

POLITICAL PERSPECTIVE IN COLLECTIVE CREATION OF CANADIAN DRAMA

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ABSTRACT

The fundamental concept is to explore the possibilities of a live theater that could go beyond its entertainment, morals, and revenue. In order to express their views on society and acute awareness of living in a changing world, the designers began experimenting with new forms, techniques, and materials, putting away all theatrical norms. Since improvisation was a crucial component of their creative process, the group's initial productions were entirely actor-improvised plays. 'Dramatizing abstractions' becomes impossible without this. The players went on tour to play in a variety of locations, including prisons, town halls, churches, gyms, women's shelters, auction houses, and theaters in all their forms. Instead of seeking an audience, they stood up and performed their works spontaneously practically anywhere, speaking directly to the local populace on topics of interest centered around their customs and way of life. They frequently considered the local environment in some of their pivotal moments and progressively broadened their scope by maintaining constant communication with the "other" and the target audience, even though it required risky performance. By using this new method, the actors and directors created new forms, increased the performers' range and ability, and, via working together, provided a new and innovative perspective on the issues.

KEY WORDS: *Collective Creation, Theatre, Post-Modern, Canadian Drama.*

INTRODUCTION

COLLECTIVE CREATION

In actuality, actor-improvised plays are referred to as collective creativity. Due to their enigmatic working style, they were forced to bear the awful yet amazing weight of innovation. Since they lacked

a script, they were forced to rely on their own impromptu ingenuity. The rehearsal of the play 1837 by Rick Salutin and Paul Thompson exemplifies the terrible practical difficulties these authors faced: Horrible. Simply awful. I'm not sure how bad it is. Nothing is there. And they won't give, they won't work... We've come to a complete stop—no, we're hurtling backward. There is no script to rely on, no expansiveness, and no giving! I asked Paul, "Christ, is it always like this?" "I'm not sure," he sighed. I can't recall. I suppose so. Are you able to tolerate it? I have to forget. I would never do that again if I recalled.

HISTORICAL BACKGROUND OF COLLECTIVE CREATION

The backdrop necessary for a comprehensive knowledge of the communal business in Canada would be highlighted by a study of the forerunners of collective creations in the US and Britain. As true artisans and valid forerunners of the post-modern theater, Erwin Piscator and Bertolt Brecht aimed to address the shortcomings of the traditional theater while taking into account the shifting cultural landscape of the technological period. To investigate the extreme political beliefs of the day, they established "small collectives" with experts from a variety of disciplines, including historians, sociologists, playwrights, and actors. As a filmmaker, Piscator pushed freedom to its utmost limits to further his political goals, but he also assisted the working-class audience he was aiming for in understanding the evolving landscape of the modern technological era. These two essential playwrights had a significant impact on Joan Littlewood's efforts to start a working-class community theater in Manchester and then Stratford East, London, in the 1930s. She oversaw the early adaptation of *The Good Soldier Schweik* by Brecht and Piscator over the first several years. Ensemble playing was prioritized by Brecht and Littlewood. Littlewood sought to fully integrate the resources of movement, speech, sound, and light while creating both new plays and classics. In order to provide her company with the tools it needed, she arranged for them to receive intensive instruction in Rudolph Laban's dance style. According to Alan Filewood, her "signature technique of portraying realistic action through mime and sound effects" is "Disciplined Improvisation". Piscator's earlier method of presenting factual situations with satirical undertones against a backdrop of documentary projections is combined with music in her most well-known company piece, *Oh What a Lovely War!* (1963), which is ironically based on the popular songs of the First World War. When making their films in the 1960s, director Peter Cheeseman and his team showed a strong care for factuality as the *Living Newspaper* in an effort to build a direct connection with the community. By using a lot of local theatrical material and candidly

presenting the reality of their life, Cheeseman and his supporters appealed to the tastes of the audience, who had rarely visited a theater. According to Diane Bessai, "In the notable case of a local issue (The Fight for Shelton Bar, 1974), the company went out and learned the plant operations they were to depict on stage through combinations of realistic action and mime".

