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Repossession of a Cultural Space in Francophone Native Literature from Quebec

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Abstract

Francophone Native literature from Quebec is a relatively recent phenomenon. The first anthology[1] of this literature was published in 2004. Although Native writing started as early as the 18th century with the teaching of missionaries, it is only since the 1970s that Native authors from Quebec began to write fictional works increasingly. Due to their historical past, social and economic situation, Native authors have only recently slightly moved away from political issues. These authors have adopted and adapted Western literary forms so that they would be able to express the specificities of their cultures and beliefs. Despite their literary evolution, there are very few articles and no book providing a critical literary analysis of their works. Indeed, their works are most of the time only considered as a source of factual information on Native people.

This thesis aims at highlighting the core elements of this literature and at demonstrating its specificities. The main corpus for this research is composed of seventeen works written by nine authors. Poetry and plays tend to be favoured by Native authors over novels and short stories; their closeness to oral tradition can be seen as one of the main reasons for such choices.

By way of introduction to the topic, I summarize the historical, social and literary evolution of Native people in Quebec. In order to understand the founding of this literature, it is necessary to trace back the dramatic changes Quebec Native people went through since their first contact with White people. I problematize my research with references to postcolonial theories as the authors' situation as ex-colonised people echoes the issues raised in this particular field. However, I also refer to other theorists like Doreen Massey or Anthony Giddens when necessary. I have chosen a multitheoretical approach in order to highlight the specificities of this literature. The focus of the next chapters derives from these considerations. The second chapter examines how they represent themselves and others. The third chapter highlights how their recurrent representations of past events serve to the construction of a Native discourse. The fourth chapter is concerned with their representations of their own environment and demonstrates how they tie in past conceptions of nature with modern needs. The final chapter shows how using the French language can contribute to their repossession of a cultural space within Quebec society. Using the ex-coloniser's language shows a desire for recognition as well as subversion.

This is a field of research not yet widely discussed. While there have been many examinations of Native works in English (whether Canadian or American), this is the first literary critical approach of Francophone Native writing. This investigation plays a crucial role in the understanding of Native literature within Canada, as it concurs in some ways with the rest of Canadian Native literature and of Native literature at large, and in others detaches itself as Native authors from Quebec have their own specificities.

[1] Maurizio Gatti, *Littérature amérindienne du Québec. Ecrits de langue française* (Montréal: Hurtubise, 2004)

Table of Contents

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Introduction

Francophone Native literature from Quebec is a fairly recent phenomenon. Native writing from Quebec has been considered as forming a literature only for the past ten years, thanks to researchers such as Maurizio Gatti[1]and Diane Boudreau.[2] Quebec Native writing started in the 17th century with the presence of missionaries who transcribed the languages they heard into written systems in order to convert the different groups of Indians[3] they encountered. These religious men taught the Indians the written languages they had created. From the very beginning, politics and the process of writing have been deeply intertwined, notably because the first pieces of Native independent writing took the form of petitions to those who were in power at the time. Francophone Native literature has evolved since the 1970s, moving away from an essentially political agenda to a more creative and literary line of development. Whereas it is possible to find a good number of anthologies and literary analysis about Native literature in English (whether Canadian or American), there have been only two books published so far on Francophone Native literature. The first, *Histoire de la littérature amérindienne du Québec: oralité et écriture*[4] by Diane Boudreau gives a historical summary of its evolution. The author also comments briefly on some of the texts, but her approach is more contextual than literary. The second book, *Littérature amérindienne du Québec. Ecrits de langue française*,[5] is the first anthology of Francophone Native literature from Quebec. In this recent work, Maurizio Gatti has included several unpublished texts that he collected from the different Native communities inhabiting Quebec. The publication of such a book

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[1] Maurizio Gatti completed his PhD, 'Qu'est-ce que la littérature amérindienne au Québec?' in 2003 at Laval University in Quebec.
[2] Diane Boudreau founded in 1992 the Centre de recherches sur la littérature et les arts autochtones du Québec. Since 1985, she has been teaching French at St Jean-sur-Richelieu in Quebec.
[3] I will use the terms "Indian" and "White" when the historical context will require it and also when referring to the imaginary world created by the discourse opposing these two notions.
[4] Diane Boudreau, *Histoire de la littérature amérindienne du Québec: oralité et écriture* (Montréal: Hexagone, 1993).
[5] Maurizio Gatti, ed., *Littérature amérindienne du Québec. Ecrits de langue française* (Montréal: Hurtubise, 2004).

shows the growth of acknowledged output among Native authors and also the youth of Francophone Native literature. Native texts have most of the time been considered on an anthropological level. In libraries and bookshops, they are often placed in the history section. It is thus not surprising that Native narratives from Quebec have rarely been analysed from a literary point of view. Over the past ten years, there have been only a few articles[6] published on some of the works of the most famous authors. For instance, Hélène Destrempes has published several articles on Bernard Assiniwi's and Yves Sioui Durand's works establishing comparisons between the two. She has considered their representations of Native people and others, and also how both authors not only depict Native ways of life and thinking, but also tend to create a universalist vision of man.[7] Although I do share some of Hélène Destrempes' views, the scope of this thesis is much wider as it includes nine authors and seventeen works. The aim of this thesis is to demonstrate the existence of such a literature, its specificities and how through the process of writing Native authors from Quebec try to repossess a cultural space. This cultural repossession occurs at different levels. Having been described and analysed by non-Native people for centuries, Native authors from Quebec have been reclaiming their own identities through writing. Drawing on past representations or Native mythology, some of their narratives have succeeded in entering Quebec literary scene and thus enabling the authors to be heard. As Chapter Four will reveal, "cultural space" can also refer to their imaginary territories. Mythology and dreams can be re-accessed and reconstructed as in Yves Sioui Durand's plays.

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[6] See bibliography at the end.

[7] Hélène Destrempes, "Pour une traversée des frontières coloniales: identité et transaméricanité dans les oeuvres de Bernard Assiniwi et Yves Sioui Durand" in *Le Nouveau récit des frontières dans les Amériques*, edited by Jean-Francois Côté and Emmanuelle Tremblay, Quebec: Presses de l'Université de Laval, 2005, pp. 183-203.

The lack of awareness of the existence of this literature is partly due to the difficulty in locating texts. As will be shown in the first chapter, Native authors from Quebec encounter financial and editorial problems regarding their publication. Moreover, the structure and content of their texts do not always correspond to Western literary criteria; this makes it difficult for non-Natives to appreciate and evaluate their work. The political, social and economic situation of Native people in Quebec brings a particular context to their writing. They are indeed a minority within a minority, as Quebec itself represents a predominantly Francophone enclave inside Canada. Consequently, Native people can position themselves in relation to Quebec, Canada, the rest of the Americas and even, because of Quebec's origin, France.

I have considered a Francophone Native author as an author who speaks and writes in French, but whose cultural experience includes Native modes of thinking. I have, however, included extracts in English and Spanish from two of the chosen Native authors as they reinforce some of the characteristics of this literature expressed in the French and also highlight the perception some authors have of themselves as citizens of the world. Native Francophone Quebec literature should not be considered as simply one element of 'Quebec literature'. Their main commonality, apart from the French language, is their strong desire for survival. Despite sharing a Francophone culture, Quebec and Native people perceive themselves as very different and often find it difficult to understand each other, notably due to present and past political decisions and a worldview on life. The idea of a Native author can be in itself a very complex matter, as the first chapter will bring to light. Identity issues already exist on political and social levels because of past laws and stereotypical representations. I have thus decided to take into account Maurizio Gatti's suggestion that a Native

author is an author who considers himself/herself as such.[8] The combination of Native ancestry and the assertion of such an inheritance are the key factors in this cultural belonging.

As in the rest of the Americas, Quebec Natives have been influenced and damaged by their past as a colonised people. The survival of their indigenous cultures has been a serious challenge over the centuries. The myth of the disappearing Indian, which started in the 19th century, still lingers today in the Native and non-Native minds alike. Long before the appearance of Native writers in North America, Native people were the subject of many fictional and non-fictional books written by non-Native people. Since the very first sustainable contacts that took place in the 16th century, the Indigenous peoples of North America have not only been dispossessed of their lands, they have also seen their cultures interpreted, distorted and represented according to Western criteria. As Daniel Francis concisely summarised in *The Imaginary Indian, the Image of the Indian in Canadian Culture*: "the Indian began with a Whiteman's [sic] mistake and became a Whiteman's fantasy".[9] The contextualisation of Native literature is essential for understanding its characteristics. How do Native authors represent themselves in a contemporary context as it seems that the dominant non-Native part of Quebec society – as well as the rest of the Americas – perceives them as elements of the past? Moreover, do they represent themselves as one sole group "the Native people of Quebec or Canada" or do they refer only to their own nations? Is it possible to reconcile traditional beliefs and a modern way of life? The weight of the past and the need for identity assertion is not unique to this literature. Most formerly colonised countries, in Africa or in the Caribbean for example, have first generations of authors who concentrate their writing

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[8] Maurizio Gatti, p. 34.
[9] Daniel Francis, *The Imaginary Indian, the Image of the Indian in Canadian Culture* (Vancouver: Arsenal Pulp Press, 1992), p. 5.

on similar issues. In such cases, the assertion of the ex-colonised's identity is very often expressed as an act of resistance. Among the best-known instances of such resistance are those offered by Chinua Achebe in the "auto-ethnographic" novel, *Things Fall Apart*[10] and by Aimé Césaire, in *Discours sur le Colonialisme*.[11] Both authors turn round Western justification of colonisation in order to denounce past acts committed by the colonisers and to regain their own voices. Since the 1970s, postcolonial theories have involved discussing a wide range of issues that particularly concern ex-colonised people: "migration, slavery, suppression, resistance, representation, difference, race, gender, place, and responses to the influential master discourses of imperial Europe such as history, philosophy and linguistics, and the fundamental experiences of speaking and writing by which all these come into being".[12] Although the situation of Quebec Native people differs from those of Africa or the Caribbean, there are certain issues raised by postcolonial theories that can be found in their texts. For instance, the creation of a counter-discourse and the delicate balance between subversion and acceptance of the master's language are important factors in Native authors' attempts to repossess a cultural space. Their relation to their historical past and environment also bears similarities with other ex-colonised peoples as they try to reclaim them. However, the study of their texts also reveals their particularly acute sense of connection to the Earth, which is not as predominant in other postcolonial literature. Is this due to their traditional beliefs or to their integration of the myth of the noble savage created by the non-Natives?

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[10] Chinua Achebe, *Things Fall Apart* (London: Heinemann, 1958).
[11] Aimé Césaire, *Discours sur le Colonialisme* (Paris: Présence Africaine, 1955).
[12] *The Post-Colonial Studies Reader*, ed. by Bill Ashcroft, Gareth Griffiths and Helen Tiffin (London: Routledge, 1995), p. 2.

Among the ten different Native[13] nations inhabiting Quebec, only five of them have produced authors writing in French. The Innu and the Atikamekw, as well as a large part of the Algonquins and the Abenaquis, have adopted French as a second language. The Huron-Wendats and the Malecites are now unilingual French. The Cree, the Mohawk, the Miq'maks and the Nascapi have English as their second language. These linguistic choices have been influenced by whether the main ex-coloniser in the Native living area was British or French. Within this corpus, the works chosen represent a selection of the different genres the authors have favoured to express themselves. Unlike the anthology of texts published by Maurizio Gatti, I have selected only those that correspond to traditional Western literary genres such as poems, novels, short stories, and plays. I have not taken into account narratives that could be considered as stories for children or short autobiographical statements, however numerous they may be, as their study involves very different methods than those for the genres previously mentioned. Poems are the most popular form of expression among Native authors. Rita Mestokso (b. 1966), an Innu, Eléonore Sioui (b. 1925) and Jean Sioui (b. 1948), both Huron-Wendats, Charles Coocoo (b. 1948), an Attikamek, Yvon H. Couture (b. 1946), an Algonquin and Roméo Saganash[14] (b. 1962), a Cree, have all favoured this medium. Yves Sioui Durand (b. 1951), a Huron-Wendat, has concentrated his work in the realm of theatre. Bernard Assiniwi (1935-2000), half Cree/half Québécois, the most prolific of these authors, has explored several different styles of writing. The choice of genre, of course, affects the structure of the narrative and reveals different strategies in the authors' attempts to repossess a

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[13] In this study, the term "Native" will refer to the descendants of the aboriginal inhabitants of the Americas after the arrival of the Europeans. This term will be the equivalent to *Amérindien* which does not refer to Inuits as they have a distinct ethnicity, and they also have a different legal status from the rest of the Native people of Canada.

[14] Roméo Saganash. "Mahiganou" in *Littérature amérindienne du Québec. Ecrits de langue francaise* ed. by Maurizio Gatti (Montréal: Hurtubise. 2004). pp. 115-118.

cultural space. Poems and plays can be seen as being closer to oral tradition, and consequently more widely chosen by these authors. The adoption of Western literary forms and of the French language raises questions of ambivalence and authenticity. Is a Native discourse really emerging? What are the characteristics of this discourse? Is there such a notion as 'indianity'[15] present in their texts? Are these authors creating hybrid literary forms?

The methodology in this thesis involves textual analysis with regard to content, genre, narrative and language, and a contextual approach which delineates the specific historical and social situation of Native people from Quebec. Although my approach has been inspired by postcolonial theories, I have also called on a wider range of theorists including Anthony Giddens, Doreen Massey or Deleuze and Guattari when my analysis required it. This multitheoretical approach will help to understand the characteristics of Francophone Native literature from Quebec in the following chapters.

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[15] The notion of Indianity can be placed on the same level as "négritude" or "créolité." It can be seen as a means of defining and asserting an indigenous identity on a wider scale, giving more strength to the discourse it generates. In the analysis of Native authors from Quebec, this term encapsulates the characteristics emphasized by the authors to represent themselves as Indians. The following chapters will reveal what these characteristics are.

Chapter One

Context

> Context is important to understanding Indian stories, and for Indian writers that context is both ritualistic and historical, contemporary and ancient.[1]

Native literature in Quebec, as in the rest of the Americas, was born out of centuries of oppression and loss, and strongly bears the traces of its past. In order to understand the different layers present within the narratives, it is necessary to go back in time and consider the steps that led to the evolution of contemporary Quebec Native people. Today's Quebec contains 10 Amerindian nations living either in towns or in the 56 communities[2] spread all over the country. The size of these communities varies considerably, from 200 to 8,000 inhabitants. In the last census of 2002, the Native population of Quebec amounted to a grand total of 64,304, which is about 1% of Quebec's population.[3] The conditions of living are very different from one community to another as some of them are situated close to towns and others implanted in the forest, being accessible only by air. The presence of White people on the American continent has caused severe changes throughout the centuries and is in great part responsible for the current situations in which Native people live. However, an acute sense of survival has enabled most Native nations to preserve certain specific aspects of their cultures even in the 21st century. The myth of the disappearing Indian is still far from being truthful no matter how ingrained it may be in the non-Native and Native minds.

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[1] Penny Petrone, *Native Literature in Canada. From the Oral Tradition to the Present* (Toronto: Oxford University Press, 1990) p. 5.
[2] Native people do not refer to "reservations"any more, but prefer the term "communities."
[3] Minister of Indian Affairs and Northen Development sources, March 2002.

I. Historical and Political Background

This first section is in three parts, corresponding to three evolutionary periods in the history of Quebec Native people's civilisations. The first part, which is the longest, examines the cultural variations between the Native nations before the Europeans' arrival and also the consequences of the European presence in their country. The war of 1812-1814 is a turning point in the relation between the Natives and the non-Natives as White people then ceased to consider Natives as military allies and started seeing them as a social problem. The second part reveals the political, social, cultural and territorial changes that have affected these nations from the 19th century till 1969. Indeed, as mentioned in the introduction, the White paper of 1969 also represents a key moment in the political evolution of Native people's rights as well as their perception of themselves. The third part summarises the most recent changes including the tensions between the Quebec government and the ten Amerindian nations inhabiting this province. This short historical overview enables us to understand the cultural and sociological aspects present in their narratives. As Native people have undergone so many major changes, notably caused by the influence of Christianity and capitalism, it is interesting to note that the representations they make of themselves, seem to correspond to a time prior to colonisation.

I.1. Life Before and After the European Presence until the War of 1812-1814

It was only at the end of the 20th century that researchers started to investigate the past of North America from the perspective of the Native people. If there are undoubtedly countless works written on the history of Canada and on the Native way of life, they

all tend to have an ethnocentric vision of the facts. As Bruce G. Trigger points out in his work *Les Indiens, la fourrure et les Blancs*,[4] there is a new generation of anthropologists, historians and sociologists from Quebec who write about Native people in a more objective manner, who dare to go back into the past and present a whole new picture of Canadian history. As a result of these studies, the insidious idea that Canadian History began with the arrival of the Europeans is now fading.

After years of research and debates, it is now agreed that humans on the American continent were present at least by 15,000 BC. It is even suggested that human life could have existed in the Americas as far back as 50,000 BC, but this hypothesis has not been conclusively proven. These first newcomers migrated from Asia via the Bering Strait after the intensification of the Ice Ages had transformed it into a land bridge. By 11,000 BC, they were inhabiting both Americas, with a greater concentration on the Pacific coast. There is also evidence that they did not only migrate by land but also by sea, widening the scope in terms of origin for these first inhabitants. As in different parts of the world, they developed knowledge of plants, and domesticated them. More than one hundred species of plants routinely farmed today were originally grown by Native people: the two best known are corn and potatoes. Not all the Native tribes cultivated plants. In Quebec, there is a clear division between the two linguistic families inhabiting the region. The Algonquian family, (composed of the Algonquins, the Montagnais, the Mik'maks, the Abenaquis, the Malecites, the Crees, the Attikameks, the Naskapis), were hunter-gatherers[5] and the members of the Iroquoian family were farmers and hunters. This linguistic family is now composed only of the Hurons and the Mohawks as some nations such as the

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[4] Bruce Trigger, *Les Indiens, la fourrure et les Blancs. Français et Amérindiens en Amérique du Nord* (Montréal: Boréal, 1992).

[5] Although the Mik'maqs would seem to have been agriculturists for a period of time according to some archaeological researches.

Petun and the Neutral have disappeared. The way Native societies were organised depended very much on their being nomadic or not. For example, there was a tendency for the mobile people to be more egalitarian. Chiefs in both societies were not perceived in the same way as Europeans were, and they did not have the same power. For example, among the Montagnais and the Mik'maks, the power of the chief depended on his capacity to provide for his followers and it was the followers' decision to keep their chief or not. However, in some cases such as the Northwest coast, the chiefs had power of life and death over the members of the tribe. In fact, in their social organisation, Native people had achieved a blend of collective motivation, consensual command, and individual achievement that was distinctively their own. They were not only leading their lives according to the rules and habits of their nations, but they also aimed at living in harmony with the cosmos. One similarity these tribes had was their common belief in life being everywhere, including in inanimate objects, and as a consequence of this, everything had to be respected. This particular characteristic appears in every piece of writing produced by Native writers. The sacredness of the earth and the importance of a spiritual life pervade all the texts. Native people did not consider themselves as superior to animals or plants; every single life was part of the harmony in the cosmos.

Before the arrival of the Europeans, Native people throughout both continents had already experienced exchanges with other cultures such as the Norse for the Beothuks[6] around AD 1000 in Newfoundland, or even the Chinese between 3000 BC and AD 500 on the Pacific coast.[7] Trade between the different nations inhabiting the Americas was already a complex network. Exchanges took place between farming peoples and predominantly hunting peoples. Each tribe had a specialisation such as

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[6] See the textual analysis on Bernard Assiniwi's *La Saga des Béothuks* in Chapter Three.
[7] Olive Patricia Dickason, *Canada's First Nations, a History of Founding Peoples from Earliest Times* (Don Mills: Oxford University Press, 2002) p. 35-37.

making the best canoes, or baskets, or being able to provide vegetable or animal skin clothing.

At the beginning of the 17th century, the members of the Algonquian family inhabited the largest part of Quebec. They were divided into groups whose migrations followed the cycle of seasons. For instance, for a few months between spring and fall, they would gather along the coast, along the banks of a river or a lake, and they would fish and hunt birds. As life was less precarious during these months, weddings, exchanges and meetings took place. Then, at the time of fall, they would go hunting caribou and moose in smaller groups back into the forest. There was quite an important population of Iroquoian in the valley of the St Lawrence until the second half of the 16th century. These Native people were actually the first ones that Jacques Cartier met in 1534 on his journey. Unfortunately, they disappeared. According to the Algonquian oral tradition, their disappearance was due to some intertribal conflicts. At the beginning of the 17th century, however, Iroquoian nations used to live in the region of the Great Lakes. It is only during the second half of the 17th century that they moved out to the St Lawrence valley, close to the French trading settlement. The Hurons and the Five Nations League (Mohawks, Oneida, Onondaga, Cayuga and Seneca) lived in longhouses forming villages surrounded by wooden palisades. These villages could house 1,500 inhabitants or more. Cultivating corn, different types of squash, beans[8] and sunflowers made them develop a sedentary way of life complemented by hunting and fishing. Sometime during the 15th or 16th century, groups of Iroquoians organised themselves into confederacies. The Hurons were composed of four nations: the Attignawantans, the Attingueenongnahacs, the Tahontaenrats, and the Arendarhonons. The Iroquois confederacy was composed of

[8] Bean, squash and corn were called the "three sisters" and often referred to in traditional tales.

five nations as I have mentioned above. By the end of the 16th century, Huronia counted a larger population than that of the five nations, an estimated 30,000 compared to only 16,000. Inside these confederacies, each nation was politically independent, both in local affairs and in its relationship with the other nations. The Iroquois confederacy was governed by a council of 50 chiefs representing the tribes more or less equally. The aim was to try to maintain peace between them and also to co-ordinate their actions against external enemies. Hunting and fishing were the men's responsibilities, whereas the women worked in the fields organising the stocking of food supplies. As men were away for long periods of time, women experienced considerable power. These societies were matrilineal. Men had to go and live in the longhouses of their wives' family. It was through the women that the transmission of a title or the belonging to a clan happened. When the Europeans arrived, the various Native tribes had already been through many changes. This time, however, they would have to go through much faster and more severe changes.

In 1534, Jacques Cartier made his first voyage to Canada where he encountered a group of Iroquoians, living in Stadacona, which is the present site of Quebec City. During his last voyage in 1541, Cartier attempted to create a settlement, which lasted only three years, and discovered Hochelaga (Montréal) after following the banks of the St Lawrence. The settlement did not flourish due to Cartier's lack of diplomacy with the Natives. There were quarrels and disputes, and men died on both sides. Lieutenant-general Jean-François de la Rocque de Roberval had come with Cartier on his last trip and stayed slightly longer after Cartier left, but without any success either. Samuel de Champlain met some Montagnais at Tadoussac on his way to Stadacona in 1603. They were situated at the mouth of the Saguenay River. He joined them in their celebration of a victory over the Iroquois. By doing so, he sealed

a pact of friendship with them and that allowed the French to establish themselves on Montagnais territory. In 1608, Samuel de Champlain founded Quebec on the Stadacona site. All the Stadaconans had disappeared, probably dispersed or killed by the Mohawks and the Mik'maqs trying to gain access to their European goods. Tadoussac was the first trading post built as such, Quebec was the second one. From time immemorial, for Northern hunters and Southern agriculturalists, Tadoussac had been a gathering place where exchanges could take place. Thus the Montagnais and the Algonquins were in a very lucrative position in the fur trade until Montreal was established in 1642, quickly becoming another important trading post. The fur trade developed through a series of exchanges between different nations. The Montagnais of Tadoussac obtained some of their furs from other tribes further north. They proceeded, in fact, through the same networks that they used to have before the Europeans. As a consequence, the goods exchanged by the Europeans even reached peoples who had never encountered a European. After 1615, another group started to dominate the trade: the Hurons from the Bay of Georgia. They became the main commercial partners of the French until 1650 when the Iroquois dispersed them. This new trade stimulated the exchanges between the different Native nations in order to acquire European objects such as axes, knives and especially cauldrons. These objects replaced very quickly the tools made out of bones, wood and stone, as they were more efficient and lasted longer. Just as Native people benefited from European technology, Europeans learned to appreciate the use of moccasins, maize as a food crop, snowshoes or toggling harpoons for whaling. French people who moved to live in Canada also changed and discovered different ways of living, which have influenced present day Quebec culture. The Coastal Mik'maqs were also trading with the French with their close relatives, the Malecites. They had been used to working in fishing

industry with Europeans a few centuries previously and adapted themselves very well to the fur trade. For the Crees living further north in the region, their main trading partners were the British and to a lesser extent, the Dutch. Trade was extremely important in Native societies as the alliances made for trade also implied peace between the two nations contracting the alliance.

As early as the 17th century, the Indian way of life had started to change considerably, due to the exchanges taking place with the Europeans. Denys Delâge, a historian and sociologist, has considered the trade between these two different worlds as unequal.[9] Indeed, the objects obtained by the Indians could not be reproduced by them whereas the plants, the geographical areas or navigating techniques shown by the Indians could be easily made use of by the Europeans. The dependence of the Indians on European goods and the trade in place led the Indians to change their connection to their surroundings and also the organisation of their societies. In order to get more European items, the Indians had to work more and thus would not only hunt, fish or farm for their own needs. The fur trade nearly caused the extinction of certain animals such as the beaver. Consequently, the desire for an accumulation of material goods slowly replaced the idea of a balanced relationship with their environment. These societal changes were particularly acute in the case of the Hurons and the Iroquois because of the large number of lives lost due to wars and epidemics. Indeed, the fur trade brought more than commercial exchanges to the Indians, European traders carried with them viruses from the Old World. These diseases were mainly viral infections and extremely contagious: measles, flu, chickenpox, mumps, German measles and most deadly of all, smallpox. Even the Natives who were not in contact with the Europeans became contaminated because of the flow of goods

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[9] Denys Delâge, *Le Pays renversé, Amérindiens et Européens en Amérique du Nord-Est, 1600-1664*, (Montréal: Boréal, 1991).

circulating throughout the region. The worst period of time in terms of smallpox epidemics for the Hurons and their neighbours is the decade between 1630 and 1640. There are many testimonies by the Jesuits describing the poor state of the Natives and the decreasing size of their villages.[10] At the time of these epidemics intertribal wars reappeared. They were linked to the fur trade, but were also due to previous conflicts that had existed before the arrival of the Europeans. The strategic position of the St Lawrence as a trading place created tensions over its control between the Montagnais/Naskapis/Algonquins from the north and the Iroquois and the Hurons from the south. From the beginning of the 17th century, the French fought against the Iroquois as they sided with their main fur providers: the Montagnais, the Algonquins and the Hurons. Samuel de Champlain participated in three expeditions against the Iroquois (in 1609, 1610 and 1615). The Iroquois war went on from 1609 till 1701 with the Great Peace of Montreal. The fur trade was not the only motive for war; the series of deadly epidemics seems to have contributed to the intensification of these intertribal wars. For the Iroquois, war also meant capturing prisoners who would be put into Iroquois families to replace their dead. As epidemics increased dramatically the number of deaths, it seems that the Iroquois felt the need to attack their neighbours in order to capture some of them.

As stated earlier, 1650 saw the great partnership between the Hurons and the French suffer because of the Iroquois' constant attacks. In fact, the territorial occupation of the St Lawrence valley started to undergo important changes. The population increase of the French settlers forced the Montagnais and the Algonquins to abandon the region of Quebec and Trois-Rivières, as the presence of so many humans scared off game. On the other hand, Amerindians coming from the region of

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[10] See Bruce G. Trigger, *Les Indiens, la fourrure et les Blancs*, Chapter Five, for more information.

the Great Lakes and New England decided to settle there. The Hurons (about 500 of them) settled in "jeune Lorette" which is today Wendake, a reservation near Loretteville, a few miles away from Quebec City. At the end of 1660, some Mohawks converted to Catholicism migrated to the St Lawrence valley to form two communities, Kahnawake and Kanesatake. In the 1730s', another was created and named Akwesane. The three of them are still Mohawk communities today, and are situated near present day Montreal. The Abenaquis, escaping violent conflicts with the colonists in New England, came to seek refuge and formed two communities: St François (present day Odanak) and Becancour (present day Wôlinak). These Native people from different origins were called "domiciliés" by the French, as they seemed to have found a place to stay.

It is during the second half of the 17th century that these Native people created the Alliance of the seven Nations, or seven fires. This alliance could be called a confederation as it had the same way of functioning. Every village was independent despite their political alliance. Their conversion to Catholicism probably contributed to the strength of their union. From the 17th century onwards, missionaries, mostly Jesuits, tried hard to convert the Natives. The missionaries' main problem with tribes such as the Montagnais or the Algonquins was nomadism. It was much easier for them to work on the Hurons who were semi-nomadic people. However, the first "reservation" in Canada had been set up near Quebec City by Jesuits in 1637 on the site of a Montagnais summer fish station. It lasted until 1655 when an Iroquois raid ended the whole experience by destroying most of the buildings. Before the Iroquois attack, some Natives had already started leaving the mission because of the strict rules imposed by the Jesuits. Native people had different views of Catholicism and especially of priests. During the deadly epidemics, priests were often considered as

sorcerers, as the Natives did not understand why the Jesuits were not getting the same diseases. In *Atiskenandahate. Le voyage au pays des morts*,[11] Yves Sioui Durand, a Huron playwright, uses this historical fact to denounce past atrocities perpetrated in the name of God. Conversion to Catholicism also increased internal clashes among the different nations as not all the members of a tribe were converted. However, at the end of the 17th century, the Hurons and a few other tribes, diminished in numbers and weakened by disease and warfare, were now living closer to European settlements and did adopt these new beliefs. Part of the missionaries' aim was to transform the Natives into French Christians. During the 1630s, the Jesuits created a seminary for young Native people in order to teach them French good manners. This attempt failed because of a lack of candidates.

By the end of the 17th century, the Jesuits realised that this policy was not realistic and they became more inclined to separate Amerindians from the French. They thought the French were having a bad influence on the Natives. While facing a new economic system, Native people also had to face a religious and ideological onslaught, which disrupted their traditional perception of the world. Christianity brought notions alien to their cultures such as sin, redemption and humility. For instance, in the Iroquoian societies, pride and dignity were important values. In the Huron society, banquets, games, gift exchanges and sexual liberty were also major founding aspects of their culture, which did not concord with the Christian frame of mind. The important value of the body and the quest for pleasure had to be repressed. Denys Delâge remarked that in the *Jesuit Relations*, one can notice a clear division between "nature" and "faith" in terms of images and representations referring

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[11] Yves Sioui Durand, *Atiskenandahate. Le voyage au pays des morts* (Montréal: Ondinnock Inc., 1988).

respectively to the Indian and the Christian worlds.[12] The Jesuits introduced a mode of repression based on a sense of culpability. The analysis of the texts present in this corpus will show how most Native authors have created a space where both conceptions of the world merge to give birth to another discourse, which corresponds better to a contemporary Native vision.

During the 18th century, among the "domiciliés", other cultural influences took place. Bilingualism increased rapidly. Agriculture became complemented by cattle raising. The Hurons in Lorette happened to be the fastest to adapt to the Canadian way of living. The main change was their housing. At the beginning of the 18th century, the Hurons were the first ones to abandon their long houses made out of bark and to use smaller houses like the Canadian settlers. This transformation also took place among the Abenaquis and the Mohawks towards the end of the 18th century. This change in housing is rather important as it reflects and also affected their social life. For instance, several families no longer lived under the same roof anymore. These changes among the Natives were their own decisions; it had nothing to do with the politics of "francisation" pursued in the 17th century. Despite some of the changes in their way of living, the Native people who had settled did not perceive themselves as Canadians. Some of their traditions were maintained. For example, hunting was still extremely important for them and thus they spent several weeks and even months at this activity. In the 18th century, the political organisation of the Natives was still traditional, with a division into clans and bands, which were controlled by a chief. Further away from the St Lawrence valley, the Montagnais, the Algonquins and the Crees would keep their traditional way of life for longer as they were visited only by fur traders and a few missionaries. However, they did integrate some European items

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[12] Denys Delâge, p. 207.

such as knives, pieces of cloth, cauldrons and flour. These articles became essential for them so they kept coming to the fur trade posts in order to obtain them. The Natives used to come during the spring and stay there for their summer camp, but during the winter, they would go back deeper in the forests. In fact, French colonisation during the 17th and 18th centuries was never important enough to disturb in any depth these Native peoples' way of life. In the American and British colonies, colonisation was more destructive because the colonisers forced the Indians to leave their territories to make room for new settlers. On the one hand, the Natives felt protected from the British and the Americans because of the presence of the French. On the other hand, the French needed the Natives, as they were not numerous enough. During the 17th and 18th centuries and also the beginning of the 19th century, Native people were perceived as military allies. They were particularly good at quick surprise actions against isolated posts, houses and villages. After the second half of the 17th century, the Montagnais, who were less numerous, did not participate as much in the French military operations. This was also the case for the Attikameks in Haute-Mauricie. The Crees and the Naskapis never really played an important role as they always tried to stay away from the European conflicts. As the rivalries between the two colonial powers (France and England) became more and more important, the Natives' own conflicts ended up being subordinate to colonial purposes. The end of the French and British rivalries in 1760 did not create many changes for the Natives. In 1760, the settled Natives negotiated with a British officer before the surrender of Montreal. William Johnson, British superintendent of Indian Affairs, promised that the Natives would not be punished for having supported the French and especially that they could keep their land and practise their religion. The Treaty of Paris of 1763 partially acknowledges Native territorial rights. It states that all lands that had not

been ceded to or purchased by Britain and that were part of British North America were to be considered as "reserved lands" for the Natives. Because of its lack of precision, this treaty did not really protect Native territories from invasion by the colonists. In 1783, another treaty tried to put an end to the British and American conflict. The war of 1812-1814 did finally end it. During that war, Tecumseh (1768-1813), part Shawnee, part Creek, succeeded in uniting more than thirty tribal nations in order to fight against American encroachment. As he became more and more successful, the British sided with him against the Americans trying to gain more territory. The Treaty of Ghent finally settled the conflict. This war was the last colonial war in North America. Native people (mainly the Iroquois) played an important role in this war. However, as the relations between the French, the British and the Americans improved, the Natives started to lose some of their independence.

I.2. From the 19th Century till 1969

The 19th century would bring massive changes in the life of the Native people of Quebec. So far colonial expansion had been rather moderate. However, with the end of warfare, the population grew and the colonisers' activities started seriously to interfere with the Native way of life. The decline of the Natives' military importance and the growing need for territories made the British government change its attitudes towards them. After 1820, the Natives were seen no longer as allies, but as a social problem. The aim of the government was now to 'civilise' them and, more particularly, to develop a politics of assimilation. They wanted to force the Natives to become farmers, to reduce their fishing and hunting activities, and most of all to stop them being nomadic. The intensity of the timber industry deeply disturbed the Native

communities whose main diet depended on hunting. It is during this period of time that Native people began to send petitions to the government. They complained about the invasion of their territories and asked for financial compensation. In 1851, in order to give an answer to the numerous petitions written by the Natives, the Canadian parliament decided to reserve a certain amount of land for them. The law reserved 230,000 acres for their use. The government hoped that the Natives would become farmers and sedentary. The first modern reservations were thus created. In the first half of the 19th century, the British government thought that isolation was the best solution. They needed to be protected from the Whites' vices. Yet they still wanted them to integrate into the rest of the population. The only solution that seemed suitable at the time was to separate them from Whites, but also to let them stay close enough to the settlers' communities so that they would be influenced by them. During the 19th century, the federal government passed a series of laws to favour the assimilation of the Natives. In 1850, the first law aimed to define the status of the Indians. For the first time, non-aboriginal people claimed the right to determine who was an Indian and who was not. At the beginning, anyone who married an Amerindian (male or female) would have had Indian status as well as his/her descendants. People who were adopted by Natives in their childhood also obtained that status. However, the following year, the criteria required to be considered as a Native became more restrictive. Non-aboriginal men who got married to Native women were no longer considered as Indians, nor were their children. In 1869, Native women marrying non-aboriginal men automatically lost their status as Indians. However, a Native man marrying a non-aboriginal woman would still keep his status and his wife and children would be considered as Indians. These discriminatory measures had actually been requested by Native men living in the St Lawrence valley

because White men were getting access to Native land thanks to their marriage with Native women. After having defined who was an Indian and who was not, the federal government produced a series of laws laying out the legal status of the Indians. The act of 1857 placed Native people at the same level as children under 18. They would be assisted until a special committee considered them to be emancipated. An emancipated Indian had then the right to ownership and could possess his own land on Indian territory. Native people strongly protested against this law as they realised that it would divide the communities and that it would dismember their territory. Despite the lack of success of this law, this political strategy of emancipation did exist for more than a century after the creation of the Confederation in 1867.

