu à peu se transforme en gros patron du bois (Parole13).⁶⁰

An example of pantomime is also found in Paiement's *La vie et les temps de Médéric Boileau*. The character of Eva Commanda assumes the role of story teller while other characters illustrate that which is said:

Ce "conte" est interprété en mime par Médéric et « les loups » --tous les autres personnages lors de la création de la pièce par le

⁶⁰ They cut wood together and utter insults at each other without understanding what is said as each group speaks in their own language. An argument ensues and finally, the French Canadian decides to cut down the tree by himself. The Irish worker first gives advice and then gives orders until finally he is transformed into the foreman.

T.N.O., Médéric disait les réponses du texte du « conte », le restant de l'action était mimé. A la discrétion du metteur en scène, un narrateur peut réciter le conte entrecoupé des réponses de Médéric (Médéric 37).⁶¹

In this play, however, the use of pantomime has a different function. In this example, it becomes a means of theatricalizing the popular French Canadian folktale, a mode of communication and performance with which the Franco-Ontarian audience is quite familiar. Thus the audience is provided with a recognizable mode of performance.⁶²

h) Parody

Perhaps as a reaction to being forced to perform from a classical repertoire in the early days of his career (see Section C), Paiement parodies Molière. In *Lavalléeville*, for instance, he parodies Molière's satires of the medical profession.⁶³ However, Paiement's satire is aimed at the partially assimilated Franco-Ontarians who have left the community and rejected its values and

⁶¹ This story is interpreted in the form of a mime by Médéric and "the wolves" –all the other characters in the performance of the play by T.N.O., Médéric utters the responses of the text of the story, and the remainder of the action is mimed. At the discretion of the director, a narrator may recite the story in juxtaposition with Médéric's responses.

⁶² The theatricalization of the traditional story will be discussed in further detail in Chapter Two of the thesis.

⁶³ Paiement's character Cyrbantigne Latriproure may be seen as a parodic compilation of the various doctors found in Molière's *Le médecin volant* (1659), *L'amour médecin* (1665), *Le médecin malgré lui* (1666), *M. de Pourceaugnac* (1669), and *Le malade imaginaire* (1673).

language. Cyrbantigne Lariproure is a phony doctor who has come to Adolphe's aid; however, we soon discover that he lusts after everything that comes his way: Diane, then her mother, Adèle and finally Adolphe's power and wealth.

Furthermore, while Molière's doctors wear costumes that identify their profession, Paiement dresses Lariproure in an absurd manner that contrasts him with the rest of the community: "Son habit est d'une couleur très voyante et d'un matériel luisant. Le tout est très serré autour des fesses et des génitaux. Il porte aussi une grande veste en fourrure qui lui tombe aux chevilles" (*Lav* 5).⁶⁴ Finally, the Latin usually spoken by Molière's doctors is replaced by an affected form of European French: "Je perçois que vous avez des craintes un tout petit peu paranoïaques à mon égard. C'est sans doute cet habillement avec lequel je me travestis qui vous surprend" (*Lav* 41).⁶⁵

The dramatic situation involving Lariproure mirrors that of a Molière play as well. This part of the story unfolds when Lariproure becomes embroiled in a conspiracy in which Adèle attempts to overthrow her husband, Adolphe. First, Adèle instructs Diane to seduce Cyrbantigne and convince him that Adolphe is unfit to run the village. Secondly, she convinces Cyrbantigne that he will share in the wealth. However, Adolphe, having captured Diane in her attempts to flee the village, forces her into confessing all that she knows. In the end, the tables are turned and Cyrbantigne is the character that is duped. Thus, the deceiver is deceived.

⁶⁴His costume is of very bright colours and shiny fabric. It fits very tight, especially around the genitals and buttock. He also wears a long fur coat that hangs to his ankles.

⁶⁵I perceive that you might have some paranoic concerns about my appearance. It is no doubt my attire that surprises you.

i) The Popular Folktale or “conte”

The above examination located the re-birth of Franco-Ontarian Theatre within the rubric of an existing trend of People’s Theatre in the Western world. Secondly, it outlined the theatrical elements in light of the agenda set out by this particular form of theatre. In effect, the particular stage space; the use of familiar language, settings and characters; the breaking of the barrier that separates the actors and the audience; and the use of popular modes of performance such as pantomime, song and parody may all be seen as ways in which this theatre attempted to incite a collective consciousness in its target Franco-Ontarian audience. While these elements, which constitute an important part of Franco-Ontarian People’s Theatre, all have their roots in oral culture, we have not yet dealt with what may be seen as the very heart of the Franco-Ontarian oral tradition: the traditional story or “conte.”

These “contes” consist of a body of folktales that were passed on, in a family setting from one generation to the next by word of mouth rather than by writing, and were thus partly modified by successive re-tellings. An enormous collection of these were finally recorded and transcribed by Germain Lemieux between 1973 and 1991.⁶⁶

The stories (or contes) were introduced to Canada by its first French immigrants who came, in large part, from the West of France and most

⁶⁶Lemieux, Germain. *Les Vieux m’ont conte*. Montreal: Editions Bellarmin, 1973-1991 (volumes 1 to 32).

particularly the region of Brittany (Voldeng 19). Once they arrived, the new settlers reformulated the traditional old-world tales in order to suit their new home. Thus the tales of French princes were revised to tell of a local “habitant” hero by the name of “Ti-Jean” (Fowke 15). As Évelyne Voldeng further explains:

Le conte populaire franco-ontarien et en particulier de Ti-Jean révèlent un monde essentiellement rural, monde de pionniers, de bûcherons et de paysans. Nombreux sont les contes où il est question de chantiers, de terres à défricher, de troupeaux à garder et de courses en forêt [...] le conte populaire était un hommage aux défricheurs de cette terre du Nord (Voldeng 46).⁶⁷

Ti-Jean, thus became prototypical hero of the often times exploited Franco-Ontarian people, “[d]éfenseur des opprimés, porte-parole des démunis, représentant du bon people” (Voldeng 14).⁶⁸

The “contes” have their own underlying structure that is considerably different from text-based prose stories since it corresponds with a form of recitation which, in effect, constitutes a genuine mode of performance. In order to fully comprehend this we cannot separate the story from its delivery; thus, the story and its utterance are combined to create an exclusively oral mode of communication that we will refer to as the “story-telling event.” Furthermore, the

⁶⁷The popular Franco-Ontarian folktales, in particular the adventures of Ti-Jean, reflect an essentially rural setting of pioneers, lumberjacks and peasants. Numerous are those folktales that concern working the land, herding livestock and trailing the forest [...] the popular “conte” was an homage to those who first settled the North.

⁶⁸hero of the oppressed, the voice of the exploited, representative of the “good” people.

story-telling event is not limited to the recitation of the conte. As we will later see, its underlying structures are also found in other modes of communication such as the telling of “personal anecdotes” and “oral history.”

The transposition of the story-telling event from its traditional family setting to the dramatic stage is where Franco-Ontarian People’s Theatre and its text-based theatre of the 1980s and 1990s find their commonality. Indeed, the traditional art of Franco-Ontarian story-telling appears in various forms in almost all Franco-Ontarian plays. Thus, further discussion of the appropriation and theatricalization of the traditional conte, the personal anecdote and oral history will be deferred to the following chapters of this thesis and will take the form of a comparative study to show how the story-telling event was first incorporated in the oral-based People’s Theatre of the 1970s, and then appropriated and transcribed into the text-based theatre of the 1980s and 1990s. We will discuss the underlying structure of the story-telling event and the theatricalization of its performance in Chapter Two, and the appropriation of recurring story-telling themes in Chapter Three.

Chapter Two:

Transcribing Orality in a Text-Based Theatre

1) Oral Notions of Time

In order to fully grasp the underlying form of the traditional story, its performance and its representation in our plays, we must first look at the complex notion of oral time. In effect, oral time is non-teleological; in this context, it is both cyclical and transcendent. On the one hand, it is cyclical in that the past often has a tendency to repeat itself in the form of actions, events and even behaviours. As Ellen Basso explains:

[The idea] that time is cumulative and has cumulative effects is in turn rooted in the idea of time as recurrent. This idea is the basis for the explanatory proposition that an event can serve as causal precedent for similar future events [...] Past, present, and future are all one in the sense that what has once happened may continue to occur and has a chance of recurring in the future (Basso 38).

On the other hand, oral time is also transcendent in that memory, which is alive in the mind of the beholder, has the ability to manifest itself as a living

being. This indicates that time is also global, that there is no distinction between past, present and future; therefore, the past can invade the present without causing any overt upheavals. Thus, Serge Ouaknine explains that there exists

[c]e passage subtil et indicible entre une mémoire qui n'est pas morte, mais qui s'actualise dans le présent, et une mémoire qui actualise les notions qui ne relèvent pas simplement de l'horizontale, mais aussi de la transcendance. Dès l'instant qu'il y a mythe, disait Sartre, l'histoire disparaît. Et ceci est important. Que signifie ce passage à cette mémoire dans laquelle l'horizon se renverse pour établir une brèche dans la linéarité, et faire descendre les dieux, l'invisible? (Ouaknine 55).⁶⁹

The above quotation by Ouaknine is especially pertinent (as we will later see in more detail) to a category of oral time that we refer to as “the manifestations of the past,” since it helps to clarify the apparently unexplained appearance of various ghosts, specters and figures from the past that impose themselves upon the living characters of the present. Whereas transcendent time is manifested in these “manifestations of the past,” the notion of cyclical time is seen in what we will refer to, for the purposes of this thesis, as “cyclical recurrence” and “cyclical return.”

⁶⁹This subtle and unspeakable passage between a memory that is dead but that reappears in the present, and memory that goes beyond linear time that belongs to the transcendent. From that point on, myth comes into being, says Sartre, and history disappears. This is important. What is the meaning of this shift to a form of memory where synchronic time is reversed, where linearity is breached and the gods, these invisible forces come down to earth?

a) The Notion of Cyclical Recurrence

The notion of cyclical recurrence implies that events are destined to repeat themselves. This is first seen in the circular structure of the plot in which the end of the play parallels the beginning through a repetition of events. In Paiement's *Moé, j'viens du nord, stie*, for instance, Roger, while determined that he will never do so, follows in his father's footsteps by working at the mine in order to raise a family. This is also seen in Dalpé and Haentjens's *Hawkesbury Blues* and *Nickel*. In *Hawkesbury Blues*, the protagonist, Louise is seen at both the beginning and the end of the play packing her belongings in preparation for a move to a different geographical location. In *Nickel*, the play also begins and ends with the same daily routine: the men work their shift at the mine while the women prepare a meal for their husbands' return. In both plays, the circular plot is also reflected in the songs that begin and end the dramas. In *Nickel*, for instance, the song reflects the daily routine of movement into and out of the mine:

Cage monte, cage descend

Les heures dans la nuit.

Cage monte, cage descend

Les heures sans m'amie ⁷⁰(*Nickel* 5).⁷¹

⁷⁰ Cage goes up, cage goes down/The hours in the night/Cage goes up, cage goes down/The hours without my friends.

⁷¹Dalpé, Jean Marc & Haentjens, Brigitte. *Nickel*. Ottawa : Prise de Parole, 1984. Subsequent references to this play will be cited with *Nickel* and a page reference.

In other plays, cyclical recurrence is manifested in the way certain actions and patterns of behaviour are passed down from generation to generation. In this way, a given event resulting from a certain pattern of behaviour functions as a precedent for future similar events. In Ouellette's *French Town*, for instance, the father's violent behaviour that culminates in the beating of his son, Pierre-Paul, is handed down to and subsequently repeated by Pierre-Paul as he beats his mother. In Dalpé's *Le chien*, the cycle of violence spans three generations as it is exhibited first by the grandfather who enjoys the violence he sees in World War One, then by the father who commits violent acts on every member of his family, and finally by Jay, the son who beats and finally murders his father. At the end of Jean Marc Dalpé's *Eddy*, Vic betrays Eddy in the same way that Eddy had betrayed his elder brother years before. And finally, Michel Ouellette's *Corbeaux en exil* traces the events spanning four generations of a Franco-Ontarian family. In *Corbeaux*, Ouellette provides four sequences that relate essentially the same event, the humiliation and subsequent exile of a family member that took place at different times, under different circumstances and with different people from the same family.

Thus, the sins of past generations are revisited upon those of the present. In some plays, this is taken to a further extreme when a living character incarnates a dead one. In Paiement's *Médéric Boileau*, for example, the character of Médéric literally takes the place that his mother occupies at the beginning of the play. Thus, he figuratively becomes his mother. Later, in Ouellette's *French Town*, Cindy incarnates her dead father by becoming his mirror image. She works the

same job as her father at the local paper mill, dons men's clothing, drinks beer at the local bar and utilizes her father's speech patterns. And finally, at the end of both *French Town* and *Requiem*, Pierre-Paul, having resigned himself to the fact that he has inherited the worst of his father's traits symbolically transforms himself into his father's representation by donning his clothes, using his language and handling his gun.

b) The Notion of Cyclical Return

While the notion of cyclical recurrence involves patterns handed down in cyclical fashion from one generation to the next, the notion of cyclical return is limited to the actions of one particular character. It involves a process in which a character returns to the past in order to relive certain events. In the Franco-Ontarian drama this is manifested in two ways.

First of all, cyclical return is manifested by the way in which characters physically return to the past by visiting, and sometimes re-visiting, the place in which the events of the past took place. In Ouellette's *Corbeaux en exil*, for instance, Pete Tremblay returns to his home town of Kapuskasing in order to write a history of that town; however, his project is soon transformed into a personal venture into the past that traces the protagonist's family roots. In Dalpé's *Le chien*, the character of Jay returns to his family home after seven years of nomadic exile. And, in both Ouellette's *French Town* and *Requiem*, Pierre-Paul follows a cyclical pattern in which he continually leaves his home only to return

in order to resume the battles with his father and then with his sister who has taken the father's place.

In *French Town*, Pierre-Paul's departure and return is punctuated by a parallel story related by his mother Simone in which her brother Urbain was also exiled and returned to the family home at a later time. Finally, in Ouellette's *Le bateleur*, the character of Virgile returns to the setting in which his father was murdered. In all these plays, the notion of cyclical return takes the form of a personal quest in which the protagonist returns to the setting of his youth in order to relive previously repressed memories and subsequently attempt to resolve the issues contained therein.

The notion of cyclical return is further manifested through the act of story-telling. In this case, the characters are forced to return to events of the past as they are recounted to them by other characters. In some cases, the characters often revert to their past-selves in order to participate in the enactment of the story and thus relive past events. This is first seen in Paiement's *La vie et les temps de Médéric Boileau*. In this play, Médéric revisits and retraces his youth through the act of story-telling.

The act of story-telling also occurs in Ouellette's *French Town* when Pierre-Paul is forced to relive the fateful hunting trip with his father as it is recounted by his sister Cindy. It also occurs in Dalpé's *Eddy* when the protagonist tells his own story and also reverts to his past self in its re-enactment. And finally, it is seen in Ouellette's *Le bateleur* in which both Jack and Eliza revert to their past selves in order to enact events recounted by Dempsey.

Characters thus undergo a symbolic journey in which they both physically and psychologically return to the past. The characters first physically return to the specific setting in which the events of the past occurred, and then relive the past by hearing and re-enacting the details of its events as they are retold by other characters. All of this will be dealt with in more detail in later chapters.

c) Manifestations of the Past

The past thus repeats itself via cyclical recurrence and cyclical return. However, time is also transcendent in Franco-Ontarian drama in that the past and the present often occur simultaneously. When speaking of the Caribbean theatre, Serge Ouaknine explains that it creates a space in the linear structure out of which the otherwise invisible gods appear: “l’horizon se renverse pour établir une brèche dans la linéarité, et faire descendre les dieux, l’invisible” (Ouaknine 55).⁷² In Franco-Ontarian theatre, something similar occurs via the appearance of various “manifestations of the past.” These characters may be living or dead, ghosts or figments of the protagonist’s imagination. In all cases, however, their primary purpose is to confront the protagonist and force him or her to revisit events of the past and deal with unresolved issues contained therein.

In the 1970s People’s Theatre, Paiement introduced a manifestation of the past in *La vie et les temps de Médéric Boileau*. In this play, Médéric shares the stage with his deceased mother. Her purpose is two-fold. On the one hand, the

⁷²Synchronic time is reversed and linearity is breached so that the invisible forms of the gods, can come down to earth.

deceased mother represents the otherwise silent voice of the past; and on the other hand, she is a constant reminder of Médéric's unresolved guilt for having abandoned her in her old age. Transcendent time may thus be seen as a projection of the subconscious: a way of confronting a repressed problem through its incarnation on the stage.

In the text-based theatre of the 1980s, the appearance of manifestations of the past is a recurring element shared by almost all the plays. In Jean Marc Dalpé's *Le chien* for instance, Jay brings with him three other characters from the past: the recently deceased grandfather appears along with the mother and the adopted sister Céline who are still living but have long since left the father. Furthermore, they are manifestations of neither the father's nor Jay's imagination. These "manifestations of the past" occupy their own autonomous spatial and temporal setting which is further abstracted by the fact that they are simultaneously in and out of its perimeters. They appear in order to force the father to confront a past that he has thus far managed to repress from his memory.

A similar situation is found in Michel Ouellette's *French Town*. In this play, the characters share the stage with the deceased mother Simone. Simone is an omnipresent character who is invisible to all but the audience. However, the other characters, Pierre-Paul, Cindy and Martin hear the mother, react to her presence, and at times interact with her utterances. Simone thus represents an ever-present voice from the past that invades the living characters of the present. As in *Médéric Boileau*, Simone gives utterance to an otherwise forgotten past, but her function is also similar to the manifestations found in *Le chien*. As in that play,

Simone forces the living characters to confront past events that they would rather forget.

Furthermore, in Michel Ouellette's *Le bateleur*, we have the omnipresent figure of Dempsey who is a manifestation of both Jack and Éliza's shared past. While he occupies his own spatial and temporal setting, Dempsey nevertheless ventures in and out of its perimeters by either participating in events that take place in the present or by reverting to and reliving events from the past. As in the other plays, Dempsey functions as a constant reminder of past issues that have remained unresolved. His utterances, furthermore, prompt the protagonists to confront the past and finally resolve that which is repressed.

Le bateleur is also provided with a symbolic manifestation of the past through the living character of Virgile, a Native Canadian, who has ventured into Jack's bar in order to find temporary shelter from a snow storm. For Jack, however, Virgile is no stranger. Rather, he appears as the mirror image of a man that Jack had previously beaten and unceremoniously left to die in the street outside his bar. While we come to understand that Virgile is in fact the son of the deceased man, Jack believes him to be the man's ghost who has returned from the dead in order to enact his revenge.

In Jean Marc Dalpé's *Eddy*, the protagonist is confronted with the "Vieux Spectre" and the "Jeune Spectre," two figures from Eddy's past. The "Vieux Spectre," is Eddy's deceased older brother as he appeared at the time of his death. The "Jeune Spectre," on the other hand, is also the representation of his older brother but this time as Eddy remembers him in the prime of his youth. While

these characters are only visible to Eddy, they nevertheless interrupt the present course of action by interjecting and reacting to its events. The “Vieux Spectre,” first of all, reminds Eddy about how he had abandoned his family in Sudbury. He appears especially disgruntled by the fact that Eddy was absent at his funeral ceremony. The “Jeune Spectre,” on the other hand, is a continual reminder of Eddy’s failure as a professional boxer and boxing promoter. In essence, the “Jeune Spectre” represents the young and vibrant fighter of Eddy’s unrealized aspirations. The past and the future are thus reunited in one problematic space of unresolved questions.

Manifestations that appear exclusively to one character, as in *Eddy*, are also found in Michel Ouellette’s *L’homme effacé*. In this case, the figures from Thomas’s past, his mother Marthe, the boarder Pite and Annie-2, the younger version of Annie, perform a secondary drama that takes place in a parallel temporality: that of the past that is unfolded solely in Thomas’s imagination. Although Annie never sees or hears them, the manifestations of this past are nevertheless aware of her presence as they speak and react to her utterances and to the events that take place between her and Thomas. In the beginning, Marthe, Pite and Annie-2 represent the past as Thomas remembers it. However, this past is soon reformulated through Annie’s discourse, which provides information to which Thomas is not privy. Annie’s discourse thus completes Thomas’s memory of the events by providing the missing pieces. Once Thomas is provided with the complete picture of the past (as it is told by Annie and re-enacted by the manifestations of the past), he is then able to forgive Annie and move on with his

life. The manifestations of the past thus provide a means in which Thomas can resolve the issues surrounding his relationship with Annie.

In Michel Ouellette's *Requiem*, a similar situation is presented that involves an encounter between the protagonist and the past. In this case the meeting of past and present occurs while the protagonist, Cindy, is doing her homework for a night school course. She inadvertently conjures up the memories of her deceased father and her brother, Pierre-Paul, by opening a dictionary that once belonged to Pierre-Paul. Once they appear, Pierre-Paul and the father perform their own drama concerning the events that led to Pierre-Paul's suicide that is witnessed and then commented upon by Cindy. As in *L'homme effacé*, Pierre-Paul and Bobotte enable Cindy to relive her turbulent past and re-evaluate her part in the events in order to find a resolution.

Finally, in Robert Marinier's *L'insomnie*, the past is manifested through an ailment suffered by the protagonist. As the title suggests, the protagonist, Gilles, is suffering from insomnia. His insomnia eventually causes what the narrator refers to as "flashbacks." These flashbacks invade Gilles's consciousness at any given moment, and they include, as the narrator informs us, "des moments importants et moins importants de son passé"⁷³(*L'insomnie*, 23).⁷⁴ These flashbacks thus appear instantaneously as time slippages in which Gilles suddenly finds himself at the specific time and place in which the event occurred, and with the specific people involved in that event. Thus, at any given moment, he is forced to relive a specific moment from the past. In this way, Marinier creates a

⁷³ The important and not so important moments of his past.

⁷⁴ Marinier, Robert. *L'insomnie*. Sudbury: Prise de Parole, 1996. Subsequent references to this play will be cited with *L'insomnie* and a page reference.

dramatic situation that is similar to the previous plays, but where the manifestations of the past are part of the protagonist's psyche. In essence, Gilles's insomnia is symbolic of an identity crisis. His flashbacks thus represent a psychic journey into the past that Gilles undertakes in order to rediscover his identity.

In all cases, the manifestations of the past represent a protagonist's repressed memories that are released by a living character, a representative location or object from the past, or a psychological condition suffered by the protagonist. In Dalpé's *Le chien* for instance, the manifestations of the past appear along with the character of Jay as if this character's very presence unlocked all of the painful memories that the father has successfully repressed until that point. Similarly, in Dalpé's *Eddy*, the appearance of his nephew Vic appears to prompt the appearance of both the young and the old ghost.

In Ouellette's *French Town* and *Le bateleur*, the manifestations of the past are contained within the perimeters of a location from the past. In *French Town*, the deceased mother Simone appears to exclusively haunt the family home, the setting of Pierre-Paul's youth. And, in *Le bateleur*, Dempsey haunts Jack's bar, the same location in which the turbulent events of the past took place.

In Ouellette's *Requiem*, on the other hand, the manifestations of the past are evoked by an object from the past. The dictionary functions as the crucible that contains the repressed memories of Pierre-Paul and his father. As with Pandora's Box, Cindy opens the dictionary, releases the ghosts and thus sets the drama in motion.

Finally, in Ouellette's *L'homme effacé* and Marinier's *L'insomnie*, the manifestations of the past are a result of psychic phenomena. In *L'homme effacé*, Thomas is a mute character who finds himself in a psychiatric hospital. The manifestations of the past are thus the psychic projections of Thomas's obsession with the past as he remembers it. In *L'insomnie*, the invasion of the past comes about as a side-effect of his insomnia.

2) Performance Space

The idea that the past can exist simultaneously alongside the present is also reflected in the playwrights' manipulation of the dramatic space. For the most part, the manifestations of the past share the same stage space as the living characters of the present. In this way, the past invades or imposes upon the present in order to be heard. Such is the case in Dalpé's *Le chien* where all action takes place in the front of the father's home. In Ouellette's *Le bateleur*, furthermore, all action (including that which depicts events from the past) takes place in Jack's bar. And finally, in Ouellette's *L'homme effacé*, all the action, including the events from the past which took place in Sudbury, takes place in the psychiatric ward of the hospital in which Thomas finds himself. We thus have the impression that the manifestations of the past are psychic phenomena that haunt individuals in whatever location they happen to inhabit.

However, in Ouellette's *French Town* and *Requiem* the sets reflect the simultaneous existence of the past and the present through the creation of multiple settings that share the stage space. In *French Town*, Ouellette provides one setting in which two spaces are depicted simultaneously: one in Toronto, which represents Pierre-Paul's present situation, and one in Timber Falls, which is the setting of Pierre-Paul's youth. As the didascalia explains:

Une galerie métallique sur laquelle se trouve une vieille laveuse qui occupe l'espace central arrière ; d'un côté, l'espace de Cindy, représenté par une vieille banquette de camionnette ; de l'autre côté, l'espace de Pierre-Paul, représenté par un fauteuil de bureau à roulettes (*French 9*).⁷⁵

Having these two separate spaces may be seen as a reflection of Pierre-Paul's oscillation between the past and the present. It facilitates not only Pierre-Paul's continual return to his family home, but also his revisiting of the past as he always reverts to his past self when he occupies the space that depicts Timber Falls. Furthermore, the space from the past, the family home, is haunted by Simone, the manifestation of the past. Thus, the space corresponds with Pierre-Paul's central desire. He wishes to sell the family home in order to rid himself of the past that continually torments him.

⁷⁵ A metal porch where there is an old washing machine occupies the central space in the rear; on one side, Cindy's space, represented by an old truck; on the other side, Pierre-Paul's space represented by a desk chair on wheels.

A similar manipulation of space occurs in Ouellette's *Requiem*. In this play, however, there is no division between the setting that depicts the past and that which depicts the present. Cindy occupies a desk that represents the present in which she is doing her school work. But this desk is placed at the forefront of a setting from the past: the garage in which Pierre-Paul committed suicide. Thus, in this play, the past does not impose itself on the space of the present. It is more of a case in which the past and the present co-exist in the same shared space.

3) Scripting Orality: Story-Telling on the Dramatic Stage

Thus far, we have seen how time is both cyclical and transcendent in Franco-Ontarian drama. On the one hand, events from the past repeat themselves in a cyclical fashion in the present; and on the other hand, time is transcendent in that figures from the past co-exist with those of the present. This oral notion of time and space is also reflected in another example of residual orality that recurs in the majority of the plays in question. This involves what we will refer to as the dramatic representation of the act of "story-telling."

Richard Bauman, in his book *Story, Performance and Event* (1986), discusses the recurring structural elements found in various modes of traditional story-telling. According to Bauman, the traditional story is organised around a two-fold structure which includes both the narration of events and their

reenactment by the person telling the story. This is facilitated by the use of both indirect and direct styles of speech.

The traditional story always begins with a section devoted to two complementary functions, “the introduction of the *dramatis personae* and the setting of the scene for the narrated event to follow” (Bauman 63). The introductory material then invariably leads up to what Bauman refers to as a “conversational encounter”—the core of the oral anecdote. However, a shift takes place in the presentational mode of the stories, a shift from the recounting of circumstances and actions—telling about them—to replaying the actions or showing them. As Bauman further explains, it is a process of:

reenacting them (the events) to a degree by ostensibly—and ostensibly—repeating what was done in the original past event of which the narrative is an account. In the terminology of classic rhetoric, this may be seen as a shift along the continuum from *diegesis* to *mimesis*, from telling to showing. By far most of the reported turns at talk in the stories are rendered as direct discourse, in which the reported speech is actually quoted (Bauman 65).

Thus, a time slippage is marked between that which is narrated and that which is quoted via direct discourse. The story oscillates between the past-time of the story and the present-time of the enacted event. In the traditional French-Canadian “*conte*” this is taken one step further as the *conteur* shifts from the past

tense to the present tense as soon as the introduction comes to an end. For instance, in the Franco-Ontarian version of *Ti-Jean-joueur-de-tours*, the conte begins “Une fois, *c ’était* un roi; il *avait* comme voisin un paysan intelligent et retors que l’on *nommait* Ti-Jean-joueur –de-tours” (from Voldeng 129, my italics).⁷⁶ However, as soon as the story’s action begins, the present tense is used, “Un bon jour, Ti-Jean *dit* à sa femme « Tu vois le beau château du roi qui brille chaque matin au soleil levant ? »[...]” (Voldeng 129).⁷⁷

When transposing the narrated event into dramatic discourse, one commonality remains: the action always begins with one or another form of exposition that is always narrated via indirect discourse. This is, in turn, followed by a dramatic re-enactment which is presented in direct discourse through either quotation or action that takes place in the dramatic present. It would appear that in much of the oral-based Franco-Ontarian People’s Theatre of the 1970s, this constitutes the basic format in which each play is constructed.

In much of André Paiement’s work, for instance, the drama is an amalgam of monologue, action and song. These three elements, however, are juxtaposed in such a way that they liken the play’s overall structure to that of a story-telling event where expository material (presented via indirect discourse) is provided by either monologue or song and is immediately followed by dramatic action (direct discourse) that illustrates that which was said in the exposition.

⁷⁶Once upon a time, there was a king, he had a neighbour who was an intelligent and sly peasant that was named Ti-Jean-the trickster.

⁷⁷One day, Ti-Jean tells his wife, “You see the king’s nice castle that shines every morning with the rising sun?”

In Paiement's drama, most if not all dramatic action is preceded by a discourse spoken directly to the audience which outlines the dramatic setting and characters involved in the events that takes place immediately afterwards. In *Moé, j'viens du Nord*, *stie*, for example, the play opens with a monologue addressed to the audience by Roger in which he introduces the *dramatis personae* and then outlines the ensuing dramatic situation. He first introduces himself as an eighteen year old high school student from Sudbury whose sole ambition is to attend University in order to free himself from the control of his father. He then speaks of his family and his turbulent relationship with his father and ends the speech by introducing and describing his girl friend Nicole and his two friends Marc and Raymond. In other words, his monologue provides for an exposition concerning the events that will follow.

In turn, this monologue is followed by a dramatic sketch (using direct discourse) depicting a conversation between Roger and his girlfriend at the restaurant where she works. Once the sketch comes to an end, the entire sequence is completed by a song which provides further exposition concerning Roger's situation:

Roger veut vieillir
 Mais Roger aime maudire
 Un père qui l'aime
 L'ancien système
 [...]

Roger ...veut s'amuser
 Roger...aime la liberté
 D'un nouveau système
 D'un monde sans peines (*Moé* 16).⁷⁸

Thus, the entire play is provided with the same underlying structure as that of the traditional story: an exposition which is presented through indirect speech, followed by an enactment of narrated events that take place in the dramatic present or through direct discourse and a final denouement which is told or sung via indirect speech.

In la Corvée's *La parole et la loi*, the story-telling structure is composed of a combination of dramatic action, song and elements of docudrama.⁷⁹ As in Païement's plays, each of the juxtaposed elements comprise a specific function that likens it to the specific parts of the traditional story: exposition and dramatic re-enactment. In this case, each sketch is clearly differentiated by its own exposition that is provided via documentary material concerning historical events. These are recited by one or another character. This is then immediately followed by one or several dramatic sketches that are presented in a way as to demonstrate that which was just said. The sketch is then completed either by a song or further exposition, related through indirect speech as the actors speak to the audience

⁷⁸Roger wants to grow up/But Roger likes to curse/ A father that loves/ the old ways [...] Roger wants to have fun/Roger likes the freedom/of a new system/ of a world without worries

⁷⁹Docudrama is a form of theatre that is composed of documents and authentic sources, selected and assembled according to the playwright's socio-political thesis. It often employs the form of a trial or inquiry in order to quote proceedings, i.e. Peter Weiss's *Discourse on... Viet Nam*, or John Coulter's *Riel* (Pavis 1998: 110).

about that which was just enacted. Thus, the three part structure (exposition, enactment, final word/denouement) demonstrated in the traditional story is maintained.

While in the People's Theatre of the 1970s the overall structure of the plays resembles that of the story-telling format, in the later text-based theatre of the 1980s, the story-telling format is exemplified in specific pieces of dialogue found within the plays. The story-telling format is transcribed according to two structural categories that involve, on the one hand, one speaker who relates the entire narrated event, and on the other hand, a story that is shared by two or more characters. In the first case, one speaker begins with a retelling of an event that took place in the past. In keeping with the story-telling format, the discourse begins in the past tense by outlining the dramatic situation and introducing the *dramatis personae*. Once this is accomplished, the discourse then shifts into the present tense of direct speech in order to re-enact the events related. Thus, direct and indirect discourses are intertwined in order to create the uninterrupted flow of the story-telling event.

Furthermore, the story-teller is seldom an autonomous person who stands outside of the drama; on the contrary, he or she is often a character in the play who tells a story to the other characters. One example of this is found near the end of Jean Marc Dalpé's *Le chien*. It involves an episode in which the father narrates the events that led up to how Céline came to be adopted by the family. He explains how one day an English speaking native couple found themselves at the family's doorstep. In the retelling of this event, the father begins by outlining the

dramatic situation and then introducing the *dramatis personae*. Once this is accomplished, the father then shifts into direct discourse by quoting the Native man:

On v'nait juste de déménager icitte. C'tait au mois de mars. Toé, t'avais sept ou huit ans. Pis vous étiez en ville, ta mère pis toé pour la fin d'semaine. Dentiste...famille, quequ'chose de même. C'tait une des pires tempêtes de l'hivers. Je regardais 'a TV quand ça cogne à' porte. C't'un homme, un Indien avec une Indienne enceinte. « *Got to phone*, l'homme y m'dit. *She's havin' the baby*. »⁸⁰ (*Chien* 54).⁸¹

Similar examples of stories told and re-enacted by a sole speaker are found in La Vieille 17's *Les Murs de nos villages*. In a sketch entitled "Le Garage," four characters meet to converse over coffee at a local garage. What ensues, however, is a story told by one of the characters called Aurèle, concerning a hunting trip that took place the previous year. Further examples (which will be discussed in greater detail in Part 4 of this chapter) are found in the grandfather's discourse concerning his experiences in World War One in Dalpé's *Le chien*, and

⁸⁰Dalpé, Jean Marc. *Le Chien*. Ottawa : Prise de Parole, 1990. Subsequent references to this play will be cited with *Chien* and a page reference.

⁸¹We had just moved here. It was in March. You were seven or eight years old. You went to town, you and your mother, for the weekend. Dentist...family, something like that. It was during one of the worst storms that winter. I was watching T.V. when there was a knock at the door. It's a man, an Indian with a pregnant Indian woman. "Got to phone, the man tells me. She's having the baby."

the mother's discourse concerning the destruction of her home town in Ouellette's *French Town*.

The second type of dramatically transposed story involves two or more speakers who share in the entire story-telling process. In this case, the expository material that begins the story is related by one character and the narrated event, which culminates in quoted speech, is taken over by another character. An example is found in *Le chien* where Céline and the mother share the telling of an episode in which the father ruins a family picnic.

When speaking about the narrated event, Bauman points out that the stories are often situated in the past through the use of time markers such as "one day" (Bauman 64). In this episode from *Le chien*, the mother uses a similar time marker by beginning her story with the words "Une fois," which also functions as a type of announcement proclaiming her intention to begin a specific story. She then completes the sentence by outlining what the story will be about: "Une fois, y'a garroché un rôti d'boeuf de 8 lb au chien" (*Chien* 20).⁸² The mother then continues the discourse by introducing the characters and setting. In this case, the story takes place outside of the family home during a picnic organized to celebrate another family member's birthday. Since the physical setting remains the same, the mother must describe the story's setting verbally: "On s'fait une table avec quequ'planches pis j'y mets la belle nappe, notre cadeau de mariage" (*Chien* 20).⁸³

⁸²One time, he threw an eight pound roast beef at the dog.

⁸³We make a table with some boards and a place the good table cloth on it, our wedding gift.

Having introduced the characters, described the setting and outlined the dramatic situation, the mother then tells the story proper which begins with the father's rage that erupts over his inability to open a bottle of imported wine. Seeing that the only corkscrew in the house is broken, the father decides to improvise by using a pair of pliers: "Y visse à' main la patente dans l'bouchon, prend la paire de pince, tire dessus" (*Chien* 21).⁸⁴ His efforts, however, are to no avail as he only succeeds in spilling wine all over himself. This then drives the father into an uncontrollable rage which results in the act of throwing the entire dinner to the dog.

In the above example, we note that a shift has occurred from indirect discourse in the past tense to direct discourse in the present tense. This, to use Bauman's terms, marks the shift from the recounting of circumstances and actions—telling about them—to a replaying or reenacting of those actions. This is brought to a further head when Céline takes over the discourse in order to relate the conversational encounter. In order to do so, she quotes the father directly:

MERE: Pis lui [the father] que c'est qu'y fait?

Pause

MERE : Y s'énervé !...Y s'énervé!!

CÉLINE: Y prend le rôti de bœuf dans une main, regarde ta mère
pis y dit : « Si tu t'fermes pas a' yeule, ma sacramente, j'te
garroche ça dans' face » (*Chien* 22).⁸⁵

⁸⁴He screws the thing in the cork by hand, takes the pair of pliers and pulls on it.

⁸⁵Mother: And him, what does he do?

Furthermore, we notice that the verb tense eventually shifts from the past to the present. In this way, the audience is brought into the present world of the story being told. When the mother ends her story, however, she reverts to the past tense in order to bring the discourse back to the recurring theme concerning the father's violent nature:

C'était dans ses yeux. Y'a toujours eu quequ'chose de dur dans ses yeux. Même aux noces. Mais avant, c'était pas gros. Juste comme un petit trou noir où c'est qu'y'avait rien de vivant, pis où c'est que rien pourrait jamais vivre (*Chien 22*).⁸⁶

Further examples of this type of shared story-telling are found in Ouellette's *French Town* where the fateful episode of Pierre-Paul's first hunting experience is related by both Cindy and Pierre-Paul. In this case, Cindy provides the expository material that leads up to the conversational encounter that is taken over by Pierre-Paul, who in turn quotes his father.

Another form of story-telling is facilitated further by the very fact of having several characters simultaneously sharing the stage space. In this case, one character assumes the role of story-teller in order to relate the narrated event in

Pause

Mother: He blows up! He blows up!

Céline: He takes the roast beef in one hand, looks at your mother and says: "If you don't shut up, I'll throw this in your face."

⁸⁶It was in his eyes. He always had something hard in his eyes. Even at our wedding. But before, it wasn't as big. Just a little black hole where there was nothing living, and where nothing could ever live.

the past tense through indirect discourse. However, rather than using quoted speech in order to assume the role of the character depicted, this function is assumed by the character in question that is already present. In other words, a character assumes the role of his or her past self and in turn “quotes” him-or herself.

This type of narration is first seen in Paiement’s *La vie et les temps de Médéric Boileau*. When Médéric tells his own version of his life story, he begins in the same way as the other narrators by providing expository material through indirect speech which inevitably leads up to an illustration of what was said via a dramatic re-enactment. However, the story’s re-enactment, the conversational encounter that takes place between Médéric and his “boss,” is presented differently. For, while there is dramatic action between this character and Médéric, the latter maintains his role as narrator throughout, always addressing the audience directly in the past tense, while the Boss speaks in the present tense and is apparently oblivious to the presence of the audience:

Le Boss

Mederric, Mederric, Mederric, Mederric, Mederric, Mederric my
boy!

Médéric [to the audience]

Torvisse! V’la le nouveau boss qui m’arrive. Je l’avais jamais vu
celui là.

Le Boss

Comment ça va Mederric ?

Médéric [to the audience]

Ben, ça allait ben (*Médéric* 33).⁸⁷

This type of narration, in which one character consciously maintains a link with the audience while the other appears oblivious to it, is simulated in Ouellette's *Requiem*. In this play, Pierre-Paul functions primarily as the storyteller. Using the past tense, he speaks about the event while Bobotte relives the event by assuming the role of his former self:

PIERRE-PAUL: Un soir de bingo. [to the audience]

BOBOTTE : Ta mère est partie au bingo. Va pas te cacher. Sauve-toé pas. Stie. Reste. Là. Viens

PIERRE-PAUL: J'ai ouvert la bouche pour lui donner le mot
« revendiquer »[to the audience] ⁸⁸(*Requiem* 43).⁸⁹

Thus, while Pierre-Paul projects the story forward, Bobotte participates in its re-enactment by speaking a piece of dialogue from his past. This type of storytelling performance is also seen in Ouellette's *Le bateleur*. In this case, Dempsey,

⁸⁷The Boss: Mederric, Mederric [...] my boy!

Médéric: Wow! The new boss is here. I've never seen that one before.

The Boss: How's it going Médéric?

Médéric: Well, it was going fine

⁸⁸Ouellette, Michel. *Requiem*. Ottawa : Le Nordir, 2001. Subsequent references will be cited with *Requiem* followed by a page reference.

⁸⁹Pierre-Paul: Bingo night.

Bobotte: Your mother's gone to Bingo. Don't hide. Don't run away. Stay here, come here.

Pierre-Paul: I opened my mouth to give him the word "vindicate [...]"

the manifestation of the past, prompts both Jack and Elisa to revert to their past selves and relive events that he both initiates and narrates. For instance, in a scene in which Jack relives the bar-room brawl in which he inadvertently killed the native man, Dempsey provides the narration, in the past tense, that propels the story forward:

Tout le monde sortait de l'ombre pour entrer dans la lumière. Tout le monde entrait dans le combat. Chaque coup de poing, chaque goutte de sang, c'était toutes les vengeance, toutes les frustrations, toutes les envies...C'était l'Homme contre Dieu [...] (*Bateleur* 39).⁹⁰

After this discourse is completed, Dempsey assumes the role of his past self and joins the others in the re-enactment of the past event that is performed in the dramatic present:

JACK: Quand c'est que ça commence? Les mains me démangent.

DEMPSEY : C'est soir de paie. Ça va payer gros tantôt. Attends, icitte. Bois ton verre à ptites gorgées.

Dempsey se dirige vers le bar.

⁹⁰ Everyone came out from the shadows and into the light. Everyone got into the fight. Every punch, every drop of blood represented everyone's revenge, everyone's frustrations, everyone's desires...It was man against God.

DEMPSEY : Messieurs, je vous propose un combat. Une bataille à coups de poing, pas de limite, pas de règlements ; le premier qui tombe pis qui se relève pas perd [...] (*Bateleur* 43)⁹¹

In Michel Ouellette's *L'homme effacé*, the process is somewhat different. In this case, the drama has a two-fold structure in which Annie maintains her autonomous role as story-teller. Annie speaks about the events in the past tense, and these are then completed or illustrated by the manifestations of the past that re-enact, in the "dramatic present," what was just said. This is different from the previous format discussed in that Annie maintains her role as story-teller throughout the narration. In other words, while she projects the story forward, she does not participate in its re-enactment. The re-enactment is performed solely by the manifestations of the past.

In turn, Annie-2, Marthe and Pite take their cues from Annie's discourse and subsequently act out the events that are related in the monologue. While they do so, they always remain under Annie's control, making her, in effect, the unwitting director of the inner drama that takes place in Thomas's imagination. In a discourse concerning her relationship with Pite, for instance, Annie simply utters one line in order to put the inner drama into motion:

⁹¹ Jack: When is it going to start? My hands are burning up. /Dempsey: It's pay-day. We'll make lots of money tonight! Wait here. Drink your beer slowly. *Dempsey moves towards the bar*/ Dempsey: Gentlemen, I present a challenge. A bare fisted fight, no limits, no rules; the first man to go down and not get up loses.

ANNIE: Pite pis moi, on était comme chien et chat.

PITE: Toi, là. Écoute ben. Tu passeras pas tes journées évachée devant la *tivi* pendant que Thomas est à l'ouvrage. Tu vas te ramasser, te trouver une job, faire de quoi de ta vie. T'es pus dans le Moulin à fleur, fille.⁹² C'est pas le b.s. ici.

Annie-2 lui montre le doigt.

PITE : Insolente !

Annie-2 se met le doigt dans la bouche et le suce.

PITE : Vulgaire !⁹³ (*L'homme effacé* 42).⁹⁴

Annie thus propels the story forward through the narration of events while the members of the inner drama participate in its enactment through their dialogue. The process may thus be likened to the contes that are pantomimed in Paiement's *Médéric Boileau*. In that play, as we recall, the story-teller is accompanied by actors who mime the action that is described in the story. In *L'homme effacé*, however, the action is not mimed but performed as a spoken play.

Thus we notice a distinction between stories related by one character and those related by two or more. In the former, the conversational encounter is comprised of quoted speech in which the speaker quotes a line that another

⁹² The "Moulin de fleur," flour mill, was the neighborhood in Sudbury where the Franch Canadian community originally lived.

⁹³ Ouellette, Michel. *L'homme effacé*. Ottawa : Le Nordir, 1997. Subsequent references to this play will be cited with *L'homme* followed by a page reference.

⁹⁴ Annie: Pite and me, we were like cats and dogs.

Pite: You there! Listen up! You're not going to spend your days in front of the T.V. while Thomas is at work. You're going to pick yourself up and find yourself a job, do something with your life. You're not at Moulin de fleur anymore little girl! There's no b.s. here.

Annie shows him the finger. Pite: Insolent! *Annie sucks on the finger.* Pite: Vulgar!

character uttered in the past. In the latter, however, the conversational encounter involves dialogue in which either the manifestations of the past or living characters who revert to their past selves utter their own lines.

A distinction, therefore, is always made between narration and quoted speech. In Robert Marinier's *L'insomnie*, however, this distinction is blurred by the way the story is executed. For, in the original performances of *L'insomnie*,⁹⁵ Marinier is a sole narrator who delivers what at first appears as an extended monologue. In this way, the production may be seen as a dramatic re-enactment of the performance given by the traditional story-teller.

As in these first productions of *L'insomnie*, the performance of the traditional story usually takes the form of a "one person show." The story-teller or "conteur" thus necessarily performs the two functions of "story-telling" simultaneously: he both narrates and re-enacts the presented events. However, although he is alone during the performance, the conteur does not quote the character in question; on the contrary he or she becomes that character. Every time the story calls for a dialogue between characters, the conteur moves into the story and immediately adopts the role of each character that is speaking. He or she does so by both telling and showing that of which he or she speaks through gestures, tones of voice and accents. Thus the conteur both propels the story forward and participates in its enactment.