As Because these plays were mostly based on the popular culture of the day, they were quite popular with their intended audience. For instance, in 1968, workers from all over the world flocked to the Newcastle and Nottingham Playhouse to see Alan Platers' documentary musical Close the Coalhouse Door, which was based on the rich English music-hall tradition and the community experience of the mining industry over the years. Together with his student Theatre Group, Albert Hunt at Bradford College of Art created an alternative education theater and a "community core" to guide his communications. His group created a cartoon adaptation of John Ford's 1970 novel A Cuban Missile Crisis. The play was presented in a number of locations, including London's Open Space Theatre, a tavern, and a rural community in the north. Hunt was more satisfied with its performance with an audience that did not attend the theater.

These are The Living Theatre, created in 1951 by Julian Beck and his wife Malina; The Open Theatre, formed in 1963 by Joseph Chaikin; and The Performance Group of Richard Schechner, founded in 1967. using open, sensational, and ritualized engagement with the audience, they experimented with radical new adaptations of ancient literature and primarily explored acting skills using non-spectacular verbal gestures. The collective creators aimed to revolutionize their creations by breaking down the barriers between life, theater, and revolution; for instance, Brecht's contribution to the Living Theatre was remarkable as they triggered aggressive interactions between performers and audience through their onstage improvisations and innovations of the period as they were committed to a political philosophy of pacifist anarchism. The creators were indebted to Antonin Artaud for his marvelous experimental ideas and emphasis on these features. Actors pushed the audience out into the street at the end of their 1968 production of Paradise Now, even though the episode "The Rite of Universal Intercourse" had rashly asked for audience participation. Since the poor people of Brazil were the intended audience for their guerilla theater work, they also conducted in-person interviews with them for their cycle of plays on the causes of violence, The Legacy of Cain. However, rather than focusing on political change and philosophy, the Open Theatre was more dedicated to exploring theatricality through new bodily techniques of acting and improvisation exercises. Megan Terry's creation, Viet

Rock, turned out to be a universal production because it clearly expresses deep anger against the Vietnam war, even though they were fully focused on their transformational acting experiments, in which the actor played multiple roles in addition to exchanging individual parts. By combining the elements of the Living Theatre and the Open Theatre, the environmental theatre, often referred to as the Performance Group, placed a strong emphasis on spatial interactions and eagerly awaited a close contact between actors and audience members. For instance, the well-known Dionysus in 69, a version of Euripedes' The Bacchae, in Schechner's theater, blended traditional and modern rituals with the actor's impromptu and personal remarks.

POLITICAL PERSPECTIVE

The play has been frequently performed in Canada and awarded the Chalmer's Award. Mary Jane Miller claims that there is a second edition of Les Canadiens, which was created by Toronto Workshop Productions and published by Talonbooks in 1977. This rendition was the winner of the 1977 Salutin the Chalmer Award. In this drama, Salutin connects the current ambiguities and misunderstandings of English-Canadian political and cultural identity in Quebec to the ramifications of the Parti Quebecois's win in the separatist election on November 15, 1976. An extended stage metaphor that makes historical events politically relevant to the Quebec election is provided by the game of hockey. Diane Bessai notes, "It's hockey as history and history as hockey".

Mary Jane Miller claims that hockey can be viewed as a game, a ritual, a drama, a surrogate war, or as situations pitting Quebec against the others. First of all, Les Canadiens successfully conveys the customs, abilities, and atmosphere of hockey. Second, it is a difficult drama about the origins of our current predicament, employing a simple yet adaptable metaphor for the emergence, development, and maturation of a political process in Quebec, and possibly throughout Canada.

STRUCTURE OF THE PLAY

The "demythologization" of a hockey team and "the repoliticization of a society" are the subjects of the two-act drama Les Canadiens. This drama's title is the team's name. A backward time movement in the first act serves as a kind of flashback. In the first act, time, place, and theme are all given a passing mention, but in the second act, each of the three unities is closely examined. The second act's woof and warp are shaped by the events of a single, tragic day in Canadian history. Each act has been named by

Rick Salutin. "Survival" is the title of the first act. Northrop Frye claims that "Survival (1972), written by Margaret Atwood, is an essay on an aspect of Canadian sensibility". According to Desmond Pacey, "Her central thesis - that the distinguishing characteristic of Canadian literature is its obsession with survival - is dubious". Given that it discusses the French people's ability to survive following their military setback on the Plains of Abraham, the title is appropriate. Like past collective works, this act is episodically constructed, with each scene blending Quebec's history with that of its hockey club to convey a distinct point. The actors carry out their various roles in accordance with the public figures that history remembers, and the historical characters—including players and owners—are identified by name. The game itself is stylized on stage, with performers showcasing the well-known Les Canadiens style while skating on roller skates. Orangeman is also assailed, and Wolfe and Macdonald, two of English Canada's national heroes, are burlesqued. By transforming sticks into a battlefield and the clock countdown into a parade of significant dates in Quebec history, the piece energizes the game of ice hockey.

