Performing Anglo Quebec: The Myth of Solitudes and (E)Merging Anglo-Québécois Subject

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Inspired by Alan Filewod's *Performing Canada: The Nation Enacted in the Imagined Theatre*, this essay proposes that Premier Lucien Bouchard's "Address to the Anglophone Community of Quebec" in the wake of the 1995 referendum and the premiere of David Fennario's play, *The Death of René Lévesque*, both of which took place at Montreal's Centaur Theatre, were performances of Anglo Quebec and enactments of an Anglo-Québécois subject. The essay questions why the sense of a distinct community and corresponding subject positions have not taken greater hold in the aftermath of these performances, and hypothesizes a competition of narratives between a myth of two solitudes on one side and an emerging Anglo-Québécois subject on the other. In contrast to the tenor of most discussions of "the subject," this essay proposes that an accumulation of subject positions might have the positive consequence of a subject being recognized, accepted, and given a voice. While acknowledging signs of emergence, the essay analyses how a myth of two solitudes continues to erase Anglo-Québécois subjectivity.

Inspiré par l'œuvre d'Alan Filewod, *Performing Canada: The Nation Enacted in the Imagined Theatre*, le présent article avance que l'allocution du premier ministre Lucien Bouchard devant la communauté anglophone du Québec après le référendum de 1995 et la première représentation de la pièce de théâtre de David Fennario intitulée *La Mort de René Lévesque*, les deux événements ayant eu lieu au Théâtre Centaur de Montréal, étaient des performances du Québec anglophone et la mise en scène d'un sujet anglo-québécois. L'article questionne pourquoi le sentiment d'une communauté distincte et les postulats correspondants n'ont pas eu un impact plus grand à la suite de ces événements et il suggère que deux récits se font concurrence : un mythe de deux solitudes d'un côté et des postulats anglo-québécois émergents de l'autre. À l'encontre de la teneur de la plupart des discussions sur le sujet, le présent article avance qu'une accumulation de postulats pourrait avoir la conséquence positive de faire reconnaître, accepter et défendre un sujet. Tout en reconnaissant des signes d'émergence, l'article analyse comment un mythe de deux solitudes continue de supprimer la subjectivité anglo-québécoise.

A logical expectation from the merging of English and French "solitudes"[1] in recent decades, in particular the growth of bilingualism among Quebec anglophones (surpassing 65% in this period) is the emergence of a new subject: the Anglo-Québécois. From an analysis highlighting two salient events—a speech given in the wake of the 1995 referendum on Quebec's independence by the newly acclaimed premier of Quebec, Lucien Bouchard, and the premiere of *The Death of René Lévesque*, by Anglo-Quebec's most iconic playwright, David Fennario, both of which were windows of opportunity for the Anglo-Québécois community and subject to gain recognition and acceptance—this essay ultimately questions a competition between narratives: the myth of two solitudes on the one hand, and the emergence of an Anglo-Québécois community/subject on the other.

The key term in this discussion is the always ambiguous, ubiquitous, and polysemous expression *the subject*. Not only is the locution unstable, but its usage in materialist discourse, as pointed out by Jonathan Dollimore, is designed to indicate instability "because informed by contradictory social and ideological processes, the subject is never an indivisible unity, never an autonomous, self-determining centre of consciousness" (1984, 269). In his preliminary discussions of the word in *Discerning the Subject,* Paul Smith points out that: "In some instances the 'subject' will appear to be synonymous with the 'individual,' the 'person.' In others—for example, in psychoanalytical discourse—it will take on a more specialized meaning and refer to the unconsciously structured illusion of plenitude which we usually call 'the self.' Or elsewhere, the 'subject' might be understood as the specifically subjected object of social and historical forces and determinations" (1988, xxvii). In Smith's argument, "the 'subject' ... is determined—the object of determining forces; whereas 'the individual' is assumed to be determining. Thus the phrase, 'the individual subject,' ... construes a contradiction" (xxxiv). Smith's project is a demonstration that the term "subject" should signify a "series or the conglomeration of positions, subject-positions ... into which a person is called momentarily by the discourses and the world he/she inhabits" (xxxv).

Smith's argument notwithstanding, this essay proceeds on a premise that countervails the tenor in which the word *subject* is most often used. In what follows, the subject and the individual are taken to be opposite sides of the same coin. One's sense of self is an accumulation of subject positions that can be imposed or chosen. While most of the discussion of subject positions tends to focus on the imposition of gender, class, ethnicity, and ideology, this essay contends that, logically, it must also be possible to choose or at least adhere to subject positions that are resistant, egalitarian, and gender neutral. Subject positions can be adopted and performed by various people in diverse ways and contexts. Subject positions can be adopted and adhered to with varying degrees of awareness from

unconsciousness to firm conviction. Who adopts a subject position, and why, and with what degree of determination (in both senses of the term) can be the subject of logical analysis. The light at the end of the tunnel of accumulated subject positions is, paradoxically, a sense of individuality, recognition as a subject, and consequently a voice and the right to speak.

In the Canadian context, the theory of subject positions overlaps what philosopher Charles Taylor (himself an archetypal Anglo-Québécois subject) calls "deep diversity"; that is, "diversity at the level of how you understand belonging" (quoted in Grescoe 2000, 298; see also Taylor 1993, 183). None the less, as we will discover, the idea of an Anglo-Québécois subject remains so contested that it is difficult (sometimes bordering on impossible) to claim or analyze clear, uncontested evidence of its existence. What can be more readily analyzed (and is, paradoxically, evidence of its existence) is resistance to this particular subject position, in particular from individuals who would seem to have good reason to embrace it.

Josée Legault, in *L'invention d'une minorité: Les Anglo-Québécois*, and Linda Leith, in *Writing in the Time of Nationalism: From Two Solitudes to Blue Metropolis*, seem in agreement that the Anglo sense of community was created in reaction to Quebec's language laws (Legault 1992, 57; Leith 2010, 50), yet, according to Legault and Leith, this socially and historically determined object has not resulted in the creation of Anglo-Québécois subjectivity. For Legault the English of Quebec were "'québécois,' dans le sens territorial et non culturel du terme" (1992, 58) and "s'il est indéniable qu'un certain nombre d'anglophones résidaient bel et bien au Québec, on ne pouvait toutefois parler de l'existence d'une 'communité' anglo*québécoise*" (58; emphasis in original). In *Time to Say Goodbye: The Case for Getting Quebec out of Canada*, Reed Scowen argues that the population is not decidedly Anglo enough to be a community: "there is, in fact, no English-speaking community in Quebec" (1999, 117), because anglophones lack "a common vision of their English language and culture" (120).