⁹⁵The final version of *L'insomnie* (Prise de Parole: 1996) is the end product of what Marinier calls an evolution that involved four productions. The first took place on April 9, 1991 at L'Atelier du Centre national des Arts ; the second took place on February 6, 1993 at the same locale; the third took place on March 4, 1994 as part of "Dix jours de la dramaturgie franco-ontarienne"; and the final version was presented on January 23, 1996 at the Arts Court of Ottawa.

Like the traditional “conteur,” Marinier, in his original performance, seamlessly shifts from a narrator of his story to the characters that this narrator is describing and back again. While in the role of narrator, he speaks directly to his audience as he describes what the characters are feeling, doing and so on. Since his story takes place in the past, the conteur, Marinier, continually oscillates between the present, when he is narrating, to the past when the same performer adopts the role of a specific character. Consequently, he inhabits two worlds simultaneously: the real “present” world of the stage which is shared with the audience and the imaginary, magical world of the past encompassed within the story or conte:

Avec un narrateur, seul en scène, qui crée l’univers et le décor,
joue tous les personnages et qui entre ou sort de l’action à volonté.
Plus l’action avance, plus le narrateur semble s’impliquer
émotivement dans l’histoire, plus il semble se rapprocher du
personnage principal et fusionner avec lui. A la fin de la
représentation, on ne sait plus qui est qui, de l’auteur, du narrateur
et des différents personnages (*L’insomnie* 9).⁹⁶

Thus Marinier returns to the format that we originally saw with one speaker both narrating the event and performing its re-enactment through quoted

⁹⁶ With a narrator, alone on stage, who creates the universe and the set, plays all the characters and who enters and exits from the action at will. The more the action moves forward, the more the narrator appears to implicate himself in the story, grow closer to the main character and fuse with him. At the end of the performance, we no longer know who is who, the author, the narrator, or the different characters.

speech. However, there is a marked difference, for Marinier does not quote the character in question, he becomes that character. Furthermore, the story is not encompassed within the play in a mise-en-abyme fashion; on the contrary, the story-telling structure comprises the entire performance. Thus Marinier's drama replicates the story-telling event. As Brigitte Haentjens states in her introduction to the play, "*L'insomnie* est peut-être tout simplement un *vrai conte* pour grandes personnes" (*L'insomnie* 12).⁹⁷

In the above analysis we note the cyclical trajectory of the story-telling event as it is removed from its traditional setting and transposed to the dramatic stage. In the example given from Dalpé's *Le chien*, Bauman's basic structure remains intact: one character both tells a story and replays the action by quoting the character of whom he/she speaks. In other plays, such as Ouellette's *Requiem* and *L'homme effacé*, the process is refashioned in order to allow the participation of two or more characters. In effect, one character assumes the role of a story-teller who talks about the event in question, while other characters (who happen to have been participants in the event) re-enact or "show" what happened by reverting to their former selves and uttering what was said. Thus, quoted speech is replaced by dialogue.

Finally, in Marinier's *L'insomnie*, the process appears to have returned to where it began, with one character who assumes the role of both story-teller and character. However, the fundamental difference lies in the fact that Marinier does not quote the character in question; he literally "becomes" that character. In the former plays, the character always maintains his role while telling the story. In

⁹⁷ *L'insomnie* is probably a *real folk tale* performed for adults.

L'insomnie, however, the performer continually oscillates from the role of story teller to character and back again.

4) Three modes of Story Telling

What we will thus call the “story-telling event,” in turn, may be divided into three categories. On the one hand, it includes the retelling of personal experiences via “anecdotes.” In this case, the past lives of the protagonists are revisited via various episodes in their lives that are recounted by the manifestations of the past. Secondly, there is the recounting of what we will refer to as “oral history,” that is, the previously undocumented history of the Franco-Ontarian people. Lastly, there is the narration of the fabulous in which the past lives of the protagonist are reformulated or “fictionalized” culminating in an adaptation of the traditional Franco-Ontarian “conte.”

a) Anecdote

In many plays, story-telling takes the form of personal anecdotes in which the experiences of one or another character are told. This is first exhibited in the 1970s in the plays of Paiement. In *La vie et les temps de Médéric Boileau*, for

instance, Médéric recounts the story of his life from when he worked as a lumberjack to the present circumstances in which he finds himself.

In the text-based drama of the 1980s, similar anecdotes concerning the past lives of characters are recounted in story-telling fashion. In Dalpé's *Le chien*, for instance, each character has a story to tell concerning his or her relationship with the father. Similarly, in Ouellette's *French Town*, we learn, through the telling of stories, about the on-going rift between Pierre-Paul and his father. The story is repeated in *Requiem*, the sequel to *French Town*. However, it is coupled with Pierre-Paul's experiences while he was touring Europe. Both plays end with another story that depicts Pierre-Paul's suicide in the family garage.

In Dalpé's *Eddy*, we hear about the protagonist's youth as a professional boxer and about how he had betrayed his older brother. In Ouellette's *Le bateleur*, we are provided with stories about the past experiences of Jack and Eliza. And finally, in Ouellette's *L'homme effacé*, Annie's discourse provides us with the entire story involving the relationship between Annie and Thomas.

As we will see in greater detail in Chapter Three, these anecdotes function as part of the desacrilized Catholic ritual of confession. In effect, the characters are forced to relive the painful events of their past in an attempt to find resolution. In this way, the plays remove the ritual from its traditional setting (the Church), and transpose it to the dramatic stage.

b) Oral History

Another mode of story-telling is found in what we will refer to as “oral history.” The oral history of French-Ontario involves a previously undocumented history which reflects the Franco-Ontarian point of view. Oral history provided the source for certain plays performed in the 1970s and the early 1980s.

Paiement’s *Lavalléville*, for instance, is based on a story that is well known to any Francophone who ever lived in Northern Ontario. The community of Lavalléville is modeled after the real town of Dubreuilville in Northern Ontario which was founded in 1960 by Napoléon Dubreuil and his brothers as an exclusively francophone community that was literally separated from the rest of the world. Furthermore, the Dubreuil brothers owned everything in the village and ran it like their own personal dukedom.⁹⁸

The oral history of Franco-Ontarians also provided the source for some of the text-based theatre of the 1980s. One example can be found in *Nickel* (1984), written by Jean Marc Dalpé and Brigitte Haentjens. This play traces the struggles undertaken in the 1930s in Sudbury by the Franco-Ontarian miners who wished to establish a trade-union. Ouellette’s *Corbeaux en exil* is also a reconstruction of an

⁹⁸In her book, *Hors du Québec, point de salut?* (1982), Sheila McLeod Arnopoulos explains that, “Sauf pour l’école et l’arène, tout leur appartenait: les maisons, le magasin général, l’hôtel-résidence et le restaurant [...] L’ordre public était administré par la famille [Dubreuil] qui pouvait bannir tout individu jugé coupable de battre sa femme, de trop boire ou de se bagarrer. La barrière installée à la croisée des chemins à une trentaine de kilomètres du village ne permettait le passage qu’à ceux que la famille agréait (1982 : 209).

[Except for the school and the arena, everything belonged to them: the houses, the general store, the hotel-residence and the restaurant [...] Public order was administered by the family who had the power to banish anyone judged guilty of beating his wife, drinking too much or fighting. The barrier at the cross-roads, about thirty kilometers from the village, allowed entry only to those who had the permission of the family.]

historical event. In this play, the protagonist, Pete, begins by attempting to write the history of his home town of Kapuskasing. However, he is diverted from this project and in its stead, traces his family roots, from their migration from Québec to their settlement in Northern Ontario. And finally, we also see oral history re-enacted in *Hawkesbury Blues* (1982), also by Jean Marc Dalpé and Brigitte Haentjens. This play follows the migration of a group of families after their village, the island of Chenail, is bought by Ontario Hydro and then flooded in order to create a new power plant.

The premise behind *Hawkesbury Blues*, the disappearance of a Franco-Ontarian community, is especially significant for Michel Ouellette, for it describes one of many instances in which entire communities have been displaced, leaving behind little if no traces of their existence. As he explains:

Pendant les années vingt [...] il y avait des communautés canadiennes françaises qui se sont établies et se sont effacées. [Justement dans] l'histoire de Smooth Rock Falls il y avait un « French Town. » Mais il n'y a pas de traces aujourd'hui. Personne qui peut te dire que « French Town » était là. Il y a des vieux qui s'en souviennent qu'il y a des endroits qu'on nommait comme ça [...] Mais il n'y reste rien [de concret] de cela (Ouellette : interview).⁹⁹

⁹⁹In the 1920s [...] there were French-Canadian communities that established themselves and then disappeared. Indeed, in the history of Smooth Rock Falls there was a "French Town." But there are no traces of it today. Nobody can say that French Town was there. There are some older people that remember there were areas with such names [...] But there is nothing [concrete] left.

Oral history is thus provided with the function of resurrecting and disseminating either a forgotten or suppressed history. This phenomenon is what inspired Ouellette to include an example of oral history as story-telling in his play *French Town*. In effect, besides relating stories that have to do with her son Pierre-Paul, Simone has another story to tell. This one has to do with the community of “French Town” which existed alongside Timber Falls and which has since all but disappeared (for a resumé of the play see Annex 1).

The fact that Ouellette chose Simone, the deceased mother, to tell this story should come as no surprise since she is the eldest member of the family, and the older generation holds a special status in oral based cultures. For, as Jack Goody explains:

In oral cultures all is stored in the heads of adults, so the one who has seen most and lived longest remains a major source of knowledge. The elders have to be respected for this reason alone; they are irreplaceable storehouses of information about the past, that is, about the culture and traditions of the community (Goody, “Oral Culture” 16).

Simone thus functions as the custodian and purveyor of the otherwise lost story of “French Town”—a microcosm of the history of the Franco-Ontarian people. Other examples in which characters from the older generation function as

the purveyors of oral knowledge are found in Dalpé's *Le chien* and Ouellette's *L'homme effacé*.

In *Le chien*, the grandfather relates a story describing his experiences in the trenches of World War One; and thus, he indirectly recounts the undocumented contributions to the war-effort made by Franco-Ontarians. In *L'homme effacé*, furthermore, the character of Pite not only reminisces about how he has travelled the world but also provides glimpses of information concerning the traditional values and habits of days gone by (for details see Annex 1).

c) Story or “conte”

In *Cosmos and History*, Mircea Eliade describes how many oral cultures have transformed historical figures into mythical heroes (Eliade, *Rites and Symbols* 42). They do so, Eliade explains, in order to assure that historical personages and events do not fade from the collective memory of the community:

The historical event in itself, however important, does not remain in the popular memory, nor does its recollection kindle the poetic imagination save insofar as the particular historical event closely approaches a mythical model (Eliade, *Rites and Symbols* 42).

In a way, the very process of “mythicization” is reproduced in Paiement’s *La vie et les temps de Médéric Boileau*. Médéric’s story, which depicts the harsh reality of his life, is placed in juxtaposition with another version of the same story, as retold by Eva Commanda who reworks it and presents it in the form of a conte. Thus, Paiement, through the vehicle of Eva Commanda, takes the life of a typical elderly Franco-Ontarian and “fictionalizes” it in order to show a different, more nostalgic view of the past. A similar process occurs in La Corvée’s *La parole et la loi* in which the narrator appears to recreate, in mythical proportions, the struggle undertaken by the Franco-Ontarians during the years of Règlement 17.

Robert Marinier does something quite similar in *L’insomnie*. He takes an average, modern and perhaps prototypical Franco-Ontarian with a very modern psychological dilemma, and transforms the story into a fabulous tale that may be likened to the traditional Franco-Ontarian conte, using as his model for both the protagonist and the plot-line *Les contes de Ti-Jean*.

In her book, *Les mémoires de Ti-Jean* (1994), Éveline Voldeng identifies a variety of characteristics that define the Franco-Ontarian version of the hero “Ti-Jean.” First of all, in the various versions of “Le riche et le pauvre paysan,” Ti-Jean is often, if not always, depicted as the representative of the lower classes. As Voldeng explains:

Que ce soit en Bretagne, en Ontario, aux Antilles ou au Maghreb,
Ti-Jean représente le héros marginal, le paysan pauvre, le petit,
l’esclave qui fait face à un milieu social hostile [...] Ti-Jean est

porte-parole des paysans, des faibles et des opprimés (Voldeng, 50-51).¹⁰⁰

Secondly, the conte usually involves a conflict with authority figures who, in one way or another, have used their power to exploit the poorer classes. In Franco-Ontarian culture, this involves feudal as well as religious leaders that often held the position of authority that was simultaneously denounced and subverted by the hero. As Voldeng further explains:

Si les contes de Ti-Jean dénoncent à leur façon le pouvoir religieux, ils s'en prennent également à la classe dirigeante qui domine et exploite le peuple. C'est le plus souvent le roi—il faut sous-entendre le roi anglais—ou son représentant le seigneur, le nanti, qui est l'objet de la satire des contes (Voldeng 49-50).¹⁰¹

However, in other “contes,” such as “La Bête à Sept têtes” and “Jean de l'Ourse,” Ti-Jean is provided with super-human qualities and larger than life tasks that equate him with figures from Greek mythology. In the latter, for instance, Ti-Jean's character and his adventures may be equated with those of Heracles (Voldeng 24).

¹⁰⁰Whether in Brittany or in Ontario, Antilles or Maghreb, Ti-Jean represents the marginal hero, the poor peasant, or the little slave who confronts a hostile environment [...] Ti-Jean is the voice of the peasants, the weak and the oppressed.

¹⁰¹While the stories of Ti-Jean subvert the religious powers, they equally do so with the ruling classes that dominate and exploit the people. It is often the king—more often the English king—or his representative that is the object of satire in the story.

In the Franco-Ontarian version of “Le fils de l’Ourse,” for example, the story may be likened to Heracles’ descent into Hades in which he is given the task of stealing the watchdog Cerberus. In “Le fils de l’Ourse,” Ti-Jean, who was born with super-human strength of both man and bear, descends a magical well in pursuit of a powerful witch who has brutalized his companions. Reaching the bottom of the well, Ti-Jean discovers a parallel universe: an underworld ruled by the witch. Furthermore, “La bête à sept têtes” may be equated with Heracles’ slaying of the Hydra of Lerna. In this conte, the nine headed hydra is replaced by a monster with seven heads. This task is accomplished in the same manner as that of Heracles: by severing the heads of the monster.

In both contes, the Franco-Ontarian endings differ from their Greek counterparts. However, they have similar elements. While undertaking his task, Ti-Jean encounters a princess who is either enslaved in the underworld or faces the threat of death by the monster. Seizing an opportunity, Ti-Jean rescues the princess and delivers her to the king who rewards him by granting Ti-Jean the princess as his bride. Ti-Jean is thus released from exile and returns to the community as both hero and future king.

Marinier’s *L’insomnie* may be seen as a compilation of the Ti-Jean character that follows the two patterns described above. On the one hand, he is the representative of the average Franco-Ontarian who speaks and acts for the people. And on the other hand, Gilles undertakes a mythical descent into an underworld, discovers the aggressor, slays that aggressor and inadvertently becomes a hero.

First of all, it may be said that Gilles, Marinier's protagonist, is representative of the contemporary Franco-Ontarian. Like many francophones living in Ottawa, he is a civil servant who works hard in order to support his family. And, as the narrator explains, "C'est une famille normale...sauf que Gilles ne peut pas dormir" (*L'insomnie* 20).¹⁰² Like Ti-Jean before him; Gilles is the representative voice of his people. Furthermore, like Ti-Jean, Gilles finds himself in conflict with figures of authority who, rather than feudal kings or religious leaders, are modern figures of authority: his employers and representatives of the federal government.

While Gilles is not endowed with super-human strength, he nevertheless undergoes a journey which may be equated to those taken by both Heracles and Ti-Jean. As we recall in *L'insomnie*, the dramatic situation involves Gilles's insomnia, a lack of sleep which soon leads to the occurrence of "flashbacks:" recurring images of the past that often do not correspond with the events as he remembers them. As the drama unfolds it soon becomes evident that Gilles can no longer differentiate between reality and hallucination. Nevertheless, Gilles frantically searches for a cure to his insomnia, and this search eventually directs him towards the discovery of what actually caused his condition in the first place.

Gilles's dilemma, his flashbacks, may in themselves be seen as a modern representation of the mythical journey to the underworld. In effect, his is a psychic journey in which he travels to an alternate universe which is familiar but at the same time foreign to him. Through his flashbacks, Gilles undergoes a series of other descents through various portholes, leading him into an enormous clothes

¹⁰²It is a normal family... except that Gilles cannot sleep.

dryer door, an elevator, and even a picture frame that all transport him to different worlds. The most interesting of these, however, has to do with Gilles's antagonist, M. Singulier.

In this episode, a way to the underworld is revealed in Singulier's desk drawer. As the narrator explains, "Du bas de son bureau, M. singulier ouvre un énorme tiroir, dans lequel il y a un grand escalier qui mène à l'étage inférieur" (*L'insomnie* 74).¹⁰³ Once at the bottom, Gilles discovers a parallel work environment:

Il y a des employés de toutes sortes, en grandes salopettes bleues, qui s'affairent comme des abeilles autour de machines de toutes sortes, qui produisent des poudres, des sirops et des pilules de toutes sortes (*L'insomnie* 74).¹⁰⁴

Much like the witch's world found at the bottom of the well in "Fils de l'Ourse" here, Singulier is the sole master. In this modern version of the conte, the witch is replaced by the figure of a mad scientist who has his minions secretly conduct his experiments underground.

This scene marks the point of crisis in the play as it reveals certain events that lead to the final conflict between Gilles and Singulier. First of all, Singulier reveals that, "ma compagnie pharmaceutique est sur le point de perfectionner un

¹⁰³ At the bottom of his desk, M. Singulier pulls open an enormous drawer, in which a great stair case leads to the lower level.

¹⁰⁴ There are employees of all sorts, in blue overalls, who occupy themselves like bees around all kinds of machines that produce powders, syrups and pills of all kinds.

nouveau stimulant qui enlève le besoin de dormir” (*L’insomnie* 75).¹⁰⁵ At this point, Singulier reveals Gilles’s connection with the plan, “Gilles a été notre premier volontaire...Nous étudions les effets du stimulant sur lui depuis quatre mois déjà” (*L’insomnie* 75).¹⁰⁶ And finally, Singulier also reveals that he holds the cure, “peut-être que je devrais songer à te donner...l’antidote?” (*L’insomnie* 76).¹⁰⁷

Consequently, a mythical situation is created in which Gilles must destroy his aggressor, a task revealed to him in a “prescription” provided by Titine: “Gilles, il faut qu’il te donne l’antidote” (*L’insomnie* 87).¹⁰⁸ However, Singulier does not comply. Gilles thus kills him by bludgeoning him with an ashtray that he finds on Singulier’s desk. After this act, Gilles is cured of his insomnia and finally finds the sleep he has sought for such a long time.

L’insomnie thus follows the mythical pattern provided by the models of *Les contes de Ti-Jean*. The protagonist, Gilles, descends into an underworld where he finds his aggressor, destroys that aggressor, frees himself and inadvertently saves his co-workers from further exploitation.

¹⁰⁵My pharmaceutical company is in the process of perfecting a new stimulant that eliminates the need to sleep.

¹⁰⁶Gilles was our first volunteer... We have been studying the effects on him for four months already.

¹⁰⁷Maybe I should think about giving you... the antidote?

¹⁰⁸Gilles, he must give you the antidote!

5) Framing the Story-Telling Event within the Dramatic Text:

From Story-Teller to Narrator to “Conteur”

As we have seen, Franco-Ontarian drama often constitutes a two-fold structure in which an outer drama, that which takes place in the present and concerns interactions between characters existing in that time frame, is invaded by various manifestations of the past that recount and at times relive past events. Thus, in the simplest terms, the “outer” drama provides a framework in which the “inner” drama takes place

The way in which the “inner drama” is framed differs, however, according to the various methods of presentation. The many “inner dramas” (or stories) are all framed as *mise-en-abyme*; that is, events are foregrounded within the play proper as the characters each take their turn in the telling of one or another story concerning past events. These stories appear as various autonomous episodes that are related in theme. For instance, in *Le chien* as in *French Town*, the characters all have at least one story concerning their relationship with the father. The construct is thus likened to a *mise-en-abyme* in which we are not witnessing the usual “play within the play” but more specifically a “story within the play.”

Moreover, these stories include their own internal orator and audience. While one character speaks, the other characters listen to what is being said. Therefore, within the construct of the entire play, the external audience is watching a performance in which an audience of actors is watching and listening to another performance conducted by another actor. Thus the drama unfolds as

each character takes his or her turn as the “story-teller.” The audience is thus witnessing a dramatic reproduction of the entire story-telling event.

In *Le chien* and *French Town* the relating of a story becomes a community event that is shared by the characters. In Dalpé’s *Eddy* and Ouellette’s *Le bateleur*, however, the focus is shifted away from the communal and towards the personal. While the narrated events are still autonomous stories found within the construct of the play proper, the story tellers nevertheless lack an internal audience since the narrated event is presented as a psychic phenomenon shared solely by the character and his or her manifestation of the past. In this sense, the narrated event is used to allow the character to revert to his or her past self in order to relive certain events of the past. The focus thus shifts away from a reproduction of the story-telling event to a dramatic adaptation of the story itself.

In the later plays, namely Ouellette’s *Requiem* and *L’homme effacé* and Marinier’s *L’insomnie*, the stories within the drama differ in scope. In these cases, we are no longer dealing with a series of autonomous episodes that are framed within the play proper; on the contrary, the story within the play constitutes one continuous drama that makes up the majority of the play proper. Thus, the “outer” drama, the play proper, functions as frame-work in which the “inner” drama in question is performed.

In order to fully understand this format a distinction must be made between the story-teller and what we will now refer to as the “narrator.” As we have seen, the story-teller often performs two functions simultaneously. He or she relates or speaks about the event to the audience and then illustrates or “shows”

what happened either by quoting or becoming the character in question. The narrator, on the other hand, performs only one of the two functions provided by the story-teller. The narrator often remains outside of the performance proper, acknowledging the audience and speaking on his or her own behalf and never adopting the role of a character. Furthermore, rather than relating the entire event, as the story-teller does, the narrator opens the performance by addressing the audience first to announce that a story is to be told; then to introduce the *dramatis personae*; and finally, to outline the dramatic situation. He or she then exits the stage only to return periodically to provide further expository material and then one final time to close the performance with concluding comments. He thus acts as a type of mediator between the audience and the characters (Pavis 1998: 234) and leaves the telling and enacting of the story to the other performers. The narrator thus frames the story and its enactment, in a *mise-en-abyme* fashion, within the context of the entire performance.

We first encounter a narrator in the character of M. Loyal in *La parole et la loi* (1980). M. Loyal opens the play by speaking directly to the audience. He first welcomes the audience and then announces that a performance is about to take place: “Bonsoir Mesdames et messieurs: bienvenue à *nom de localité* où nous présentons, pour votre divertissement et votre érudition, la toute dernière et la plus récente création collective de La Corvée : *La Parole et la loi*” (*Parole* 9).¹⁰⁹

M. Loyal then proceeds to outline the dramatic situation. This involves the struggle undertaken by the Franco-Ontarians in order to maintain their own

¹⁰⁹Ladies and Gentlemen: welcome to *name of the locale* where we will present, for you amusement and education, the last and most recent collective creation of La Corvée: *La Parole et la loi*.

French speaking schools, which came to a head with the government application of Règlement 17. The narrator then proceeds to introduce the *dramatis personae*. These include the protagonists Sam Genest, the Conseil Scolaire Séparé d'Ottawa, and the women and teachers who took part in the struggle, and their antagonists Monseigneur Fallon, Prime Minister Whitney and the Orangistes.

After his introduction, M. Loyal leaves the stage and will only appear periodically to provide added expository comment and then at the end to close the play. What ensues after his departure may be seen as the dramatic recreation of the story where narration of the event is produced via authentic documentary material and conversational encounters (quoted speech) presented via dramatic sketches. Thus the entire performance, which is likened to that of a story, is framed by the narrator in a *mise-en-abyme* fashion.

This type of narrator is also seen in La Vieille 17's productions of *Les murs de nos village*. In this collective creation, a narrator appears at the beginning and the end of the performance and provides verbal accounts that parallel many of the sketches contained in the performance. In effect, it begins by depicting the typical morning in a Franco-Ontarian town with recognizable characters and situations. A similar narrative is provided at the end of the performance. This time, however, a typical evening is shown. Thus, the drama, which involves sketches concerning a typical day in the lives of various Franco-Ontarian characters, is framed by the twelve hours of a day from morning to evening, and a narrator that stands outside of the performance proper.

In one way, this structure is recreated in Michel Ouellette's *Requiem*. In this play, the character of Cindy may be seen as a narrator who frames the performance of the story which is told by Pierre-Paul and then enacted, via quotation, by Bobotte, the father. Cindy neither tells the story proper nor does she participate in its enactment as a character. Like the narrator from *La parole et la loi*, Cindy outlines the dramatic situation and introduces the characters involved in the story that is to be told by Pierre-Paul.

Cindy speaks at the beginning of the performance, periodically throughout its telling and enactment, and again at the end. First of all, she announces the drama by explaining how she had inadvertently conjured up the manifestations of her brother Pierre-Paul and her father Bobotte. Then, she provides both a time-frame and a setting in which the ensuing events have taken place: "Déjà sept ans. Que Pierre-Paul. Dans le garage..." (*Requiem* 12).¹¹⁰ And finally, she introduces the characters: "Gilbert [Bobotte] j'ai été comme toé pendant tant d'années. Mon père. Mon idole. Pis Pierre-Paul. Mon grand frère. Je te dois tout, aujourd'hui" (*Requiem* 12).¹¹¹

Once this is completed, Cindy does not exit the stage but nevertheless remains silent as if to witness the events that take place between Pierre-Paul and Bobotte. These involve the turbulent relationship between the two that inevitably leads to Pierre-Paul's suicide in the family garage. As we have seen, this drama follows the story-telling format in which Pierre-Paul tells his story which is instantly enacted, via quotation by Bobotte. During this process, Cindy often

¹¹⁰It has already been seven years. That Pierre-Paul. In the garage...

¹¹¹Gilbert, I was like you for so many years. My father. My idol. And Pierre-Paul. My big brother. I owe everything to you.

interjects with comments. However, her interjections, rather than forming part of Pierre-Paul's discourse, comment upon it retrospectively in terms of the present rather than the past. Thus she continually remains outside the realm of the story in much the same way as the narrator remains outside of the boundaries of the drama. Once Pierre-Paul has completed his story, Cindy resumes the discourse in order to bring the entire performance to its close.

In Michel Ouellette's *L'homme effacé*, we saw how the story-telling event separates Annie, who tells the story, from the manifestations of the past who enact or illustrate what is being said. In this way, Annie may also be seen as the narrator since she also provides the introductory material that sets the inner-drama/story in motion. In this case, she simultaneously outlines the dramatic situation and introduces the *dramatis personae* by recalling the relationship she had with each character in question.

In three separate sequences, she introduces Thomas, his mother Marthe, and Pite, the boarder. Through these discourses, which are also narrated by Annie and enacted by the characters in question, we come to understand that the action took place ten years before in Sudbury. Also, Annie remains at the end of the play, once the story has been fully enacted by the manifestations of the past. She does so to give concluding comments and bring the play to a close.

However, this narrator differs from Cindy in *Requiem* in that Annie tells the story. Thus we see an evolution from a narrator that outlines the dramatic situation and introduces the characters to a narrator that provides the above

functions but also tells the story. This evolution is taken one step further with Marinier's *L'insomnie*.

As we have seen, Marinier's original production replicates the performance of the traditional Franco-Ontarian conte by conducting a one-man-show in which he seamlessly shifts from one character to another. When Marinier first appears, he does so in the role of "Le Narrateur." Since the production is a modern adaptation of the traditional conte, one might say that "le narrateur" is actually synonymous with a "conteur." As conteur, the performer goes beyond the functions associated with the narrator. Not only does he provide the introductory material pertaining to the dramatic situation and the characters, but (as we have seen) he also narrates and re-enacts the presented events.

The appearance of the narrator, not only at the beginning and the end but throughout the production, frames the story in the same fashion as the previous plays discussed. Le Narrateur opens the production by first addressing the audience and asking them for their attention as he would like to begin his story, "Laissez-moi vous raconter l'histoire de l'homme qui ne peut pas dormir" (*L'insomnie* 20).¹¹² After this, he goes into specific details concerning the characters, the setting and the central dilemma of the story that is to be presented. Then, he tells the story proper through both narration and action depending on which role is assumed. While in the role of the narrator, he speaks directly to the audience; however, once he has assumed the role of a character, it appears as if he has become oblivious to the spectator's presence. Finally, once the story comes to its end, Marinier assumes the role of the narrator, for the last time, in order to

¹¹²Let me tell you the story about the man who cannot sleep.

provide final comments. At this point one may say that the narrator and the traditional story-teller are synonymous, since the narrator fulfills all of the functions prescribed to the traditional story-teller by providing exposition, telling the story and enacting the events.

Our dramas thus use two methods of mise-en-abyme in order to frame the story-telling event within the confines of the drama. The first, as we have seen in Dalpé's *Le chien* and *Eddy*, and Ouellette's *French Town* and *Le bateleur*, involves autonomous stories told by one or another character to an internal audience of other characters. The second, as seen in Ouellette's *Requiem* and *L'homme effacé* and Marinier's *L'insomnie*, makes use of a narrator. The narrator, furthermore, undergoes an evolution that begins (in *Requiem*) with an autonomous narrator that provides exposition but does not participate in the story telling event. Later, in *L'homme effacé*, however, the narrator outlines the dramatic situation, introduces the characters, and tells the story but she leaves the story's enactment to the other characters. Finally, in *L'insomnie*, Marinier's narrator or "conteur" does everything. He outlines the dramatic situation, introduces the characters and tells the story through the narration and the re-enactment of events. Thus, the evolution from "story-teller" to "narrator" to "conteur" further demonstrates what we will refer to as the Franco-Ontarian poetics of theatre since it shows how the story-telling event, as well as the traditional conte have been removed from their traditional settings and transposed to the dramatic stage.

6) Oral Patterns in Language Usage

In the section entitled “Oral History” in Part 4 of this chapter, we saw how the older generation is depicted as the purveyor of the undocumented history of the Franco-Ontarians. Simone, for instance, in Ouellette’s *French Town* relates the undocumented story of the French speaking community that once inhabited a section of the town of Timber Falls. A further demarcation is made between the older and younger generation in the way in which the older characters speak. Since the purveyors of oral knowledge (this includes those who relate oral history as well as the story-tellers) have no written documentation to which to refer, alternatives are required to retain facts and details. One method, according to Walter Ong, is directly related to the specific speech patterns used by these individuals.

In his book *Orality and Literacy* (1982), Ong identifies several distinct but related characteristics of expression used by oral cultures in order to retain undocumented knowledge. For the purposes of this thesis, two are of particular significance. First, Ong claims that expression in oral cultures is *redundant*. In a culture that does not rely solely on written documentation, repetition is required in order to store knowledge in the memory of the speaker. Also, oral settings encourage redundancy by virtue of the fact that, in speaking to a large audience, a speaker must be repetitive in order to ensure comprehension by the entire group, as well as to fill in the pauses needed to recollect thoughts (Ong, *Orality and Literacy* 40).

In our plays, such redundancy is seen when an older character is narrating a story. For instance, in his discourse from *Le chien*, the Grandfather begins with a sentence where the words, “c’tait hier...hier, j’avais 17 ans” (*Chien* 24, 25, 26)¹¹³ are repeated a total of three times. We have the impression that after having paused in order to collect his thoughts the grandfather must bring his audience back into the story by repeating the introductory lines.

Ong also notes that verbal expression in oral cultures is *additive* rather than *subordinative*, meaning that it accumulates individual thoughts and phrases serially (using connectives such as ‘and’) rather than stringing them together in hierarchical structures or subordinate concepts (Ong, *Orality and Literacy* 37). This is also seen in the Grandfather’s discourse which consists of short sentences strung together with the locutions “pis” and “Y”:

Y pleuvait à boire deboutte depuis le matin, pis ça faisait une heure que les Boches nous tiraient dessus. Ça pétait de tou’es bords.
Y’avait rien à faire. Tu t’serrais contre le mur de ta tranchée, le nez dans bouette, pis t’attendais. Y’en avait qui priaient, y’en avait qui faisaient rien que répéter : « Maman ! Maman ! » pis y’en avait qui riaient pis qui sacraient contre les Boches pour s’en faire accroire. Tout l’monde avait son p’tit truc [...] (*Chien* 24).¹¹⁴

¹¹³It was yesterday...yesterday, I was seventeen years old...

¹¹⁴It was raining very hard since the morning, and the Germans [les Boches] had been bombing us for an hour. It was going on all around us. There was nothing to do. You braced yourself against the wall of the trench, your nose in the mud, and you waited. Some guys prayed, some guys did nothing but repeat: “Mama! Mama!” and some guys laughed and cursed against the Boches. Everyone had their thing [...]

As well as in the Grandfather's speech (*Le chien*), these patterns are also prevalent in the discourses of Médéric and his mother (in Paiement's *La vie et les temps de Médéric Boileau*), of the mother in Ouellette's *French Town*, and especially of Pite (in Ouellette's *L'homme effacé*). For example, during one of the many instances when Pite reminisces about his youth he says:

Parti de chez nous à douze ans. Douze ans que j'avais, quand je suis parti. Fait les bateaux sur la mer, la haute mer. Calcutta, Jakarta. Le p'tit mousse. Douze ans. Saigon, Hong-Kong. Sur des grands bateaux, grand comme des îles (*L'homme* 19).¹¹⁵

In this excerpt, we note the redundancy of Pite's discourse as he mentions his age three times and the mode of transportation twice. Furthermore, the discourse is additive in that it strings together a list of geographical locations in apparently no specific order.

The fact that oral speech patterns are limited to the older characters is interesting for two reasons. First, it puts into contrast this older generation with its younger counter-parts who no longer rely on the above methods of mnemonics since their knowledge-base is dependent on written documentation. Secondly, this way of depicting the older generation of Franco-Ontarians alerts the audience to a

¹¹⁵Left home when I was twelve years old. Twelve years old I was, when I left. Took ships on the ocean, the high seas. Calcutta, Jakarta. Twelve years old. Saigon, Hong-Kong. On big ships, as big as islands.

facet of orality which may indeed disappear since its purveyors will inevitably die off.

In this chapter we saw how both the Franco-Ontarian People's Theatre of the 1970s and its text-based theatre of the 1980s and 1990s share various structural characteristics that are akin to orality. The analysis centered primarily on oral notions of temporality and the act of story-telling. First, we saw how the oral notion of time is both cyclical and transcendent. The cyclical notion of time is exhibited in two ways with what we have referred to as the notion of "cyclical recurrence" and the notion of "cyclical return." In the first, events from the past and patterns of behavior repeat themselves in the present; and in the second, characters revert to the past in order to relive crucial events that took place in their lives. We also saw the transcendent notion of oral time through the appearance of various "manifestations of the past." In this case, both living and dead characters from the past either inhabit the world of the living or invade it in order either to force or assist the living characters of the linear present to revisit their past. Consequently, the oral notion of space is often similarly bipolar in that two spaces (that of the living/present and that of the dead/past) share the same area of performance.

Furthermore, we defined much of the dialogue, especially that uttered by the manifestations of the past, as staged performances of the story-telling event. Using Richard Bauman's theories, we saw how the story-telling event is broken down into two components. On the one hand, there is the retelling of the event

through indirect discourse (when the speakers tell about what occurred in the past). On the other hand, there is the showing or re-enacting of the same event through the direct discourse of quotation. In our plays, the story is told by either one character who functions both as the narrator and the actor of events (through direct quotation), or by two or more characters. In the latter case, one character functions as the narrator of the story while other characters enact that which is being said.

In our plays, the act of story-telling is divided according to three modes: anecdote, oral history and conte. First of all, stories presented as anecdotes either force or assist characters to relive previously forgotten or repressed events from their personal past. Secondly, oral history provides a voice for a previously undocumented and unspoken history of the Franco-Ontarian people. And lastly, the telling of the “conte” represents the oral mode of transforming historical figures into “mythical heroes.”

Furthermore, we saw how the story is framed within the greater construct of the linear drama either as a mise-en-abyme (various stories within the play) or through a narrator that appears at the beginning and at the end in order to draw the audience into another drama which is, in itself, a story. In our final example, that of *L'insomnie*, the narrator is replaced by a “conteur” who not only frames the story within the construct of the play, but also performs both components of the story-telling act. He tells the story by speaking about the event, and he re-enacts the events in question by assuming the role of the character being discussed.

In essence, we have seen how the Franco-Ontarian playwrights have taken various modes of orality, removed them from their traditional context and transposed them to the dramatic stage. Consequently, the story-telling act, as seen in personal anecdotes, oral history and the traditional contes are theatricalized and thus transformed into dramatic events. This, one might argue, constitutes the Franco-Ontarian theatre poetics of that particular period in its history.

Having dealt with the various forms and structures of orality, we will now move on to the next chapter in which we will examine the “oral themes” found in Franco-Ontarian theatre. While a distinction remains between “structure” and “theme,” an intrinsic connection nevertheless remains between the two since the themes of orality are informed by the temporal notions of circularity and transcendence.

Chapter Three:

Oral Themes in Franco-Ontarian Theatre

In Chapter 2, we examined the underlying structure of the story-telling event and how it is removed from its traditional setting and relocated on the dramatic stage. We saw how the theatricalisation of the story-telling act becomes part of the poetics of Franco-Ontarian drama. We also made the distinction between the modes of “personal anecdote,” “oral history” and “conte” which, in effect, created a further distinction between stories involving individuals and those involving the collectivity. Oral history and conte function as strategies of preserving and regenerating the community’s culture through the recounting of the collective experiences of oral history and through the mythicization of stories (contes) that become part of the community’s collective memory.

While we have identified the function of both oral history and conte, we have not yet fully explored that of the personal anecdote. The first section of this chapter will therefore explore the recurring theme of personal regeneration via the telling of personal anecdotes. In the text-based drama of the 1980s and 1990s, the personal anecdote may be seen as the theatricalized and desacrilized reproduction of the Catholic ritual of “confession.” The second section will continue the discussion of the recurring theme of regeneration through the playwrights’ appropriation of mythical models found in the Judeo-Christian Bible and in the traditional conte.

1) Story-Telling as a Means of “Confession”

Confession is an oral mode of ritual where an individual, feeling remorse for having committed a sin, is isolated in a confessional box and recounts his or her wrongful acts to a priest who in turn absolves that individual of guilt by forgiving his or her sins in the name of God. The process may be compared with that of other more traditionally oriented oral cultures. As Mircea Eliade explains, oral cultures periodically regenerate themselves through the expulsion of “evils” through a magical conception of eliminating a fault through some physical means such as blood letting or speech (Eliade, *Rites and Symbols* 75). In both cases, the result is the same: the individual undergoes a therapeutic renewal of the self through a recounting and subsequent purging of wrongful acts.

As was noted, the reproduction of confession, via the personal anecdote, is both theatricalized and desacrilized. It is theatricalized in that it is removed from its traditional setting and transposed to the dramatic stage. It is desacrilized, furthermore, in that the traditional components have been removed (there is neither a priest nor a confessional box located in a church) and that its function is no longer that of creating a link with a transcendent superior being. What remains is the structure of the act in a renewed setting. The individual in question relates the wrongful events he or she has committed, usually to his or her victims, in an attempt to obtain forgiveness and absolution.

This act, in our plays, embodies three themes. The first, which we will refer to as “failed confession,” involves characters who are forced to revisit the

sins of their past but refuse to accept responsibility for their actions. In other words, they feel no remorse for what they have done and consequently fail to find forgiveness from their victims. The second theme, which we will call “absolution,” involves characters who recount the wrongful acts themselves. These characters feel a genuine sense of remorse for what they have done and subsequently ask their victims for forgiveness. In turn, forgiveness is granted and absolution is achieved. The third and final theme, which we will call “confession as a mode of therapy,” focuses primarily on the therapeutic effects of recounting the events of the past. In this case, the ritual of confession takes the secular form of psychoanalysis in which the character revisits the past in order to re-evaluate his acts and, in turn, to regenerate his sense of the self.

a) Failed Confession

In order for the act of Confession to be successful, the individual must take responsibility and feel remorse for his or her wrongful act. If the individual refuses to do so, absolution is impossible. Such is the case in Dalpé’s *Le chien*. Although the father is provided with the means of confessing his wrongful acts, and although he is forced to revisit those acts, he nevertheless refuses to take responsibility for his own sins. Consequently, he is incapable of feeling the remorse required to seek forgiveness and be granted absolution.

As the drama unfolds, we come to realize that the father is guilty of inflicting many years of abuse on his family. Not only did he continually beat his

son Jay, but he also beat his wife so badly that she had to replace all of her teeth with dentures. The worst event, and that which the father desperately wishes to hide, is the rape of the adoptive sister Céline. All of the events that culminate in the rape force each of the family members to finally leave the father. The father's behaviour has, in essence, destroyed the family unit.

Rather than attempting to make amends, the father perpetuates his frustration and anger by virtually isolating himself from all human contact. As Mariel O'Neill-Karch points out, the father's space corresponds to his antisocial behaviour: "L'emplacement de la maison « au bout d'un petit chemin de terre » indique une volonté de vivre isolé de ses semblables, personne ne passant devant la porte puisque la route ne continue pas plus loin" (O'Neill-Karch, *Théâtre Franco-Ontarien* 142).¹¹⁶ This is punctuated by the fact that Jay is literally forced to trespass on the property in order to arrive: "J'arrive de tracks. J'ai sauté le fossé pis la clôture du fond" (*Chien* 9).¹¹⁷

Jay's unexpected arrival thus provides an opportunity in which the father may confess his sins, and perhaps find absolution; however, the father refuses to do so. This is first reflected in the initial dialogue that takes place between him and Jay. Since the father has no desire to hear or speak about the painful events of the past, Jay's utterances represent a threat that is to be avoided—since they contain the truth that lies behind those past events. Consequently, the father is always on his guard, attempting to predict Jay's words and ready to draw the conversation in another direction:

¹¹⁶The location of the house "on the edge of a little plot of land" indicates the desire to live isolated from his peers: no one came by since the road goes no further.

¹¹⁷I came from the tracks, I jumped over the ditch and the fence in the back.

PERE: Fait que...pis toé ?

JAY : J'suis su'a route. Construction. Des contrats icitte pis
là...dans l'Ouest, dans le Nord, aux États...

PERE : (*L'interrompant*) As-tu vu ta soeur ? Tabarnas ! Ça l'a pas
d'tête su'es épaules, ostie ! (*Chien 11*)¹¹⁸

The father's interruption, "As-tu vu ta soeur" is significant since it implies that the father is fearful that Jay is perhaps about to speak of past events that the father would rather keep hidden. Namely, that he had raped the adoptive sister Céline. It is for this reason that the father immediately adds, "Ça l'a pas d'tête su'es épaules" as if to tell Jay not to believe anything Céline might have to say about him.

Rather than sustaining the topic of the sister, however, the father deflects the conversation by veering in other directions and never permitting Jay to complete his thoughts. François Paré has pointed out that in Franco-Ontarian drama, "les personnages ne communiquent jamais entre eux, leur participation au langage n'étant qu'une suite d'interruptions" (Paré *Théories de la fragilité*: 107).¹¹⁹ However, rather than seeing this form of dialogue as an expression of non-communication, I would argue that Dalpé uses these specific strategies of theatrical dialogue in order to prevent the "confession" from taking place.

¹¹⁸ Father: Well...and you?/ Jay: I'm on the road. Construction. Contracts here and there... West, North, in the States... /Father: (*interrupting*) Did you see your sister? She's got no head on her shoulders!

¹¹⁹The characters never communicate, the participation in language is but a series of interruptions.

While the father is successful at evading any real conversation with Jay in the present, it appears as though he has no such power over the beings who appear from the past. Thus, the mother, the grandfather and Céline, who are located in the past, each tell their stories unabated and subsequently force the father to at least listen. It appears that since he refuses to confess his sins, the manifestations of the past become his reluctant voice, recounting the father's sins in his place.

However, their efforts are to no avail, for although it appears that the father has no choice but to relive his repressed memories through the manifestations of the past and their discourses, he nevertheless attempts to deflect his own responsibility in the outcome of the events. He does so by placing the blame on an "alter ego" that surfaces, he claims, at the moment of impending violence: "C'est comme si y'en un autre en dedans de moé, pis quand c't'autre-là y sort...(Chien 46).¹²⁰ As if to justify the violence, the father then transforms his troubled existence into a type of inner struggle in which his alter ego is exorcised through the very act of violence:

C'est comme un feu qui s'allume icitte. Ça me brûle dans'
poitrine, pis y faut que j'fesse su' quequ'chose ou su quequ'un
pour que ça l'arrête...pour que ça s'éteigne (Chien 46).¹²¹

Having seemingly no control over this alter ego, the father thus equates himself to a wild animal who will inevitably repeat the violent act in the future: "j'me dis:

¹²⁰It's like there is another person inside of me, and when this other surfaces...

¹²¹It's like a fire that starts here. It burns in my chest, and I have to hit something or someone for it to stop...to put the fire out.

« Envoye, perds toé. T'es rien qu'un animal sauvage de toute façon. » Pi après, j'm'en r'viens, jusqu'à prochaine fois" (*Chien* 47).¹²² The father thus succeeds in repressing any sense of remorse he may have felt by transferring his guilt for the actions to his alter-ego.

Since the father feels no genuine remorse for his sins, his act of confession ends in failure. Furthermore, since the father refuses to accept responsibility for his actions, he sees no need to apologise for them. Thus, the father has created a situation where Jay is not allowed to forgive his father, and this father has, in fact, provoked his own death by causing Jay to shoot him in an act of revenge. The father's refusal to recognize his guilt could therefore be seen as an act of self-destruction.

The fact that absolution is not attained is further represented in the play's symbolic ending. Even though Jay shoots his father, this death does not bring with it a teleological end to his existence. The father remains standing regardless of the fact that Jay shoots him three times in the chest (*Chien* 56). The father has thus joined the realm of the "living dead," becoming another "manifestation of the past" who is condemned to haunt the living until the issues of the past are finally resolved.

In Michel Ouellette's *French Town*, we have another example of a "failed confession." In this play Pierre-Paul, like the father in *Le chien*, is guilty of a wrongful act. While he is eventually forced to confess his sin, however, Pierre-

¹²²I say to myself, "go, get lost. You're nothing but a wild animal anyway." And afterwards, I come back to my senses, until the next time.

Paul nevertheless refuses to acknowledge his guilt and thus cannot receive forgiveness or absolution.