In order to 'civilise' the Natives, the government tried to abolish their traditional political structures. In 1869, Native people were strongly advised to replace their designated chiefs by a group of elected Natives called the band council who would have the same role as a village council. The aim of the government was to have more control over the communities as the traditional hereditary chiefs were most of the time opposed to change. This measure was presented by the government as another step towards emancipation, but Native people were in no rush to adopt it. Presented first as a suggestion, it was finally imposed by the government at the end of the 19th century. This drastic change placed Native people even more under the domination of the government. Moreover, they had to make sure that the Indian Affairs agent in charge of their community agreed with their decisions, as he was the person dealing with the finances.

Since 1867 the federal government has been in charge of Indian matters. As Renée Dupuis explains in *La Question indienne au Canada*: "c'est le Parlement fédéral qui a le pouvoir exclusif de faire des lois dans ces domaines qui se divisent en

deux catégories distinctes: les Indiens en tant que personnes et les terres qui leur sont réservées."[13] As she further points out, both terms, "Indiens" and "terres réservées", are not defined precisely. The Indian Act of 1876 consolidated the legislation that had been implemented since the 1850s and turned it into a nationwide framework, which is still in place today. There have been amendments to it through the years, but the basic framework still exists. The definition of a Native person changed. S/he was now "a person who pursuant of this Act [was] registered as an Indian; also, a person of Amerindian blood reputed to belong to a band and entitled to use its lands."[14] The lands were held in trust by the Crown for the benefit of the Natives and could not be taxed, mortgaged or seized by any person other than an Indian or a band. Because of this, it has been impossible for Natives to access development capital. During the 19th century, the Natives had to adjust their lives once again to a new economic environment. Despite the decline of hunting as a means of survival, agriculture did not become as important as those in favour of assimilation would have hoped. This reluctance to farm was especially true for the Natives living in the parts of Quebec recently colonised, such as the regions of Saguenay-Lake-St-John or the North Coast. The Montagnais of these regions found it hard to give up their fishing and hunting activities in order to spend more time farming. For a long time, the reservations created in the second half of the 19th century were considered by the Natives only as summer meeting places. As they needed to survive, they turned towards seasonal work and also crafts. During the second half of the 19th century, Amerindian craft work happened to be extremely popular. As towns became bigger, markets and leisure activities increased. These developments provided a good opportunity for Native people as customers became interested in their exotic handmade items. At the end of

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[13] Renée Dupuis, *La Question amérindienne au Canada* (Montréal: Boréal, 1991), p. 23.
[14] Olive Patricia Dickason, *Canada's First Nations. A History of the Founding Peoples from Earliest Times*, p. 264.

the 19th century, the making of latticework baskets was an activity that could involve every single inhabitant of a village. Among the Abenaquis of Odanak, men, women and children participated in this new industry. At the beginning of the 20th century, the Abenaquis or the Hurons did not hesitate to carry their baskets where they could find customers. The Abenaquis crossed the American border and the Hurons went to seaside resorts.

The 20th century brought new technologies and consequently the intensification of industrialisation. In 1898, the first significant hydroelectric dam began to be built on the Saint-Maurice. The hydroelectric development enabled the creation of other types of industry (electrometallurgy and electrochemical). The pulp and paper industry was one of the most important implantations in Quebec at the beginning of the 20th century. It gave the timber industry a new boost, but the Native economy suffered deeply from it. Large parts of their territories could no longer be used for hunting and fishing as game and fish were rarer. The development of these industries led to the construction of roads, railways, and electric lines, and consequently, a large number of new settlers arrived. The conditions of living of the Natives greatly deteriorated. Their dependence on the government's help increased. During the Depression period, Native people throughout Canada suffered more than the rest of its inhabitants as their problems were not perceived as priorities by the government. Many Native people enrolled for the First and Second World Wars although it was not compulsory for them. Those who survived and came back home had experienced a different way of life and could not stand the differences in equality between themselves and the Québécois. All over Canada, groups of Native people tried to create a pan-Indian organisation. An attempt to unite all Native peoples which came close to success had been carried out by Tecumseh at the turn of the nineteenth

century.[15] However, the aim of such unions was no longer war, but to have more power to fight for their rights. After several attempts in different provinces, the still existing Assembly of First Nations finally emerged in 1982. After the Second World War, the federal government decided to give more financial help to the Natives so that they would stay for shorter periods inside their lands. This strategy worked as fewer and fewer Native people were tempted to stay in the forests. During this time, several new reservations were created in the Algonquin and Montagnais territories. Indeed, it had suddenly become easier to live in the reservation with the government's money. At the same time, the Canadian and Quebec governments began to intervene more and more in the education of the young Amerindians living in the North. Up to this point, only a few missionaries had been teaching young Natives at summer camps so their way of life had not deeply changed. However, after the Second World War, boarding schools were built and parents were pressurised to send their children to school from June till September. Even if boarding schools did not last very long in Quebec, they left deep scars in the lives of those who experienced them.[16] These institutions provoked the acculturation of those who went in. They were taught notions and ideas from a totally different culture. They were forbidden to speak their own language. When they were back with their parents, the relationship between them was extremely difficult. Young people did not want to live and do things in the same way as their parents. The young adults who had never known life in the forest settled in reservations or in towns. And when they could not find a job, they lived precariously with the government's help.

For the first half of the 20th century, the political situation was still the same as in 1867. After the 1950s, the provinces were in charge of a few services offered to the

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[15] To a lesser extent, Pontiac, an Odawa chief (1712/25?-1769), had done the same a few years before.
[16] See the documentary *Les Tambours d'Abitibi* filmed by Qado Quaregna in 2000.

Natives, but the main decisions were made by the federal government. During the 1950s and the 1960s, Native people became more involved in political movements. In 1964, the Canadian government felt the need to investigate the social, economic and educational situation of the Natives, as they became more and more vocal. The report of 1967 revealed obvious inequalities and also suggested that to improve the situation, the government should accelerate their integration in society. In order to do this, the Natives had to be considered as "normal" citizens. Thus their Indian status had to be put to an end. This is when the Canadian government of Pierre E. Trudeau suggested the White Paper of 1969, which proposed abolishing the Indian Act of 1876. No matter how much this act was and continues to be criticised by Native people, they did not want to be left without any legal protection. They were afraid of seeing their nations disappear. Because of strong Native protests, the government decided to abandon its project. The publication of the White Paper created a great stir and played an important role in the increase of Native political movements. This universal reaction from the Native people of Canada made them realise that they could regroup themselves into national associations. The 1960s brought a major change in their political situation: the eventual right to vote. They were allowed to vote in the federal elections of 1960, but it took them slightly longer to obtain provincial vote as this depended on the province. Quebec was the last province to give its Native people the right to vote in 1969.

I.3. 1969 onwards

In the 1970s, the Canadian tribunals passed several judgements which brought Native people's quest for independence a bit further. In 1973, in a case opposing the Nishgas

in British Columbia, the Supreme Court of Canada delivered a judgement to the government of the province that acknowledged for the first time the existence of an ancestral title for some Native lands. Even if the judges were divided, it was an important moral victory for Native people. The same year, in Quebec, Judge Malouf gave to the Crees of North Quebec the right to stop the work of Hydro-Quebec in James Bay. Even if his decision was finally reversed, it was still another moral victory. Judge Malouf also played an important part in the negotiations that took place between the Canadian and the Quebec governments and the Crees. In 1975, the different members involved signed the James Bay Convention of North Quebec. Then in 1978, the Naskapis did the same with the Convention of North-East Quebec. Following the repatriation of the Canadian constitution of 1982, the federal government added a constitutional law in 1982 acknowledging the ancestral rights of the Native people of Canada, and also their rights obtained through various treaties. As these acknowledgements are part of the Constitution, no provincial or federal laws can cancel these rights. This acceptance of their rights was a big step forward in their battle for recognition as a people. On the other hand, there are still efforts to be made on the government's side to transform this law into a practical reality. For instance, the territorial negotiations that started in the 1970s between the Attikameks, the Innus and the governments are still inconclusive. The situation is changing for the Native people of Canada, but extremely slowly. Their frustrations have not always been kept under control, however, such as during the Oka crisis[17] in 1990, when a land protest by a group of Native warriors turned violent. Despite the presence of a group of warriors in that case, the great majority of Native people were against the use of violence. In 1991, the federal government decided to set up a commission in order to

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[17] Olive Patricia Dickason, *Canada's First Nation, A History of Founding Peoples from Earliest Times*, pp. 326-330.

investigate the social and economic situation of the Natives. This five-year report showed once again the big gap between the Canadians' way of life and that of the Natives. The level of poverty and unemployment was extremely high. In 1992, 43% of the Natives living in reservations were dependent on government benefit whereas only 10% of the rest of the society needed it. There is an increasing gap between the Native family's income and the Canadian one. Renée Dupuis gives several reasons for this: " la pénurie d'emplois spécialisés et bien rémunérés dans les réserves, la préférence qu'on y observe pour les activités traditionnelles de chasse, de pêche et de piégeage, plutôt que pour un emploi salarié, le faible niveau d'instruction ainsi que le manque de qualifications professionnelles."[18] Their living conditions are inferior to those of the Canadians. In some reservations, people still do not have access to drinking water. The lack of central heating is twice as high in the reservations than in other communities in Canada. The Natives' health is less good than the non-Natives. Their life expectancy is seven to eight years less than that of the other inhabitants. Undoubtedly, the economic and social situation is not the same everywhere in Canada, even within Quebec. Natives living far from urban centres have a higher level of unemployment. Consequently, the living conditions are better in the south of Quebec than in the north. However, among the northern communities, the Crees and the Naskapis have greatly improved their situations since the two signed Conventions of 1975 and 1978. They benefit from the indemnities obtained through these treaties which give a boost to their economy. In 2002, Quebec government, the Crees and the Inuit signed a new agreement, which is based on a development model that relies on the principle of sustainable development partnership and respect for the traditional way of life of the Crees as well as a long-term economic development strategy.

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[18]Renée Dupuis, *La Question amérindienne au Canada* (Montréal: Boréal, 1991), p. 60.

In Quebec, as in the rest of Canada, the high level of poverty is a contributory factor in the incidence of dramatic situations such as suicides, domestic violence, alcoholism, drug-addiction and crime. Things are improving, however, as the different communities now dare to talk about their problems. They tend to organise meetings in order to find solutions to their problems. This is when tradition plays an important role in the healing process. Performances such as plays are very often used as a therapeutic means to help the audience to heal the wounds caused by past and present situations.

One of the reasons why in the 21st century Native people are more than ever determined to fight for their autonomy is the presence of international support. Since 1998, the Canadian government has to submit to the U. N. a periodical report in which it has to explain the measures it takes to protect Aboriginal rights. In fact, since the second half of the 20th century, all around the world, more and more voices have expressed their desire for a recognition of their social and political rights as minorities inside a state. The Native people of Canada joined these international tribunes to attract more media coverage. Moreover, in 1993, a report on Aboriginal populations by a commission set up by the U. N. in 1982, resulted in the project of a declaration of rights for Aboriginal peoples. For the first time, the term "people" was used to qualify the Aboriginal. This change of terminology is not trivial, it shows a major difference in the conception of Native rights. The whole project of this declaration is grounded on the basis that the Aboriginals have " le droit collectif d'exister librement dans la paix et la sécurité en tant que peuples distincts au sein d'un état."[19] This project is still being debated at the U. N. and it will probably take a long time before being implemented. The text is now a reference and cannot be ignored. Amerindians make

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[19] Renée Dupuis, *Quel Canada pour les autochtones? La fin de l'exclusion* (Montréal: Boréal, 2001), p. 161.

themselves heard in Canada, but also throughout the world now. They refuse to be silenced. The situation is a bit more complex for Native people in Quebec as they are a minority inside a minority. As is the case for the Natives, a strong movement for sovereignty exists among the Québécois. They want to be recognised as having different needs from the rest of the inhabitants of Canada. The different provinces of Canada have never tried to work together to adopt a common policy towards the Natives. The historical legacy of each province varies, as does the Natives' situation all over Canada. For example, the territories in Quebec, British Columbia and the Maritime Provinces were never gained through treaties with the Indians. Native people today have therefore not lost their territorial rights. The James Bay Convention was the first treaty signed with some Natives in Quebec and one of the conditions to it was the loss of the Crees' ancestral rights. The tension between the Natives and the Quebec government has its origin in the aftermath of Quebec's refusal to participate in the repatriation of the Canadian Constitution.[20] Quebec's refusal was badly criticised by the Natives and a few provincial premiers. The direct consequence of this refusal led to Quebec's non-participation in the three conferences that took place to add a definition of Native rights to the constitution. Quebec actually participated in the first one, but then refused to sign the agreement that came out of it. As a consequence, its participation in the two other conferences was as an observer only. In 1982, before the first conference, an informal group of Native representatives showed Quebec's government a text containing fifteen major points that they wanted to be part of the Canadian constitution. The group was looking for Quebec's support. The government of Quebec gave its answer in 15 points with the obvious proposal that Native rights as a distinct nation would be acknowledged inside Quebec if they agreed

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[20] Renée Dupuis. *Tribus, Peuples et nations. Les nouveaux enjeux des revendications autochtones au Canada* (Montréal: Boréal, 1997), pp. 107-116.

to follow the laws of Quebec. As it is much easier to change a Quebec law than a federal one, Native people saw few guarantees in that proposal and preferred to have a constitutional acknowledgement of their rights. After 1982, Native people were seen by the federal government as partners for constitutional discussions. The Québécois feared that the Canadian constitution could in the end protect the Natives' rights more than theirs, and this is why Quebec put all its efforts in placing them under its jurisdiction. The Native people of Quebec are trying to free themselves from federal laws and have no desire to end up under Quebec domination. In 1985, Premier René Lévesque presented at the third conference a text from the National Assembly of Quebec, as a proof of their honesty, stating that the Natives' rights would be respected inside Quebec. This text acknowledged the existence of the following nations: the Abenaquis, the Algonquins, the Attikameks, the Cree, the Hurons, the Mik'maqs, the Montagnais, the Naskapis and the Inuits (the Malecites were recognised as nations a few years later). The purpose of this motion was also to let the Natives know that the government of Quebec was ready to discuss their rights in the province. Native people were frustrated to see that the Quebec government was trying again to gain jurisdiction over them while giving a good image of itself to the rest of the world. After the conferences, the Quebec government asked for the support of the Natives for a project in which they required Quebec to be considered as a specific nation having special needs. In the section on their desire to be in control of linguistic matters, the different Native nations were placed on the same level as other minorities in Quebec (Anglophone or other). The Natives then said that they would support the Quebec government if it did not consider them as a cultural minority, and did not use its veto against their constitutional requests. As may be expected, Quebec replied that they would vote in favour of the Natives' negotiations if their own constitutional demands

were fulfilled. Then in 1987, the Meech Lake Agreement – reflecting Quebec's desire for specificity – needed to be unanimously accepted by the Premiers of the ten provinces. The agreement collapsed because it required a 'yes' vote in every provincial assembly. Manitoba and Newfoundland voted against it. What needs to be considered is Quebec's perception of this failure. It seems that the Québécois only remembered the opposition of the Native deputy Elijah Harper from Manitoba. The accumulation of such events reinforced the tension between Quebec and the Natives living in the region. In 1992, however, the Charlottetown Agreement acknowledging the right of Natives to governmental autonomy obtained the support of Quebec's Premier, Robert Bourassa. It is the rest of the Canadian population who rejected it. The return of the Parti Québécois to power in 1994 and the 1995 referendum on the sovereignty of Quebec encountered Native opposition. Native people were afraid at that time of losing their rights if Quebec was suddenly independent, and still fear that it could happen.

In July 2000, the Canadian government published a report entitled "To Gather our Forces: The Action Plan of Canada for The Autochtones Questions (sic)",[21] which showed improvement regarding Native people's partnerships with the government and also in the Natives' social and economic situation throughout Canada. Launched in 1998, this report represents a political plan and effort from the federal government to show its commitment in improving Native people's quality of life. As a consequence, many more Native communities saw their requests granted. For example, in 2000, the Huron-Wendats in Wendake (Quebec) signed an agreement with the federal government concerning the loss of a territory called "les quarante

[21] For more information, see Indian and Northern Affairs Canada website.

arpents" sold illegally by the federal government in 1904.[22] The Huron-Wendats obtained 12 millions of dollars in compensation. In 2001, a committee was set up by the federal government in order to discuss and elaborate a draft for a new law regarding the governance of Native people. The committee was composed of National Native organisations and government representatives. This represented an important step in changing the Indian Act. In 2003, The First Nation Governance Act or Bill C-7 was finally rejected by the federal government after many amendments and debates. In 2005, however, Bill C-20 or the First Nations Fiscal and Statistical Management Act[23] received royal assent and represents an important change in the economy of the First Nations. Indeed, this law enables them to access private funding and gives them the possibility to managing their land freely. This recent change should make a considerable difference socially and economically, and improve Native people's way of life in the future.

Over centuries, the different Amerindian nations of Quebec went through major changes and had to resituate themselves in the world they were living. The key aspect of their history is their strong desire for survival. It is undeniable that their writing is impregnated with it. As changes in their civilisation happened quickly and most of the time with violence, they tend to look at the past before the arrival of the Europeans as a time of happiness to be regained. Most of the Native writers in Quebec still make references to past events in their writing. Thus all the various aspects of their history mentioned in this chapter will bring light to the narratives analysed in the following chapters. Their relationship with their environment has changed and yet there seems to be a return to a traditional perception of the world within their literary output in which spirituality and mythology play an important role. The construction of

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[22] Ibid.
[23] Ibid.

such a discourse may lead to a questioning of the notion of authenticity regarding identity representations.

II The Evolution of Native Literature in Quebec and the Rest of Canada

The Native people in North East Canada did not invent a system of writing to communicate. They communicated, transmitted their knowledge, their beliefs, and expressed their creativity through oral tradition. Even if they did start to write as far back as the 18th century, the oral tradition is still alive. Whatever the means of communication, a language will carry a society's vision of its own world and of the world at large. Because of its history, Native literature of Quebec is deeply embedded in its political background. After the publication of the White Paper of 1969, more "Native authors" appeared in Quebec. It seems that this event served as a wake-up call and that the Natives realised that they should be proud of their origins. However, by following the evolution of their works throughout the centuries, it seems that recurrent themes and patterns emerge.

II. 1. Oral Literature

Each means of communication has its own rules. The conditions of production of oral tradition influence its context and style. Its aim is to explain the origin of the culture of a people. Oral tradition is the memory of a people. It serves to pass on the knowledge, the techniques, the history and the moral values of a nation. As Diane Boudreau explains, oral tradition is a semi-fixed verbal performance with a partial improvisation containing different genres. [24] In Quebec, the Algonquians and the Iroquoians recognise three different types of genres: narratives (myths, legends and tales), songs and traditional speeches performed according to certain circumstances.

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[24] Diane Boudreau, *Histoire de la littérature amérindienne au Québec: oralité et écriture* (Montréal: Hexagone, 1993).

For most of the Algonquians, the myths include narratives about the creation of the world, cosmogonic characters. These stories relate the time when men and animals were not considered as different. The Montagnais separated these narratives into two categories: *antanukan* (also present in the other tribes' oral traditions) and *tipatshimun*. This last category seems to refer to events that have been seen by the present Natives or that were about the ancestors of the present population. In the *atanukan* narratives, the narrator tells of the relations between humans and animals and the journeys of some humans into the supernatural world. It can also include historical events such as the coming of the Europeans. Most of the narratives which are not fixed and that belonged to the second category are anecdotes, comments on a recent past. These narratives are generally personal creations whereas the "texts" of the first category are mainly collective transmissions from one generation to another. It has been recognised that the Iroquoians distinguish three types of narratives. W. N. Fenton[25] calls them myths, tales and traditions. The first category is similar to the Montagnais *atanukan*, events that "truly happened long ago, and in which the old people believe." The second category corresponds to tales which are purely fictional, and the last ones are human adventures, which open with 'they went to hunt for meat.' The last category relates the experience of an individual. Each narrative has its own rules and its moment to be told. One of the main components of oral tradition is the performance. The function and the quality of an oral "text" come only through its performance. Indeed, the quality of an oral "text" depends on the ability of the performer to respect the rules and also to create variations. In her introduction to *Oral Literature in Africa*[26], Ruth Finnegan points out that "it should be clear that oral

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[25] W. N. Fenton "The Island, the World on the Turtle's Back", *Journal of American Folklore*, vol. LXXV, 1962, pp. 283-300, in Diane Boudreau, *Histoire de la littérature amérindienne au Québec: oralité et écriture* , p. 28.
[26] Ruth Finnegan, *Oral Literature in Africa* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1970), p. 5.

literature has somewhat different potentialities from written literature, and additional resources which the oral artist can develop for his own purposes; and that this aspect is of primary significance for its appreciation as a mode of aesthetic expression." The presence of oral tradition in a community has no other justification than the link it produces between the present and the past, the individual and the community and in certain situations, between the community and the cosmos. It is integral to their everyday life. Songs have an important place in oral tradition. Diane Boudreau explains that they can be grouped into two categories: those that are part of a narrative and those that are sung on special occasions. As Ruth Finnegan noted for African oral tradition, the intonation and the power of the words seem more important than the words themselves. In the Algonquian or Iroquoian narratives, a song can be used to express the presence of an invisible character. If a character is transformed into a bird, for instance, the singing in the narrative will represent this character. Songs outside narratives can be a means to communicate with the spiritual world, to call your enemies or your friends, or they can be used as magic. There are also ritual songs for hunting, for the ceremony of the "tente tremblante" and songs sung by women to babies. Songs heard in dreams are very often considered as a gift, and it is the owner's decision to share it or not. Marguerite Vincent, a Huron who published in 1984 a thorough description of the Huron nation's beliefs and culture, highlights the social function of music inside the nation and how it was an important factor for the social harmony of the group:

> La musique avait toujours une fonction sociale, que ce soit pour l'action de grâce tribale, ou familiale face au nouveau-né, le chant de paix, le chant de guerre, le chant de mort du prisonnier qui trouvait dans son chant final la force galvanisante de supporter la torture, tout en tournant son ennemi en dérision, que ce soient les chants cérémoniels et rituels de sanctification ou de guérison, des incantations thérapeutiques de type psychanalytique

> clanique ou tribale, ou les mélopées antiques du culte des morts et de la Vénération des os des Ancêtres.[27]

Pantomimes were also quite popular among the Hurons as they enabled the reconstitution of important events. This type of performance differed from the narration of a story by one single person as it involved the presence of several participants acting together. Dancing and singing were very often part of these performances.

As for many civilisations, the creation of the world is one of the most recurrent subjects told through Native oral tradition. These narratives are at the very heart of their cultures and consequently of their way of perceiving the world and themselves. There exist different stages of transformations leading to the creation of the world as it is now. If the world on earth has undergone many changes, it seems that the Earth itself has always existed for Native people of Canada. As Diamond Jenness points out, "there were no true creation stories, no myths attributing to the will of a creator the genesis of stars and planets, earth and water (...) the phenomenom of nature has always existed somewhere."[28] The formation of the world starts for all the nations with disturbances in the universe. These disturbances can be caused by different phenomena. For example, for the Algonquians, a huge flood destroys everything apart from a few animals who take refuge on a raft. Then various animals dive under the water to try to bring back a piece of the earth, but only one succeeds in doing so.[29] From this piece, the earth is reformed and humans are born out of the union of the diver and a female, or as for the Algonquins, Michabou, the Great Hare, creates humans out of the corpses of a bear and a moose. The Iroquoian nations

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[27] Marguerite Vincent, *La Nation huronne, son histoire, sa culture, son esprit* (Québec : Editions du Pélican et Septentrion, 1984), p. 249.
[28] Diamond Jenness, *The Indians of Canada* (Toronto: University of Toronto Press, 1977), pp. 188-189.
[29] This animal varies from one tribe to another, it can be a beaver or a muskrat for example.

have a different story for the creation of the world. Aataentsic, a woman, fell from the sky and this event marked the origin of the earth. The reason for her fall varies from one tribe to another. Her dog may have been following a bear and fallen into a hole, she may have followed it. Her jealous husband, not understanding why she was pregnant may have pushed her out of the sky.[30] Then there is a similarity with the Algonquian narrative in that several animals dive to get some pieces of earth. However, in the Iroquoian story they place them on the shell of the Turtle who had ordered them to do so. Aataentsic will give birth to a daughter who will be made pregnant either by the Turtle or the wind. She will give birth to twins, Tawiscaron (the evil spirit) and Iouskeha (the good spirit). Both of them will create all the things on earth, the good and the bad ones, and Iouskeha will create the Humans. This stage of the creation is extremely important as it enabled the Earth to become a living place for the Humans and of course to give birth to humanity.

In the next stage of the creation of the world cultural heroes appear, especially the trickster. The Trickster is a very popular figure in all the Native civilisations. This character has many different names and appearances: he is the king of transformation. He is called Carcajou by the Montagnais and the Hurons, Wiskedjack by the Attikamekw, Nanibush by the Algonquins and Azeban by the Abenaquis. This hero keeps transgressing society's rules and always ends up in farcical situations. However, through his mistakes, the consequences of his greediness and cupidity, the listeners realise, while having a laugh at his expense, the importance of their social rules. Even if the Trickster belongs to the animal species, his way of living and behaving are definitely human. He encapsulates the fragility of human nature by his

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[30] See Andrew Wiget, *Native American Literature* (Boston: Twayne Publishers, 1985), for more details.

being good and evil at the same time.[31] On the other hand, some of his mistakes serve as explanations for the existence of certain elements in the world. For instance, during one of his fights, his blood gave birth to a type of tree, the red willow. The Hurons today still have explanations for the geographical landscape surrounding their village based on Carcajou's adventures.[32] Because of his behaviour, the Trickster, half-human and half-animal, is situated beyond the norms and yet he contributes by his acts to the building of Native society.

For the Algonquians, Tshakapesh is as important as Carcajou, but he is not a Trickster. He also has an educative role, but he is never destructive or harmful. He actually attacks all the dangerous creatures that threaten the Natives. His stories highlight all the hardship that humans can go through. This hero can be considered as a social role model. Tshakapesh is a human, but he is a very powerful shaman.[33] Glouscap for the Mik'maqs and the Abenaquis plays the same role as Tshakapesh and he is not a Trickster. These heroes' stories also bring information about the formation of the world, but they are more centred on social values and rules to be followed in order to live in harmony (hospitality, food sharing, etc.).

The last level in the formation of the world corresponds to the type of stories mentioned previously: *tipatshimun*. The characters involved in these narratives are the ancestors of present human beings. In these stories, the humans very often have to face dangerous monsters and are helped by supernatural beings with strong powers. These narratives emphasise the social values of the group and the dangers of not respecting them. In the Iroquoian stories, the term *oki* refers to the spiritual representations of animals, plants, monsters or intermediary people. Their powers can be evil or good. This term was also used to refer to the shamans. *Okis* are omnipresent

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[31] Diane Boudreau, p. 39.
[32] Ibid., p. 40.
[33] Indian term for a religious wizard.

in the Huron narratives. As Barbeau[34] reports, their role is extremely important in the formation of the clans and sibships. The animal symbols of the clans such as the Bear or the Turtle correspond to the events told in these stories and thus have powerful implications. The narratives about the journeys in the world of Death undertaken by some protagonists enhance social values such as the victory of collectivism over individualism.

For these nations, their narratives were at the base of their survival as communities. By setting examples and giving explanations about the world around them, they guided the Natives to live in harmony. They also now serve as historical archives as they recall past events that marked each nation: for instance, the wars between the different tribes, the origin of their political system or the arrival of white people in the country. Similar themes or subjects can be found in the narratives of the different tribes even if many variations of them exist,[35] and some of the themes are more present than others in the different oral traditions. There are stories about the creation of the world, about encounters with supernatural beings, traditional techniques of survival etc. However, certain rituals can be specific to only one nation. For example, the ritual of the "tente tremblante" is performed only by the Algonquians. The narratives about the society of the false faces and about the banquet of the dead are only part of the Iroquoian oral tradition. The narrators of oral tradition have had a social and cultural role, which is important for the unity and survival of their nation. The sociolinguistic context is reflected through these stories. The variations in the stories are not only due to individual creativity, but are influenced by the geographical, natural and economic environment in which the storyteller is placed.

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[34] Marius Barbeau, *Huron and Wyandot Mythology* (Ottawa, Department of Mines, 1915).
[35] In *La Voix des autres* (Montréal: Hexagone, 1981), Rémi Savard presents and analyses 69 versions of the same story. It is quite interesting to see that despite some variations in the actual story, the structure is always the same one.

The content of these narratives is also affected by the mode of delivery. The performance of an oral text requires a whole range of skills that are not present in written literature. The narrator can play with different vocal sounds, adapt to the reactions of the audience, can interact with the audience, and add songs and gestures to enhance the message. To structure the text and give it its full power, narrators use repetitions and formulae. One of the main characteristics of oral tradition from any nation in the world is the abundant use of repetitions. Academics tend to see in it only a mnemonic means whereas Native literary critics, such as Paula Gunn Allen of Native American origin, insist on the fact that repetition is used for several reasons and not only as a help to memorisation. First of all, it has an entrancing effect. It brings unity and harmony between the listener and the person saying the words. By hearing the words several times, their meaning is amplified, "becomes part of [the listener]" and it creates a better awareness of what is actually said. Alongside repetitions, sounds without any meanings can also be added in order to attract the listener's attention and to render the text less understandable for other tribes.[36]

The characteristics of Native oral tradition will be developed more incisively in relation to written texts in the last chapter on Language. However, it is necessary to point out at this stage how words and eloquence were extremely important and highly valued in these societies without a writing system. Throughout the *Jesuit Relations*, the various narrators express their surprise at the length of some of the Native speeches and at their use of complex and striking metaphors. In *Eloquence indienne*,[37] André Vachon presents a selection of speeches from all the different Native nations of Quebec. These speeches have been transcribed by the Jesuits. Through this selection Vachon shows how they were well-trained orators. It seems that any occasion could

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[36] See Diane Boudreau about the Montagnais in *Histoire de la littérature amérindienne au Québec: oralité et écriture*, p. 57

[37] André Vachon, *Eloquence indienne* (Ottawa: Fides, 1968).

trigger off a display of eloquence. For example, a man about to die would deliver his farewell speech, a fisherman about to fish would say a praise poem to the sea and the fish. Daniel Vachon even compares Indian eloquence to that of the Greeks to highlight how important mastering the words was: "chez eux, tout dépendait du peuple, et le peuple dépendait de la parole. Dans leur gouvernement, la fortune, la réputation, l'autorité, étaient attachées à la persuasion de la multitude."[38] Oral tradition clearly comes out of a social situation. An oral text exists only through its performance - it is a shared experience - whereas written texts are most of the time an individual experience (both in the writing and the reading). Passing from one medium to another does take time and does not happen in a clear-cut manner.

II.2. From Orality to the Written Word

Before the Europeans' arrival, Native people in Canada did not have a writing system. However, they did use drawings and objects such as carved wooden sticks to trigger off their memories. The most common object used by the various Amerindian nations was called a Wampum. It was made of shells threaded on a string like beads, and was also used as money. Pictograms drawn or carved on stones, bones, shell and clothes were the closest Native people came to writing. Writing was introduced by the missionaries as early as the 17th century. Their aim was to convert the different tribes, and in order to do so, they had to learn the language of the nations they were targeting. As a result, they wrote and created numerous grammars, dictionaries and alphabet primers. For example, Gabriel Sagard, a Recollet priest, wrote a Huron/French dictionary in 1632 as did Brébeuf a few years later. It seems that Native

[38] *Ibid.*, quoted from *Fénélon, Lettres à l'Académie*, IV, p. 9.

people had mixed feelings towards writing and books until the 18th century. Because deadly diseases appeared at the same time as the discovery of the written word, many Natives considered the missionaries as evil sorcerers, as powerful shamans using writing as a means of witchcraft. Alain Beaulieu quotes a passage from the *Jesuit Relations* in which a few Algonquins had accused a Basque of having cast a spell on them because he had written their names on a piece of paper.[39] When they were not afraid of being bewitched, they would consider writing as having beneficial magical power. Beaulieu mentions another case when an Algonquin in 1637 was actually looking for a letter that would prevent him from dying too soon.[40] Despite their first impressions, the Natives started using this new mode of communication in the 18th century. They soon knew how to write in their own language as well as in French, some even learning to write in Latin. However, it is important to point out that the missionaries were more interested in the Natives' ability to read and in making sure that they would understand their transmission of religious doctrine than in educating them in the art of writing. They were afraid of them becoming too independent, and they carefully controlled the books the Amerindians were reading. Native people began to use writing in order to defend their rights. In the 18th and 19th century, they wrote many petitions to governors, Prime Ministers, and others in positions of power. In these letters, the Natives denounced territorial dispossession and complained about the invasion of their territories by white colonists and industrialists. The style of these complaints is close to the oral tradition. An appeal is made to the feelings of the receiver by insisting on the poverty of the nation.[41] As these letters and petitions were sent to white people, Native people expressed themselves either in English or French.

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[39] Alain Beaulieu, *Convertir les fils de Cain, Jésuites et Amérindiens nomades en Nouvelle-France, 1632-1642* (Québec: Nuit Blanche Editeur, 1994), pp. 92-93.
[40] *Ibid.*, p. 93.
[41] There are various examples of this in Diane Boudreau, *Histoire de la littérature amérindienne au Québec: oralité et écriture*, pp. 79-83.

The missionaries sometimes helped them, or wrote them on the Natives' behalf. Whether helped or not, the Natives' petitions were not successful. On the other hand, if the missionaries indirectly helped the Natives to gain more power through writing in the long term, they also dispossessed some tribes of their cultures. The Hurons, who have lost their knowledge of speaking their own language, are trying to regain this knowledge through the various dictionaries and grammar books left. However, when an external person transforms an oral language into a written one, meanings and subtle differences disappear as the "linguists" try to standardise the language. Besides, the transcribers were highly influenced by religious motives. There is less cultural damage for the tribes who kept on speaking their own language. In Quebec, the Malecites and the Hurons are the only one to have suffered such a great linguistic loss.