The fact of Anglo-Quebec—as a population of 760,000 speakers; a major cultural influence in Quebec; a linguistic minority with a long and fructuous heritage; a wide variety of institutions dedicated to its maintenance, growth, and promulgation; and a rich history of literary and theatrical production—is beyond debate. As Garth Stevenson outlines in *Community Besieged: The Anglophone Minority and the Politics of Quebec*: "While the boundaries of the anglophone community in Quebec can ... not be defined with precision, its existence as a demographic reality, reinforced by a variety of public and private institutions that provide for its needs and that tend to distinguish it from the francophone majority, has been one of the most durable, and distinctive, aspects of life in the province" (1999, 19). This community is, however, divided by ethnicity, religion, class and politics,

and region. With 75% of Quebec anglophones living in Montreal, it is a common gambit to adopt the subject position of Anglo-Montrealer, and to abandon both the concept of Anglo-Québécois and the 25% of anglophones who live outside of Montreal. The degree of community cohesion that language in itself will eventually catalyze remains to be determined by time and circumstances, although repeated theoretical claims that the subject is created through discourse encourages the observation that every utterance in English in Quebec is evidence, however tenuous and ephemeral, of the existence of this subject position. The Catch 22 that the Anglo-Québécois community faces is that it is not recognized as a community because it lacks a shared culture, but when cultural artefacts and performances are produced they are not recognized as Anglo-Québécois on the grounds that they are not a product or reflection of the community—because there is no such community.

Consequently, the defining trope of a distinct Anglo-Québécois discourse has been apophasis, the "denial of one's intention to speak of a subject that is at the same time named or insinuated" (Random House). Who other than an Anglo-Québécois would go around saying "I am not an Anglo-Québécois"? Or, "There is no such thing as an Anglo-Québécois anything!" In her autobiographical reflections on English writing in Montreal, Leith asks the question, "Am I myself a Québécois?" and answers in the negative: "I am a Quebecer, certainly, and in some contexts Quebecer works as an adequate translation of Québécois. But not all contexts, for being a Québécois is charged with an exclusive nationalist meaning that doesn't apply to people like me who speak English" (2010, 23).

The expression *Québécois* meaning a citizen of Quebec, as opposed to a resident of Quebec City, only became current in the late 1960s and early 1970s. Since that time it has become the politically correct designation for a citizen of Quebec, with *French Canadian* relegated to identifying speakers of French outside Quebec. As Leith suggests, the term Québécois, in certain contexts, connotes nationalism. At the same time, we should note that anyone speaking French would, of linguistic necessity, have to refer to Linda Leith as a *Québécoise* or *Anglo-Québécoise*. Although Quebec French offers numerous substandard, sociolinguistic possibilities for referring to anglophones—*têtes carrées*, *les Anglais*, *blokes*—standard French usage dictates that the only appropriate referent for Linda Leith would be *Anglo-Québécoise*. The resistance to Leith's being identified as *Québécoise* comes from English usage and Linda Leith herself, not from the discourse of the French-speaking people of Quebec—Josée Legault's claims notwithstanding.

In her seminal article on Anglo-Québécois literature, "Quebec Fiction in English during the 1980s: A Case Study in Marginality," Leith surveyed a number of writers and concluded, "The question of what to call the Quebec writers

who write in English is problematical, and there is no unanimity among the writers themselves as to the best term to use" (1990, 15). In fact, it appears that the expression Anglo-Québécois was never mentioned for consideration.

At a meeting of the research group investigating "La littérature anglo-québécoise: institutions, textes, traductions, territorialité" held at Concordia University, on 29 April 2011, at which Linda Leith and Patrick Coleman, professor of Canadian Studies and Quebec literature at UCLA, were guest speakers, Leith would neither endorse nor reject the expression Anglo-Québécois, counting it as simply one among many possible expressions. Coleman questioned the expression on the grounds that it was a French expression being used in an English-language context; however, such bilingual usage has become typical, in fact required, among English speakers in Quebec, to the point that *The Guide to Canadian English Usage* has described "Quebec English"—not without controversy—as "a new Canadian regional dialect" (Fee 1997). Whatever the legitimacy of Coleman's and Leith's positions, the lack of consensus on and, in fact, the absence of a name problematizes and discourages the recognition and adoption of this subject position.

During a special broadcast on the French television show *Bouillon de Culture* on the subject of Quebec, host Bernard Pivot would ask, "Finallement, qu'est que c'est un québécois?" The Anglo-Caribbean-Québécois-Canadian writer and professor of English from Quebec City, Neil Bissoondath, responded with preemptive rapidity: "un Québécois c'est quelqu'un comme moi." The Québécois literary critic Gilles Marcotte would subsequently respond, in a paper entitled "Neil Bissoondath disait ..." addressed to a conference on "Anglais: Langue et culture," that "Il n'existe évidemment pas telle chose qu'une littérature anglo-québécoise" (Marcotte 1998-99, 6). Since, in Marcotte's view, Québécois literature was by definition French, Bissoondath, though a citizen of Quebec, was an English-Canadian but not an Anglo-Québécois writer.