Pierre-Paul's guilt ironically stems from a series of episodes in which he was a victim of his father's violence. Having endured beatings from his father throughout his youth, Pierre-Paul finally decides to put a stop to the abuse by asking Simone, his mother, to have his father officially charged with abuse. In turn, Simone refuses to do so and this produces so much rage in Pierre-Paul that the son, blinded by his anger and frustration, beats his mother in the same way that his father used to beat him.

Rather than acknowledging his guilt, however, Pierre-Paul prefers to erase all memories of his youth. This explains his motivation for selling the family home, for this is not only the space in which the events happened, it is also a space that is haunted by the ghost of the deceased mother. Pierre-Paul is thus confronted with a dilemma, because in order to fulfill his desire, he must venture back to the house and relive those painful moments of his youth.

Pierre-Paul's return to the family home thus provides him with the opportunity to undertake a symbolic act of confession since it is there that he is forced to confront his mother's ghost, the victim of his sin. However, like the father in *Le chien*, he refuses to do so.

Much like in *Le chien*, Pierre-Paul avoids speaking about these events by using a unique method that he devised in his youth. Every time he is confronted by an unpleasant memory elicited by another character's utterance, Pierre-Paul instinctively recites the vocabulary and grammar rules that he memorized as a

child. Thus as Cindy, Pierre-Paul's sister, attempts to initiate the discourse concerning the fateful hunting trip, when the father attempted and failed to usher his son into adulthood, Pierre-Paul replies with seemingly rehearsed interjections:

CINDY : C'était le premier jour de la chasse à perdrix.

PIERRE-PAUL : Chasse, action de chercher quelqu'un ou quelque chose avec obstination ¹²³(*French Town* 35).¹²⁴

Pierre-Paul thus displaces his anxiety by shifting it to another object (the words in a dictionary), which in turn, produces a reaction that deflects the act of confession. Pierre-Paul's attempts at blocking out the discourse from the past, however, are to no avail, since Cindy continues the discourse regardless of Pierre-Paul's interjections and succeeds in drawing him into the past against his will. Eventually, the entire story is revealed and Pierre-Paul, as if resigned to this fact, finally confesses to his crime:

Tiens. Tiens. Tiens. Je t'ai giflée. Je t'ai poussée contre le mur. Je t'ai tiré les cheveux. Je t'ai jetée par terre. Je t'ai donné des coups de pieds. Tiens (*French* 107).¹²⁵

¹²³ Cindy: It was the first day of the partridge hunt. /Pierre-Paul: Hunt, act of chasing someone or something with obstinance.

¹²⁴ Ouellette, Michel. *French Town*. Ottawa : Le Nordir, 2000. Subsequent references to the play will be cited as *French* and a page reference

¹²⁵ Well. Well. Well. I hit you. I pushed you against the wall. I pulled your hair. I threw you on the floor. I kicked you. Well.

However, while Pierre-Paul finally acknowledges what he has done, he nevertheless succeeds, like the father in *Le chien*, in redirecting his responsibility for the act. However, rather than placing the blame on an alter-ego, Pierre-Paul justifies his actions by placing the blame on the rage he felt toward the father: “Je t’ai frappé parce que je voulais le tuer, lui. J’ai toujours voulu le tuer” (*French* 108).¹²⁶ As in the earlier scene in which Pierre-Paul shifts his anxiety toward the dictionary, here he deflects his guilt by shifting it to the father.

Furthermore, rather than asking his mother to forgive him, Pierre-Paul’s immediate response is to kill himself. However, his suicide is not an act of contrition; it is not done out of any remorse he may have felt for beating his mother. On the contrary, his suicide comes about through the revelation that he has acquired the most destructive traits of the father that he despises: his bullying and his potential for murderous violence. This revelation comes to a head as Pierre-Paul feels that he has actually become the father’s incarnation: “J’étais dans lui, y était dans moé. Je le sentais. J’étais lui pis y était moé” (*French* 110).¹²⁷

Thus, much like *Le chien*, the act of confession is incomplete. While Pierre-Paul is forced into confessing his crime, he nevertheless refuses to accept full responsibility for the act. He thus lacks both the feeling of remorse and the desire for forgiveness that are necessary to attain absolution.

Pierre-Paul’s failure to attain absolution is also reflected in the play’s ending. As with the father in *Le chien*, Pierre-Paul’s death is not the teleological

¹²⁶I hit you because I wanted to kill him. I always wanted to kill him.

¹²⁷He was in me and I was in him. I felt him. I was him and he was me.

end of his existence. Indeed, he remains on stage to describe his own death after the fact. Thus, he has joined his mother to become a manifestation of the past. Pierre-Paul's failure to fully undertake the act of confession while he was alive consequently manifests itself in the fact that he will find no rest after his death.

b) Confession and Absolution

In *Le chien* and *French Town* the authors make use of various strategies of theatrical dialogue to prevent the act of confession from taking place. In Ouellette's *Le bateleur*, other strategies are used to create the means in which a theatricalized confession may come about. First of all, the protagonist, Jack, is not reluctant to confess, and he does not deflect the opportunity to do so. On the contrary, Jack may be defined by his overwhelming desire to confess his sin and take responsibility for his actions. Jack thus succeeds in finding absolution in the end and subsequently purges himself of the past that haunts him.

Jack is crippled by his guilt concerning an event from his past in which he beat a native man to death in a bar room brawl. He is especially troubled by the fact that he was never punished for this crime; the dead man was simply thrown outside in the street and nothing more was said about the matter.

This event has haunted Jack ever since. This is first symbolised by the omnipresent figure of Dempsey, a ghost from Jack's past that continually reminds him of his crime by continually retelling the story. In order to purge his guilt, Jack attempts to act out his own punishment. At one point he places his hands in the

fan-belt of the running engine of a car. Seeing that this act does not create the desired effect, Jack purposefully allows his physical surroundings to deteriorate. At one point Jack explains that, “C’est ma pénitence”¹²⁸ (*Bateleur* 25)¹²⁹ for why he will neither leave nor make repairs to his deteriorating bar.

Jack, however, is given the chance to redeem himself when another native man, Virgile, enters his bar to take refuge from a storm outside. This man, to Jack’s amazement, is the mirror image of the man he had killed years before and Jack sees this newcomer as the reincarnation of the man who has come to take his revenge. Acting on this thought, and seizing upon the opportunity to confess and redeem himself, Jack retells the fateful event in his own words:

Tu respirais pus. Ton silence a vidé la place. Vidé les verres,
vidé les bouteilles, vidé la place.

[...]

Le propriétaire de l’hôtel pis un de ses chums t’ont jeté dans la rue.
Personne a rien vu, rien entendu. Un Indien mort dans la rue. Dans
la rue, comme un chien. Je t’ai tué (*Bateleur* 115).¹³⁰

Thus we see a contrast between this play and both *Le chien* and *French Town*. Rather than evading the telling of the story and thus deflecting

¹²⁸Ouellette, Michel. *Le Bateleur*. Ottawa : Le Nordir, 1995. Subsequent references will be cited with *Bateleur* and a page reference.

¹²⁹ It’s my penitence.

¹³⁰You stopped breathing. Your silence emptied the place. The glasses, the bottles, the whole place [...] the bar-owner and one of his chums threw you out in the street. Nobody saw or heard anything. A dead Indian in the street. In the street, like a dog. I killed you.

responsibility, Jack willingly relives the event and fully accepts responsibility for what he has done. Furthermore, once Jack has completed the story, he asks Virgile (who he still believes is his victim) to act out his own retribution, “Tue-moé asteur” (*Bateleur* 115).¹³¹ In this theatrical reproduction of the act of confession, Jack’s utterance may be seen as the expression of his remorse and his desire to seek forgiveness and absolution.

Although Virgile simply leaves the scene, the very act of retelling the story appears to have created the desired effect, since it has helped Jack to rid himself of Dempsey, the symbolic representation of Jack’s past and his guilt. This takes place through strategies that change the theatrical dialogue between Jack and Dempsey. In effect, it soon becomes impossible to differentiate between the two characters; the spectator/reader has the impression that all utterances belong to Jack. This culminates in both characters speaking simultaneously:

“JACK/DEMPSEY: Tu peux-tu faire tomber le vent? Y me gruge en dedans” (*Bateleur* 123).¹³² By the end, Dempsey disappears indicating that Jack has purged himself of this ghost by absorbing him, like a memory, back into his subconscious.

Jack is thus contrasted with both the father from *Le chien* and Pierre-Paul from *French Town* in that he is portrayed as a penitent figure who undergoes the symbolic act of confession and is thus absolved of his guilt. A similar representation of confession is also seen in Ouellette’s *L’homme effacé*.

¹³¹Kill me now.

¹³²Jack/Dempsey: Can you make the wind stop? It is torturing me from within.

In *L'homme effacé* Annie has lived with guilt over events that took place ten years in the past. This story takes place in Sudbury and begins when Annie meets her boyfriend Thomas and moves into his home where his mother and a boarder already reside. Thomas's mother, Marthe happens to be dying of cancer and Thomas is contemplating the idea of quitting his job at the mine in order to take care of her. At the same time, however, Annie has become pregnant with Thomas's child. Hearing and disapproving of Thomas's plans, Annie gives him an ultimatum: either he will continue to work or she will abort the child. Thomas abides by Annie's wishes and goes to work. However, while Thomas is away, Pite, the boarder, convinces Annie that she would not be a good mother and provides her with the money required to abort the child in Toronto. After Annie's departure, furthermore, Pite helps Marthe to commit suicide. Thomas then returns from work to find his mother dead and his girlfriend gone. The story thus ends as Thomas leaves in pursuit of Annie.

However, the play actually begins at the moment when ten years have elapsed since the occurrence of these events. Annie, as it turns out, did not abort the child and has made a home for herself and her daughter, Eve, in Toronto. Thomas, on the other hand, has spent those years wandering the streets as a homeless person until he is picked up by the police and brought to the psychiatric ward of a hospital. When we encounter Thomas, he is a mute figure who responds to no-one. Furthermore, Thomas is haunted by the memories of the past. Marthe, his mother; Pite, the boarder; and Annie-2, the younger version of Annie,

continually replay the painful events in Thomas's mind. Annie, who happened upon his photograph in a local news-paper, has come to his aid.

The dramatic situation is thus created in which the desacrilized act of confession may take place. Annie is provided with the opportunity to confront her victim, confess to her wrongfull act and ask for forgiveness. Like Jack from *Le bateleur*, Annie seizes the opportunity; she tells her version of the story to Thomas who, in turn, listens without interrupting as a Priest would in the Catholic ritual.

As with Jack in *Le bateleur*, Annie has lived with the guilt of her sin for many years, and this has had both a physical and psychological effect on her life. When we first encounter her, she appears to have aged prematurely. As the didascalía explains: "*Elle a l'air fatigué, ses vêtements aussi. Elle fait plus vieux que son âge*" (*L'homme* 19).¹³³ Later, Annie explains that this is perhaps due to the psychosomatic effect of living with her guilt:

J'ai réveille tout ce qu'y avait de toi qui dormait en moi. Depuis dix ans, tu dors dans mon corps. C'est peut-être pour ça que j'ai de la misère à dormir depuis dix ans (*L'homme* 62).¹³⁴

On the third day, the final act of the play, however, a change has taken place. It appears that the act of retelling the story has cured Annie of her insomnia, the

¹³³She looks tired, old for her age.

¹³⁴I woke up all the memories of you that were sleeping in me. For ten years the memories of you have been dormant in my body. Maybe that's why I haven't been able to sleep well for these past ten years.

psychosomatic effects of her guilty feelings. Part of her healing process, furthermore, involves a momentary erasure of her memory. In other words, Annie had momentarily succeeded in forgetting what she had done, symbolizing a purging of her sins. As she explains:

Hier, quand je suis partie, je voulais pas revenir. J'étais crevée.
 Mais. Ça a dû me faire du bien dans le fond parce que j'ai bien
 dormi cette nuit. Tellement bien que j'ai oublié jusqu'à mon nom.
 En me réveillant, ce matin, ça m'a pris un temps avant de
 reconnaître où j'étais, qui j'étais (*L'homme* 88).¹³⁵

The act of confession also has a therapeutic effect on Thomas. Once the story is told, the manifestations of the past, Marthe, Pite and Annie-2 disappear in the same way that Dempsey disappears in *Le bateleur*. Thus Thomas, like Annie, has succeeded in purging himself of the past that has haunted him for ten years. Furthermore, Thomas is also healed of the psychosomatic effects of dwelling in the past. At the end of the play, he has regained his voice. Ouellette provides him with the play's final word as he utters the name of his daughter, Eve. Thus, absolution, the final result of the traditional oral act of confession, is equated with the results that come about from the more secular healing faculties of psychotherapy.

¹³⁵When I left yesterday, I didn't want to come back. I was exhausted. But it must have done me some good because last night I was able to sleep well. So well that I forgot who I was. It took a while, this morning, before I could figure out who I was and where I was.

We have seen how the act of confession has a therapeutic effect on the penitent, as well as the victim. The healing effect of confession on the victim of the wrongful act is also seen in Ouellette's *Requiem*.

In this sequel to *French Town*, Cindy inadvertently conjures up the figures from her past, her father and brother Pierre-Paul, and allows them to retell the story of how their turbulent relationship led to Pierre-Paul's suicide. This dramatic strategy, once again, creates a means through which a desacrilized ritual of confession takes place.

In *Requiem*, Cindy is tormented by the memories of her brother's suicide and the turbulent relationship he had with their father. In this case, however, Cindy makes use of those memories, the manifestations of her dead father and brother, as a means of enacting her own personal act of confession. In effect, Cindy recovers the past, through the monologue of Pierre-Paul's ghost, in order to uncover the truth behind her relationship with Pierre-Paul. Once this is revealed, she absolves herself of any guilt she may have felt concerning Pierre-Paul's suicide and subsequently purges herself of the ghosts that torment her.

When we first encounter Cindy in *Requiem*, we note that she has drastically transformed herself. In *French Town*, we observed how Cindy had adopted her father's dress, speech patterns and habits, thus perpetuating his presence after his death in order to continue the on-going battle with Pierre-Paul. In *Requiem*, Cindy has re-transformed herself into the woman that she actually is. Not only does she wear a dress, but she is also recently married and is expecting a

child. Furthermore, when we first encounter her in this play, she is in the process of bettering herself by taking literacy courses.

However, regardless of her physical transformation, Cindy is still tormented by the memories of the turbulent events of the past. This is reflected in the way in which she conjures up the memories of the past: the very act of opening a dictionary (that once belonged to Pierre-Paul) re-awakens the ghosts of her father and her older brother Pierre-Paul who, in death, are continuing the battle that took place when they were alive: “Je le sais que t’es pas mort, p’pa. Toé pis Pierre-Paul, vous vous chicanez toujours. En dedans de moé” (*Requiem* 12).¹³⁶

However, rather than repressing these memories, as did Pierre-Paul in *French Town*, Cindy allows the story to play itself out. Pierre-Paul thus recounts the turbulent relationship he had with his father and the subsequent events that led to his suicide. This story, however, proves to be part of Cindy’s confession rather than Pierre-Paul’s, for after bearing witness to the events, Cindy acknowledges her own part in the events that led to Pierre-Paul’s death.

Cindy’s part of the story begins when she feels that she is denied her father’s love for the simple fact that she is a girl. As she states, “J’aurais dû être ton fils. Si. Je t’aurais compris, moé. Je te comprenais. Mais j’étais une fille” (*Requiem* 17).¹³⁷ Later, she admits that she hated her brother because she was jealous of the fact that he was his father’s son: “Je t’ai hai autant que p’pa t’haissait. Parce que. J’étais jalouse de toé. Parce que. T’étais un gars. Son gars.

¹³⁶I know you’re not dead Dad, You and Pierre-Paul are still fighting inside me.

¹³⁷I should have been your son. I would have understood you. I did understand you. But I was a girl.

Le gars à Gilbert” (*Requiem* 45).¹³⁸ Cindy’s love for her father is then manifested after his death when Cindy decides to perpetuate his existence by becoming his mirror image:

Quand t’es mort. J’ai pas voulu que tu meures. Je t’ai gardé vivant.
Je t’ai porté sur mon dos. Ton linge. Je me suis habillé comme toé.
J’ai continué à travailler au moulin comme toé. J’ai tout fait
comme toé. Pour pas qu’on t’oublie. Pis pour continuer ta vie
(*Requiem* 24).¹³⁹

However, Cindy admits that, through her transformation, she also acquired the most destructive traits of his personality: his bad temper and his potential for violence: “J’étais tellement comme toé. Que je me suis enfermée dans les mêmes silences que toé. Les mêmes violence” (*Requiem* 24).¹⁴⁰ As a result, Cindy perpetuates the father’s hatred for Pierre-Paul and continues the battle waged between them by symbolically stepping into the father’s role.

Pierre-Paul can therefore never properly come to terms with the relationship he had with his father and thus he ends his own life. Cindy, on the other hand, through the act of recovering the past, has succeeded in finding the cause for her own negative behavior. As a result, she is finally able to reconcile

¹³⁸I hated you as much as Dad hated you. Because I was jealous of you. Because you were a boy. His boy. Gilbert’s son.

¹³⁹When you died. I didn’t want you to die. I kept you alive. I wore you on my back. Your clothes. I dressed like you. I worked at the mill like you. I did everything like you. So that I wouldn’t forget you. To continue your existence.

¹⁴⁰I was so much like you. That I locked myself inside the same silence. The same violence.

with her brother: “Je t’hais pus. Je suis même capable de t’aimer” (*Requiem* 45).¹⁴¹ The final act of reconciliation occurs when she names her unborn son after both Pierre-Paul and her father, “Gilbert Pierre-Paul Simon Bédard pour que ceux qui sont morts dorment du repos des morts, éternel” (*Requiem* 49).¹⁴²

Cindy’s utterance, which acts both as forgiveness and absolution, purges her of the memories that torment her. As in the other plays, Pierre-Paul and the father (the manifestations of the past) disappear; however, their exit is marked by the Christian symbols of death and resurrection in the afterlife: Pierre-Paul and Bobotte follow a light that appears and leads the way to the Archangel Saint Michael who will, in turn, grant them passage to Heaven (*Requiem* 56).

So far in this section, we have seen how the Catholic ritual of confession is desacralized in order to provide a theatricalized situation in which characters revisit the events of the past (through the act of story-telling) in an attempt at finding forgiveness for their sins and the subsequent absolution that is symbolized by a disappearance (or purging) of the manifestations of the past that torment them. As we have seen, the secularized act of confession is depicted in two ways. Firstly, it is seen in Dalpé’s *Le chien* and Ouellette’s *French Town* where the characters are forced to revisit the past but refuse to accept responsibility for their sins. Consequently, the act of confession ends in failure; absolution is not

¹⁴¹I don’t hate you anymore. I think I can even love you.

¹⁴²Gilbert Pierre-Paul Simon Bédard so that the dead can find eternal rest.

achieved and the characters are forced to perpetuate their existence after death in the form of manifestations of the past.

In the second depiction of the act of confession, the characters both revisit the past and acknowledge their guilt and remorse for the sins they have committed. Thus, Jack from *Le bateleur*, Annie from *l'homme effacé* and Cindy from *Requiem* resolve the past and are granted absolution through a purging of their past sins. This is, in turn, symbolized by the disappearance of the specters (the manifestations of the past) that haunt them. Thus the process of revisiting the past via the act of confession is seen as a therapeutic device in which the characters free themselves from the guilt associated with the sins of their past. We also see that without absolution, no healing can take place.

c) Confession as a Mode of Therapy

In *L'insomnie*, Marinier moves the focus away from a character who suffers because of his or her guilt by presenting a character that is afflicted with a physical ailment; namely, the protagonist suffers from insomnia. Furthermore, the revisiting of the past, through the act of confession is both a manifestation of the protagonist's real illness and a means by which he finds a cure. The traditional act of confession is thus further desacrilized as it is transformed into its modern counterpart of psycho-therapy. In effect, the act of story-telling is no longer a means by which a character finds absolution, but it is a means to curing a physical

ailment. However, while the focus has changed, the final result is similar to that of the previous plays; by the end of the play, the protagonist is purged of the past that torments him.

As with the other characters, Gilles is tormented by visions of the past. However, Gilles's affliction occurs as a direct result of his ailment. After three months of insomnia, Gilles begins experiencing "flashbacks" that appear instantaneously as time slippages when at any given moment, Gilles is forced to relive a specific moment from his past. However, Gilles soon discovers that his flashbacks often do not correspond to the specific events as he remembers them: "y'a commencé à avoir des flash-backs pis il se souvient pas que c'est comme ça que ça c'est passé" (*L'insomnie* 39).¹⁴³ Sometimes he even has flashbacks concerning events of which he has no recollection whatsoever: "Fait que vous avez des flash-backs d'événements dont vous vous souvenez pas" (*L'insomnie* 39).¹⁴⁴ Eventually, the flashbacks meld with his sense of reality. In other words, the past becomes intermingled with the present. Furthermore, we are informed that after five months and two weeks, Gilles loses his sense of "self": "Gilles perdit soudainement la notion du 'je.' Il ne pouvait plus parler de lui-même à la première personne du singulier" (*L'insomnie* 23).¹⁴⁵

Consequently, Gilles is left in a situation in which both the validity of the past and his own perception of reality are put into question. The effect, for both Gilles and the audience, is one in which we are never certain whether Gilles is in

¹⁴³He started having flashbacks but he doesn't remember that things happened in that way.

¹⁴⁴So you have flashbacks about events that you don't even remember.

¹⁴⁵Gilles suddenly lost the notion of "I." He could no longer refer to himself in the first person singular.

the past or in the present—in a world of fantasy or in his own reality, or both simultaneously. Furthermore, since he has no control over when or how these flashbacks occur, he subsequently appears to have lost control of his life, never knowing where he will be or what he will do at any given moment. He thus finds himself in the position of both participant and observer of his own life as it imposes itself upon him in the most chaotic way.

Gilles has thus inadvertently become his own “Other” that observes himself experiencing events that often appear to take place for the first time. In this way, the play has become an elaborate process of psychoanalysis in which Gilles uncovers memories that he never knew existed.

This notion was further explored by the March 2002 production of *L’Insomnie* directed by Geneviève Pinault and performed by Le Théâtre Tremplin de Vanier. Pinault’s adaptation of the play is not a “one-man-show” as originally envisioned by Marinier, but a theatrical performance in which various actors play the specific roles of all the characters from Gilles’s past: the narrator, Gilles, Ti-Bé, Titine, Singulier and so forth. What is most interesting, however, is that the narrator is transformed into an independent presence: a psychiatrist who interacts with Gilles who has become a patient, and the play thus becomes a clinical case study of Gilles.

In the end, the very act of recovering his lost past, through his flashbacks, produces Gilles’s cure by revealing the initial cause of his sickness. In the final flashback, which is part of a recovered memory, Gilles discovers that he was the subject of an experiment in which he was administered a drug designed to prevent

sleep and consequently allow him more time to work. In retaliation, Gilles uses an ashtray as a weapon to kill Singulier, the administrator of the drug. Thus, Gilles finds a cure through the side-effects of his insomnia (his flashbacks) since this last violent gesture instantly puts an end to Gilles's flashbacks and allows him to finally sleep.

In the above analysis we have explored three ways in which the oral ritual of confession is desacrilized and transposed to the dramatic stage. Furthermore, in all the plays, the "manifestations of the past" play a key role in the enactment of these theatricalized confessions. In effect, the manifestations of the past are memories that have taken tangible forms and have emerged with the purpose of confronting the living characters with various unresolved issues from the past. They thus provide the means through which the living characters may confess their sins. This occurrence leads to three different results. On the one hand, as in *Le chien* and *French Town*, the past remains unresolved since the protagonists, the father and Pierre-Paul, refuse to take responsibility for their actions. Since they remain unredeemed, absolution is not granted and they are destroyed. However, their deaths are not final because they remain on stage and move into another temporal space, as if to add to the ranks of the other living memories: two more manifestations of the past. Continuing the Christian/Catholic imagery, this space of the dead could appear to be a form of purgatory where the troubled dead must linger until their absolution is obtained and closure is found.

In the second case, the living characters of *Le bateleur*, *Requiem* and *L'homme effacé* succeed in finding the sense of closure with regards to the past that is lacking in the previous two plays. Jack from *Le bateleur*, Cindy from *Requiem*, and both Annie and Thomas from *L'homme effacé* resolve the past by revisting it and acknowledging their part in the course of events. In other words, they undertake the act of confession and are thus granted absolution. The fact that the past is laid to rest is exemplified by the fact that, in the end, its manifestations disappear.

Finally, in the third case, that of *L'insomnie*, the act of confession is further transposed from its traditional setting as it is transformed into a “theatricalized therapy session” conducted for the purposes of curing the protagonist’s insomnia. While the focus has changed, the therapeutic benefits of orally revisiting the past remain intact. Gilles is not only cured of his insomnia, but he has also purged himself of the past that was tormenting him in the form of his flashbacks.

2) The Appropriation of Mythical Models

In the first section of this chapter, we saw how the Roman Catholic, oral ritual of confession is removed from its traditional setting and thus theatricalized as it is transposed on the dramatic stage. The act of confession thus functions as a means by which to explore the oral theme of regeneration. Through the act of confession, the characters orally revisit the “sins” of their past in the quest for absolution (a symbolic purging of sin) which, in turn, allows for a regeneration of the self.

In Franco-Ontarian theatre the oral theme of regeneration also recurs in the authors’ various appropriations of Biblical stories and traditional folktales. In effect, the authors reproduce the mythical theme of regeneration through the creation of modern theatricalized versions of traditional Franco-Ontarian mythology and folklore.¹⁴⁶ They do so by appropriating stories from the Old Testament of the Judeo-Christian Bible, parables told by Jesus in the New Testament, and traditional Franco-Ontarian folktales of *Ti-Jean*.

In the oral traditions of myth and legend, the theme of regeneration is reflected in the way in which both individuals and societies are depicted. In order to fully comprehend this, however, we must note how the mythical cosmogony

¹⁴⁶While “myth” and “folktale” may be seen as two separate categories, their commonality lies in the fact that both embody forms of verbal expression that are handed down from one generation or locality to the next by word of mouth. Thus, they both constitute oral traditions. Folktales are distinguished from myths in that they concern human beings rather than gods (Baldick 1990: 121). In this thesis, what we refer to as “myth” involves that which is found in the two parts of the Christian Bible. On the one hand, we will refer to “stories” from the Old Testament that depict the history of the Jewish people; and on the other hand, we will refer to “parables” told by Jesus in the New Testament. When we refer to folktales, furthermore, we make reference to the “conte de *Ti-Jean*” that were handed down from one generation of Franco-Ontarians to another.

opposes conventional notions of history. Myth does not depict a civilization that is progressing toward some teleological end; but rather, it represents a cyclical pattern of birth, death and renewal. Mircea Eliade explains the process by dividing myth into the three separate but related categories of cosmogony, eschatology, and rites of passage (1959; 1963). According to Eliade, cosmogony involves stories that deal with the creation or origin of the universe, and eschatological stories conversely deal with the end of the world or with apocalyptic scenerios. While these two categories may appear to be diametrically opposed, it is important to note the cyclical continuity that unites them. Eschatology, for instance, is an end which is always followed by a new beginning—a new cosmogony. In the widespread story of the Flood, for example, the End of the world is not final; rather, it is the end of one human race, followed by the appearance of another (Eliade, *Myth and Reality* 54).

In Eliade's third category, "rites of passage," a ritual is performed either by the collective or by an individual that symbolically re-enacts the events of both cosmogony and eschatology. In essence, these rituals are performed in order to assure the continuation of the cycle of life, death and rebirth. As in the larger mythological framework, the end of a former initiative act is always followed by a new one symbolizing the cyclical nature of life on both an individual and universal scale.

This section will examine the plays in light of the mythical patterns outlined by Mercia Eliade and Victor Turner. The first sub-section examines the traditional "rite of passage" and how it is represented in the Biblical parable of the

Prodigal Son. This story appears to have been adapted by Jean Marc Dalpé (with Jay in *Le chien*) and Michel Ouellette (with Martin in *French Town* and Pierre-Paul in *Requiem*) to depict the psychic journey undertaken by the characters. The second sub-section examines how the rites of passage may be equally equated with the various stories of *Ti-Jean*. In turn, we will see how the cyclical patterns found in these stories are adapted to the plot of Marinier's *L'Insomnie*.

Finally, in the third subsection, we will look at the notions of “cosmogony and eschatology.” We will first see how the themes of apocalypse and regeneration are depicted in stories of Babel and Sodom from the Old Testament of the Judeo-Christian Bible. In turn, we will see how the cyclical pattern found in these stories, as they are adapted by our playwrights, may be seen as the symbolic death of the traditional Franco-Ontarian community in Northern Ontario and the subsequent rebirth of the modern Francophone community in other parts of the province.

a) Rites of passage

On an individual level, the rites of passage are symbolic of the liminal moments that exist between the times of eschatology and cosmogony, that is, between death and rebirth. In the social context, they indicate the transition from one position an individual holds within a community to another. They include such life changing events as the transition from adolescence to adulthood, from single to married life or even from old age to death. Furthermore, it is important

to note that the rites of passage are based on the patterns established by cosmogony and eschatology. The dynamics of renewal cannot take place until after the end of the preceding world order; in other words, a new order cannot be achieved until the former is erased.

Rites of passage are consequently stages of transition. Arnold Van Gennep establishes a system which breaks down each individual rite of passage into three categories. These include the subsets of “separation,” “margin” and “reintegration.” As Victor Turner notes, the first (separation) and the last (reintegration) “detach the neophytes from their former places in society and return them, inwardly transformed and outwardly changed, to a new position” (Turner, *Anthropology of Performance* 36). The “margin” or “liminal” phase, as Turner refers to it, is the most interesting for our analysis.

Limen, as Turner explains, is a threshold. Consequently, it evades ordinary cognitive classification, for it is neither “this-or-that, here-nor-there, one-thing-nor-the-other” (Turner, *Anthropology of Performance* 37). Furthermore, as Turner explains, it is during this stage that the neophyte undergoes the processes in which his/her “former self” is erased: “the neophytes undergo a ‘leveling’ process, in which signs of their preliminal status are destroyed and signs of their liminal non-status are applied” (Turner, *From Ritual to Theatre* 26). Furthermore, Turner adds that

They may be said to be in the process of being ground down into a sort of homogeneous social matter, in which possibilities of

differentiation may still be glimpsed, then later positively refashioned into specific shapes compatible with their new postliminal duties and rights as incumbents of a new status and state (Turner, *Anthropology of Performance* 37).

During this process the neophytes are frequently stripped of their name, their previous kinship ties and their former residential and political connections (Turner, *Anthoropology of Performance* 47). The intention, as Van Gennep states, is to make the initiate lose all recollection of his former existence (Van Gennep *Rites of Passage* 75). Having figuratively erased their past lives, the initiates may then take on their new role in the community.

a.1) The Franco-Ontarian Neophyte: “The Prodigal Son”

The cyclical, tripartite pattern found in the rites of passage is a recurring theme in the works of one of the most influential oral traditions handed down to the Franco-Ontarians: the Judeo-Christian Bible.¹⁴⁷ One example found in the New Testament, for instance, is Jesus’s parable of the Prodigal Son.¹⁴⁸ The

¹⁴⁷ Biblical references are taken from *The Holy Bible, Revised Standard Version*. Toronto: Canadian Bible Society, 1971. Subsequent references will be made according to the Book and Verse passage: (Luke 15: 11-24).

¹⁴⁸ “There was a man who had two sons; and the younger of them said to his father, ‘Father, give me the share of property that falls to me.’ And he divided his living between them. Not many days later, the younger son gathered all he had and took his journey into a far country, and there he squandered his property in loose living. And when he had spent everything, a great famine arose in that country, and he began to be in want. So he went and joined himself to one of the citizens of that country, who sent him into his fields to feed swine. And would gladly have fed on the pods

parable depicts a neophyte's spiritual journey, which, owing to his fallen nature, inevitably takes him to the land of sin and temptation, far removed from his heavenly origins. Remorse and a desire for forgiveness, prompted perhaps by fear and despair, cause the neophyte/sinner to journey back to the father, who forgives and receives him unconditionally.

The parable follows the same three-part structure as that of the traditional rites of passage. The Prodigal Son first leaves the community, squanders the money given to him by his father, endures much hardship, and then returns with a greater appreciation of his father and his values. The cyclical pattern is reiterated in the end by the father, who explains to his other son that "It was fitting to make merry and be glad, for this your brother was dead, and is alive; he was lost, and is found" (*Luke* 14: 32).

In one way, *Le chien* may be described as a Franco-Ontarian adaptation of this particular rite of passage pattern. Like the prodigal son described in the parable of Jesus, Jay has left the family and during his travels has endured hardships that have caused certain revelations concerning his character. As a result, he returns home to his family to seek forgiveness from his father whom he had rejected. Thus, Jay passes through a three-part cycle in which he is separated

that the swine ate; and no one gave him anything. But when he came to himself he said, 'How many of my father's hired servants have bread enough and to spare, but I perish here with hunger! I will arise and go to my father, and I will say to him, "Father, I have sinned against heaven and before you; I am no longer worthy to be called your son; treat me as one of your hired servants."' And he arose and came to his father. But while he was yet at a distance, his father saw him and had compassion, and ran and embraced him and kissed him. And the son said to him, 'Father, I have sinned against heaven and before you; I am no longer worthy to be called your son. But the father said to his servants, 'Bring quickly the best robe, and put it on him; and put a ring on his hand, and shoes on his feet; and bring the fatted calf and kill it, and let us eat and make merry; for this my son was dead, and is alive again; he was lost, and is found.' And they began to make merry (*Luke* 15: 11-25).

from the community, undergoes a liminal period of transition, and then returns in order to seek redemption and a subsequent re-integration into the community.

Represented both as the traditional neophyte and as the Prodigal Son, Jay is first separated from his community. The departure occurs when Jay, after enduring years of physical abuse from the father, finally retaliates: “J’t’ai fourré une volée v’là sept ans” (*Chien* 14).¹⁴⁹ However, the event is but a catalyst behind the true reasons for his departure. In effect, we come to understand that Jay, feeling rejected by his father, leaves in order to find a place where he can be himself: essentially he is looking for a new home. But Jay is unsuccessful in his attempts and consequently becomes a nomad:

Sept ans de trips de fou d’un boutte à l’autre du Canada pis des États...(*Pause. Il boit et boira tout au long de son récit.*)

J’taille quatre, six semaines, deux mois ; douze, quatorze heures par jour ; pis j’m ramasse du cash; puis j’sacre mon camp [...]

(*Chien* 41)¹⁵⁰

His nomadic lifestyle, in turn, may be likened to the liminal period in which the neophyte is stripped of his or her former self. This first occurs when Jay is stripped of his name as others refer to him by an epithet: “Tout le monde m’appelait « Frenchie » de toute façon. Fait que moé j’m’en crissais pas mal de

¹⁴⁹Seven years ago, I beat you.

¹⁵⁰Seven years of wandering from one end of Canada to the other, in the States...(*Pause, he drinks and continues to drink throughout this speech*). I work four, six weeks, two months; twelve, fourteen hours a day; and save some cash; and I leave [...]

c'qu'y pouvaient penser" (*Chien* 41).¹⁵¹ Jay then precipitates the erasure of his identity by adopting a new one: that of an "outsider" provided for him by popular films: "Free Spirit ostie! James Dean Easy Rider sacrament! C'est ça que je suis moé !" (*Chien* 43).¹⁵²

Jay then buys a motorcycle as if to complete the new nomadic image he has formulated for himself. However, his journeys serve a purpose of which he is unaware. Through the process of his wandering, Jay undergoes a personal transformation, and he finally discovers that his true identity lies within his family and his community. This epiphanic experience occurs while Jay is on a bus headed back to his home town: "« Ça commence à ressembler à chez-nous icitte! » Pis ça me surprend ça, « chez-nous » ; j'ai dit : « chez-nous » pis, au fond j'sais que je l'ai toujours pensé »" (*Chien* 44).¹⁵³

When he finally returns home, Jay then asks for unconditional forgiveness and acceptance from his father that is granted to his counter part, the Prodigal Son: "J'veux tu me m'dises que j'suis correct!/J'veux tu m'dises que tu m'aimes!/J'veux tu m'serres dans tes bra, Pa!" (*Chien* 48).¹⁵⁴

However, his father bluntly refuses, stating that he cannot forgive Jay since too much time has elapsed: "J'peux pas. C'est trop tard" (*Chien* 48)¹⁵⁵. Thus, rather than celebrating the return of the lost son, the play ends in an impasse.

Although the general structure of the Parable of the prodigal son remains intact,

¹⁵¹ Everyone called me "Frenchy" anyway. So I didn't really care what they thought of me.

¹⁵² Free Spirit! James Dean Easy Rider [...] That's what I am!

¹⁵³ "It's starting to look like home here!" And that surprises me, "home"; I said: "home" and, in the end, I knew I always thought of it that way.

¹⁵⁴ I want you to tell me I'm alright!/I want you to tell me that you love me/I want you to take me in your arms, Father !

¹⁵⁵ I can't. It's too late.

there is a reversal at the end. This problematic relationship with the father would seem to symbolize the final deterioration of the traditional value system that once governed the Franco-Ontarian community. For, whereas the parable is meant to bring out the deep seated values of the community, this version indicates their erasure. Thus the adventures of the Franco-Ontarian Prodigal Son become a space of further liminality and unresolvable confrontation where Jay is renewed by his nomadic experiences but the father remains frozen in time.

The notion of liminality as seen through the parable of the Prodigal son is also seen in Ouellette's *French Town* and then reiterated, in more detail, in that play's sequel *Requiem*. This time, the dynamic is reversed because the father changes, but the son remains the same. In the sequel (*Requiem*), Pierre-Paul leaves his family in order to tour Europe. Before his departure, however, he attempts to erase his past self by literally burning the symbol of his youth, the representation of the space where he retreated in moments of conflict:

Avant le départ [...] Je regarde brûler. *Le Petit Larousse illustré*.

De mon enfance. Dans l'âtre du barbecue [...] Oui, je suis libre.

Pas heureux. Mais libre (*Requiem* 16).¹⁵⁶

We learn, however, that both Pierre-Paul's separation from his father, via his trip to Europe, and the erasing of his past self, via the burning of the dictionary, are of no consequence since he has not undergone the transformation required to

¹⁵⁶Before the departure [...] I watch it burn. The *Petit Larousse illustré*. Of my youth. In the barbecue [...] Yes, I am free. Not happy. But free.

make him seek forgiveness from his father. Nevertheless, as Cindy the sister explains, while the father is willing to fulfill his role foreseen in the Parable of the Prodigal Son, by forgiving Pierre-Paul unconditionally and reinstating him into the community, Pierre-Paul bluntly refuses the offer:

Pierre-Paul. T'aurais pas dû revenir à la maison. T'es revenu pour le provoquer, p'pa [...] tu voulais qu'y te batte. Mais lui voulait pas. Pas vraiment. Y aurait été prêt à te parler. Y voulait te faire entrer au Moulin. Avec lui. Y voulait t'aider. Mais t'a craché sur sa main (*Requiem* 44).¹⁵⁷

Pierre-Paul's transformation does not come about until after his father is dead and Pierre-Paul leaves his family a second time in order to take a job in Toronto. During this second separation, Pierre-Paul is stripped of his identity (he becomes "no-one") and this allows him to re-emerge as someone who, like the original Prodigal Son, comes to appreciate the family he left behind:

Il y a pas longtemps. J'ai quitté la hiérarchie. Ma situation s'est dégradée. Je suis sans fonction. Je suis le fils de personne. Le frère de personne. Personne (*Requiem* 51).¹⁵⁸

¹⁵⁷Pierre-Paul. You should not have come back to the house. You came back to provoke Dad [...] You wanted him to beat you. But he didn't want to. Not really. He was ready to talk to you. He wanted to get you a job at the mill. With him. He wanted to help you. But you spit in his hand.

¹⁵⁸It wasn't long before I quit the hierarchy. My situation degraded. I have no function. I am nobody's son, nobody's brother. Nobody.

Having experienced the emotional and physical hardships similar to those undergone by the Prodigal Son, Pierre-Paul is now ready to return to his home and accept unconditional forgiveness from his father. But, as we learn, it is too late since the father has died. In this context, the theme of the Prodigal Son is played out according to different scenarios, but they all share a problematic relationship with the father, the emblematic figure of authority.

Pierre-Paul's failed attempts at the initiation process are interestingly contrasted with the parallel attempts that are undergone by his younger brother Martin in *French Town*. While Martin's story veers away from that of the Prodigal Son, since there is no forgiveness from the father, it nevertheless follows the pattern of separation, transition and reintegration.

After his father's death, Pierre-Paul decides to take Martin under his care. Martin realizes, however, that his separation from his family home is in itself a journey of discovery: "Je suis parti sans comprendre les mystères de ma famille [...] Je suis parti pour apprendre les mystères de la ville" (*French* 48).¹⁵⁹

Martin then undergoes the liminal period of symbolic erasure as he is transformed into the mirror-image of Pierre-Paul. As Martin explains, "L'école privée, l'université, les vêtements, même mon avenir. A toi" (*French* 75).¹⁶⁰ Furthermore, it is in this revelation that he gains a deeper appreciation of both his father and his heritage:

¹⁵⁹I left without understanding the mysteries of my family [...] I left to learn about the mysteries of the city.

¹⁶⁰Private School, university, the clothes, even my future. All yours.

Mais moi, je suis fier de mon père. Depuis que je travaille avec les gars du moulin, je comprends mieux qui il était...Pis je te laisserai jamais m'enlever son héritage (*French* 105).¹⁶¹

In the end, Martin re-integrates himself into the community thus bringing the three-part cycle to completion. In these examples, we note the importance of the liminal phase, for, it is only after the character has undergone a symbolic erasure of his former self that transformation is possible. In these cases, the transformation involves a new understanding and a re-evaluation of the family and community that was left behind. Liminality is provided with a slightly different function, as we will now see, in the traditional Franco-Ontarian conte.

a.2) The Liminal hero: *Ti-Jean*

The tripartite pattern found in the traditional rites of passage and reiterated in the parable of the Prodigal Son is also apparent in the traditional series of Franco-Ontarian *Contes de Ti-Jean*. However, in the conte, the end result is somewhat different from that of its Biblical counter-part. Like the neophyte of the Prodigal son, the character of Ti-Jean undergoes a separation, a liminal period which culminates in a transition, and a reintegration into the community. However, his transition differs from that of the Biblical neophyte in that Ti-Jean is

¹⁶¹But as for me, I am proud of my father. Since I've been working with the guys at the Mill, I understand who he was... And I'll never let you take away my heritage.

transformed through an act that takes place during the liminal period, into a celebrated hero.

In *Ti-Jean-fils-de-l'Ourse*, for instance, Ti-Jean's separation takes the form of a forced exile from the community. Since he is born of man and bear he is considered too harmful to the children of the other members of the community. His exile then takes the form of a mythical journey in which he overpowers an evil witch in order to free himself from a magical well he has descended. Once at the bottom of the well, Ti-Jean happens upon a princess who has similarly been imprisoned by the witch; he then rescues her, and returns her to her community. As a result, the act of saving the princess transforms Ti-Jean. He is no longer an unwanted outcast but is now a celebrated hero who is allowed to marry the princess. He is therefore reintegrated into the community with a new status and the three part cycle remains intact.

In Marinier's theatrical adaptation of the traditional story, *L'insomnie*, the author has retained the original three part cycle: the pattern of separation, liminality, and reintegration. In effect, the psychic journey undertaken by Gilles, the protagonist, through his flashbacks may be equated with his separation from his family. Next, as we saw earlier, the effects of his flashbacks constitute an erasure of his present identity. This thus represents the liminal phase of his separation.

Furthermore, Gilles's subsequent descent into Singulier's parallel universe (an underworld found at the bottom of a desk drawer) and his destruction of Singulier, Gilles's oppressor, provide for his transformation. For, although his

primary motivation for destroying Singulier is his desire to cure himself of his insomnia, by doing so, Gilles also saves his many co-workers from suffering the same fate. Gilles is thus transformed into a local hero and, in the end is properly reintegrated with his family.

In our plays we are thus provided with modern theatricalized appropriations of the oral parable of the Prodigal Son (with Dalpé's *Le chien* and Ouellette's *French Town* and *Requiem*) and the traditional legend of Ti-Jean (with Mirinier's *L'insomnie*). As we have seen, the underlying themes are informed by the tripartite pattern of separation, transition and reintegration outlined by Eliade's theories concerning the oral forms of myth. The underlying pattern of separation, transition and reintegration are also seen in the authors' appropriation and theatricalization of the mythical/Biblical themes of cosmogony, the creation of the world and escatology, the destruction of the world.

b) Cosmogony and Eschatology

The oral/mythical notions of cosmogony and escatology are appropriated by Dalpé's and Haentjens's *Hawksbury Blues* and Ouellette's *French Town*, *Requiem* and *L'homme effacé*, to depict the transition undertaken by the Franco-Ontarian community as it ventures away from its rural origins and towards a new position in urban Ontario.

As we recall, eschatology never implies the teleological end of the universe because it is inevitably and invariably followed by a new cosmogony. In effect, the world thus continually renews itself in a cyclical pattern. Besides the well known story of the Flood, the Old Testament section of the Bible offers other examples in which judgment is passed on various communities which are subsequently destroyed by God. For instance, there is the story of Babel (*Genesis* 11. 1-9) which relates how the people of Babel attempted to build a tower that would reach Heaven. Hearing this, God came down to earth to witness the event for himself. Having done so he then proclaimed: "Behold, they are one people, and they have all one language; and this is only the beginning of what they will do; and nothing that they propose to do will now be impossible for them" (*Genesis* 11.6). Fearing these possibilities, God destroyed the tower and then scattered the people around the world and gave them each different languages.

On the one hand, the myth is provided in order to explain the diversity of languages in the world. On the other hand, it represents a cycle in which the destruction of one society brings forth the rebirth of not one but many others. As George Every explains, the story is also meant as a warning against man's pride, Babel "is considered as the city of man doomed to destruction because it is organized for a bid to control history instead of God" (Every 44).

The chastisement of man by God is also seen in the story of Sodom (*Genesis* 19.1-29). However, in this case, God's wrath comes about for a different reason. The people of Sodom are punished for having subverted the law and ultimately submitted to the temptations of sin. And, as in the story of Babel, it

does not denote the end of human-kind; it shows the rebirth of new societies, as Lot and his family are spared in order to start a new community.