At the beginning of the 20th century even if Native languages were not taught, some of the Natives did use writing as a means of communication between the family members. In order to teach the Natives how to behave religiously and in a white civilised manner, the missionaries set up schools inside Native villages or at fur trade posts and Native summer camps. These places were not very popular among the Natives as most of what they were taught, and especially the way they were taught, was completely alien to them. In Native society, children used to learn things by watching the adults; teaching was not imposed on them and they were not punished when they did not understand something. State schooling for Natives, which became more widespread through time, turned out to be the prime cause of acculturation. At school, the children were forbidden to speak their own language and were taught subjects that did not correspond to their culture. Moreover, girls and boys were separated, then had to respect scheduled time and rigid discipline. An amendment to

the Indian Act made schooling compulsory only in 1894. However, before the law change, parents who were not sending their children to school were penalised by having their rations withheld. Residential schools were favoured over day schools, as it was believed that they would accelerate the process of assimilation. As Olive Patricia Dickason explains, there were two types of residential schools: "the boarding schools, usually located on reserves and catering to students between the ages of 8 and 14; and industrial schools, off reserves and close to Euro-Canadian centres, that had more elaborate programs and took in students until the age of 18."[42] Both schools aimed at preparing the children to become low-class citizens. In some schools, they would spend more time doing manual work than learning how to think for themselves or mastering the art of writing. In the documentary, *Les Tambours d'Abitibi*[43] filmed by Qado Quaregna in 2000, all the Algonquins interviewed clearly recall their years spent in a 1950s in a boarding school as a painful experience. Their Native identity was entirely negated. For example, as soon as they arrived at the boarding school, they all had their hair cut very short in the same way and they were forced to get rid of their moccasins and clothes. Learning and writing were rarely an enjoyable experience. Besides, those who succeeded at school and who wanted to pursue their studies had to go to non-Native schools where peer pressure and bullying were extremely common. In the 1970s, it seemed more and more obvious that the teaching delivered in the federal, provincial or religious schools was far from successful. The federal government decided progressively to transfer the management of education to the Natives. Even if the average Native level of education has improved, attendance at

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[42] Olive Patricia Dickason, *Canada's First Nations, a History of Founding Peoples from Earliest Times*, p. 315.
[43] *Les Tambours d'Abitibi* (dir. Qado Quaregna, Les Productions en Commun Inc., 2000)

post-secondary level education is less than half of that of Non-Native Canadians.[44] This may partly explain the slow process in their production of creative writing.

At the end of the 19th century, a few Natives managed to have articles published in newspapers, thus expressing their complaints to a wider public. Diane Boudreau mentions that Joseph Laurent (1839-1917) was probably one of the first published Native writers, having several articles published in the newspaper *La Presse* in 1901.[45] Nevertheless, it is only after 1969 with the publication of the White Paper[46] that Native writers really started to emerge. In 1971, the magazine *Recherches Amérindiennes au Québec* was founded in which not only specialists (in History, Health or Anthropology) could be published, but also Natives' visions of their own reality. In 1972, in *Recherches Amérindiennes au Québec* a dozen articles by Native people from various nations can be found.[47] Through these articles, the authors denounce the dispossession of their territories and highlight the Native perception of education, colonisation and environmental problems. Among these authors, a few of them would actually end up publishing books in subsequent years: Georges E. Sioui (Huron), Jacques Kurtness (Montagnais), An Antane Kapesh (Montagnaise), Denis Gill (Montagnais) and Richard Kistabish (Algonquin).

At the end of the 1970s, Native people started to publish their own newspapers. These newspapers were financed by band councils or by different organisations such as the C.A.M. (Conseil Attikamek Montagnais) which grouped nine Montagnais and three Attikamek communities. *Tepatshimuwin* and *Atikamek Sipi* are the examples of such arrangements. Whereas both newspapers deal essentially with Quebec Native problems or interests, "Sans réserve," created in the 1980s,

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[44] Renée Dupuis, *Quel Canada pour les Autochtones?*, pp. 27-28.
[45] Diane Boudreau, p. 103.
[46] See previous paragraph.
[47] *Recherches Amérindiennes au Québec*, n.4-5, Vol II.

incorporates Canadian, American and even other countries' Native issues. However, whatever the public aimed at or the language used, all these newspapers are no longer published. Newspapers have continually been started up, but due to a lack of funding they have never really been able to survive more than 10 years. As previously mentioned, it is really after the publication of the White Paper in 1969 that Natives used writing more widely to expose their opinions and to make their situation change. The books published in the 1970s and the 1980s are mainly concerned with personal experiences, autobiographies, and the survival of Native culture, as well as historical and political statements.

Native autobiographies can be divided into two separate sections. Indeed, one can distinguish the autobiographies directly written by Native people and those written by another person after having listened to the 'author'. *Le "Premier" des Hurons* was the first Native book of major importance published in Quebec; it was the first published Amerindian autobiography. Despite the fact that Marcel Bellier actually wrote it, the themes and the ideas are entirely those of Max Gros-Louis. In the following years, two Innu authors also published their autobiographies, but in their own languages. In 1976, An Antane Kapesh's personal narrative, *Je suis une maudite sauvagesse*[48] was translated into French and in 1984, Mathieu André's story of his life (1904-1991) also succeeded in reaching some of the Quebec readership. These autobiographies differ from the conventional, traditional model of European ones. The presence of the techniques used in oral tradition can still be perceived. For example, there is no chronological order. The narrative is organised around themes, events that the author considered important. Their stories are presented as a representation of the life of their own nation rather than as a personal experience. Writing, for these

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[48] An Antane Kapesh, *Je suis une maudite sauvagesse* (Montréal: Leméac, 1976).

authors, is a need, a means for survival. An Antane Kapesh starts *Je suis une maudite sauvagesse* with these words:

> Dans mon livre, il n'y a pas de parole de Blanc. Quand j'ai songé à écrire pour me défendre et pour défendre la culture de mes enfants, j'ai d'abord bien réfléchi car je savais qu'il ne fait pas partie de ma culture d'écrire et je n'aimais pas tellement partir en voyage dans la grande ville à cause de ce livre que je songeais écrire.[49]

This statement also emphases the difficulty the first authors encountered as most of them were not used to the written medium. For instance, Antane Kapesh and Mathieu André left school early and had been used to living traditionally in the forest during their childhood. In *Orality and Literacy, the Technologising of the Word*,[50] Walter Ong differentiates the psychodynamics of orality and the mechanisms in place in writing. In orally based societies, one can notice a tendency to narrate stories in a more emphatic manner with no real attempt to distance oneself objectively from the content. The need for memorization also affects the structure and choice of the events narrated. The last chapter on language will bring further analysis of this point. As the first attempts at writing aimed at exposing Natives' own perception of themselves, historical essays were also favoured at this early stage. These historical essays published by the Natives are impregnated by their vision of the world. None of the authors pretends to be objective, but all insist on showing their own vision of History. The lines between autobiographical, political and historical discourses are very often blurred as these different categories are very often the vehicles of similar messages: writing is used to denounce the dispossession of territories and the disappearance of certain elements of their culture. Among the Hurons, Georges E. Sioui (b.1948) published in 1989 his Master's dissertation: *Pour une autohistoire amérindienne. Un*

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[49] Ibid., p.2.
[50] Walter Ong, *Orality and Literacy,the Technologising of the Word* (London: Routledge, 1982).

essai sur les fondements d'une morale sociale.[51] Marguerite Vincent published in 1984 an extended narrative[52] on the history and the culture of the Huron nation from prehistoric time to 1981. For the Montagnais nation, André Vachon,[53] Pierre Gill[54] and Albert Connolly (b.1926)[55] contributed to the survival of Native identities with their own publications. Yvon H. Couture (b.1946) published *Les Algonquins* in 1983 in order to "inform" his readers of the Algonquin history and culture before and after the Europeans' arrival. Only Bernard Assiniwi, half-Cree and half-Québécois has written extensively on all the tribes of Quebec, not only his own.[56] Some authors are more interested in expressing clearly their political views instead of having it as an undertone to the narrative. Bernard Cleary (b.1937), a Montagnais, has published two extended essays[57] in which he denounces the unfairness of their situation and stresses the need for the Natives to be united.

Fictional works started to appear during the 1970s and the 1980s. As Andrew Wiget pointed out in his book on Native American Literature,[58] fictional writing is one of the last steps in the evolution of writing for authors with an ex-colonised background. Various modes of fiction are being used, but apart from the few novels of Bernard Assiniwi, for the Native authors of Quebec, poetry and plays are the most popular means of expression, being closer to oral tradition. I shall develop this point later. Whatever the means used, the language and the background of the author

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[51] Georges E. Sioui, *Pour une autohistoire amérindienne. Un essai sur les fondements d'une morale sociale* (Québec: Presses de l'Université de Laval , 1989).
[52] Marguerite Vincent, *La Nation huronne, son histoire, sa culture, son esprit* (Québec: Editions du Pélican et Septentrion, 1984).
[53] André Vachon, *Eloquence indienne* (Ottawa: Fides, 1968).
[54] Pierre Gill, *Les Montagnais, premiers habitants du Saguenay-Lac-St-Jean* (Alma: Editions Mishinikan, 1987).
[55] Albert Connolly, *Oti-il-no kaepe, les Indiens Montagnais du Québec* (Chicoutimi: Editions Science Moderne, 1972).
[56] Bernard Assiniwi, *Histoire des Indiens du Haut et du Bas Canada* 3 tomes (Montréal: Leméac, 1973-74).
[57] Bernard Cleary, *L'Enfant de 7000 ans, le long portage vers la délivrance* (Sillery: Editions du Pélican et Septentrion, 1989) and *Capteur de rêves* (Dolbeau-Mistassini: Editions de la piste et Margot Rankin, 2002).
[58] Andrew Wiget, *Native American Literature* (Boston: Twayne Publishers, 1985).

(reservation or town), writing is an act of survival and of cultural repossession, highlighting the values of Native culture and their rights:

> Il ne s'agit pas de rouvrir une plaie pour le plaisir des mots ou du style, mais plutôt de démontrer la réalité de la blessure. Bien sûr, certains expriment moins directement la déchirure, car ils appartiennent à une génération qui n'a pas connu le choc de la conquête, mais l'indianité demeure pour tous la justification première de l'écriture et de l'acte de publier.[59]

The Native literature of Quebec is actually a "métissage" of several cultures. Passing from oral tradition to writing does not necessary mean that oral tradition disappears. The texts written by Native authors do not always follow European conventions. These authors redefine the role of the traditional storyteller. Besides, their literature is an act of resistance, it represents their desire to be acknowledged as different and to reject dogmatism and colonialism. However, Native authors have had difficulties in being published for various reasons. Some authors can choose which language to write in, but the readership of course will not be the same depending on the language used. Writing in French and using a white publisher forces an author to adopt European conventions more closely. Bernard Assiniwi, who is one of the major Quebec Native writers, complained bitterly about it in an article entitled "Les écrivains aborigènes du Québec, qui sont-ils?."[60] Since the end of the 1970s, publishing houses, like the newspapers/magazines, have kept on appearing and closing as their readership is not broad. At the moment, Hyperborée in Val d'or created by Yvon H. Couture and éditions Innu from Sept Iles are the most successful Native publishing houses. Leméac, a non-Native publisher, has also largely enabled Native authors to be known.

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[59] Diane Boudreau, p.140.
[60] Bernard Assiniwi, "Les écrivains aborigènes...qui sont-ils?," in *Liberté*, vol. 33, 4-5, 1991, pp. 87-93.

In my analysis of Francophone Native literature from Quebec, I will refer mainly to seven authors, as their texts sufficiently characterize the specificities of this literature, and their backgrounds are varied enough to be able to attain a constructive conclusion. The Huron-Wendat nation will be the most represented, as three of the seven authors belong to it. This aspect should not be surprising as the historical and social factors mentioned previously have highlighted how much acculturation and assimilation this nation has undergone. Having lost their language, French is now their first mode of expression. Among the three authors, Yves Sioui Durand (b.1951) has been the most prolific and creative. A playwright and an actor, Yves Sioui Durand spent most of his childhood in the Native community of Wendake near Quebec City. Since 1984 he has been a pioneer in Francophone Native theatre and has created his production company Ondinnock. He has written fourteen texts for Radio-Canada and ten original plays, only three of which have been published. His plays have been performed mainly in Canada, but some of them, like *Le Porteur des peines du monde*,[61] have been shown on a European tour in France[62] and England.[63] Yves Sioui Durand's work reflects a desire to create a contemporary vision of Native mythology and spirituality; he also strives to produce performances that give a therapeutic experience to the audience. Past, present and future are entangled in his stories, following a traditionally Native cyclical perception of life. Eléonore Sioui is the first Huron-Wendat to have published a collection of poems, in 1985.[64] She studied with the Sisters of Saint-Louis de France, but had to leave school when she was sixteen as her parents needed her financial help. Mother of seven children, she eventually decided to return to education, studying French at the University of Laval where she

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[61] Yves Sioui Durand, *Le Porteur des peines du monde* (Montréal: Leméac, 1992).
[62] Dance International Festival of Montpellier in 1989.
[63] Glastonbury Festival in 1989.
[64] Eléonore Sioui, *Andatha* (Val d'Or: Hyperborée, 1985).

obtained a Masters in International Studies. She also gained a Doctorate in Native philosophy and spirituality at the Cincinnati (Ohio) Graduate Institute. She has been travelling the world giving lectures in order to promote Native cultures and more especially Huron-Wendat characteristics. She is a specialist of traditional Huron-Wendat medicine and has opened her own spiritual therapeutic centre in Wendake. In 2001, she received the title of *Officier de l'ordre du Canada* for her work, which is imbued with her passion for nature and Native traditional spirituality. She has published two other collections of poems. Jean Sioui has also lived in Wendake most of his life apart from fifteen years spent on a farm in Saint-Henri de Lévis, a small village. His main occupation has led him to work in computing. He has been retired since 2002. Jean Sioui has published only one collection of poems, *Le Pas de l'Indien*[65] in 1998. His collection was nominated for the Gabrielle Roy Prize the same year. After the *Salon du livre* of Quebec, he then participated in cultural events in Europe. In 2002, Jean Sioui chaired a poetry workshop at the cultural Huron-Wendat training centre. His poems denote an inclination torwards a spiritual life and a passion for nature.

Bernard Assiniwi, half-Cree/half-Québécois, also had some Algonquin ancestry from his father's side. Assiniwi studied a wide range of subjects: music, classical songs, biology and farming. He eventually obtained a degree in animal genetics in 1957. Later on he started a career as a researcher in Native history and worked as radio presenter. He also produced programmes on Native Quebec history and ecology. Bernard Assiniwi was a teacher at the Ecole normale des Ursulines at Rimouski until the end of the 1960s. At the end of the 1960s, he created and directed the cultural section of the Minister of Indian Affairs and Northern Development in

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[65] Jean Sioui, *Le Pas de l'Indien. Pensées W'endates* (Québec: Le Loup de Gouttière, 1998).

Ottawa. After having published many articles in different magazines and papers, Assiniwi became the director of the collection *Ni-t'chawama/mon ami mon frère* for Leméac from 1972 to 1976. He then edited the ecology review, *Québec nature*, from 1976 to 1978. All these activities did not prevent him from being an actor in the theatre and from winning distinctions for it between 1957 and 1982. In 1988, he was elected president of the Native Quebec alliance. His work as a researcher was finally acknowledged as he obtained in 1992 the position of Native history researcher at the Canadian Museum of civilisations in Hull. In 1994, as *écrivain à résidence* in the French Department of Ottawa University he held the post of creative writing professor. In 1999, the University of Quebec in Trois-Rivières awarded him an *honoris causa* doctorate for his life's work. After his death in 2000, the Native organisation *Terres en vues* created the Bernard-Chagnan-Assiniwi Prize, which rewards Native artists whose work has contributed to enhance and promote Native cultures. Bernard Assiniwi wrote twenty-six works. His literary output includes novels, short stories, stories for children, retelling of legends and one play. He never wrote poems, however. Whether in his work or in his actions, Assiniwi aimed at promoting Native cultures and beliefs in the protection of the Earth. He received the *Prix littéraire France-Québec Jean Hamelin* for his historical novel *La Saga des Béothuks*[66] in 1997. In 1971, he was also the first Native author in Quebec to widely publish a book in French, a collection of Algonquin tales, for which he obtained the *Prix littéraire de la ville de Montréal.*[67]

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[66] Bernard Assiniwi, *La Saga des Béothuks* (Montréal: Leméac, 1996).
[67] Bernard Assiniwi and Isabelle Myre, *Anish-Nah-Bé, contes adultes du pays Algonquin* (Montréal: Leméac, 1972).

Coming from the same linguistic family, Rita Mestokosho, was the first Innu poet to publish a collection of poems[68] in Quebec. She was born and still lives in the community of Ekuanitshit (Mingan). After going to school on the reservation, she finished her studies in Quebec and Montreal. She then did a course in politics at the University of Quebec in Chicoutimi for a year. She has been mainly involved with educational strategies in order to teach and protect the Innu culture and language. She has organised dance and theatrical activities for children in her community. Rita Mestokosho has also participated in several workshops and conferences in the rest of Canada, South and Central America, to present and discuss possible strategies for developing Native cultures. She participated in the creation of a cultural association that would enable exchanges between artists and craftsmen from different fields. She started writing in her teenage years and found that this medium allowed her to reconcile her nation's past with her contemporary situation.[69] Like the majority of my chosen writers, she writes mostly in French, as it is the language she has been educated in, but she also writes in Innu. She has published many poems in revues and magazines and two collections of poems. In 1997, she participated in a meeting in Venezuela between Native authors. Rita Mestokosho was also invited several times to France, notably for the "Festival du livre international" in Saint-Malo. Her poems also reflect her Native spirituality and her desire to protect the Earth.

Charles Coocoo, an Atikamek, has not experienced the same educational background that the aforementioned authors have undergone. He was trained as a carpenter and joiner and mainly worked in the forest in his youth. In the 1990s, he participated in the production of a film on the Native way of life, *Automne sauvage*

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[68] Rita Mestokosho, *Eshi uapataman nukum.Comment je perçois la vie, Grand-mère. Recueil de poèmes Montagnais* (Mashteuiatsh: Piekuakami, 1995).
[69] Maurizio Gatti, ed., *Littérature amérindienne du Québec. Ecrits de langue française* (Montréal: Hurtubise, 2004), p. 226.

and acted in a number of Quebec films and documentaries. Since 1998, he has been working as an interpreter and linguistic adviser for Wemotaci school, his own community school. His role is to facilitate the communication between the Native pupils and the non-Native teachers. Charles Coocoo has published only one collection of poems, *Broderies sur mocassins*.[70] His personal quest has led him to spend a great part of his time with elderly people from his nation in order to learn more about Atikamek spirituality before the Europeans' arrival. Having been entrusted as a "porteur de pipe", he now has the right to chair certain spiritual ceremonies for the community. His spiritual involvement and his quest for an ancestral perception of life can be noticed in his writing.

Yvon H. Couture, half Algonquin/half Québécois, will be the last author whose work will be analysed. He perceives himself as a "chantre de la nature",[71] and created his own publishing house at the beginning of 1980s, *édition Hyperborée*. He has published three collections of poems and two history books about his own nation. His poems have themes in common with the other authors, but some of them show a definite classical Western inspiration. Most of these authors come from different Native nations and have followed different paths, as none of them have been only writers. Yet, as will be demonstrated in the following chapters, they all share a common need for identity assertion, past traditional references to time and space. Over centuries, Native nations have undergone major social and political changes, most of the time in painful circumstances. Consequently, their writing bears the marks of their suffering. Finding their place in contemporary Quebec and defining their own identity is thus at the very heart of the process. Chapter Two will expose the mechanism of this quest for self-assertive identity. For these writers, writing is about

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[70] Charles Coocoo, *Broderies sur mocassins* (Chicoutimi: JLC, 1988).
[71] Yvon H. Couture. *Aki Têwêgan, le tambour de la terre* (Hull: Lettresplus, 2000).

being in control again; defining their culture according to their own criteria enables them to repossess it. This is why the past is an important theme in their narratives. To be able to understand where they stand at the present time, they first need to understand where they have come from. As Frederik Wyatt explains in 'The Reconstruction of the Individual and the Collective Past', "the past is integral to our sense of Identity; the sureness of 'I was' is a necessary component of the sureness of 'I am.'"[72] Remembering the past is an unpleasant, but necessary task, as it serves as a healing process for the Native author or reader, as Chapter Three will highlight. Another recurrent theme in this writing, once again linked to their whole history, is nature. Native authors present themselves as the defenders of nature. Due to their ancestral religious beliefs, the natural world is sacred and thus has to be protected. Their belonging to the Earth and more locally to their territory can hardly be separated from their political demands. Thus spatiality becomes engraved in the text at two different levels: the representation of their own space and the repossession of a cultural space through the act of writing.

II. 3. A Short Comparison with Native Canadian Literature in English

In the rest of Canada, as in Quebec, written systems for Native languages were created by missionaries. For Native authors, writing was at first a way of protesting against oppression. Letters and petitions were the first Native form of written expression. In *Native Literature from Canada, From the Oral Tradition to the Present*,[73] Penny Petrone divides her historical literary review into six phases: Oral

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[72]Frederick Wyatt, 'The Reconstruction of the Individual and Collective Past,' in David Lowenthal, *The Past is a Foreign Country* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1985), p. 41.
[73] Penny Petrone, *Native Literature in Canada, from Oral Tradition to the Present* (Toronto: Oxford University Press, 1990).

Literature, 1820-1850, 1850-1914, 1914-1969, 1970-1979 and 1980-1989. This division follows the political and social evolution of the Native people in Canada. As she clearly states in her introduction, the context cannot be separated from the literary work:

> As a literature grounded in the political and social realities of life on Canada's reserves and in its urban centres, while also being rooted in oral tribal traditions, it reveals a continuum of the Ancient and the Modern that is complex because it is coloured by several stages in the development of writing in English.[74]

Between 1820 and 1850, Native writers wrote journals, diaries, autobiographies, histories, reports, letters, travelogues and sermons in English. They were published in newspapers and books. These writers were encouraged by Missionaries from different churches. In Upper Canada, the Anglican Church and the Wesleyan Methodist Missionary Society were successful in converting and teaching the Natives. In the mid-1820s, the Wesleyan Methodist Missionary Society was particularly efficient in training a number of Ojibways to become teachers, interpreters and missionaries. Many young men came out of this training as highly successful missionaries with both Indians and Whites. This aspect practically never occurred with the Jesuits or the Catholic priests. Native people in Quebec were not encouraged as much to impart what they had learnt to other Natives so that the power would stay in the hands of white people. This also partly delayed the production of fictional work in Quebec as the literary world was perceived as a non-Native territory. In English-speaking Canada, the young men trained by the missionaries wrote about their experiences and defended Native Canadian rights. The most famous ones are: Peter Jones (1802-1856), George Copway (1818-1869), George Henry (1811-?) Peter Jacobs (1809-1890), John Sunday (1795-1875), Allen Salt (1818-1911) and Henry Bird Steinhauer

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[74] *Ibid.*, p.1.

(1804-1885). All these writers came from the same close circle. James Evans and William Case - a former American circuit-rider who was the leader of the Methodists in Upper Canada - were very impressed by the young Native converts' intelligence and put much effort into teaching them. Another major reason for this stronghold of writers was the fact that they generated literary enthusiasm among themselves. They actually formed the first literary group of Native writers in Canada. Literary exchanges between Native authors have only recently started in Quebec. This partly explains why Native literature from Quebec is less developed. Cross-cultural marriages also resulted in the spread of literacy and writing as in the rest of Canada, but there is also a striking accentuation of this phenomenon in English-speaking Canada. For example, the Ojibway Catherine Soneegoh Sutton (1823-1865) (Nah-nee-bah-wee-qay, "upright woman"), the niece of the aforementioned Peter Jones, was one of the few Indian women of her time to work for the rights of her people. George Henry was also Peter Jones' half-brother through their mother. As Penny Petrone explains "children from [cross-cultural] marriages were sometimes sent abroad to complete their education, and the home often had good libraries."[75] The Anglican Church based in the Red River settlement in Hudson Bay managed by the Reverend James West also had a certain success in teaching the Natives, but there was no real literary movement, possibly due to the absence of a figure like Peter Jones. As for Quebec Native people, with the loss of their land, they soon discovered that they also had lost their sense of identity. Consequently, the overriding theme in their writings was a sense of loss: loss of land, loss of hunting and fishing rights, loss of self-sufficiency, dignity, and loss of nationhood. These English-speaking Native writers were also very interested in telling the history of their peoples and in writing

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[75] *Ibid.*, p. 58.

down legends inherited from the past. They aimed at instructing and informing white readers. In 1850, George Copway published *The Traditional History and Characteristic Sketches of the Ojibway Nation.*[76] He was actually one of the first North American Indians to have his works widely read by whites. In 1947, George Henry published *Remarks Concerning the Ojibway Indians, by One of Themselves, Called Maungwudaus.*[77] Between 1850 and 1914, the Canadian government reinforced its assimilationist policy towards the Indians as they were an obstacle to its territorial spread. During this time, Indians were settled on reservations and taught in schools where the teaching methods alienated them, so there were few publications. However, a few isolated educated Natives managed to achieve publication, such as Peter Dooyentate Clarke (1810-1870), Francis Assikinack (1823-1863), John Brant-Sero (1867-1914) and Pauline Johnson (1861-1913). They wrote about the customs of their peoples, essentially to defend their rights. Pauline Johnson wrote several poems and children's stories. She wrote primarily about the beauty of Nature and celebrated Canadian landscapes. Her lyrical style corresponded to the Victorian romantic and sentimental manner praised at the time. She was called "the Mohawk Princess" and dazzled her audiences in Canada, the United States and even England. She was the first Canadian woman, the first Canadian Indian and the first Canadian writer to be honoured by a commemorative Canadian stamp in 1961. Her poetry was very popular in the 1920s and it was studied at schools in the 1930s. Despite the lack of literary output in this period, periodicals and newspapers written only by Native people started to flourish. They were sponsored by local missionaries and Indian-interest groups who recognised the educational usefulness of print. Unfortunately, as for the

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[76] George Copway, *The Traditional History and Characteristic Sketches of the Ojibway Nation,* (London: Charles Gilpin, 1850).
[77] George Henry, *Remarks Concerning the Ojibway Indians, by One of Themselves Called Maungwudaus, Who Has Been Travelling in England, France, Belgium, Ireland, and Scotland* (Leeds: C.A. Wilson, 1847).

Natives in Quebec, these papers struggled to survive. For instance, *Pipe of Peace* published by the Shingwank Home in Sault St Marie lasted only from October 1878 to September 1879. *The Indians* published in Ontario also lasted only a year from 1885 to 1886. During this period of tension between the government and the Indians, Louis Riel (1844-1885), another politically involved writer, stands out not only because of his tragic end, but also due to his prolific writing. Louis Riel was a Métis who led the North West Rebellion of 1885. After the disappearance of the buffalo, the white settlement in Saskatchewan started to invade the Métis lands. The Métis were afraid of having nothing left to live on. Unfortunately, this rebellion failed and Louis Riel ended up imprisoned and hanged; present historians still think this was unjustified. Louis Riel could write in French and in English: "his letters, diaries, poetry, and political and religious writings could fill four to five volumes up to 500 pages each."[78] All his writings are pervaded by his involvement in politics. However, Victorian society in Canada was not ready to listen to its Native peoples. The dominant white society was interested in expanding its territories and building a new nation.

Penny Petrone goes on to describe the period between 1914 and 1969 as a "barren period" for Native writing in Canada. She gives eight reasons for this:

> growing power of white control through the Department of Indian Affairs; government policies that were based on the assimilation and suppression of Native cultures; a native population overwhelmed by the deluge of immigration that flooded the Western Prairies and placed natives in ever more humiliating subjugation; the Depression and an increase in poverty; lack of unity among the scattered tribes across the country; the commonly held belief that the natives were dying out; lack of interest among the publishers in anything pertaining to natives, although some of their narratives, as retold by non-natives, were published.[79]

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[78] Penny Petrone, p. 87.
[79] Ibid., p. 95.

Moreover, a few impostors pretended to be Indians and published books portraying the romantic Indian. Grey Owl (Archibald Stansfeld Melaney, 1888-1938) and Chief Buffalo Child Long Lance (Sylvestre Clark Long, 1890-1932) were the most famous ones. The first was actually an Englishman adopted by the Ojibway and the latter was an American adopted by the Blood. The few Native writers who managed to be published during this period wrote mostly life stories or collections of legends. A few authors of this period had to wait until the 1970s to see their work published. Edward Ahenakew began a book in 1923 and had it published in 1973. However, the production of newspapers picked up especially after the appointment to the senate of an Indian, James Gladstone, in 1958. The protest and radical change in North America in the 1960s also affected the Natives. Friendship centres opened up in Toronto and Winnipeg helping the Natives moving into these cities. Governments began to fund Native associations and newspapers; some of them are still being published today such as *The Indian Voice* in Vancouver, British Columbia, *Kainai News* in Hobbema, Alberta and *Native People* in Edmonton, Alberta. These newspapers enabled the various Indian organisations to express their protests. Native speakers emerged and journalistic prose, reports and essays were used to criticise the dominant society. Irony, sarcasm and grievances expressed with humour made their literature of protest rather distinctive.

Following the rejection of the White Paper of 1969, the 1970s saw a massive development in Amerindian creative writing. First of all, the range was wider; poetry, song, autobiography, short fiction, novels, drama, story-telling, traditional stories, essays and children's literature were all being produced. In terms of literary evolution for all the Natives in Canada the 1970s was definitely a turning point. It is true that the decade began with books of protest and defence written by activists, but works of

history appeared too. Enos T. Montour, a Delaware, published *The Feathered U.E.L.s*[80] in 1973, telling the story of the first Indian loyalists and their descendants on the Six Nations Indian Reserve. Bruce Sealey and Antoine S. Lussier, both Métis, published *The Métis, Canada's Forgotten People*[81] in 1975, tracing the history of the Métis from their beginnings to the present. Autobiographies also gained popularity among writers. For Quebec Amerindians, whether realised with or without collaboration, these autobiographies conformed to the Native autobiographical tradition mixing personal, tribal and mythological history with a temporal shifting in the narratives. According to tradition, Native people perceive time as cyclical, as opposed to linear. Everything is thus connected, which can be represented in literature by an interflow of past, present and future.

According to Penny Petrone, "the decade's most acclaimed Native autobiography was *Halfbreed*"[82] published in 1973 by Maria Campbell.[83] She recalls her childhood in a community in Saskatchewan. Through her personal story, she exposes the social and cultural differences between the Métis and the Indians. In the 1970s, a few books were published in which Natives themselves recorded their oral tradition. Basil H. Johnston published *Ojibway Heritage: the Ceremonies, Songs, Dances, Prayers and Legends of the Ojibway People*[84] in 1979. He has been one of the leading Native short story writers, and has also written articles and poems. Throughout his work, Johnston highlights the pretensions of Indians and white alike. Many of his protagonists are stereotypes. Through the use of satire and caricatures,

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[80] Enos T. Montour, *The Feathered U. E. L.s* (Toronto: Division of Communication, United Church of Canada, 1973).
[81] Bruce Sealey and Antoine S. Lussier, eds., *The Métis: Canada's Forgotten People* (Winnipeg: Manitoba Métis Federation Press, 1975).
[82] *Ibid.*, p.119.
[83] Maria Campbell, *Halfbreed* (Toronto: McClelland & Stewart, 1973).
[84] Basil H. Johnston, *Ojibway Heritage: the Ceremonies, Songs, Dances, Prayers and Legends of the Ojibway People* (Toronto: McClelland & Stewart, 1979).

Johnston shows the inconsistencies of acculturation. In his collection of short stories published in 1978, *Moose Meat and Wild Rice*,[85] the presence of the Trickster enables the writer to create scenes of raucous comedy. During the 1970s, children's stories written by Native writers started to be very popular, so many Native writers participated in this area. Indeed, children's stories as such did not exist in oral tradition. Maria Campbell wrote three books for children: *People of the Buffalo*[86] (1976), *Little Badger and the Fire Spirit*[87] (1977), and *Riel's People*[88] (1978). These stories deal with the way of life of their ancestors using cultural specificities and historical landmarks presented simply for children. The stories highlight the pride of being a Native person. In Quebec, Native writers such as Bernard Assiniwi[89] used this same theme and also aimed to give a sense of belonging to the new generation. Native poetry flourished in the 1970s. Among those authors published, there were Sarain Stump (Shoshone-Cree-Salish), Duke Redbird (Ojibway-Irish), George Kenny (Ojibway), Rita Joe (Mik'maq), Ben Abel, Chief Dan George (Coast Salish), Daniel David Moses (Delaware). With different degrees of emphasis, all these writers depict either the beauty of nature and celebrate Canadian scenery, or use their words to express their political views and defend their rights. Stump concentrates more on the loss of the traditional way of life; Redbird's and Abel's poetry have a definite political undertone. There is a similarity in the themes used by Native Quebec authors. In 1977, an *Anthology of Contemporary Canadian Poetry*[90] published by two non-Natives included several poems from Native authors. A comparable anthology of

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[85] Basil H. Johnston, *Moose Meat and Wild Rice* (Toronto: McClelland & Stewart, 1978).
[86] Maria Campbell, *People of the Buffalo: How the Plains Indians Lived*, Illus. by Douglas Tait and Shannon Twofeathers (Vancouver: J. J. Douglas, 1976).
[87] Maria Campbell, *Little Badger and the Fire Spirit*, Illus. by David Maclagan (Toronto: McClelland & Stewart, 1977).
[88] Maria Campbell, *Riel's People: How the Métis Lived*, Illus.by David Maclagan (Vancouver: Douglas & McIntrye, 1978).
[89] Bernard Assiniwi, *Chasseurs de bisons* (Montréal: Leméac, 1974).
[90] Day David and Marylin Bowering, eds., *Many Voices: An Anthology of Contemporary Canadian Indian Poetry* (Vancouver: J.J. Douglas, 1977).

Francophone Native writers from Quebec only appeared in 2004 thanks to Maurizio Gatti's research on the subject.[91]

Daniel David Moses is one of the best acknowledged Native writers of Canada. He writes poetry, plays and short stories, and he is also a critic. His works have been published in a number of literary magazines. He seems to enjoy blending nature and human relationships in the text. He writes about his own environment, his childhood spent in the country and his various working places in town. Questions of Native mythology are often central to his prose and drama. *Delicate Bodies*,[92] his first collection of poems, received a low-key welcome, but since then he has managed to establish himself. Indeed, he published an anthology of Canadian Native Literature in English in 1992 in collaboration with Terry Goldie.[93] The introduction of the book is a dialogue between the two editors giving reasons for their choice of texts. They justify their choice by saying that the chosen texts are from "all areas along a scale of good writing", and that "the actual impact of the stories also [had] to be part of the decision making. We are in history and this writing is very involved in that history."[94] Once again, Native literature seems inseparable from its context.

During the 1980s, a younger generation of university trained writers began producing exciting and original works. This new generation of writers created an energetic literary scene, often gathering to exchange ideas and inspire each other. There was Tomson Highway (b.1951), Lenore Keeshig-Tobias (b.1950), Daniel David Moses (b.1952) and Drew Hayden Taylor (b.1962) in Toronto, Lee Maracle (b.1950), Vera Samuel, Margo Kane (b.1951) and Verna Kirkness (b.1935) in

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[91] Maurizio Gatti, ed., *Littérature amérindienne du Québec, Ecrits de langue française* (Montréal: Hurtubise, 2005).
[92] Daniel D. Moses, *Delicate Bodies* (Vancouver: Blewointment Press, 1978).
[93] Daniel David Moses and Terry Goldie, eds., *An Anthology of Canadian Native Literature in English* (Toronto: Oxford University Press, 1992).
[94] *Ibid.*, p. xiii.