AMBIENCE OF HOCKEY

By making references to a number of clubs that are well-known for their ice hockey prowess, Rick Salutin evokes the atmosphere of ice hockey. Since the entire action depends on it, Les Canadiens is undoubtedly the dominating team. The Bruins, The Flyers, Brothers of the Sacred Heart, Stratford, Montreal Wanderers, Maroons Chicago, New York Yankees, Maple Leafs, and Colorado Rockies are the other teams. The Stanley Cup, a prestigious cup by any measures, was won five times in a row by Les Canadiens during the 1950s, solidifying their unrivaled dominance.

In addition to the team names, there are mentions of the most notable athletes who have earned a spot in the Hall of Fame as a result of their accomplishments. The star of the show is Rocket, whose real name is Maurice Richard.

IDENTITY CHANGE

Throughout the production, transformation appears to be the author's preferred technique. The world is changing. The purpose of this identity shift is to show that Canada's current political climate is reversible. It is unlikely that the two linguistic groups' rigid position will last forever. Even though the team is demonized and the players are no longer the evangelists of Canadian federalism, the barriers of

miscommunication are likely to fall down and a sense of solidarity created by Les Canadiens is expected to surface. In the end, the principles they stand for will win out.

General Wolfe promises to be generous after defeating Montcalm on the Plains of Abraham. He displays his disgust with war in the hour of victory by stating that he would have preferred writing eloquent lines that people would remember, like Gray's "Elegy Written in a Country Churchyard," than winning a fight. He hates his military skills, which he has in spades, and longs for political ingenuity, which he glaringly lacks. Towards the end of his life, he seemed to be frustrated with the life he had led. This is a sign that someone wants to change who they are. A farmer who, according to his wife, was never able to shoot loses the identity during the hour of victory. It is a strange twist of fate that a farmer who is not trained in combat techniques lays low a doughty warrior. Although General Wolfe wins Quebec, he loses both his identity and his life. Identity metamorphosis serves as a metaphor for bringing order out of chaos and reality out of fantasy. This metaphor alters occurrences just as much as it shapes characterization. It is particularly noticeable at the characterization level in a few key characters. One of the main characters is the Farmer's son, who takes full credit for creating the hockey puck after turning his father's rifle into a hockey stick. He is referred to as George by the Rink Owner, Georges Vezina by the author, and Georges and Jacques by his own mother to highlight his French heritage. Vezina has emerged as the best goalie, and this moniker initially appears through the mouth of an armourer. The key to his portrayal is seen in his opening statement, "Papa, Papa, Mama wants you home" (LC 31). He is his mother's messenger, and he informs his father that his mother wants her spouse to come home.

POLITICAL SCENARIO

General Wolfe's military triumph at the cost of his own life on the Plains of Abraham marked a turning point in the political enslavement of the French in Canada. The French, smarting under this shame, use a variety of strategies to achieve parity, balance, rehabilitation, and retrieval. They use a variety of derogatory terms to express their feelings. When the French farmer refers to the English as "bastards," his wife not only repeats what he says, but also adds the derogatory term "pigs." She uses language in a fiery manner that is venomous. She claims that the English are never content and have been skulking throughout Europe and America before extending their predatory tendencies to Canada. She informs an English fan that the English "gotta own everything" (LC 80), displaying her animosity without

holding back. The French play hockey for the English, which her kid finds annoying. The English are referred to as "bastards" and "buggers" by a French fan. In pursuit of employment, 500,000 Quebecers relocate to the United States.

As stated by the Rink Owner, "The French hate English" (LC 48). Mother does not stand when the national anthem is played, and when she does, she sings a different song. She can't find anything admirable in an English player. She would rather believe that Morenz is a Frenchman from Switzerland, even if he is an English player. She dismisses and snubs an English fan.

Pronouncing English names like Watson, McMahan, O'Connor, and Getliffe is a challenge for the French. Names like Lamarche and Boucher are hard for the English to pronounce. Dave Kirk's pronunciation of "Lise" is incorrect.

One element that reflects the social gap between Canada's two linguistic populations is the mispronunciation of names. The owner of the rink and O'Brien cannot agree on how to pronounce even the hockey team's name.