The Judeo-Christian notion of eschatology and cosmogony thus involves a destruction of the populated area and a dispersal of some or all of its peoples. A similar cyclical pattern is seen in Franco-Ontarian drama in order to symbolize the disintegration of many Franco-Ontarian communities in Northern Ontario and the subsequent migration of their peoples to other parts of Ontario and Canada.

For instance, we already saw how in Ouellette's *French Town*, Simone's historical discourse depicts the burning down of the French community that lived on the outskirts of Timber Falls. Dalpé's and Haentjens's *Hawkesbury Blues*, furthermore, makes an allusion to the story of the Flood when the island community of Chenail is forced to migrate because Ontario Hydro has literally flooded their home in order to create a new electrical power plant.

The theme of destruction and regeneration is also reflected in Ouellette's two plays, *Requiem* and *L'homme effacé*, in which both protagonists, Cindy and Annie, leave their traditional Franco-Ontarian communities in order to raise their children and start a new life elsewhere. Furthermore, *L'homme effacé* is of particular significance since it appears to emulate the Biblical story of Sodom.

When we encounter both Thomas and Annie in *L'homme effacé*, they have already migrated to Toronto, far removed from the rural francophone community in Northern Ontario. The family that they left behind no longer exists since Marthe (the mother) is dead and Pite (the boarder) is in prison for her murder. What is interesting, however, is how this now dissipated family is portrayed.

In effect, the family unit is depicted as a community that, much like Sodom, is living in depravity and sin. Pite, for example, is defined by his sexual depravity which translates itself into his obsessive habit of scanning the photographs of his *Playboy* magazines. Secondly, Marthe contemplates suicide and in turn prompts Pite to assist her in the act, subsequently making him a murderer. And finally, Annie-2 is not only pregnant out of wedlock but is also defined by her chronic alcoholism and the disrespect she shows for her elders.

If the family that both Thomas and Annie left behind is equated with Sodom, then Thomas may also be equated with Lot's wife who, looking back on the city's destruction, is turned into a pillar of salt. Like Lot's wife, Thomas cannot help but look back and dwell in the past; thus he is turned into a mute, unresponsive, statue-like individual.

Annie, on the other hand, is equated to Lot who never looks back and consequently is able to start life anew. This notion of re-birth is punctuated by the fact that her daughter is named Eve, the first woman in the founding discourse of the Bible. Born and raised in the Anglophone environment of Toronto, Eve may be seen as the symbol of the possible emergence of a new culture expressed within the parameters of the Judeo-Christian myth of creation.

In this chapter we first saw how the authors desacrilized and then theatricalized the Catholic oral ritual of confession. We then saw how the authors appropriated mythical models from the Christian Bible and the traditional Franco-Ontarian conte. In effect, both sections also demonstrate how the themes

correspond to the complex notions of oral time brought forth by Basso and Ouaknine. In the first section, “Story-Telling as a Means of Confession,” we saw how the dramatists invariably share a preoccupation with the past; or, to be more exact, a preoccupation with a past that is unresolved by the living characters of the present. The first part, “Failed Confession,” dealt with characters such as the father in *Le chien* and Pierre-Paul from *French Town*, that deny their responsibility in the outcome of past events. Consequently, the issues from the past remain unresolved. This results in a process in which the protagonists are forced to join the realm of the dead in order to become manifestations of the past themselves and continue a seemingly endless cycle.

The second part, “Confession and Absolution,” dealt with characters who willingly return to the past in order to face and acknowledge their responsibility in the outcome of events. Jack from *Le bateleur*, Cindy from *Requiem*, and both Annie and Thomas from *L’homme effacé* willingly bear witness to the events of their past and consequently come to terms with them. This is especially evident by the end of the plays as the manifestations of the past conspicuously disappear, denoting a break in the cycle that connects the realm of the living with that of the dead.

Finally, in the third part, “Confession as a Mode of Therapy,” we saw how the ritual of confession is transformed into a mode of secular therapy used in order to find a cure for a real ailment. As with the other characters, Gilles frees himself of the past through the very act of revisiting it.

The cyclical notion of time is also examined in the second section of Chapter Three, “Mythical Patterns of Orality.” In this section, we saw how Mircea Eliade’s tripartite notions of myth are also seen in stories from the Judeo-Christian Bible, *Les contes de Ti-Jean* and finally in our plays. We saw how characters like Jay in *Le chien* and Pierre-Paul from *Requiem* may be equated with the Biblical Prodigal Son. As with the latter, these characters undertake a journey in which they undergo a symbolic erasure of their past selves and consequently gain a new appreciation of the community they left behind. Thus these characters may be seen as a reflection of the three-part system of “separation,” “transition” and “reintegration” described by Eliade. In *L’insomnie*, furthermore, Gilles’s psychic journey was equated with that undertaken by Ti-Jean in the various contes.

In the second part of this section, “Cosmogony and Eschatology,” the notion of community was analysed in terms of Eliade’s theories concerning the mythical end and rebirth of the universe. In this section, the traditional Franco-Ontarian community, as seen in plays like *L’homme effacé* and *Requiem*, was equated with the Biblical communities of Babel and Sodom. In the Biblical stories, the cities were destroyed leaving but a few survivors who were forced to flee and start a new community elsewhere. This is reflected in our plays in the way that the characters have left the moribund traditional communities of Northern Ontario in order to begin anew in other parts of Ontario.

Conclusion

In this thesis we traced the evolution of Franco-Ontarian Theatre by first locating its rebirth in the 1970s within the trend of People's Theatre that existed throughout the Western world. Secondly, we demonstrated how the oral elements that exist in this theatre were adapted to suit the structures and themes of the later text-based theatre of the 1980s and the 1990s.

In analysing the drama of André Païement and *la Corvée* as People's Theatre, we noted that, within the parameters that we have defined, this was essentially a decentralized drama performed in alternative spaces for an exclusively Francophone audience from Northern and Western Ontario that was, for the most part, unfamiliar with the theatre. By depicting familiar settings, characters, and language; by using various popular modes of performance such as mime, pantomime, physical comedy, song; and by using various methods of breaking the imaginary barrier that separates the audience and the performer, the artists succeeded in entertaining their key audience as well as inciting the emergence of a collective consciousness.

In the second chapter, we saw how the Franco-Ontarian theatres of the 1970s, 1980s and 1990s all shared various structural characteristics of orality. This chapter focused primarily on the oral notions of temporality and story-telling. On the one hand, we saw how events from the past often recur in the present; thus time is seen as cyclical in nature. Furthermore, we saw how manifestations from the past invade the present in a way that also makes time transcendent

in nature. These theatrical incarnations of the past force the living characters to go back in time by telling and re-telling their own stories.

Thus, we note an underlying unity between the representation of oral temporality and the act of story-telling. The story-telling event allows the characters to return to the past and rediscover themselves. Story-telling thus becomes the act which produces a collective transformation: transformation of the characters, of the actors, and ultimately of the collectivity. Therefore, we might say that the story-telling event is at the very heart of this theatre.

It also becomes clear that the oral act of story-telling is developed in a particular way in these dramas. It includes the narration of events through indirect discourse, where the narrator becomes an observer of the phenomenon being described, but it also includes the enactment of those events through quoted speech, which projects the story-teller directly into the action. Thus, characters often adopt the role of their past, younger selves in order not only to play the designated role, but also to relive the narrated event. This two-fold function of the character who becomes a story-teller and actor in his/her own story indicates one of the ways that orality in the theatre has made the transition from a primarily oral practice to a residual trace in the written text. In effect, the story-teller becomes a playwright by creating a dramatic mise-en-abyme foregrounding various alienation strategies, flashbacks, characters whose voices become transcendent and other strategies that aid in the creation of a non-linear dramatic structure.

Furthermore, we saw the complexity of the story-telling forms: anecdote, oral history and conte. Anecdotes, as they appear in *Le chien, French Town*,

L'homme effacé, *Le bateleur*, *Eddy* and *Requiem*, involve the personal experiences of a character. On the other hand, “oral history,” such as that provided by Simone in *French Town*, and the Grandfather in *Le chien* involves the undocumented history of a Franco-Ontarian community. And lastly the conte, as reproduced in *Médéric Boileau*, *La parole et la loi* and *L'insomnie*, involves the fictionalization of an historical event for the purposes of immortalizing it in the popular mind. In essence, all three forms could be seen as emblematic of the transitional function of residual orality.

The elements that have evolved from the oral tradition of story-telling are of a secular nature. What becomes very clear, however, is the particular impact in this theatre of the forms of oral culture adapted from secularized versions of sacred rituals and texts drawn from the Judeo-Christian Bible and the Catholic Mass. In Chapter Three, we first saw how the plays appropriated, desacrilized and theatricalized the Catholic oral ritual of “Confession.” In this case, the act of revisiting the past, through the story-telling event, provides a means by which the characters are forced to confront the victims from the past, confess their sins, and finally find absolution. As we saw, this was depicted in three ways. In the first, “Failed Confession,” the protagonists (the father from *Le chien* and Pierre-Paul from *French Town*) are confronted with the sins of their past, but refuse to acknowledge their responsibility for the acts. Feeling no remorse for what they have done, the characters fail to find the absolution required to properly purge the past. Consequently, although these characters die in the end of both plays, they

are nevertheless condemned to a state of purgatory in which they continue to exist in the realm of the living as “manifestations of the past.”

In the second instance, “Confession and Absolution,” Jack from *Le bateleur*, Annie from *L’homme effacé*, and Cindy from *Requiem* are also forced to revisit the past. However, unlike those of the previous plays, these characters acknowledge and feel genuine remorse for having committed the wrongful acts. Consequently, these characters are absolved of their sins through the symbolic purging (the disappearance) of the manifestations of the past.

Finally, the secular versions of these forms adapted from the Catholic ritual undergo a further change as the Confession becomes a mode of therapy, functioning as an act of healing and self-recognition. The act of confession is thus further removed from its traditional setting and modernized into a form of psychotherapy. The story-telling event is encompassed within flashbacks which give impetus to the therapeutic process and help the main protagonist find a cure. Thus Gilles, in *L’insomnie*, understands his past and can carry on with his life since, like the characters from the other plays, he is purged of the past (his flashbacks) that has come back to haunt him.

In the second part of Chapter Three, we saw how the playwrights incorporated oral themes in their plays through the adaptation of the Parable of the Prodigal Son from the New Testament, the apocalyptic stories of Babel and Sodom from the Old Testament, and the stories of Ti-Jean from the traditional Franco-Ontarian conte. The oral nature of these adaptations is further punctuated by the fact that they correspond to van Gennep’s regenerative three-part cycle of

“separation, margin and reintegration” that are manifested via the traditional “rites of passage” and the notions of “cosmogony and escatology.”

When the thesis is seen as a whole, we might conclude that Franco-Ontarian theatre depicts a people whose culture is both structurally imbedded in and thematically informed by residual orality. This notion becomes even more evident through a cross-referencing of the above analysis with the various annexes we have provided. In the interview with Robert Marinier, for instance, he describes the dramatic technique used in the performance of *L'insomnie*. This involves a manipulation of the spectator's imagination. During the performance of his play, Marinier verbally describes the settings, props and characters, and he narrates the dramatic action. He thus reproduces the story-telling event by creating a theatrical experience in his audience's imagination. Ouellette, for his part, expresses his concern for the preservation of the oral history of the Franco-Ontarian people. Furthermore, he describes his method of preserving this history through the use of various notions of temporality that, in turn, corresponds to the ideas brought forth by Ouaknine and Basso.

By further cross-referencing the analysis with the theatrography of TNO, one gains a greater understanding of the evolution of Franco-Ontarian theatre. For instance, the history of this theatre company begins with the oral-based People's Theatre of Paiement and is followed by the theatrical reproductions of the traditional stories of Ti-Jean, demonstrating that this theatre is founded upon the notions of orality. One might therefore say that the oral-based techniques used in

the theatre of the seventies provided a foundation for that of the eighties and nineties. What remains is thus a text-based theatre defined by traces of orality.

The questions that arise from the thematic and structural evolution seen in these plays have important repercussions for the future of Franco-Ontarian theatre. As we have seen, the thematic desire for both self-definition and self-acceptance are ultimately fulfilled through the liberation from the personal ghosts that cripple the individual's psychic growth and maintain a form of internal oppression. One might say, therefore, that this period of Franco-Ontarian theatre underwent a process of representing a community that had to first evolve through a psychic process of self-evaluation via the liberation from the 'inner monsters' that would not be eradicated. The plays may thus be symbolic of a collective purging of a past that beforehand prevented the Franco-Ontarians from entering into a new phase of cultural development.

One might also say that this "symbolic purging of the past" is equally a reflection of the structural patterns that we have referred to as "residual orality." Having exhausted the theatrical possibilities provided by the traditional storytelling format and having fully explored and paid homage to their cultural heritage, the artists became free to explore new theatrical possibilities and thus enter into a new phase of dramatic production.

Actually, the conditions for this new theatrical phase have already been created. During the same thirty years in which the artists were developing their theatre, a fundamental transformation had been simultaneously taking place within both their culture and their community. Migration of Franco-Ontarians

from rural communities to urban centers and the influx of French speaking immigrants from around the globe have put into question the notion of a closed and uniform Franco-Ontarian community. Paul-François Sylvestre, for instance, explains that, “Le paysage culturel franco-ontarien a beaucoup changé au cours des 20 dernières années [...] aux artistes de souche au *tricotés serré*, sont venues s’ajouter des forces vives en provenance du Québec et de l’Acadie, bien entendu, mais également de l’Afrique noire, du Maghreb, des Antilles et de l’Europe (Sylvestre, “La culture en Ontario français” 547).¹⁶² This leads us to wonder how this new francophone population will be represented in the theatre. Will new playwrights of non-European origin emerge in French speaking Ontario?¹⁶³ If so, what will be the nature of this new theatre, and will it find a place within the perimeters of existing Franco-Ontarian theatre?

Furthermore, exogamy has produced, and is still producing generations of young bilingual Franco-Ontarians for whom English is the dominant language.¹⁶⁴

Will this phenomenon spark a new wave of playwrights who identify themselves

¹⁶²The Franco-Ontarian cultural landscape has greatly changed in the past twenty years [...] along with the core Franco-Ontarian artists, there are added voices from, not only Quebec and Acadia, but also from Africa, Maghreb, the Antilles, and Europe.

¹⁶³Such an occurrence has already taken place in Quebec with artists of Middle-Eastern descent such as Wajdi Mouawad, a French speaking Lebanese dramatist who is currently the artistic director of Théâtre de Quat’Sous in Montreal.

¹⁶⁴See Roger Bernard, “Reflexions critiques d’un chercheur” in *La francophonie ontarienne: bilan et perspectives de recherches*, (dir.) Jacques Cotman, Yves Frenette and Agnès Whitfield Ottawa, Le Nordir 1995, p. 327-340; and “Du social à l’individuel: naissance d’une identité Bilingue » in *La question identitaire au Canada francophone*. (dir.) Jocelyn Létourneau, Sainte-Foy, Les Presses de L’Université Laval, 1994, p. 155-163 where he states « Ils [Franco-Ontarians] habitent un univers diglossique où le bilinguisme linguistique et culturel est caractérisé par un transcodage fonctionnel et naturel [...] Dans l’univers du bilinguisme, le français, langue maternelle, qui est normalement porteur de la culture française, est devenu effectivement une langue seconde et l’anglais, la langue première » p. 161. [The Franco-Ontarians inhabit a bilingual universe where linguistic and cultural bilingualism is characterized by a functional and natural transcoding [...] In this bilingual universe, French, the mother tongue which is normally the crucible of French culture, has effectively become the second language to English, the first language.]

as Franco-Ontarian and embrace their cultural specificity but, nevertheless, choose English as their primary mode of communication?¹⁶⁵ How will we define these new artists when the existing body of Franco-Ontarian work has, for the most part, marked its specificity through the very use of the French language?

In effect, the Franco-Ontarian community is quickly becoming geographically dispersed, culturally heterogeneous and linguistically fragmented. While some may fear what appears to be the inevitable disappearance of the traditional Franco-Ontarian community, others have seen new possibilities within its heterogeneity and pluralism. For one thing, the Francophones in Canada have been able to finally distance themselves from Quebec, which has always been considered the francophone center within Canada. Since then, these Francophones have gone from being members of the vast “French-Canadian” society (which included Quebec) to being one of many ethnic groups such as Franco-Ontarians, Franco-Manitobans or Acadians (Bernard, “Du social à l’individuel” 161-2). As Raymond Breton states: “Il y a hétérogénéité et fragmentation, de sorte qu’on ne peut parler d’une minorité francophone, mais de plusieurs” (Breton 60).¹⁶⁶

Furthermore, migrations to urban centers, improved education and the ability to speak English have provided a socio-political power which the Franco-Ontarians never had before. Proof of this is found, among other things, in the opening of a permanent theatre space, La Nouvelle Scène, in Ottawa in 1999. As

¹⁶⁵ A similar occurrence has taken place within the Italian-Canadian community with novelists such as F. G. Paci (*Italians* 1978, *Black Madonna*, 1982, and *The Father* 1984) and Nino Ricci (*Lives of the Saints* 1990) who embrace their Italian culture and heritage but nevertheless choose to write in English rather than in Italian.

¹⁶⁶ There is heterogeneity and there is fragmentation to the point where we can no longer speak of one Francophone minority but of many.

Paré explains, the entire perspective has changed: “La collectivité franco-ontarienne est dorénavant perçue, non plus comme faible et dominée, mais comme forte des liens de partenariat qui ont rendu possible le lieu scénique permanent” (Paré, “Le théâtre franco-ontarien” 79).¹⁶⁷

Consequently, a new theatre is required that will re-define Franco-Ontarian status and identity. For, as Danielle Juteau-Lee explains, “La collectivité ne veut plus se définir par sa différence (Franco-Ontarien), mais veut exister hors de ce rapport d’oppression” (Juteau-Lee 42).¹⁶⁸ François Paré has ventured so far as to suggest that Franco-Ontarian culture, as it has been depicted in its drama, has essentially come to an end. Thus, he claims that, “tôt ou tard, la culture franco-ontarienne devra déclencher le discours de sa propre disparition dans l’histoire” (Paré, “Le Théâtre franco-ontarien” 84).¹⁶⁹

I would suggest, however, that we are not witnessing the end of Franco-Ontarian history per say, but rather the end of a cycle that began in the 1970s. Indeed, Joel Beddows defines the 1970s as a time in which TNO and La Corvée established new frontiers that ushered in the possibility of a professional theatre in French speaking Ontario. By the 1980s, as Beddows further explains:

La frontière était dressée et les créateurs franco-ontariens pouvait dorénavant se concentrer sur la professionnalisation de leur

¹⁶⁷The Franco-Ontarian community is no longer seen as weak and dominated but as a community with strong ties of partnership that have made a permanent theatre space possible. (my translation)

¹⁶⁸The community no longer defines itself in terms of its difference and wishes to exist without the stigma of oppression.

¹⁶⁹Sooner or later, Franco-Ontarian culture will have to undertake the discourse pertaining to its own disappearance within history.

pratique et l'écriture d'une dramaturgie franco-ontarienne.

L'émergence de cette dramaturgie, dont l'originalité esthétique sera reconnue dans les années quatre-vingt, signalera le début de l'institutionnalisation d'un théâtre qui a dû, dans un premier temps, tracer ses frontières (Beddows, "Tracer les frontières" 66).¹⁷⁰

With this in mind, we might add to Beddows's assessment of the 1970s and claim that the Franco-Ontarian theatre of the 1980s and 1990s is essentially "liminal"—a transitional drama that bridges the gap between the minority People's Theatre of the 1970s and a new theatre for the new millennium that reflects a Franco-Ontarian community that lives with and engages in a dialogue with the heterogeneous, pluralistic Canadian society. Perhaps a new cycle has already begun with plays such as Robert Marinier's *Epinal* (2002) and Michel Ouellette's award winning *Le testament du couturier* (2002),¹⁷¹ which are notably detached from the traditional Franco-Ontarian themes and characters that previously preoccupied Franco-Ontarian dramatists.

¹⁷⁰Having marked their territory, the Franco-Ontarian artists were free to concentrate on the professionalization of their art and the writing of a Franco-Ontarian dramaturgy. The emergence of this dramaturgy, whose aesthetic originality would flourish in the eighties, would signal the beginning of the institution of a theatre that had to, in the beginning, trace its frontiers.

¹⁷¹Ouellette won the Trillium Book Award in 2003 for his text of *Testament du Couturier* and the prize for the year's best production by the Cercle des Critiques de la Capitale in 2003; furthermore, the Théâtre de la Catapulte's production of the play, directed by Joel Beddows, also received a "Soirée des Masques" award.

Annex 1:

Synopsis of the all Plays Discussed

1) Three Plays by André Paiment

Biographical note:

André Paiment was born in 1950 in Sturgeon Falls, Ontario. He studied at the Collège du Sacré-Coeur and at Laurentian University of Sudbury. In 1970 he wrote his first play, *Moé, j'viens du Nord, s'tie* which was produced by la Troupe de Université Laurentienne. The same year, he assisted in the founding of Théâtre du Nouvel-Ontario (TNO). The newly founded troupe produced his play *Et le septième jour* and performed it on a tour across Ontario and Québec. In 1974, Paiment wrote and produced *Lavalléville*. In 1975, he founded the musical group CANO (Coopérative des artistes du Nouvel-Ontario) with whom he recorded two albums. In 1978, Paiment took his own life at the age of 28.

Moé, j'viens du Nord, stie (1970)

(six scenes, two monologues, four songs and dramatic action)

Cast of Characters: Roger, 18 years old

Père, Roger's father

Nicole, Roger's girlfriend

Raymond and Marc, Roger's friends

Travailleur, a mine worker

Propriétaire, the owner of the restaurant where

Nicole works

Setting:

The action takes place in the town in which the play is performed: Sudbury and other towns in Northern Ontario.

Synopsis:

Moé, j'viens du nord, s'tie uses dramatic action, monologue and song to tell the story of Roger, a shiftless teenager who at eighteen years old repeats his final year of high school without doing the minimal amount of work required to graduate. While Roger dreams of attending university where he will be free from dress codes and parental control, he spends most of his time loitering around the town with his friends and dating Nicole, a waitress at the local restaurant.

Meanwhile, he argues with his father who works at the nickel mine. The mine, the town's sole industry, symbolizes a future that Roger rejects passionately. In the

end, Nicole announces that she is pregnant, and Roger becomes resigned to the inevitable conclusion that he will marry Nicole and join his father in the mines.

Theatrical details:

First produced by la Troupe de l'Université Laurentienne

Director : André Paiement

Music : Jacques Chartrand, Jim Cryderman, Pierre Germain, Donald

Laframboise, Robert Paquette.

Lighting : Conrad Morin

Set: Yvon Besner, Danielle Talbot

Cast : Thérèse Boutin, Denis Courville, Jean-Paul Gagnon, Carol Morisette,

André Paiement, St-Jules, Gaston Tremblay

Performances: in Sudbury on February 1 & 2, 1971 and in seven northern Ontario towns in the Winter and Spring of that year.

Critical Reviews :

Courchesne, Michel. "André Paiement : Père de la francophonie ontarienne"

Revue du Nouvel Ontario 9 (1987): 145-146.

Allain, Mathé. "Schizophrénie ! is what we be—or is it ? The Franco-Ontarian

Heritage in the Plays of André Paiement" *Theatre History in*

Canada/Histoire du théâtre au Canada 11. 1 (Spring 1990): 94-100.

Gay, Paul. "Paul André Païement (1950-1978), ou le désespoir du colonisé"

Theatre History in Canada/Histoire du théâtre au Canada 7. 2 (Fall

1986): 176-185

Moss, Jane. "Le Théâtre Franco-Ontarien: Dramatic Spectacles of Linguistic

Otherness" *University of Toronto Quarterly* 69. 2 (Spring 2000): 587-614.

Published : Ottawa : Prise de Parole, 1978

La vie et les temps de Médéric Boileau (1973)

(17 Acts : three choruses, four songs, two "contes" and eight scenes)

Cast of Characters: Médéric Boileau,

La Mère, Médéric's deceased mother

Aldège Parent, Médéric's childhood friend

Mère Parent, Aldège's mother

Aldège's son and daughter in law.

Le Boss

Eva Commanda

A man and woman from the city

A young couple from the city

Setting:

The action is divided between two locations: the country in Part One and the city in Part Two (Sudbury or the town in which the performance takes place).

Synopsis:

As the title indicates, the play is about the life and times of the protagonist, Médéric Boileau. Médéric's life story, however, is presented in two versions. Firstly, it is presented by a "conteur" in the form of a traditional conte. Secondly, the same events are presented by Médéric himself in a manner that depicts the harsh and often brutal reality of the same situation. The fictional world of the conte is thus put into juxtaposition with that of reality as Boileau's discourse appears to "correct" the fictionalized account of his life provided by the conteur. In this way, he is depicted as a character who continually resists the temptations of using the past as refuge until, in the end, he finds himself in a situation in which he has little choice but to do so.

Both versions of the story, however, are abstracted by the overall structure of the play. For, at the beginning, the play appears to be structured in a "mise-en-abyme" fashion that frames a play (or more precisely a story) within the greater construct of the entire drama. However, by the end of the play, it becomes apparent that the structure is more akin to an analepsis in which the drama ends where it began. In effect, after the introductory scene, the drama undergoes a unique type of flashback in which the events of Médéric's life are retraced (by both Médéric and the conteur) from the time of his birth to the moment when we

encounter him at the beginning of the play. Thus, the drama reflects the cyclical structure found in the performance of the conte in which the conteur shifts from the stage time (the present time of action shared with the audience) to dramatic time (the past time of the story) and back to stage time.

The play opens in a similar fashion to *Moé, j'veiens du Nord, stie*. The characters address the audience, introduce themselves and outline the setting for the ensuing drama. However, both the title and the appearance of the first character, Médéric's mother, create an atmosphere more akin to the performance of a "conte." While the title, "*La vie et les temps de Médéric Boileau*" is reminiscent of the titles provided by various folktales and contes, the appearance of the mother sitting on a rocking chair reproduces the familiar setting in which the traditional Franco-Ontarian conte was often performed.¹⁷²

This idyllic setting, however, is instantly disrupted by the appearance of the protagonist Médéric, and the meeting between Médéric and his mother foreshadows the underlying tension between fiction and reality. Médéric's mother begins her discourse by lamenting the fact that her son has abandoned her-- "Pourquoi c'est/Que tu m'as abandonnée?" (*Médéric* 8)¹⁷³--and ends with a nostalgic reminiscing of times gone by.

However, the mother's discourse is immediately contrasted in both form and content by that of Médéric. While the mother uses a rhyme scheme that punctuates the lyrical and romantic notion of the past, Médéric speaks in prose,

¹⁷²I base this observation purely on my personal experience. As a child, my siblings and I would often sit around my grandmother as she sat in her rocking chair and narrated her stories.

¹⁷³Why did you abandon me?

giving concrete details of the same events which convey the reality of day to day existence.

This opening discourse between Médéric and his mother parallels and even foreshadows the ensuing dramatic tension. However, it suddenly comes to an end as Médéric addresses the audience to introduce himself--“j’m’appelle Médéric Boileau [...] J’ai soixante-neuf ans” (*Médéric* 13)¹⁷⁴--outlines his present situation and presents the play.

In effect, the drama that follows this introduction consists precisely of that to which Médéric refers: a return to the past. This happens by means of a unique type of analepsis in which Médéric and his mother are physically thrown off the stage in order to begin the story that retraces the Médéric’s life from the moment of his birth to the time when we first encounter him at the beginning of the play (*Médéric* 15).

This story, however, is further complicated by its two-fold nature as it consists of two versions of the same story. On the one hand, it is presented as an elaborate conte in which Médéric’s life is fictionalized by the “conteur” Eva Commanda; and on the other hand, Eva’s story is placed in juxtaposition with that which is narrated and acted out by Médéric. Médéric’s reflections of the harsh reality of his life thus appear to “correct” the fictionalized version of his life as presented by the conteur Eva Commanda.

The “conte” version of the story first differentiates itself from the other version in that it is autonomous and it is not meshed with the rest of the play. Furthermore, it begins with its own introduction. Like the performance of the

¹⁷⁴My name is Médéric Boileau. I’m sixty-nine years old.

traditional conte, this involves expository material provided by the characters of Mère Boileau and Mère Parent which is then taken over by the character of Eva Commanda. As with Médéric and his mother, Mère Boileau, Mère Parent and Eva Commanda speak directly to the audience in the past tense in order to introduce the characters and outline the ensuing dramatic setting. Mère Boileau and Mère Parent explain that the action takes place in 1904 in a lumber camp located somewhere in Northern Ontario, far removed from civilization. Then, they introduce the character of Eva Commanda, the mid-wife who helped deliver Médéric and who will henceforth act as narrator of the ensuing conte.

However, before commencing the narration of the conte, Eva Commanda provides further exposition, always in the past tense, in the form of character development. She narrates Médéric's birth and childhood which is modeled after the patterns found in the traditional conte. As in the conte, Médéric's birth is marked with exceptional circumstances. In this case, he is born at precisely the same moment as his friend Aldège Parent. The two friends thus become inseparable until Aldège falls in love, marries and leaves for the city. However, rather than causing despair on the part of Médéric, this event aids in transforming his character into an exceptionally strong figure since he is now forced to work by himself at tasks that he usually performed with Aldège .

In the next scene, Médéric reappears on stage to tell his version of the same story. While Médéric's version of the story is depicted as his personal experiences, he nevertheless follows the same pattern of performance that is likened to that of the conteur. In effect, he appears to take over the role of conteur.

As in the previous discourse, Médéric speaks directly to the audience as himself in order to relate events from the past tense. Furthermore, the discourse is divided into two distinctive parts in which the first acts as expository material that leads up to a specific action.

However, as opposed to the romanticized life provided by Eva Commanda's exposition, Médéric's story depicts a life that is punctuated by a series of mishaps. It begins as Médéric follows in his father's footsteps, entering the employ of the "American Lumber and Export Company of Canada." At fifteen he helps in the kitchen, until deemed too old for that job. He is then moved to log running, which he does until, too old for that task, he is sent into the woods to cut trees sixteen hours a day. This is when he began to work with Aldège. However, rather than heroically doing the work of two men after Aldège's departure, as he does in Eva Commanda's version, Médéric is deemed too old for that job and is returned to the kitchen.

At this point of Médéric's version of the story, however, the dramatic structure shifts with the introduction of the character of the "Boss." This is not to say that the narrative format of the conte is discarded. For, while there is dramatic action between this character and Médéric, the latter maintains his role as narrator throughout, speaking directly to the audience in the past tense while the Boss speaks in the present tense and is apparently oblivious to the presence of the audience.

The material outlined by Médéric before the Boss's arrival may be seen as the exposition that leads up to Médéric's final dismissal from the lumber camp.

Once this is completed, the story shifts into a dramatic action that takes place simultaneously in the present and the past in which Médéric functions both as narrator and actor. Like the conteur, Médéric adopts two roles simultaneously. In effect, he is both narrator who speaks directly to the audience, and an actor that performs that which is being said.

After this sequence, Eva Commanda re-appears as if to take over the story and transform it, once again, into the fictionalized conte. Médéric's dismissal from his job acts as cue for Eva Commanda as she takes over the narration and transforms Médéric's termination into the mythical exile in the forest where he sets off in search of his long lost friend Aldège. In this part of the conte, Eva transforms Médéric into a mythical hero: an extremely strong character that is in control of his surroundings. Once in the forest, he is able to magically start a fire with the stroke of his hand, and when he is confronted by a group of wild wolves, they pose no threat since in the conte version of the story Médéric has a magical power that enables him to tame wild animals.

On one level, the two discourses are contrasted to denote the tension between two fictional worlds. On the one hand, Eva Commanda's discourse creates a mythology by producing a hero; on the other hand, Médéric's discourse reproduces a popular naturalistic vision of the world. On another level, however, one might say that the opposing discourses demonstrate how daily life can be transformed into myth through the story telling process.

It is both interesting and important, furthermore, to note the similar way they are performed. As with Médéric's discourse, Eva Commanda's is also

marked by a specific mode of performance that likens it to that of the conte. However, whereas Médéric adopts both the role of narrator and actor by speaking directly to the audience while simultaneously enacting the events as a character, Eva functions solely as narrator and allows the characters to speak their own lines. As the didascalia explain, the conte versions of the story are performed in an elaborate form of pantomime.

The end of this conte also marks the end of the first act. However, the underlying tension between everyday world and mythical world remains intact as the mythical exile described in Eva's conte is contrasted with the Médéric's actual exile to Sudbury. As in the conte version, Médéric's exile is coupled with his quest to find Aldège. However, unlike the conte version of his exile, Médéric finds himself in a modern world that is completely foreign to him: "Y ont réussi à mettre le dehors en dedans!" (*Médéric* 44).¹⁷⁵

Furthermore, as in the conte version, Médéric is faced with the threat of confrontation. In this case, however, rather than being wild wolves that he manages to tame, Médéric comes face to face with adversities he cannot overcome. These take the form of two rejections. He is first rejected as a minority who does not speak the dominant language: "I DON'T SPEAK FRENCH!!! You damned frog!" (*Médéric* 44); and secondly, he is rejected by his own people as he is mistaken for a beggar: "J'ai pas une maudite cenne! Si t'es pas capable de te

¹⁷⁵They succeeded in putting the outside in.

trouver une job, viens pas quêter icitte pour que j'te paie de la bière. Maudit bum ! Maudit bum ! Maudit bum !" (*Médéric* 44).¹⁷⁶

His rejection is then paralleled with that of his friend Aldège as Médéric discovers that Aldège has been abandoned by his own family. As the daughter-in-law explains, "Si y reste iccite ça va être le même histoire qu'avant. J'vais être obligée de le garder vingt-quatre heures par jour, de le nourrir, de l'habiller, de le coucher, de le lever pis de le faire pisser !" (*Médéric* 48).¹⁷⁷

In the final scene, Médéric is finally reunited with his long lost friend Aldège. One of the first things we notice in this scene is that the drama's structure has shifted from narration to mimetic action that takes place in a continuous present. Eva Commanda has apparently disappeared and the characters no longer acknowledge the presence of the audience. This gives the impression that the drama is close to completing its cycle in that the past has caught up with the present.

The scene involves Médéric as he finds that his friend has become an invalid, confined to a wheelchair and unable to speak. Médéric visits with him nevertheless and further pretends that nothing is wrong by feigning to play a game of checkers, drinking some wine, and holding a one-sided dialogue.

However, by the end of the scene, a conspicuous change occurs in Médéric's attitude. Up until now, Médéric was portrayed as a character that rejected the romanticized view of the past in favor of a more realistic depiction of

¹⁷⁶I don't have any money. If you can't find a job, don't expect me to pay for your beer! You damn bum!

¹⁷⁷If he stays here it will be the same old story. I'll have to watch him twenty-four hours a day, feed him, dress him, put him to bed, get him up and have him go to the washroom.

his own life. While with his friend, however, Médéric suddenly begins to reminisce, in a nostalgic way, about days gone by: “Aldège, j’t’ai manqué dans le chantier. J’aimerais donc ça qu’on retourne tous les deux, comme avant, rien que moé pis toé...” (*Médéric* 52).¹⁷⁸ Then, as if through the power of story-telling, Médéric’s utterance transforms the present situation into the magical world of one final conte. This time, however, while the story has its own narrator, it takes place in the imagination of both Médéric and Aldège. Furthermore, it is enacted in such a way that the naturalistic view of the world appears to have been fused with the mythical.

Thus, we are presented with a final contrast where the last encounter between two old friends is transformed through the power of the conte into a heroic adventure. This time the conte is implemented by Médéric himself, indicating that the drama has completed its cycle. Not only does the end bring us back to the beginning but it also indicates that Médéric has become the mirror image of his mother: a figure whose only refuge from the harsh reality of his existence lies in the nostalgic reminiscing of the past. This is further reflected in the final scene in which Médéric is placed in the same rocking chair that his mother (who has not appeared since the beginning of the play) occupied before him.

¹⁷⁸ Aldège, I missed you when I was in the field. I would love to go back there, the two of us, like before, just you and me...

Theatrical Details :**First Produced by Théâtre du Nouvel-Ontario****Director :** Gilles Garand**Music :** Marcel Aymar, André Paiement**Musical Arrangement:** David C. Burt**Lighting:** Marc Delorme**Sound:** Jacques Chartrand**Set:** Jacques Chartrand, Marc Delorme**Cast:** Marcel Aymar, Suzie Beauchemin, Daniel Jacques, Rachel Paiement,
André Paiement**Performances :** Sudbury : September 28, 1973 ; November 1, 1973 ; December
12, 1973.

From October 1, 1973 to December 16, 1973: Hearst, Kapuskasing, Smooth Rock
Falls, Cochrane, Iroquois Falls, Ramore, Kirkland Lake, Hannover, Sturgeon
Falls, Noelville, Hull, Orleans, Ottawa, Plantagenet, Lafontaine, Penetanguishene,
George Bay, Niagara Falls, Welland, Windsor, Cambridge, Espanola, Thunder
Bay, Chapleau, North Bay.

Critical Reaction:

Allain, Mathé. "Schizophrénie ! is what we be—or is it ? The Franco-Ontarian
Heritage in the Plays of André Paiement" *Theatre History in Canada* 11.
1 (Spring 1990): 94-100.

Gay, Paul. "Paul-André Paiement (1950-1978), ou le désespoir du colonisé",

Theatre History in Canada/Histoire du théâtre au Canada 7. 2 (1986):

176-185.

Moss, Jane. "Le Théâtre Franco-Ontarien: Dramatic Spectacles of Linguistic

Otherness" *University of Toronto Quarterly* 69. 2 (Spring 2000): 587-614.

Published : Ottawa : Prise de Parole, 1978

Lavalléville (1974)

(Musical Comedy in three acts and six songs)

Cast of Characters :

Albert, a 43 year old blacksmith, his face is disfigured from a work related accident and he walks with a limp. He is very dirty and not well dressed.

Ambroise, 20 years old, Adolphe's son, in love with Diane. He is also a blacksmith and like Albert, he is very dirty and not well dressed.

Adolphe, 60 years old. Son of Napoléon (deceased) and brother of Hermès (deceased). Ambroise's father and patriarch of the community. He is

dressed in a black suit and a dirty white shirt. On formal occasions he wears an overcoat and a top-hat. He always carries a cane.

Adèle, 55 years old, Hèrme's wife. Diane's mother. She is dressed in red and wears a bright red wig that she continually removes and puts back on because she is too hot.

Diane, 18 years old, Adèle's daughter, very pretty but badly dressed, in love with Ambroise but frustrated with him.

Cyrbantigne Latriproutre, This is his alias. He is 25 and comes from the city. He is dressed in bright colours with clothing that is very tight fitting, especially around the genitalia.

Setting : All action takes place in the forge located in the fictive community of Lavalléville.

Synopsis:

Lavalléville is a musical comedy that depicts a closed community run by a tyrant named Adolphe Lavallé. It is of particular interest to Franco-Ontarians since it is loosely based on the community of Dubreuilville. Before the drama begins, however, Paiement provides a subtext in the published version of the play

that is not provided for the audience where he outlines the historical events that led to the founding of Lavalléville. It proceeds as the following: in 1904, the “National Canadian Pacifist Railway” laid tracks through the community known as “Chutes Esturgeons” (no doubt a reference to Paiement’s home town of Sturgeon Falls) in Northern Ontario due to the potential behind the abundant natural resources found there. Napoleon Lavallé moved to Northern Ontario from Montreal to take up the post as manager of the newly opened Banque Canadienne Royale. Soon after, Napoleon invested a sum of money in the newly opened “Abitibu Pulp and Paper Co.”¹⁷⁹

All went well for Napoleon until one day, Thyron Burnsfield, an Anglophone janitor, discovered a fire in the mill’s cafeteria and alerted the authorities who were able to extinguish the fire and save the mill. Consequently, Thyron was deemed a hero, and as a reward he was given Napoleon’s job as bank manager. In retaliation, Napoleon availed himself of \$700.004.13 from the bank, fled further north and founded the community of Lavalléville with his wife and two sons Adolphe and Hermès.

Paiement’s subtext thus sets the stage for the action that ensues in the drama which takes place many years after Napoleon has died. His son Adolphe is now the patriarch and he rules with the aid of a wand that he believes has magical powers. In reality, however, he simply uses it to beat his subjects into submission. The play opens with a general sense of unrest exhibited by the townspeople. Albert, Adolphe’s son, for instance, is dissatisfied with his work in the town’s

¹⁷⁹The “Abitibu” Pulp and Paper Co. is no doubt a parodic reference to the Abitibi Paper Company that was spread throughout Northern Ontario.

forge where he does nothing but fix old parts of the mill that are continually breaking down. His work thus symbolizes the impotence of Lavalléville where everyone toils but nothing new is created. Furthermore, Adolphe's niece, Diane, after being seduced by representations of the outside world (an Eaton's catalogue and a magazine of "sex photos"), has concocted a plan to escape the community. She plans to hide in one of the barrels that will be delivered to Toronto.

Diane reveals her escape plan to Ambroise and Albert, but Adolphe suddenly appears and she is forced to hide in a pile of tires in the forge. From this hiding place, she and the audience are privy to the events that take place in the ensuing scenes. The first of these events involves a telling scene between Adolphe and Adèle, Diane's mother, where we learn that Adèle is holding a secret (involving the murder of Adolphe's brother Hermès) over Adolphe's head in order to procure some of the brother's money. Immediately after this scene, Adèle exits and Adolphe falls asleep in the forge. Upon awakening he imagines that the ghost of his father Napoleon appears to him to chastise him for hoarding his money rather than using it to expand the village.

The fact that Adolphe has something to hide in relation to his brother's murder is further reflected in his preparation for the arrival of Cyrbantigne Lariproure who is apparently a doctor whom Adolphe has summoned to cure his chronic headaches. Somehow, though, his presence within the community only stirs up mischief, discontent and chaos. Since this doctor is the only outside visitor to have ever set foot in "le territoire sacré," Adolphe decides to clean the

forge. He also rubs soot on his face, explaining that his guest should not think that he is a man who refuses to work (*Lavallé* 39).

In fact, Lariproure may be seen as a “diabolic” presence in the traditional folktale of *Lavalléville* as his arrival fuels more plotting: Adèle plans a conspiracy with both Diane and Lariproure to overthrow Adolphe. However, Adolphe catches Diane as she is fleeing the village and forces her to confess everything. Finally, the tables are turned and we learn that Lariproure is a phony.

From the moment when Lariproure’s true nature is revealed, order is instantly and almost magically restored to the community. The young people decide to stay and work in Lavalléville, Adolphe and Adèle are married as are Ambroise and Diane. Furthermore, Adolphe’s wand has disappeared and the violence that ensued from it has turned to laughter. And lastly, the forge which beforehand kept Ambroise chained to unproductive labour has now turned into a tool for the creation of art.

Theatrical Details :

First produced by Théâtre du Nouvel-Ontario

Director : Pierre Germain

Music : Marcel Aymar, André Paiement

Musical Arrangement : David Burt

Lighting : Marc Delorme

Sound : Philippe Legault

Set: Raymond Simon

Costumes: Cathy Brown

Cast: Marcel Aymar, Suzie Beauchemin, Louise Beaudoin, Daniel Jacques,
Joseph Mathie, André Paiement

Performances : Sudbury : October 28, 1974 ; February 6-9 1975;

Northern Ontario and Quebec: Fall 1974, Winter and Spring 1975

Roughly 40 presentations

Critical Reaction:

Dickson, Robert. "L'Espace à créer et l'espace qui reste" *Revue de Nouvel-Ontario* 4 (1982): 56-57.

Gay, Paul. "Deux comédies d'André Paiement" *Le Droit*, August 26, 1978, 17.

Gay, Paul. "Paul-André Paiement (1950-1978), ou le désespoir du colonisé",
Theatre History in Canada/Histoire du théâtre au Canada 7. 2 (1986):
176-185.

O'Neill-Karch, Mariel. "Signes textuels de l'espace scénique dans *Lavalléeville*"
Théâtre franco-ontarien : Espaces ludiques. Vanier : L'Interligne, 1992.

Moss, Jane. "Le Théâtre Franco-Ontarien: Dramatic Specacles of Linguistic
Otherness" *University of Torontt Quarterly* 69. 2 (Spring 2000): 587-614.

Publication: Ottawa: Prise de Parole, 1983.

2) A Play by La Corvée

Biographical Notes:

La Corvée was a collective founded in 1975 by Jean-Marc Leclerc, André Legault, Daniel Chartrand and Luc Thériault, and included Catherine Caron, Robert Colin, Francine Côté, Madeleine Leguerrier and Marc O'Sullivan. It made its home in Vanier, the eastern region of the city of Ottawa. In its founding years it was known for its “guerilla” theatre events in the streets and even on public buses, but the majority of its productions took place in conventional theatre spaces. Its first productions included *La patente ou L'union fait la force* and *L'annonce faite à Vanier*. In 1979, Brigitte Haentjens joined the troupe and together they produced *La parole et la loi*. The company was created to defend Franco-Ontarian culture and to provide a Franco-Ontarian political consciousness. Since 1988, when La Corvée changed its name to Théâtre du Trillium, the mandate has changed considerably.

La Parole et la loi (1979)

(27 Scenes)

Breakdown of Scenes, Settings and Cast of Characters:

- 1) **Chanson du début:** Introductory song sung by a chorus
- 2) **Introduction de Monsieur Loyal:** Introduction of the troupe and the ensuing action by the play's narrator, M Loyal
- 3) **Attention:** an interlude spoken by the chorus indicating that the action is about to commence
- 4) **L'Orangiste,** a monologue delivered in the form of a speech by the "Orangiste"
- 5) **Les bûcherons:** a mime depicting a scene from the past involving French Canadian and Irish lumberjacks
- 6) **L'usine,** a sketch depicting a scene from the present involving a group of French Canadian factory workers discussing their conditions in the factory
- 7) **Les deux petites filles,** a sketch involving two young school girls from the 1920s
- 8) **Les Soeurs,** a sketch which includes a young school girl, a Francophone teacher and an Anglophone teacher from the 1920s
- 9) **Sermon de Monseigneur Fallon,** a sermon by Monseigneur Fallon
- 10) **Whitney et Fallon,** a conversation between Fallon and Ontario Premier Whitney done as a sketch

- 11) **La secte**, a sketch where the play's antagonists--the chairperson, Whitney, the minister of education, and two un-named characters--meet to discuss how to implement the "Règlement 17"
- 12) **Les journaux**, docudrama in which actors recite headlines from various newspaper articles of the period
- 13) **R 17 et Davis**, Premier Davis gives his opinion about the Franco-Ontarian question in the 1970s
- 14) **Congrès de l'ACFEO**, the "héros" of the play--the chairperson of the association, le curé (a priest), Samuel Genest, and three un-named characters--meet to discuss how they will proceed against the implementation of "Règlement 17"
- 15) **La messe**, a parody of a Catholic mass involving the allegorical figures of "le Pouvoir" and "les Français"
- 16) **L'éloge, la maladie, les solution**, a sketch involving six characters, each named as a number --un, deux, trois, quatre, cinq and six--that discusses the current situation in French speaking Ontario and the ever-growing threat of assimilation.
- 17) **L'épique**, a scene that takes place in two settings: a school and the basement of a church. It involves the characters of narrator, les Soeurs Desloges, Diane and Béatrice, Denis Murphy (l'Orangiste), Arthur Charbonneau, Samuel Genest, m. Bélanger, the French Canadian women, two Anglophone teachers and one police officer.