Vancouver; Jeannette Armstrong (b.1948) in Vernon, Marie Annharte Baker (b.1942) and Sue Deranger in Regina, Maria Campbell (b.1940) and Beth Cuthand in Saskatoon, and Thomas King (b.1943) in Lethbridge. All of them have encouraged Native writers, organising festivals and conducting literary workshops. There is no established school or organised literary movement so far for Native writers in Quebec. It seems that each writer must work in isolation. However, literary exchanges have started to take place between the different communities inhabiting Quebec, as authors such as Rita Mestokosho or Jean Sioui have participated in the creation of literary workshops in communities other than their own. The emphasis seems to be more on the therapeutic effect that writing or performing can produce, than on a creative process.[95] In the field of performing arts, meetings and connections have happened more easily thanks notably to Yves Sioui Durand's production company, *Ondinnock*. For instance, Jean-Marc Niquay, an Atikamek, acted in a few plays written and produced by Sioui Durand before becoming the coordinator of theatrical activities in the community of Manwan in 2000. Most Native writers use writing as a means of understanding the challenging social context they are in. Relative to other Native Canadian authors, few attempts have been made by Native writers from Quebec to use the novel as a literary form. During the 1980s, some markedly popular novels were published in English. Jeannette Armstrong published *Slash*[96] in 1985 and Beatrice Culleton (b.1949) *In Search of April Raintree*[97] in 1983. Both of them were very original in structure. In 1989, Jeannette Armstrong became the director of a school of writing, "the first credit-giving creative-writing school in Canada to be operated for

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[95] See the analysis of the work of Yves Sioui Durand in Chapter Four.
[96] Jeannette Armstrong, *Slash* (Penticton: Theytus Books, 1985).
[97] Beatrice Culleton, *In Search of April Raintree* (Winnipeg: Pemmican Publication Inc., 1983).

and by Native people."[98] In 1985, *Achimoona*[99] (stories in Cree) was the first anthology of short fiction by Native Canadians. This publication originated in a series of writing workshops sponsored by Saskatchewan Education and directed by Maria Campbell. The pieces were full of images of nature, loneliness, rejection and harmony. Two years later, Thomas King, another well known Native writer, collected in Issue 16 of *Canadian Fiction Magazine*, 18 stories by 14 native authors. Thomas King also published an anthology of Canadian Native Literature in 1990.[100] These authors had a dedication to writing and thus created a motivating atmosphere amongst themselves. During the eighties, autobiographies continued to being published, but the desire to write history books faded.

In the field of drama, Tomson Highway has been one of the most creative since that period of the time. His plays are based on contemporary problems, such as alcohol or drug abuse, but past legends are also integrated and the presence of the Trickster strongly felt. His way of dealing with contemporary issues is similar to that of Yves Sioui Durand. The difference lies in his employment of the trickster, which has not been used much in Quebec Native literature so far. It is possible to find the Trickster as the main character in a few tales[101] published in Native magazines such as *Terres en vues* and *Rencontre*. Tomson Highway and Daniel David Moses are both part of the Committee to Re-Establish the Trickster, a Toronto based Native writers' group to reclaim the Native voice.

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[98] Penny Petrone, *Native Literature in Canada, From the Oral Tradition to the Present* (Toronto: Oxford University Press, 1990).
[99] *Achimoona* (Saskatoon: Fifth House, 1985).
[100] Thomas King, ed., *All My Relations. An Anthology of Contemporary Canadian Native Writing* (Toronto: McClelland & Stewart, 1990).
[101] Maurizio Gatti, pp. 52-58.

Through this short summary of Native Quebec history and the evolution of Canadian Native writing, it should become clearer that the analysis of Native Quebec literature cannot be dissociated from its specific context. The brutal changes that have occurred in these Native civilisations have left deep scars in their collective memory. There exists a cultural gap between the present generation and the previous one. Contemporary Native authors try to reconcile traditional perceptions of life with present social situations and to find inspiration in Native mythology. For example, Innu writers will make references to Caribou hunting and symbolism whereas Huron-Wendat authors will reuse symbolic plants such as the three sisters: maize, beans and squashes, essential in the Huron traditional diet and at the heart of how their society was once organised. Canadian Native literature in English has managed to reach a certain status within Canadian literature. It is undeniable that there is a greater number of Native authors writing in English than in French, and this should be expected in proportion to their respective population. On the other hand, Quebec Native literature is still relatively young and has not benefited from the rich literary past of Native literature in English in the 19th century. Peter Jones and the other authors of that period in a certain manner paved the way for the next generations. However, the themes and the emotions described are similar on both sides. Native writers in Canada underline the importance of living in harmony with nature, and recall past events in order to understand the present and defend their rights. Having to undergo so many changes in a short period of time against their will has greatly disturbed Native people's sense of identity. Even if their situation has improved, the Natives of today still feel the pressure of centuries of colonisation. Having to face serious economic and social problems, they tend to look back into the past as a golden period that will never happen again. By trying to situate themselves in the society they live in, these

writers give their own representations of the past Indian, and of the new Native. As the next chapter will reveal, this quest for identity is an important consequence of their history and a major element of their writing.

Chapter Two

Assertion of Identity/Identities

Un peuple sans terre

Quand la lune sera pleine

Et que le soleil sera rouge

On verra alors sur la plaine

Un homme faisant brûler de la sauge

Sa peine sera immense comme la mer

Car il aura vu la terre disparaître sous ses pieds

Les hommes machines l'auront dévoré les premiers

Pour en faire une nouvelle cité.

Là où l'entraide et le respect n'existeront pas

Tu piétineras mon enfant, mais tu le fais déjà

Ta soif d'ambition et de grandeur nous tuera

Mais malgré tout cela, mon esprit survivra.

Tant que le soleil brillera au-dessus de nous

Et que les rivières seront débordantes d'énergie

Tu entendras nos rires les plus fous

Qui te poursuivront dans ton rêve maudit.

N'enlève pas à la terre, son dernier souffle

Permets à notre mère de respirer

Et de voir ses enfants courir à bout de souffle

Dans la nature qui est ma protégée.[1]

This poem written by Rita Mestokosho was published in 1995 in the collection *Eshi Uapataman, Nukum, Comment je perçois la vie, Grand-Mère*. The author translated

[1] Rita Mestokosho, *Eshi uapataman Nukum. Comment je perçois la vie, Grand-mère. Recueil de poèmes Montagnais* (Mashteuiatsh: Piekuakami, 1995), p. 25.

her poems into Montagnais and French. In 'Un peuple sans terre,' her positioning as protector of the Earth echoes the first poem of the collection which defined the Innu's role as "Gardien de la terre."[2] This poem is composed of five stanzas of four lines each. Due to the presence of rhyming verses, Rita Mestokosho has created a certain rhythm to the poem. The number of syllables per line in each stanza is not regular, but the punctuation contributes to the creation of the rhythm. The first stanza gives an impression of calm and serenity by the simplicity of the vocabulary, the image depicted and the shortness of the lines. In the third stanza, the interruption of the rhythm by a comma emphasizes the last part of the line. This happens in the second and fourth lines:

> Tu piétineras mon enfant, mais tu le fais déjà (...)
>
> Mais malgré tout cela, mon esprit survivra.

The poem is written in standard French and the vocabulary chosen is also standard. The main theme of the poem is based on the opposition: nature/Native versus town/White people. The first stanza alludes to Native religion and beliefs; the gesture described is a sacred act equivalent to a prayer. Stanzas two and three reflect Rita Mestokosho's criticism of modernism and capitalism. The first two lines of the fourth stanza copy the famous words uttered by a Native American chief[3] in the 19th century when Native extinction was close to happening in America. The last stanza finally lets Rita Mestokosho's message come to the surface: the Earth must be protected. The poem is addressed to non-Native people. The presence of the opposition between "tu" and "nous" in the third paragraph parallels the separation between Nature and town. The use of the terms "mère" and "enfants" to refer to the Earth and her inhabitants

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[2] Rita Mestokosho, p. 7.

[3] These words, or the meaning they carry, have been frequently used by Native people throughtout North America. The origin of this saying is obscure. A Blackfoot chief has apparently said these words in the 19th century in a speech addressed to White government representatives.

correspond to the Native perception of their environment. The political or social message of the poem seems to dominate over the artistic intent. This aspect has been considered by Deleuze and Guattari[4] as being one of the three main characteristics of minor literature. Indeed, Native literature from Quebec bears some characteristics of Deleuze and Guattari's definition. Minor literature does not imply the use of a minor language, it is a major language used by a minority with a strong coefficient of deterritorialization. The deterritorialization of a language happens when an author either enriches it or simplifies it to the extreme, thus leaving only expressions of intensities. As will be shown in the last chapter, the simplicity of the French language in most of the texts contributes to the construction of a Native voice inspired by Nature. Deleuze and Guattari also demonstrated that the individual was in fact tuned to the collective. Indeed, due to its minor presence, this type of literature will very often have a tendency to either be structured as a representation of a whole group or be interpreted as such by the non-Natives. In the case of Native literature, it can also be tied to the influence of oral tradition in which the interest of the group mattered more than the individual's. Within this poem, the traditional representation of the self, which is actually part of a collective, is paralleled with the poet's individual voice. This tension between the two appears in many other texts and corresponds to the authors' intent to reconcile past modes of identity representations with modern ones. In *The Consequences of Modernity*,[5] Anthony Giddens has underlined the change in the perception of the individual between pre-modern cultures and modern ones. Indeed, pre-modern cultures did not express the idea that each person had its unique character and potential and especially did not conceive of the self as a "reflexive project." Setting oppositions and comparisons can be part of this process of self-

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[4] Gilles Deleuze and Felix Guattari, *Kafka, pour une littérature mineure* (Paris: Minuit, 1975).
[5] Anthony Giddens, *The Consequences of Modernity* (Cambridge: Polity Press, 1991).

definition. The sources of identity are very often envisaged through the concepts of nationality, ethnicity, social class, community, gender and sexuality. In a postcolonial context, the relation to the ex-coloniser also comes into play. In 'Un peuple sans terre', Rita Mestokosho has reused the opposition Native versus non-Native although she has not stated this openly. The choice of the language is affected by whom she intends to address. There exists a certain ambivalence in the portraying of Native people as defenders of the environment. In western culture, meaning is dominated by historical and cultural facts. In traditional societies, the relation between Native people and Nature defined their culture. However, the myth of the noble savage has been created by non-Native people. It seems that contemporary Native people, while condemning previous clichés imposed on them, have embraced this representation of them as peoples living in harmony with Nature. This ecological role combines traditional background (Native ancestors' culture being centred on their environment), the coloniser's perception of them, and its transposition in the modern world. Native authors do not support the idea of a return to living in nature, but they stress the need to take care of the earth. This positioning of defenders of Nature in Native literature may also have been inspired by the political discourse that started to appear in the 1970s. In an article concerning the political debate surrounding the James Bay-Northern Quebec Agreement, Barri Cohen[6] gives an analysis of Quebec government's and Native people's speeches. His analysis highlights the structure and the components of the two discourses in opposition. Drawing on a historical past and sets of implicit equivalence such as "Native/earth/non-civilized" versus non-Native/environmental destruction/capitalism, the two Native nations involved in the project, the Cree and the Inuit, gave birth to a counter-discourse which enabled them

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[6] Barri Cohen, " Technological Colonialism and the Politics of Water," in *Cultural Studies*, vol. 8, 1, January 1994, pp. 32-55.

to play on Eurocentric referents. Cohen, however, points out the danger of such a discourse as the evocation of traditional beliefs and modes of living can be easily dismissed by non-Native people as Native people's way of living is no longer traditional. The battle for survival leads Native people to redefine themselves and to find arguments that can be understood by the dominant society.

Whatever the context, the notion of identity in itself is far from being transparent and unproblematic. Stuart Hall[7] distinguishes two different ways of considering 'cultural identity.' It can, first of all, be seen as one shared culture, shaped by historical experiences and cultural codes, and seen as stable. In the second approach, identity is a matter of "'becoming' as well as of 'being'."[8] It is not something that already exists, but which is evolving through time. Native identities in Quebec are represented according to these two antagonistic approaches. The historical context plays an important role in the explanation for the first perception of a cultural identity. Indeed, as Frantz Fanon stated in *The Wretched of the Earth*,[9] post-colonial countries tend to launch themselves into the search for a lost heaven, a period of time that existed prior to colonisation. The resurgence of this past serves to rehabilitate them in regard to themselves and in regard to others. This need to bring back past events and historical figures also allows the Natives to avoid being absorbed by the ex-coloniser's culture. Fanon also remarks that Native intellectuals from Africa have created a Negro movement, an African culture and an Arab culture as a result of the coloniser's discourse instead of highlighting the specificities of each national culture. This mode of representation can lead to the alienation of the Native intellectuals by their own people as they tend to base their claims on ancient stories and not on present

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[7] Stuart Hall, "Cultural Identity and Diaspora," in *Identity: A Reader* (London: Routledge, 1995) pp. 51-58.
[8] Ibid., p. 53.
[9] Frantz Fanon, *The Wretched of the Earth* (London: Paladin, 1963).

realities. As mentioned in the previous chapter, there are ten different Amerindian nations in Quebec, each with a different culture and language. Consequently, Native authors can refer to themselves as Native or as Innu or Algonquin...Presenting a universalization of their Indianity could be part of their being influenced by the ex-colonisers seeing them as one sole group. Before the European invasion, each tribe considered itself as a separate entity and did not perceive itself as belonging to the peoples inhabiting the American continent. On the other hand, this perception of themselves as the "Native people of Canada" could also be part of the evolution of their cultural identity. Moreover, the concept of nation also reflects a Western influence in relation to time, space and individuals. As Benedict Anderson pointed out, the circulation of newspapers has led individuals within a society to see themselves as part of a homogenous time and "to achieve solidarities on an essentially imagined basis."[10] In the case of Native communities, I would add the fact that radio and internet have particularly contributed to bringing connections between communities, notably those accessible only by air. Modern technology and globalisation have also created the sense of an even wider community: some of the Native authors have actually described themselves as belonging to the group of the Aboriginal people of the world whose responsibility is to protect the Earth. Thus their relation to their own environment has become more global, as the chapter on Space will reveal.

Another important component in the analysis of their representations is the weight of representations that White people have imposed on them through centuries. Despite recent changes, most of the population of Quebec, Native people included, still have lingering in their minds derogatory clichés about what kind of person an

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[10] Benedict Anderson, *Imagined Communities, Reflections on the Origin and Spread of Nationalism* (London: Verso, 1983), p. 77.

Indian was or is. The authors presented in this study learned at school how cruel their ancestors were and were bombarded by images of Indians as noble savages or bloodthirsty warriors. It is understandable that through writing these authors try to assert their identity, considering their historical evolution, the dramatic changes they went through, and their interpreted identities imposed by the colonisers. They counteract discourses, which have positioned them as the Other. Tzvetan Todorov demonstrates in *The Conquest of America*,[11] how the essence of Alterity corresponds to two different views: considering the other as identical and thus equal, as different and thus unequal.[12] As the birth of this literature took place in a colonial and post-colonial context, the representation of the Other cannot be separated from their assertion of identity. However, the Other in these texts is the coloniser. This amounts to a return of the gaze: instead of being the observed subject, the ex-colonised becomes the observer and the commentator. This process seems to be a necessary passage for regaining a self-assertive identity. The means to repossess a cultural space where the identity exposed corresponds to the author's own criteria can take place through a process of transculturation or hybridity as the ex-coloniser's culture or points of references become integrated and adapted to the Native authors' needs.

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[11] Tzvetan Todorov, *The Conquest of America. The Question of the Other*, trans. by Richard Howard (New York: Harper Perennial, 1984).
[12] Ibid., p. 42.

I. Representation of Themselves

First, it is important to differentiate the modes of narration. Native poems tend to be more personal than their novels or plays. Poetry as a genre enables authors in general to move away from everyday language where the stress is most of the time on efficiency of communication. It is undeniable that the language chosen by Native authors when writing poems can be considered as simplistic. However, the "gestural" characteristics of their texts justify their place in the poetic field: "gesture in language [is] those qualities we employ to signal our meaning strongly by emphasizing particular word sounds, rhythmic sequences or patterns." [13] The ideas evoked such as identity crisis or self-definition, and the structure of the poems as if they were addressed to a particular reader contribute to the perception of the text as a personal statement. However, all the books represent the authors' vision of how Indians were and how they are or should be today. As Stuart Hall pointed out, identity should be thought of as a production and "never complete, always in process, and always constituted within, not outside representation."[14] Through their written texts, Native authors expose their thoughts about their own situation or their nation's situation or another nation's situation, thus allowing an individual voice to emerge, a voice speaking for the collective, or very often a mix of the two.

I.1. Individual and Collective Voices

As mentioned in the first chapter, poems are the most popular form of Native literature from Quebec. This genre gives the author a certain freedom as the narrative

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[13] Jeffrey Wainwright, *Poetry, the Basics* (London: Routledge, 2004), p. 2.
[14] Stuart Hall, "Cultural Identity and Diaspora", p. 51.

can be short and can correspond to a stream of thoughts. Rita Mestokosho discloses her feelings (pain, happiness, sense of loss) through her poetry.[15] In *Eshi uapatam, Nukum*, all her poems are constructed on the same model. They are organised around stanzas of three to five lines with words rhyming every two lines. Each of her poems is juxtaposed with a personal photo. These photos represent either a place or people. There are several photos of herself as a child and of her grandparents. The rest of the photos are of people living in her community. The presence of the photos reinforces the impression of an individual experience. Throughout most of her poems there is a sense of loss, of a quest for her own identity. In her poem entitled 'Ma jeunesse',[16] she expresses her desire for guidance as a child:

> J'ai marché pieds nus sur la neige de mon pays
>
> Sans savoir où mes pieds allaient me guider (...)
>
> J'ai prié le Grand Esprit pour m'éclairer(...)
>
> Je voulais connaître la véritable raison

In 'J'imagine', she says that living in a community (like hers) teaches her her 'véritable identité',[17] and also that living in such a place hides a part of herself. This antagonism reflects the divide present in the Native sense of self. Living in the reservation enables them to live among people having the same culture as them. However, living in a reservation was never part of their culture originally and has been imposed on them. They are not free to do anything they want, they are dependent on the Federal government.

Rita Mestokosho dedicates two of her poems to her grandparents. In 'Numushum' (meaning Grandfather), she describes a dream or a vision of her

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[15] Rita Mestokosho, *Eshi Uapataman Nukum. Comment je perçois la vie, Grand-mère. Recueil de poèmes Montagnais* (Mashteuiatsh: Piekuakami, 1995).
[16] Ibid., p. 27.
[17] Ibid., p. 33.

grandfather where she sees him for the last time and experiences a sense of loss of connection:

> Grand-père, suis-je toujours ta petite fille
>
> Celle qui te suivait dans tes promenades?
>
> Numushum, suis-je toujours ta petite fille
>
> Celle qui t'écoutait chanter dans tes ballades?[18]

Three of her poems describe her grandmother and her feelings towards her. The first one is the portrait of a very brave woman. The firm stability that this portrait engenders contrasts with the insecurity of the others:

> M'apparaissant au loin comme la fleur de la fragilité
>
> Rien ne pouvait ébranler l'esprit de cette femme[19]

Even if it is her own grandmother that she is describing, the texts present a wider representation. This aspect becomes more apparent in 'Nukum, femme de bois',[20] where Rita Mestokosho highlights the major components of her grandmother's life: hard work and children. There is no real specificity about her description of this particular woman, and the use of expressions such as "mille secrets de femmes" or "dernière lignée remplie de richesses" reinforces this feeling of universalization. Eléonore Jiconsaseh Sioui, a Huron-Wendat who published three books of poems, wrote two poems about her mother which convey exactly the same impression. The woman being described seems to be just as hardworking, having looked after numerous children and other people:

> (…)tant soigné de plaies
>
> Accouché tant de femmes
>
> Nourri, lavé, emmailloté tant d'enfants
>
> Tant réconforté, logé de passants

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[18] Rita Mestokosho, p. 21.
[19] Rita Mestokosho, p. 23.
[20] Rita Mestokosho, p. 43.

Tant ramassé de racines, (...)[21]

These poems recount the traditional life of people whose offspring no longer live in the same way. Even if the reader is faced with a single example, their disappearance transforms them into representatives of past members of their own nation and of the core of the nation itself. Jean Sioui, another Huron-Wendat, confirms this in one of his very short poems:

A grand-mère, je dis:

Je te revois tranquille sirotant ta tisane

Tes yeux profonds, visage de mon peuple (...)[22]

Past people, past events are recurrent themes in Native literature, they play an important part in the building of their contemporary identities. The past will be dealt with in the following chapter as its presence in the narrative also serves other purposes.

In the writing of Rita Mestokosho, Eléonore Sioui and Jean Sioui, the presence of an individual voice is sometimes supplanted by a voice representing the collective. They write about their nation, and often set their poems as a dialogue. This dialogue sometimes takes place between the author and the colonisers, and thus the author assumes the role of spokesperson for his/her nation; or it takes place between the author and the other members of his nation. In the former dialogue, the author usually accuses White people of having destroyed their environment and sense of well-being. In the latter, the authors use their medium to give hope and make their nation feel proud of themselves. In 'Innu', Rita Mestokosho dialogues with her nation. It is not a didactic dialogue, but rather gives the impression that she aims at re-establishing a broken down communication. Rita Mestokosho thus contributes to the creation of an imagined community as she defines the origin of her nation's troubled sense of

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[21] Elćonore Jiconsaseh Sioui, *Corps à coeur éperdu* (Val-d'Or: D'ici et d'ailleurs, 1992), p. 22.
[22] Jean Sioui, *Le Pas de lIndien, pensées wendates* (Qućbec: Le Loup de Gouttière, 1997), p. 38.

identity as well as possible solutions. However, the idea of an authentic Native identity is never mentioned or questioned. By writing and expressing themselves, Native authors try to define who they are now, moving away from past representations made by non-Native people. Rita Mestokosho senses the Innus' regrets about the past and asks them to have some faith in themselves again and to help her find it too:

Imprégné jusque dans ta chair

Par cet (sic) odeur unique des bois

Tu vis seul dans tes pensées

Mais par ta façon d'être et d'agir

Je sens que tu regrettes ta façon de vivre

Dois-je rallumer le feu sacré?

Mais toi rallume mon Coeur

Pour que mon esprit se porte mieux

Ce feu doit réchauffer tous ceux qui vivent encore[23]

The use of "tu" renders the message more direct and brings the author closer to her interlocutor. In the last paragraph, Rita Mestokosho finally states the Innu's major role in life: to protect the Earth. Their role as protectors of nature keeps appearing in all Native writings. It is partly due to their belief in leading a life in harmony with nature, but also to the influence of past clichés. Their role towards Nature will be discussed in more depth in Chapter Four. Eléonore Sioui also wrote several poems addressing herself to the colonisers. In these poems, her voice gives the impression that she becomes, through her poetry, the spokeswoman for her nation or even sometimes of Native people as a whole. In 'Fraternité', she retells the arrival of the Europeans and how they were well received by her ancestors:

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[23] Rita Mestokosho, p. 11.

Du pays des Wyandots

Il y a des milliers d'années

Notre peuple[24]

Traça des portages (…)

Se rendant de poste de traite

En poste de traite

Pour **vous** offrir [25]

Venant de pays inconnus

Nos[26] richesses et pelleteries (…)[27]

In this poem, her position is one of belonging to the Wendats, who were called Hurons by the French. The title presents one side of the situation and could be perceived as ironic. According to her poem, brotherhood was only part of Indian behaviour. Towards the end of the poem, she finally establishes a link between what happened to her people and her situation: "Mon destin se disloqua." In 'New World', an English poem, she writes about a vision she had. Eléonore Sioui addresses herself to White people again as a collective voice even if it is her vision. The beginning of the poem is set on the opposition between us (the Native) and you (the White people). The past is brought back, but the accent is on her "Brothers" and "Sisters" who tend to live like White people and cannot find happiness. In her vision, she saw a New World where everyone was living in harmony, notably because White people had followed Native paths. Throughout most of the poems, like those of Rita Mestokosho, there is a sense of loss and a need for recognition. Eléonore Sioui's vision is a message of hope inciting her people to look to the future. Several of her poems define the qualities of the people of her nation or of all the Native people of America. In 'Don', she praises the "Grand Esprit" for having given them so many abilities:

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[24] My emphasis.
[25] My emphasis.
[26] My emphasis.
[27] Eléonore Sioui, *Corps à coeur éperdu*, p. 14.

Louange au Grand Esprit

Pour ses dons

Dont il a comblé ses Enfants Rouges

Dons de force, de clairvoyance, de sincérité

De communication, d'interaction, de persistance

De connaissance, de douceur, d'amour

De foi en nous-mêmes, d'unité

Qui rassemblent tous nos peuples

Racines de notre continent.[28]

In this poem, the author considers all the Native people of America and describes them as one unit. Eléonore Sioui is not the only author using the expression "Enfants Rouges" or "Race rouge." It occurs in the whole of Native literature from Quebec. By using an expression created by the coloniser, these authors proceed to a repossession of a part of their identity, which had been taken from them. The meaning of the expression is no longer perceived as derogatory. It is true that the expression is slightly changed: they do not refer to themselves as "peaux rouges." They kept the original meaning, but made it their own. Jean Sioui's poems also give voice to his nation, the Huron-Wendats. In his book of poems,[29] there are eleven texts. Most of the poems are based on a binary construction in which past events are paralleled with present ones. His book can be considered as a guide for Native philosophical thinking. The title "pensées wendates" is self-explicit. There are only two poems in the whole book that can be considered as personal: one about his father and one about his aunt Lucia. His poems are not based on rhyming verses. They are very often only composed of four lines in which the same words are reused in order to accentuate the parallel between past and present situations. They could be considered as proverbs.

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[28] Eléonore Sioui, *Corps à coeur éperdu*, p. 27.
[29] Jean Sioui, *Le Pas de l'Indien. Pensées Wendates* (Québec: Le Loup de Gouttière, 1997).

Once again the importance of the message is dominant. As these poems are Wendat thoughts, they indicate how a Wendat leads his life or should live his life. As for the other authors, these pieces of writing show the strong desire to assert their identity and find faith in themselves. In the introduction, Jean Sioui explains why he wrote this book:

> Ces pensées s'adressent au Wendat qui désire remonter le sentier de ses origines afin qu'il puisse aujourd'hui encore témoigner de la fierté d'appartenir à un si grand peuple.[30]

He also adds that it can be appreciated by people who would like to live in harmony. The advice given by his poems is the same as that found in the work of other authors: namely that Native people should be proud of their origin, be patient and find their answers by looking around them, in nature:

> Arrête-toi un moment
>
> Écoute les bruits de la forêt
>
> Regarde la hauteur des arbres
>
> Respire l'odeur du bois
>
> Touche la fraîcheur du sol
>
> Et repars
>
> Enivré de vie[31]

Jean Sioui only mentions once another nation - the Atikamekw - for historical reasons. He is the spokesman of his nation alone, whereas in a few of her poems, Eléonore Sioui evokes the sufferings and injustice that other nations are undergoing or have undergone, such as Black people, Jewish people or people from Haiti and Hawaii. She thus sees herself and Native people as being part of a more global group of unfairly treated people. In 'Blanc sur Noir', she calls Black people "**mes frères** muselés"[32] which gives the impression of an understanding between people from

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[30] Jean Sioui, p. 2.
[31] Ibid., p. 50.
[32] Eléonore Sioui, p. 110.

different origins due to a shared sense of suffering. The evocation of other nations' unhappiness also shows Eléonore Sioui's universalising tendencies, and highlights her perceptions of Native people as representatives of Peace and harmony. Through her poetry, she gives a voice to her nation and also to a more collective representation of the Indigenous people of America. The presence of such a discourse brings to the fore the notion that the indigenous peoples' traditional mode of thinking is the model to follow in order to find peace and happiness. This conception bears similarities to Rousseau and Lévi-Strauss's perception of traditional societies as a "pure, original form of life."[33] They both also thought that the study of these societies could give a better understanding of mankind. Consequently, one may wonder if the portrayal of Native people as innocent giving people has not been influenced by previous non-Native representations. On the other hand, some of the poems have a more personal theme such as the birth of one of her sons. As it seems to be a more feminine approach, I will discuss it in the next paragraph on Gender.

Yvon H. Couture, a Franco-Algonquin poet, writes poems and short texts which have a more personal tone than the other authors. He uses the first person extensively to narrate his feelings and his thoughts to the reader. His main theme is the denunciation of "progress" and the environmental problems caused by it. He also criticises the behavioural changes in people since the industrial revolution. Several of his poems resemble religious canticles. If his style seems to represent an individual experience, the subjects of his poems reflect the same desires and cultural aspects as other writers. The finding of comfort in nature is a recurrent theme in Native literature:

A chaque fois

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[33] Robert Deliège, *Lévi-Strauss Today, An Introduction to Structural Anthropology* (Oxford and New York: Berg publishers, 2004), p.19.

Que j'ai été

Triste, déprimé

Ce sont les Arbres

Qui m'ont consolé...[34]

Native identity for Quebec authors is closely entwined with Nature itself. This is due to their beliefs in living in harmony with it. Nature is considered as a Mother, and they can find comfort in her.[35]

By reading Native written texts, one can perceive recurrent aspects in their narratives which create a specific literary ensemble. However, the collective voice which seems to dominate their work is at times disrupted by different perspectives. For instance, male and female writers do not just highlight similar matter; because they lead different lives, they consequently have different perceptions of their identities. Julia Kristeva suggests in an article entitled "Women's Time"[36] that women have a conception of time which differs from the male perspective of it. According to her, women have a perception of time which is cyclical and monumental (eternal). These two notions correspond to the Native traditional idea of time which is linked to the cycles of seasons and reproduction. However, this is true for both men and women. The perception of time as a linear progression has been influenced by non-Native societies. As will be shown in the next chapter, the representation of time in Native literature can be divided along these two lines (cyclicality and linearity), reflecting either a need for recognition or an attempt to be reconnected to past traditions.

A serious social problem also exists in each of the Native societies: there is a pronounced gap between the different generations, as their way of living has changed

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[34] Yvon H.Couture, p. 27.
[35] This will be developed in Chapter Five.
[36] *The Kristeva Reader*, edited by Toril Moi (Oxford: Blackwell Publishers, 1986), pp. 187-213.

so dramatically in fifty years. This reinforces the point that there cannot be one single voice representing the Native identity in Quebec.

I. 2. Gender

As in many societies, men and women are expected to assume different roles. This is even more obvious in traditionally based societies. Changing roles is not easily accepted. Before the Europeans' arrival, women in all the different nations were in charge of the household and of all the work linked to it. Men had to go hunting or fishing and defend their territory and family. As shown in the previous chapter, women's role in politics varied despite the similarities in terms of task divisions between the two genders.[37] In fact, the activities undertaken in each person's life were gender based. Nowadays in Canada, men and women seem to have more freedom in the way they want to lead their lives. For Native people however, the changes that happened in their societies have disrupted the way the families were used to interacting. Women can still work at home and look after their children, but men cannot just go hunting, and find it hard to obtain a rewarding job. As a consequence there are many problems with domestic violence and alcoholism. Native men have probably more difficulties defining their role in society and gaining a sense of who they are. Resorting to violence and alcoholism helps them temporarily to evacuate their dissatisfactions. The situations vary depending on the location of the community.

In Native literature from Quebec, slight differences exist between female and male writing. Female writers, like male writers, do not only describe their belonging to a nation or to the group of the Native people, but they also write about the

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[37] For example, the Huron-Wendat society was matriarchal and thus placed women in charge of the important decisions concerning the nation.

specificities of their own gender. Eléonore Sioui wrote two poems about her mother and Rita Mestokosho two about her grandmother. The poems define these women in terms of the hard work they had to do and their roles as mothers and carers, but in a sense no specificities concerning their tastes or what made them unique as people is revealed. In Eléonore Sioui's poetry, women are represented as the bearers of hope. This symbolic perception of the female sex is not a Native specificity, this image can be found in many other literatures worldwide. Women are the carriers of future generations and thus, of possible future change. However, the perception also owes something to the fact that women perform much of the transmission of tradition in Native society. 'Femme en vert',[38] is a very short poem by Eléonore Sioui in which she briefly associates women with hope and new beginning:

Le vert du printemps

De l'amour, de la joie

De la mer

Des feuilles

Des montagnes

Qui transportent vers la croissance

De l'espérance.

In 'Woman of wendake',[39] she talks about her own role in the community, as she is a shaman in Wendake where she uses plants and traditional psychology to help her own people. She defines herself as a member of her community. The role she assumes corresponds to the type of description she made of her mother. In another poem, 'Vision of the Realization of the Tecumseh Spiritual Center'[40] she explains the vision she had of her Centre and how it is going to bring harmony and joy for her people. However, through other poems, she describes her joy as a mother and by mentioning

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[38] Eléonore Sioui, p. 41.
[39] Ibid., p. 42.
[40] Ibid., p. 62.

the names of her children, the poems appear to be more intimate: 'Bienvenue, George, Barbara',[41] 'Mon premier fils',[42] or 'A ma fille.'[43]

Love is also another recurrent subject in the female voice. In their writing, love can be directed to everyone as a form of harmony, but it can also be their own desire to be loved by a man. Eléonore Sioui's love poems denote a sensation of absence. There is always the mention of a man leaving. In one of her Spanish poems with no title, she says:

> Ese manana
>
> Se que se va
>
> Y me corazon
>
> Se muere[44]

She knows he is going to leave in the morning. Even in 'Assieds-toi près de moi',[45] which seems to be more positive as she is obviously still with the person, the moment she is describing portrays her missing him in bed, alone, as he works at night. The feeling of love is most of the time associated with peace and also with religion. Rita Mestokosho wrote a poem which is based on the love/hate opposition:

> (...)Lorsque la haine piétine ton esprit
>
> Avec les rythmes de ton Coeur meurtri
>
> N'oublie pas que la haine est ton ennemi
>
> N'oublie pas que l'amour est ton ami. (...)[46]

The extremely simplistic and unexceptional appearance of these lines is not incompatible with the idea of minor literature. Even if there are some comparisons and metaphors in the Native texts, they are so basic that the language still appears elementary. These authors from Quebec give the impression that they are simply

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[41] Ibid., p. 84.
[42] Ibid., p. 115.
[43] Ibid., p. 129.
[44] Ibid., p. 73.
[45] Ibid., p. 133.
[46] Rita Mestokosho, p. 35.

using written words to express their thoughts and feelings on paper with no particular literary intention. The result of this process brings out a certain intensity and a purity of effect which supports their truth claim project.[47] The first Native woman to have been published on a large scale in Quebec is An Antane Kapesh, an Innue. She had her autobiography published in 1976.[48] Although the text in French has been translated from the Montagnais, the structure and the content of the book make it very different from the traditional white autobiography. The narrative does not start with her birth and it does not follow a chronological order. As Diane Boudreau[49] explains, the narrative would still be understandable if the chapters were in a different order. Each chapter corresponds to a discrete episode and serves to demonstrate the unfairness of the Native situation. She is voicing her nation and there are no personal or gender aspects that are revealed without the effect of encapsulating her nation and supporting her act of denunciation. This text is different from any of the other writers as the style is aggressive and political in the extreme:

> Le Blanc ne nous a jamais dit: 'vous les Indiens, êtes-vous d'accord que je construise des barrages sur vos rivières et que je pollue vos rivières et vos lacs? [50]

This book shocked the Québécois who read it and Native authors subsequently found it hard to be published.