In his introduction to a special issue of the journal *Canadian Poetry* on Anglo-Quebec, Jason Camlot agrees with Marcotte that "there is no such thing as Anglo-Quebec literature in the sense that there is now Can Lit and la littérature québécoise" (2009, 8). These and similar claims and hesitations about the existence of an Anglo-Québécois literature need to be put in context. The paradoxical phenomenon of specialists in the field denying, repudiating, resisting, or waffling on the existence or naming of the field is quite common, perhaps even typical. For example, we might note that in *Literary Theory: An Introduction*, Terry Eagleton concludes that literature does not really exist as a distinct object or field of knowledge (1983, 205). Similarly, Frank Davey, "a leading authority on Canadian literature" (Betts 2010), claimed in an early issue of *Tish* magazine that "Canada does not exist except as a political arrangement for the convenience of individuals accidentally happening

to live within its arbitrary area" (quoted in Camlot 2009, 11). Hugh MacLennan in his time claimed quite categorically that "there is no Canadian literature," as has the author of *All the Polarities*, Philip Stratford (quoted in Lapointe 2003, 248-49, 254). A central hypothesis of Pierre Nepveu's *L'écologie du réel: Mort et naissance de la littérature québécoise contemporaine* is that the advent of *la littérature québécoise* "n'a pu concrètement avoir lieu dans la mesure où cette même littérature était déjà en quelque sorte 'post-québécoise'" (Nepveu 1988, 16). In each case, what these authors have said does not correspond to how they have acted; that is, they continued to write, research, teach, and publish in exactly the fields which they none the less claimed did not exist.

This breakdown of mimesis, of the connection between signs and referents, and the failure of semiotics to expose Anglo-Quebec and the Anglo-Québécois subject in a credible, coherent fashion suggest, by default, performance studies as a potential approach to this untheorized, "unimagined" linguistic community and subjectivity. Richard Schechner, who has been widely acknowledged as a founder of the field, has claimed that "any event, action, item or behaviour may be examined as performance" (1998, 361).

The performances that are at the centre of this analysis—Premier Bouchard's speech addressed to the anglophone community of Quebec on 12 March 1996 and the premiere of Fennario's play *The Death of René Lévesque* on 5 February 1991—are linked and parallel in an odd assortment of ways. As we will see, in one the playwright referenced a premier of Quebec; in the other a premier referenced the playwright Fennario. Both events took place in Montreal's Centaur Theatre, and in both cases affirmed the status of Centaur Theatre specifically as it was imagined and described by its founding artistic director, Maurice Podbrey, as a community theatre representing the anglophone community. Although they have gone unrecognized as such, the political and social significance of these events make them milestones not only for Centaur Theatre, but in the history of Quebec and Canadian theatre.

Moreover, in terms of the larger historical context, the performances in question bookended the 1995 referendum. Although the mathematical facts are rarely repeated, the defeat of the 1995 sovereignty campaign by 52,645 votes could easily have been attributed to 90% of Quebec's 760,000 anglophones voting no in the referendum. Quebec anglophones have found themselves in the paradoxical situation of being politically irrelevant (political parties do not win votes at any level by defending *les anglais* in Quebec), yet they are of enormous potential importance to both the sovereignty movement and the continuation of Canadian federalism. Demographic and political realities give Anglo-Quebec a high profile; expediency dictates that the community remain invisible. Beyond

these realities, the existence of an Anglo-Québécois community, a collection of Anglo-Québécois individuals/subjects, was and is potentially dangerous to both federalist and *indépendantistes* agendas. The mere idea that an anglophone could be a Québécois could, of course, undermine purist convictions that the purpose of independence is the upholding of Quebec's French language and culture—and, more pointedly, discourage an old-school fringe of the movement who view independence as retaliation against the English for past grievances. Equally, however, the idea that anglophones might begin to think of themselves as Québécois could dramatically weaken Canadian federalism within Quebec. What most significantly brings the two events in question together is that each, in its own distinctive way, performed and enacted Anglo-Quebec at a time when the stakes could not have been higher and the players, Premier Bouchard and playwright Fennario, were at the peak of their potential influence.

Alan Filewod's performance studies monograph, *Performing Canada: The Nation Enacted in the Imagined Theatre*, has proven a useful precursor to this study of Anglo-Quebec for a number of reasons. In a summary review of the epochs of Canadian theatre history, Filewod demonstrates how various theatrical performances have been enactments of nation in much the same way as those pageants, parades, and celebrations that we all recognize are designed to bring the nation to life before our eyes and ears, awing us with spectacles of the power of the state, and interpellating us into various subject positions as Canadians, Québécois, Americans, British, and so on. Premier Bouchard's speech was this ilk of interpellation. Though Fennario has expressed clear antipathy to the notion of Anglo-Quebec and, in particular, the Anglo-rights movement, his plays have invariably marked out the positions of working-class anglophone characters in Quebec society.[2] *The Death of René Lévesque* is, in many ways, a departure for Fennario, but the play and its aftermath, more than any of his previous work, raises the question of the anglophone subject having a voice in Quebec society.

As Filewod's work demonstrates, the purview of performance studies is rarely, if ever, microscopic analysis of an event as it happens. The texts under analysis here—the version of *The Death of René Lévesque* published in 2003 and copies of the premier's speech available online[3]—are approximate, forensic evidence of the performances that took place in 1991 and 1996. My approach to these events is that they are significant and salient examples from among the myriad minor performances of Anglo-Quebec that must take place in Quebec every day and go unattended. The premier's speech and Fennario's play stand out because, as we shall see, they did get some attention; however, since the Anglo-subject has most typically been exposed through denial, my analysis will probe the infelicity of the performances under scrutiny as enactments of Anglo-Quebec. If, as Filewod,

Judith Butler, and others suggest, the subject is created through the rituals of performance, then the present study is of how Anglo-Québécois subjectivity did *not* take hold in the wake of pertinent performances.

The reasons and ways to resist Anglo-Québécois subjectivity are numerous and varied; the erasure of the Anglo-Québécois subject is therefore overdetermined. The counter-narrative that has most successfully and repeatedly been used to undermine and erase the possibility of an Anglo-Québécois subject has been the myth of two solitudes. As Martine-Emmanuelle Lapointe suggests in her reflections on Anglo-Québécois literature in relation to "Le motif de deux solitudes," "La situation particulière du corpus anglo-québécois ne peut qu'ébranler le modèle des deux solitudes" (2003, 257). Conversely, the erasure of the Anglo-Québécois subject is typically couched in an implicit or explicit invocation of a myth of two solitudes.