- 18) **Non**, an interlude involving actors who appear as themselves: Bob, Daniel and the troupe.
- 19) **La famille**, a conversation that takes place at a family home between Le Père, Ti-Gars, and La Grande Soeur
- 20) **Chanson de Victoire**, sung by the entire troupe
- 21) **La scène de non**, a scene involving the entire troupe of actors as themselves and one character : le Ministre
- 22) **La disco**, the troupe dances to a disco number
- 23) **Le français**, a short sketch involving a young school girl who recites a “French lesson”
- 24) **Les femmes**, a sketch that brings together female characters from the past and the present: Desneiges, Noella and Marianne, in a contrast of the political situation that each had to face
- 25) **Les chevaux**, a scene involving two Francophone characters who play the role of work-horses for two Anglophone characters
- 26) **L’enterrement**, a dramatized burial ritual of French Canadian stereotypes involving the entire troupe
- 27) **La Chanson de la fin**, a concluding song performed by the chorus

Synopsis :

La parole et la loi is constructed around the story of Règlement XVII.¹⁸⁰ It brings together various theatrical forms such as mimetic action, narration,

¹⁸⁰See André Lalonde (1965) *Le Règlement XVII et ses repercussions sur le Nouvel-Ontario*, Sudbury : La Société Historique du Nouvel-Ontario.

documentary drama and song in order to re-create the historical event. The play begins with an introductory song performed by the entire cast while they enter the stage. During the song, it remains clear to the spectators that the actors have not yet assumed their roles; on the contrary, the players appear on stage on their own behalf with the suitcases that contain the costumes and props needed for the moment they transform themselves into theatrical characters. They then introduce themselves as a performance group and state their intentions by addressing the audience directly: “C’est nous la Corvée on s’en viens vous jouer,/Un show qu’on a monté à Vanier” (*Parole* 9).¹⁸¹ Thus a collective bond is created in which the performers are recognizable members of the francophone community, and in which the production is one of many that has already been performed elsewhere in recognizably Franco-Ontarian locales.

The song announces the production’s exclusively Franco-Ontarian content and structure: “On va vous la raconter, notre histoire,/Des temps présents, des temps passés,/Des faits connus, p’is des choses cachées” (*Parole* 9).¹⁸² We note the use of the possessive pronoun “notre” which is intended not only for the performers but for the intended audience since the history that will be presented pertains to both groups as they are all part of the Franco-Ontarian community.

When the song is finished, the players remain on stage while one performer advances and assumes the role of M. Loyal, the play’s narrator, or to be more exact, the story’s “conteur.” Much like the traditional conteur, M. Loyal speaks directly to the audience and begins by first introducing the various

¹⁸¹We are La Corvée we come to put on/ A show we did in Vanier

¹⁸²We are going to tell you our story/of the present and the past/of known facts, and things that are hidden.

characters and then outlining the dramatic situation. This involves the Franco-Ontarians' struggle to maintain their own French-speaking Catholic schools, which reached its climax in 1912 with the government application of Règlement XVII. M. Loyal describes this struggle as nothing less than an "epic battle" that comes about through a Manichean reading of the historical event that pits "heroes" against "villains."

M. Loyal does so by dividing the characters into two opposing factions. The first includes the antagonist Monseigneur Fallon, "le fanatique, qui a semé chez les Irlandais une peur et une haine irraisonnées des Canadiens français,"¹⁸³ and his ally Prime Minister Whitney, who with his cabinet of Orangistes, used his power in an attempt to "anéantir les francophones" (*Parole* 10).¹⁸⁴ The second involves the "héros" Sam Genest who worked with the Conseil Scolaire Séparé d'Ottawa, to defy Règlement 17, along with the hard working women and school-teachers who continued their work in spite of "les forces noires de l'oppression" (*Parole* 10).¹⁸⁵

The history behind Règlement XVII is thus transformed into a "conte" that pits the Franco-Ontarian "heroes" against the Anglophone "villains." Furthermore, the spectator is never allowed to lose sight of who the villains are since these characters don masks; or, to be more exact, half-masks that cover only part of the face. The half-mask has a dual-function. While it denaturalizes the character by introducing body into the relationship between spectator and actor (Pavis 1998: 202), it nevertheless maintains that relationship because it covers

¹⁸³the fanatic who spread fear and the irrational hate of French Canadians among the Irish.

¹⁸⁴Eradicate the Francophones.

¹⁸⁵The dark forces of oppression.

only part of the face. Consequently, the audience never loses sight of the fact that Franco-Ontarian performers are momentarily adopting the roles of the villains.

After his introduction, M. Loyal leaves the scene and does not return until the end of the play, but the play maintains its “story telling” structure. M. Loyal’s departure is followed by a series of dramatic sketches that are each framed by various theatrical techniques that function as exposition. *La parole et la loi* thus oscillates between exposition that is addressed directly to the audience and mimetic action that, in turn, “illustrates” that which was just said. This exposition is provided by various performers via the delivery of speeches, and the recitation of documentary material such as newspaper articles and authentic political speeches.

The role of narrator is first taken over by the “Orangiste,” a representative of the English Protestants whose allegiance to the villains of the drama is indicated by the half-mask he dons throughout his utterance. His narration takes the form of a speech in which he claims that the English were the founding fathers of colonial Ontario: “nous étions ici les premiers, LES PREMIERS!” (*Parole* 11).¹⁸⁶ Then, he proceeds to bemoan the influx of immigrants that arrived first from Quebec and then from Ireland, and ends his speech by stating that “C’est comme ça que tout a commencé: ils ont beau être tous de foi catholique, le Canadien français et les Irlandais n’arrivent même pas à s’entendre !” (*Parole*

¹⁸⁶We were here first! We were the first!

13).¹⁸⁷ The Orangiste's final utterance functions as a cue that prompts the next scene that performs that which was just described. It involves a sketch in which a group of French Canadians is working alongside a group of Irish lumberjacks. An argument ensues and the sketch ends when the Irish workers become the foremen, telling the French Canadians what to do.

The cycle that moves from exposition to action is then repeated in the following scene. This time, however, the exposition is presented in the form of docudrama. Two young girls take turns reciting the history of the segregation of the school system. They explain that in the year 1900 there were two school boards: the public school system reserved for the English protestant students, and the separate school board for the Catholics that was taught exclusively by nuns. The Catholic board was further divided between the French and the Irish Catholics. Therefore, to learn English, the francophones were apparently left with only one choice: to attend the Irish, English speaking Catholic schools.

This exposition is then immediately illustrated through mimetic action in the next sketch entitled "Les Soeurs" in which a little girl is pulled back and forth between two nuns. We see the Irish nun attempting to coerce the little girl into attending the English school with the promise of maintaining her faith while learning the dominant English language. We also see the little girl confronted by the French nun who maintains that if she attends the English school she faces the threat of rejecting her heritage, family, and friends. The scene continues in this fashion until the question of language becomes, for the French nun, one of faith--

¹⁸⁷That's how it all started. It didn't matter that they were all Catholics, the French Canadians and the Irish still couldn't agree.

“écoute-moi! Si tu perds ta langue, tu perds ta foi!”-- and for the Irish nun, one of secular reality--“l’avenir en Ontario est en anglais” (*Parole* 17).¹⁸⁸

The dilemma reaches its climax in the next scene that shifts again to exposition via a sermon delivered by Monseigneur Michael Fallon. This character appears, not only in half-mask, but also on an elevated stage to represent his heightened moral status in the community. In his sermon, Fallon first describes what he sees as the impending threat posed by the French Canadians, and then transforms the situation into a battle in which he will play a central role: “il faut s’armer pour la guerre, et c’est moi qui serai vainqueur” (*Parole* 19).¹⁸⁹ Then, as if to demonstrate how Fallon will defeat the French Canadians, the play shifts to a dramatic sketch in which we see him creating a political alliance with Premier Whitney, and then meeting with other members of the Conservative Government and the Minister of Education. Thus Reglement XVII comes into being. This sketch punctuates the militantly political nature of its intentions by replacing the half-mask with a balaclava, “une cagoule noire” (*Parole* 23), the head covering of criminals who would rather not be recognized. The portrayal of the English speaking “villains” is exacerbated by representing them as criminal activists linked to the I.R.A. or any underground illegal political movement. Their French speaking counter-parts, on the other hand, always appear as themselves: a group of Franco-Ontarian performers playing to their own people.

This sketch is then followed by yet another expository scene presented in the form of docudrama that, in effect, fills in the political context. As in one of the

¹⁸⁸Listen to me! If you lose your language, you lose your faith!...The future in Ontario is in English

¹⁸⁹We have to prepare ourselves for a war—and I will be the conquerer!

previous scenes, characters take turn reciting dates and newspaper headlines that came about as a result of the meetings between Fallon and the government officials. In this scene we learn, among other things, that in 1905 Whitney and the Conservatives come to power; in 1909 Fallon takes control of the diocese of London; in 1910 the A.C.F.E.O. (Association Canadienne-Française de l'Éducation de l'Ontario) is founded; in 1912 census poles indicate an increase in the French population in Ontario; and finally, on April 13 1912, Règlement XVII is put into practice.

The exposition is continued again in the form of docudrama as the rules governing the new law are read out loud by a half-masked character, giving the impression that the villains will now implement their new law. During this scene, we learn that French will be used as a language of instruction only up until the second grade. At this time, English will become the primary language of instruction and communication. Furthermore, the French language schools will be placed under the supervision of a “Chief inspector” who will inspect and approve the curriculum. And most importantly, as the text states: “No teacher shall be granted a certificate to teach English-French schools who does not possess a knowledge of the English language sufficient to teach the Public and Separate School course” (*Parole* 26). The annihilation of the French language is henceforth inscribed in law.

While the above functions as expository material that closes the previous sketch, it also functions as an introduction to the next sketch which involves a meeting between the story's “heroes,” Samuel Genest and the members of the

A.C.F.E.O. This scene involves further implications concerning the implementation of Règlement XVII and the decisions made by the “heroes” to organize their resistance and carry on the struggle. In response to Règlement XVII, Genest claims that:

Nous devons nous assurer que toutes nos écoles s’opposent à ce Règlement, que toutes les écoles barrent la route aux inspecteurs, que tous les professeurs continuent à enseigner et en français, quoi qu’il arrive ! (*Parole* 30).¹⁹⁰

All of the above sequences lead up to the last climactic scene of the story entitled “L’épique.” In this scene the narrator, M. Loyal, re-appears to re-assume his role as the narrator. He begins the sketch in the same manner as he introduced the play by speaking directly to the audience and by elevating the ensuing drama to the proportions of an epic battle between two adversaries.

However, this scene differs from the previous ones. Rather than leaving the scene once the action begins, M. Loyal remains on the stage to narrate the events while these are simultaneously enacted in front of him by the various characters. As the didascalía explains: “*Chaque fois que le narrateur nomme des personnages, ceux-ci apparaissent pour ‘illustrer’ la scène*” (*Parole* 36).¹⁹¹ The

¹⁹⁰We have to assure ourselves that all of our schools oppose this rule, that all our schools prohibit the inspectors from entering, that all our teachers continue to teach in French, no matter what happens!

¹⁹¹Every time the narrator names characters, these appear to illustrate the scene.

entire scene continues in this fashion; it is told by the narrator and instantly acted out by the characters involved.

In it, the nuns (the French speaking teachers) are faced with the threat of being replaced by English speaking teachers (since the French speaking nuns were deemed unqualified to teach the English language). The sisters therefore move the entire student body to the basement of the local French church. As the narrator explains, the nuns continued to teach in the church for two months without pay while the English teachers occupied the school with no students. During the two months, however, the rest of the community was preparing an inevitable conflict with the local police force in which an attempt is made to reclaim the school. Once again, the narrator elevates this climactic conflict to “epic” proportions, equating it to a battle between two adversaries.

The conflict of this scene reaches its climax as the francophone women pull the pins from their hats and use them as weapons to drive off the oppressors (*Parole* 42). M. Loyal, the narrator, then ends the story/sketch by explaining how this was one of many battles fought on various fronts for the same cause: “Cette scène fut répétée aussi à Green Valley, sur le fleuve, et dans le sud, à Sandwich, et à la porte de toutes les écoles de campagne, les femmes montaient la garde” (*Parole* 42).¹⁹²

During various moments in the play, the story is halted to provide the audience the opportunity to reflect upon how the events of the past may be seen in light of the present situation. Furthermore, the play subverts the past, in much the

¹⁹²This scene was also repeated in Green Valley, on the water front, in the South, at Sandwich, and at the doorstep of all the country schools. The women led the charge.

same fashion as Paiement's play. The past is enshrined and romanticized by the construct provided by the conte, and then subverted as the actual results of the events from the past are performed and thus put into question.

For instance, during one scene, Premier William Davis (a character from the 1970s-- the time of performance) appears while a character is reading the regulations pertaining to *Règlement XVII* (an event from the 1920s). While he is manifestation of the present, Davis is nevertheless aligned with the villains of the play. Besides donning a mask, he also wears a sweatshirt which bears his name. Furthermore, to show the distance between Davis and the francophone audience, he turns his back on them and speaks in English.

The scene juxtaposes the reading of the rules of *Règlement XVII* with Davis's discourse concerning his attitudes with regards to the French population in Ontario. The scene is designed to denote, among other things, how history repeats itself. In effect, the attitude connoted by Mgr. Fallon that culminated in *Règlement XVII* in 1912 is reiterated in Davis's discourse of the 1970s.

By juxtaposing the past with the present in this fashion, the play also puts into question the very efficacy of the struggles undergone by the Franco-Ontarian forefathers. This is further reflected in a later scene that immediately follows and, in effect, subverts the victory song. In "Scene de non" the struggles undergone by Genest and the Franco-Ontarians are paralleled by further struggles taking place at the time of the performance (the 1970s) between the Franco-Ontarians and the provincial government. In this scene, Premier Davis appears once again while a series of requests are presented to him. These requests concern, among other

things, French speaking hospitals, cinemas, high schools. However, to each request, Davis replies with an emphatic “non”.

Furthermore, in a scene entitled *L'éloge, la maladie, les solutions*” (*Parole* 32),¹⁹³ the story is interrupted by a discourse explaining how the Franco-Ontarian community faces the contemporary problem of assimilation regardless of the struggles undertaken in the past to preserve the Franco-Ontarian language and culture. The scene begins with a declaration that states:

Les Franco-Ontariens sont un peuple ayant une langue commune et vivante, une identité culturelle très forte. C'est un peuple qui ne se contente pas d'un passé glorieux, mais qui continue à marquer l'histoire de ses combats incessants. C'est un peuple majoritaire, en voie d'expansion. Un peuple bien intégré dans le système nord-américain ; ouvert, libéré et à l'avant-garde. C'est un peuple groupé et dominé par un sentiment d'union et de cohésion sociale, économique, et culturelle ! (*Parole* 32-33).¹⁹⁴

While this declaration is being pronounced, the actors join hands and form a circle, but no sooner is it formed than it falls apart as one after another, the characters move off in different directions. Finally, the one remaining character

¹⁹³Eulogy, sickness, solutions

¹⁹⁴The Franco-Ontarians are a people with a common living language and a strong cultural identity. They are a people that do not contend to have a glorious past, but continue to distinguish themselves in history through their incessant battles. They are in a majority and are expanding. They are well integrated in the North American system; open, liberated and avant garde. They are grouped and dominated by a sentiment of union and social cohesion, both economic and cultural.

laments: “Mais où c’qu’i’sont parties? You-hou! Ah, non, dis-moi pas qu’i sont disparus eux-aut’ aussi! Mais voulez-vous m’dire où c’est qu’i vont tous les Franco-ontariens ?” (*Parole* 33)¹⁹⁵

The scene then continues as the character states various popular explanations for the disappearance of the Franco-Ontarians: “Y’en a qui disent qu’c’est un complot, d’autres qui s’font enlever par des soucoupes volantes” (*Parole* 33).¹⁹⁶ However, in the next sketch, we come to understand that, according to the artists, the true problem lies not in the physical disappearance of the Franco-Ontarians but in their assimilation into the dominant English culture. In this scene, each character, in turn, explains his or her personal dilemma with regards to the encroaching English culture:

DEUX:

Moé, mon problème, c’est que les livres en français coûtent trop chers !

TROIS :

Bon, pour moé, là, la bonne musique, c’est en anglais ! La musique français, c’est plate ! Comment veux-tu que j’danse le disco sur du Robert Paquette ?

QUATRE :

¹⁹⁵Where did they go? You-hoo! Don’t tell me they have disappeared too! Can you please tell me where all the Franco-Ontarians are going?

¹⁹⁶Some say there is a conspiracy, other say that flying saucers have taken them away.

Moi, mon problème c'est que mon chum est anglais, p'is j'suis en train de m'assimiler ; pis j'aime ça ! [...] (*Parole* 34).¹⁹⁷

Later, another break in the story occurs with a scene entitled "Non!" This scene is of particular significance since it subverts both the story and the theatrical conventions of the entire play. In effect, we are told that the actors are playing in "leur propre rôle": "Bob, Daniel, La Troupe" (*Parole* 43). It begins when Daniel literally puts a stop to the performance by saying, "Non ! Non! Non !, j'en peux p'us, j'en peux p'us" (*Parole* 43). He then explains that "C'est plus que ça, Ah, j'déprime, c'te maudite scène-là, a'm'déprime assez, j'en peux plus" (*Parole* 43).¹⁹⁸ At that point, Daniel literally leaves the area of performance and joins the audience: "*Il va s'accrocher à un spectateur*" (*Parole* 43).¹⁹⁹

Daniel is particularly upset because the struggle has become ambiguous since the government (the enemy) now provides the funding needed to continue the struggle. In the past (especially as it has been depicted in the performance of the story), the differentiation between "us and them: EUX et NOUS" (*Parole* 43) was obvious; but in the present, he complains, "on lutte contre le pouvoir, mais c'est lui qui nous...nous... nous subventionne!" (*Parole* 44).²⁰⁰ The struggles of the past are therefore contrasted with the ambivalent nature that these struggles have taken in the present.

¹⁹⁷DEUX: Me, my problem is that French books are too expensive!/TROIS: Well, for me, the good music is in English! French music is boring! How am I supposed to disco-dance to Robert Paquette?/QUATRE: Me, my problem is that my boyfriend is English, I'm being assimilated—but I like it!

¹⁹⁸No, no, no, I can't go on, I can't go on! ...It's more than that, I'm depressed, this scene depresses me so much that I can't go on.

¹⁹⁹He leaves the stage and joins one of the spectators.

²⁰⁰We are fighting against a power, but it's this power that is funding us!

As if to prepare for the next scene, Daniel explains that his own personal dilemma began over an argument he had with his father over which television program to view: le Téléjournal or Star Trek! The scene then changes and Daniel takes his place in a new setting beside the other family members, all prepared to act out the sketch that he has just described. In this scene, which parallels the preceding scene, each family relates his or her difficulty in maintaining the French language while being immersed in a primarily English environment:

PERE:

Ben, si j'veux travailler, j't'obligé d'parler en anglais. Mais à la maison, j'veux entendre de français !

TI-GARS

C'est ben plus simple de parler en anglais ; les bons programmes à tivi, les films, la radio. La musique, toute en anglais !

GRANDE SŒUR :

Mes cours sont presque tous en anglais. P'is à part de ça, si j'me trouve une job comme secrétaire, ça va être en anglais ! (46)²⁰¹

We thus see a clear demarcation between past time of the story and the present time of the performance. On the one hand the events surrounding the story of Règlement XVII are presented in a “conte” fashion that oscillates between the

²⁰¹PERE: Well, if I want to work, I have to speak English. But at home, I want to hear French!/ Ti-Gars: It's a lot easier to speak in English; the good T.V. shows, the movies, the radio, the music—all in English!/Grande Soeur: Almost all my courses are in English. And besides that, if I find a job as a secretary, it'll be in English!

narration of events and their enactment. And, on the other hand, the play also provides for various “breaks” in the story in which the players revert to the present in order to provide a discourse concerning the ramifications of the past events to the present situation at hand. In this way, the past is juxtaposed with the present.

In a following sketch, however, the past and the present literally collide as they are simultaneously presented in the same scene. In the scene entitled “Les femmes” the authors bring together characters from the past and the present in order to demonstrate how the Franco-Ontarian culture has undergone certain transformations that have little to do with the question of language. Three generations of Franco-Ontarian women are represented by three characters: Desneiges (mother of 13 children), who took part in the struggle for the École Guigues; Noëlla (mother of 5 children), who, many years later, occupied the school in Sturgeon Falls during the demonstration that took place there; and Marianne, a modern woman who has no children, does not attend Mass, lives with her boyfriend, and is ironically funded by the government to continue the struggles against that same government. This scene is especially pertinent as it is symbolic of the transformation that has taken place within the Franco-Ontarian community. Marianne has all but given up the traditional family values that once defined her society, and consequently represents how the question of language is but one reason behind the community’s fragmentation.

While in the above scene the past is placed in juxtaposition with the present, the second last scene confirms the cyclical pattern of the play by bringing the action back to the beginning. In effect, the sketch “Les chevaux” corresponds

to “Les bucherons.” As we recall, this earlier scene involves a conflict that takes place between two groups of lumberjacks: French Canadians and Irish Canadians. In the end, the Irish Canadians are transformed into the bosses while the French Canadians remain subservient workers. In “Les Chevaux,” the argument is restated by representing the Franco-Ontarians as the literal beasts of burden forced to carry the Anglophone masters on their backs. Furthermore, the characters are represented not only as being resigned to their subservient status, but also as criticizing those who would object to this master-slave dynamics. The protagonists thus return to the conditions in which they began, and in this sketch the message is the same; the battle continues with the government, and the Franco-Ontarians maintain their state of minority.

This apparent dilemma is alleviated by *la Corvée* in the final sketch where Monsieur Loyal returns to conduct a “ritual” which is played in the present and which necessarily implicates audience participation. Again, the actors come out of their characters to address the audience as themselves:

Mesdames et messieurs, *La Corvée* s’excuse de devoir interrompre le spectacle, mais c’est l’heure. C’est l’heure à laquelle, tous les jours, nous devons accomplir une tâche, une corvée si vous voulez, qui nous est chère. C’est l’heure à laquelle, tous les jours, nous tentons d’éliminer notre complexe minoritaire de Franco-Ontarien, si farouchement

accroché à nos pas (*Parole* 58).²⁰²

What follows is a ritualistic elimination of the most stereotypical of Franco-Ontarian symbols. The frog, the “petit pain,” pea soup, the plaid shirt and the sash belt appear to be exorcised by a liturgical form of repetition. This final scene is symbolic of the final rejection of the past, which in turn ironically represents an end to the attitude which has always anchored their struggle.

The final song reiterates the message of the previous scene. In it, the chorus does not express disillusionment with the events of the past and their lack of effect on the present; on the contrary, it expresses a weariness with the obsession on the past: “L’histoire, c’est à chacun d’la faire,/On est tanné d’être des minoritaires,/Des temps passés, des temps présents,/On a le goût de regarder devant ! (*Parole* 62)²⁰³

Theatrical Details:

La Parole et la loi : La Corvée

Text : the players of La Corvée and Brigitte Haentjens

Director: Brigitte Haentjens

Music: Normand Thériault and Robert Colin

Cast: Catherine Caron, Daniel Chartrand, Robert Colin, Francine Côté,

Madelaine Leguerrier, Marc O’Sullivan

²⁰²Ladies and Gentlemen, La Corvée apologizes for interrupting the performance, but it’s time. It is the time that, every day, we have to accomplish a task, a “corvée” if you will, that is very dear to us. It is the time to eliminate our Franco-Ontarian minority complex.

²⁰³History is for all of us to make/ we are tired being minorities/ of the past and of the present/We feel like looking to the future now!

First performed in Ottawa on March 14, 1979

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3) A Play by La Vielle 17

Biographical note:

Le Théâtre de la Vielle 17 was founded in September of 1979 by Robert Bellefeuille, Roch Castonguay, Lise L. Roy and **Jean Marc Dalpé** in Rockland, Ontario near the old highway 17 that runs along the Ottawa River towards Montreal. A short time later, the founders were joined by Hélène Bernier, Anne-Marie Cadieux and Vivianne Rochon. The company remained in Rockland for four years before moving and settling in Ottawa. *Les Murs de nos village* was the troupe's first "collective creation" which shared the opening season with *Preotègera nos foyers et nos...*, *Le Roi Dagobert* and *J'ai au creux des mains une chanson*. In 1981, **Brigitte Haentjens** joined the company, co-wrote *Hawkesbury Blues* (1981) with Jean Marc Dalpé, and directed plays *Les Rogers* (1984). Currently, they perform the majority of their works at La Nouvelle Scène in Ottawa.

Les Murs de nos villages (1979)

(Introductory narration, 26 sketches, concluding narration)

Breakdown of Scenes, Settings and Characters:

- 1) **Introduction:** an introductory scene describing a typical Franco-Ontarian setting presented in a story-telling fashion by a narrator
- 2) **Le réveil:** early morning at the home of a family as they are waking up
- 3) **Le Petit gars au magazine chez Ménard :** a little boy is sent to the corner store to buy some bread
- 4) **Le Gilet:** a confrontation between two brothers, Bobby and Ronald, as they fight over a sweater
- 5) **Les Gouters:** two scenes unfold simultaneously about what the characters will have for lunch that day
- 6) **Les Ingolas:** a mother and daughter talk about what the daughter will wear that day at school
- 7) **Le Téléphone:** a one-sided telephone conversation is overheard
- 8) **L'Autobus:** two boys, Claude and Johnny, meet on the bus on their way to school
- 9) **Le Dentiste:** a conversation between a dentist and Monsieur Larivière
- 10) **Rita ou L'Ode à la waitress:** several characters meet at a local diner and praise Rita, the waitress
- 11) **La Rue:** various characters, both young and old, meet in front of a hardware store and converse while they wait for it to open
- 12) **Le Garage:** characters meet at a garage and listen to a story told by Aurèle

- 13) Le Déménagement:** Nicole and Lise assist a third woman, Claire, as she is packing her things to leave the community
- 14) L'Enterrement:** an aunt, uncle, father and son have a conversation while preparing to attend the grandfather's funeral ceremony
- 15) La Ferme:** a typical day at a farm, but with a conversation among the animals
- 16) Le Barbier:** a barber has a conversation with one of his customers
- 17) Le Diner:** Rita, François and their son have lunch together
- 18) La Ronde des Carrosses:** several women and their infants meet at the park
- 19) Le Club d'Age d'or:** senior citizens have a conversation while playing a game of cards
- 20) Another world:** a woman is watching her favorite soap-opera on television
- 21) Les Enfants d'école:** Six children, Bidule, Cécelle, Larose, Loulou, Quenneville and La Grosse play a game during school recess
- 22) Le Souper :** a mother, father, their son Jean-Paul and another son have a discussion over dinner
- 23) Les Magazines:** Denise, a teen-age girl has a telephone conversation about her favorite celebrities
- 24) Les Jeunes du coin:** five teenagers, Waron, Cicatrice, Ti-Coune, Ricky and Claudine, meet and have a discussion on a street corner
- 25) Le Bingo:** Gisèle, Dédé, Lucille, and Brian play a game of Bingo
- 26) L'Hôtel:** Ti-Noir, Georgette, Gun, Jos-TeX, Manon and Lullubelle meet at the local bar in the evening

27) La Fouineuse à sa fenêtre: a woman watches the various villagers from her window and comments on their actions

28) Finale: Concluding scene in which the narrator returns to close the drama

Synopsis:

Les murs de nos villages brings together numerous sketches that depict a day in the life of the Franco-Ontarian audience. These are framed, furthermore, by narrations that begin and end the performance. The narrations describe essentially the same things as the sketches show. The play covers a period of twelve hours from evening to morning describing the actions of various characters as they prepare to go to bed, wake up in the morning and prepare for the day that awaits them. Thus the narration functions as a type of prologue in which the audience is alerted to what awaits them in the ensuing performance.

The sketches follow the same pattern indicated in the narration that introduces them. They travel through various activities of the day, in chronological order, depicting what the authors consider to be characteristic types of Franco-Ontarians of various ages and from various backgrounds. The first sketch, for instance, depicts four siblings who squabble over who will be the first to use the shower. The second describes a little boy who is at the local store on an errand to buy bread. The third depicts another family squabble over a sweater, and the fifth concerns what the children will be having for lunch at school that day.

The sketches continue shifting from the depiction of children to that of adults. In these sketches, we are provided with various locales in which Franco-

Ontarians meet and converse. For instance, there is a sketch which takes place in the street of what the authors consider to be a typical Franco-Ontarian village. Characters have a conversation while they wait for a local store to open its doors. The next sketch takes place at a garage where local residents gather to hear a story about a recent hunting trip told by a well known resident.

The next sketch takes place at a family home. Local wives are helping their friend pack as she prepares to move away from the village. The ensuing conversation thus involves the pros and cons of leaving the village and living in the “big” city. This is then followed by a scene entitled “L’enterrement.” In this sketch a family is gathered in the kitchen of the household waiting and preparing to leave for the funeral of the deceased patriarch. Consequently, the dialogue focuses exclusively on the deceased father and his many exploits.

Among the sketches that follow, there is a sketch that takes place at the barbershop while a local man is getting his hair cut, a sketch at the dinner table with a young family, and one in a park with a group of mothers and their babies.

The performance then shifts its focus to depict the older generation of Franco-Ontarians in a sketch entitled “Le Club de l’age d’or” In this scene a group of senior citizens have various discussions while playing a game of cards. After this sketch, the play returns again to the depiction of children in a school playground during recess.

Time has elapsed, since the next scene depicts a family preparing for the evening meal. This is followed by a scene where a group of teenaged girls are gathered in the early evening at a local magazine counter to discuss the latest

trends and celebrities. This is followed by a scene depicting another group of teenagers hanging out at a street corner. Nearing the end of the performance, the sketches return to the depiction of adults in various locals, such as the Bingo game and a local bar during the evening.

The end of the performance then reintroduces the narrator who recounts a story similar to the one found at the beginning of the play. This time rather than beginning the typical Franco-Ontarian day in the morning, the narrator ends the day by describing how the characters are preparing for bed.

Theatrical Details:

Les Murs de nos villages: théâtre de la vieille 17

Text : a Collective Creation by Robert Bellefeuille, Hélène Bernier, Anne-Marie Cadieux, Roch Castonguay, Jean Marc Dalpé, Vivianne Rochon, Lise L. Roy

First performed in the Fall of 1979

Reviews :

Auger, Carole. “*Les murs de nos villages: un théâtre beau dans son originalité et sa simplicité*” *Liaison* 13 (1980): 37-38.

4) Two Plays by Haentjens and Dalpé

Biographical notes:

Brigitte Haentjens was born in France and studied at the atelier de Pierre Baillet and at l'École Jacques-Lecoq in Paris before immigrating to Canada in 1977. After working with la Corvée in the late 1970s, she joined Théâtre de la Vielle 17 in Ottawa. Between 1982 and 1990, she was the artistic director of Théâtre du Nouvel Ontario in Sudbury where she also co-wrote *Hawkesbury Blues* (1982) and *Nickel* (1984) with Jean Marc Dalpé. She then settled in Montreal where she continued to direct various plays with much success. From 1991 to 1995, she was the artistic director of the Nouvel Compagnie Théâtrale where she directed Albert Camus's *Caligula* and Sam Shepard's *True West*. Her subsequent production of Heiner Muller's *Quartet* (with Espace Go in Montreal) won the Québec critics award for best production of the 1995-1996 season, and her feminist work *Je ne sais plus qui je suis* also garnered rave reviews. In 2000, she received the Capital Critics Award for her production of *Marie Stuart*. Recently, she directed many plays in Ottawa where she worked with Anne Marie Cadieux at the National Arts Center and now she continues to direct plays in Montreal.

Jean Marc Dalpé was born in Ottawa in 1957. He earned a B.A. at the University of Ottawa in 1976 and a diploma at the Conservatory of Dramatic Art of Quebec in 1979. Dramatist, poet and novelist, Dalpé is the co-founder of Théâtre de la Vielle 17 in 1979 where he co-produced *Les murs de nos village* (1979) and co-wrote *Hawkesbury Blues* with Brigitte Haentjens. He also worked with Théâtre

du Nouvel-Ontario in the early 1980s where he co-wrote *Nickel* (1984) also with Haentjens. While working with La Vielle 17, he also co-wrote *Les Rogers* (1985) with Robert Marinier and Robert Bellefeuille. In 1989, he received the Governor General's award for *Le chien* (1987). Dalpé wrote *Eddy* (1994) which was translated in English by Robert Dickson and produced at Stratford the same year, *Lucky Lady* (1995) and *Trick or Treat* (1997). In 1999, he received the Governor General's award for *Il n'y a que l'amour* (1998).

List of plays by Jean Marc Dalpé:

Les murs de nos village, 1979 and 1980. Published in Sudbury : Prise de Parole, 1993.

Hawkesbury blues with Brigitte Haentjens, 1982. Published in Sudbury: Prise de Parole, 1982.

Nickel with Brigitte Haentjens, 1984. Published in Sudbury: Prise de Parole, 1984.

Les Rogers with Robert Bellefeuille and Robert Marinier, 1984-1985. Published in Sudbury: Prise de Parole, 1985.

Le chien, 1988. Published in Sudbury: Prise de Parole, 1988.

Blazing Bee to win, 1989

Eddy, 1993. Published in Québec: Boréal, 1994.

Lucky Lady, 1994. Published in Québec: Boréal, 1995.

Give the Lady a break, 1995. Published in *Il n'y a que l'amour*, Sudbury: Prise de Parole, 1999.

La Cinq, un épisode de télé, 1995. Published in *Il n'y a que l'amour*, Sudbury :

Prise de Parole, 1999.

L'âme est une fiction nécessaire, 1996. Published in *Il n'y a que l'amour*,

Sudbury : Prise de Parole, 1999.

Trick or treat, 1997. Published in *Il n'y a que l'amour*, Sudbury: Prise de Parole,

1999.

Je lui dis, 1998. Published in *Il n'y a que l'amour*, Sudbury : Prise de Parole,

1999.

Mercy, 1998. Published in *Il n'y a que l'amour*, Sudbury : Prise de Parole, 1999.

Red voit rouge, 1998. Published in *Contes urbains Ottawa*, Ottawa: Le Nordir,

1999.

Hawkesbury blues (1982)

(Five Acts)

Cast of Characters: **Un Chenailleux**, a resident of Chenail Island

Louise Lapierre

Diane Lapierre

La mère, Madame Lapierre, Louise and Diane's mother

Le Vieux Pit

Bern Larouche, Diane's fiancé

Le père, Louise and Diane's father

Le frère, Louise and Diane's brother

Une amie de Louise, Louise's friend

Pierre Leduc, Louise's husband

Le chanteur à la mode, a singer

Richard, Louise's son

Jacques, a labourer on strike

Setting : The action begins on the island of Chenail and then moves to the town of Hawksbury. In the Hawksbury setting, the action primarily takes place in the kitchen of Louise's home.

Synopsis:

Hawkesbury blues depicts the life of the Lapierre family after it is forced to migrate from its home on the Island Chenail to Hawkesbury, Ontario. The drama is divided into five acts that trace nineteen years of the lives of two sisters, Diane and Louise Lapierre who have left Chenail and settled in Hawkesbury.

Act One opens as the Lapierre family is packing its belongings. We learn, through the introductory song in Scene 1, that “Le Chenail” has been purchased by the Ontario Hydro Company. It plans to flood the island in order to construct a new power plant. To compensate the inhabitants, each family is provided with a new home in the nearby town of Hawkesbury. Scene 2 depicts the Lapierre family as it prepares for the departure, and Scene 3 finds Louise, 14 and Diane, 18 packing their belongings and discussing the new lives that await them in Hawkesbury. Diane plans to marry Bern Larouche, a mechanic from Chenail who aspires to study law and eventually become a lawyer. However, her plans are quashed as Bern enters in Scene 4 and informs Diane that his father has taken a job in Kapuskasing and is taking the entire family with him to live there. Diane, therefore, must face the two-fold loss of her family home and her fiancé Bern. Scene 5 consists of a song that echoes the previous scene by lamenting the torments of unfulfilled desires. Act One then ends with Scene 6, “Le depart,” as the family says its final farewell to its island home.

Act Two jumps two years into the future when the family is well settled in the town of Hawkesbury. It opens with a song in Scene 1 entitled “Le Jardinier de sa vie” telling how Louise, now sixteen, has fallen in love with Pierre Leduc. Scene 2 then finds Louise, still sixteen, preparing for her upcoming marriage to

Pierre. In Scene 3, as the wedding day approaches, Louise is increasingly apprehensive, thinking that her parents were perhaps correct in stating that she is too young to be married. This is followed by Scene 4, a song that recounts the wedding, and then instantly jumps another three years in the future.

In Scene 5, the final scene of Act Two, Louise is now pregnant with her third child. She and her husband Pierre live in an apartment and it is the day of their third wedding anniversary, a day they will not be able to celebrate since Pierre has to work, and Louise has to continue her job at a textile factory in order to make ends meet. The act ends with a song that reiterates Louise's general malaise.

In Act Three, twelve years have gone by. Through the didascalia, we are told that Louise has quit her job at the textile factory and now works at Amoco Fabrico. Furthermore, her relationship with her husband has deteriorated, and Louise is increasingly more involved in the factory union. Scene 1 of Act Three finds Pierre with a friend at the local bar, but it ends abruptly as Louise enters the bar to bring Pierre home.

Scenes 2 and 3 of Act Three involve Louise, Pierre and their eldest son Richard who is now 14. Richard, who aspires to be a singer, is preparing for a high school dance where he is performing with his band, but his father, Pierre, disapproves of Richard's ambitions. This creates a rift between Pierre and Louise which soon grows into an argument and culminates in Louise's departure. The Act ends with Scene 4 as Richard sings a song at the high school dance reiterating the aspirations and unfulfilled desires of the community.

Act Four jumps ahead another three years to find Louise, now 33, separated from Pierre and living with her children. In Scene 2, we discover that she still works at Amoco where the workers have been on strike for the past few months. The scene ends as Louise and Diane reminisce about the events of their lives, but their conversation is suddenly interrupted by scene 3, “La Ligne de piquetage,” when Rick, Louise’s son enters telling them he was beaten by the local police. As his friend Jacques explains, a group of policemen arrived to disperse a picket line that was preventing trucks from entering the factory. In the midst of the disturbance, Rick, who was there for no apparent reason, was mistaken for one of the strikers and thus endured the same punishment as they did at the hands of the police.

The conclusion of the play, Act Five reveals the cyclical structure of the drama as its actions repeat the opening first scene. We find Louise at 34 packing her belongings and preparing to leave once again, this time to an unstated destination.

Theatrical Details:

First produced by Théâtre de la vieille 17

Director : Brigitte Haentjens

Set : Roy Robitscheck

Music: Louis Lavoie

Lighting: Hélène Bernier

Production: Pierre Rodier

Cast : Roch Castongay, Anne-Marie Cadieux, Vivianne Rochon, Hlne Bernier,
Robert Bellefeuille

Performed : at Hawskebury on February 20, 1982 at the Centre culturel de
Chenail

Critical Reaction:

Coqueneau, Patrice. "*Hawkesbury Blues: un spectacle surprenant*" *Liaison* 21
(1982): 37.

Nickel (1984)

(Four Acts)

Cast of Characters: Youssaf, a Ukranian Canadian miner

Clara: Youssaf's wife

Giuseppe, an Italian Canadian miner

Luciana, Giuseppe's wife

Laurent, a foreman at the mine

Jean-Marie, a French Canadian miner

Anne, Jean-Marie's wife

M. Villeneuve, Clara's uncle, proprietor of the general
store.

Yvonne, M. Villeneuve's daughter, in love with Albert

Albert, a French Canadian minor, in love with Yvonne

Sonia, a Ukranian housewife

Katia, a Ukranian housewife

Sacha, a Ukranian housewife

Yaro, a Ukranian miner

Setting: *Nickel* is set in 1932 Sudbury at a time when French Canadian mine workers join forces with others in an attempt to form a trade union. This provides the background for a love story which unfolds between the two main characters, Clara and Jean-Marie.

Synopsis:

When the play opens, we are introduced to Clara and her husband Youssaf, a Ukrainian-Canadian who is spearheading the plans to start a union of mine-workers. We are also introduced to their neighbors Giuseppe and his wife Luciana, and other mine-workers Jean-Marie and Albert. The first scenes provide us with the dramatic situation in which we come to understand the unsafe working conditions and general exploitation suffered by the workers from minority groups: French, Ukrainian and Italian-Canadians. Furthermore, the workers are often involved in violent clashes organized by the factory-owners who are against the union.

After this, there is a scene where the female characters are preparing for a celebration while the men are at work in the mines. The celebration is cut short by an announcement that there was an accident at the mine which killed ten workers.

One of the victims was Youssaf, Clara's husband. Although Youssaf led the battle to start the union, the others agree that the struggle must continue in spite of Youssaf's death. Furthermore, Clara's home must continue to be the headquarters where meetings are held and the printing press is hidden.

This provides the setting for Act 2 in which the mine-owners discover the existence of the printing press and send a group of men to destroy it. They do so, but not before savagely beating Jean-Marie, who happens to be at Clara's house at the time. While Clara is mending his wounds, Jean-Marie reminisces about an earlier friendship that they had when they were younger and this sparks a love-relationship between the two. However, it must remain a secret since Clara is still in mourning for the loss of her husband, and Jean-Marie is married and has children with Anne.

In Act 3, as more and more men are recruited to join the prospective union, Jean-Marie is faced with a dilemma. Laurent, his "shift-boss," aware of Jean-Marie's involvement with the union plans, demands that his employee hand over the names of those who have agreed to join the organization. We learn that everyone on the list will be fired, and Laurent threatens to terminate Jean-Marie's employment as well if he refuses to comply. Meanwhile, to make matters worse for Jean-Marie, his wife Anne begins to suspect that her husband is having an affair.

In Act 4, a subplot emerges that parallels the events concerning Jean-Marie and Clara. It involves a younger couple: Yvonne, the daughter of a local business man simply referred to as "oncle" and Albert, another mine worker. The

two are plainly in love, but Yvonne's father refuses to permit a marriage since he will not tolerate her marrying what he considers to be a "lowly miner."

By Act 5, gossip has spread throughout the town about Clara and Jean-Marie's affair. Feeling both frustrated and humiliated, Clara decides to leave Sudbury to avoid further shame. Meanwhile, out of both frustration for losing Clara and an apparently new sense of responsibility to his family, Jean-Marie hands over the list of names to Laurent. Feeling remorse for having betrayed his colleagues, Jean Marie gets drunk and confesses to Albert and Yvonne who happen upon him in the street.

The play ends with Clara's departure. Once she leaves the scene, the circumstances continue as they began in the play. The men continue to work their shifts at the mine and the women prepare for their arrival once the work-day is done. Thus the recurrent cyclical notion of time is revealed as essentially nothing has changed in the community.

Theatrical Details:

Co-production of Théâtre du Nouvel Ontario and Théâtre français du Centre national des Arts

Text : Jean Marc Dalpé, Brigitte Haentjens

Director : Brigitte Haentjens

Lighting : Hélène Bernier

Production team: Yves Gérard Benoit, Pierre Perreault, Hélène Bernier

Music : Daisy Debolt

Cast : Robert Bellefeuille, Michel-Marc Bouchard, Kim Cholette, Jean Marc Dalpé, Daisy Debolt, Chantal LaVallée, Stéphane Lestage, Robert Marinier, Danielle St-Aubin, Jocelyn Tardif

Performances : In Sudbury: March 2, 1984 ; April 3-7, 1984 ; April 12, 1984.

In the Maritimes: Caraquet, Tracadie, Shippagan, Moncton in March 1984.

In Ontario: Ottawa, Alexandria, Windsor, Espanola, Kapuskasing, Iroquois Falls, Sault Ste. Marie in March and april 1984.

In Québec in April 1984.

Number of performances: 40

Publication : Ottawa : Prise de Parole, 1984

Critical Reaction:

Ackerman, Marianne. "Politics and passion in Sudbuty's *Nickel*" *The Gazette*
18 April 1984: G1.

-----"Ontario's French theatre Tackles Tough Social Issues" *The Gazette* 19April 1984: G8.

Chiasson, Euclide and Kevin Whelton. "*Nickel*" *New Maritimes* (April 1984):
13.

Dorais, Fernand. "*Nickel*: une réussite de l'imaginaire." *Liaison* 33 (1984-85):
57.

Gay, Paul. "*Nickel* de Brigitte Haentjens et Jean Marc Dalpé. Une histoire
d'amour sur fond de mines" *Le Droit* 18 August 1984: 22.

Guay, Hervé. "*Nickel*: Les risques de la création." *Liaison* 31 (1984):
64.

Hare, John. "Miners' lives portrayed in *Nickel*" *The Citizen* 9 March 1984:

61.

Lefebvre, Paul. "Emotion et didacticisme font bon ménage" *Le Devoir* 21 April

1984: 34.

O'Neill-Karch. "Fonctions des objets ou espace concret dans *Nickel*" in *Théâtre*

franco-ontarien : Espaces ludiques. Vanier : L'Interligne, 1992.

Simard, France. "*Nickel* du Théâtre du Nouvel-Ontario. Le Sudbury minier des

années 30" *Le Droit* 9 March 1984: 14.

Villeneuve, Jocelyne. "encore une fois...quoiqu'il arrive" *Le Voyageur* 11 April 1

1984 : 9.