Most male writers describe or define the identity of Native women by way of representing them using traditional images of mothers or devoted wives, with all the respect considered due to these major roles in their societies. Yvon H. Couture, like Eléonore Sioui, represents hope for future generation in the form of a female person:

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[47] Further development of this aspect in Chapter Five on Language.
[48] An Antane Kapesh, *Je suis une maudite sauvagesse* (Ottawa: Leméac, 1976).
[49] Diane Boudreau, *Histoire de la littérature Amérindienne au Québec: oralité et écriture* (Montréal: Hexagone, 1993).
[50] An Antane Kapesh, *Je suis une maudite sauvagesse* (Ottawa: Leméac, 1976), p. 11.

Ikwésis, meaning "little girl" in Algonquin. The poem, 'Ikwésis',[51] is set as a dialogue between the poet and this little girl who represents the children of his nation. He wants to help her to be happy and he says that he will fight for her as she is "l'espoir de l'humanité." Couture does not mention women much. He wrote a poem about a dream he had about a female friend in which he tells the reader that he is not sure if she is dead or alive.[52] In another one, 'une femme rouge',[53] he describes the brief apparition at the window of a disreputable café of a Native woman. Even if at the end of the poem her eyes are described as jewels, the representation of this woman is not that of a strong free and positive person. Yvon H. Couture is more interested in describing the beauty of Nature than the portrayal of women. Jean Sioui's thoughts are based on the memory of his people as a whole. With the rare exceptions of his grandmother and his aunt, the ancestors' experiences he highlights are male ones. His poems or rules of conduct are inspired from observations of nature and attitudes towards nature. Thus the people for whom the readings of nature were important were the hunters and consequently, male. Bernard Assiniwi described and defined women from different nations and different eras. *Ikwé, la femme algonquienne*, is a collection of short stories in which he shows the many facets of the Algonquian woman through the centuries. In the preface, Assiniwi explains to the reader that his aim is to give a different vision of Native women than those that had so far been given:

> On a dit que la femme autochtone était une espèce d'esclave des tâches quotidiennes. On a dit qu'elle était sexuellement libre. On a dit qu'elle n'était qu'un objet de plaisir puisque, souvent, les hommes pouvaient avoir plusieurs épouses.[54]

The first five stories take place before the European conquest and at the beginning of it. The next three are set in modern times. Apart from the last two stories, the main

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[51] Yvon H. Couture, *Aki Têwêgan, le tambour de la terre*, pp. 81-86.
[52] Ibid., p. 72.
[53] Yvon H. Couture, *Natura*, p. 26.
[54] Bernard Assiniwi, *Ikwé, la femme algonquienne*, p. 11.

female character is always called Ikwé. She represents all the Algonkian women. In the first story, Ikwé realises that she is important and makes Anish-Nah-bé (the man) accept it. In the second story she discovers what an important role she has as a mother. The third one highlights the difficulties and the strengths these women had when they were giving birth on the way to another camp. The fourth one shows that Ikwé can do the same things as men and still be a woman. In this story, Ikwé is a gifted warrior, even better than the men of her nation. At first, it is difficult for her to find a man as they are scared of her being stronger than them, but finally she does. The next story exposes the possibility of making the tradition flexible concerning the choice of a husband for girls. In the fifth story, Ikwé is faced with sterility and is given a child by a young aunt. This is to illustrate another tradition stating that children are not owned by anyone:

> Un enfant n'est pas une propriété individuelle, mais une richesse collective. Notre seule responsabilité est de le rendre à sa grosseur en le rendant autonome.[55]

The last two stories show the alienation of some Native women because of the government interference in Native societies. As mentioned in Chapter One, in the Indian Act of 1876, it was said that Native women who married a non-Native would lose their Indian status and so would their children. On the other hand, if a non-Native woman married a Native, she would be considered as Indian and her children too. Because of this law, many women lost their status and became excluded from their reservations. The law changed in 1985 and all of a sudden many women and children were considered Indian again. After being registered, they were given a council number and it was the council who had to decide if they had the right to live on the reservation. The councils had two years to decide. Thus even if Native women were registered again as Indian, it did not guarantee acceptance by their community. The

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[55] Bernrad Assiniwi, *Ikwé, la femme algonquienne*, p. 80.

councils could not agree to take all these new families into the community as the land was already overpopulated. Thanks to his two stories, Bernard Assiniwi calls attention to the absurdity and the sadness of the situations created by this law. For instance, in the last story, the main character, Sabrina, is preparing herself to go back with her white husband and her children to the reservation where she grew up. Unfortunately, despite the fact that she has taught her children the language and also cultural aspects of the community, she has to go back to town with her family. She cannot have access to her parents' house and her husband cannot find a job because of his skin colour. The beautiful dream presented at the beginning ends up being shattered. The assertion of their identity leads them to portray positive aspects of their cultures, the negative ones being caused by non-Native decisions or interventions in their way of living. This type of narrative also emphasizes the fact that Native identity has evolved and is being reconstructed on an individual and collective basis.

Bernard Assiniwi also touches briefly on the problem of domestic violence in the short story about the child who is given to a sterile woman. The mother giving away her child does so not only because she already has two children (one of them being handicapped) but more importantly because her husband is beating her. Two other authors denounce this modern plague among Native communities: Yves Sioui Durand and Christine Sioui Wawanoloath (b.1952). Yves Sioui Durand writes plays exclusively, and they are all based on traditional stories. However, in two of his plays he uses the past as a way of curing the bad behaviour of some of the present Native people.[56] In *Atiskenandahate, Le voyage au pays des morts*, the Moon (the wife) is having an argument with the Sun (the husband) because she does not want to go drinking with him in town. She complains about his drinking and his beating her

[56] For further analysis, see the next chapter Memory/Past.

sometimes. Through an old legend, Sioui Durand exposes the problem of alcoholism and domestic violence. The Sun has to go to the Land of the Dead to purify himself and he has to fight against a crow, an incarnation of evil. He wins and has to face other evils, but he finally gets reunited with the Moon at the end. He seems to be exhorting his people that by believing in themselves and finding strength in their tradition, they will overcome their social problems. Christine Sioui Wawanoloath wrote a story in a brochure entitled *Dépasser la violence/Beyond Violence*[57] in which she explains the origin of domestic violence. This narrative was aimed at Native readers in order to make them change their behaviour. It is written as a tale and could be told as an oral story. The style is very simplistic and allegorical. She starts with the creation of the world and, instead of having humans, birds of different colours (green, yellow and blue) represent the different races of humans. All the birds knew how to fly, but the yellow birds representing white people forget how to as they are too wrapped up in making profit. After the invasion of the country of the green birds (the Native people) and their domination, the equality between female and male birds changes. The male green birds, being unhappy about their situation, start taking black grains brought by the yellow birds. These grains make them euphoric and aggressive towards the female green birds:

> Quand elles essayaient de raisonner avec les oiseaux mâles à propos de leur comportement, ils se moquaient d'elles. Les mâles rappelaient à leurs compagnes qu'elles n'avaient rien à dire et qu'elles devaient se contenter de pondre et de faire le nid.[58]

This story serves to emphasize the fact that domestic violence is not part of Native culture. The loss of the ability to fly by the green birds represents their lack of freedom and the fact that this change of behaviour is unnatural. The aim of this story

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[57] Sioui Wawanoloath, Christine, 'La Légende des oiseaux qui ne savaient plus voler,' in *Dépasser la violence*, ed. by Christine Sioui Wawanoloath and Clotilde Pelletier (Montréal: Femmes autochtones du Québec, 1995), pp. 9-37.
[58] Ibid., p. 16.

is to be clear and direct to reach Native women and men by its simple message. This method is close to oral tradition in its fable-like execution, using animals to expose a problem faced by the nation. This legend serves to introduce the subject of violence and the questions and solutions mentioned by the book. Its creation comes from a female initiative by Quebec Native Women, an organisation whose aim is to help Native women from Quebec to fight for their rights.

In *La Saga des Béothuks,* the narrative is spread from the year 1000 to 1869, giving Bernard Assiniwi the opportunity to write a temporal series of male and female portraits. Each gender has a set of roles to fulfil due to tradition. Men are hunters and food providers, and the women do all the tasks linked to the household (cooking, sewing, cleaning, looking after the children and the fire). All the main female characters are portrayed as strong women. There are some similarities between the female characters depicted in *Ikwé, la femme algonquienne* and the women in this book. For instance, there is a strong woman, Iwish, who behaves like men and even becomes the first chief of the Beothuks. However, after getting everything right for many years, she finally makes a mistake and is rejected by everyone. She thus finishes her life on her own, being fed by the members of her nation.[59] Similarly, the story of Ooish, another character in *La Saga des Béothuks*, slightly resembles the woman from Assiniwi's short story, 'L'insoumise.' [60] Ooish comes back to her nation with a foreigner, Wobee (a former white sailor) and presents him to her father, Camtac. They are already married, which is contrary to the tradition. The last two storytellers, Wonasktaé and Shanawditith, become in turn the memory of their nation, originally a male role. As there are fewer and fewer survivors, the roles change. Throughout the narrative, the author tends to change the clichés imposed on the Native in general, and

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[59] Bernard Assiniwi, *La Saga des Béothuks*, pp. 213-252.
[60] Bernard Assiniwi, *Ikwé, la femme algonquienne*, pp. 61-72.

on native women in particular. Bernard Assiniwi also explains why sometimes men had several wives and how homosexuality was present and was accepted. When the population was lacking men, women had to share a husband so that the population would grow and also in order to live in harmony. When women did not outnumber the men, a man could be with just one woman. In the narrative, lesbianism happens when several wives stay without their husband for a long period of time, when he is gone hunting. One of them definitely seems to prefer women whereas the others appear simply sexually frustrated. Camtac, a Beothuk chief, explains that it also happens between men when they go hunting or fishing for a long period of time, and that both situations are accepted as long as it does not prevent the population from growing. [61] This is the only time that homosexuality is mentioned in Native Quebec literature so far. Homosexuality is not well perceived in all the communities, and most Native homosexuals move out to live in town if they have the opportunity. This rejection of homosexuality seems to come from the legacy of Catholic teaching as there is no mention of disapproval of it in Native tradition.

Men and women have traditionally different roles which define them inside their community. Even if Native societies have changed, the references in their present literature to the past let the same divisions between the two genders appear. However, difference does not mean inequality as in Todorov's statement mentioned at the beginning of this chapter. The idea of oneness in Native literature is rather complex. The individual voice can easily become a collective one. A female writer can represent her nation (An Antane Kapesh) or she can speak out for Native women (Christine Sioui Wawanoloath). However, the idea of oneness as "the Native people

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[61] Bernard Assiniwi, *La Saga des Béothuks*, p. 305.

of Quebec" does not exist, as male and female identity is not one single unit, and the gap between generations internally divides the communities.

I.3. Gap between Generations

As mentioned in the first chapter, the changes that took place in Native societies throughout the centuries happened fast and were most of the time against the Natives' will. Elderly people were important in traditional societies as they were thought as the memory of the people. They were considered as wise and their advice precious. The present generation of young people have difficulty connecting with the old people's stories as they seem to be part of another world. Rita Mestokosho illustrates this distance in 'Pourquoi Nukum?', a poem addressed to her grandmother:

Pourtant quand j'étais petite
Tu me racontais des histoires;
Maintenant j'ai grandi,
J'ignore en qui je dois croire.

Car tu vis tellement éloignée
Avec tes rêves, tes souvenirs,
Que je n'arrive pas à te parler;
Que je n'arrive pas à te saisir.[62]

Rita Mestokosho likes her grandmother, as she shows in another poem praising her, but she has difficulties reaching her. Christine Sioui Wawanoloath also describes this in her legend about the birds who can no longer fly. There is a passage in which the younger birds reproach the older ones for not having fought more, and blame them for

[62] Rita Mestokosho, p. 47.

the present situation and do not want to listen to them anymore.[63] The best example of a clash between generations is the play by Bernard Assiniwi, *Il n'y a plus d'indiens.*[64] The play is organised around two parts and sixteen scenes and is a classical drama with a climax and resolution. There are eleven characters. It takes place in a Native community in the North of Quebec. Six of the characters are part of the band council, five of whom are aged between 40 and 63 years old, the remaining member being aged 25. From the first scene a tension exists between Fred Pezindawatch, the chief and the oldest, and Paul Wagush, the youngest member. One of the members, Sonny Cris, is late for council meeting and Paul Wagush wants to start without him. Fred Pezindawatch insists on the fact that all the members must be there before the meeting starts. When Paul Wagush suggests voting in order to settle the decision, Fred Pezindawatch explains that according to the tradition, every member of the council must agree for anything to be decided. Paul Wagush wants the council to accept Canadian law based on the vote of the majority. Meanwhile another discussion between Tommy, Fred's son, and Sonny Cris, shows the reader or spectator that Paul Wagush is not the only young person to disagree with the previous generation:

> Les temps changent. Le monde sera plus jamais pareil! Il va falloir que vous compreniez ça vous autres. Ils veulent travailler en ville, faire de l'argent.[65]

This play is based on the attitudes of the different characters towards a prospecting company who manage to buy the subsoil of the reservation thanks to Paul Wagush's betrayal. Without telling any of the members of the council, he signs an authorisation letting the Gold Prospecting company investigate the subsoil of the reservation, in exchange for a significant sum of money. In scene five, everything is revealed by

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[63] Sioui Wawanoloath, Christine, 'La Légende des oiseaux qui ne savaient plus voler,' in *Dépasser la violence*, ed. by Christine Sioui Wawanoloath and Clotilde Pelletier (Montréal: Femmes autochtones du Québec, 1995), p. 22.
[64] Bernard Assiniwi, *Il n'y a plus d'indiens* (Montréal: Leméac, 1983).
[65] Ibid., p. 12.

Marie-Rose Canot who has found out about it by coincidence. Paul Wagush's excuse is that the subsoil does not belong legally to the reservation. However, Marie-Rose Canot protests by saying that it is not written that they do not own it either. There is a dramatic tension in the story as Fred Pezindawatch is opposed by his son. Fred Pezindawatch wants to block access to the reservation because he thinks it is illegal to have non-Native people exploiting their soil. Fred's son, Tommy, and Paul Wagush think that the mine will create job opportunities for the members of the community. Fred Pezindawatch decides, with the support of three others - Sonny Cris, Zénon Petawabano and Normand Kistabish - to ask every single person in the community if they support him in his decision. Everyone seems to be on his side apart from Paul Wagush's relatives and Tommy and his wife. Fred wants to block the road and is keen that there is press coverage. At the end of scene four, Bernard Assiniwi already has Fred say that there will not be any Indian after their generation if the community does not support him in his efforts to prevent white people from taking advantage:

> Si les nôtres ne sont pas derrière nous c'est la fin de tout. Il n'y aura plus d'indiens après nous, il y aura des gens avec du sang indien dans les veines c'est tout.[66]

This remark brings into question the notion of authenticity and truth. Who is a "real" Indian? Is it not possible to adapt to modern – and consequently non-Native – ways of life and still be Indian? The self would thus be seen as a fixed entity, and in the whole corpus, this is the only occurrence of such a view. Assiniwi seems to imply that if Native people do not fight for their rights and defend their territories, then only the bloodline will determine their indianness. However, the rest of the play does show eventually that Native identity is better represented as evolving and fragmented, a process of becoming. The notion of authenticity can be quite problematic in a Native context. Indeed, the idea of a fixed identity carries too much negative baggage,

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[66] Bernard Assiniwi, *Il n'y a plus d'indiens*, p. 25.

notably the non-Native vision of the disappearing Indian. Therefore, authenticity is not used in the same way as "nation" by Native groups. The perception of identity tends to be more fluid generally as the notion of "true Indian" is avoided. In *La Saga des Béothuks*, Assiniwi seems to suggest that Native people (the Beothuks more particularly in that case) may be truer human beings than Whites. He widens the representation of the Beothuks as he qualifies them as true men who will always exist. There will always be a type of person who is keen on learning and transmitting their own knowledge. The last few sentences of the novel express this clearly:

> Je savais que les Béothuks vivraient toujours, car il y aura toujours des vrais hommes, même s'ils n'ont pas la peau rouge.[67]

Once the police arrive with Paul Wagush at the barricades, there are not many people to support the movement after all. Even at the last minute, Basil (another older man) betrays Marie-Rose Canot and Fred Pezindawatch as he tells them too late that the police are arriving. Assiniwi did not create this play to blame the younger generation for letting down the older one. Fred does not blame the people of his community for changing their mind, though he is angry with his son's behaviour as it is a personal affront:

> Les Indiens sont des gens comme les autres mais qui ont perdu la fierté d'être Indiens, ce qui fait d'eux des habitants comme tous les autres de ce pays-ci. Pas pires, mais pas meilleurs non plus. [68]

This attitude was also communicated to me by the director of the Native Friendship Centre near Quebec, when I asked him why Native people were not more united in fighting for their rights. I was told that you do not expect two villages to get on just because they are French or Québécois. Thus to expect people from different cultures

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[67] Bernard Assiniwi, *La Saga des Béothuks*, p. 499.
[68] Bernard Assiniwi, *Il n'y a plus d'indiens*, p. 50.

to be united is a mistake: thinking of Native people as one sole group is a White invention.

Fred and Marie-Rose are arrested by the federal police as they lie on the road to prevent Paul Wagush and Tommy entering the reservation with their truck. Paul Wagush asks the mounted police to intervene, which is another betrayal. The second part starts with Vera Pezindawatch talking to her son, Tommy. This scene also illustrates another gap between the previous generation and the new one. Tommy explains to his mother that he has had financial problems and that he did not have a choice to take Paul Wagush's offer, as he is unemployed with two children. His mother tells him that they could have helped them as they have lots of game in the freezer. Tommy retorts that he is too proud for that and especially that nowadays being fed is not the only prerequisite:

> Autrefois, seule la subsistence alimentaire comptait, mais aujourd'hui c'est plus pareil. On ne vit plus uniquement de nourriture Tanis, on a besoin de savoir qu'on est bon à quelque chose dans la vie.[69]

Further on Tommy explains to his mother that each time he talked to his father about something that interested him, his father would always go against him, quoting the tradition. Fred Pezindawatch finally gets out of jail as no one presses charges. However, Fred seems to have changed and he wants to quit the council as he feels that he cannot represent his community anymore. He thinks that he has nothing left to give to his community, that older people's experience is not valued anymore. Once again he repeats that there will not be any true Indians after them, the older men of the council. He suggests that Marie-Rose Canot should become chief and indeed she gets chosen in a traditional election. As Paul Wagush asked the Indian Affairs Ministry to impose a White mode of election, he finally gets elected and Marie-Rose Canot

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[69] Bernard Assiniwi, *Il n'y a plus d'indiens*, p. 60.

cannot be the chief any more. Besides, he gets elected by default because no one actually votes, and because he is the only candidate. This last act portrays how absurd the White system appears in the eyes of Native people. In scene fourteen, Sonny Cris' comments also point out that it is the end of an era:

> Qu'est-ce qu'on va devenir Fred? Que seront nos enfants dans dix, vingt ans? Se rappelleront-ils qu'ils ont déjà appartenu à une race qui a toujours vécu en accord avec la nature jusqu'à ce qu'on modifie son mode de vie?[70]

In the last scene, on New Year's Day, Fred kills himself while hunting. Violette and Tommy (Fred's children), Sonny and Normand are at the Pezindawatch's house, with Vera sitting at a table. As Fred delivers his last speech, he addresses himself to Vera, asking for forgiveness. The Fred who dies is not the one she knew. He dies because he does not believe in this changed world anymore. He dies following the tradition:

> La tradition disait: " Quand tu ne crois plus être utile à tes gens, ne les encombre pas. Fume une bonne pipe et dors bien."[71]

This play is a social drama and the narrative is structured chronologically. The conflicts between the different generations inside a community are clearly exposed. Bernard Assiniwi does not present any of his characters in a negative way apart from Paul Wagush. Fred's comments throughout the play are not too judgmental, except towards his son because he feels betrayed as a father. Through the play, Bernard Assiniwi shows the inevitable changes that happen in Native societies and the clashes they provoke. This play questions Native identity: is following the tradition necessary to be a "real" Indian? Fred's suicide at the end of the play should not be understood as an act of abandonment. His body has been frozen in the icy river water and will reappear in spring. He decides to die as he is of no use for his community. He followed the tradition. In his speech, he also states that what is important is to believe

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[70] Bernard Assiniwi, *Il n'y a plus d'indiens*, p. 79.
[71] Ibid., p. 93.

in what you are doing. This last thought and Fred's absence of bitterness give the impression that what is happening is not completely negative for the community. The play may seem tragic from a non-native point of view, but by reading it closely and understanding the ending, one can perceive it as part of life and Native culture. The play may also be compared to *Ashini*[72] by Yves Thériault. This short novel published in 1960 also ends with the suicide of the main character, in this case Ashini, its Montagnais narrator. His final statement is far from being positive as he finally realises how useless his suicide was and how powerless his people are. There are several aspects in *Ashini*'s story that do not correspond to Native writing. Ashini does not seem to care about his wife's death or his sons', nor does he care about the fact that he is not seeing his daughter any more:

> Tout s'estompe déjà. La fille à peine en allée je n'arrivais pas à me souvenir d'elle. (...)Mes fils sont entrés dans ce brouillard où je ne sais rien reconnaître.[73]

There is no emotion in his mentioning them. There is strong criticism of Natives living in reservations; this has been avoided by Native authors perhaps because there are enough voices of dissent. Even if there exists a tension between communities, Native people generally do not want to show this aspect to the non-Native, and consequently to the reader. There is no description of nature in which the narrator is in communion with Mother nature. The reader is shown how Ashini knows well how to take advantage of his surroundings, and how to read it, but he has no feeling of belonging to or being in tune with his natural environment. Even if the narrator keeps repeating that he is proud of being an Indian, few descriptions of his previous life show pride in what he used to be:

> Et il m'est arrivé ce qui arrive à tous ceux de mon genre. J'ai tiré ma vie de la forêt, j'y ai pris femme et enfanté des petits et nous avons erré à la suite des migrations des bêtes, à la suite des

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[72] Yves Thériault, *Ashini* (Montréal: Fides, 1980).
[73] Ibid., p. 7.

> crus saisonnières, au gré des vents, de la neige et du soleil, pour atteindre finalement le terme dévolu à chacun de nous.[74]

This description reuses the clichés already ingrained in non-Native minds. Native people are compared to animals: wandering like animals, following the seasons, reproducing. They do not seem to have any aim in their lives or to think. When Bernard Assiniwi criticises certain aspects of life in the Native community, he does not do it in a harsh way. He gives the reasons for the misbehaviour of some members. In *Ashini*, the author gives the impression that Native people are cowards and lazy people. *Ashini* represents the non-Native idea of an Indian. They are bound to disappear. The real Indian, independent and using his senses to hunt and feed, is dead. They live in reservations receiving money from the government and have lost their culture. Native writers want to change these clichés. The tragedy described in *Ashini* represents a romantic vision of the disappearing true Indian. In Thériault's novel, the portrayal of Ashini corresponds to a fixed identity where the notion of authenticity is at the heart of the process of identity definition. There exists a real gap between generations which unsettles the idea of a collective voice, but it does raise the point that cultural identity is a process and evolves, and that it should be thought of as something which is produced.[75] Jean Sioui adapts the philosophy of the Ancestors of his nation into the modern world. As this philosophy is entirely based on observations of nature, it will be discussed in Chapter Four on space.

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[74] Yves Thériault, *Ashini*, p. 33.
[75] Stuart Hall, "Cultural Identity and Diaspora," pp. 51-58.

II Representation of Others

Throughout the world, colonised peoples have been extensively described and analysed by their colonisers. *Orientalism*,[76] by Edward Said explains how the colonisers projected their fear and desire onto the people they encountered and did not understand. Said's work enabled reconsideration of the way the Orient was known and revealed how colonial discourse was constructed. He notably pointed out how European culture gained in force by imposing its knowledge and definition of the Orient upon the Orient itself. This process happened with the creation of a fixed discourse which set Europeans in opposition to colonised people, turning the latter into the Other. The notion of Other can be interpreted in different ways depending on the context. For instance, in feminist literature, men can be perceived as the Other. In colonial literature, the Other is the colonised. However, in a postcolonial context, the Other for the ex-colonised can be the ex-coloniser. When analysing colonial discourse, the representations made of the Native by the colonisers show how these Europeans defined themselves through sets of oppositions. The object Other is used to define and empower the coloniser as a subject.

As a psychoanalyst, Lacan observed that a characteristic of the human psyche is its particular self-awareness. He demonstrated that a very young child could recognize itself looking at its own image in a mirror. This acknowledgment makes human beings aware of their position as subject and object: "the subject is subject only from being subjected to the field of the Other."[77] Thus the subject finds their signifier in the Other.[78] Through a process of reciprocal reflections, identities emerge.

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[76] Edward Said, *Orientalism* (London: Penguin Books, 1978).
[77] Jacques Lacan, *The Four Fundamental Concepts of Psycho-Analysis* (London: The Hogarth Press and The Institute of Psychoanalysis, 1977).
[78] In Lacan's terminology, the notion of "Other" is broader, it corresponds to other selves.

Even if in the colonial and postcolonial context, the individual persona tends to merge with the collective voice, this process is still taking place. The difference lies in the fact that the scale is now much wider. Native people have in turn made representations of their Other. In the context of Quebec, it is important to consider the influence of its history and geographical situation on its perception of the Other, transforming it into Others. Native people from Quebec can view the non-Native as one group, and the colonisers and the present inhabitants of Quebec as other groups, or they can separate English-speaking people from the French ones, or position themselves in opposition to the United States as the modern coloniser. Modern Europe has never been mentioned in their writing so far. On another level, other cultures or peoples are evoked generally because they have been oppressed too and are still suffering from oppression. The position of the Native writers who choose to describe the situation of these oppressed people reveals a desire for harmony in the world which is part of their traditional beliefs. Yves Sioui Durand brings another dimension to Native culture, as he considers his plays as being part of a transcultural movement which tries to demystify the traditional notion of purity and nation. Different cultures are placed side by side or intertwined; their mythologies are re-explored. Alterity thus becomes an internal aspect of the notion of identity.

II. 1. The Coloniser as Other

It may seem surprising that in the 20th and 21st centuries, Native authors still feel the need to write about the first White people to arrive in their country. However, giving their vision of the White man's behaviour at the time enables them to better understand their past and to be proud of who they are at the present time. The

representations of the colonisers found in the present corpus mainly portray them as cruel, violent and greedy. Native writers describe and present these White men as a single group, much as they represent themselves. The description of this Other serves to highlight the qualities of the different Native cultures. As Europe defined itself and became more aware of itself as distinct after the "Conquest" of America, Native writers try to assert their identity through comparisons between the oppressor's way of life and their own. The aggressiveness in tone of the narrative varies from author to author. An Antane Kapesh is one of the first authors to have produced a long published narrative in which a Native person expresses her own opinion of White people at the time of the colonisation and the time of her writing. Even if she wrote the narrative in Montagnais and only helped to do the translation in French, this early piece of writing sets the tone for her future work. Both of her adult books, *Je suis une maudite sauvagesse*,[79] an "autobiography", and *Qu'as-tu fait de mon pays?*,[80] an essay told as a parabola, show the anger of a woman whose life has been completely changed and disturbed. *Qu'as-tu fait de mon pays?* tells the story of a child who lives with his grandfather and is taught by him how to live in harmony with Nature and be self-sufficient. This part of the story is very brief as the grandfather dies. The child is however ready to live on his own. His life should have been like the life of his grandfather, but he encounters White men who will do everything they can to trick him and steal everything he owns. The historical time line is not respected in the story, but the reader quickly understands the different situations and the narrative unfolds itself without any difficulties. The White people portrayed in this narrative (as in Antane Kapesh's autobiography) belong to different sectors of White society, such as law representatives, religious men, doctors, shopkeepers and teachers. In fact, they

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[79] An Antane Kapesh, *Je suis une maudite sauvagesse* (Ottawa: Leméac, 1976).
[80] An Antane Kapesh, *Qu'as-tu fait de mon pays?* (Ottawa: les Editions Impossibles, 1979).

are the White men who had and still have contact with the Native. Any narrative written by Native people presenting the colonising process in Quebec shows the colonisers as Eurocentric, untrustworthy and greedy men whereas the Natives appear to be generous, patient, well-balanced people who do not realize how they could become dominated by these newcomers. In *Qu'as-tu fait de mon pays?*, An Antane Kapesh summarises in one simplified story the continuing impact on the Native way of life of the contact with White people. It starts with the fur trade when the child meets his first White men. Kapesh calls these men the Polichinelles (the muppets). As it is a translation, it is difficult to know exactly what meaning An Antane Kapesh intended. However, the choice of such a strong word does reveal a very negative representation of white people as unreliable beings. The second "polichinelle" met by the child is a missionary. An Antane Kapesh has the White characters express their exact intentions towards the child in order to demonstrate their arrogance and malintent:

> Je viens pour t'enseigner la religion et je vais te fabriquer un nom. Je te donnerai un nom comme le nôtre. C'est celui-là que tu porteras de génération en génération. (...). Ne sois pas surpris mon fils. Je changerai ta langue un certain nombre de fois mais ne te casse pas la tête.[81]

Each White man the child encounters makes him lose a part of himself (from his territory, to his health and culture). Every action undertaken by the "Polichinelles" reveals their deviousness and does not show any humanity on their part. For instance, having been forced to go to school and then led to leave it, the child, feeling really depressed, meets another "Polichinelle" who gives him some alcohol, telling him that it will make him feel better. Suddenly drunk, he meets his next "Polichinelle", a policeman, who immediately arrests him:

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[81] An Antane Kapesh, *Qu'as-tu fait de mon pays?*, p. 30.

> Je sais que tu ne fais rien de mal. Mais tu vois mon uniforme, mon travail consiste à te mettre en prison.[82]

Even if the story covers several centuries, the feeling of unity that it creates gives the impression that the aspects of the White men exposed represent their very essence. They are invaders who had no right to do what they did. In *Je suis une maudite sauvagesse*, An Antane Kapesh's tone is even more venomous. Her book is divided into nine parts which correspond to the aspects she chose to cover. All but the last give portraits of a particular type of White person: the first newcomers ('L'arrivée du blancs dans notre territoire'), the prospector ('La découverte du minerai dans le nord'), the teachers and the Federal Government ('L'éducation blanche'), the game-keeper and the police ('Le garde-chasse'), the police and the bar owner ('Le marchand d'alcool'), the police and the judges ('La police et les tribunaux'), journalists and film directors ('Les journalistes et les Médias') and the Government and the Ministry of Indian Affairs ('la maison blanche'). Through examples taken from her own family experience and nation's history, she points out all the unfair treatments they have received and the unacceptable decisions made for them. The first chapter of the book is structured as a long monologue which aims at presenting what the colonisers' intentions really were when they arrived:

> Vous les Indiens, êtes-vous d'accord que j'aille vous rejoindre dans votre territoire? Etes-vous d'accord que j'exploite votre territoire? Etes-vous d'accord que je détruise votre territoire? Etes-vous d'accord que je construise des barrages sur vos rivières et que je pollue vos rivières et vos lacs?[83]

As opposed to some other texts of the corpus, the exchanges that took place between the different cultures are not highlighted here. It is a one-sided presentation in which White men can only be perceived as self-centred and despicable characters. Chapter

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[82] An Antane Kapesh, *Qu'as-tu fait de mon pays?*, p. 66.
[83] An Antane Kapesh, *Je suis une maudite sauvagesse*, pp. 11-12.

One shows how the Montagnais settled down much later than the other peoples of Quebec. The acculturation that started taking place in the first half of the 20th century was more sudden and in a sense more disorientating for the Montagnais. Nonetheless, An Antane Kapesh's portrayal of the White man is shared by other authors. Eléonore Sioui also represents the White man as a selfish opportunist who came to use anything he could: "In the past you grazed on us unceasingly."[84] This negative image is mirrored by its opposite - the generous, non violent and sensible Indian:

> (…)Se rendant de poste de traite
>
> En poste de traite
>
> Pour vous offrir
>
> Venant de pays inconnus
>
> Nos richesses et pelleteries[85]

Like An Antane Kapesh, Jean Sioui writes a narrative full of imagery showing the colonisation process. A long time ago, an Indian sitting on a log encounters a White man who asks him to move a little further along to leave him some space on the log. Little by little, the Indian has less and less room on the log until the White man pushes him of it and tells him that it is now his.[86] This simple story encapsulates very well the image Native people have of the White man at the time of the Conquest. Bernard Cleary also creates a similar, but slightly more elaborate story in his political essay, *L'Enfant de 7000 ans, le long portage vers la délivrance*.[87] The narrative mode chosen to retell this event corresponds again to the metaphorical style of oral tradition.

The representation of the Conquest is not specific to Quebec Native literature. In Latin America, notably Mexico, it has become an artistic genre. The Theatre of the Conquest of Mexico gives the opportunity to Native Latin American playwrights to

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[84] Eléonore Jiconsaseh Sioui, *Corps à coeur éperdu* (Val-d'Or: D'ici et d'ailleurs, 1992), p. 59.
[85] Ibid., p. 14.
[86] Jean Sioui, *Le Pas de l'Indien, Pensées wendates* (Québec: Le Loup de Gouttière, 1997), pp. 74-75.
[87] Bernard Cleary. *L'Enfant de 7000 ans, le long portage vers la délivrance* (Québec: Les Editions du Pélican/Septentrion,1989), pp. 55-69.

present the principal figureheads on both sides: for instance, Aztec and Spanish. As Peter Beardsell explains: "out of the complex mixture of forces emerges a sense of Mexico's capacity for self-awareness, and an aspiration towards reconciliation with the past and hope that love will unite the people."[88] The situation in Mexico is obviously very different from Quebec's. The population of Mexico is highly aware of its mixed blood and descendants. Native people from Quebec consider themselves as very different from the Québécois, and this is exacerbated by the government's role in defining who is considered Native and who is not. This last point again raises the question of authenticity. In the whole corpus by Native authors, two messages arise which are strongly connected. The first one is that it is detrimental to Native people to live as White people do. The second one is that White people who try to integrate Native ways of thinking are represented in a positive way. Several authors mention the unhappiness of Native people trying to live in town. Eléonore Sioui's poem, entitled 'New World',[89] combines these two thoughts concerning the Other. The first line of the poem reflects the second representation mentioned previously, that of White people as profiteers: "In the past you grazed on us unceasingly." In the middle of the poem, she describes her feelings of sadness for Native people who find it difficult to live in town:

> I felt pain when seeing my brothers and sisters
>
> Roaming the streets
>
> As disrooted trees
>
> Trying to be like you (...)[90]

The poem moves on to her dream that all the people of the Americas will live in harmony. By using the expression 'New World' she reverses the previous meaning of

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[88] Peter Beardsell, *Europe and Latin America. Returning the Gaze* (Manchester: Manchester University Press, 2000), p. 75.
[89] Eléonore Jiconsaseh Sioui, *Corps à coeur éperdu*, pp. 59-60.
[90] Ibid., p. 59.

it used by the colonisers. This new world is a world of hope where she sees White people living in harmony with Native people because they realise the benefit of the Native way of seeing things:

> I saw you with us reborn
>
> To the sanity of Love
>
> You on a found (sic) following our paths (...)[91]

Jean Sioui added to his Wendat thoughts a small text transcribing the words a Wendat had said to a White person in the 17th century. This Wendat was already convinced that the White way of living was making the members of that society unhappy. He advised the White person to become Huron. His motive for it was his realisation of the lack of freedom experienced by White people. His criticism was aimed at the bureaucracy and the continual fear of theft and murder which seemed to be part of White society.[92]

The main aspects criticised by Native writers concerning the Other's culture are the ones which have caused their ancestors' and contemporary fellows to lose their roots: alcohol, religious men, and the non-Native self-righteousness. Alcohol is a recurrent theme associated with the evil brought by Western culture. It is well known that alcohol has helped the colonists in their colonisation process. Nowadays, there are still serious alcohol related problems in the communities such as domestic violence. An Antane Kapesh devoted a whole section of her book to the subject, underlining the hypocrisy of the White people who first introduced alcohol to the Native and then accused them of being disgraceful drunkards.[93] Eléonore Sioui wrote a poem in which she draws a parallel between alcohol destroying her people and the pollution of the environment:

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[91] Ibid., pp. 59-60.
[92] Jean Sioui, p. 90.
[93] An Antane Kapesh, *Je suis une maudite sauvagesse*, pp. 73-79.