I take myth to be the narrative form, reduced and simplified, of prevailing ideologies. The work of myth, to use an expression typically associated with Roland Barthes, is to naturalize history.[4] Myth has the power to make everything explicable and even familiar, and therefore to subsume historical events within its overall structure, making them seem normal, "natural," and, like ideology, a matter of common sense. References to the "myth" of two solitudes do not imply that there are no linguistic differences, tensions, and even conflicts, but they do imply the overuse of this particular binary as an explanation of nearly everything, overwriting other issues, problems, concerns, and conflicts. The myth is dangerously seductive as an alibi, as melodrama, and as an easy means of appealing to an audience of believers who will interpret whatever is presented within the structure of the myth as clear therefore coherent, and familiar therefore realistic. Myths prevail because it is a feature of human perception that we tend to see what we expect to see. We understand, remember and hold as truth that which fits with what we already think we know, and we consequently label as apocryphal, insignificant, minor, eccentric, exceptional, and unrepresentative whatever does not align with prevailing mythologies. This is the process through which the myth of two solitudes overwrites the possibility of an Anglo-Québécois subject, as well as Anglo-Québécois literature and drama. The investigation of the Anglo-Québécois subject necessarily reveals the parameters and operations of the myth as Anglo-Québécois subjectivity would be the evidentiary contradiction of a myth of implacable and impenetrable solitudes.

Conscious awareness of the myth as myth is symptomatic of its imminent loss of ascendancy. As numerous commentators immediately noted, the election of the New Democratic Party of Canada as the Official Opposition in the federal

election of 2 May 2011, in particular by overrunning the Bloc Québécois in Quebec, signalled a change in the axis of the political debate from French/English to left/right. This shift has been accompanied by the growing credibility and élan of organizations like ELAN (the English-Language Arts Network) and its RAEV project (Recognizing Artists: Enfin Visible), the Quebec Community Groups Network (in particular its research wing the Quebec English-Speaking Communities Research Network), and the multitude of theatre companies under the umbrella of the Quebec Drama Federation, including the Black Theatre Workshop, whose artistic director Tyrone Benskin was elected to Parliament in the NDP sweep of Quebec, not to mention the Blue Metropolis Festival and the extensive list of flourishing Anglo-Quebec writers named by Linda Leith in her conclusion to *Writing in the Time of Nationalism*. Together, these groups might suggest the denouement of the historical moment that I am analyzing, the ascendency of an Anglo-Québécois subject and a decline in the force of a myth of solitudes.[5]

Despite the ambience of rapprochement marked by Premier Bouchard's speech in 1996, however, Anglo-Québécois subjectivity seemed to make little immediate progress against the myth of solitudes. This lack of emergence speaks to the underlying essentialisms upon which the myth is based. For example, in *L'invention d'une minoritié : Les Anglo-Québécois*, Legault essentializes the community by connecting what she calls the dominant Anglo-Quebec discourse from 1974 to 1991 with the British Conquest. This transhistoric link then allows Legault to claim of Anglo-Quebeckers, "La langue anglaise, la domination économique des anglophones, de même que leur culture politique propre, qu'ils considéraient supérieure à celle des francophones, étaient au cœur même de leur identité collective" (1992, 58). Linda Leith's essentialist view of the Québécois majority becomes most obvious in her eugenic analysis of Hugh McLennan's *Two Solitudes* and her rejection of the typical interpretation of the novel's romance between Heather Methuen and Paul Tallard as "symbolizing the union of English and French Canada" (2010, 92). According to Leith, "Paul Tallard is only half French. His mother was an English-speaking Irish Montrealer, and he himself was educated in English. And if Paul is half French, any children he and Heather might have would only be a quarter French" (92). The question that Leith's analysis raises is, of course, who does pass this test of ethnic purity? With the premiere of his play, *Encore une fois, si vous permettez*, Michel Tremblay, Leith's icon of Québécois writing in *Writing in the Time of Nationalism*, revealed that his mother was born in Rhode Island, was raised in Saskatchewan and was part Cree. Neither the children of Lucien Bouchard with American Audrey Best, nor the children of Jacques Parizeau with Polish immigrant Alice Poznanska would meet Leith's description of being fully French. As Taras Grescoe observes in *Sacre Blues*, the Québécois *laine*, rather than *pure*, is "an intriguing patchwork" (2000, 45).

Clearly Leith did not accept Lucien Bouchard's claim that "We are all Quebecers. Nous sommes tous Québécois" (Bouchard 1996c). None the less, when Québécois has become an accepted, common, politically correct designation for a resident of Quebec in both French and English, and Anglo means English-speaking, in an era that celebrates hybridity and hyphenation to the point that the US President cheerfully describes himself as "a mongrel," why is it so hard for Leith and English-speaking Quebeckers in general (myself included) to say, "I am an Anglo-Québécois"?

Director Guy Sprung who has been quick to describe the English of Quebec as "a minority within a minority" (1993, 8) and writer Marianne Ackerman may be exceptions to this rule. Ackerman, in addition to her work as a journalist, novelist, and playwright, was the co-founder and artistic director of Theatre 1774, a company set up to do crossover, bilingual, and bi- and multicultural productions in Montreal. In a 1997 interview, on the eve of turning over Theatre 1774 to Sprung, who renamed the company Infinitheatre, Ackerman argued quite poignantly that "there is huge resistance to the truth of how Quebeckers live, English and French, which is rather well. On any planetary or historical scale, people here get along well and work together—that's a fact. That fact cannot be reflected on stage because it flies in the face of two deeply entrenched visions" (Ackerman 1997).

Given the circumstances of Bouchard's speech in 1996—that it was an address from the highest office in Quebec, and that the premier was at the pinnacle of his personal power and prestige, not only as the newly acclaimed premier of Quebec, but also as the hero of the 1995 referendum campaign who had guided it out of the doldrums to near victory only weeks from the final vote—the premier's speech was an illocutionary performance. That is, just as surely as the priest's or minister's pronouncement creates a married couple, or the judge's verdict of guilty makes it so, the premier's address to the Anglo-Québécois community brought that community into a certainty and clarity of existence and gave it an ontological status that it had never before enjoyed. In his speech, Premier Bouchard explained his choice of venue, saying, "Here in this very room, French and English Montrealers sat side by side, laughed and were moved, by one of the most popular plays this city has ever seen: *Balconville* by David Fennario. You know it well: it's about a group of Montrealers in Pointe-St.-Charles, French and English-speaking, who disagree about politics but are bound together by their shared experiences of life" (Bouchard 1996c).