The English have mental concerns about the French, despite the fact that it is never explicitly stated that they despise them. The Canadiens are tough and rugged, according to the English sportscaster. Dandurand informs Morenz, "Those things you heard about the French Canadian girls. A lot of them are true". O'Brien asserts that Quebec does not have three wise men and a virgin. If Dandurand believes that the French are lazy and unintelligent, the English fan responds that the French are little, spiritual, and not physical, and that having a French hockey team is the most ridiculous thing ever. 'Rowdy Quebecers' is how Watkin depicts the Quebecers. 'Montreal is the devil's den,' says Reverend Peachtree. "Quebec always seemed to be a trouble-maker," writes Rick Salutin. They fly in the ointment of Canadian history because those French-Canadians were quarrelsome and boisterous.

The English have a distinct advantage over the French notwithstanding such disparaging remarks about them. The English, for instance, are aware of their wealth, economic savvy, and political influence. They make an effort to show the French generosity. An English fan offers to purchase a souvenir program for Mother, while another English businessman offers a French businessman a job establishing a brewery. The French treat such propositions with contempt.

"I have nothing against you," says National Hockey League President Clarence Campbell to Maurice Richard the Rocket. or any player who is French-Canadian. or any participant. One person characterized England as a country of shopkeepers. As an Englishman living in Canada, Clarence Campbell states, "Hockey is also a business". When dealing with the Rocket, this business instinct—rather than anti-gallicity—comes into play.

The first player, Peter, is prepared to adopt a French version of his name, Jean-Pierre Mahlovich, as the election results are being revealed and it becomes more and more obvious that the party supporting French interests is winning.

The English feel sorry about their language's great dominance. To learn French, the Anglophone players go to courses. There aren't many lessons, and the French instructor doesn't allow them to use English in the French class since she thinks the space is weird and inappropriate for learning French. The English players have offered to learn French, according to the third Anglophone Canadian, since "We work with guys who speak English to us; we wish to speak French to them". According to Kirk, English is the team's official language.

Miss Miron does not allow the pupils to learn French without crying, and it appears that she uses the Direct Method as her pedagogical approach. Moliere is a product of her mother tongue, which she is proud of.

The French player makes her proud. In order to conceal her liking for the Parti Quebecois from the Anglophone pupils, Rocket mentions it last even if she enjoys it. She introduces French words for the objects related to the hockey uniform and game, and she teaches the language through song.

To the extent that she complies with the Anglophone players' free decision to study French in order to return the Francophone players' understanding of English, Miss Miron is significant. She is not Mother's equivalent. As demonstrated in the following excerpt, "The woman becomes an irate French teacher who is less than committed to the linguistic ineptitude of the class until she discovers belatedly that they belong to Les Canadiens" (Bessai, Playwrights 143), it is too much to assume in the absence of any actorial hint in this regard. It should also be mentioned that the second act does not feature any of the characters from the first act. They're meant to look ethereal, Rocket might be referenced, Vezina's photo might be present, and so on. Either the English or the Les Canadiens players express their

patriotism for the entire nation of Canada. Maurice Richard's brother, Henri Richard, also known as Rocket, is a former athlete. "You see, this is the best country in the world to live in," he says. It offers you the greatest opportunity to achieve your goals (LC 158). In addition to wanting to manage a tavern, he aspired to play for Les Canadiens. Both of his dreams came true. Despite people's expectations that he would write an article supporting the Liberal Party because he had suffered greatly at the hands of the English trainers, this knowledge strengthens his sense of patriotism. The contest is reduced to just two parties: the federalists, represented by the Liberals, and the separatists, represented by Rene Levesque and his party Parti Quebecois. The fourth player, a Francophone, voted for the Union Nationale, a separatist party, but people understand that this splits the anti-Parti Quebecois votes. The Quebec populace firmly supports the Parti Quebecois on November 15, 1976.