In the Past

The White Man created

The Water of Fire

Which has destroyed our people.

At present

The White Man has created

The Water of Death

In poisoning our waters with mercury (...)[94]

As mentioned before in the Native representations of themselves, Yves Sioui Durand also exposes the problems caused by alcoholism in *Le Porteur des peines du monde*[95] with the domestic abuse scene involving the Moon and the Sun. In *Atiskenandahate-Le voyage au pays des morts*[96], in scene ten, 'combat Soleil/Aigle et Corbeau/Vautour', alcohol has transformed the Corbeau into a disgraceful being, obscene and lost. In his speech to Soleil, he keeps repeating that he is a real Indian and also says that he has lost his country to a barrel of whisky.[97] As Corbeau and Soleil/Aigle are about to fight, Corbeau says that he is the best cowboy in the West and he draws with a bottle of beer pretending it is a gun. The Soleil calls him "un cowboy de bière."[98]In the last representation, there is of course another type of Other evoked, which is the myth of the Cowboy, a hero to Americans. This will be dealt with further on. Soleil wins the battle and thus succeeds in overcoming the non-Native damaging behaviour and regains a part of his identity. In *Le Bras coupé*, Bernard Assiniwi also represents seven of his main white characters as heavy drinkers. The narrative takes place in the 19th century in a small village where English, Irish, Scottish, French Canadians and Algonquins live close to one another, although the

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[94] Eléonore Jiconsaseh Sioui, p. 47.
[95] Yves Sioui Durand, *Le Porteur des peines du monde* (Ottawa: Leméac, 1992).
[96] Yves Sioui Durand, *Atiskenandahate-Le voyage au pays des morts* (Montréal: Ondinnock Inc., 1988).
[97] Ibid., p. 43.
[98] Ibid., p. 44.

Algonquin settlement is a little further away. The first chapter opens up with two morning scenes paralleling each other. The first one shows the wakening of Menji-Mendam, the main Native character. With his eyes still closed, he can feel the changes in his surrounding, the snow, the sun rising. It is warm in his shelter. By noon, he is back home to see his partner and two boys with the game he has managed to hunt. The scene shows a happy family, independent and living in harmony with their environment. The following scene is completely the opposite. Bert Côté, an unemployed drunk, wakes up in yesterday's clothes in a dirty house with no heating, due to his laziness. He reaches to take the bottle sitting on the table and accidentally lets it fall on the ground. He then manages to fall outside before finally cutting some wood.[99] Positioning these two scenes one after the other highlights once more a decadent aspect of White society, and the well-balanced way of life led by Native people. Assiniwi also contrasts two different scenes later in the narrative about ways of communicating. Bert Côté talks to Ti-Trou (the village buffoon) about his life, but Ti-trou falls asleep after two hours of monologue. In most of the scenes between Menji-Mendam and the old Mashkiki-winini (a medicine man), they both hardly say a word, but completely understand each other and respect each other's intimacy:

> Longtemps les deux hommes demeurèrent cois, dans cette position de compréhension mutuelle. Si des paroles avaient été prononcées, elles se seraient perdues au creux des vallons sans rien apporter de plus à cette communication de deux êtres de générations différentes mais d'aspiration commune.[100]

The whole story is based on a problem of communication between a Scottish shopkeeper and Menji-Mendam. At the beginning of the story, Menji-Mendam is seriously ill and Ikwé, his partner has to take him to a healer in the Algonquin settlement, as they live away from it. Unfortunately, she accidentally dies coming

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[99] Bernard Assiniwi, *Le Bras coupé*, pp. 15-17.
[100] Ibid., pp. 149-150.

back from MacIntosh's shop after having bought food and a red shawl on credit. Ikwé never had the time to talk to Menji-Mendam about her purchase and debt; the only thing he is given is the red silky shawl. When Menji-Mendam meets MacIntosh, the latter enquires about his health and asks him when he is going to pay his debts. MacIntosh asks Menji-Mendam to give him half of his winter's furs. Menji-Mendam does not understand why and answers angrily that he is free and that he will sell his furs himself and give him the amount due. MacIntosh, offended by such a strong answer and behaviour from an Indian, tells the whole story to his five "friends" at the hotel bar. After a few drinks, they are all rather excited and decide to teach him a lesson. They surprise Menji-Mendam in his wooden house and in a moment of panic, Paul Francis, the least brave of all, cuts Menji-Mendam's hand with his own axe while he is trying to get his knife on the table. All the men run out in a hurry and the Indian sets his dogs on them. The rest of the story is based on Menji-Mendam's revenge; he kills all the men apart from MacIntosh, who finally kills him. In this story, alcohol and arrogance cause harm to the Native peaceful way of living. Bernard Assiniwi does not forget to include Indians in the hotel bar scenes. They sit together on one side of the room and do not mix with White people. When they are drunk, they behave in the same way as White people, and the author portrays them as no better than the Whites. Bernard Assiniwi introduces Jos, an Indian, who as the barman is also in charge of security. He is the one preventing fights among White people and also between White and Native. In Native Quebec literature, Native writers have in turn portrayed their own Other, the White Man, and they have highlighted the very aspects of the White civilisation that have destroyed their own.

Yet Christian religion has never been criticised so far; what has been highly criticised is the White Man's hypocrisy or misuse of it, and the behaviour of certain

missionaries. An Antane Kapesh criticised the fact that White men, often religious White men, taught the Montagnais children in boarding schools, pretending to help them find an easier place in Quebec society while making sure they would never be good enough to have access to higher education. In *La Saga des Béothuks*, towards the end of the story, the few Beothuks left meet a Sang-Melé and discuss with him the reason why the Beothuks have been treated so badly in comparison to other peoples. During the conversation, it appears that the Shanung and the Sang-Melé have become Christians, which is more likely to protect them from being killed. Wonoakté, the narrator, asks her companion Nonosabasut if they should do the same. He laughs saying that it does not prevent them from fighting one another:

> Et tu n'as jamais entendu des guerres qu'ils se livrent entre eux? S'ils s'entretuent entre chrétiens, pourquoi ne feraient-ils pas dc même avec nous?[101]

Later in the narrative, Wonoakté, renamed Mary March, has been captured and placed in a reverend's house.The maid accuses her one day of having stolen some night caps, but they had been given to her by John Peyton who had captured her. Assiniwi uses a cynical remark to tell this event to the reader: "bien entendu, comme le veut la charité chrétienne, la bonne accusa Mary March d'avoir volé deux de ses bonnets de nuit."[102] In *Le voyage au pays des morts*, Yves Sioui Durand also stages some critical scenes concerning missionaries. In the opening scene with the grandfather, the uncle and the two children sitting by the fire, Sioui Durand has the grandfather complain about the missionaries never being satisfied with the Indians.[103] In scene five, having just witnessed the murder of the Moon by the Sun (her drunken husband), and her body being taken by the spirit of the blood river, the spectators hear a tape on which a Jesuit makes a report of his activities. He tells how many savages they have baptised and

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[101]Bernard Assiniwi, *La Saga des Béothuks*, p. 418.
[102] Ibid., p.454.
[103] Yves Sioui Durand, *Atiskenandahate-Le voyage au pays des morts*, p. 5.

how some of them were against being baptised, convinced that these religious men brought death to them. With this short extract, the audience is reminded of the numerous deaths caused by European viruses from the "Old World", and how being close to the missionaries accentuated the problem. However, religion in itself is never criticised because many Native people nowadays still believe in a Christian God. Native people have always had a strong spiritual life and already believed in a Creator when the Europeans came. Some of the stories of the Creation could easily be adapted by the missionaries as they were close to the Christian foundation. Yvon H. Couture, Eléonore Sioui, Rita Mestokosho, Jean Sioui and Yves Sioui Durand thank the Creator in their work. There exists an undeniable ambivalence in their representations. Yves Sioui Durand and Yvon H. Couture are the ones who seem consciously to play with the two systems in order to communicate their messages to the reader or spectator more plainly. This corresponds to a particular concept called transculturation discussed in the following section. The cosmogonic world of Native culture will be analysed in the chapter on Space as it plays a large part in their representation of their surroundings.

The Other as the coloniser, the White Man, seems with all the examples mentioned until this point to be considered as a generic pattern. Although this notion of White versus Native keeps recurring as a way of highlighting the qualities of Native culture in general, a few authors differentiate between the different groups of White people inhabiting Quebec at the time of the Conquest, and also criticise separately the new worldwide coloniser, the United States. Historians have very often pointed out the difference between the French and British methods of colonisation. The French seemed to have mixed with Native people more easily than the British. It is thus possible today to see that both cultures have influenced each other. First of all,

it is interesting to note that the words "Québec" or "Québécois", are only used twice in the whole corpus. The near absence of these words denotes the Native perception of Quebec as an Other, a unity of which they are not a part. Towards the end of her parable, An Antane Kapesh makes the child confront a polichinelle. The child accuses him of having committed all these acts so that they would be able to call themselves Québécois.[104] This utterance of the word is rather strong and direct and is the only mention found in the corpus. The single mention of the word "Québec" is in a poem by Yvon H. Couture describing a crow reduced to eating chips on the pavement, chips "made in Québec."[105] Bernard Assiniwi, a historian himself, differentiated the roles played by the French and the English in his narratives. In *Le Bras coupé*, he also distinguishes the status of the Scottish, Irish and English in the English-speaking community. French people in *Le Bras coupé* and *La Saga des Béothuks* are considered as friends to the Native people. Jacques Cartier, as opposed to the Portuguese navigators and the English, did not kidnap or kill any Beothuk, or even damage their environment.[106] However, Jacques Cartier and Samuel de Champlain did kidnap some Iroquoians and Montagnais, but no Natives from Newfoundland. Choosing the history of the Beothuks enabled Assiniwi to narrate one of the worst tragedies involving Native people from Canada, perhaps also to denounce the colonisers' brutal violations without directly attacking the ancestors of the actual present day inhabitants of Quebec. Even if *La Saga des Béothuks* is indeed about the Beothuk nation in particular, the messages expressed by the narrative open more general grounds.[107] In *Le Bras coupé*, the French Canadians are not presented as hostile to the Algonquins. Jos Parent, the new shopkeeper, trusts Menji-Mendam when he asks him to give him

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[104] An Antane Kapesh, *Qu'as-tu fait de mon pays?*, p. 79.
[105] Yvon H. Couture, *Aki Têwêgan, le tambour de la terre*, p. 58.
[106] Bernard Assiniwi, *La Saga des Béothuks*, p. 261.
[107] See next chapter.

some material on credit. Jos Parent does not believe like the rest of the villagers that Menji-Mendam is mad because he has guessed who the aggressors were.[108] Assiniwi does not depict the French Canadian as any better than the British in terms of general behaviour. Bert Coté is unemployed, lazy and a drunkard. Jos Parent's wife is an unhappy woman who finds every opportunity to argue with her husband. She does not trust the savages and keeps making comments about them. In both stories, the English are portrayed as cruel and selfish men. In *La Saga des Béothuks*, one of the most barbaric scenes is attributed to a group of English men:

> Plusieurs autres hommes arrivèrent en courant, félicitant l'Anglais d'avoir réussi cet exploit digne d'un grand guerrier: éventrer une femme vivante et exhiber un foetus de Béothuks.[109]

In *Le Bras coupé*, the six guilty men are even deprived of a feeling of solidarity between themselves; they only keep meeting each other because they are frightened by the presence of Menji-Mendam in the village. They have lost their self-assured and arrogant attitude. John Ireland, the former boxer, is the only one who shows a little courage and decides to face Menji-Mendam to kill him. He turns out to be the first victim. In this novel, the white Other is depicted as rather despicable. Even if Menji-Mendam becomes a murderer, he realises that his hatred against these men will not bring him back his hand or his partner. He finally spares MacIntosh's life, and MacIntosh kills him at the very end of the novel. Menji-Memdam's death brings him peace as he finally sees himself reunited again with Ikwé.

Two authors, Yves Sioui Durand and Eléonore Sioui have added American society to their representations of the alienating Other. In *Le Porteur des peines du monde*, scene four entitled 'Le Loup de la finance' presents a face à face between the portageur and a cowboy wearing a glittering hat, with banknotes coming out of his

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[108] Bernard Assiniwi, *Le Bras coupé*, p. 128.
[109] Bernard Assiniwi, *La Saga des Béothuks*, p. 352.

pocket. In the stage notes, Yves Sioui Durand gives his vision of this character. Le Loup de la finance represents the Far West conqueror, who has dispossessed the Indians of their lands, their cultures and even their lives. His aim is to turn the Indian into a White Man.[110] During the scene mentioned, Le Loup de la finance throws banknotes in the face of the Porteur and tries to convince him like a game show presenter to join the civilised world. Then suddenly a pile of rubbish falls on the Porteur and he collapses.[111] This scene in *Le Porteur des peines du monde*, and that from *Le voyage au pays des morts*, question the image of an American hero. The Far West cowboy represents a strong opportunist man able to survive in a wild dangerous environment. This image is however stained by these scenes portraying the absurdity of his desire for profit; American consumerist society is being criticised. This criticism highlights Native people today's chosen role as protectors of the Earth. How their role is more precisely defined by their perception of Nature and their spiritual life is dealt with in Chapter Four. In 'Equilibrium of Time',[112] Eléonore Sioui discusses American politics, not so much in relation to Native American people, but in relation to their foreign policy. She questions the legality of America's military interventions and also parallels the American's Far West with the search for "Middle-East Black Gold." The immaculate and righteous image of pious America is unsettled:

> (...)The Untouchable
>
> Taking off his shiney golden gloves
>
> To reveal the denuded bloody hand
>
> Of the Comedian' Sons & Sons Co. (...)[113]

Having been subjected to analysis for centuries, Native people in Quebec have finally returned the gaze. In order to assert their identity, they have mirrored back the stare of

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[110] Yves Sioui Durand, *Le Porteur des peines du monde*, p. 37.
[111] Ibid., p. 41.
[112] Elćonore Jiconsasch Sioui, *Corps à coeur éperdu*, p. 51.
[113] Ibid.

others. Presenting the coloniser, the White Man as cruel, self-centred and greedy, enables these authors to contrast these patterns of behaviour with the Native way of living and thinking. The choice of the generic term White Man entails a universalism, and creates in turn a universal vision of the representation of Native people. The position becomes one of oppressed against oppressor, reinforced by the choice of certain authors to evoke other oppressed people such as Black, Jewish or Tibetan people for Eléonore Sioui,[114] and other Native groups for Yves Sioui Durand. Asserting an identity, whether individual or collective, involves comparing and rejecting cultural aspects that one decides not to value. Construing negative differentiations such as the opposition us/them in the Native context may be seen as a reinforcement of previous non-Native attitudes. The essentialisms created through sets of oppositions disappear when authors such as Yves Sioui Durand turn themselves to transcultural representations which tend to erase cultural boundaries and give a certain fluidity to identity production.

II. 2. Transculturation and the Internal Other

The term "transculturation" was coined by Fernando Ortiz in 1940 in Cuba. Anthropologists have used it to define the mutual transformation of cultures, but with particular emphasis on the transformation of the Natives by the Europeans. In any ex-colonised country, there have been cultural exchange, whether willing or not, between colonisers and colonised. The result of these exchanges has been the birth of a hybrid culture. Homi H. Bhabha sees hybridization as a process of subversion.[115] For Native authors from Quebec, choosing to write, and to write in French, constitutes the

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[114] Eléonore Jiconsasch Sioui, *Corps à coeur éperdu*, p. 48, 104, 110.
[115] Homi H. Bhabha, *The Location of Culture* (London: Routledge, 1994), pp. 102-122.

creation of a "contact zone." Mary Louise Pratt calls "contact zones" texts which open up a space where "disparate cultures meet, clash and grapple with each other."[116] As has been shown in the previous paragraph, representations of the Other can create an asymmetrical relation of power. For centuries, the colonial discourse has placed White people at the centre and Native people at the periphery. Through autoethnographical texts, Native people are reusing parts of the previous discourse to make it their own.

The beginning of this chapter recalled the various representations made by White people about the Aboriginal of America: the noble savage and the cruel uncivilised barbarian. It has been touched upon in the paragraph on representations of themselves how some authors deliberately readdress clichés imposed on Native people in order to rectify them. Peter Beardsell's uses of Andrea Giunta's essay 'Strategies of Modernity in Latin America', adds another dimension to the matter. Andrea Giunta underlines the cultural movements that take place between Europe and Latin America: an appropriation of the appropriation. Europeans have borrowed and interpreted aspects of Native cultures and have transformed them into what is now called Primitive art. Native people have then reused these symbols to make them their own.[117] The same process is happening in literature with literary representations. Even An Antane Kapesh, whose books do not correspond to the European canon, has reacted towards the already existent appropriations the coloniser has made of her own culture. Her "autobiography", *Je suis une maudite sauvagesse*, is articulated around nine themes which are all linked to White culture. The statements she makes about herself and her nation are her response to a discourse which started centuries ago. Bernard Assiniwi with *La Saga des Béothuks* deliberately reverses some of the known clichés. This

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[116] Mary Louise Pratt, *Imperial Eyes, Travel Writing and Transculturation* (London: Routledge, 1992), p. 4.
[117] Peter Beardsell, *Europe and Latin America. Returning the Gaze* (Manchester: Manchester University Press, 2000), p. 174.

historical novel has many aspects in common with narratives of the first explorers such as Jacques Cartier or Samuel de Champlain. In the saga, Anin, the founder of the Beothuk nation, sets off at the beginning of the story to discover the world. As opposed to the explorers, he does not plan to conquer any land and find any precious merchandise. He does it not only for his own experience, but also to be able to share what he discovers with his whole nation upon his return. The first time he meets a foreign person, his first reaction is to try to understand them and to communicate with them:[118] there are no quick judgmental comments. The scene with the four foreigners meeting members of Anin's nation for the first time may remind the reader of exhibitions of Native people that took place in Europe where the prisoners were looked upon as funfair animals and treated as such. Bernard Assiniwi ingeniously counterbalances the expectations of such narratives. The openness of Beothuk society highlighted in the narrative is possible because the European gaze is still there inside the community. There is thus an interactive effect. The English are mocked in the last section because they do not wash when they are part of an expedition.[119] Earlier in the narrative, Le Guellec, an ex-sailor with Jacques Cartier who was adopted by the Beothuks, is being criticised by his wives because he has not washed for several days. These points allude to the White men's common criticism of the dirtiness of the Native. Throughout the story, the reader discovers the hardships undergone by these people and the willpower and courage that was necessary for them to be able to lead their everyday lives. Another common statement about Native behaviour is their laziness. In *Ikwé, la femme algonquienne*,[120] Bernard Assiniwi states in the foreword that he decided to write his collection of short stories on the Algonquian woman to counteract the many false images present in White people's minds. This desire to put

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[118] Bernard Assiniwi, *La Saga des Béothuks*, p. 221.
[119] Ibid., p. 444.
[120] Bernard Assiniwi, *Ikwé, la femme algonquienne* (Hull: Vents d'Ouest, 1998), pp. 11-12.

the record straight influences the image Natives have of themselves. It is certainly important to master a Native discourse in order to assert Native identities. However, it cannot be denied that there exists an internal Other which influences their own discourse. Transculturation brings them control; they are not objects, but subjects which favour the assertion of their identity. Yves Sioui Durand considers his plays as being part of a transcultural movement, the characterics of which are as follows:

> métissage, altérité, intéraction des cultures, postmodernité et pluralisme, hétérogénéité, quotidien immigrant, déracinement et exil, marginalité, s'adresse à la xénophobie, au racisme, intérieur de la conscience immigrante; un théâtre plus individuel que collectif.[121]

In *Le Porteur des peines du monde* and *Le voyage aux pays des morts*, different cultures are integrated into the plays. In *Le Porteur des peines du monde*, there are Huron-Wendat symbols such as the "roue-des-herbes-de-la-guérison", and there are four Ojibway singers and musicians, two Andean Natives and a young Innu woman. The languages used are French and Montagnais. The play is actually a ritual drama and is intended to be much more than an entertainment. In the prologue, Sioui Durand explains that Native theatre is an essential tool in developing Native culture:

> La dramaturgie amérindienne est un outil essentiel de développement culturel. Elle est un instrument de prise en charge. Elle nous propose de défolkloriser la perception de l'art autochtone en rompant avec l'isolement culturel des réserves.[122]

Chapter Four will discuss Yves Sioui Durand's use of spatialization on the stage as it is at the very core of the play in a non-European way. The title of the play, *Le Porteur des peines du monde*, brings together the Christian image of Christ as the carrier of the sins of the world, and the image of the shaman. By dying and purifying himself, the Porteur brings an image of hope, of rebirth, the rebirth of Native identity. Yves Sioui Durand draws a parallel between a young Native mother who represents the

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[121] www.aqad.qc.ca/PAGES/AUTEURS/sioui_dy.htm
[122] Yves Sioui Durand, *Le Porteur des peines du monde*, p. 15.

genocide of all the Indians of the Americas, and the Virgin Mary.[123] The only difference between the two portraits is that the baby carried by the young Native mother is dead: a strong image playing on the two symbolic systems. In *Le voyage au pays des morts*, Yves Sioui Durand uses another image with double meanings. In scene five, entitled 'L'esprit de la rivière de sang', the Moon, murdered by the Sun, lies in front of a waterfall of blood. She is carried inside it by the spirit of the blood river to be transported to the land of the dead. In the next scene, the audience hears the voice of a Jesuit making his duty report. The Jesuit announces the number of Indians he has baptised. Baptisms in America were carried out at a river or a lake, much as the first Christians were said to have done. The two scenes seem to be related to one another, and the correlation offers again a striking image: death (as a result of Christian baptism) and rebirth (by Native ritual) as it is revealed later in the narrative. Yves Sioui Durand considers himself as an "Asirindien", as Asia is Native American ancestors' land of origin. The inspirations led by this choice lead him to use not only Native American culture, but certain aspects of Asian culture too. *La Légende de Knìkamch, l'asirindien* was performed at the Jardin des Premières nations at the Botanic Gardens in Montreal in 2002. Its creation reflects the coming together of two cultures through the theme of the refusal of ageing, and its consequences. The spectators at the play were gathered in a yurt and served tea by a young Asian girl. The transculturation that impregnates Yves Sioui Durand's plays does not correspond comfortably to the definition given at the beginning of this paragraph. Apart from the two Christian allusions, it seems that the intertwining cultures are all aboriginal. Among the criteria quoted previously, there is the concept of hybridity (métissage).

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[123] Ibid., p. 32.

However, in Yves Sioui Durand's work, there are no positive representations of non-Native communities.

Yvon H. Couture is certainly the author whose inspiration seems at times to be utterly alien to Native culture. His vocabulary is very lyrical and the structures of his poems tend to correspond to European classical standards; he very often follows a rigid system of rhymes and regular syllable stress patterns. In his first collection of poems, *Natura*,[124] there are two poems that evoke Scandinavian imaginary: 'Le scalde vagabond'[125] and 'Puissants Knorrs.'[126] The latter of the two is surprising as it is in praise of the Vikings. This poem contrasts with the negative representations found in *La Saga des Béothuks*. The longest poem of his first collection is devoted to the 'Chevalier d'Airain.'[127] In this poem, the imagery used is definitely European. Yvon H. Couture describes four knights including the "chevalier d'airain", meeting by a sacred rock. They are dressed in white, riding white horses. The four knights represent four different nations: "L'un est Frison; L'autre Franc; un autre Normand et le dernier est Saxon."[128] All of them break their swords on the rock to seal a pact of peace, then each rides in one of the four directions: the North, the East, the West and the South. The "chevalier d'airain" is the Franc knight as he crosses the channel to go home to his castle. The fourteenth paragraph warns that war will continue without them, though, as a group of Saxon horsemen are seen in the distance. Couture here uses European symbolism, but attempts to make it his own. He uses the image of the "chevalier d'airain", in another poem in which he draws a picture of the knight as an eternal traveller for whom nothing is impossible.[129] The poem placed just after

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[124] Yvon H. Couture, *Natura* (Val-d'Or: D'ici et d'ailleurs, 1990).
[125] Ibid., p. 47.
[126] Ibid. p. 43.
[127] Ibid., pp. 35-39.
[128] Ibid., p.38.
[129] Ibid. p. 40.

'Puissants Knorrs', is entitled 'Le château écroulé.' The medieval imagery in the text ("la muraille s'est fendillée," "le Seigneur des lieux") belongs to a European psyche. This poem could be the representation of a person's inner self falling apart. In both his collections, Yvon H. Couture has expressed his desire for harmony, admiration and respect for Nature, but the first collection is the one which draws most on European symbolism. It could be argued that the second collection shows a European Romantic style because of its exuberant tone and celebration of nature. In the second collection, Yvon H. Couture uses Christian terminology in two poems entitled "Cantique" ('Cantique de l'eau' and 'Cantique de la forêt'). His poetry is spiritual and as a Native person, this spirituality expands to include all living things. The representations of Nature could be considered as part of the transculturation process, but will be analysed in the last chapter.

The importance of awareness of one's own individual needs and the expression and fulfilment of one's individuality are both modern concepts. Members of traditional societies used to repeat the same patterns as their parents and, as survival was the main issue, no one had the time to reflect on self-fulfilment as an important factor in their own lives. Native writers from Quebec have integrated this modern social change. One of the consequences of this new frame of mind is already evident simply in the presence of individual voices: for instance, there are a few poems by Rita Mestokosho showing her desire for direction in her own life. The sense of loss evoked in them can of course reach Native readers who feel the same, but the expression of these feelings is definitely hers. For instance, in 'Poète en liberté', it is clear that the poem reflects her thoughts as an individual female poet and does not correspond to "all women of her nation":

(...)J'ai pleuré parce que j'avais tort

de ne pas croire en la seule vérité

Après des années, je me cherche encore

Mais je ne suis qu'un poète en liberté.(...)[130]

Eléonore Sioui also expresses her personal feelings with her love poems and the ones describing the joy and pride her children give her. At the end of 'Oukiouhoy, mon premier fils', she writes a dedication to her son: "A mon Georges, Maman."[131] Yvon H. Couture considers himself as a "chantre de la Nature." In *Aki Têwêgan, le tambour de la terre*, most of his poems praise nature's beauties and benefits. However, he describes his own individual experience of nature and shares this with the reader. In his poems, he does not try to represent the Algonquin vision of nature, it is definitely his own. For example, in 'Au festin de la vie', the author describes an early morning walk in the forest and how all his senses were aroused and happiness overcame him:

(...) Mes yeux

Pourtant grands ouverts,

Ne sont pas assez grands

Pour capturer tant de Beauté...(...)

La silhouette

D'un jeune Cerf

Apparaît soudain

Devant moi !!!

Je reste paralysé

D'émerveillement...(...)[132]

The scene described corresponds to the author's own experience at that particular moment and not to a generic understanding of the environment. Choosing to write is

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[130] Rita Mestokosho, p. 13.
[131] Eléonore Jiconsaseh Sioui, *Corps à coeur éperdu*, p. 115.
[132] Yvon H. Couture, *Aki Têwêgan, le tambour de la terre*, pp. 55-56.

in itself an act of transculturation, as writing was not part of Native culture in Canada before the arrival of White people. Native writers from Quebec may find it difficult to be published as their writing must appeal to the majority of their future readers, i.e. non-Native people. This last reality influences to a certain extent their way of writing and also the content of their texts. On the other hand, it could be argued that any writer, Native or non-Native, is faced with the same pressure.

Native writers in Quebec come from different origins. Among the ten Amerindian nations inhabiting Quebec, only five of them have generated published writers who have chosen to write in French over the past thirty years. It may, then, seem improper to name this field "Native literature from Quebec." Colonisers have named the first inhabitants of Canada as the "Native people of Canada", whereas all these very different peoples never considered themselves as one unit. Since colonisation, however, all these peoples have suffered, certainly in different ways, but they have all shared the same oppressor, and this common suffering has to a certain extent unified their voices when retelling the past and portraying the coloniser as Other. Native writers of Quebec have integrated the White's perception of them as a whole group without forgetting each nation's specificities. Their writing varies in its mode of expression, from that of an individual voice, to a collective voice (their nation's), to another wider collective voice: the Native people of the Americas. Whether the collective or the individual voice is dominant varies from author to author. Poems generally convey the feelings of an individual rather than voice Native people's identity. Gender and age are factors in the strength of the individual voice. The descriptions of the Other enable the writers to assert their own identity. Denouncing the behaviour and acts of White people from the time of colonisation to

the present time serves to highlight the qualities of their own cultures. Returning the gaze is an act of empowerment which contributes to the assertion of their identity. When portraying the coloniser as Other, some Native writers reuse the coloniser's discourse and clichés in order to redress, counterbalance and change them and assert their own identity. This transcultural process shifts power. Transculturation is at the heart of their representations of themselves. Transcultural representations can also refer to borderless cultural productions. This takes place, for instance, when Yves Sioui Durand mixes mythologies from different Native nations of the Americas. Yvon H. Couture has created poems using European imagery, but expressing his own thoughts within a Native context.

It is apparent that in contemporary Native Quebec literature, collective traditional and modern individual self-analytical voices create contrasting cultural representations. Yet there are recurrent ideas that bring unity and can give birth to a Native discourse. The representations of nature and the retelling of the past are two key aspects in the assertion of Native identity. Nature is present in all their writings and more specifically the Natives' relation to her. Native people perceive themselves as the defenders and protectors of Mother nature,[133] and as for the theme of nature, the retelling of the past corresponds to two seemingly antagonistic conceptions: one drawing on ancient beliefs and traditions, the other on modern ideas developed by contact with non-Natives.

[133] See Chapter Four.

Chapter Three

Memory/Past

"Il y a un grand peuple dans ce pays
chaque jour il doit se raconter le passé
pour porter fièrement le souvenir de sa race."[1]

The remembrance of the past is a key component in the building and assertion of the identity of both individual and nation. Whether oral or written, narratives serve to articulate and position an individual or a nation through selection and combination of past events. Sociologists such as Maurice Halbwachs emphasize the fact that we can only remember by placing ourselves in the perspective of a group. Through our lives, these groups vary and subsequently our memories vary. Maurice Halbwachs points out that "collective memory is essentially a reconstruction of the past in the light of the present."[2] Thus the past should not be considered as a series of fixed images that one can access on request. When we reflect on the past, we reconstruct it through a conscious effort, and the result of this process creates a distorted past. However, since the Enlightenment period, history has become a subject which is approached scientifically, and aspires to objectivity. Historians are their own authority. Like the rest of the West, the dominant tendency in Quebec has been to reconstruct the past as an evolutionary grand narrative. In "La Saga du Québec moderne en images",[3] Jocelyn Létourneau shows how Quebec history was reconstructed during the Quiet Revolution in the 1960s in order to create a modern image of Quebec. The authenticity of the narrative is not questioned, but the author clearly demonstrates how the representation of the past is structured by how a society desires to perceive itself. Through the selection of events being retold or not, it is possible to highlight certain characteristics of a nation. In the 1960s, the historical narrative in Quebec concentrated on showing how the Québécois were coming out of darkness and turning

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[1] Jean Sioui, *Le Pas de l'Indien. Pensées Wendates* (Québec: Le Loup de Gouttière), p. 23.
[2] Maurice Halbwachs, *On Collective Memory*, ed. and trans. by Lewis A. Coser (Chicago: The University of Chicago Press, 1992).
[3] Jocelyn Létourneau, "La Saga du Québec en images," in *Genèses*, 4, mai 1991, pp. 44-71.

themselves into a progressive and successful nation, freeing themselves from the domination of the Catholic Church. Létourneau demonstrates how the historical narrative scheme was composed of heroes and culprits, "goodies" and "baddies", and how the narration of the past led to the representation of a created modern collective identity. This discourse, however, did not seem to include the First nations living on the same land. As mentioned in the first chapter, history, in Canada as in the whole American continent, was considered for a long time to have started only after the arrival of the Europeans. Until around twenty years ago, school manuals still related how the American continent had been occupied only by wandering savages who did not have any civilisation, and that History began with the White settlers. This version of history served to justify the colonists' behaviour towards America's original inhabitants and to alleviate the feeling of guilt that might have been present in the descendants' minds. It is thus understandable that Native authors nowadays are still concerned with retelling the past. They are eager to give their own version of the past. The resurgence of past scenes in their writing serves to rebuild confidence in their identity. As Homi K. Bhabha remarks in *The Location of Culture*, this process does not occur without its load of grief: "remembering is never a quiet act of introspection, it is a re-membering, a putting together of images from a dismembered past in order to make sense of the trauma of the present."[4] Halbwachs also states that "society tends to erase from its memory all that might separate individuals, or that might distance groups from each other."[5] The analysis of the representations of the past in the cited texts is a good indicator of what matters to Native authors at present, and this corresponds to the identity features identified in the previous chapter. In creating their own historical discourse, Native authors have shown a tendency to present a counter-

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[4] Homi K. Bhabha, *The Location of Culture*, p. 63.
[5] Maurice Halbwachs, *On Collective Memory*, p. 183.

narrative of the non-Native one. Paul Connerton, another sociologist, thinks that to pass judgement on previous modes of representation is constitutive of a new order.[6]

In a postcolonial context, this counter-narrative process can be expressed through mimicry[7] of the ex-colonisers' discursive elements. This has been considered by Homi K. Bhabha as an act of empowerment. It is undeniable that this positioning also raises the question of ambivalence: to what extent is a Native discourse really coming into existence? Depending on the author, time will be either represented in a Western linear way or in a Native circular way. Traditionally, Native people in Quebec, as in the rest of the Americas, have perceived time in relation to nature, which meant following the cycle of the seasons. Due to their mode of living, their daily activities were organised and dictated by their surroundings and the weather. The cyclical aspect of the seasons led to a conception of time and life as a circular movement. Since the invention of printing and the spread of newspapers, Western people have conceptualised time as being homogeneous, which differs entirely from preliterate societies. Indeed, the presence of newspapers gave the readers the impression that the different members of a given society shared a uniform vision of time, and thus felt connected to one another. By choosing to be published at all, Native authors from Quebec participate in this conceptualisation of time. However, the construction of certain narratives tends to represent time in a pre-modern manner. The form of the narrative and the perception of the author's intent will thus play an important part in relation to the evocation of the past. Bernard Assiniwi's historical novel, *La Saga des Béothuks*, does not negotiate the past in the same manner as Yves Sioui Durand's play, *Le Porteur des peines du monde*. Assiniwi bases his narrative on facts he found in history books and chronicles, whereas Yves Sioui Durand used

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[6] Paul Connerton, *How Societies Remember* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1999).
[7] Homi K. Bhabha, *The Location of Culture*, p. 85-93.