In its references to Fennario and other anglophone writers of Quebec, the premier's speech invoked the existence of a distinct Anglo-Québécois culture. In its central theme of cross-linguistic rapprochement if not solidarity, the speech echoed Maurice Podbrey's memoir/history of Centaur Theatre and numerous

plays presented at Centaur. In his memoir, *Half Man, Half Beast,* Podbrey describes Centaur as having "resisted being drawn into a defensive posture" and deciding "not to survive against the changes but to survive with the changes" (1997, 55) while adjusting to the challenge of becoming bilingual and accepting "a new power relationship" (99). These themes and shifting attitude towards the French majority are also explicitly reflected in Centaur plays like Fennario's *Balconville* and its sequel *Condoville* in 2005, Vittorio Rossi's *The Last Adam* and *Love and Other Games*, and Ann Lambert's *Very Heaven,* to name but a few.

In the same gesture Bouchard enacted the Anglo-Québécois community and announced that Quebec was a nation capable of embracing linguistic and cultural heterogeneity. While the premier's speech described "the Anglophone community" as "an example for how other minorities in North America should be treated" and "Quebec nationalism" as a movement that "no longer seeks to be homogenous, but instead embraces diversity and pluralism" (Bouchard 1996c), reactions from within the Quebec nationalist movement and the Parti Québécois ranged from indifference to opposition, and among Quebec anglophones from scepticism to disdain.[6]

Premier Bouchard pointed out that the speech was "the first time a premier of Quebec [had] extended an invitation to such a broad segment of Quebec's anglophone community" (Bouchard 1996c). In fact, Bouchard's declaration understates the singularity of the event. In *Community Besieged,* Stevenson points out that the Parti Québécois government attempted "to build bridges to the English-speaking community" prior to the 1980 referendum: "This effort was originally the responsibility of Dr. Camille Laurin, the minister responsible for language policy and as such a natural focus for anglophone resentment" (1999, 162). Responsibility for cultural communities would later become part of Gérald Godin's portfolio as minister of immigration: "On 7 February 1981 the party published an advertisement in the *Gazette*, signed by Premier Lévesque and including his photograph. The message, addressed to 'English Speaking Quebecers' ... invited English-speaking readers to join the party" (Stevenson 1999, 165). No extended political address before Lucien Bouchard's speech on 12 March 1996 or since[7] has similarly evoked and enacted the existence of an Anglo-Québécois community.

The premier's speech was an important step on his eventual collision course with Yves Michaud, who publically chastised Montreal's Jewish community for its opposition to Quebec independence in the 1995 referendum. The Michaud affair, as it came to be called, in which Bouchard spearheaded a vote of censure against Yves Michaud through the Quebec Assembly, proved divisive within the Parti Québécois and was widely considered to be an important factor in Premier Bouchard's decision to resign in 2001. Among anglophone commentators the

most typical reaction to the Centaur speech was to underline the futility of the premier's implied promise of hospital services in English when he quipped that "When you go to the hospital and you are in pain, you may want a blood test, you don't want a language test" (Bouchard 1996c).

Theatre critic Pat Donnelly, in a *Montreal Gazette* column, described the premier's speech as a "one-man show" and complained that "It wasn't exactly reassuring to realize that the premier's (or rather his speechwriter's) knowledge of Quebec anglophone theatre appeared to be limited to David Fennario's *Balconville*, first produced at Centaur in 1979" (1996, E7). Donnelly ultimately used the premier's address to Quebec anglophones as a springboard to react to "a minor kerfuffle that recently occurred at city hall over the suitability of Cahier de Théâtre *Jeu* for a city cultural award" (E7). At issue was the fact that included in *Jeu*'s dossier was a copy of *Cent ans de théâtre à Montréal*, a book of theatrical photos published in 1988 that, according to Donnelly, was "pretty well devoid of anglo content" (E7). In reaction, Donnelly commented,

> Usually, it's pretty tough to get my Irish (of the third-generation Canadian variety) up on that one. Because, like the Italians, blacks, Greeks, Jews, Asians, Armenians, Arabs and other "ethnics," the Irish have generally been reduced to footnotes with equal efficiency in both the English and French history books, along with the rest of the minorities and the entire working class. (1996, E7)

Donnelly's thesis, in reaction to the premier's speech, was that: "with history, it all depends on who writes the books. And in the case of Quebec theatre history, the books are largely being written by francophones with little anglophone input" (E7); however, as Yves Jubinville points out in "Une mémoire en veilleuse: Bilan et défis de l'historiographie théâtrale au Québec," there has not been a written history of Quebec theatre published since the works of Houlé, Béraud, and Hamelin between 1945 and 1962 (2001, 37).[8] The tone of Donnelly's commentary turns decidedly optimistic when, based on a conversation with Michel Vaïs, director of *Jeu*, she announces "that things have changed mightily since 1988 in the field of Quebec theatre history, thanks to Jean-Marc Larrue" (1996, E7). Donnelly reports that "Larrue's Le Monument Attendu [*sic*] draws attention to the fact that the first play ever presented at the Monument National was a Shakespearean comedy performed by children under the direction of Lord Melville in 1894. And he also mentions the fact that Griffintown's St. Ann's Young Men's Association first performed an Irish play at the Monument that same year" (E7).

Larrue's account in *Le Monument inattendu: Le Monument-national, 1893-1993* is not the celebration of English theatre in Quebec that Donnelly's report

suggests. The English productions at the Monument National were the result of its dire and embarrassing financial straits resulting from the still unpaid costs of its construction. L'Association Saint-Jean-Baptiste, owner and manager of Le Monument, was forced to "tourne donc vers les organisations anglophones, généralement plus riches et mieux établies que leurs pendants francophones.... C'est donc, bien ironiquement, à une société d'amateurs canadiens-anglais que revient l'honneur d'ouvrir la carrière artistique de la grande salle du Monument national" (Larrue 1993, 82). What had been conceived as "un 'fabuleux' projet, celui du Monument National de tous les Canadiens français d'Amérique" (32) appeared to have become "le Monument des autres" (83).