5) Two Plays by Jean Marc Dalpé

Le Chien (1988)

(A One-Act Play)

Cast of Character: Jay

Père, Jay's father

Mère, Jay's mother

Grandpère, his grandfather

Céline, the family's adopted daughter

Setting: The action takes place during an evening in July in front of a trailer, the father's home, at the end of a small plot of land that is not far from a village.

Synopsis:

Le chien involves an encounter between Jay and his father. Jay fled the family seven years earlier after a violent episode that took place between him and his father. Meanwhile, his father, who has since alienated himself from his wife and adoptive daughter through various acts of violence, now lives alone with a dog that has since gone mad. After years of guilt and frustration, the father has essentially repressed the past. Jay, however, is motivated by a desire to reconcile with his father through a re-examination of those turbulent past events. The play thus consists of the unraveling of the various reasons behind Jay's departure and behind the father's self imposed exile.

This unraveling is facilitated by the various manifestations of the past that share the stage with Jay and the father. The grandfather, the mother and Céline, the adoptive daughter each take turns with Jay, narrating various episodes that are all related to the father and his violent behavior. We learn, for instance, how Jay was continually beaten and was periodically prevented from attending school so he would not have to explain the bruises to his teacher. We also learn that the mother was beaten so badly that she needed dentures to replace her broken teeth.

However, the play is not a total condemnation of the father, for at one point, the father is provided with an opportunity to explain his behavior. Through his discourse, we come to understand that his violent nature stems from the loss of the paternal land. As he explains, Jay's grandfather was one of the first pioneers in the area and he owned a large portion of land. When he was too old to work the land, it was handed down to the father's elder brother. The brother died prematurely but the father, out of pride and spite, refused to work the land himself, so it was sold off, lot by lot. This act may indeed be the cause of the father's frustration and subsequent violent behavior, for as Normand Renaud explains:

en renonçant à la terre, il a renoncé à ses plus nobles aspirations. Il s'est dégradé, il a perdu toute estime pour lui-même, pour enfin sombrer dans l'incommunicabilité et la violence auto-dénigrante”
(Renaud 1988: 11).²⁰⁴

²⁰⁴By rejecting the land, he also rejects his most noble aspirations. He thus degrades himself and loses all self-esteem until he degenerates into an incommunicable and violent state.

Although this explanation is presented to the audience as the root of all his frustration and violent behavior, the father never acknowledges his own pride as the reason for the loss of the land. He evades the entire question by basing his decision, first on the lack of money--“Bon prix ou pas bon prix, on n’a pas l’argent” (*Chien 32*)²⁰⁵ --on a deep seated resentment towards his deceased brother--“J’vois ça v’nir d’icitte, chaque fois j’ferais de quoi tu me dirais: “Ben ton frère y’aurait pas fait ça de même” (*Chien 32*)--²⁰⁶ and finally on Céline--“En plus qu’y’a la p’tite qui vient de nous tomber dessus” (*Chien 32*).²⁰⁷

The play also has a subtext which relates to the Grandfather’s experiences in the trenches of World War One. During one battle, the Grandfather is trapped outside the trench with no protection, so he finds refuge in a bomb-crater. The crater is already occupied by a German soldier, so the Grandfather is forced to shoot the soldier. But we learn that the Grandfather actually enjoyed the act of killing. While this scene appears to have little to do with the father, it helps us understand the playwright’s naturalistic notion of family ties. Since the Grandfather was drawn to violence and harboured certain sadistic qualities, this would seem to foretell the violent nature of his own son. Thus, the Grandfather’s violent nature provides a precedent that explains the father’s violence. The notion that certain traits or behaviors are passed on from generation to generation suggests 19th Century theories of heredity which interested naturalist writers such

²⁰⁵Whether it’s a good price or not, we don’t have the money.

²⁰⁶I can see it coming, every time I’d do something, you’d say: “Well your brother would not have done it that way”

²⁰⁷Plus, we have the little one to worry about.

as Zola, but here they also denote a cyclical pattern of time in which the past returns to haunt the present.

The final scene involving Céline, functions as the catalyst that incites Jay to take action. In effect, we learn how the father beat and raped the adoptive daughter Céline, and how Jay, in a rage, takes the revolver that the Grandfather brought back as souvenir of the war and shoots his father. The link between the Grandfather and the father is incarnated in the violent ending where we see how the grandfather's interest in guns created the conditions for the murder of his own son.

Theatrical Details:

Co-production of Théâtre du Nouvel-Ontario and Théâtre français du

Centre national des Arts.

Director : Brigitte Haentjens

Lighting : Claude Cournoyer

Set and Costumes : Pierre Perrault

Producer: Diane Fortin

Music: Robert Paquette

Technical director: Laurent Bussires

Cast of First Season (1987-1988): Roger Blay, Roy Dupuis, Hlne Paulin,

Marthe Turgeon, Lionel Villeneuve

Cast of Second Season (1988-1989): Roger Blay, Pierre Colin, Roy Dupuis, Marthe Turgeon, Isabelle Vincent

Performances in Sudbury: February 24-27, 1988; October 21, 1989

Toured Performances: First Season: Fall 1987, Reading in Quebec; March 1988, Quebec; April 1988, Ontario.

Second Season: Spring 1989, Festival du Théâtre des Amériques, Montreal; October 3-6 1989, Festival des Francophonies, Limoges, Sommet de la Francophonie, Quebec ; October 1989, five week tour in Europe.

Number of performances : 49

Distinction : Governor General's Award presented to Dalpé, theatre section, 1989.

Publication : Ottawa : Prise de Parole, 1988

Critical Reacion:

Barrette, Jean. "*Le chien.*" *Vie française* 40. 1 (1988): 87-88.

Beaulieu, Léo. "*Le chien: Un Pit Bull franco-Ontarien*" *L'Express de Toronto* 15 to 21 November 1988: 9.

Beaunoyer, Jean. "*Le chien de Dalpé : Décapant jusqu'à l'os.*" *La Presse* 20 March 1988: E6.

Bélanger, Louis. "*Le chien, revu et consacré.*" *Revue du Nouvel-Ontario* 11 (1990): 217-219.

Boudreault, Miville. "*Le chien de Jean Marc Dalpé : Une bête aux dents acérées*" *L'Express de Toronto* 19-25 April 1988: 5.

- Brisebois, René. "L'Amour en laisse" *Voir* 2. 14 (March 1988): 13.
- Conlogue, Ray. "Sharp Writing, Strong Acting Make Powerful Family Drama" *The Globe and Mail* 19 November 1988: C8.
- Crew, Robert. "Le chien's English Debut: An Underwhelming Event" *The Toronto Star* 18 November 1988: B18.
- Donnelly, Pat. "Franco-Ontarian Play Echoes Tremblay" *The Gazette* 5 March 1988: D2.
- Fortier, André. "Tissu riche en sentiments durs, mais vrais." *Liaison* 45 (1987): 40-41.
- Fréchette, Carole. "Le chien" *Jeu* 48 (1988): 141-143.
- Lépine, Stéphane. "Le théâtre qu'on joue: *Le chien*" *Lettres québécoise* 50 (1988): 54.
- Nutting, Stéphanie. "Entre chien et homme: Hybridation dans *Le chien* de Jean Marc Dalpé" *Les Théâtres professionnels du Canada francophone*. eds. Hélène Beauchamp & Joel Beddows. Ottawa : Le Nordir, 2001.
- Moss, Jane. "Le Théâtre Franco-Ontarien: Dramatic Spectacles of Linguistic Otherness" *University of Toronto Quarterly* 69. 2 (Spring 2000): 587-614.
- O'Neil-Karch, Mariel. "Le chien: Espace scénique, espace dramatique" in *Théâtre Franco-Ontarien : Espaces ludiques*. Vanier : Interlingue, 1992.
- Pontaut, Alain. "Le chien: Un jeune auteur d'une grande force" *Le Devoir* 7 March 1988: 9.
- Renaud, Normand. "Le chien monté par T.N.O.: Une production remarquable," *L'Original déchainé* 1 March 1988: 10.

----- “*Le chien* de Dalpé: Une grande oeuvre. Il faut tuer le chien”

L’Orignal déchainé 1 March 1988: 11.

Roberge, Pierre. “*Le chien*: La primauté absolue du texte sur la scène,” *La Presse*

5 March 1988: E5.

Saint-Hilaire, Jean. “*Le chien* de Dalpé : Un bon vent venu de l’ouest,” *Le*

Soleil 4 September 1987: C1.

Wickham, Philip. “*Le chien*: Le Meilleur ennemi de l’homme” *Continuum* March

14, 1988: 23.

Eddy (1994)

(Five Acts)

Cast of Characters: **Eddy:** a 56 year old former boxer. Presently, he is a

boxing coach and proprietor of a “snack-bar” on
the east side of Montreal.

Mado: Eddy’s wife, a 52 year old former night club
singer. She presently works in her husband’s snack-
bar.

Maurice: a 32 year old former boxer who also
works at the snack-bar.

Vic: Eddy’s nephew, a 23 year old boxer from
Sudbury.

Coco: a 66 year old Boxing promoter and manager.

He is Eddy's former coach

Two ghosts

Setting: the action takes place in Montreal at Eddy's snackbar, his home-gym (above the snackbar), and in a sports arena where the scene of the boxing match takes place.

Synopsis:

Eddy is the principal protagonist who, in his youth, migrated from Sudbury to Montreal to pursue a career in professional boxing. When we encounter him, however, his career is long over and he makes his living running a diner that he owns and operates with his wife, Mado. However, Eddy still thinks of himself as a professional boxing promoter, and he constantly dreams about the glories of his former life with the help of the "Jeune Spectre," the young ghost who continually reminds Eddy of the various events of his past.

When the play opens, Eddy is given the opportunity to relive his past glory through Vic, his nephew. Like Eddy, Vic has also come from Sudbury with similar aspirations of rising in the ranks of professional boxing, and Eddy has accepted to train Vic in return for the nephew's help in the diner.

Meanwhile, Eddy is troubled by both past events and present circumstances. He is ridden with guilt because he failed to return to Sudbury for his older brother's funeral, and this guilt haunts him in the form of a "Vieux

Spectre,” an elderly ghost, who is a manifestation of his deceased brother.

Secondly, he is threatened by an up-coming tax audit that could close down his diner. To escape the present that weighs too heavily on him, he takes refuge in his “scrapbooks,” the repositories of his former career, where he can lose himself in the newspaper clippings, photos and articles about his former life.

As Eddy prepares Vic for his first fight, a subplot develops as Eddy tells of Maurice, another former boxer whom Eddy once trained. This story involves a violent relationship between Maurice and a girl-friend whom he had beaten up in a drunken rage. Once informed about the abuse, the girl’s brother and his friends broke Maurice’s hands with a baseball bat, thus destroying the boxer’s career. As a result, Maurice became a drug-addict and only managed to clean himself up through Eddy’s continuous support, and Maurice now works for Eddy at the diner.

Later, Eddy succeeds in arranging Vic’s first boxing match, but he is concerned because the opponent appears to be much stronger than Vic. Therefore, Eddy explains to his nephew that he will stop the fight the moment he senses that Vic has had enough. Vic, however, insists that Eddy should not interfere in this way under any circumstances.

As the match progresses, and Vic seems to be taking a severe beating, Eddy is about to call off the fight when he remembers what Vic said and lets the match continue. Vic suddenly regains his strength and defeats his opponent, and then, after the match, rather than celebrating the victory with Eddy, Vic betrays his uncle by accepting an offer made to him by Coco, Eddy’s former manager.

Thus, the play ends leaving Eddy in the same situation in which he began, with only his dreams of the past to comfort him.

Theatrical Details:

The play was the object of two performances: one in French and the other in English:

1) French production: Montreal, October 11, 1994 at la **Nouvelle Compagnie Théâtrale**

Director: Brigitte Haentjens with the assistance of Sabrina Steenhaut

Set: Claude Goyette

Costumes: Lyse Bédard and Luc Deguise

Lighting: Guy Simard

Properties: Nathalie Gingras

Make-up: Angelo Barsetti

Music: Marcel Aymard

Sound effects: Claude Cyr

Boxing instructor: Deano Clavet

Cast: Pierre Lebeau, Sophie Clément, Pierre Collin, Robert Aubert, Luc Bourgeois, Luc Proulx

Publication: Quebec: Boréal, 1994

2) English Production: At the **Stratford Festival** on June 22, 1994

Translation: Robert Dickson

Director: Richard Rose

Cast: Ken James, Janet Wright, Roland Hewgill, Ben Bass, Andrew Renner,
Wayne Best

Set and Costumes: Douglas Paraschuk

Lighting: Paul Mathiesen

Music: Don Horsburgh

Fight Choreography: John Stead

Production: Ryan Araki

Critical Reaction:

O'Neill-Karch, Mariel. "Eddy & Lucky Lady: Egal pair, inégal résultat" *Liaison*
82 (1995): 36-7

----- "Eddy dans le ring" *Jeu* 73 (1994): 21-27.

----- "In the ring: premier round" *Liaison* 78 (1994):10.

Moss, Jane. "Le Théâtre Franco-Ontarien: Dramatic Spectacles of Linguistic
Otherness" *University of Toronto Quarterly* 69. 2 (Spring 2000): 587-614.

Paré, François. "Genèse de la rancœur sur trois oeuvres dramatiques franco-
ontarienne" in *Théories de la fragilité*. Ottawa : Le Nordir, 1994.

6) Five Plays by Michel Ouellette

Biographical Note:

Michel Ouellette was born in Smooth Rock Falls in Northern Ontario in 1961. He later moved to Sudbury and worked with le Théâtre du Nouvel-Ontario. As a playwright, he wrote *Corbeaux en exil* (1992), *French Town* (1993) (for which he received the Governor General's award), *Le bateleur* (1995), *L'homme effacé* (1997), *La dernière fugue*, *Duel* and *King Edward* (1999), *Requiem* and *Fausse route* (2001), and *Le testament du couturier* (2002) for which he received the Trillium Award as well as the prize for the best play by the Cercle des Critiques de la Capitale; furthermore, the production by Théâtre la Catapulte won the *Masqué* award for best French language production outside of Quebec. He currently lives and continues to write in Gatineau, Quebec.

List of Plays:

Corbeaux en exil, 1991. Published in Ottawa: Le Nordir, 1992

Dans ses souliers, 1991

Les ordres du jour, 1991 and 1999

Apache et Sandrine, 1991 and 2001

La rançon, 1992 and 2001

French Town, 1993. Published in Ottawa : Le Nordir, 1996

Le Bateleur, 1995. Published in Ottawa: Le Nordir, 1995

Sédiments, 1995

Songe de nuit, 1995

Duel, 1996. Published with *La dernière fugue* and *King Edward* in Ottawa : Le

Nordir, 1999.

Fausse route, 1997. Published with *Requiem* in Ottawa: Le Nordir, 2001.

L'homme effacé, 1997. Published in Ottawa: Le Nordir, 1997.

L'occupante, 1997

La dernière fugue, 1997. Published with *Duel* and *King Edward* in Ottawa: Le

Nordir, 1999.

A ceux qui luttent, 1998

Aux voleurs!, 1998

King Edward, 1998. Published with *La dernière fugue* and *Duel* in Ottawa: Le

Nordir, 1999.

Requiem, 1999. Published with *Fausse route* in Ottawa: Le Nordir, 2001.

L'école des jeunes, 2000.

Le testament du couturier, 2000. Published in Ottawa: Le Nordir, 2002.

Soleil abimé, 2000

Zag, 2000

Voyage vers le desert, 2002-2003

Willy Graf, 2004

Corbeaux en exile (1991)

(four “sequences”)

Setting : The action unfolds in five sequences that progressively go back in time: the first takes place in 1990 in Kapuskasing; the second in 1918 also in Kapuskasing but at the period when it was not yet a town but a prisoner of war camp called MacPherson. The third (1914) and the fourth (1904) both take place in a small village in Quebec.

Cast of characters:

1990: **Pete Tremblay**, 25, a translator

Emily Tremblay, 50, Pete’s mother

1917: **Simon White**, 20, a soldier/guard

Colonel, 36, the commandant

Rose at 50, Emily’s grandmother

Corbeaux, an ageless spirit

1914: **Simon Leblanc**, 16, Rose’s son

Emilie Leblanc, 18, Rose’s daughter

Monsieur Murray, 38, a farmer/neighbor

1904: **Rose** at 37, Télesphore’s wife

Télesphore Leblanc, 40, Rose’s husband

Pierre Leblanc, 32 Télesphore’s cousin

Catherine, 33, a widow and Télesphore’s lover

Synopsis:

Corbeaux en exil involves Pete Tremblay, a writer who has come back to Kapuskasing to write a history of his home town. However, no sooner has he begun when his mother intervenes, insisting he write a story about his own family. She then leaves him a package of photographs that stimulate his memory.

The drama then becomes a retelling of Pete's family history as a series of sequences that move back in time from 1917 to 1914 and finally to 1904. Each sequence is played by the same actors who simply assume different roles. The 1917 sequence takes place on a prisoner of war base which is located in Kapuskasing, Ontario. It involves a dispute between a soldier, Simon White (formerly Simon Leblanc) and his commanding officer simply referred to as Colonel. This dispute eventually results in White being transferred to the European front of World War One.

The second sequence takes place in 1914 in a small village in Québec. It involves Simon, his sister Émilie and their neighbour Murray. Simon, being the only male left in the household, considers himself the head of the family. However, he proves he is not worthy of the responsibility when Murray dupes Simon into selling him a large portion of the family farm land. Simon's mother, disapproving of this act, chastises him for it, and Simon, both humiliated and enraged, leaves the family home. We soon understand that Simon White and Simon Leblanc are one and the same. We also come to understand why Simon has

left his home to join the army; and ultimately, why he finds himself in at MacPherson (Kapuskasing).

The play then shifts to the last sequence, which is actually the beginning of his story in chronological time. It takes place in the same small village in Quebec in the year 1904. This time, however, the *dramatis personae* have changed. We encounter Simon's parents, Rose and Téles along with Pierre, Téles's cousin, and Catherine, Téles's lover. In this story, Téles comes to believe that Rose is having an affair with Pierre. Consequently, he murders him and burns the body. Remorseful for the act, Téles also abandons his wife and children, and thus we have the reason why Simon became the head of the family in the preceding sequence.

At the end of the play, we come back to the prologue in the present initiated by Pete Tremblay. It explains how fate informs family relations and how events within the family are interconnected. First, we realize that after the war, Simon returned to Kapuskasing to settle and raise a family. In effect he is Pete's grandfather. Furthermore, Simon has named his daughter, Pete's mother, after Émilie, the sister whom he had left behind to go to war. And lastly, we discover that Pete is named after his grandfather's cousin, Pierre. Thus, we are provided with a complex family cycle in which memory is preserved through the recounting of events and through the handing down of names.

Theatrical Details:

There was a public reading of the text, co-produced by Théâtre du Trillium and the Théâtre français du centre national des Arts in collaboration with Radio Canada Ontario/Outaouais on March 22, 1991.

Cast: James Bradford, Dominik McNicoll, Benoit Osborne, Pierre Provençal, Chantale Richer, Lucie Vigneault.

Director : Dominique Lafon

Production : Francine Lapointe

Publication : Ottawa : Le Nordir, 1992

Critical Reaction:

Lafon, Dominique. "Michel Ouellette: les pièges de la communalité" *Les Théâtres professionnels du Canada francophone*. Ottawa : Le Nordir, 2001.

Moss, Jane. "Le Théâtre Franco-Ontarien: Dramatic Spectacles of Linguistic Otherness" *University of Toronto Quarterly* 69. 2 (Spring 2000): 587-614.

Oneill-Karch, Mariel. "Michel Ouellette: *Corbeaux en exil*" *Liaison* 68 (1992).

French Town (1993)

(two parts)

Setting: The action takes place in two locales: Toronto and Timber Falls.

Cast of Characters: **Simone**, the deceased mother

Pierre-Paul, Simone's eldest son

Cindy, Simone's daughter

Martin, Simone's youngest son

Synopsis:

French Town essentially involves two reunions, at Christmas and at Easter, between three siblings after the death of their parents. Like Jay in *Le chien*, the eldest son Pierre-Paul left family and his home-town of Timber Falls and has only recently ventured back for these family rituals after the father's death. We soon realize, however, that the primary motivation for his return is his desire to sell the family home, a desire thwarted by his two siblings who have other plans.

First of all, Pierre-Paul's sister Cindy realizes that her identity is bonded to Timber Falls. This is reflected by the way she has become the mirror image of her father. She works the same job as her father at the local paper mill, dons men's clothing and drinks beer at the local bar. Realizing that in this state she would never be accepted anywhere else, she is forced to remain in her father's house almost as a prisoner of a continuity which she is not allowed to disrupt.

Meanwhile, the younger brother Martin, who was raised by Pierre-Paul since his adolescence, is undergoing a personal crisis. Rather than living the life provided for him by his older brother-- a university education and a secure job

with the government in Toronto-- he has decided to defy Pierre-Paul's wishes. He prefers to re-discover his heritage by dropping out of university, taking a job at the paper mill and making a life for himself in his home-town.

Thus we see that both Cindy and Martin have deep seated reasons for wanting to remain in the house. This confrontation between Pierre-Paul and his two siblings makes up the dramatic action of the play. However, beneath this conflict, there lies another drama that concerns the personal struggle between Pierre-Paul and his past. In effect, Pierre-Paul might be defined by his unsuccessful attempts at breaking free of the past. The house, in turn, represents a youth that Pierre-Paul has unsuccessfully attempted to forget, and selling the house would mark his final attempt at erasing all the memories associated with the family space.

The fact that Pierre-Paul cannot fully escape the past is partly explained by the appearance of a fourth character: the deceased mother Simone. Simone is an omnipresent "manifestation of the past" who is invisible to all but the audience. Therefore, Pierre-Paul can never free himself of his memories since he is continually haunted by the ever present voice of his mother.

To sell the house would therefore also be a way in which Pierre-Paul could rid himself of the ghost that refuses to leave him alone. However, as we have seen, the other characters will not allow him this freedom since they refuse to sell the house. Therefore, in spite of all his efforts, Pierre-Paul is forced to relive his memories, and the drama that unfolds is composed of a series of revelations about Pierre-Paul's past which provide the true reasons for his desire

to sell the house along with the essential truth about Pierre-Paul's character that he has always tried to repress.

These revelations begin with the recurring story of a hunting trip in which his father Gilbert, deciding to usher his son into adulthood, shows him how to hunt and use a gun. Having no desire to kill animals and being unfamiliar with guns, Pierre-Paul shoots his father's pick-up truck instead of the intended target, a tree. The experience thus ends with what will be the first of many beatings endured by Pierre-Paul at the hands of his father.

From that moment on, the relationship between Pierre-Paul and his father entails a continuous conflict which is never resolved, and thus the selling of the house transcends the erasure of memory to include, as Martin explains to Pierre-Paul, an act of revenge against the father in particular: "T'as attendu la mort de m'man pour te venger. C'est pour ça que tu veux vendre la maison, pour effacer toutes les traces de p'pa" (*French* 105).²⁰⁸

However, this only provides part of the truth behind Pierre-Paul's situation. After the last beating, Pierre-Paul wanted his mother to press legal charges against his father, but Simone could not bring herself to do this. Pierre-Paul reacts to this apparent betrayal by his mother with a rage similar to the anger expressed by Gilbert. Consequently, Pierre-Paul beats his mother in the same way his father beat him.

This episode serves to reveal the awful truth that Pierre-Paul has tried desperately to hide. Not only has he attempted to repress his guilt and shame for

²⁰⁸You waited for mom to die before you took your revenge. That's why you want to sell the house, to erase all traces of our father.

having beaten his mother, but more importantly, this act unveils his worst fear. He has acquired the most destructive traits of his father he despises: his bullying and his potential for murderous violence: “Vous êtes pareils” (*French* 107),²⁰⁹ Simone says, confirming that the sins of the father are revisited upon the son. The conclusion reflects a terrible but implacable logic: having inherited his father’s violent nature, Pierre-Paul has no alternative but to end his own life.

The play ends, as in *Le chien*, in a tragic death, in this case Pierre-Paul’s suicide. As if resigned to his fate, Pierre-Paul chooses to end his life by ritually returning to the fateful hunting trip of his youth. He enters the garage, dons his father’s coveralls, takes the gun and goes through the motions of the hunt until finally he puts the gun in his mouth and kills himself.

French Town is also provided with a subplot via a story narrated by Simone that has an underlying purpose of purveying the oral history of a now non-existent Franco-Ontarian community. Simone’s story is structured in the mode of a traditional story with an expository introduction, a narration and a final comment that reflects the oral concept of cyclical time. Her exposition involves details concerning the setting: “French Town...(pause) c’était un village dans le village de Timber Falls. Pas juste un quartier, là” (*French* 11).²¹⁰ In effect, French Town was the French district of Timber Falls: a village that was built up around the pulp and paper industry. As she explains, “Tout le monde travaillait pour la compagnie. Une compagnie de New York. Coupait des arbres pour faire du

²⁰⁹You are both the same.

²¹⁰French Town was a village in the village of Timber Falls, not just a section of town.

papier... (*French* 13).²¹¹ French Town was thus a segregated village within the village of Timber Falls, where as Simone further explains, “Ça s’appelait de même à cause que c’était là que les Canadiens français vivaient avec leurs familles” (*French* 13).²¹²

Furthermore, we come to understand that the village was never meant to be permanent; it was meant to house the transient workers who often lacked adequate space:

y avait plus d’ouvriers que de lits, fa que dès que le travailleur de jour se levait, le travailleur de nuit prenait sa place. Même pas le temps de changer les draps” (*French* 31).²¹³

By 1936, the company had flourished and subsequently built, as Simone explains, “une ville à son image, moderne, organisée” (*French* 42).²¹⁴ French Town , in comparison, became a ghetto, “à coté de ces belles grande maisons, c’était rien, rien qu’une rangée de taudis” (*French* 42).²¹⁵ Consequently, the company wished to do away with French Town as it depreciated the new city’s aesthetic value-- “la compagnie a décidé de déménager le monde de French Town” (*French* 41)²¹⁶-- but the francophone inhabitants of French Town resisted this forced exodus by organizing themselves around the local union that was

²¹¹Everyone worked for the company. A company from New York. They cut trees to make paper.

²¹²It was called French Town because that’s where the French Canadians lived with their families.

²¹³There were more workers than beds, so as soon as a day worker woke up, a night worker took his place. There wasn’t even enough time to change the sheets.

²¹⁴A village to suit its own image, modern and organized.

²¹⁵Next to these beautiful big houses it was nothing but a row of shacks.

²¹⁶The company decided to move the people from French Town.

headed by Simone's father. As the time to leave drew near, the community became polarized between those who had accepted to vacate their homes and those who refused to leave, and the story comes to an end as it converges with the main plot.

Within the frame-work of the story concerning French Town, there is also that of Simone's older brother Urbain. In effect, the conflict between the French Canadian workers and the Company comes to a head when it is discovered that Urbain took matters into his own hands by murdering a "company man" (*French* 62). Rather than turning in the guilty party, however, the community handed down its own punishment by exiling Urbain from the community and remaining silent about the crime in face of the authorities (*French* 93). In retaliation, not only for the murder but also for what they saw as a conspiracy of silence, the company proceeded to set fire to the houses and erase all traces of French Town. As Simone finally explains: "C'est une histoire qui existe pus" (*French* 78).²¹⁷

This story is made even more significant to Pierre-Paul's situation by creating a parallel between the past and the present. First of all, Urbain, like Pierre-Paul, is exiled from the family home by the father. Secondly, and more importantly, Urbain's act, which is the direct cause of the company's retaliation (the burning of and ultimate destruction of the community), parallels Pierre-Paul's desire to sell the home, for the fruition of this desire would have equally resulted in the ultimate demise of the family.

The parallel between Urbain's narrative and Pierre-Paul's is further demonstrated when Simone reflects upon Urbain's return to the family home

²¹⁷It's a story that no longer exists.

many years after he was exiled because of the murder: “Urbain, y est allé en ville, lui, pis...[...]Y est revenue icitte ben des années plus tard, tout en guénilles.

Défaite en dedans comme en dehors. Y puait l’*alcohol cheap*” (*French* 49).²¹⁸

Ultimately, Urbain’s degeneration is equated with that experienced by Pierre-Paul during his own exile.

Theatrical Details:

Co-production of Théâtre du Nouvel-ontario and Théâtre français du Centre national des Arts.

Director : Sylvie Dufour

Set: Jean Bard

Lighting : Sylvie Lavoie

Music : Dominique Saint-Pierre

Producer : Diane Fortin

Cast : Danièle Aubut, Roch Castonguay, Lyette Goyette, Eloi Savoie

Performances in Sudbury : March 24 to April 3, 1993.

Touring performances : February 10 to 27, 1994 in Moncton, Toronto and Ottawa.

Number of performances : 14

Distinction : Winner of the Governor General’s Award for Theatre in 1994.

Publication : Ottawa : Le Nordir, 2000.

²¹⁸Urbain, he went to the city [...] He came back many years later, dressed in rags. He was destroyed on the inside as well as the outside. He smelled of cheap alcohol.

Critical Reaction:

Bélanger, Louis. "De l'exiguité comme discours du savoir," *Spirale* 140 (1995):

15.

Bérard, Sylvie. "L'école des dramaturges," *Lettres québécoises* 75 (Fall 1994):

55.

Karch, Pierre. "French Town," *Francophonie d'Amérique* 5 (1995): 91-92.

Marcoux, Bondfield. "Critique. Théâtre," *Liaison* 72 (1993): 37.

Moss, Jane. "Le Théâtre Franco-Ontarien: Dramatic Spectacles of Linguistic

Otherness" *University of Toronto Quarterly* 69. 2 (Spring 2000): 587-614.

O'Neill-Karch, Mariel. "Le Théâtre" *University of Toronto Quarterly* 65. 1

(Winter 1995/1996): 120-121.

Paré, François. "Genèse de la rancœur. Sur trois oeuvres dramatiques récentes"

Liaison 77 (1994): 33-34.

Robert, Lucie. "De l'inutilité du théâtre au théâtre" *Voix et images* 57 (Spring

1994): 670-672.

Yergeau, Robert. "Postures scripturaires, impostures identitaires," *Tangence*

56 (1997): 9-25.

***Requiem* (1999)**

(Eight Scenes)

Cast of Characters: Cindy

Pierre-Paul, the spectre of Cindy's brother

Bobotte, the spectre of Cindy's father

Setting: The action takes place in an undisclosed locale. Cindy occupies a desk at the forefront of a setting from the past (the garage from *French Town*) where the action between Pierre-Paul and Bobotte takes place.

Synopsis:

Michel Ouellette's *Requiem* is the sequel to *French Town*. It involves a drama in which Cindy revisits the events of the previous play in order to make sense of the past and resolve events in her own mind.

Cindy, first of all, has undergone a transformation since we first encountered her in *French Town*. She has shed her androgynous dress, she has adopted a nomadic life-style as a truck driver, found a husband and she is pregnant. As the play opens, she is in the process of doing a homework assignment for her literacy classes. To search for a word, she opens a dictionary and this gesture conjures up the memories of her brother Pierre-Paul and her father, thus initiating an inner drama involving her brother Pierre-Paul and her father. This drama consists primarily of the same events that were told in *French*

Town. It begins when Pierre-Paul completes his university education and ritually burns the dictionary which, as we have seen, symbolizes his youth. The play continues with his trip to Europe where we follow Pierre-Paul's travels from Amsterdam, to Nîmes (here he finds his own name written on a soldier's monument), from Munich to Dachau, Belgrade to Athens (where he offers up the ashes of the dictionary as a sacrifice to Athena), Florence (where he sees Michelangelo's *Pietà*) and finally to Paris. Once he reaches Paris, Pierre-Paul is forced to return home because his father will not send him any more money. Pierre-Paul returns home, but he has a disagreement with his father when he refuses to take the job that his father has found for him. Exiled from his father's home, Pierre-Paul takes a job as a civil servant in Toronto but soon falls into despair and loses this job. The story ends by revisiting the final events of *French Town* as Pierre-Paul relives the fateful hunting trip with his father and shoots himself

Besides this story, which encompasses the inner drama narrated by Pierre-Paul, we are also provided with retrospective comments by Cindy where she acknowledges the profound effect both her father and Pierre-Paul have had on her life. She admits how she loved her father and consequently tried to perpetuate his existence by becoming his mirror image. Furthermore, she acknowledges how she would never have undergone her change in character if it were not for Pierre-Paul: first because of the money Pierre-Paul left for her after his death, and second because the shock of finding Pierre-Paul's dead body forced her to realize that the same fate was waiting for her if she did not change her ways.

Theatrical Details:

There were two public reading of the text:

1: in Québec by the “Rendez-vous dramaturgiques” at the Théâtre Niveau

Parking on October 15, 1999

Cast: Gill Champagne, Guy Daniel Tremblay, Jean-Sébastien Ouellette and
Caroline Stephenson

**2: in Montreal for the “14e Semaine de la dramaturgie” at the Centre des
auteurs dramatiques on December 7, 1999**

Cast: Gill Champagne, Marc Legault, Sébastien Ricard and Isabelle Roy

Publication: Ottawa: Le Nordir, 2001

Critical Reaction:

Lafon, Dominique. “Michel Ouellette : Les pièges de la communalité.” *Les*

Théâtre professionnels du Canada francophone. eds. Hélène Beauchamp

and Joel Beddows. Ottawa : Le Nordir, 2001: 257-276.

Moss, Jane. “Le Théâtre Franco-Ontarien: Dramatic spectacles of Linguistic

Otherness” *University of Toronto Quarterly* 69. 2 (Spring 2000): 587-614.

***Le bateleur* (1995)**

(A One-Act play)

Cast of Characters: Jack, a bar owner

Éliza, Jack's waitress

Virgile, a Native Canadian

Dempsey, a spectre from Jack and Éliza's past

Setting: The action takes place in Jack's bar located in an undisclosed town in Northern Ontario.

Synopsis:

Le bateleur relates the drama of Jack, a despondent bar-owner, and his waitress Éliza. The play opens as Jack is standing behind the bar and diluting his whiskey with water. Jack is accompanied by Dempsey, a manifestation of the past who continually reminds him of his failures. We learn that Jack is in love with Éliza but is incapable of making real advances to her. In essence, Jack can only relate to Éliza by assuming the gaze of a voyeur as he watches her through a peek-hole in the washroom while she bathes. Éliza, for her part, wants nothing to do with Jack, and as she enters the bar, she informs Jack that she will be leaving his employ.

Jack is also troubled by a second problem. He is continually haunted by an episode from his past in which he beat and murdered a native man. No retribution was ever taken against Jack, and the body of the native was simply thrown out into the streets. We later discover that Jack, haunted by guilt, inflicted punishment

upon himself by putting his hands in the moving fan belt of a car and crushing his fingers. However, this fails to erase the act from his memory, and we see Dempsey, the spectre, continually re-telling the story, forcing Jack to re-live the moment.

Meanwhile, Éлиза feels that she has wasted the past ten years of her life working for Jack. Although she dislikes her job, it nevertheless provides a refuge in which she can escape from her dying mother, who never stops talking about her bad health. Éлиза, like Jack, is also haunted by Dempsey. In her case, however, Dempsey helps Éлиза escape into a fantasy world in which she lives a life that resembles a movie scenario. As a manifestation of the past, Dempsey has a two-fold function. On the one hand, he acts as an escape mechanism in which Éлиза can find refuge from the banal reality of her existence; and on the other hand, Dempsey functions as Jack's conscience.

Later in the play Jack is provided with the opportunity to redeem himself when Virgile, the mirror image of the native man Jack killed, walks into the bar. He claims that his car broke down and that he simply wants to warm himself, but he refuses to leave. Finally, Jack tells Virgile that he will fix the car himself and steps outside. During Jack's absence, Virgile seduces Éлиза and they make love in Jack's bed. Jack then returns and confronts Virgile in the final scene of the play.

During this confrontation, fantasy is melded with reality and the past with the present. With the aid of Dempsey's retelling of the story, Jack returns once again to the fateful moment in which he killed the native years before. However, rather than assuming the role of his former self, Jack takes over the narration from

Dempsey and tells the conclusion of the story himself, expressing the belief that Virgile is the reincarnation of the native man that was murdered. Jack thus assumes that he is confronted with his victim and confesses his guilt.

Confused as to how to respond to this, Virgile simply leaves the bar. However, it appears that the telling of the story has somehow purged Jack of his feelings of guilt and inadequacy. For the first time, he is able to confront Dempsey and force his bad conscience to leave. Having shed his oppressive manifestation of the past, Jack's emotions are no longer repressed and the play ends as he asks Éliza to marry him.

Theatrical Details:

Co-production of Théâtre du Nouvel-Ontario and Théâtre français du Centre national des Arts

Director : Sylvie Dufour

Set : Jean Bard

Music : Marcel Aymar

Lighting: Michel Charbonneau

Producer: Jean-Sébastien Busque

Cast : Annick Léger, André Richard, Marc Thibault, Roger Wylde

Performances in Sudbury : April 19-29, 1995

Toured performances: May, September, October, December 1995: Ottawa, Kapuskasing, Hearst, North Bay, Longueuil

Number of Performances: 15

Publication : Ottawa : Le Nordir, 1995

Critical Reaction:

Lafon, Dominique. Critique: "*Le bateleur*" *Liaison* 83 (1995).

Mainville, Lara. "Michel Ouellette, *Le bateleur* : un théâtre en technocouleur"
Liaison 80 (1995): 36.

Moss, Jane. "Le Théâtre Franco-Ontarien: Dramatic Spectacles of Linguistic
Otherness" *University of Toronto Quarterly* 69. 2 (Spring 2000): 587-614.

Tremblay, Micheline. "*Lucky Lady* de Jean Marc Dalpé et *Le bateleur* de Michel
Ouellette: La quête de la vérité ?" *Revue du Nouvel-Ontario* 21 (1997):
161.

L'homme effacé (1997)

(the action takes place over three days that are separated into acts)

Cast of Characters: Thomas, a mute homeless man

Annie, Thomas's former girlfriend

Three manifestations of Thomas's memory:

Marthe, Thomas's deceased mother

Pite, the former boarder in Marthe's house

Annie-2, the younger version of Annie

Setting: The action takes place at an undisclosed time in the psychiatric ward of a hospital in Toronto.

Synopsis:

L'homme effacé involves Thomas, a francophone from Sudbury who, because he has lost his ability to speak, finds himself in a psychiatric hospital in Toronto. The main action involves the encounter with his girl friend Annie, who has not seen Thomas in ten years but happened upon his photograph in a newspaper. After her arrival, she reluctantly decides to stay to help him out of his present state. She does so by revisiting their shared past. Seeing that Thomas is mute Annie provides a monologue which pieces together the events of the past in order to discover the reasons for Thomas's loss of ability to speak.

However, upon Annie's arrival, another drama is already taking place. Apart from Thomas and Annie, other characters exist in another temporality: that of the past that is endlessly repeated in Thomas's imagination. This drama

involves Thomas's deceased mother Marthe, Pite a boarder with the family and Annie-2 (the younger version of the real Annie). As in the previous plays, these manifestations of the past share the same stage space with the other characters, but also inhabit an "inner space"²¹⁹ of which Annie is unaware. Although Annie never sees or hears them, they are nevertheless aware of her presence as they speak and react to her utterances and to the events that take place between her and Thomas. The drama is thus informed by the depiction of past events that are shared by all the characters except Annie. On the one hand, the past is reconstructed by Annie's monologue as she tries to help Thomas recover his speech; and on the other hand, those same events are enacted in the inner drama by the characters who inhabit Thomas's imagination: Marthe, Pite and Annie-2.

The reasons behind Thomas's silence emerge from these multiple stories. The fact that he is a stranger in a city in which he does not speak the language is only part of his predicament. The initial cause of the symbolic "erasure" alluded to by the play's title, takes place before he even ventures to Toronto. Thomas's silence is, in effect, a reflection of the inner drama that took place before Annie arrived on the scene.

The characters from the inner drama, Marthe, Pite and Annie-2, each have their own method of avoiding all possibilities of communication among one another. Thomas's mother Marthe is dying of cancer from smoking, but she avoids this truth by dreaming of her own death. When this daydream proves to be an insufficient escape from her painful reality, she dispatches Thomas for more

²¹⁹ According to Pavis, *inner space* represents a fantasy, dream or vision of the playwright or a character (1998: 345)

cigarettes: “Va me chercher des cigarettes. J’ai besoin de fumer” (*L’homme* 17).²²⁰ Her smoking also becomes a manifestation of her inability or unwillingness to speak since it sparks a violent coughing fit every time she attempts to do so. Consequently, rather than speaking she coughs--“*Marthe se remet à tousser*” (*L’homme* 16)²²¹-- and becomes mute in the face of her reality.

Pite, for his part, continually repeats the stories about various sites that he visited during his youthful travels: “Fait le tour du monde au moins trois fois. Shanghai, Tokyo. Oui le monde” (*L’homme* 13).²²² However, no matter how far away he has ventured, he has always found himself back in his home town, since it is in Sudbury, he explains, that he hoped to fulfill his true desires: “Je reviens pour m’imaginer qu’y a une famille où je *fit* dedans. Une famille où je suis un père, un mari, un homme” (*L’homme* 14).²²³ But his desire is never fulfilled, as Annie-2 reminds him: “T’es ni le père ni le mari. Pis t’es même pas un homme” (*L’homme* 15).²²⁴ Although the current situation continually reminds him of this failure, Pite escapes through his *Playboy* magazines: “Tiens de l’argent, mon Thomas. Va me chercher un *Playboy*” (*L’homme* 15).²²⁵

Finally, Annie-2 is also dissatisfied with her current domestic situation. Her first and preferred form of escapism involves drinking beer at the local bar: “Emmène-moi à la Nash! Prendre un bière, deux bières, trois ! Sors-moi de la

²²⁰Go get some cigarettes. I have to smoke.

²²¹Marthe coughs.

²²²I toured the world at least three times. Shanghai, Tokyo. Yes, the whole world.

²²³I imagine that there is a family that I fit into. A family where I am the father, a husband, a man.

²²⁴You are neither a father nor a husband. You’re not even a man.

²²⁵Here’s some money Thomas, Go get me some *Playboys*.

maison” (*L’homme* 18).²²⁶ Seeing that Thomas will not physically remove her from her surroundings, Annie-2 deafens herself by listening to her “walkman.”

The inner drama thus remains at an impasse because its characters refuse to communicate in order to escape a reality they cannot face. Since they are a product of Thomas’s imagination, these figures are also reflections of his incomplete vision of past events. Thomas’s silence, therefore, is less a tactic of evasion in which to find refuge from reality and more of a reflection of his own frustrated unwillingness and/or inability to come to terms with the past.

Annie functions as the catalyst who breaks the cycle of non-communication and subsequently puts the inner drama into motion. In effect, Annie traces the chain of events that led her and Thomas to their present state. Since, as we have seen, Annie’s monologue/narrative is the sole instigator of the events which simultaneously take place in both the present and the past, the story essentially becomes hers. In it, the initial conflicts between Marthe, Pite and Annie-2 are allowed to play themselves out.

Beneath the conflicts from the past that ensue among Annie-2, Thomas, Marthe and Pite, another conflict emerges, involving a battle between Annie-2 and what she perceives as her predetermined fate. The story begins with the initial rift between Annie-2 and Thomas that is centered on Annie-2’s revelation that she is pregnant with Thomas’s child. This otherwise happy event creates a dilemma since it occurs at the same time that Thomas contemplates quitting his job at the mine in order to take care of his dying mother. Annie-2 disapproves of this decision and gives Thomas an ultimatum: “Va travailler, sinon je me fais

²²⁶Take me to the Nash! Let’s have a beer, two beer, three! Get me out of this house.

avorter!” (*L’homme* 70).²²⁷ Annie-2 thus places herself between Thomas and his mother. Initially, Annie-2 appears to be motivated by selfishness: “Il voulait lâcher sa job pour sa mère. Trop, C’est trop. Moi, là-dedans, je suis quoi?” (*L’homme* 71).²²⁸ However it is later revealed that her motivation is based on her fear that the cycles of the past will repeat themselves. First of all, she does not want her child to experience the same life of poverty that she experienced in her own youth: “Moi, je mettrai pas au monde un enfant dans la misère. Je veux pas faire vivre à mes enfants mon calvaire à moi. Mes enfants, ils vont avoir des chances dans la vie” (*L’homme* 72).²²⁹ Secondly, she fears that by choosing his mother over her, Thomas will eventually leave her to raise the child by herself, and she would be condemned to repeat Marthe’s existence as a single mother.

The episode that takes place between Annie-2 and Marthe is based upon a misunderstanding. Marthe, who has overheard only part the above conversation, assumes that Annie-2 has decided to abort the child. Consequently, Marthe makes Annie-2 promise that she will keep the child, but it is a promise that she will not keep. Pite, unconvinced of Annie-2’s change of heart, offers to provide the money required for her to have the abortion and to never return.

In the end, Annie-2 accepts Pite’s money and flees to Toronto. Immediately following her departure, Pite helps Marthe commit suicide. Thomas thus returns from his day at work only to find that the two women in his life are shrouded in death: his mother is dead and Annie-2, who is carrying his child, is

²²⁷You go to work or I’ll get an abortion!

²²⁸He wanted to quit his job for his mother. That’s too much. And what about me? Where do I fit in?

²²⁹Me, I’m not going to bring a child into a world of misery. I don’t want my children to go through the same life as I did. My children will have chances in their lives.

having an abortion. The inner drama thus concludes when Thomas leaves in pursuit of Annie-2.

Thomas's departure thus marks the conclusion of the inner drama. By the third and final act, the third day of the drama, the manifestations of the past—the ghosts that have haunted Thomas have disappeared. This indicates that through Annie's monologue Thomas has succeeded in making peace with the past. However, what Thomas is not aware of is the fact that Annie-2, while on the bus headed for Toronto, has had a change of heart and has decided to keep the child. In the end, Annie brings her daughter with her to visit Thomas. As Annie and Eve leave for the last time, Thomas has finally regained his voice, his first word he utters being the name of his daughter, Eve.

Theatrical Details:

Co-production of théâtre du Nouvel Ontario and Le Centre national des Arts.

Director : Sylvie Dufour

Music : Marcel Aymar

Lighting : Michael Brunet

Producer: Mélanie Doyon

Cast: Nadine Desrochers, Lyette Goyette, Annick Léger, André Richard, Éloi Savoie.

Performances in Sudbury : February 19 to March 1, 1997

Toured Performances: June 8, 1997: Festival Théâtre Action; November 1997:

Rouyn, Kapuskasing, Elliot Lake, Brampton, Quebec; May 1998: Ottawa

Number of Performances: 15

Publication: Ottawa: Le Nordir, 1997.