Native mythological references. For the latter, the performance of the text undoubtedly brings another dimension to the representation of time and space. In 'Theatre as a Site of Passage, Some Reflection on the Magic of Acting', Kirsten Hastrup states that "theatre has developed from ritual and that both are in some sense an answer to people's need for 'communitas' and spectacle."[8] Drama can be seen as a means of expression closer to oral tradition than any other textual form, transmitting cultural elements in a communal way. Rituals are coded representations that serve to assert continuity with past events and to create a meaningful relationship between the different participants. Theatre has often been thought of as being derived from rituals. In her article, 'From Ritualization to Performativity, The Concheros of Mexico',[9] Suzanne Rostas explores the relationship of these two entities. The conclusion in her specific situation shows that there is indeed a close connection between the two, in fact that differentiating between them can be difficult. Her definition of ritual is drawn from Humphrey and Laidlaw,[10] who explained that the agents of ritualistic acts "remove the sovereignty of [themselves] as agent[s]', for in ritual you both are and are not the author of your acts."[11] Performativity[12] is the measure of effort put into an action - the way the action is performed is at the centre of interest - whereas a ritual action implies that there exists something outside of the action which brings meaning to it. Yves Sioui Durand's plays combine performativity and ritualization, and this affects both the perception and the representation of past events.

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[8] Kirsten Harstrup, 'Theatre as a Site of Passage. Some Reflection on the Magic of Acting,' in *Ritual, Performance, Media*, ed. by Felicia Hughes-Freeland (London : Routledge, 1998), p. 31.
[9]'From Ritualization to Performativity, The Concheros of Mexico,' in *Ritual, Performance, Media*, ed. by Felicia Hughes-Freeland (London: Routledge, 1998), pp. 85-103.
[10] C. Humphrey and J. Laidlaw, *The Archetypal Actions of Ritual* (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1994).
[11] 'From Ritualization to Performativity, The Concheros of Mexico,' p. 90.
[12] In this case, performitivity should not be understood in Judith Butler's sense as it is not linked to the idea of "performing" identity. Suzanne Rostas' conception of performativity is only related to theatre and performance.

I Reconstructing the Past as a Historical Process

I. 1. Recurrence of Certain Images and Selective Memory

As touched upon in the previous chapter, the past evoked in the texts of the corpus corresponds essentially to the period of time preceding colonisation or during colonisation. Since the 1970s, several Native writers have published books telling the history of their nations or of other Native nations. Their approach has generally been similar to the non-Native one, using previous written references and following a chronological order. For instance, Pierre Gill, an Innu, published the history of the Innus from Saguenay-Lake-St-John[13] in 1987. In his introduction, he explains that he thought it was necessary to study documents such as *Relations des Jésuites*, as their detailed analysis of the Montagnais could not be overlooked. All the written documents still available nowadays are composed of comments and observations made by non-Native people whose background and frame of mind were very different from the people they wrote about. Most of the comments were very critical too. However, Native authors produce a very positive vision of their ancestors based on these sources. The construction of a modern Native discourse is thus based on the selection of images and representations that mainly reveal a past of which Native people can be proud. Bernard Assiniwi[14] wrote three volumes telling the history of all the nations from Upper and Lower Canada. At the beginning of the first volume, he clearly says that this is a Native version of history and that he does not pretend to be objective, as nor were previous writings. The list of his bibliographical references at the end of each volume is nonetheless very long and these sources have all been

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[13] Pierre Gill *Les Montagnais, premiers habitants du Saguenay-Lac-St-Jean* (Alma: Les Editions du lac-St-Jean, 1987).
[14] Bernard Assiniwi, *Histoire des Indiens du Haut et du Bas*, tome1,2,3 (Ottawa: Leméac, 1974).

written by non-Native people. His tone can be very sarcastic in some places and he continually highlights certain aspects that other historians have purposefully forgotten to mention in order to portray the French colonisers as heroic and righteous. For instance, Assiniwi criticizes Jacques Cartier's behaviour during a meeting Cartier had with a few Wendats. The meeting ended with two of the Wendats taken away on Jacques Cartier's boat. In fact, Assiniwi questions the authenticity of the non-Native version of the events:

> [Jacques Cartier] affirme aussi que le chef accepta des cadeaux en échange de ces deux hommes. Et pourtant...personne ne comprenait la langue des Wendats...et les Wendats ne comprenaient pas le français...Mais Cartier affirme que le chef était d'accord...force nous est faite de le croire, puisqu'il était homme d'honneur, gentilhomme et Français.[15]

History texts written by Native people, like fictional texts, tend to focus on showing a more positive vision of the role played by the different nations. As stated in the previous chapter, the descriptions made by Native authors of their ancestors contrast highly with those made by colonisers. Whatever the author's origin, previous generations are never criticised or blamed for their present situation, which is not the case for the ex-colonisers. On the contrary, the harmonious way of living of the Natives is praised. Native ancestors are never portrayed as helpless victims. The stress is put on the evil nature of the white man, whose scheming mind tricks the generous and peaceful Indian. The retelling of past events enables the authors to show how, despite very violent changes, Native people have survived and how the memory of their ancestors will help them not only to be proud of their origins, but also to find a place in the modern society in which they live. As identity representations are revealed, the specificities of each nation do not prevent the emergence of a Native

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[15] Bernard Assiniwi, *Histoire des Indiens du Haut et du Bas*, tome 2 (Ottawa: Leméac, 1974), pp. 37-38.

discourse. Narrating past events will also contribute to the formation of such a discourse.

La Saga des Béothuks,[16] a historical novel published in 1996, contains a wide selection of representations of past Native life. The fact that Bernard Assiniwi received some recognition from a non-Native jury may bring into question the indianity of his narrative. The structure and the content of this work may have been acceptable and publishable because it satisfied the dominant society's perception of Native people. I will return to this point later in the chapter, but will bear it in mind in the analysis of characterisation and storyline which follow. To recreate the story of this now extinct people, Bernard Assiniwi used his experiences of historian, anthropologist and storyteller. Very little is known of the Beothuk people who lived in Newfoundland until the last one died in 1829.[17] Bernard Assiniwi bases his narrative on historical facts extracted from letters, journals, and historical research written by non-Native people. At the end of the book, the reader can find a chronology of the main events the author refers to during the story. The time line is spread over 800 years from 1000 A.D. until 1829. Comparing these facts with his narrative is useful as it puts into perspective the way the events are being revealed in history in general, and also what aspects Assiniwi brings to the fore. *La Saga des Béothuks* has been defined by publishers as a historical novel and it does bear characteristics of this Western literary genre. For instance, critics such as George Lukács[18] have pointed out the necessary presence of dates, real personages or events to which identification can readily be given. Assiniwi has included in his text explorers and known Beothuk people who lived at the time the narrative is set. In fact, one can easily follow the

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[16] Bernard Assiniwi, *La Saga des Béothuks* (Montréal: Leméac, 1996).
[17] Shanawditith died of tuberculosis on June 6th 1829 at Saint John's hospital in newfoundland.
[18] George Lukács, *The Historical Novel*, trans. from the German by Hannah and Stanley Mitchell (London: Merlin Press, 1962).

chronological events listed at the end of the book in parallel with the story. Of course, novelists' selection of events is dependent on where they place primary emphasis and upon the ideological position that can be perceived behind the fictional creation. Assiniwi portrays the Beothuks as very decent people, enabling him to counteract the coloniser's universal discourse justifying the need to civilise what they consider to be a barbarian people. George Lukács also pointed out how authors very often choose to tell the story from the perspective of minor characters as opposed to well-known historical figures. Assiniwi has indeed invented a series of characters who make it possible for the reader to grasp the cultural and social reality of a people who lived centuries ago. The combination of real personages and the reader's empathy with minor characters helps to create an impression of historical authenticity. In the title of the book, the word "saga" also reveals another dimension that the author has clearly attempted to access. Sagas were originally medieval Scandinavian and Icelandic stories in prose concerning the heroic exploits of warriors. The meaning of this word has evolved and now also corresponds to the relation of events spanning several generations, as is the case with this novel. Besides, the use of certain oral aspects within the language and the structure share similarities with the original definition.[19] In the first two parts of the novel, Assiniwi gives an epic dimension to the story with the introduction of Anin, the fictional founder, and representative of the Beothuks' nation. Despite an absence of supernatural events, the war elements and the breadth of scope of the narrative give the novel an epic quality. In *La Théorie du roman*,[20] Lukács put in contrasts epic stories and historical novels. In the first genre, the hero can barely be separated from the exterior world and encapsulates values of the civilisation being depicted. Anin, the first main character of *La Saga des Béothuks*,

[19] This will however be dealt with in the last chapter on linguistic matters.
[20] Georges Lukàcs, *La Théorie du roman*, traduit de l'allemand par Jean Clairevoye (n.p.: Gonthier, 1968).

embodies the Beothuk nation. In epics, the hero is very often the leader of a nation and represents a strong sense of collective identity within the framework of an inevitable tragic fate. In Assiniwi's narrative, it corresponds to the disappearance of the Beothuk nation. Moreover, old traditional epics, such as *Odyssey* or *Aeneid*, were not only a means of entertainment, but they were chronicles of past civilisations, "a vital record of custom and tradition."[21] Although Assiniwi has reconstructed Beothuk society thanks to written testimonies, the scope of events, the accumulation of cultural details and especially the emphasis on actions - as opposed to characters' psychology - contribute to such an effect. Contrastingly, historical novels tend to focus more on individuals. One of the key elements for this reason is the author's intent to show how different strata in the society being depicted were affected by the chosen historical period. Assiniwi's *La Saga des Béothuks* is in fact constructed around these two genres.

After the chronology, the reader can find a list of the last Beothuk words known today. These 274 words were transmitted by Oubee, a kidnapped Beothuk sent to England to stay with a couple called Jones in 1758. Bernard Assiniwi mixes some of the Beothuk words with the French language, enticing the reader to enter another world. The history of the Beothuks is organised around three parts of unequal length. The first part, entitled 'L'initié', is the longest, and tells how the Beothuks used to live; this part is built around the main character, Anin. The second part, 'Les envahisseurs', takes place 500 years later. As the title indicates, the colonisation of the island becomes more and more serious and Anin's descendants struggle to keep their territory. In this section, Assiniwi describes the various approaches the Beothuks may have undertaken towards their invaders. Unfortunately, they never managed to

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[21] Paul Merchant, *The Epic* (London: Methuen, 1971), p.1.

establish a trading relationship with the colonisers, and this would have given them a better chance to survive. The first two parts tend to follow rules of the epic genre. Chapter six, situated in the first part, offers a good example of such a process. The time line of this passage covers a period of five days although it starts in an evasive time reference with the use of the imperfect indicating that the actions depicted have occurred for certain period of time. The text is centred on Anin's and Woasut's activities, leaving little space for dialogue. Consequently, the narrative is articulated through the narrator's telling of events and rarely presenting "showing" scenes, which Aristotle referred to as imitative mimesis. The opening scene of the passage reveals Woasut's feelings and serves to establish a link with the previous chapter, which ended with her being upset about the loss of her entire family and entire community. This one concludes with the possible establishment of their living together. The depiction of their surroundings is always deeply related to their daily activities and needs for survival. For instance, after their arrival in a creek, the narrator describes the forest in the area in terms of possible use for their future dwelling:

> La forêt devenant moins fournie, le bouleau était moins gros et l'écorce couvrait moins de surface. Aussi, l'abri temporaire ne fut-il pas terminé le premier soir, et c'est sous un ciel étoilé qu'ils passèrent cette première nuit de l'étape du froid.[22]

The two main events of this passage concerning the flow of the narrative are Anin's meeting with the bear again, and finding a place for their winter settlement. These elements contribute to the setting of further *detours*[23] in the sequence telling Anin's journey as Anin will meet and include in his clan a group of four foreign people. The structure of the narrative based on successions of actions with short intermittent externalizations of thoughts and feelings does bear similarities with epic style. As in

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[22] Bernard Assiniwi, *La Saga des Béothuks*, p. 54.
[23] In Roland Barthes' sense developed in *S/Z* (Paris: Seuil, 1974).

Homer's narratives, characters do not seem to evolve in the course of the narrative. Even if they sometimes decide to change their behaviour due to some eventful circumstances, the strong presence of the narrator's voice prevents the characters from being perceived as rounded. Each time a character's thought is revealed, it is either in relation to cultural aspects that Assiniwi wants to highlight or linked to the historical plot. In the current passage, the evocation of Woasut's fear and sadness allows the narrator to mention the traditional Beothuk attitude concerning lies and respect towards other people. On page 58, Anin does not ask any question when Woasut starts crying, and respects the expression of her pain. This example in particular exposes the intervention of the "poet's voice"[24] within the narrative:

> Woasut ne rit pas de cette croyance, car beaucoup avaient la même dans son village, avant...(...) Il lui sembla impossible de ne pas se souvenir et elle pleura un bon moment, sans qu'Anin intervienne. Les choses qu'on se rappelle sont à nous et personne n'a même le droit de poser de questions à leur sujet.(...) Pour ne pas susciter le mensonge, il ne faut pas poser de questions.[25]

In the first quoted sentence, the character's and narrator's voice conflate and the didactic tone of the narration is brought to the surface. The last three cited instances clearly belong to the narrator. If Bakhtin suggests that in novels the presence of several voices, notably the narrator's and the characters', create a dialogue within the narrative, it seems that in this text the narrator's voice dominates the process. In fact, the system of re-presentation in place in the passage can be envisaged according to Plato's conception of modes of depiction. He considered that there were two methods of re-presentation: mimesis and the poet's voice. The first corresponds to the imitation of a character's voice. The second implies that the narrator's and the author's voice are the same. If these two remarks tend to coincide with the present

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[24] Plato's terminology in relation to systems of re-presentation as summarized further on.
[25] Bernard Assiniwi, *La Saga des Béothuks*, p. 58.

passage and most of the narrative, it is important to emphasize the fact that there is absolutely no noticeable speech distinction between the different characters and between the characters' and the narrator's voice. The whole narrative including the dialogues has been written in standard French. For example, there is not a single instance of omitted negation which is extremely common in spoken French. It is only the presence of inverted commas and the use of first and second person narrative that determine the separation between narrator and characters' voices.

The last part, 'Le génocide', unlike the third person narratives of the previous two parts, is told in the first person by Wonasktaé,[26] the first woman chosen to be the living memory of the Beothuks. After her death, Shanawditith, the truly last Beothuk, voices the rest of the story. As this part leads to the final tragedy - the disappearance of the Beothuk nation -, the events accelerate and the tone of the narrative oscillates between despair, anger and glimpses of hope. In chapter 55, Shanawditith starts to question the tradition in relation to the keeper's memory. She wonders what she should do, what path to follow as there are fewer and fewer of them and her family is ill. Because of this change of focalization, Assiniwi moves away from the epic and brings the narrative into the realm of the historical novel. The hero's characterisation is centred on an interior world: the main character no longer blends with his/her surroundings. *La Saga des Béothuks* is in fact an epic and a historical narrative. Assiniwi has constructed this story following Native oral tradition and Western forms. The mixing of the two influences creates an interesting hybrid production.

The general structure of the novel corresponds to a Western vision of time, following a linear perspective. Even if there are circular representations of time within the story as the Beothuks count in seasons, moons and suns, Assiniwi constructs the

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[26] Wonasktaé, also called Desmaduit and Mary March, did exist, but no evidence confirms her role as a keeper of memory.

narrative in a linear way. The presence of the three maps in the text, one preceding each part, belongs to the usual non-Native manner of dealing with history. However, as will be discussed, the apparent effect of such a process can be misleading. Through his narrative, Bernard Assiniwi presents the Beothuk past prior to colonisation as an era when, despite the difficulties of their environment, these people lived in harmony with it. Every member of the nation had a role to play and the participation of everyone was important for the survival of the group. For instance, there are two large-scale hunts that are described in the second part - caribou hunting and beluga hunting - and both of them give a clear impression of the importance of coordination within the community:

> Les avironneurs avaient contourné le troupeau de baleines blanches qui avait enfin trouvé la passe nord de l'île des Exploits (...). Dès qu'une baleine s'échouait, deux ou trois chasseurs venaient avec des aminas, harponnaient la tête près de l'artère principale, sur le côté droit du corps, juste au bas de l'évent(...)Les femmes et les hommes moins jeunes s'approchaient alors et commençaient le dépeçage à l'aide de tranchoirs en forme de demi-lunes au bout d'un long bâton.[27]

Throughout the story, the stress is put on selected scenes showing the numerous qualities these Native people had: courage, patience, determination. However, Bernard Assiniwi never force-feeds these aspects. Through the description of the Beothuk daily routine, for instance, the author manages to make the reader realise how hard-working the people were. There are very few scenes in the book where the characters are not active. Even if Assiniwi depicts a few banquet scenes, notably for Anin's return to his nation, the main impression that the narrative gives is of days filled with many tasks. These images of hard-working ancestors recall the female portraits mentioned in the previous chapter. Rita Mestokosho's grandmother and

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[27] Bernard Assiniwi, *La Saga des Béothuks*, pp. 273-274.

Eléonore Sioui's mother were both described as old women who had used up all their energy as the society they lived in required. The hardships that the Beothuk have to face in their everyday life do not turn them into bitter and selfish people; the reader can perceive that life, as the heart of everything, is the only thing that matters. The retelling of the past contrasts with the way contemporary Natives live. As explained in the first chapter, before the intensification of colonisation, every Native nation had its own place within its environment and also in relation to other nations. For instance, the Innu were nomadic hunters, and exchanged products with the Iroquoians who were farmers. It is undeniable that war sometimes took place, but constant exchanges between the different groups enabled each culture to survive. By placing Native people in reservations and by preventing them from hunting where they wanted, the main part of their active life became restricted in just a few centuries. Nowadays the high level of unemployment with its concomitant alcoholism and domestic abuse exacerbates the loss of a feeling of belonging to the same culture as their forefathers. It thus seems important to revive a sense of continuity in highlighting the positive features that their ancestors developed. Native authors do not preach a return to their ancestors' way of living as this would not only alienate the young generation, but would be impossible to realise due to the massive changes that have occurred over the past centuries. One may wonder how bringing back scenes from the past will generate an assertion of identity in a contemporary society. From the beginning of the 20th century till the 1970s, there was an unspoken consensus among Native people which advised that it was better not to underline the fact that you were from Native origin. This was partly due to the negative images evoked by White people which tended to enclose Native culture in a past that was considered gone for ever. So many derogatory representations have been made of the various Native nations that to

counterbalance the flow, Native authors have had a tendency to present almost exclusively positive behaviour. This aspect enables to understand the selection of the positive images mentioned so far. Among all the Native texts in this corpus, only three of them contain the representations of badly behaved characters and they are all set in contemporary situations. The image of the Indian living in complete harmony with nature is certainly the most popular one. This is not surprising if one considers that Native people's ancestors depended entirely on their surroundings; their relationship with nature was at the centre of their lives and their oral tradition and beliefs were bound directly to their perception of the natural world. Even if Native people's mode of living has markedly changed, their professed perception of nature and the cosmos is still very similar to their ancestors'. As opposed to non-Native writings from Quebec, nature is never described as a hostile place by Native writers. Rosemary Chapman shows in *Siting the Quebec Novel, the Representation of Space in Francophone Writing in Quebec*[28] how descriptions of the Canadian landscape, notably Northern Quebec, by non-Native writers have been punctuated by scenes of depressing emptiness and treacherous cold weather. The link between nature and the Native perception of space and time will be analysed in the next chapter.

The image of the generous Indian is also recurrent. In *Corps à Coeur éperdu*,[29] Eléonore Sioui writes three poems, one in French and two in English, retelling the meeting between her people - the Huron-Wendat - and White people. They all contrast the welcoming attitude of the Natives with the selfish and imposing behaviour of the White invaders. As 'Fraternité',[30] has already been looked at in the

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[28] Rosemary Chapman, *Siting the Quebec Novel, the Representation of Space in Francophone Writing in Quebec* (Oxford: Peter Lang, 2000).
[29] Eléonore Sioui, *Corps à Coeur éperdu* (Val d'Or: D'ici et d'ailleurs, 1992).
[30] Ibid., p. 14.

previous chapter, 'Kanatha',[31] and 'The People of the Island',[32] will be examined more closely in their English versions. Both poems end on the bitter statement that the author's Wyandot country has been reduced to one very small village, Wendake:

> Such is the way we received our White brothers
>
> Who came from the other side of our Great Island
>
> Four hundred fifty years ago
>
> Taking my people from our once beautiful Country
>
> The Great Lakes
>
> To the little Huron Wyandot nation's village.[33]
>
> Five hundred years ago
>
> And then my fate took me
>
> Raped our Wyandot Country
>
> To the Huron Village
>
> Helded in genociding laws.[34]

The vocabulary used in the last poem is definitely stronger and more aggressive towards the colonisers. These two poems, contrasting the generosity of the Indians and the greed of the Whites, do not however portray Natives' behaviour as being naïve or a mistake. On the other hand, the attitude of the colonisers is condemned. The stress is placed on the presence of the exchanges already existent between the different Native nations prior to the arrival of the colonisers:

> and above all, our sacred tobacco
>
> Negotiated for generations with our Northern brothers
>
> The Attikamecks, Nescapi, the Crees,
>
> The Algonkins and the Montagnais [35]

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[31] Ibid., p. 54.
[32] Ibid., p. 63.
[33] Ibid., p. 54.
[34] Ibid., p. 63.
[35] Ibid., p. 54.

The fact that these exchanges did occur notwithstanding, this long enumeration of the products and people involved contrasts sharply with the last short lines concerning White people. In another very short poem, 'Collier de partage', Eléonore Sioui also evokes the caring and generous nature of Native people for others:

> Le Grand Esprit
>
> A donné à l'Homme Rouge
>
> La vertu de connaître
>
> Les racines et les plantes
>
> Qui protègent nos santés et nos vies
>
> Ainsi que celles de nos frères
>
> Blancs, Jaunes et Noirs.[36]

In this poem, there is also the theme of the Indian close to nature whose knowledge could improve modern societies. This point will be developed later. The welcoming and generous nature of Native people is also present in *La Saga des Béothuks*. In the first part of the narrative, Anin the main character saves the lives of four outsiders; two female Vikings and two Scottish slaves (a man and a woman). These four people then get integrated into Beothuk society. In the second part, a French sailor also joins them when he decides to abandon his life as a sailor, having fallen in love with a Beothuk woman. Assiniwi uses the voices of these non-Natives living within Beothuk society to convince the reader of the efficient functioning and nobility of such a society. For instance, Jean Le Guellec, the French sailor, is impressed by the way the Beothuk hunt the belugas and especially how none of them made fun of a hunter who became disfigured after a mistake in the caribou hunt:

> Wobee[his Beothuk name] assista à toutes ces effusions et apprit beaucoup sur la très grande solidarité de ces gens qui passaient pour des sauvages sanguinaires aux yeux des Européens venus pêcher sur les côtes de l'île.[37]

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[36] Ibid., p. 87.

This last quotation brings in another aspect, the feeling of unity amongst the people. The combination of scenes of "natural" co-operation within the group, with descriptions of scenes from a non-Native point of view, contributes to the creation of a Native discourse with a positive view of the past.

The texts evoking the past do not only emphasize the Natives' capacity to live in harmony with nature, but also with each other. In *La Saga des Béothuks*, each time a tension or a problem appears, the leader of the group or the people involved find a solution as soon as possible. There are sets of rules that the Beothuks should follow to ensure that they can live in peace. For example, when the number of men is too low in comparison to the amount of women present in the society, several women will have to share a man. This kind of situation may create some tension too in the household as jealousy between the women is likely to happen. However, Bernard Assiniwi portrays his female characters as being able to find happiness and overcome their feeling of jealousy. At his return to his nation, Anin has four females to form his clan: Woasut (a Beothuk he saved during his trip), Gudruid and Gwenid (two Viking sisters) and Della (one of the Scottish slaves). Woasut's feelings are never revealed in front of the others or Anin. The reader discovers what she thinks through the description of her thoughts by the omniscient narrator. Even if she feels hurt first of all when Anin brings back a White woman, Gudruid, with him to the mammatik, she realises quickly that the newcomer will be able to help her with her work and the coming baby.[38] Later joined by two other women, this group of females eventually appreciate and understand each other. In the Beothuk society depicted by Bernard Assiniwi, it seems that it does not take long for people to comprehend how they should behave or think in order to restore either their inner peace or the peace inside the community. By choosing to

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[37] Bernard Assiniwi, *La Saga des Béothuks*, p. 301.
[38] Bernard Assiniwi, *La Saga des Béothuks*, p.100.

describe such sexual and social arrangements, Assiniwi may have also considered that it would appeal to modern readers, and this is also the case with the mention, previously, of homosexuality.[39] However, a disruption does occur within Beothuk society with the rise of Iwish, a female warrior who leads the nation for several years in the second part of the book. Assiniwi portrays her as a very gifted and strong fighter whose strategy for facing the invaders is at odds with the opinion of the male members' of the council. Having lost her husband, the previous chief, with his other wife to Portuguese sailors, Iwish is convinced that the Beothuks should divide the nation into separate groups who would then live in different parts of the Island. Her aim is to prevent the whole nation from disappearing completely. She also thinks that they should practise more lightning fast attacks on White people. The males want to follow the tradition and stay where they have always lived since Anin's time:

> Les hommes clamaient que depuis trois cycles de saisons, aucun navire n'était venu prendre de l'eau sur leur île. C'était la preuve que les plans d'Anin, l'Ancêtre, étaient respectés et bien mis en application. Pourquoi diviserait-on le village alors que leur union faisait leur force?[40]

Eventually, after losing another 57 men to the Portuguese, Iwish's opponents admit that she is right and let her access leadership. Peace is once again restored, even if the threat of European invasion still prevails. *La Saga des Béothuks* is structured in such a way as to give a positive impression of a harmonious people despite their tragic demise. The kaleidoscope of visions in the narrative enhances the positive image of the Native way of life. The Beothuks comment on the Viking, Scottish and French civilisations respectively, while the non-Native characters do the same with the Beothuk society. As stated previously, Beothuk society is ultimately portrayed as the best one of all.

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[39] See page 97 in Chapter Two.
[40] Ibid., p. 229.

Harmony and unity within a nation is also recurrent in Eléonore Sioui's poetry, as in most Native texts. 'Vision of the Realization of Tecumseh Spiritual Center'[41] is a poem revealing her vision as a spiritual leader and healer. She uses the word "reunited" twice as part of a message for the future: "vision of a reunited Nation", "I saw my people reunited again."[42] Her longing for the reunion of her people is closely connected to Native bravery and pride in their origins:

(...)I saw my people reunited again

Living healthy, physically and spiritually,

On our abundant mother earth

Holding hands and head high, adorned with eagle feathers

In proudness, braveness and courage

Head to the breath of freedom again.[43]

It is true that the division she evokes is also dependent on the government's law deciding who is native and who is not, and a result of the colonisers' wars which scattered the members of the Huron-Wendat nation in Canadian and American territory. Yet one cannot deny that there is a lack of unity today within each community, preventing the very feelings of pride or courage that she writes. Thus the selection and combination of peaceful images serve to create a constructive representation of Native identity. In 'Arbre de vie',[44] Eléonore Sioui once again refers to a disunited nation. She compares the different nations or Natives to branches that do not meet, but which are linked to the same source with the Creator as the provider of life. This desire for unity, life in harmony, and pride in their origins could not be better encapsulated than in historical figures such as Tecumseh (1768-1813) and Pontiac (1712/1725?-1769).

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[41] Eléonore Sioui, *Corps à Coeur éperdu*, p. 62.
[42] Ibid., p.62.
[43] Ibid., p.62.
[44] Ibid., p.85.

Assiniwi wrote another historical novel relating the last fifteen years of Pontiac's life.[45] Pontiac was an Odawa war chief, who managed for a short period of time to unite nineteen tribes to fight against the English. According to Olive Patricia Dickason, there is not much information concerning his origins.[46] There are contradictory reports about his personality. He is variously described as a vindictive and easily offended person, or someone with great judgement and a thirst for knowledge. As could be expected, Assiniwi chose to select the second representation of this historical figure. After the end of the French/British wars, Native peoples became worried and angry as they could not benefit from the tensions between the two European sides. Moreover, Native chiefs including Pontiac tried to make the British understand that even if they had conquered the French, it did not mean they had conquered the Natives or their lands, as the French were only tenants. Pontiac gained more and more power with Neolin, a Delaware prophet, as the Natives showed more and more resentment of the new situation. Not only were they provided with fewer goods and especially ammunition by the British, but their lands were increasingly invaded by European settlers. Pontiac did not instigate the troubles; he contributed to bringing unity between the different Native nations in the conflict to oppose the British. Olive Patricia Dickason considers it as "the most formidable Native uprising faced by the British during the 18th century."[47] Pontiac and his men were successful enough to take control of several forts. They put so much pressure on the British that they decided to resolve the situation by calling a peace conference at Fort Niagara in 1764. Pontiac refused to join the conference, but signed a separate agreement the following year. Despite being killed by an Illinois bribed by an English

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[45] Bernard Assiniwi, *L'Odawa Pontiac* (Montréal: XYZ, 1993).
[46] Olive Patricia Dickason, *Canada's First Nations, a History of Founding Peoples from Earliest Times* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2002), p. 159.
[47] Ibid., p.159.

trader, Pontiac succeeded for a short while in creating a coalition between different nations such as the Odawas, the Ojibways, the Potawatomis, the Abenakis, the Huron-Wendats, the Delaware and the Shawnis. In his novel, Bernard Assiniwi portrays Pontiac in a very flattering manner. He appears to be a very strong, thoughtful and righteous man. For example, after finding out that Angélique Cuillerier (the young woman he is in love with) has betrayed him, he does not take revenge on her or her father as he understands that Angélique's lack of maturity led her to such an act.[48] The narrative is divided into 16 chapters. It is composed of scenes of battles, war strategies, speeches and an impossible romance between Pontiac and Angélique Cuillerier. The reader can find at the end of the book a chronology of the events that occurred in Canada, America and Europe between 1713 and 1783, a period of time which covers Pontiac' s lifetime. Before the chronology, there is also a lexical list of bold terms found in the text. These terms refer to historical figures, Native peoples and places and are given a condensed explanation by Assiniwi. *L'Odawa Pontiac, l'amour et la guerre* could have been constructed like a 19th century adventure novel such as those written by James Fenimore Cooper. It had most of the common components: wars between Indians and white people, romance and a historical background. However, in this case, Indians are not portrayed as cruel barbarians justifying the acts of the Europeans. This fictional biography was published as part of a series called "les grandes figures" edited by Louis-Martin Tard. Despite the fact that the linear structure of the narrative and the format of the book entirely resemble Western models, this story highlights another positive piece of Native past. Pontiac appears to have more dignity than some of the non-Native characters. In the first

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[48] Bernard Assiniwi, *L'Odawa Pontiac*, p. 96.

scene of the book, the behaviour of the soldiers and warriors of his side is contrasted with his own impassivity following a victory:

> Pendant que soldats et guerriers alliés rapaillaient le butin, l'homme vêtu de peau rejoignit Pontiac qui contemplait le carnage sans même sourire. Lui, par contre, jubilait (...)[49]

In a similar way, Pontiac does not show any sign of emotion after hearing from Angélique Cuillerier in a direct confrontation that she does not want him as a husband. The reader is told by the omniscient narrator that he was however hurt and upset. Pontiac is presented by Assiniwi as a man with great judgement, realising that it was impossible for Native people to go back to living as they did before, but also realising that the British would not treat them in the same way that the French had. He thus tries to convince Native peoples and the French to unite and fight against them. This historical novel ends on a slight note of reproach towards the French:

> s'il avait eu advantage d'aide de ses alliés d'alors, les Français, le pays serait peut-être devenu entièrement Francophone.[50]

This last statement also underlines the fact that throughout the narrative it is often difficult to differentiate between Pontiac's voice, the narrator's voice and Assiniwi's own personal judgment. The retelling of the past from a Native point of view once again enables the positioning of a Native discourse within Quebec dominant discourse.

Eléonore Sioui devotes one of her poems to Tecumseh -part Shawnee, part Creek- another great Native leader who came close to uniting Indians against European encroachments. She centres her poem on his death, or rather his lack of a tomb. In her last sentence she qualifies him as "the greatest hero of Americas."[51] Her healing centre also uses the name of Tecumseh. These two leaders, Tecumseh and

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[49] Ibid., p. 14.
[50] Ibid., p. 168.
[51] Elćonore Sioui, *Corps à Coeur éperdu*, p. 61.

Pontiac, have very powerful images as they are not only recognised by non-Native people as memorable figures, but more importantly because they can be used by Native authors to promote a sense of unity and pride in Native origins. When narrating historical events or referring to historical figures, Native authors create a discourse that contributes to building a contemporary identity. The history of colonialism has an importance for Native authors which differs from European historical novelists as it is not only used to restore pride and to make sense of the past, but also to counterbalance previous historical visions.

I.2. Counter-discourse: Ambivalence or Birth of a Native Discourse?

The retelling of the past entails the conscious or unconscious selection of memories. As shown previously, the recurrence of certain representations is highly noticeable. When looking closely at these images, it becomes obvious that they parallel or rather counteract the representations present in the colonial discourse. Gayatri Spivak considers that criticism of the master discourse does not lead to the rise of an independent Native voice:

> No perspective critical of imperialism can turn the Other into a self, because the project of imperialism has always already historically refracted what might have been the absolutely Other into a domesticated Other that consolidates the imperialist self...[52]

For instance, it is arguable that maintaining the division between "Indian" and "White man" in a dialectical way reinforces the position of the Native as a subaltern. On the other hand, this approach to the dominant narrative may be necessary as a first step towards exiting the Manichean paradigm. In *La Saga des Béothuks*, Bernard Assiniwi

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[52] Gayatri Spivak, "Three Women's Texts and a Critique of Imperialism" in *Critical Inquiry*, 12, (1985), pp. 243-261, p. 253.

addresses in an indirect way all the usual clichés imposed on Native people. As was exposed in the previous paragraph, the image of the lazy Indian is reversed as the reader becomes convinced by the descriptions of the daily activities of the Beothuks. The image of the cowardly Indian is also contradicted by several scenes in the book. From the beginning to the end, the Beothuks are portrayed as a resilient people, even if towards the end of the story, there is a passage where a handful of the remaining Beothuks start to despair and the council struggles to find a chief who will lead the nation. In the end, a young man, Dosomite, stands out from the crowd and brings hope to everyone. Assiniwi puts words in his mouth that have been used as a traditional declaration of the Natives' strength and ability to endure for several centuries:[53]

> Tant que je trouverai belles les feuilles de cet arbre, tant que ces feuilles changeront de couleur avant de tomber, je voudrais vivre. Quand cet arbre me paraîtra laid, je sais que je serai prêt à mourir.[54]

As developed previously, Beothuk life is portrayed as being peaceful and better than some European civilisations. In this historical novel, Bernard Assiniwi presents 'the other side of History' - colonisation seen through the eyes of the Native people. Looking back again at the structure of the novel, the semi-scientific approach with the use of maps and time references, which seemed to reflect the intention of copying a non-Native mode of presentation, may in fact reveal the presence of a counter-discourse. Bernard Assiniwi counterbalances the narratives written by the first colonisers such as Jacques Cartier and Samuel de Champlain by rectifying the descriptions of the savages and by imitating the style of their narratives. The presence of the three maps marking the change of eras recalls the spirit of the Conquest.