What this spiralling series of identity-politics gambits displays is a constant return to the image of irreconcilable linguistic solitudes, not because this image is the only or best possible representation of the facts, but because it frequently makes the most dramatic or ironic or compelling narrative, as well as playing to the political exigencies of the day and the expectations of an audience that has already accepted the prevailing myth. Even if healthy scepticism leads one to conclude that the premier's speech was a disingenuous continuation of the established political agenda, it remains striking that no one, on either side of the sovereignty question, was willing to fully take advantage of what the premier actually said. It appears that both *indépendantistes* and Anglo-rights advocates, either consciously or unconsciously, arrived at the conclusion that their interests and agendas were best served by continuing adherence to a myth of two solitudes.

Although writers like Taras Grescoe and Robert Majzels (see Majzels 1998-99, 18) have been outspoken in decrying Anglos' propagating myths of their victimization in Quebec, Pat Donnelly has been an unusual case in that she has appeared to play identity politics on both sides of the linguistic divide. At the launching of Theatre 1774 as a new company and its first play *Echo*, directed by Robert Lepage, as shown in Don Winkler's documentary film *Breaking a Leg*, it was Donnelly (the new theatre reviewer at the *Gazette*, replacing Marianne Ackerman) who asked the question, in French, which would eventually become a pivotal criticism of the project: "La pièce sera présentée en quelle langue?" (Winkler 1992). Robert Lévesque, theatre critic for *Le Devoir*, would later question the production and the company for using a francophone Québécois director and actors for a play that ended up being completely in English. It is Pat Donnelly, however, who would declare, "I went home from *Echo* thinking seriously about Quebec separation. Maybe it's not such a bad idea after all. Here is a case of a francophone great talent crossing over and kind of losing it" (Winkler 1992). Although the film documented that the play was underprepared because Robert Lepage was pursuing two projects simultaneously, Lepage would also join in invoking the myth of solitudes

as he claimed he had been "roughed up" by the critics, not because of the production but because of the language issues. *Echo* played to 30% houses through its Montreal run and the company lost $10,000; a revised version of the play went on to have larger audiences and mixed reviews in Toronto (Winkler 1992).

Although the *Echo* project might stand as the defining conflict of the Anglo-Québécois theatre, the *problématique* that exposes its parameters, particular challenges and limitations, the more striking example would be the reception of David Fennario's *The Death of René Lévesque*, produced at Centaur, directed by Paul Thompson. As Fennario describes in a preface to the 2003 publication, the play provoked broken windows, a bomb scare, and death threats, and "was booed from the audience on opening night by an enclave of francophones led by the *Le Devoir* drama critic" (Fennario 2003, 10). Robert Lévesque's review appeared on the front page of *Le Devoir*. In his review, he mocked les Anglais, whom he describes as BMW-driving Westmounters, for being "Marxistes d'un soir" and panned the play with the claim that "Théâtralement, c'est une merde" (1991, A1). In an overview essay in *Jeu*, Yvan Lamonde and Louise Vigeant asked, "À qui parle Fennario?" and concluded that "Il semble que Fennario ait eu quelque difficulté à identifier son récepteur" (1991, 136).

Fennario seems to have taken this conclusion to heart. As he describes in the preface to the revised, published version, "I decided to have the text translated into French and went shopping for a francophone company to produce the play" (2003, 10). He reports that "None of the mainstream theatres even bothered to respond to my queries, nor did I get much interest from the smaller companies" (10). The play exemplifies the challenges of an absent Anglo-Québécois subject. In a world view dominated by a myth of solitudes, a play in English cannot be addressed to a Québécois audience even though it is conservatively estimated that at least three million Québécois can understand English. Conversely, a Québécois play cannot be addressed to an anglophone audience without the risk of profaning sacred icons, in this case the image of René Lévesque.

The original production was clearly marked by the rough-hewn stylistic features that we would typically associate with a Paul Thompson collective creation (e.g., *The Farm Show*, *1837: The Farmers' Revolt*). The episodic scenes were linked by a guitar-playing chansonnier named Barbotte whose frenetic performance as the chorus tended to dominate the action and give the entire production a carnivalesque tone. Fennario's proximity to Michel Tremblay has always been obvious in that they are both playwrights from Montreal writing primarily about the working class.[9] Fennario has joked that "A lot of people I meet think that Michel Tremblay wrote *Balconville*. When they tell me that, I tell them I wrote *Les belles soeurs*"

(Fennario 1999). The revised, published version of *The Death of René Lévesque* in both style and content is the most Tremblayesque of all Fennario's plays.

Although the play is more explicitly political than Michel Tremblay's drama, the characters—Jean-Louis Demers, a business leader; Jacques Beaubien, a political activist; Gérard Martin, a union leader; and Hélène Duguay, Lévesque's lover—are all clearly identified as Franco-Québécois. In addition to the biographical exposition in their respective monologues, they speak varieties of English that include what might be considered Quebec English or French-accented English or translations of *joual*. The script includes extensive passages in French—generally, poetry and songs—as well as historical documents such as the FLQ Manifesto and passages of Lévesque's speeches translated into English. The characters address the audience directly in monologue and occasional choral chants reminiscent of the style of some of Tremblay's finest plays, *À toi pour toujours*, *ta Marie-Lou*, *Bonjour là*, *bonjour*, and *Albertine en cinq temps*. In the published script Fennario also eliminated the chansonnier Barbotte and included a statue of René Lévesque with a speaking role in the play. The final effect is staging very similar to Denise Boucher's controversial play *Les fées ont soif* in which a statue of the Blessed Virgin Mary is present on stage as one of three women characters.