Critical Reaction:

Bélanger, Georges “*L’homme effacé: ré-structuration d’une mémoire éclatée*”

Liaison 92 (1997): 31.

Moss, Jane. “Le Théâtre Franco-Ontarien: Dramatic spectacles of Linguistic

Otherness” *University of Toronto Quarterly* 69. 2 (Spring 2000): 587-614.

7) A Play by Robert Marinier

Biographical note:

Robert Marinier was born in Sudbury in 1954. He studied acting at L'École nationale de théâtre (1973-1976) and afterward in Paris at l'Atelier Alain-Knapp. Upon his return to Canada, he participated in various productions of Le Théâtre du Nouvel Ontario and of La Vieille 17. In 1979, he wrote *Lafortune et Lachance* which was produced by TNO, and in 1980 he wrote and directed *La Tante*. In 1981, he wrote *L'Année chanceuse*, ten monologues for Radio-Canada. In 1983, the National Arts Center produced his play, *L'Inconception*. In 1985, he co-wrote and acted in *Les Rogers* with Jean Marc Dalpé and Robert Bellefeuille. In 1993 he wrote and performed *L'Insomnie*, and in 1998 he wrote *Epinal*, both produced by La Vieille 17.

List of Plays:

Lafortune et Lachance, 1979

La tante, 1980

L'inconception, 1982. Published in Sudbury : Prise de Parole, 1984

Les Rogers, 1984-5 with Jean Marc Dalpé and Robert Bellefeuille. Published in Sudbury: Prise de Parole, 1985.

En camisoles, 1988

Deuxième souffle, 1989. Published in Sudbury: Prise de Parole, 1982

A la gauche de Dieu, 1993. Published in sudbury : Prise de Parole, 1998

L'insomnie, 1994. Published in Sudbury, *Prise de Parole*, 1996

Le golfeur wt la mort, 1999. Published in *Contes sudburois*, Sudbury : *Prise de Parole*, 2001.

Je me souviens, 2000. Published in *Liban, écrits nomads, no.1*, Editions Lansman, 2001.

Univers, 2000-2001

Épinal, 2003

L'Insomnie (1996)

(A One-Act Play)

Cast of Characters: The narrator

Gilles, a civil servant

Lorraine, Gilles's wife

Karo and Nounourse, Gilles's daughters

M. Picard, Gilles's boss

Ti-Bé, a laudromat operator

Titine, Ti-Bé's sister

Mère and Père, Gilles's parents

Singulier, the owner of a pharmaceutical company

Mme Jutras, Picard's secretary

Madame dans l'autobus, a lady on the bus

Conférencier, a conference director

Giselle, Lorraine's sister

Graham, Giselle's husband

Note on the Performance: Marinier's performance takes place on a bare stage.

Consequently, the various settings are evoked by the actor's performance—both physical and verbal. The original performance was a “one-man-show” which consisted of one monologue in which the performer assumes the various roles.

Therefore, the above “cast of characters” emerges as a series of voices performed by a single actor.

Setting: All action takes place in Ottawa and includes Gilles's home, his office, a laundromat, a pharmaceutical factory, M. Picard's office, the Ottawa exhibition, a conference center, and a city bus.

Synopsis:

L'insomnie was first presented as a "one-man show" in which one performer (Marinier) simultaneously played the roles of the narrator, Gilles the protagonist, and all of the other characters involved. The drama is centered on Gilles's inability to sleep. It begins, first of all, with the narrator's exposition concerning Gilles's problem and the various repercussions that ensue. This is then followed by a psychic journey that oscillates between reality and delirium and finally comes to an end when Gilles discovers a cure for his ailment.

When the play opens, Gilles has already been suffering from his ailment for several months, and after four months and three weeks when, as the narrator explains, the insomnia "montrait son vrai visage" (*L'insomnie* 23),²³⁰ Gilles begins experiencing what the narrator calls, "flashbacks."

These "flashbacks" invade Gilles's consciousness at unforeseen moments, and they include, as the narrator informs us, "des moments importants et moins importants de son passé" (*L'Insomnie* 23).²³¹ These flashbacks appear instantaneously as time slippages when at any given moment, Gilles is forced to relive a specific moment from the past.

²³⁰The insomnia revealed its true colours.

²³¹The important and not so important moments of his life.

Gilles's dilemma begins when he realizes that his flashbacks often do not correspond to the specific events as he remembers them: "y'a commencé à avoir des flash-backs pis il se souvient pas que c'est comme ça que ça c'est passé" (*L'Insomnie* 39).²³² Secondly, his flashbacks sometimes concern events of which he has no recollection whatsoever: "Fait que vous avez des flash-backs d'événements dont vous vous souvenez pas" (*L'insomnie* 39).²³³ And finally, the flashbacks eventually meld with his sense of reality so that the past becomes intermingled with the present.

Consequently, Gilles is left in a situation in which both the validity of the past and his cognitive reality are put into question. The effect, for both Gilles and the audience, is one in which we are never certain whether Gilles is in the past or present—in fantasy or reality, or in both simultaneously. Furthermore, since he has no control over when or how these flashbacks occur, he subsequently appears to have lost control of his life, never knowing where he will be or what he will do at any given moment. He thus finds himself in the position of both participant in and observer of his own life as it imposes itself upon him.

This state is carried to a further degree when we are informed that after five months and two weeks, "Gilles perdit soudainement la notion du 'je.' Il ne pouvait plus parler de lui-même à la première personne du singulier" (*L'Insomnie* 23).²³⁴ Gilles has thus inadvertently become alienated from himself, his own

²³²He started having flashbacks and he doesn't remember things happening in that way.

²³³So you have flashbacks of events that you don't remember.

²³⁴Gilles suddenly lost the notion of 'I'. He could no longer refer to himself in the first person singular.

“Other” who experiences events that often times appear to take place for the first time.

This is brought to a head during one flashback in which Gilles finds himself at his eighth birthday when his parents inform him that he was adopted, or to be more exact, that they gave him up for adoption and then instantly adopted him in order to give themselves “an out” in case things did not work out between them. They now declare that since they do not and perhaps never have really loved him, they are going to give him up one more time. Thus, Gilles’s complex and unstable relations with his parents are revealed.

This episode is later paralleled with the question of whether he is the father of his own children. Since the past is suspect, Gilles can no longer identify himself with it. Thus, on the one hand, he is left with no identity, and on the other hand, he revisits a past which does not seem to belong to him. It is as if Gilles is forced to relive moments of the life of a stranger.

Gilles first attempts to cure himself of his insomnia through apparently all of the available means provided by modern science: “Après deux semaines—et dix-sept rendez-vous avec des médecins de toutes sortes, psychologues, spécialistes, psychiatres—Gilles, avec l’aide de Lorraine, avait tout essayé” (*L’Insomnie* 21).²³⁵ All of these attempts, however, prove to be fruitless, and Gilles only succeeds in falling into deeper despair (*L’Insomnie* 21). He soon comes to the conclusion that since he cannot sleep, he might as well take the opportunity to catch up on his work (*L’Insomnie* 21). Finally, out of sheer

²³⁵After two weeks—and seventeen meetings with all kinds of doctors, psychologists, specialists, psychiatrists—Gilles, with Lorraine’s help, tried everything.

frustration, Gilles decides to venture out of his home in search of help: “Faut qu’il s’en sorte. Faut qu’il fasse quelque chose, faut qu’il trouve quelqu’un qui puisse l’aider” (*L’Insomnie* 32).²³⁶ This decision sets Gilles off on a journey that fluctuates between reality and fantasy--between the past and the present.

This journey brings him to an all-night laundromat where he encounters Ti-Bé and his sister Titine, an expert in the type of phenomenon that Gilles is experiencing. She assesses the situation and then agrees to study the case further. In the mean time, she suggests that he attempt to have “positive flashbacks.” For, as she says, “Ça pourra pas vous faire de tort” (*L’Insomnie* 44).²³⁷

Gilles proceeds to fill his mind with more positive thoughts in the hope that these will trigger more positive flashbacks. This leads to an important discovery on his part. After work one day, Gilles picks up his two daughters, Karo and Nounourse from the baby-sister’s house where he suddenly has a flashback. Gilles finds himself as a young boy at the Ottawa exhibition in the company of his daughters. Rather than allowing the events to play themselves out, Gilles takes the opportunity to enjoy the exhibition with his daughters, thus succeeding in melding the past with the present in order to take advantage of the situation. Gilles, in effect, has discovered that, while experiencing a flashback, he has a certain control over the outcome of events, and ultimately this implies that he may indeed control his own destiny. As the narrator further posits:

²³⁶He has to get out of this. He has to do something; he has to find someone that can help him.

²³⁷It wouldn’t hurt.

Est-ce que c'est seulement un soubresaut sociobiologique qui veut qu'il voit à son investissement génétique ? Ou est-ce que c'est la preuve que s'il le veut, il est capable d'agir sur son destin, même s'il ne sait pas trop ce qu'il a fait pour que ça lui arrive ?
*(L'Insomnie 57)*²³⁸

This sets the stage for the events that inevitably lead to his cure. In the final flashback, Gilles inadvertently discovers the cause of his insomnia. In it, Gilles finds himself with his supervisor, M. Picard and Singulier, the head of a pharmaceutical company. It is, we are told, a meeting that took place two months previous. During this meeting, it is revealed that Gilles's insomnia was not necessarily a product of his crippling paranoia, but that he was the subject of an experiment in which he was administered a drug designed to prevent sleep and consequently allow for more time to work.

At this point, Gilles has already discovered that he need not remain a victim of past events. On the contrary, he can act on those events and change the past. Acting upon this notion, Gilles grabs an ashtray that lay on the table and repeatedly strikes M. Singulier on the head, thus killing his oppressor. The play ends as Gilles, now cured of his insomnia, is able to find peace and go to sleep.

²³⁸Is this simply a socio-biological somersault or is it proof that if he wants to, he is able to act upon his destiny, even if he is not certain about the result?

Theatrical Details:***L'Insomnie : Théâtre de la vieille 17*****Text and Interpretation:** Robert Marinier**Director :** Robert Marinier with the assistance of Brigitte Haentjens**Set:** Daniel Castonguay**Lighting:** Carole Caouette**Production:** Diane Fortin**Critical Reaction:**Beaulne, Brigitte, *CBOF Bonjour* (Ottawa Radio).Lafon, Dominique. “*L'Insomnie*: phantasmer les fantasme de son inconscient”*Liaison* 86 (1996): 31.

Moss, Jane. “Le Théâtre Franco-Ontarien: Dramatic spectacles of Linguistic

Otherness” *University of Toronto Quarterly* 69. 2 (Spring 2000): 587-614.**Publication:** Sudbury: Prise de Parole, 1996

Annex 2: Interview with Robert Marinier, February 19, 2002

Introductory note: In the following interview, Marinier relates his own version of the history of Franco-Ontarian theatre and the part he played in its development. His discourse moves, often in a non-linear fashion, through the re-birth of Franco-Ontarian theatre in Sudbury, to his introduction to drama in highschool, to his participation in TNO, and finally to his more recent experiences as a Franco-Ontarian playwright and performer.

The document remains as close as possible to Marinier's original discourse; little effort has been made to transform his discourse into standard French.

Furthermore, the disconnected and disjointed nature of Marinier's monologue, the way he switches into English and the way in which he moves from one thought to another provides a non-linear discourse that gives us the impression that he is thinking to himself out loud. The final product may be thus likened to a prose-poem constructed through Marinier's stream of consciousness.

Chevrier : Il est souvent mentionné que l'oralité se trouve au centre d'un grand nombre d'expériences poétiques et dramatiques des Canadiens Français. Quel est votre avis ?

Marinier: « Oralité ! »—Le théâtre c'est une écriture orale. On l'écrit peut-être à notre bureau mais c'est fait pour être entendu par les gens. Même la poésie Franco-Ontarienne est « orale. » Moi, je me souviens il y a très longtemps, vers le début, il y avait un moment où le théâtre rassemblait tout le monde, les musiciens, les poètes, les artistes visuels, tout le monde. C'était l'époque du début du Théâtre Action « la Cuisine de la poésie. » Par exemple, « la Cuisine de la poésie » était vraiment une poésie de spectacle. Les gars restaient en scène et faisaient leurs poèmes et ils y chantaient—et le théâtre est aussi oral!

La première écriture, la littérature Franco-Ontarienne, de mon point de vue, c'est Sudbury. Mais, il y a deux écoles en Ontario. Il y a la version Sudbury, le Nord, TNO et tout cela ; puis il y a la version de l'Est. Toronto, c'est un autre animal ça. L'Est a toujours été plus politique. Il y a les « Jean Marc » et « La vieille 17 ». Avant « Le Théâtre Trillium » c'était « Le Théâtre de la Corvée », tous des théâtres engagés dans une lutte politique pour l'Ontario francophone. Par exemple La Corvée faisait des shows comme *La parole et la loi*. La Vieille 17 dès son début, allait sur des lignes de picketage et il se mêlait de la cause des travailleurs.

Par contre, à Sudbury, on était beaucoup moins actif. Mais peut-être que je généralise ben gros là, surtout moi qui ne faisais pas partie de la gang Paiement et

l'Université Laurentienne. J'étais encore trop jeune pour tout cela. Moi, je venais de l'école secondaire : l'école Macdonald Cartier. J'étais un des fondateurs des « Draveurs ».

Pour nous, l'acte de faire du théâtre en français c'était déjà un acte politique. Alors on n'avait pas besoin de remplir nos textes de messages. Ce n'est pas qu'il n'y en avait pas, mais notre but était surtout de faire du théâtre français pour en venir à ce qui est l'essence du théâtre—le divertissement. Mais pour nous c'était surtout oral—c'est à dire que l'écriture, « les romans, » est venue après.

La gang de Paiement à l'Université Laurentienne venait pour la plupart du Collège où il avait fait du Molière. Ils faisaient le «not too offensive stuff » le stuff qui étaient « offensive at the time, but not offensive anymore. » Alors c'était le « grand théâtre. » Quant à moi, mon prof. de théâtre à l'école secondaire venait de c'te gang là, Hélène Gravelle.²³⁹ Elle a eu une énorme influence sur le théâtre franco-ontarien. Quand nous avons commencé à faire du théâtre à l'école secondaire, la première année on avait monté du Marcel Dubé.²⁴⁰ C'était en 1970-71. Cette année là, où l'année après, Gravelle est venue nous dire, « il faut que vous allez voir le show qui joue à l'université qui s'appelle *Moé, j viens du Nord, stie.* » Eux autres, j'imagine qu'ils ont fait un peu le même trajet que nous. Ils sont allés voir des shows à Toronto comme *Hair* et des affaires de même. Et les gars sont revenus en se disant qu'il faut qu'on fasse notre propre théâtre. Alors ils

²³⁹Hélène Gravelle was Marinier's teacher and drama coach at l'Ecole MacDonald Cartier.

²⁴⁰Marcel Dubé is an important and productive Québécois dramatist writing before the Quiet Revolution. Many of his plays were written for television and many of them were visibly influenced by it, the most important being *Zone* (1955) and *Un simple Soldat* (1958).

ont écrit leur propre pièce. Leur première pièce « à gang » s'appelait *Moé, j'viens du Nord, stie*.

Moi, j't'allé voir ça. Après avoir vu la production, il n'y avait aucun doute dans la tête à personne, il faut qu'on écrive nos propres pièces. Il y avait Robert Paquette qui faisait la musique. Il faut comprendre que Robert Paquette n'était pas encore chansonnier à l'époque. Moi, je le connaissait comme le « lead guitare » du Marketville Riot qui était le gros rock Band de Sudbury. Donc c'était très, très, très excitant.

Alors l'année après, on a fait un show qui a été écrit par deux filles de ma classe, il s'appelait *Le jeu des cartes*. Ça a été le début d'une tradition de « création » de nos propres textes.

A l'époque où je suis revenu de Montréal, trois ans plus tard, la gang de Paiement avait abandonné le théâtre pour la musique (CANO). Paiement avait quitté le TNO. Je m'imagine qu'il était tanné de crever de faim. Comme ça le TNO est tombé dans les mains de mon anciens prof de théâtre, Hélène Gravelle et puis ensemble nous avons monté un show des Contes de *Ti-Jean* et d'autres chose...Et, en tout cas, on a eu nos succès à nous. Le TNO a travaillé pendant deux ans avec Hélène Gravelle. Après ça, moi, je suis parti pour aller étudier en France pendant un an. Quand je suis revenu, Hélène n'était plus là puis il y avait vraiment plus de direction artistique. Le TNO était dans les mains d'un directeur administratif. Moi, j'ai monté mon premier show là, et ils m'ont commandé un texte pour l'année après, qui est devenu *La tante*. Entre temps, le Conseil des Arts du Canada a dit à l'administration du TNO qu'il fallait que [...] eux autres, ils

poussaient pour avoir plus de compagnies de théâtre permanentes et moins de troupes qui voyagent de ville en ville. Alors il (le Conseil des Arts) nous poussait pour établir des saisons de théâtres, ce qui était un peu la mort du théâtre comme nous l'avions connu. Le Conseil des Arts nous a dit, « pour que ça se fait plus professionnel allez donc chercher un directeur artistique et un directeur administratif à Montréal. » Ils (TNO) ont écouté ce que ces gens disaient car « they were signing the check » et puis ça a été un grand fiasco. A mi-chemin dans la saison, le directeur artistique et la directrice administrative sont parties et le théâtre n'a duré qu'une saison. Pendant la prochaine saison, TNO a existé seulement dans l'ordinateur de Ivan Rencour. Puis ils ont voulu remettre le théâtre sur pieds. Alors ils sont allés chercher Brigitte Haentjens.

A partir de ce moment, il y a eu du renouveau avec un côté de l'Est-Ontarien qui est venu s'y installer. Alors, nous avons commencé à faire des textes plus engagés comme *Nickel*. C'était une pièce très « Sudbury » qui a été bien reçue et qui a fait le tour de Montréal. Déjà, le TNO commençait à se distinguer en tant que le théâtre professionnel. Prestige was what mattered. Prestige got you more money than ticket sales.

Et c'est pendant *Nickel* que Brigitte a approché Jean Marc et moi et elle nous a demandé, « pourquoi est-ce vous ne faites pas de show ensemble ? » Après ça Robert Bellefeuille got in on the deal puis on a fait *Les Rogers* ensembles. Tu sais, quand tu fais le bilan des événements tu vois l'évolution des choses. Par exemple, le scandale autour de *Les Rogers*, dans le fond, c'était juste une game de pouvoir : who is gonna run the show! Est-ce que c'était les théâtres qui avaient le

pouvoir pour dire « this is the show were gonna do », ou est-ce que c'était les écoles qui disaient au théâtre « do those kind of shows » ? Fait que, pendant longtemps, après ça, les shows pour adultes ne tournaient plus dans les écoles.

(While gazing at a copy of *L'insomnie* that was on the desk, Marinier suddenly changed the topic of discussion.) *L'insomnie* c'est une ré-édition. It's not completed. There are more changes to come. Après qu'il a été ré-édité on l'a repris and we changed some more things after. Just minor things.

Chevrier: Vous avez dit « nous » est-ce que cela veut dire que c'était un travail collectif ?

Marinier : Ben, quand je dis « we » c'est dans le sens que c'est moi qui l'ai écrit. C'était mes idées. (At this point, Marinier suddenly shifted his discourse into English.) I knew where it was going. I knew what I wanted to do with it. Quand t'es en répétition, it's not like when you've got six months and you start writing slowly. T'es en répétition, you need something tomorrow. I would go in and I'd sit and I'd write say, three pages. Then, I'd try it out. And there was Diane [Fortin] and Carole [Caouette] with me; Diane doing la régie, Carole doing the lights, they were close collaborators. Also, they'd come in at night and talk about it and also explain that "Robert, we made a few cuts, here's a page left." Then, they would wait four days, five days for me to muddle through it and finally make the cuts. Usually they were right. They were a lot meaner than I was with the cutting, so instead of waiting another two weeks that I would normally take they

would say, “no, cut that and cut that and cut that...” This is why I say “we” because, in the end, it is a collaboration. At one point you say, well, whose idea is it. Everyone’s pitching ideas, I go home and I have a great idea, and I say, “is it my idea, or is it the group’s idea?”

Chevrier: Do you prefer this process? It reminds me of Shakespeare. How he would collaborate with the actors and write while he was in the theatre, rather than being home by himself.

Marinier: I call it writing standing up. Basically, that’s my training. I went to “acting school,” I learned to act in Montreal. And then I went to France where I learned how to improvise. But this was more than an “improv” course because it forces you to do everything. You have to write, act and direct as you go along; which means that you have to think everything out as you’re going along. It’s not just a matter of spouting words, but what words am I going to spout? Basically, it was a course that answered many questions for me: What’s a “situation dramatique,” what makes a story a story?, what’s a dialogue?, what’s a character?, what’s a mise-en-scène?, what are all the things you have to think about before you start telling the story and so on [...]

I was the author of *L’insomnie*, but I did everything. If I were to change a line, I would change a line. But usually I’d rehearse it first though because *L’insomnie* became very precise. In a sense, one of the safe-guards I had about having “un blanc,” a memory blank, was that I didn’t think about it, I just did the

next line. I would say to myself “don’t think about what’s coming next, you’ll get there.” Often it was because my body would automatically get into position for the next line. So I could not change things at random.

Chevrier: The process may be likened more to a story-telling performance than to a conventional dramatic story told by stage conventions. Do you ever see yourself as “conteur” rather than as an actor?

Marinier: I’ve done *Les conte*, and there is something magical about that. The conteur tells the story then he plays a bit of a part and he changes his voice to play the mean ogre (Marinier changes his voice as if to demonstrate). This is what I wanted to do with *L’insomnie*, put the theatre in people’s minds. Although we had a nice big set, the play was conceived to be performed in a two-meter by two-meter box. I should be able to play *L’Insomnie* on a street corner, if people were willing to sit there for an hour and a half to watch it. It came about basically from experiences I had as a young man doing different kinds of story-telling theatre.

When I was a kid, there was a “perspective jeunesse” opportunities for youth [...] which was a government program which gave summer work to students. The Trudeau government puts lots of money into it. I was part of that, and our project was “story theatre.” It was a bilingual show with a group of kids from Sudbury. Anyway, it was very exciting. We toured Ontario, we toured the Maritimes. It was basically the brain-child of one of the English guys. We did all kinds of things that were based on stories but were essentially very theatrical. So,

I wanted to re-explore that and get away from the typical characters on stage in which the audience is outside the box looking in. That's where *L'insomnie* came from—with a narration given directly to the public but also with a scene—“imagine an office looking like this,” and making the audience see all kinds of things, like a man walking through a giant clothes dryer.

A lot of people that put this play on call me up and say “I don't understand it” because they put it on, like at Laurentian University, with three actors. In fact, there is a group putting it on now with eight actors. Then, they say to me, “what do you mean by this, what do you mean by that,” and a lot of it was conceived to be played by one person. I can't imagine a lot of this dialogue being done by two people because it was not made for that. I haven't seen one of these productions, yet, I'm still waiting.

Because it is “dream-like” and because of certain theories I have concerning creativity and where it comes from, I did not try to manipulate the story to be easily readable from a Freudian perspective. For me, it was [a question of] “what would be weird,” and so, the idea of the “je” came from the fact that at one point somebody said, “who is the narrator?”...”when is it the narrator and when is it Gilles?” People saw the script and thought it was very bad writing. And I answered, well, does it matter? This became a problem, since if Gilles always said “il” then you would be even more lost. But to me it makes sense, because if you don't sleep for a week, then your brain starts doing weird things. So, for me it was one way of showing that, but also of showing the alarming stress of insomnia.

But the play is also about identity. What makes “me” me? So, Gilles doesn’t have a « me » anymore.

Chevrier: How much of that has to do with the fact that Gilles is a civil servant?

Marinier: Well, that’s kind of an Ottawa joke. I have these images that keep coming back to me and I keep re-introducing them all the time. The civil servant’s job is so obscure. A doctor is a doctor, a fireman is a fireman, a policeman a policeman, their job is very real; you know what it is. It’s that weird question in life: what am I doing, I don’t know what I’m doing. I push paper. There is no identity to be found in his work.

A recurring theme I use in other plays is adultery, which is a crime and yet not a crime. You don’t go to jail for it but it is still a crime. It’s a moral crime in the religious sense and in the sense of commitment to another person. I call it the ultimate bourgeois crime. You can’t go to jail for it, but it can fuck up your life pretty bad.

Take *Epinal*. In *Epinal*, a guy is going to meet his mistress at a hotel, the room is not ready so he goes to the bar to wait for her there. And the waiter starts to annoy him. And then it starts turning into a conflict. It appears to be such a banal event, but for him it’s not banal. It’s very serious. These little “non-events” interest me very much.

So, getting back to *L’insomnie*, the fact that Gilles is a civil servant is so banal that it doesn’t seem to matter. If he [Gilles] was a doctor having these

flashbacks it would go back to the life or death events of his profession. If he [Gilles] was a lawyer, it would have to do with the lying and cheating that are part of his job. Furthermore, when they are putting it on, people try to impose meaning when there is none. In Sudbury for instance, they asked me, “why is it that when he goes to see Ti-tine and Ti-bé, why is she this short and he that tall, what is the meaning?”. But there is no meaning. I just wanted to play with the audience’s head in that I [the performer whom they see] am always the same height, but in their imagination they see three people: one short, one medium and one tall. Does it have second meaning? I don’t know.

M. Singulier, for instance, is played very physically with his body very distorted. This is because when I wanted to create this character I couldn’t find a new voice, and I couldn’t find a new physical attribute. All of a sudden I had nothing. The only thing I could come back to was a character I used to play when I was in High school: a monster in a kid’s play. So, I re-played and re-created that.

As for performing comedy, dans mes pièces il y a beaucoup de « one liners » ...et, je sais que les Québécois « just don’t get it » *L’Insomnie* went over like a fart in church in Montreal. I played at Le Festival des Amériques and I am sure that if it had been in German, they would have loved it even if they didn’t understand a fucking word. But it was Franco-Ontarien so nobody cared. But it was a big success everywhere else. If it’s not a “big pie in the face” in Québec, well they don’t get the joke. Doing comedy is scary, you know, all they seem to have there is *La p’tit vie* which is kind of funny but that’s just one aspect of

comedy. There is much more subtle comedy. If you want to create good comedy, you have to create tension, and it's hard to create tension with card-board characters. Once you start creating characters with real problems, then you go that extra step in creating that tension that will make people laugh.

Chevrier: So you see a fundamental difference between the Québécois and the Franco-Ontarians. Can you foresee any way of bridging the gap? And if so, what does this mean for the survival of Franco-Ontarian culture in general?

Marinier: Do we really have a culture? Are we going to disappear as a people? I think that if we disappear then Quebec will eventually disappear because they say that a lot of languages are going to disappear, and French is no longer one of the ten major languages of the world...I think what's going to happen is that Quebec and Franco-Ontarian culture will become hybrid. Some pockets of die-hard francophones might remain, but I am sure we will disappear. Franco-Ontarian culture will disappear in places like Sudbury where there is not much left. Sure, when I die, there will be Francophones in Sudbury, but will there be something to write about? I don't think so. Here, in Ottawa, it will last longer...

As far as I'm concerned, I've never really done Franco-Ontarian plays, in the sense where my main theme is about being Franco-Ontarian. As a matter of fact, someone told me the other day, he said, "do you know why you are never studied in universities?—it's because you don't fit into the categories for being a Franco-

Ontarian writer like Michel Ouellette.” There are expectations for Franco-

Ontarian writers that I don’t fill, I guess.

Annex 3: Interview with Michel Ouellette, February 28, 2003

Introductory note: At the time of this interview, Michel Ouellette had written his latest play, *Le testament du couturier* (2002) and was looking forward to its upcoming production by le Théâtre la Catapulte in March 2003. *Le testament du couturier* marks a new direction in Ouellette's work as he appears to have shed his preoccupation with the localized past of the Franco-Ontarian people and replaced it with a more universal and disturbing vision of the future. In many ways, the following interview mirrors Ouellette's change in perspective. In it, he reflects upon his initial preoccupation with the collective past of the Franco-Ontarians, his personal struggles to shed that past and his new perspectives concerning the Franco-Ontarian people, their culture and their future.

Chevrier: Au début de votre carrière, connaissiez-vous André Paiement et le TNO ?

Ouellette : Oui, je les connaissais depuis mon adolescence, même si je n'avais jamais vu les pièces de Paiement. Le TNO est venu à mon village. *Lavalléville* a été présenté à Smooth Rock Falls en 1975, je crois. J'étais en huitième année and je me souviens qu' ils s'étaient installés dans le gymnase de l'école. Mais, à l'époque je ne sortais pas, alors je ne pouvais pas voir ce spectacle. Mais, par la suite, au secondaire quand je commençais à faire du théâtre pour de vrai, c'est à dire à m'initier à l'écriture dramatique, c'est à ce moment que j'ai pris conscience du fait Franco-Ontarien. Il s'incarnait beaucoup avec le premier disque de CANO. C'était des chansons tirées des spectacles de Paiement. Donc, c'était à ce moment là que j'ai commencé à faire du théâtre, que j'ai pris conscience du TNO. Sauf que, curieusement, les textes que j'ai écrit à cette époque, j'en ai écrit quatre d'ailleurs, n'étaient pas des textes oraux. Ce n'était pas des textes qui cherchaient à transposer l'oralité ou le parler des gens. Je n'avais pas conscience de ça, mais plus tard, quand j'ai fait une adaptation de *Lavalléville* à Sudbury, je pense que c'était le 27^{ième} anniversaire de TNO, j'ai pu voir les personnages autrement, et comprendre aussi qu' André Paiement venait de l'école classique et que sa pièce *Lavalléville* était construite à partir d'un mythe. Les personnages ont des noms mythiques : Hermèse, Adolphe, Diane...et mon adaptation a cherché à révéler cela. Je voyais dans ce travail une forme de création qui était loin de ce que j'avais imaginé. Parce qu'on imagine André Paiement comme étant celui qui a

fait parler toute une génération, qui a « dit » l'Ontario français à cette époque là et qui a mis en place beaucoup des organismes importants.

Mais, j'étais étonné de constater que quelque part dans ce qu'il disait, ce n'était pas moi, j'imaginai que c'était une génération qui voulait tout défoncer et qui voulait aller ailleurs. Mais dans son théâtre [Paiement] je trouve qu'il y a en effet l'idée de défoncer, de faire éclater, de faire la révolution sociale mais dans le sens de renouer avec le passé. Pour moi dans le théâtre de Paiement, surtout dans *Médéric Boileau*, son grand-père représente cette tradition. Je pense qu'il y avait plus contre ses parents que contre ses grands-parents. C'est curieux de constater que moi j'avais toujours perçu *Lavalléeville* comme étant une pièce sur le Franco-Ontarien qui sort de son village et qui se libère de ses chaînes et qui s'en va dans le monde. Mais en fait, il s'agit d'une oeuvre qui conteste l'autorité et rétablit un nouvel ordre à l'intérieur du village. Quand j'ai compris cela, cela m'a un peu déprimé. Parce que moi, à l'époque, dans les années 1980s, ma vision des choses était d'aller par en avant et de ne pas rester enfermé, de ne pas me replier sur moi.

Mais Paiement n'était pas une vraie influence. Par contre, les mouvements des années 1970s, oui. C'est ce qui m'a amené au théâtre très jeune, au niveau du primaire, parce qu'à cette époque il y avait des jeunes animateurs qui organisaient des activités d'art dramatique. Durant l'été, où pendant l'année, j'avais une cousine qui a monté un spectacle de théâtre, et j'ai joué dedans.

Pour ce qui concerne des influences théâtrales, je ne peux pas dire qu'il y en a. Parce que, j'ai pas de fonds théâtraux, je n'ai pas fréquenté les écoles et je m'intéresse à tout, je lis toutes sorte de choses. J'ai toujours tout pris. Même

aujourd'hui quand je m'attaque à un texte, j'aime lire des historiens, des économistes...même des romans policiers, la science-fiction...je me considère un peu comme un éponge.

Chevrier : Comme Paiement, vous vous intéressez au passé. Et dans votre oeuvre ça se voit à travers le phénomène des mort-vivant—les revenants dans vos pièces. Est-ce que les revenants ont une fonction au delà du choc de leur présence physique sur les personnages vivants ?

Ouellette : Oui, par exemple dans *French Town*, la mère est morte, mais elle transporte tout un discours du passé qui n'est j'amaï entendu auparavant. Les autres personnages ne voient pas la mère, mais ils entendent néanmoins son discours, et c'est un discours qu'ils ne reconnaissent pas. Ma génération, je l'analyse ainsi—une génération qui a été coupée de son passé. Je me souviens quand je me suis retrouvé dans le Nord de l'Ontario. Après avoir voyagé comme un jeune adulte, je voulais connaître mes racines. J'ai réalisé que je ne comprenais pas pourquoi les Franco-Ontariens existaient. Je ne comprenait pas pourquoi les francophones, mes parents—mes grandparents, étaient venus s'installer dans le Nord de l'Ontario. Je ne pouvais pas situer ça dans le temps. Je n'avais aucune notion de notre histoire. Donc, quand j'en suis retourné, c'est ça qui m'a inspiré ; *Corbeaux en exil* est un peu cette réflexion-là.

Mes parents sont au courant, parce-qu'ils l'ont vécu, mais jusqu'à un certain point. Ils ne connaissent pas tout le contexte politique/économique des

Franco-Ontariens. Ils savent quand ils sont arrivés là, mais pourquoi leurs parents, leur grandparents voulaient s'y installer—il ne se sont jamais posé la question. Tandis que moi, je cherchais à tout comprendre pour me rendre compte de quelque chose de vaste et d'oublié.

Il y avait des communautés canadienne-françaises, par exemple, qui se sont établies dans des villages du Nord de l'Ontario puis qui ont disparu. Justement, dans la ville de Smooth Rock Falls il y avait un quartier qu'on appelait « French Town » où les Franco-Ontariens habitaient. Mais il n'y a plus de trace aujourd'hui de cela : personne peut indiquer l'emplacement exact de « French Town. » Il y en a encore des vieux qui se souviennent qu'il y a des endroits qu'on nommait French Town dans certains villages. Mais aujourd'hui, il n'en reste plus rien de cela. Alors, dans un sens la mère morte incarnait un peu cette histoire, parce que les autres personnages, les jeunes personnages vivant, ne la connaissent pas.

Plus tard, c'est vrai que le travail concernant les morts est plus un travail sur le temps. Ma perception est que le passé est là, autour de nous. Il y a toujours des échos. Je cherchais d'abord à transcrire, à faire parler les échos du passé. On est ici maintenant, mais ici, il n'y pas si longtemps, il s'est passé autres choses. Je trouvais ça intéressant de travailler sur le temps.

Chevrier : Il y a certain moment où Annie dans *L'homme effacé*, veut rejeter le passé.

Ouellette : Oui, dans *L'Homme effacé* il y toute une tension entre le passé et le futur. C'est-tu le passé où c'est-tu l'avenir qui nous détermine comme des individus? C'est une question qui remonte de temps en temps. Le futur est toujours à venir, il est certain. Mais le passé est incertain. C'est incertain parce qu'il est subjectif, parce qu'on le vit au présent sans le comprendre. C'est seulement après avoir vécu l'événement qu'on le reconstitue dans la mémoire. On a l'impression que l'événement du passé est vrai, que c'est solide mais, en réalité il est plus flou que l'avenir.

Je pense que nous sommes toujours hantés par le passé. Puis des fois dans mon écriture, je cherche à me défaire de cette hantise. Parce que je la trouve lourd ! Je m'attaque à une histoire où je vois toujours le personnage comme étant porteur de l'histoire. Il a toujours une histoire à révéler. Je vois rarement les personnages comme étant des « forces » qui s'affrontent dans un présent qui progresse vers quelque choses. C'est plutôt des personnages lourds de différentes histoires et je cherche à faire révéler ces histoires, des fois pour produire un effet de catharsis. Mais maintenant, j'ai l'impression que je me suis vidé de plusieurs notions du passé qui étaient trop personnelles. Dans mon théâtre, souvent je fais appel à mes propres souvenirs--surtout les souvenirs de mes parents, ou les souvenirs de mon village. Maintenant, je fabrique autres choses.

Chevrier : Il y a cette préoccupation avec le passé chez les personnages, surtout chez Pierre-Paul, dans *French Town*, qui mène un véritable combat avec le passé, pour, apparemment le fermer.

Ouellette : Oui—« closure »--mais moi je pense qu'il y a beaucoup de choses qui restent irresolues. Je pense que celle-ci est peut-être d'une perspective minoritaire, dans le sens qu'on ne peut pas tout résoudre. Parfois la vie est trop fragmentée. Je pense que quand tu appartiens à la majorité, ces conclusions arrivent plus facilement, plus naturellement. Je pense aussi que dans une société minoritaire il y a toujours le problème du repli. La communauté franco-ontarienne s'est définie comme une communauté en marge, contrainte à se marginaliser mais qui s'est contentée de rester à l'intérieur de l'église catholique—à l'intérieur de la langue française. Le résultat est le portrait d'un solitaire qui n'appartient pas. Par conséquent, c'est la fuite puis l'errance ou c'est l'alcoolisme, l'exclusion, la prison. Pour moi à la fin, je vois le drame qui n'a jamais été dit, peut-être parce qu'on n'avait pas un sens de l'histoire, un sens d'appartenir à cette histoire. L'histoire en Ontario c'est l'histoire d'un autre. Je pense que cela a changé depuis trente ans mais tout le monde n'est pas prêt à le reconnaître. Au fond, c'est toujours la majorité qui a fait l'histoire.

Chevrier : Mais dans vos textes, le passé s'inscrit souvent dans le présent aussi car les gens du présent aiment mieux parler du passé que d'agir dans le présent.

Ouellette : Oui, ce que nous voyons souvent dans mes textes dramatiques est une situation d'arrêt. Dans le sens que le temps s'arrête pour que le passé rattrape le présent. C'est comme si avant d'avancer dans un présent linéaire, il faut

premièrement affronter le passé. Quand j'écrivais, je cherchais une structure qui supportait tout cela.

Chevrier : La fin de *Requiem* est marqué d'un espoir qu'il n'y a pas dans *French Town*. Est-ce que ça constate un certain changement d'avis thématique pour ce qui concerne le Franco-Ontarien ?

Ouellette : Avec des pièces comme *Requiem* et *L'homme effacé*, j'ai voulu répondre aux critiques à propos des choses qu'ils m'avaient reprochées au sujet de *French Town*. Puis c'était pour marquer une certaine distance aussi. J'avais l'impression parfois qu'on m'enfermait dans *French Town*—dans un certain style dans une certaine idée. Bien des gens voyait *French Town* comme étant dans la lignée de *Le chien* et de *Lavalléville*. On me reprochait d'être dans le passé. Tandis que moi, je percevais mon théâtre autrement.

Car, mon théâtre ce n'est pas un théâtre qui se replie sur lui même. Il y a de ça, oui. On peut dire oui ça fait penser à *Lavalléville*, ça fait penser au *Chien* à toute cette thématique là. Mais, c'est pas juste ça. Il y a une volonté d'aller ailleurs. Il y a l'ailleurs. On peut faire des liens avec les ailleurs qui sont nommées. Ce n'est pas pour rien que dans *Requiem*, je voulais montrer Pierre-Paul en Europe. Même dans *La dernière fugue*, le frère est allé combattre en Espagne. De plus en plus, je veux dire que oui nous sommes ici mais nous sommes dans le monde aussi. Nous ne sommes pas enfermés dans *Lavalléville*. Certains commentateurs imaginent ou préfèrent voir nos oeuvres de cette angle là.

Il me semble que je ne parle pas seulement de replis. Je pense dans *French Town* je cherchais à montrer les liens avec le passé, oui, mais les liens aussi avec la langue, la politique de la langue. Je voulais montrer que les gens qui parlent bien ont un pouvoir sur ceux qui parlent moins bien. Voilà la dynamique franco-ontarienne, mais il s'agit d'une dynamique qui se trouve aussi en Belgique, en France, aux Antilles, dans toutes sortes de situations de colonisation. Dans ce sens- là, quand on essaie de réduire mon oeuvre à quelque chose qui concerne seulement un passé close et circulaire, je trouve que c'est une vision courte.

Je trouve aussi qu'il y a tout un débat qui diminue le Nord, comme si notre théâtre est « régional » et sans importance puisque l'action se déroule dans le Nord de l'Ontario. Alors que si l'histoire se déroule à Toronto, un lieu international, il s'agit d'un théâtre plus « réel ». Voilà le genre de débat qui m'agace. Je trouve que les critiques passent à côté des choses essentielles qui sont dans les oeuvres. Mais, moi je ne peux pas arrêter les gens de penser. Je pense qu'il y a des choses qui vont se révéler plus tard. Et c'est vrai que ce que j'écris maintenant va peut-être jeter des éclairages nouveaux sur mon oeuvre existante. Mais je ne l'explique plus parce que comme je disais tantôt, j'ai l'impression d'avoir évacué beaucoup de choses de mon passé. Actuellement, ce qui m'intéresse est l'imaginaire, le présent, l'avenir, et beaucoup moins ce passé culturel, même si ce passé va demeurer parce que j'aime bien parler de Kapuskasing, et du Nord de l'Ontario. Dans un même texte, parler de Kapuskasing puis de Toronto puis de Québec ça aide à donner une perspective réelle aussi.

Chevrier : Vous venez de mentionner une évacuation de votre passé. Pouvez vous élaborer un peu sur ça.

Ouellette : Je constate que dans les dernières années j'ai essayé de me libérer de certains personnages, par exemple, du personnage de la mère. Mais j'ai bien de la difficulté parce qu'elle reste. Est-ce peut-être une invitation à renouveler le discours, à dire autre chose et de ne pas dire la même chose ? Des fois j'aimerais bien écrire des pièces où il n'y a pas de mère. Même dans *Requiem* Cindy est une future mère qui va recommencer le monde car les mères ont toujours cette fonction là dans mes pièces. C'est la tradition ; c'est la base du monde.

Chevrier : Etes vous fini avec le Nord de l'Ontario ?

Ouellette : Je pense que dès *Fench Town*, je m'en éloignais. Parce que les personnages les plus importants ne viennent plus du Nord de l'Ontario. Martin, il vient d'ailleurs; Pierre-Paul vient d'ailleurs. Ils reviennent, oui, pour régler des questions et pour contribuer à la famille. Dans le fond, c'est peut-être un souhait de ma part, puis de toute une génération de gens comme moi qui ont été forcés à l'exil pour des raisons économiques, mais qui aimeraient bien revenir pour transformer, pour contribuer et pour s'inscrire dans la continuité. Une fois que t'as dépassé ce sentiment là, le rapport avec le lieu change.

Mon oeuvre constate ce mouvement : que le centre d'attention se déplace. Le Nord de l'Ontario reste seulement comme un lieu qu'on mentionne. Dans *L'homme effacé* Annie vit à Toronto, l'action est à Toronto mais le passé c'est Sudbury. Puis maintenant, je dirais que je ne pourrais pas écrire une histoire qui se situe concrètement dans le Nord. Je n'ai plus la dynamique de celui qui revient. En fait s'il revenait, cette fois il serait un anti-héro.

Chevrier : Si le Franco-Ontarien se situait auparavant dans le Nord, où est-ce qu'il se situe maintenant ?

Ouellette : Moi, je pense qu'il est un peu partout. L'idée franco-ontarienne a pris un peu de temps à se faire comprendre. Il s'agissait d'un mouvement qui exigeait une vision des choses. Il fallut accepter d'être un Franco-Ontarien. Il fallut se dire Franco-Ontarien, et revendiquer tout le reste. Actuellement, nous sommes entré dans une phase où le passé est acquis. Le drapeau est là. L'identité est cernée. Donc maintenant, on peut commencer à vivre autrement que de se mettre en position de revendication et de combat.

De plus en plus les enfants franco-ontariens s'éparpillent dans le monde, ils sont reconnus dans le monde. Ce n'est pas un phénomène d'église—de salle paroissiale...nous sommes dans le monde. Il y a des gens qui travaillent à Montréal qui font des choses intéressantes; il y des gens d'ici donc le travail est reconnu ailleurs.

Moi, je suis un Franco-Ontarien qui vit au Québec. Je ne suis pas Québécois selon la notion de l'identité que les Québécois se sont faites. Mais, d'une certaine façon, je pourrais dire que je suis Québécois—si Québécois veut dire Canadien-Français. Je pense pour certain, peut-être plusieurs aujourd'hui, Québécois veut dire Canadien-Français, au moins francophone. Et pour d'autres, Québécois veut dire ceux qui vivent au Québec. Le Québec n'a pas réglé cette question non plus. C'est la même question qui se pose dans notre communauté: le Franco-Ontarien, c'est quoi ? Ce n'est pas juste les Catholiques, ce n'est pas juste les blancs. Parce que j'ai habité à Toronto, j'ai compris cela. J'ai compris que l'identité Franco-Ontarienne doit être globale, ouverte. Il doit dépasser les frontières. Il y a des Franco-Ontariens de sources. Il y a des Franco-Ontariens en milieu—des Québécois qui travaillent dans les écoles les milieux Franco-Ontariens. Je pense qu'ils font tous partie de l'identité Franco-Ontarienne. Donc, pour moi c'est quelque chose qui est en train de changer, de s'ouvrir.

Annex 4: Theatrical Activities of TNO

Historical note: Le Théâtre du Nouvel Ontario was first conceived and then founded by the members of “La Troupe de L’université Laurentienne” at Laurentian University in Sudbury, Ontario. After their first original production, Païement’s *Moé j’viens du Nord, stie* (1971), the troupe adopted their new name and began to devote themselves to original works that reflected their vision of Franco-Ontarian drama and culture. Since their founding, TNO has evolved in three recognizable stages: the 1970s, the 1980s, and the 1990s to the present.

During the 1970s, TNO was essentially a touring collective bringing the people’s theatre of André Païement--*Moé j’viens du Nord* (1971), *La vie et les temps de Médéric Boileau* (1973), *Lavalléeville* (1974)-- and others to various towns and cities throughout Canada. In 1975, Païement, the visionary driving force behind TNO, left the troupe in order to further pursue his musical career with CANO; and, in 1978, he took his own life. The loss of Païement coincided with a steady decline of TNO until, by the 1980s, it had practically ceased to function.