Les Canadiens players advocate for federalism and are no different from Henri Richard. They want to sway their followers by stating the following:

- 1) They assert that they embody both the essence of Quebec and its aspirations.
- 2) They assert that they are aware of what is best for Quebec and its future. They are the only ones who can know.
- 3) It's wrong to be apart. Separatism is limited. Nationalism that is self-centered is a sin against mankind and the spirit.
- 4) Their advice is to maintain federalism. Federalism is a lovely concept. Federalism is an admirable idea. Federalism in Canada is a valiant experiment. Canada is an amazing, stunning nation. Federalism will preserve its beauty and wonder.
- 5) Federalism generates profits. It will keep Quebec from becoming an economic backwater and integrate it into the economy of the continent. The standard of living won't fall.
- 6) The players use the following phrases to desperately get the audience's attention: "Are you listening? Pay attention to what we have to say. Pay attention. Please remove the wax from your ears.

Following the vote and the announcement of the results, the speech is addressed to the maximum number of spectators in attendance. Miss Miron's absence from voting, in contrast to Mademoiselle Champleau's, is not insignificant.

Sir Edward Watkin is the link between England and Canada, and he intends to play his part in uniting Canada into a single nation by laying a railroad from coast to coast—or, as he prefers to say, from the Atlantic to the Pacific. The size of the national system will eventually allow the English railroad investment to be profitable. The word 'rowdy Quebecers' is used by Englishmen who are not Canadian, but Canadian Englishmen would never use it. According to Rick Salutin, "I remember that Quebec always seemed to be a trouble-maker in high school history class". Therefore, Watkin's portrayal of Quebecers is a stereotype. According to Macdonald, Canada should continue to be a single nation with municipal administrations. Only topics like "education and the like" will be subject to municipal autonomy. He is opposed to monarchies, republics, and confederations of states. In addition, he dislikes the concept of a federation. Time passes too quickly for Macdonald, and the drive for independence gathers steam across the nation. Macdonald starts to question whether it was a smart idea to give them their own small province and let the English handle nation-building. He is uneasy about Quebec's fissiparous tendencies, but the Liberals are equally concerned about them. He regains self-respect after his fear is realized on November 15, 1976, when Rene Levesque's Parti Quebecois defeats the Liberals in the election. "We stood up" encapsulates the essence of the electoral triumph.

THE ARCHETYPAL VALUE OF THE THEME

Reading the play leads one to the conclusion that, despite expressing a very local sensibility, it has a very universal importance. Despite living so close to the imposing North Pole, the French-Canadians are not an isolated group seeking identity, freedom, and victory. Rather, they stand for and embody goals that many people from all over the world have in common. The people of Bosnia-Herzegovina do not want to be a part of the larger Serbia; Corsica wants to assert her identity against the French mainland; Belfast's Irish Catholics are pitted against the British majority; Georgians in the former Union of Soviet Socialist Republics repeatedly express their resentment toward Georgia; and Chechnya has used violence and bloodshed to gain independence from Russian federalism. Unrest has recently spread throughout African nations as a result of a quest for identity. Darfiir in Western Sudan is an example of how this quest for identity can result in a humanitarian crisis. There is no relationship between the majority Arab Muslims and the African Muslims.

CONCLUSION

Together, they created plays that examined working conditions, such as the industrial revolution's impact on the textile trade, and cabaret-club performances that drew thousands of people to West Yorkshire. The collective creators in the United States were required to utilize particular techniques that were appropriate for the goal of collective production. It was a personal battle against overwhelming hurdles to obtain social acceptance. Given that this profession was historically defined by "specialization, competition, and internal hierarchies," the collective designers' efforts nearly turned into an international search for completeness. In addition to experimenting with radical ways of reaching audiences through consciousness-raising initiatives centered on specific social and political goals, these businesses heavily exploited the creativity of individual performers. The play was always in its fluid form, which allowed for better group performance and occasionally led to the production of text as a byproduct of the group's work. For instance, Susan Yankowitz wrote the lyrics for *Terminal* and *Chaikin*, whose group meditations were founded on profound issues and consistently used by a participating writer, while Van Itallie organized the final draft of *The Serpent*. The author served as both a performer and a director. Action, music, nonverbal cues, masks or puppets, and occasionally visual art have all become just as important as language. Special recognition should be given to three American countercultures that gained widespread recognition outside of Broadway.

But the overall goal of the Canada Council's theatrical growth was to create a uniform national theater rather than a localized one. "The essential of a national theater, as we see it, is that it should reach a national audience - even if this audience must, for convenience, be broken down into regional audience," the Council said in its 1961–62 Annual Report. (Playwrights 25; Bessai). Within ten or so years, it also predicted that civic theaters outside of Ontario and Quebec, as well as those in Toronto and Montreal, would establish a pretty tight working relationship.

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