Throughout his career Michel Tremblay has acknowledged the profound influence of the ancient Greek theatre in his work. Tremblay's play, *Sainte Carmen de la Main*, written in the style of a Greek tragedy, is often considered the ultimate example of that influence. David Fennario's best-known plays, though done with a satiric, "epic theatre" twist or in the style of social realism, in terms of tone and narrative structure have typically been comedies. *The Death of René Lévesque,* in which Fennario presents the story of how Lévesque's dream of Quebec as an independent "social democracy" failed when confronted with "free-market economic policies" (Fennario 2003, 11) is, as Fennario himself acknowledges in "A Note on Style," "a tragedy in the style of the Greek dramatists" (13). Despite the *enquébécoisée* (to borrow a locution from Jacques Ferron's *Les grands soleils*) nature of play, neither the 1991 production nor the 2003 publication has provoked a second performance of the play or any significant acknowledgement of its distinctive features.

As Terry Eagleton points out in his discussion of "the subject," without "some sense of our selves as reasonably unified, coherent selves, ... action would be impossible" (1983, 169). Although the unified, coherent subject is always unstable and illusory, the radical degree of instability and the challenges of the Anglo-Québécois subject are apparent in the opening scene of the play when a "Broadcast Voice" announces that the Complexe Desjardins in Montreal has "demonstrated our capacity as Québécois to transform our aspirations into

concrete reality" (Fennario 2003, 19). This example demonstrates the extreme disconnection between the "subject of the enunciation" (the person speaking before us) and the "subject of the utterance" (the "I" of the grammatical sentence) (Eagleton 1983, 169). Lived experience in Quebec amply demonstrates that the implied subject in the phrase "our capacity as Québécois" simply does not exist; that is, there is no television broadcaster who while speaking English would use a first-person pronoun (I, we, our) and self-describe as Québécois.

While the apparent unity of these two sides of the subject is always illusory and only imagined, there is an extreme degree of radical split between the subjects of enunciation and utterance that runs throughout *The Death of René Lévesque*. David Fennario is the Anglo-Québécois playwright par excellence; this is his most markedly Québécois play, but there are no categorically anglophone characters in the play, no Anglo "subjects of enunciation" speaking before us. There are, of course, francophone characters who (like Lucien Bouchard) momentarily adopt a subject position that is or, at least, is like the Anglo-Québécois subject position between solitudes. The effectiveness and clarity of the political message that Fennario has attempted to transmit through his plays has previously been largely dependent on the authorial, Marxist, working-class persona both behind and on stage in those plays. In each of Fennario's early plays he was known to include himself as one of the characters: Gary in *On the Job*, Jerry in *Nothing to Lose*, the playwright in *Toronto*, and Tom in *Balconville*. In the later, one-man shows—*Gargoyles* and *Banana Boots*—Fennario would play himself.[10] In the case of *The Death of René Lévesque*, however, the absence of an Anglo "subject of the utterance" makes the play all the more stereotypically Québécois (i.e., purely French, *de souche*, *pure laine*), yet the language of the play and the playwright (the subject of the enunciation) make it necessarily Anglo, projecting exactly the Anglo-Québécois subjectivity that a myth of solitudes would challenge. Although it always remains to some degree unstable and illusory, it is through this constant process of reaching across the linguistic divide, as the Anglo playwright presents, without parody, Franco characters, situations, and icons, and the Franco characters present themselves in English, that the Anglo-Québécois subject position is occupied. Potentially, as this performed subjectivity takes hold, it approaches a necessary or legal fiction and creates the possibility of an Anglo-Québécois voice.

The play is critical of the Parti Québécois for turning away from its social democratic principles once in power, but at the same time, to a degree, it elevates René Lévesque to the status of tragic hero—although it is a statue of Lévesque rather than Lévesque himself on stage. As the dramatic monologues of his entourage reveal, Lévesque resisted kowtowing to bankers at the "Economic Club in New

York City" (Fennario 2003, 58) by wearing "fluorescent blue Wallabies in clashing contrast" to the "monkey suit ... tuxedo" he swore he would never wear (58) and going off "the prepared text" (59) of his speech. After ten months of being squeezed by New York bankers who held "hundreds of millions of dollars worth of bonds issued by Hydro-Québec and the Québec Treasury" (58), the Quebec government acquiesced through an equally symbolic gesture of erecting "a statue of Maurice LeNoblet Duplessis on the grounds of the National Assembly in Québec" (62), as well as the less symbolic gesture of imposing austerity programs on Quebec's social programs and unions. In Fennario's analysis it was the death of his dream of a social democracy in Quebec that was the death of René Lévesque.

To put reaction to the original production of *The Death of René Lévesque* and the absence of reaction to the published text into context, Michel Tremblay's criticism of the Parti Québécois led to the hyperbolic headline in *Le Devoir* that "Michel Tremblay dit ne plus croire à la souveraineté" (*Le Devoir* 2006) and his consequent vilification by various Québécois nationalists (Bernard Landry announced that he would never again attend a Tremblay play [Radz 2006, E12]). As Tremblay revealed in an interview with *Montreal Gazette* theatre critic, Matt Radz, he gave up his membership in the Parti Québécois in 1971 because as he put it: "I wanted to keep my, uh, independence" (quoted in Radz 2006, E12). David Fennario, like Michel Tremblay, is a Quebec sovereigntist, or, as he is described on the cover of *The Death of René Lévesque*, "an anglophone Quebec separatist" (2003). As Fennario explains in his preface, he was motivated to revise and publish *The Death of René Lévesque* in the wake of the "anti-globalization movement" that had "created a solidarity between anglophones and francophones that hasn't existed since the 1970s" (2003, 10). From *On the Job* (his first Centaur play) to *The Death of René Lévesque*, this solidarity has been a key theme in Fennario's work, and an accidental consequence has been the repeated performance and enactment of an Anglo-Québécois subject.

Notes

1. The notion of *two solitudes* in contemporary Canadian discourse typically suggests mutual exclusivity, an inability of "the French" and "the English" to communicate across the cultural and linguistic divide, and consequently, a fatalistic expectation of misunderstanding, impasse, and conflict. Ironically, the expression was popularized in Canada by the publication of Hugh MacLennan's novel, *Two Solitudes*, which in its final chapters is a love story of the coming together of a francophone and an anglophone. Moreover, MacLennan's title and the novel's epigraph are taken from Rainer Maria

Rilke's letter to a young poet in which Rilke proposes that true love depends on a man and a woman each maintaining his or her individuality: "love consists in this: that two solitudes protect and border and greet each other" (1986, 78).