However, TNO’s demise was prevented in 1982 with the arrival of Brigitte Haentjens and Jean Marc Dalpé who became the company’s new artistic directors. During this decade the troupe acquired a permanent theatre space in the “Moulin-à-fleur,” the French-Canadian district of Sudbury. No longer a touring company, they established regular seasons and began to perform various text-

based plays such as Dalpé and Haentjen's *Nickel* (1984), Dalpé, Bellefeuille and Marinier's *Les Rogers* (1985) and Dalpé's *Le Chien* (1987). However, the 1980s was also marked by a continued commitment to the precepts of "orality" as seen, first of all, in the dramatized poetry readings conducted by Dalpé (1983, 1984, 1987 and 1989), and secondly, in the various adaptations of the *Contes de Ti-Jean* that began in the seventies and continued in the eighties (1976, 1977, 1983, 1984).

By the 1990s, TNO had thus established itself as one of the key players in the development of Franco-Ontarian culture. Their status attracted playwrights from other areas of Ontario and these artists came to Sudbury to launch their new plays. The most important of these artists was Michel Ouellette who brought with him *French Town* (1992), *Le Bateleur* (1994) and *L'homme effacé* (1996).

1970-1971

Moé, j'veiens du Nord s'tie

La Troupe de L'Université Laurentienne

Text : André Paiement

Director : André Paiement

Music : Jacques Chartrand, Jim Cryderman, Pierre Germain, Donald Laframboise, Robert Paquette.

Lighting : Conrad Morin

Setting : Yvon Besner, Danielle Talbot

Cast : Thérèse Boutin, Denis Courville, Jean-Paul Gagnon, Carol Morisette, André Paiement, Denis St-Jules, Gaston Tremblay

Performances: in Sudbury on February 1 & 2, 1971 and in seven northern Ontario towns in the Winter and Spring of that year.

Published : Prise de Parole, Ottawa: 1978

1971-1972

Et le septième jour

Text : André Paiement

Director : André Paiement

Projections : Denis Courville

Lighting : Jean-Paul Gagnon

Masks : Diane Roux

Cast : Pierre Bélanger, Monique Boisvert, Donald Laframboise, Pierre Germain, Daniel Jacques, André Paiement, Robert Paquette, Michelle Vézeau

Performances : February 1972 in Sudbury, toured Ontario in September 1971 and Quebec in the Summer and Fall of 1971.

Number of performances: 27

Ti-Jean joueur de tours

Inspired by the contes and songs of Père Germain Lemieux

Director: Monique Rioux

Technical team: Jean-Paul Gagnon, Paul Giroux

Cast : Gisèle Dandeneau, Robert Marinier, Collette Naubert

Toured : Northern Ontario during the Summer and Fall of 1971

Chialeux Marabout

Puppet and clown show for children

Toured: Northern Ontario, September 1971

1972-1973

A mes fils bien aimés

Text : André Paiement

Directors : Pierre Bélanger, Jean-Paul Gagnon

Music : Marie-Claire Blais, Pierre Germain, Robert Paquette

Technician : Marcel Aymar

Cast : Michael Gallagher, Daniel Jacques, André Paiement

Performances : Sudbury : November 22-26, 1972 ; March 16, 1973 ; Summer 1973.

Toured: Fall and Spring 1972: Sturgeon Falls, Ottawa, Toronto, Noelville, Penetanguishene, Hammer, Dubreuilville, Toronto.

Number of performances: 23.

1973-1974

La vie et les temps de Médéric Boileau

Text : André Paiment

Director : Gilles Garand

Music : Marcel Aymar, André Paiment

Musical Arrangement: David C. Burt

Lighting: Marc Delorme

Sound: Jacques Chartrand

Setting: Jacques Chartrand, Marc Delorme

Cast: Marcel Aymar, Suzie Beauchemin, Daniel Jacques, Rachel Paiment,

André Paiment

Performances : Sudbury : September 28, 1973 ; November 1, 1973 ; December 12, 1973.

From October 1, 1973 to December 16, 1973: Hearst, Kapuskasing, Smooth Rock Falls, Cochrane, Iroquois Falls, Ramore, Kirkland Lake, Hannover, Sturgeon Falls, Noelville, Hull, Orleans, Ottawa, Plantagenet, Lafontaine, Penetanguishene, George Bay, Niagara Falls, Welland, Windsor, Cambridge, Espanola, Thunder Bay, Chapleau, North Bay.

Published : Prise de Parole, Ottawa : 1978

Les Communords

Text : Claude Belcourt

Director : Bernard Martineau

Cast : Marcel Aymar, Suzie Beauchemin, Marc Delorme, Daniel Jacques, André

Paiement

Performances : 4 in March of 1974 in sudbury.

1974-1975

Lavalléville

Text : André Paiement

Director : Pierre Germain

Music : Marcel Aymar, André Paiement

Musical Arrangement : David Burt

Lighting : Marc Delorme

Sound : Philippe Legault

Setting : Raymond Simon

Costumes: Cathy Brown

Cast: Marcel aymar, suzie Beauchemin, Louise Beaudoin, Daniel Jacques, Joseph

Mathie, André Paiement

Performances : Sudbury : October 28, 1974 ; February 6-9 1975;

Northern Ontario and Quebec: Fall 1974, Winter and Spring 1975

Roughly 40 presentations

Critical Reaction :

Dickson, Robert. "L'Espace à créer et l'espace qui reste" *Revue de Nouvel-*

Ontario 4 (1982): 56-57.

Gay, Paul. "Deux comedies d'André Paiement" *Le Droit* 26 August 1978: 17.

Gay, Paul. "Paul-André Paiement (1950-1978), ou le désespoir du colonisé",

Theatre History in Canada/Histoire du théâtre au Canada 7. 2 (1986):

176-185.

O'Neill-Karch, Mariel. "Signes textuels de l'espace scénique dans *Lavalléville*"

in *Théâtre franco-ontarien: Espaces ludiques*. Vanier : L'Interligne, 1992.

Publication: Ottawa: Prise de Parole, 1983.

1975-1976

Le Malade imaginaire

Text: Jean Baptiste Poquelin Molière

Adaptation : André Paiement

Director : Jean-Marc Leclerc

Music : Marcel Aymar, David C. Burt

Lighting: Mark Delorme

Costumes: Marise Baillargeon, Susanne Hurtubise

Cast: Carole Auger, Ginette Beauchemin, Daniel Chartrand, Daniel Jacques,

Gilles Leduc, André-Paul Legault, Paul-André Legault, Luc Thériault

Performances : Fall 1975 and December 21, 1975 in Sudbury

Toured: Fall 1976 in Toronto

Number of Performances: 12

Les Folionettes

Text: Philippe Legault

Cast: Ginette Beauchemin, Louise Beaudoin, Gilles Leduc, Lise Roy

Toured : February 1976

Number of Performances : 2

1976-1977

Ti-Jean de mon pays

Text: Nicole Beauchamp

Inspired by the collected contes of Père Germain Lemieux

Director: Hélène Gravel

Technical Team: Hélène Gravel, Anne-Marie Lavigne, Paulette Légère, Robert

Pellerin, Luc Robert, Gaston Tremblay, Anna White, Liane Wyman

Cast : Nicole Beauchamp, Paulette Légère, Robert Marinier, Pierre Paquette

Performances : February 25, 1977 in Sudbury

Toured :

February 1977 in Quebec: Montreal, Balmoral, Campbellton, Robertville, St-Anne.

March 1977 in the Maritimes: Tracadie, Shippagan, Bouctouche, Cocagne,

Dieppe, Moncton, St-Meteghan, St-Anlphonse, Pubnico ouest, Wedgeport,

Pubnico, Tusket, Rivière Bourgeois, Chéticamp, Charlottetown, Abrams Village,

St-Louis, Fredericton, St-Anne, Grand Sault, Edmundston

March 20, 1977 in Montreal.

March and April 1977 in Ontario: Vankleed Hill, Hawkesbury, Plantagenet, Alfred, Casselman, St. Isidore de Prescott, Wendover, Rockland, Limoges, Embrun, Ste. Catherines, Niagara Falls, Port Colborne, Welland, Delhi, Brantford Cambridge, Kitchener, Georgetown, Guelph, Windsor, Pointes-aux-Roches, Pain Court, London, Woodstock, Thunder Bay

April and May 1977 in West Canada: Winnipeg, Bellegarde, Regina, Saskatoon, Vonda, St-Brieux, Prince-Albert, Bellevue, Doden, North Battleford, St. Paul, Bonnyville, Morinville, Falher, Girouxville, Edmonton, Calgary, Lac Louise, Medicine Hat, Ponteix, Gravelbourg, Ferland, Willow Bunch, Regina, Geraldton

May 1977 in Quebec and Canada East: Labrador City, Montréal, Stephenville, St-John's, Rimouski, Edmundston, Iroquois, St-Quentin, Kedgwick, Claire, St-François, Bakerbrook, Grande-Anse.

Number of Performances: 129

1977-1978

Scène d'amour : a collages of dramatic sketches from various French-Canadian authors

Text: Jean Barbeau, Clémence Desrochers, Robert Dickson, Marcel Dubé, Michel Garneau, Gratien Gélinas, Jean-Claude Germain, Robert Gurik, Jacques Languirand, Roland Lepage, Louvigny de Montigny, Michel Tremblay

Director : Eugène Gallant

Stage director : Mark Delorme

Lighting : Gérard Vachon

Costumes: Cathy McLaren

Set: Mark Delorme, Gérard Vachon

Cast: Katherine Kilfoil, Paulette Légère, Robert Marinier, André Roy

Performances : May 25-28, 1978 in Sudbury

Number of performances : 4

Ti-Jean fin voleur

Inspired by the contes and songs collected by Père Germain Lemieux

Director: Hélène Gravel

Lighting: Gérard Vachon

Set: Luc Robert

Costumes: Rose-Marie Kingsley

Cast: Katherine Kilfoil, Robert Marinier, André Roy, Paulette Légère

Performances: in Sudbury: October 21-25, 1977; October 31 & November 1, 1977; November 9, 1977; November 15, 1977; November 17, 1977

Number of performances: 36

Toured: October, November and December in Ontario: Blezard Valley, Hanmer, Capréol, Chelmsford, Azilda, Dowling, Markstay, Wahnapiatae, Rayside, Chapleau, Dubreuilville, Wawa

1978-1979

En plein paiement

Text: André Paiement

Director : Brian David

Technical team : Edward Blanchard, Marie Brunet, Henriette Dauphinais, Brian David, Claire Dickson, Tiphonie Dickson, Michael Gallagher, Eugene Gallant, Ronald Gauthier, Lyne Jolicoeur, Marcel Lalonde, Malcolm Lamothe

Cast: Sylvie Ferlatte, André Roy, André Thériault

Toured : Northern Ontario in November 1978

Number of Performances : 13

Et si le p'tit chaperon rouge n'avait rencontré le loup

Text : André Roy

Director : André Roy

Music : Michel Pélissier

Set : Dominique L'Abbé, Gérard Vachon

Cast : Carole Aveline, Roch Castonguay, Marc Cholette, Sylvie Ferlatte

Performances : in Sudbury : May 7-25, 1979

Toured: April 30 to May 4, 1979 in the region of Nipissing; May and June 1979 in Ontario: Espanola, Spanish, Elliot Lake, Sault Ste-Marie, Blind River, Wawa, Dubreuilville, Manitouwadge, Geraldton, Opasatika, Val Rita, Kapuskasing, Fauquier, Smooth Rock Falls, Val Gagné, Iroquois Falls, Timmins, Gogama, Earlton, Haileybury, New Liskeard

Number of Performances: 75

1979-1980

Maria Chapdelaine

Co-production of T.N.O. and Théâtre du p'tit bonheur

Text: Louis Hémon

Adaptation: Armand Laroche

Director : Eugène Gallant

Costumes and set : Claude Rocque

Lighting : Marye Tanguay

Producer: Guy Richer

Cast: Jean-Marc Amyot, Marie-Hélène Fontaine, Armand Laroche, Carmelle

Legal, Robert Marinier, Marc Royer, Christian Vidosà

Performances: October 4-13, 1979 in Sudbury

Number of Performances : 10

Lafortune et Lachance

Text : Robert Marinier

Director : Robert Marinier

Tecnician : Chrystianne Drolet

Cast : Chrystianne Drolet, Katherine Kilfoil, Paul Latreille

Performances : February 1980 in Sudbury

Number of Performances: 6

Bonjour le monde: a children's play with 3 sketches and 4 characters ages 10 to 12 years

Text: Mariette Thberge

Director: Louise Nolan

Lighting and Technical director: Marc Delorme

Cast: Clarence Breau, Sylvie Ferlatte, Louise Nolan, Constant Lalonde

Perfromances in Sudbury : February 25-29, 1980 ; March 3 & 4, 1980 ; June 5-8, 1980

Toured:

February 1980 in Ontario: Espanola, Spanish, Blind River, Elliot Lake, Sault ste. Marie, Wawa, Dubreuilville, Chapleau, Foleyet, Gogama, Kirkland Lake, Smooth Rock Falls, Kapuskasing, Fauquier, Val Rita, Chelmsford, Jackson, Val Caron, Azilda

March 1980 in Canada West: Winnipeg, St-Norberg, St-Claude, Notre Dame de Lourdes, St- Malo, St-Pierre, St-Adolphe, Ile-des Chnes, Lorette, Powerview, St-Laurent, Ste-Anne, La Broquerie, Brandon, Ignace, Thunder Bay

April and May 1980 in the Maritimes: Charlottetown, Abramstown, Pomquet, Chtcamp, St-jean, Cape St-George, Halifax, Dartmouth, Point de l'Eglise, Mtghan, Fredericton, Cocagne, Moncton, Tracadie, St-Isidore, Kedgwick, Irland Sault, St-Franois de Madawaska, Edmunston

June 1980 in the Grand Sudbury region and Ontario: Chelmsford, Caprol, Hanmer, Alban, Noelville, Val Caron, Earlton, New Liskeard, Ramore, Iroquois Falls, Cochrane, Timmins, Toronto, Manitoba

Number of Performances: 104

1980-1981

La Tante

Text: Robert Marinier

Director: Robert Marinier

Set : Yvon Tanguay

Music : Ricki Lamoureux

Cast: Christine Paquette, André Roy

Performances in Sudbury: June and December 1981

Number of Performances: 7

Publication: Sudbury: Prise de Paole, 1981.

1981-1982

Le chat d'Etienne

Text : André Roy

Director : André Roy

Music : Michel Pélissier, Pierre Plante

Set concept : Jean Bécotte

Cast : Clément Cormier, Francine Côté, Christine Paquette

Performances : May and June 1981 ; February 1982

Number of Performances: 53

1982-1983

Les porteurs d'eau

Text: Michel-Marc Bouchard

Director : Brigitte Haentjens

Technical Team : Marcel Aymar, Kim Cholette, Denis Couture, Robert Paquette

Music : Normand Thériault

Cast : Marie-José Baron, Hélène Bernier, Jean Marc Dalpé, Diane Fortin

Performances : May 1982, Winter 1983

Number of Performances : 30

Laurent et mille-feuilles

Text : Claude Lapointe, Lise L. Roy

Director : Jean Marc Dalpé

Technician : Normand Thériault

Cast : Joelle Roy

Toured : Fall 1982: Espanola, Elliot Lake, Blind River, Chapleau, Dubreuilville, Earlton, New Liskeard, Haileybury, Cochrane, Iroquois Falls, Val Gagné, Ramore, Ottawa, Sarsfield, Nepean, Orleans, Kingston, Georgetown, Mississauga, Toronto, Ste. Catherines, Barrie, Windsor, Penetanguishene, Lafontaine

Number of Performances: 40

Histoire de Pleine Lune**Text:** Denis Couture**Director:** Denis Couture**Cast:** Hélène Bernier, Jean-Marc Dalpé, Diane Fortin**Toured :** Fall 1982, Ontario ; Fall 1983, Canada West : Saskatoon, Prince Albert, Edmonton, Peace River, Calgary, Gravelbourg**Number of Performances:** 47**1983-1984*****Quelques mots au bout d'un crayon (poetry reading and performance)*****Text :** Jean Marc Dalpé**Interpretation :** Jean Marc Dalpé**Performances :** Fall 1983, Spring 1984 in ontario and Acadia**Number of Performances:** 20***Nickel:*****Co-production of Théâtre du Nouvel Ontario and Théâtre français du Centre national des Arts****Text :** Jean Marc Dalpé, Brigitte Haentjens**Director :** Brigitte Haentjens**Lighting :** Hélène Bernier

Production team: Yves Gérard Benoit, Pierre Perreault, Hélène Bernier

Music : Daisy Debolt

Cast : Robert Bellefeuille, Michel-Marc Bouchard, Kim Cholette, Jean Marc Dalpé, Daisy Debolt, Chantal LaVallée, Stéphane Lestage, Robert Marinier, Danielle St-Aubin, Jocelyn Tardif

Performances : In Sudbury: March 2, 1984 ; April 3-7, 1984 ; April 12, 1984.

In the Maritimes: Caraquet, Tracadie, Shippagan, Moncton in March 1984.

In Ontario: Ottawa, Alexandria, Windsor, Espanola, Kapuskasing, Iroquois Falls, Sault Ste. Marie in March and april 1984.

In Québec in April 1984.

Number of performances: 40

Critical Reaction:

Ackerman, Marianne. "Politics and passion in Sudbuty's *Nickel*" *The Gazette*

18 April 1984: G1.

-----"Ontario's French theatre Tackles Tough Social Issues" *The*

Gazette 19 April 1984: G8.

Chiasson, Euclide and Kevin Whelton. "*Nickel*" *New Maritimes* (April 1984):

13.

Dorais, Fernand. "*Nickel*: une réussite de l'imaginaire." *Liaison* 33 (1984-85):

57.

Gay, Paul. "*Nickel* de Brigitte Haentjens et Jean Marc Dalpé. Une histoire

d'amour sur fond de mines" *Le Droit* 18 August 1984: 22.

Guay, Hervé. "*Nickel*: Les risques de la création." *Liaison* 31 (1984): 64.

Hare, John. "Miners' lives portrayed in *Nickel*" *The Citizen* 9 March 1984:

61.

Lefebvre, Paul. "Emotion et didacticisme font bon ménage" *Le Devoir* 21 April

1984: 34.

O'Neill-Karch, Mariel. "Fonctions des objets ou espace concret dans *Nickel*" in

Théâtre franco-ontarien : Espaces ludiques. Vanier : L'Interligne, 1992.

Simard, France. "*Nickel* du Théâtre du Nouvel-Ontario. Le Sudbury minier des

années 30" *Le Droit* 9 March 1984: 14.

Villeneuve, Jocelyne. "encore une fois...quoiqu'il arrive" *Le Voyageur* 11 April 1

1984: 9.

Publication : Ottawa : Prise de Parole, 1984

1984-1985

Un p'tit bout de stage

Text: Jean Marc Dalpé, Brigitte Haentjens

Director : Brigitte Haentjens

Set : Robert Paquette

Cast : Jean Marc Dalpé, Brigitte Haentjens

Performances in Sudbury : November 9, 1984 ; April 30, 1985

Toured: Fall 1984 and Spring 1985 in Ontario: Ottawa, Toronto, Peterborough,

Sarnia, Ste. Catherine's, Blezard Valley, Caprétol, Coniston, Garson, Chelmsford,

Dowling, Hamilton, Sault Ste. Marie, Dubreuilville, Chapleau, Gogoma, Espanola,

Val thérèse, Walden, Noelville, St. Charles, Pembroke, Oshawa, Bowmanville,
Pain Court, London, New Market

Number of Performances: 135

(1983 and 1985)

Au pays de Ti-Jean

Co-production of T.N.O. and Théâtre Centre national des Arts

Text: Inspired by the collected contes of Père Germain Lemieux

Director: Dominique LaVallée

Technical team: Daniel Bédard, Daniel Castonguay, Pierre Germain

Cast : Kim Cholette, Brigitte Haentjens, Dominique LaVallée, Stéphane Lestage,
Danielle St-Aubin

Performances in Sudbury : November 9, 11, 15 1983 ; March 11, 1985 ;

October 24 to November 1, 1985

Toured : Spring and Fall of 1983 in Ontario : Noelville, Alban, Onaping,
Chelmsford, Azilda, Markstay, Wahnapiitee, Hanmer, St. Charles, Warren, Vanier,
Hawkesbury, Bourget, St-Albert, Ottawa, Kingston, Trenton, London, Bramalee,
Burlington, Windsor, Scarborough, Don Mills, Toronto, Kitchener, Downsview,
Hamilton, Bonfield, North Bay, Sturgeon Falls, Gogama, Dubreuilville,
Mississauga, Cambridge, St-Bernadin

Number of Performances: 100

1984-1985-1986

Entre-Deux Saison: poetry reading and performance**Text:** Jean Marc Dalpé, Michel Vallières**Director :** Brigitte Haentjens**Music :** CANO**Producer :** Paul Charatrand**Director of Production :** Yves-Gérard Benoit**Cast:** Jean Marc Dalpé, Michel Vallières**Performances in Sudbury :** January 25, 1986**Toured :** October 1984, May and October 1985, January 1986 in Ontario :

Timmins, Toronto, Kingston, Sarnia, Windsor, Sault Ste. Marie, London,

Penetanguishene, Wellan, Willowdale, Pain Court, Ottawa, Alexandria,

Hawkesbury, Belleville, Elliot Lake, Kapuskasing, Hearst

Number of Performances: 61**1985-1986*****Les Roger*****Co-production of T.N.O., Théâtre de la vieille 17 and Théâtre français de****Centre national des Arts****Text :** Robert Bellefeuille, Jean Marc Dalpé, Robert Marinier**Director :** Brigitte Haentjens**Set :** Luce Pelletier**Lighting :** Diane Fortin**Cast:** Robert Bellefeuille, Jean Marc Dalpé, Robert Marinier

Performances in Sudbury : February 25, 1985 ; March 19, 1985 ; March 21 and 23, 1985

Toured: February 18 to May 18, 1985 in Ontario: Elliot Lake, Sarnia, Windsor, Penetanguishene, Noelville, Sturgeon Falls, New Liskeard, Alexandria, Ottawa, Hanmer, Azilda, Timmins, Kapuskasing, North Bay.

March 1986: Quebec

Number of Performances: 100

Critical Reaction:

Bergeron, François. “*Les Rogers* au TPB: Heureusement qu’il y a la censure...”

L’Express de Toronto 29 April 29 to May 5 1986: 7

Carrière, Fernan. “La triste histoire d’une pièce très drôle” *Liaison* 35 (1985) : 20-22.

Demers, Edgar. “*Les Rogers*: Mots et maux d’adolescents 85.” *Le Droit* 8 March 1985: 17.

Dorais, Fernand. “La *farce* des *Rogers*. L’Imaginaire et sa censure” *Témoins d’errance en Ontario français. Essai*. Hearst : Le Nordir, 1990: 109-132.

Foucart, Danielle. “*Les Rogers*. Aussi subtil que Bugs Bunny” *Liaison* 35 (1985): 23.

Fraser, Matthew. “Dissecting the Macho Mentality.” *The Globe and Mail* 28 March 1986: D9.

Hare, John. “Actors give off sparks in skillfully-written comedy” *The Citizen* 9 March 1985: C6.

O'Neill-Karch, Mariel. "Espace ludique dans *Les Rogers*" in *Théâtre franco-ontarien : Espaces ludiques*. Vanier : L'Interligne, 1992.

Penman, Margaret. "French-Canadian farce worthy of Molière." *The Toronto Star* 28 April 1986: D4.

Roberge, Pierre. "*L'homme nouveau* aux prises avec la resurgence du machismo." *La Presse* 9 March 1986: 69.

1986-1987

La Visite

Co-production of T.N.O. and Théâtre de la Vielle 17

Text: Michel Marc Bouchard with the collaboration of Robert Marinier

Director: Michel Marc Bouchard

Lighting: Claude Cournoyer

Music and Sound: Catherine Gadouas

Set: Pierre Perrault with the assistance of Jean-Yves Cadieux

Producer: Jenny Tessier

Cast: Christian Bégin, Normand Bissonette, Roch Castonguay, Marie Denyse

Daudelin, Sylvie Drapeau, Marjolaine Lemieux, Luc Thériault

Performances in Sudbury : March 11 to 14, 1987

Toured: March and April in the Maritimes: Caraquet, Dalhousie, Shippagan, Tracadie, Newcastle, St-Louis, Moncton, Pointe-de-l'Eglise, St-Jean, Fredericton, St-Quentin, Bathurst, Edmundston. **April 9 to 19, 1987 in Ottawa**

Number of Performances: 25

Des yeux au bout des doigts

Co-production of T.N.O., théâtre Populaire d'Acadie and Théâtre Centre national des Arts

Text: Louise Painchaud

Director: Brigitte Haentjens

Set : Alain Tanguay

Music : René Cormier

Cast: Gilles Doré, Bernard LeBlanc, Hélène Paulin

Performances in Sudbury : March 18,19, 20, 1987 ; April 27, 1987 ; April 30, 1987

Toured:

October, November and December 1986 in the Maritimes: North-East New Brunswick, Northern New Brunswick, North-West New Brunswick, Nova Scotia, Prince Edward Island, Newfoundland.

February to May 1987 in Ontario: Ottawa, Windsor, Lasalle, Belle Riviere, Tecumseh, Mc Gregor, Amherstburg, St-Joachim, Pointe-aux-Roches, Pain Court, Niagara Falls, Oakville, Mississauga, Georgetown, Toronto, Ste. Catherines, Gogama, Timmins, Foley, Chapleau, Dubreuilville, Wawa, Sault Ste. Marie, Blind River, Spanish, Elliot Lake, Espanola, Haileybury, New Liskeard, Earlton, Geraldton, Longlac, Ignace, Thunder Bay, Manitouwadge, Hornepayne, Warren, Markstay, Verner, Sturgeon Falls, North Bay, Mattawa, Hawkesbury, Garson, St-

Charles, Noelville, Chelmsford, Val Caron, Hanmer, Vanier, Canton d'Alfred,
Plantagenet North, Canton de Clarence

Number of Performances: 198

1987-1988

Le chien

**Co-production of Théâtre du Nouvel-Ontario and Théâtre français du
Centre national des Arts.**

Text : Jean Marc Dalpé

Director : Brigitte Haentjens

Lighting : Claude Cournoyer

Setting and Costumes : Pierre Perrault

Producer: Diane Fortin

Music: Robert Paquette

Technical director: Laurent Bussires

Cast of First Season (1987-1988): Roger Blay, Roy dupuis, Hlne Paulin,
Marthe Turgeon, Lionel Villeneuve

Cast of Second Season (1988-1989): Roger Blay, Pierre Colin, Roy Dupuis,
Marthe Turgeon, Isabelle Vincent

Performances in Sudbury: February 24-27, 1988; October 21, 1989

Toured Performances: First Season: Fall 1987, Reading in Quebec; March 1988,
Quebec; April 1988, Ontario.

Second Season: Spring 1989, Festival du Théâtre des Amériques, Montreal;
 October 3-6 1989, Festival des Francophonies, Limoges Sommet de la
 Francophonie, Quebec ; October 1989, five week tour in Europe.

Number of performances : 49

Distinction : Governor General's Award presented to Dalpé, theatre section,
 1989.

Reviews :

Barrette, Jean. "*Le chien.*" *Vie française* 40. 1 (1988): 87-88.

Beaulieu, Léo. "*Le chien: Un Pit Bull franco-Ontarien*" *L'Express de Toronto* 15
 to 21 November 1988: 9.

Beaunoyer, Jean. "*Le chien de Dalpé : Décapant jusqu'à l'os.*" *La Presse* 20
 March 1988: E6.

Bélanger, Louis. "*Le chien, revu et consacré.*" *Revue du Nouvel-Ontario* 11
 (1990): 217-219.

Boudreault, Miville. "*Le chien de Jean Marc Dalpé : Une bête aux dents acérées*"
L'Express de Toronto 19-25 April 1988: 5.

Brisebois, René. "L'Amour en laisse" *Voir* 2. 14 (3-9 March 1988):13.

Conlogue, Ray. "Sharp Writing, Strong Acting Make Powerfull Family Drama"
The Globe and Mail 19 November 1988: C8.

Crew, Robert. "*Le chien's* English Debut: An Underwhelming Event" *The*
Toronto Star 18 November 1988: B18.

Donnelly, Pat. "Franco-Ontarian Play Echoes Tremblay" *The Gazette* 5 March
 1988: D2.

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Fréchette, Carole. "*Le chien*" *Jeu* 48 (1988): 141-143.

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Pontaut, Alain. "*Le chien*: Un jeune auteur d'une grande force" *Le Devoir* 7 March 1988: 9.

Renaud, Normand. "*Le chien* monté par T.N.O.: Une production remarquable," *L'Original déchainé* 1.10 (1988): 10.

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Roberge, Pierre. "*Le chien*: La primauté absolue du texte sur la scène," *La Presse* 5 March 1988: E5.

Saint-Hilaire, Jean. "*Le chien* de Dalpé : Un bon vent venu de l'ouest," *Le Soleil* 4 September 1987: C1.

Wickham, Philip. "*Le chien*: Le Meilleur ennemi de l'homme" *Continuum* Week of March 14, 1988: 23.

Publication : Ottawa : Prise de Parole, 1988

Dalpé-Desbiens

Poetry, Music and song

Text: Jean Marc Dalpé, Patrice Desbiens

Cast : Jean Marc Dalpé, Patrice Desbiens

Music : Sylain Lavoie

Performances in Sudbury : October 28, 1987

Toured: Winter and Spring 1988: Montreal and Toronto

Number of Performances: 5

Publication :

Dalpé, Jean Marc. *Et d'ailleurs*. Ottawa : Prise de Parole, 1984

Dalpé, Jean Marc. *Dans l'après-midi cardiaque*. Ottawa : Prise de Parole, 1985.

1988-1989

***Le Chien* (English Version)**

Text : Jean Marc Dalpé

Translation : Maurice Labonté

Director : Brigitte Haentjens

Lighting : Claude Caournoyer

Set and Costumes: Pierre Perrault

Producer: Diane Fortin

Music: Robert Paquette

Technical Director: Laurent Bussière

Cast: Roger Blay, Roy Dupuis, Hélène Paulin, Marthe Turgeon, Lionel

Villeneuve

Toured: May 1988 in Toronto

Number of Performances: 20

Cris et Blues

Text: Marcel Aymar, Jean Marc Dalpé, Patrice Desbiens, Robert Dickson,
Marianne Théberge, Gaston Tremblay

Director : Brigitte Haentjens

Music : Marcel Aymar, Marc Cholette, Sylvain Lavoie, Dave Burt

Lighting : Marc Delorme

Technical Director : Christian Paquin

Director of Production : Yves Gérard Benoit

Cast: Marcel Aymar, Jean Marc Dalpé

Performances in Sudbury : October 6-8, 1988

Toured : **October 1988** in Ottawa and Toronto ; **March 1990 :** Elliot Lake,
Hearst, Chapleau, Timmins, North Bay, Vanier, Penetanguishene, Strurgeon Falls,
Glendon, Noelville, Ottawa, Sault Ste. Marie, Kirkland Lake, Iroquois Falls,
Hearst, Orleans; **October 1990:** Festival International des Francophonies de
Limoges; **October 14, 1990:** Caen (semaine franco-ontarienne) **October 16-21,**
1990: Paris (Centre Georges Pompidou) **October 22-28, 1990:** Lyons, Les Nuits
Francophones

Number of Performances : 25

1990-1991

Deuxième Souffle**Co-production of T.N.O. and Théâtre français du Centre national des Arts****Texts :** Robert Marinier, Dan Lalande**Director :** Sylvie Dufour**Production Director :** Yves Gérard Benoit**Set and Lighting :** Daniel Bédard**Costumes:** Jean-Pierre Delorme**Producer:** Lyse Criystal Lanteigne**Cast:** Roch Castonguay, Luc Dorion, Louis Lefebvre, Annick Léger**Performances in Sudbury:** March 20-23, 1991; March 27-30, 1991**Toured:** April, October, November 1991: Ottawa, Noelville, Sturgeon Falls, Alexandria, Orleans, Hawkesbury, Rockland, Embrun, North Bay, Timmins, Kapuskasing, Kirkland Lake, Chapleau, Pembroke, Sarnia, Toronto, Welland, Oshawa**Number of Performances:** 30**Publication:** Ottawa: Prise de Parole, 1992.**1991-1992*****Lavalléville* (second version)****Text :** André Paiement**Adaptation :** Michel Ouellette**Director :** Sylvie Dufour

Director of Production : Guy Gervais, Paulette Gagnon

Set : Jean Bard

Music : Pier Rodier

Sound : Dominique Saint-Pierre

Lighting : Marc Delorme

Production : Louis Roubillard

Cast : Jean-Pierre Delorme, Luc Dorion, Michèle Léveillé, Marie-Thé Morin,
Pier Rodier, dominique Saint-Pierre

Performances in Sudbury : March 25 to April 4, 1992

Toured: April 1992, Ottawa; October 13 to November 29, 1992: Hawkesbury,
Orleans, Alexandria, Embrun, Rockland, Sarnia, Toronto, Oshawa, Welland,
North Bay, Timmins, Iroquois Falls, Hearst, Kapuskasing, Chapleau, Elliot Lake,
Noelville, Sturgeon Falls

Number of Performances: 15

Critical Reaction:

Lafon, Dominique. "Michel Ouellette: les pièges de la communalité" *Les théâtre
professionnels du Canada francophone* eds. Hélène Beauchamp and Joël
Beddows, Ottawa : Le Nordir, 2001.

Canada Bread

Text: Pierre Albert, Bobby Bread, Robert Dickson, Paulette Gagnon, Yolande
Jimenez, Laurent Vaillancourt

Director: Sylvie Dufour

Music : Pierre Albert

Set : Colette Jacques, Normand Fortin, Laurent Vaillancourt

Cast : Pierre Albert, Robert Dickson, Paulette Gagnon, Guy Gervais, Colette Jacques, Sylvie Dufour, Normand Fortin, Yolande Jimenez, Laurent Vaillancourt

Performances in Sudbury : September 4, 5, 6 1991

Number of Performances : 4

1992-1993

French Town

Co-production of Théâtre du Nouvel-ontario and Théâtre français du Centre national des Arts.

Text: Michel Ouellette

Director: Sylvie Dufour

Set: Jean Bard

Lighting: Sylvie Lavoie

Music : Dominique Saint-Pierre

Producer: Diane Fortin

Cast: Danièle Aubut, Roch Castonguay, Lyette Goyette, Eloi Savoie

Performances in Sudbury: March 24 to April 3, 1993.

Touring performances: February 10 to 27, 1994 in Moncton, Toronto and Ottawa.

Number of performances : 14

Distinction : Winner of the Governor General's Award for Theatre in 1994.

Critical Reaction:

Bélanger, Louis. "De l'exiguité comme discours du savoir," *Spirale* 140 (1995):

15.

Bérard, Sylvie. "L'école des dramaturges," *Lettres québécoises* 75 (1994): 55.

Karch, Pierre. "French Town," *Francophonie d'Amérique* 5 (1995): 91-92.

Marcoux, Bondfield. "Critique. Théâtre," *Liaison* 72 (1993): 37.

Moss, Jane. "Le Théâtre Franco-Ontarien: Dramatic Spectacles of Linguistic Otherness" *University of Toronto Quarterly* 69.2 (Spring 2000): 587-614.

O'Neil-Karch, Mariel. "Le Théâtre" *University of Toronto Quarterly* 65. 1 (Winter 1995/1996): 120-121.

Paré, François. "Genèse de la rancœur. Sur trois oeuvres dramatiques récentes" *Liaison* 77 (1994): 33-34.

Robert, Lucie. "De l'inutilité du théâtre au théâtre" *Voix et images*. 57 (Spring 1994): 670-672.

Yergeau, Robert. "Postures scripturaires, impostures identitaires" *Tangence* 56 (1997): 9-25.

Publication : Ottawa : Le Nordir, 2000.

1994-1995

Le Bateleur

Co-production of Théâtre du Nouvel-Ontario and Théâtre français du

Centre national des Arts

Text : Michel Ouellette

Director : Sylvie Dufour

Set : Jean Bard

Music : Marcel Aymar

Lighting: Michel Charbonneau

Producer: Jean-Sébastien Busque

Cast : Annick Léger, André Richard, Marc Thibaudeau, Roger Wylde

Performances in Sudbury : April 19-29, 1995

Toured performances: May, September, October, December 1995: Ottawa, Kapuskasing, Hearst, North Bay, Longueuil

Number of Performances: 15

Critical Reaction:

Lafon, Dominique. Critique: "*Le Bateleur*" *Liaison* 83 (1995).

Mainville, Lara. "Michel Ouellette, *Le Bateleur* : un théâtre en technocouleur" *Liaison* 80 (1995): 36.

Moss, Jane. "Le Théâtre Franco-Ontarien: Dramatic Spectacles of Linguistic Otherness" *University of Toronto Quarterly* 69.2 (Spring 2000): 587-614.

Tremblay, Micheline. "*Lucky Lady* de Jean Marc Dalpé et *Le Bateleur* de Michel Ouellette: La quête de la vérité ?" *Revue du Nouvel-Ontario* 21 (1997): 161.

Publication : Ottawa : Le Nordir, 1995.

1996-1997

L'homme effacé

Co-production of théâtre du Nouvel Ontario and Le Centre national des Arts.

Text : Michel Ouellette

Director : Sylvie Dufour

Music : Marcel Aymar

Lighting : Michael Brunet

Producer: Mélanie Doyon

Cast: Nadine Desrochers, Lyette Goyette, Annick Léger, André Richard, Éloi Savoie.

Performances in Sudbury : February 19 to March 1, 1997

Toured Performances: June 8, 1997: Festival Théâtre Action; November 1997:

Rouyn, Kapuskasing, Elliot Lake, Brampton, Quebec; May 1998: Ottawa

Number of Performances: 15

Critical Reaction:

Bélanger, Georges “*L'homme effacé: ré-structuration d'une mémoire éclatée*”

Liaison 92 (1997): 31.

Moss, Jane. “Le Théâtre Franco-Ontarien: Dramatic spectacles of Linguistic

Otherness” *University of Toronto Quarterly* 69.2 (Spring 2000).

Publication: Ottawa: Le Nordir, 1997.

Monsieur Lou

Text : Mireille Francoeur, Patrick Leroux, Marie-Thé Morin, Michel Ouellette,

Stefan Psenak

Creations : Sylvie Dufour, Louis Lefebvre

Director : Sylvie Dufour, Louis Lefebvre

Costume : Jean Bard

Cast : Louis Lefebvre

Performances in Sudbury : November 4, November 15-18 and 22, 1996;

April 19, October 4 1997 in the Sudbury region

Toured: Fall 1996; Spring and Fall 1997; Spring and Fall 1998; Spring and

Fall 1999: Ottawa, Val Caron, Warren, Cholmsford, Blezard Valley, Hanmer,

Noelville, Astorville, Bonfield, Ste. Jérôme, Toronto, Weston, Pembroke,

Orleans, Vanier, Barrie, borden, Penetanguishene, Orillia, Lively, Dowling,

Manitouwadge, Red Lake, New Liskeard, Timmins, Hearst, Hamilton, Markham,

Mississauga, Burlington.

August 27 to September 6 1997: Madagascar (Jeux de la Francophonie)

July 1998 : Sudbury (Festival Boréal)

June 1999 : Whitehorse (Yukon International Story Telling Festival)

June 27, 1999: Ottawa (Festival franco-ontarien)

Number of Performances: between 150 and 200

1998-1999

Le Moine

Co-production of T.N.O. and Le Groupe de la Veillée

Text : Matthew Gregory Lewis

Director : André Perrier

Technical Director: Claude Faucon

Producer : Annick Asselin

Lighting and Set : Alain Lelièvre

Lighting: Barry Seawright

Costumes: Sondee Goldsack, Normand Thériault

Set Manipulation: Robbo Krouse, Rodney Parcker

Dramaturgic Advisor: Brigitte Haentjens

Songs: John von der Leeden

Weapons: Sophie Tremblay

Clowns: Sue Morrison

Mimes: Denise Bélanger

Cast: Isabelle Bélisle, Robin Denault, Stéphane Franche, Vincent Leclerc,

Rafaelle Leiris, Elizabeth Robertson, Lucie Vigneault

Performances in Sudbury: November 17 to 21 1999

Toured: November 25 to December 6 1998: Montreal

Number of Performances: 15

Review:

Legault, Myriam. “*Le Moine: succombe aux force du mal*” *Liaison* 100 (1999):

25.

Contes Sudburois**In collaboration with Laurentian University**

Text: Jean Marc Dalpé, Robert Dickson, Paulette Gagnon, Brigitte Haentjens,

Robert Marinier

Director : André Perrier

Music : Lorian Bélanger

Lighting : Tim McKinnon

Technical Director: Claude Faucon

Cast: Roch Castonguay, Michel Gauthier, Lyette Goyette, Annick Léger, Robert

Marinier, Danielle St-Aubin

Performances in Sudbury: February 9 to 13, 1999

Toured: June 15-16, 1999 in Ottawa

Number of Performances: 7

Review:

Legault, Myriam. “Sudbury m’a conté...les contes sudburois au Théâtre du

Nouvel-Ontario” *Liaison* 101 (1999): 29.

Publication:

Sudbury: Prise de Parole, 2001

1999-2000

Du pépin à la fissure

Text : Patrice Desbiens

Director: André Perrier

Set: Laurent Vaillancourt, Glen Charles Landry

Sound: Dan Bédard

Lighting: Michel Charbonneau

Special Effects: Gérard Beaulieu, Alain Haché

Cast: Alain Doom

Performances in Sudbury: January 11-15, 2000; September 26-30, 2000;

October 12, 2002

Toured: October 11 to December 2, 2000: Hearst, Kapuskasing, New Liskeard,

Chapleau, Mississauga, Kingston, Ottawa

June 10, 2001: Festival de théâtre des régions

October 2002 : Toronto

April 2003 : Montreal and Quebec

August 2003: Montreal and FAIT de L'Assomption, Qubec

October 2003: Edmonton, Alberta

Number of Performances: 43

Review:

Gautier, Stephane. "La prodigieuse force de la fiction du *Pépin à la fissure*"

Liaison 106 (2000): 29.

2000-2001***Univers***

**Co-production of T.N.O., Théâtre l'Escaouette and Théâtre français du
Centre national des Arts**

Text : Herménégilde Chiasson (Collision), Dominique Parenteau-Lebeuf

(Radiations Tcherenkov), Robert Marinier (Big Crunch)

Director : André Perrier, assisted by Marcia Babineau

Concept : Dan Bédard, Sylvie Bouchard, Marjplaine Bourgeois, David Danzon,
Glen-Charles Landry, Marc Paulin

Cast : Jean Marc Dalphond, Sasha Dominique, Robert Gauvin, Luc Leblanc, Guy
Mignault

Performances in Sudbury : March 29 to 31, 2001 ; April 4-7, 2001

Toured: October 10-27, 2001: Toronto

2001-2002***Violette sur la terre***

**Co-production of T.N.O., Théâtre du Tandem (Abitibi-Témiscamingue,
Quebec), Théâtre en Scène (Nord-Pas-de-Calais, France)**

Text : Carole Fréchette

Director : Vincent Goethals

Assistant to the director : André Perrier

Artistic Director : Jean-Guy Côté

Set : Raymond Marius Boucher

Lighting : Pierre Lemoine

Sound: Daniel Boivin

Costumes: Linda Brunelle

Production/technical director: Louis-Philippe Morency

Production coordinator: Anne Plamondon

Cast: Geneviève Couture, Miriam Cusson, Pierre Drolet, Micheline Marin, Marc Thibaudeau

Performances in Sudbury: January 25 to February 2, 2002

Toured: February 2002, Quebec: Ville-Marie, Rouyn-Noranda

March and April 2002, France: Douai, Dunkerque, Loos-en-Gohelle, Roubaix

September and October 2002, Quebec and Ontario: Montreal, Ottawa, Amos,

Val d'Or, Rouyn, Kingston, Oshawa, Mississauga

Number of performances: 67

Critical Reaction:

Ruprecht, Alvina. "*Violette sur la terre* by Carole Fréchette/ La Nouvelle Scene"

Ottawa Morning, Sept. 2002. Ottawacbc.ca/ottawamorning/theatrearts.

2002-2003

SAHEL

Co-production of T.N.O. and Théâtre français du Centre national des Arts

Text : Franco Catanzariti

Director : André Perrier

Set : Gérard Beaulieu, Lynn Cox, Alain Haché, Glen Charles Landry, André Perrier

Sound : Daniel Bédard

Lighting : Claude Faucon

Costumes: Sondee Goldsack

Special Effects: Gérard Beaulieu, Alain Haché

Production: Miriam Cusson

Technical Director: Ivan Pitre

Cast: Jasmine Therrien, Pandora Topp

Performances in Sudbury: February 25 to March 1, 2003; September 25 to 27, 2003

Toured: April 28, 2003: Fort de l'Assomption, Festival annuel d'Innovation théâtrale de l'Assomption

Number of Performances : 10

Works Cited and Consulted

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18 April, 1984: G1.

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The Gazette 19 April, 1984: G8.

Allain, Mathé. "Schizophrénie! Is what we be—Or is it?: The Franco-Ontarian

Heritage In the Plays of André Païement." *Theatre History in*

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1958.

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sa simplicité." *Liaison* 13 (1980) : 37-38

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Pennsylvania Press, 1985.

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Beauchamp-Rank, Hélène. "Notes sur les troupes de théâtre dans l'Outaouais."

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5. Montréal: Fides, 1976: 437-441.

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dans la Vie franco-ontarienne. Présenté au Conseil des Arts de l'Ontario,

Toronto, September, 1977.

Beaulieu, Léo. "Le chien: Un Pit Bull franco-ontarien." *L'Express de Toronto*

15 to 21 November 1988: 9.

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----- "Robert Marinier raconte: je crée à partir de la scène" *Liaison*

51 (1989): 4-5.

Beaunoyer, Jean. "Le Chien de Dalpé: Décapant jusqu'à l'os." *La Presse* 20

March 1988: E6.

Beddows, Joel. "Tracer ses frontières: vers un théâtre franco-ontarien de création

à Ottawa." *Les Théâtre professionnels de Canada francophone*. eds.

Hélène Beauchamp and Joel Beddows. Ottawa : Le Nordir, 2001: 49-68.

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structure professionnelle pour des artistes créateurs" *Les Théâtre*

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Bertrand, Denis. "Michel Ouellette: L'écriture à l'ordre du jour" *Liaison* 54, (1989): 32.

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Couture, Denis. "Le Théâtre de la Corvée : l'idée ne se brule pas" *Liaison* 15, (1981): 12.

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