2. When asked about his reaction to Anglo-Quebec in an interview, Fennario responded, "The whole English-rights thing makes me want to vomit" (quoted in Reid 1999, 65).
3. For the transcript of Premier Bouchard's speech I first consulted a web page entitled "Parts of Premier Lucien Bouchard's Address to Anglophones: March 12, 1996" (1996b). The website has since become inaccessible. On 17 May 2009, I consulted the "Site du premier ministre du gouvernement du Québec" where there was an "official" French translation of the speech entitled "Allocation du premier ministre du Québec, M. Lucien Bouchard, devant la communauté anglophone du Québec" (1996a). This website also became inaccessible shortly after I consulted it. Parts of the premier's speech are currently available under the title "Speech of the Premier of Quebec, Mr. Lucien Bouchard, before the Anglophone community of Quebec" at the *Independence of Quebec* website (1996c). I have compared the parts of the speech I have quoted in this essay to my print-out of the "official" French translation to confirm that they correspond. Having consulted both Centaur Theatre and the Bibliothèque et Archives nationales du Québec, neither of whom have a transcript, audio, or video of the event, I believe I have as authoritative a copy of the speech as I can possibly access.
4. The expression *to naturalize history* has become a commonplace. See, for example, John Fiske's explanation that "Barthes argues that the main way myths work is to naturalize history" (1990, 89). In *Mythologies*, Roland Barthes explains that "Nous sommes ici au principe même du mythe: il transforme l'histoire en nature" (1957, 232); Annette Lavers offers this translation: "We reach here the very principle of myth: it transforms history into nature" (Barthes 1972, 129).
5. Following the election of the Parti Québécois (4 September 2012), Premier-elect Pauline Marois's discourse on election night was both literally and figuratively interrupted by the tragic melodrama of a masked gunman's attempt to firebomb the event. In the aftermath, Richard Henry Bain, the alleged gunman, was led away in handcuffs shouting, "Les Anglais se réveillent"; David Courage was wounded and Denis Blanchette was dead after what has been described as his heroic attempt to stop the gunman from entering the Metropolis Club where Pauline Marois was giving her speech. Inside the Metropolis Club, only moments earlier, Pauline Marois was making the remarkable gesture of addressing the anglophone community of Quebec in English—to a cheering response from the crowd of her supporters—with the promise that "your rights will be fully protected" and the acknowledgement that "we share the same history ... and ... a common future" (2012). The full video recording of Madame Marois' speech is available at the Parti Québécois website (Marois 2012).
6. Anglophones would have good reason to react sceptically to the premier's interpellation with this claim of a pluralist ideology when only months before in the 1995 referendum campaign the Parti Québécois's principal rationale for independence was the essentialism encapsulated in the slogan "nous sommes un peuple." Despite the

referendum loss on the basis of this slogan, at the Parti Québécois national convention, 18 April 2011, at which Pauline Marois received a 93% vote of confidence, she once again invoked the slogan "nous sommes un peuple" as a basis for relaunching the sovereignty debate. The slogan was an underpinning of the 2012 PQ election campaign and a theme in premier-elect Marois's victory speech on election night. To erase the incongruity in the ongoing PQ discourse it would be necessary to acknowledge that the Québécois "peuple" ("nation" in English translation) is not a matter of shared essence but a construction over time (or to be more transparent about its "strategic essentialism") and, in a second step, to explain how other nations and communities (First Nations, anglophones, non-francophones) can be made fully part of this constructed, integrated rather than multicultural nation.

7. As noted above, Pauline Marois's sentences in English addressed to the anglophone community during her victory speech 4 September 2012 were exceptional; however, they were an aside rather than an extended discourse addressed to the anglophone community.

8. Information and data on the history of Quebec theatre obviously exists in a variety of forms and sources; however, as Jubinville rightly points out, scepticism about the concept of history throughout the postmodern period, together with a lack of consensus about how theatre history should be approached or written, has resulted, despite the pedagogical need, in a comprehensive history of Quebec theatre not being written. Although it is a popular assumption that such a history must exist, it does not. One possible exception to Jubinville's thesis is a thin volume by Madeleine Greffard and Jean-Guy Sabourin entitled *Le theatre québécois,* published, according to its copyright, in 1997, although the final chapter of the publication covers the period 1980 to 2005. Presumably this volume was not available to Jubinville as he was preparing his article but even if it were as the authors, Greffard and Sabourin, themselves point out, "*Le Théâtre québécois* est un titre commode, mais beaucoup trop large par rapport à l'objet visé" (1997, 12). The general outline of Jubinville's argument would also apply to Canadian and Anglo-Québécois theatre history. Although theatre history per se is not the focus of this essay, it is worth pointing out that even in the context of pervasive scepticism about the grand narratives of history, historical information about English-language theatre in Quebec is available in the form of memoirs (such as Maurice Podbrey's *Half Man, Half Beast*, covering the history of Centaur Theatre, Murial Gold's *A Gift to Their Mother: The History of the Saidye Bronfman Centre Theatre* and Herbert Whittaker's *Setting the Stage: Montreal Theatre 1920-1949*), unpublished working documents (such as "Anglophone Theatre in Quebec from 1870 to 2000: Status Report," by Phillip Booth, Kimberly Diggins, Jean-Marc Larrue, Isabelle Roy, Peter Urquhart and David Whitely [1998]), compendiums and individual articles (such as Catherine Graham's "Le théâtre anglophone au Québec" [2001] and Marianne Ackerman's "Anglo-Québécois Theatre: From Commiseration to Celebration" [2012]). For further discussion of Anglo-Québécois theatre history see Reid, "Le théâtre anglo-québécois : Le 'théâtre imaginé' d'une communauté manqué" (forthcoming).

9. For further discussion comparing Tremblay and Fennario see Reid, "Mapping *Jouissance*: Insights from a Case Study in the Schizophrenia of Canadian Drama" (2001-2002).
10. For further discussion of this thesis see Reid, "David Fennario Turned Rhapsodist: The Rebirth of the Author in Performance" (1999).

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