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[53] These words, or the meaning they carry, have been frequently used by Native people throughtout North America. The origin of this saying is obscure. A Blackfoot chief has apparently said these words in the 19th century in a speech addressed to White government representatives.
[54] Bernard Assiniwi, *La Saga des Béothuks*, p. 333.

Renaming a territory was part of the colonising process, although the colonisers saw it as naming a virgin place. In this case, the name "Terre Neuve"or "Newfoundland" is self-explanatory: new found land. As the story progresses in a more and more tragic way, the maps represent graphically the taking over of Beothuk territory and their unavoidable disappearance. They frame the novel, but also denounce the European invasion. At the beginning of the narrative, the reader encounters Anin, who has been travelling for several months around the world.[55] As opposed to the discoverers, he has undertaken this lonely trip to get some experience, to form himself, to gather knowledge and share his adventure with his people upon his return; there is no mention of territorial or material conquest. The first time he encounters a few foreigners, who happen to be Vikings, he wants to have an exchange with them and does not show any preconceived ideas:

> Il eut envie de se montrer, de faire connaissance, de tenter de communiquer avec eux pour en apprendre advantage.[56]

This attitude is very different from Samuel de Champlain's comments for instance on the "savages" that he encounters on the island of St. Croix:

> They clothe themselves in winter with good furs of beaver and elk. The women make all the garments, but not so exactly but that you can see the flesh under the arm-pits, because they have not ingenuity enough to fit them better. (...)This is the mode of life in winter of these people, which seems to me a very miserable one.[57]

Further on in the narrative, Bernard Assiniwi counterbalances another aspect of the colonisation which was the kidnapping and exhibiting of Native people. These captures are also depicted in the narrative. The presence of the four foreigners saved by Anin enables Assiniwi to portray a scene where a small group of White people are

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[55] The world for Anin is actually Newfoundland.
[56] Bernard Assiniwi, *La Saga des Béothuks*, p. 22.
[57] *Voyages of Samuel de Champlain* edited by W. L. Grant, New York: Charles Scribner's sons, 1907, p. 55.

being discovered by an entire nation of Natives. Unlike when Native people were taken to France or to the United Kingdom and shown in public places as if they were exotic animals,[58] when the foreigners Gudruid, Gwenid, Robb and Della are finally presented to the members of Anin's nation, it does not become a traumatic experience for them. Anin prepares both sides psychologically, knowing that these four Europeans look very different from the Beothuks. He gives them some advice in relation to their behaviour. For instance, it is better if they wash with their clothes on for a short period of time as they have hair on their bodies.[59] Thus Bernard Assiniwi does not deny the existence of possible cultural shocks and does not create a world where the Beothuks are angelic people. However, Anin's way of proceeding seems more diplomatic and humane than that of the Europeans. The counter-discourse is undoubtedly produced also by the presentation of the Beothuk story through the natives' eyes. To do so, Bernard Assiniwi mixes Beothuk words with the French as previously mentioned, but he also describes the world and the historical situation from the perspective of a Native person. When Anin discovers sheep and cows, the author does not use the terms sheep and cows; instead he makes a description that can help the reader guess what they are. Anin compares them to animals he knows from his own environment:

> Cette enceinte contenait d'étranges bêtes qu'il [Anin] ne connaissait pas. Trois avec des cornes et d'autres avec une toison épaisse, qui couvrait tout leur corps. 'Des bêtes d'un autre monde,' pensa-t-il. Trois bêtes énormes, plus grosses que des caribous. Et une dizaine d'autres, plus petites. Comme des ours, mais de couleur pâle, sauf une qui était toute noire.[60]

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[58] Olive Patricia Dickason, *Le Mythe du sauvage*, traduit de l'anglais par Jude Des Chenes (Sillery: Septentrion, 1993), pp. 223-48.
[59] Bernard Assiniwi, *La Saga des Béothuks*, p. 160.
[60] Ibid., p. 88.

Assiniwi proceeds to a defamiliarisation of the French language.[61] The author also leads the reader into the Beothuk world by referring to time in the first two parts using Native representations. The Beothuks divided time into five seasons and they counted days and months in suns and moons.[62] Thus the reader thinks from one season to another, and about what preparations are necessary to survive. Another way that Assiniwi lures the reader into the Beothuk world is by mixing Beothuk words with the French, but I will return to this in more detail in the chapter on "Language." Assiniwi also counterbalances the colonial discourse by showing the Native perception of events. By retelling the tragedy of this extinct people, Assiniwi manages to convey a feeling of strength and not despair. He counteracts the common discourse of the disappearing Indian. This is notably due to two major statements found in the text. The first one is uttered by one of Beothuk chiefs:

> C'est pourquoi, selon Camtac, les Béothuks vivraient toujours, même quand mourrait le dernier. Ils continueraient de vivre en d'autres. Dans d'autres mémoires.[63]

On the one hand, retelling the past brings this people to life again: they live in the memories of others. On the other hand, Assiniwi widens the representation of the Beothuks as he qualifies them as true people who will always exist. There will always be a type of person who is keen on learning and transmitting their own knowledge. The second statement corresponds to the last few sentences of this novel and punctuates one last time the message of hope delivered by the text through Shanawditith's voice:

> Je savais que les Béothuks vivraient toujours, car il y aura toujours des vrais hommes, même s'ils n'ont pas la peau rouge.[64]

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[61] See Chapter Five.
[62] See list of seasons in *La Saga des Béothuks*, p. 515.
[63] Bernard Assiniwi, *La Saga des Béothuks*, p. 281.
[64] Ibid., p.499.

As mentioned in the previous chapter, the idea of "real men" can be ambiguous as it can also refer to non-Native people or allude to the fact that nowadays with the mix of races, Native people do not necessarily have a red skin. Whatever the interpretation of the sentence, one cannot miss the idea of survival evoked in it. The narrative calls on Native beliefs, which consider that the ancestors still live in the same way they did, but in another world and as part of you. The transmission of knowledge from one generation to another prevents the memory of others from dying. In this sense, retelling the past allows a certain continuity and counterbalances the non-Native discourse which either shuts Native peoples in an outdated culture, or projects them into a completely different modern White world.

There exists a striking difference between the counter-discourse found in this novel published in 1996 and some of the texts published in the 1970s. In the 1970s, the tone was much more direct and aggressive towards White people. As stated previously, An Antane Kapesh's autobiography resembles a political pamphlet. She, too, counterbalances the descriptions made of the Natives by the colonisers. In her parable, *Qu'as-tu fait de mon pays?*,[65] the retelling of the colonisation of Native people in Quebec is, again, expressed from the point of view of the Natives. The vocabulary used in the text belongs to the usual opposition between Native and non-Native: "le Blanc" and "Nous, les Indiens." This text corresponds to the oppressed writing back to the oppressor. The Manichean world created by the colonisers is reversed. When writing his historical books and his first novel in the 1970s, Bernard Assiniwi appears to have had a similar desire to set the record straight. Contrary to Gayatri Spivak, Homi K. Bhabha sees elements of ambivalence in the colonial discourse that can be reused by the colonised in order to assert themselves. Homi K.

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[65] An Antane Kapesh, *Qu'as-tu fait de mon pays?* (Montréal: Editions Impossibles, 1979).

Bhabha thinks that by showing the wide range of stereotypes and the shifting positions imposed on the colonised object, the Natives will recover their own voice. It is considered necessary to disperse fixed images created by the former colonisers before accessing the freedom of one's own representations. Before 1969, Native people in Quebec had not voiced their opinions and expressed their differences on a large scale to the rest of the inhabitants. In history books, a short mention at the beginning of the history of Quebec would briefly state the existence of Indians living in the country before the Europeans' arrival. They were identified most of the time as one sole group with no distinctions in names and cultures. This antagonism between "White" and "Indian" tends to freeze discourse and limit artistic production. Jean-Jacques Simard, a Quebec sociologist, refers to this duality as a reduction. He bases his argument on the idea that "Indians and Whites do not exist."[66] Indeed, these two words operate as two vacuums filled with angst and desire. Their stereotypical images create tensions evoked in the previous chapter: what is a true or a false Indian? Jean-Jacques Simard does not suggest forgetting the past, but instead exhorts a sharing of each other's responsibility in order to move forward:

> No one need shoulder the historical burdens of guilt for having vanquished or the shame of defeat. Nor must anyone be tolerated who waves the battle flags of self-pride or the bandages of self-pity. But everybody must accept responsibility for changing the hurtful social conditions and misperceptions they share. Everyone should be held answerable, now to one another, tomorrow to our posterity. How otherwise can *We, Whiteman* [sic] *or Indian*, ever break out from the bondage of our mutual reductions?[67]

In Western societies, social and technical changes have occurred very quickly in the past fifty years and it is true that all of us are marked by a loss of continuity and

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[66] Jean-Jacques Simard. 'White Ghosts, Red Shadows: the Reduction of North American Natives,' in *The Invented Indian. Cultural Fictions and Government Policy* ed. by James A. Clifton (New Brunswick: transaction publishers, 1990), 18, pp. 333-369.
[67] Ibid., p. 368.

belonging by the disappearance of ways of living familiar to our grandparents. Jean-Jacques Simard is right in wanting to move the social debate on "Indianness" and "Whiteness," away from its fixed structure. However, it cannot be denied that human beings define themselves not only in relation to kin group, neighbourhood, occupation, lifestyle and gender, but also nation and race. As shown in Simard's article, there also exists a division *us* versus *them* between the French Canadian and the English Canadian. After being talked about for centuries, it seems understandable that Native writers feel the need to talk or write back, bringing stories from the past into a different light. On the other hand, it is also important for Native creativity to separate itself from past semiotic fields in order to embrace a modern identity. Since the 1970s, Native discourse has evolved from direct accusations to subtle rectifications when retelling history. More recent texts seem to move away from the usual antagonism between Indians and Whites. Past events and ancient legends provide a source of inspiration for these authors. In 'The Muse of History', Derek Walcott praises New World writers who reject the idea of historical time as "in time every event becomes an exertion of memory and is thus subject to invention."[68] He criticises the fact that in the New World, for the descendants of the colonised, the constant reference to historical facts has produced a literature of either despair or revenge. In order to get away from it, some authors such as Pablo Neruda have turned to a vision of man which is Adamic. Derek Walcott considers that these authors are more interested in celebrating the essence of man and the elements, in an ancestral manner (a method already exploited by classical poets), than evoking the past in a polemic discourse. Mythology and religion create a timeless sphere lifting the weight of a linear progressive historical pattern. In the next section, the evocation of the past

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[68] Derek Walcott, 'The Muse of History' in *The Routledge Reader in Caribbean Literature*, ed. by Alison Donnell and Sarah Lawson Welsh (London: Routledge, 1996), pp. 354-58, p. 354.

functions not to reconstruct past events or repossess historical space, but the memory of the ancestors does function as part of a cyclical and healing process.

II. Mythological Elements: Negotiating the Past within the Present

In the modern world, time is represented as a progressive line. With the advance of technology, human activities seem to be more and more frantic. Gaining time, making things faster becomes part of everyday life. As Anthony Giddens points out, the term "modernity" corresponds to "modes of social life or organisation which emerged in Europe from about 17th century onwards and which subsequently became more or less worldwide in their influence."[69] Despite a rather recent loss of a belief in "progress", Western people still perceive time as a linear process with the idea of the self as a project to work on and improve. In traditional societies, time was represented by the changing of seasons, the rising and setting of the sun. Daily activities would start and stop in parallel with the sun's revolution. Native people perceived life in a circular way, and some still do. The image of the circle is very important in Native beliefs. Natives' representation of the world suggests that everything is interlinked and part of a whole. The representation of the past thus differs from a historical perspective. Yves Sioui Durand has written several plays in which present and past are intermingled, creating a sense of continuity, but not progress. Jean Sioui, another Huron-Wendat, has published a collection of poems drawing on past situations to establish a present positive way of thinking of the Native philosophy of life. Although there is still an underlying political tone, the past is used as a source of strength, and is not at the centre of a counter-discourse. The choice of theatre as a mode of representation brings another dimension to the perception of the present and reality, and as will be shown later on, it combines tradition and modernity in an interesting way. The ritualistic

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[69] Anthony Giddens, *The Consequences of Modernity* (Cambridge: Polity Press, 1990), p. 1.

aspect of Yves Sioui Durand's plays also enables him to heal the scars of the past and the pains of the present.

II.1. Mixing the Past and the Present; the Circularity of Life

Placing past situations in parallel with present ones is common in Native poetry from Quebec. Eléonore Sioui tends to use it in a negative way. She wants to acknowledge the fact that her ancestors were not only abused and tricked in the past, but that it is still happening today. In 'Houarinda, the Circle', she blames White people for having destroyed Native people with the introduction of alcohol, and she draws a parallel with the present pollution of the rivers:

> In the Past
> The White Man created
> The Water of Fire
> Which has destroyed our people.
> At present
> The White Man has created
> The water of death
> In poisoning our waters with mercury (...)[70]

The title of the poem, 'circle', does not refer to the positive image of harmony that it usually carries, but evokes the repetitive negative impact of White people on the Natives. The metaphors employed here are those of a stereotypical symbolic Indian discourse. In the last chapter on Language, the consequences of such a choice will be analysed. In 'New World', already explored in the previous chapter, the parallel between the present and the past also contributes to expressing a critical opinion of the ex-colonisers' attitude. In a very different manner, Jean Sioui has built a cultural bridge between the past and the present. The binary construction of his texts does not

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[70] Eléonore Sioui, *Corps à Coeur éperdu*, p. 47.

illustrate a progression in the way of perceiving the world, but rather an inclusive frame of mind. The most explicit examples of this are quoted. They both parallel ways of living in the past with the present. For instance, a hunter attentive to the sounds of the forest will be able to survive and live in harmony with his environment; an attentive man should be able to do the same with his household.[71] Most of his parallels are based on images of nature, which is how Native ancestors would tend to relate their ideas. I will explore this further in the next chapter, which deals with spatial representations. Eléonore Sioui and Jean Sioui have indeed given the past an important role in connection with the present, by introducing it within a present reality.

Yves Sioui Durand has constructed his own past discourse with references to Native mythologies from different nations. He claims that he wants to reconstruct live Native cultures based on transferable values. His plays are then built in such a way as to create "a Native mythological theatre, integrating initiatory traditions and contemporary theatre practice that is innovative and responsive to the present."[72] Time, performance and ritual are three key notions in Yves Sioui Durand's theatre that need to be closely looked at. All his plays so far have been retellings of mythological stories from different sources: Iroquoian, Algonquian, Aztec and even Mongol.[73] In his plays, Yves Sioui Durand incorporates music, songs, dance, and the careful choice of where the play is actually performed is part of the whole experience. For instance, the first time that *Le Porteur des peines du monde* was performed it was outdoors in waste ground at the junction of rue Bleury and boulevard Maisonneuve in

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[71] Jean Sioui, *Pensées Wendates*, p. 53.
[72] Yves Sioui Durand quoted in 'Urban Dreams, Native Rites and Rural Pleasures: Festival de théâtre des Amériques, Montréal, 20 May- 6 June 1999,' written by Ric Knowles in *Canadian Theatre Review*, Issue 102, Spring 2000, at http:www.utpjournals.com/product/ctr/102/urban1.html
[73] *Kmùkamch l'Asierindien* was based on a founding myth extracted from a Mongol diary of the 13th century.

Montreal.[74] Traditionally, the Huron-Wendats, like most of the Natives in Quebec, would not have considered the telling of stories as a form of entertainment. Music had a social function: to praise the Creator, to prepare to go to war or even to cure illness.[75] The notion of art as a pure form of entertainment and separated from daily life has never existed as such in Native culture. All the activities that we set aside as artistic have been considered by those within Native nations as part of their everyday life. Sioui Durand thus seems to draw on Native ancient tradition by staging his plays in an environment where the separation between audience and performance breaks down. For the presentation of *Iwouskéa et Tawiskaron*, he invited the audience to sit in a large tent or long-house to watch the performance, and the cast members worked very close to the crowd, very often touching them gently on the shoulder. In 'Theatre as a Site of Passage. Some Reflections on the Magic of Acting', Kirsten Hastrup briefly summarizes the evolution of theatre through centuries. Starting with Greek theatre, she then moves on to medieval representations and modern theatre. In her short summary, there are some striking points that highlight the pertinent choice of theatre as a mode of expression for Native culture. Indeed, before becoming institutionalised, most theatrical performances took place in the street or in front of churches. This mode of entertainment was thus a social experience within the space of everyday life. The creation of permanent theatres removed drama from such a space. Kirsten Hastrup then mentions the return of the use of streets as a stage. After having transformed a "spectacular society, into a society of spectacle", the postmodernist era is reversing the process. Theatre developed in connection with festivals which involved citizens, turning the performance into a social event. Sioui Durand's mode of

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[74] The first showing of this play took place as part of the Festival du Théâtre des Amériques and it obtained Le Prix Américanité in 1985.
[75] Marguerite Vincent, *La Nation huronne. Son histoire, sa culture, son esprit* (Québec: Editions du Pélican et Septentrion, 1984), p. 349.

representation tries to integrate the members of the audience into his plays. Secondly, Kirsten Harstrup defines theatre as a site of passage, a liminal space, for it is part of reality and at the same time it distances itself from it. In the Elizabethan period, Shakespeare theatre was perceived as representing a Microcosm and was part of the universe, the Macrocosm. To a certain extent, Yves Sioui Durand's plays are orchestrated to convey the same idea. Peter Brook[76] coined the term "holy theatre" to describe performances that render the invisible visible. He also considered theatre as a communion, a coming together; Jacques Copeau,[77] another 20th century theatre director, added that theatre should raise in the spectators and the actors a new sense of human worth.[78] With the analysis of two plays written by Yves Sioui Durand, it should become clearer how his plays combine tradition and modernity, and how mixing the present and the past contribute to a Native representation of the circularity of life.

Le Porteur des peines du monde is a ritual drama in seven scenes and a prologue. As explained previously, in Yves Sioui Durand's plays, ritual and performance are intermingled. The main character, le porteur or l'homme-oiseau, acts as a shaman guiding the audience to the world of the Dead. In the prologue, Yves Sioui Durand qualifies him as an incarnation of "toutes les voix du monde, celles qui nous habitent pleinement et qui hurlent en nous contre la destruction."[79] This character also embodies the Sun who carries the world. Natives thought that the Sun dived under the earth and fell into a world of suffering; he would then fight against obscurity to purify himself and then rise again, reborn. The audience witnesses the fall, the fight and the rebirth of le Soleil/l'Homme-oiseau/le Portageur. The evocation

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[76] Peter Brook, *The Empty Space* (Harmondsworth: Penguin, 1968).
[77] Jacques Copeau, *Notes sur le métier de comédien* (Paris: Michel Brient, 1955).
[78] 'Holy Theatre and Catharsis,' in *From Acting to Performance and Postmodernism*, ed. by Philip Auslander, (London: Routledge, 1997), p. 16.
[79] Yves Sioui Durand, *Le Porteur des peines du monde*, p. 16.

of the past is portrayed by powerful and painful representations. In scene two, 'la parade funéraire', a young Native woman carrying a doll made of maize (supposedly her dead baby) comes onto the stage, representing the genocide of the Indians of America. While she places the doll on burning tobacco leaves, Le Porteur asks the audience if they are all going to die and disappear. The spectator is taken further down into the land of the dead with the battle between the Porteur and the Loup de la finance, who incarnates capitalism and White desire for material possessions. In this scene, Le Porteur becomes a puppet in the hands of the Loup de la finance who is tempting him with dollars. While the burning doll is accompanied by two Andean flute players, disco music is now played in the background. The music accelerates, Le Porteur dances as if he were possessed, and repeats the same rhythmic words: "all is double little doll all is double tout est double petite poupée tout est double..."[80] Then suddenly he has a vision that encapsulates the past and a possible future; men and women covered in ashes and torn tents abandoned. The scene ends with another mix of contemporary and past images. As a circus ring master or a casino croupier, Le Loup de la finance invites L'homme-oiseau to play in the "big magic city." Finally exhausted, Le porteur collapses while a rain of rubbish falls upon him. This scene integrates a criticism of present problems into a traditional mythic narrative. In the next scene, Le Porteur, drunk, faces the master of the Caribous, who tries to understand the reason for his drunken state and gives him his ancient power and strength to revive him. In scene six, Le porteur carries his double, a skeleton pierced by two torches. He walks balanced on a snake made of sacred plants towards light and rebirth. The spectator is told that the show ends there as this act corresponds to the brave path undertaken by shamans. All the pains and threats of the world have been

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[80] Ibid., p. 38.

revealed, Le Porteur then asks the audience to give him some strength to finish his journey. Sioui Durand calls the audience at this stage in the play: "les humains-du-bord-du-monde."[81] The last scene shows the transformation of Le Porteur into a white eagle, symbol of the birth of daylight. The eagle then disappears in a clap of thunder having danced to intense rhythmic drumming. The last vision for the audience is a fire at the centre of the "stage" burning the skeleton. In this play, the suffering of the present and past Native generations is made visible. The present and the past are fused together through the evocation of strongly emotional situations such as the loss of loved ones or the fall into decay.

In his article on 'Holy Theatre and Catharsis', Philip Auslander relates the theories of four playwrights concerning performance. In his argument, he separates the notion of catharsis into two definitions. The first one comes from an interpretation of Aristotle's definition in *Politics*, where the process is seen as having "an educative function: through catharsis, we are trained in the use of our emotions and brought closer to the balanced inner state of the ideal Aristotelian good and wise man."[82] He develops this idea with reference to Copeau and Brook's vision of theatre as communal, where through sharing of emotions between the actors, the director and the audience, theatre is seen not only as uniting people, but as being able to represent the core characteristics of human beings. By showing intense representations of pain magnified by dances and tribal music, all the participants are enticed to feel the same emotions during the play, as well as the resolution or relief at the end. The second definition of catharsis comes from a psychoanalytic field and refers to a therapeutic experience. This will be dealt with in the following section. In *Atiskenandahate. Le*

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[81] Ibid., p.56.
[82] 'Holy Theatre and Catharsis,' in *From Acting to Performance and Postmodernism*, ed. by Philip Auslander, (London: Routledge, 1997), p. 14.

voyage au pays des morts,[83] Yves Sioui Durand weaves the past and the present in an even tighter way. The play is divided into four days representing the four directions successively taken by the Sun and the Moon in their travel in the land of the dead. These four days are associated with four different places: "la rivière de sang pour l'Est; le désert de l'ombre pour le Sud; la montagne sacrée des ossements pour l'Ouest et la toundra de la dernière migration pour le Nord."[84] There are four tableaux and twenty scenes. With this play, Yves Sioui Durand aims at re-presenting Native cosmogony in a ritualistic drama in which past and present collide. The connection between Native people and their physical and mental environment is being restored:

> Le rapatriement de la culture religieuse et magique osé par cette ocuvre se situe aussi dans l'évocation de la parenté spirituelle avec les entités mythiques tels les masques, les maîtres, les gardiens et les ancêtres mais aussi avec les animaux, soit: le saumon, esprit-gardien de la rivière pour l'Est, le vautour et l'aigle pour le Sud, l'ours pour l'Ouest et les caribous pour le Nord.[85]

These previous quotations are not from the play itself, but from the author's notes. For this ritual drama, Yves Sioui Durand separates the audience into men and women and places them on each side of a rectangular space, representing an Iroquois long-house. The soil is covered with grain. At each end of the rectangle, there is a door with two columns and a lintel: la porte de l'Est and la porte de l'Ouest. The setting of the play is turned into a ceremonial place. The timeline in the narrative is very intricate as different time periods intersect each other. The play starts with two old men and two young people (a boy and a girl) sitting by a fire. The two old men tell the two young ones how their ancestors lived and how they did too. There is a clear contrast between the two generations. The conversation evolves to the description of the "tente

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[83] Yves Sioui Durand, *Atiskenandahate. Le voyage au pays des morts* (Montréal: Ondinnok inc., 1988)
[84] Ibid. p. 2.
[85] Ibid.

tremblante", which is a means of communication between Natives and mythic beings.[86] The grandfather tells the young ones that it is a little like a radio. He thus compares a traditional ritual to a modern piece of equipment in order to make it clear for the new generation. The two young ones, especially the boy, keep joking and interrupting the grandfather as if they are not really convinced by his stories. However, the scene ends with the grandfather telling the legend of the Sun and the Moon that the spectators are going to witness. The two young people play the Sun and the Moon in the rest of the play. Past legends and reality meet again. After two glimpses of future scenes (caribou migration and the death of Moon), the audience is projected into the first of the four days with a ritual ceremony. Scenes one to three from the first tableau are made of dances, traditional music, false masks (Huron-Wendat tradition) and tobacco burning. The ceremony is led by the Godesoni, the master of the long-house. He utters a litany of thanks addressed to the Creator, and a group of Native men and women acknowledge his words by saying "Gwah." In the script, Yves Sioui Durand notes that this ceremony was a way of communicating to the audience the emotions felt by Native people with regard to their loss of territorial identity.[87] The ceremony is followed by a return to more conventional theatre with a man and a woman summarizing briefly the effect of colonisation on Native people. It is told from their point of view as if they actually underwent all the events themselves. This constant shift between present and past shuffles the references familiar to the audience. The next scene shows domestic violence between the Sun and the Moon; again present problems are integrated into a traditional narrative. The ending of this scene parallels the legend as the Sun kills the Moon out of jealousy. After overcoming obstacles and ordeals, the Sun is finally reunited with the Moon. The last scenes bring

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[86] Sylvie Vincent, 'Structure du rituel: la tente tremblante et le concept de Mesta.pe.w', in *Recherches Amérindiennes au Québec*, vol. III, 1-2, 1973, p. 69-83.
[87] Yves Sioui Durand, *Atiskenandahate. Le voyage au pays des morts*, p. 13.

back elements from the beginning to create a circular vision: the four masks are placed in the same four directions, the Moon is carried in the same way as in her brief apparition at the beginning, and the caribou are seen migrating towards the North. This migration represents the circularity of life, the survival of wildlife over thousands of years. The cathartic effect produced in this play comes from the depiction of the cultural and physical dispossession undergone by Native ancestors, the scene of violence between the Moon and the Sun and the final fight between the Sun and Corbeau. The audience is encouraged to empathize with the Natives' feelings through the use of music. Without self-pity, the author expresses the suffering of Native people. He does not accuse White people directly, so that the audience, the majority of whom would be non-Native, do not distance themselves from the show. Unless a play is performed in a Native "reservation," it will mainly be seen by non-Native people due to economic and social reasons.[88] In scene thirteen, for example, an old man addresses himself to the audience to talk about environmental catastrophes. His tone is more factual and sad than accusatory:

> Ils savaient çà[sic] eux-autres...les étrangers, ils les ont vu venir icitte...puis, ils ont vu la Terre brisée...puis l'Indien disparaître...la forêt c'est comme çà[sic] aussi...les arbres meurent...c'est comme fini....je marche dans le bois...pis je l'vois....c'est décourageant....c'est comme fini, tout brisé souvent...., c'est la Terre... qui est malade....c'est la Terre qui change asteure...[89]

Theatre can be seen as a liminal space in the context of these two plays. The setting delimits a sacred area in the present where the evocations of mythological entities take place. However, the audience is drawn into that space by their physical proximity to the stage and the players, and their emotional engagement.

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[88] See chapter One.
[89] Ibid., p. 59.

The cultural references used in Yves Sioui Durand's two quoted plays can be difficult for a non-Native audience to grasp, nevertheless, it can be argued that the universality of the themes raised and collectively accessible emotions displayed enables the audience, and perhaps any audience to understand the messages evoked. Peter Brook qualified theatre as being life itself; he emphasized the continuity between life and theatre. Yves Sioui Durand would certainly agree with this statement. His plays combine the past, present and future of the Native voice in a communal experience. The last few sentences of *Le voyage au pays des morts* confirm his desire to transmit a traditional yet modern culture for future generations: "ici, se tisse l'espoir d'un déplacement réel vers le futur...d'une renaissance réelle qui perpétue notre identité...le retour à la sacralité de la Vie."[90]

II.2. Strength in the Past and Therapeutic Writing

Native languages do not have an equivalent of the word "art." The expression closest in meaning and function would be "medicine." It is thus understandable that Yves Sioui Durand talks about self-healing when discussing Native culture. In the previous part, the texts mentioned all deal with a historical past. The counter-discourse they articulate is in a sense also part of a healing process. It is impossible to erase the past and never mention it. However, retelling historical events from the Native point of view reasserts pride in their origins, healing the wounds of the past. By combining rituals and performances, Yves Sioui Durand works on suppressing little by little the folklorisation of Native culture. Over the centuries, there have been many shows incorporating dances that were performed only for tourists, corresponding once again

[90] Yves Sioui Durand, *Atiskenandahate. Le voyage au pays des morts*, p. 73.

to the expectations of a non-native audience. To picture this sort of representation, one has only to remember scenes in old westerns where groups of Indians are shown in trance half-dressed, wearing feathers and running around screaming. To cure the feeling of loss experienced by many Native people, Sioui Durand explores the different cultural traces left by Native ancestors and adapts them to the needs of his contemporary society. The notion of therapeutic theatre comes from two playwrights' attitudes to the genre: Antonin Artaud and Jerzy Grotowski. Artaud saw theatre as a means of exteriorizing the "latent depth of cruelty that enables all of the perverse possibilities of the spirit to manifest themselves in an individual or a people."[91] In Philip Auslander's terms, Artaud would look for theatrical images strong enough to trigger a release of repressed psychic materials in the spectator's mind. The aim was to lead the audience to think and reflect on certain aspects of life. Through the choice of some of his subjects, Yves Sioui Durand seems to create the same effect. In *Kmìkamch l'Asierindien*, the author exposes the difficulties of facing the process of ageing and the consequences for those who refuse to accept it. This text also deals with the origin of Native roots in Asia. *Le Porteur des peines du monde* and *Atiskenandahate-Le voyage au pays des morts* force the spectator to reflect on, for instance, colonisation, alcoholism, capitalism and death. Artaud's theory concerns the finding of a private truth, whereas Peter Brook's and Copeau's concern engagement with universal values. In Sioui Durand's plays, both approaches are in play. Negative behaviours and attitudes are shown to be annihilated. The loss of a Native culture is being negated by the very existence of the plays. The second definition of catharsis derived from psychoanalysis corresponds to an experience that would enable a patient

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[91] 'Holy Theatre and Catharsis,' in *From Acting to Performance and Postmodernism*, p. 21.

"to relive, and therefore resolve, earlier painful experiences which were unfinished."[92] According to this definition, Yves Sioui Durand's way of proceeding contributes to healing past scars, and Artaud's concern to re-establish life on healthier spiritual terms is exactly what Yves Sioui Durand is aiming at.

Within the plays themselves, there are recurrent mentions of purification and illness, or psychological states of mind that need to be improved or cured. In *Le Porteur des peines du monde*, Le Porteur/Soleil/homme-oiseau is described first of all as an exhausted old man; the Sun dives into darkness. On the ground there are two healing wheels that Le Porteur enters at specific times during his performance. In Scene four, entitled "purification," he is asked by a Native woman to show the audience all the pains that inhabit his heart in order to be purified:

> Montre-leur ce que tu as dans ton sac
>
> Montre-leur ce que tu as sur le Coeur
>
> Montre-leur ta lourde blessure HURLANTE afin qu'ils puissent voir...[93]

At the end of this scene, Le Porteur drinks a bottle of alcohol and collapses again. Yves Sioui Durand has identified the causes of Le Porteur's illness: dispossession, identity crisis and alcoholism. The apparition of the Master of the caribous is the key to the healing of L'Homme-oiseau. The few sentences he pronounces accompanied by a dance help him to stand up again and symbolically burn his burden of pain. In this play, as in *Le voyage au pays des morts*, a side of the Native past must be healed with past representations or incarnations. Light and darkness in both plays symbolize the battle between chaos and harmony. The division between good and evil is basically Christian. In Native beliefs, they are not set in opposition. For instance, one of the stories of the creation recounts the birth of twin brothers, Tsestah and Tawiskaron (in

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[92] Ibid., p. 14.
[93] Yves Sioui Durand, *Atiskenandahate. Le voyage au pays des morts*, p. 45.

Huron-wendat). One was good, the other one was evil. They fought because the evil one kept disturbing the good one, but both created very different, but complementary things useful for humans. Tsestah facilitates the life of the Wendats, creating fire, fruit, and animals for instance. Tawiskaron creates dangerous insects, powerful rivers, and steep mountains. Despite the fact that Tsestah kills his brother, this victory is not considered as good overcoming evil:

> Pour les Wendats (et les Amérindiens en général), c'est la Vie qui triomphe, bien qu'elle n'élimine pas la Mort (Tawiskaron, tué, ne meurt pas). Le monde est suprêmement beau et bon, mais également dur, mystérieux et dangereux (...) Les Wendats ont Aataentsic et Tawiskaron, qui les protègent contre le bien absolu. [94]

The vision of life as a circle does mean that every part of it has its place whether good or evil. Harmony is obtained thanks to a balance between the two. Yves Sioui Durand perceives theatre as a means of healing the soul in order to be at peace again. Performing dances and mythological narratives enable the artist to reinterpret Native culture and "l'enracinement identitaire."[95] As has been pointed out, there is no word to translate the term "art": Sioui Durand thinks that Native artists are not driven by the desire to produce something aesthetic, but are rather interested in the ethics of their representations. Indeed, most of the texts present in this corpus propose a set of values that have their own wisdom and aspire towards inner peace, and a sense of pride in being Native. These authors very often reinterpret old sayings or legends of the past to suit modern situations. Jean Sioui with his book of Wendat thoughts has created a philosophy of life inspired from his own tradition. He often compares how his ancestors lived to people nowadays, adding representations of natural elements to highlight his point. Among the moral values advocated, one can distinguish a strong

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[94] Georges E. Sioui, *Les Wendats. Une civilisation méconnue* (Sainte-Foy: Les Presses de l'Université de Laval, 1994), p. 38.
[95] Yves Sioui Durand, "Faire le Mantow-Mantowkasowin-l'art," in www.expressions.gc.ca/durandpaper_f.htm

insistence on having a positive attitude towards life in general and one's origins and heritage. He clearly seems to be concerned with fighting any sense of despair and abandon. This point is perhaps best illustrated by the following poem:

> Si tu combats de toutes tes forces
> tu ne connaîtras jamais la défaite
> tu ne peux que rencontrer plus fort
> et apprendre le respect.[96]

Rita Mestokosho's poetry oscillates between anguish and joy. Her poem 'Beauté de la nature,'[97] addresses the problem of faith in oneself and the lack of desire to keep on living. The author tries to convince her interlocutor to enjoy life and find strength in Nature. Forgiveness is also a recurrent moral value. It is not only directed at White people and the past, but also in relation to the various dissensions taking place within and between communities. Rita Mestokosho wrote a poem entitled 'Cultive l'amour',[98] which may seem a little simplistic and idealist. It is constructed around the opposition love/hatred, in three paragraphs of four lines each with binary rhymes. However, the simplicity of this poem brings a certain lightness to it. As mentioned earlier, the message is more important than the aesthetic. The notion of forgiveness may also refer to the "mistakes" of judgment made by the ancestors. In two works by Assiniwi, a criticism is addressed to an elder for not having enough forsight to see that a change in their attitudes may have avoided the present situation. Yves Sioui Durand releases this guilt in scene three of *Le voyage au pays des morts*. After the ceremony, a man and a woman facing the audience evoke in turn Nature's complaints and summarize the Natives' painful path until now. The simplicity of the

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[96] Jean Sioui, *Le Pas de l'Indien, pensées Wendates*, p. 59
[97] Rita Mestokosho, *Eshi Uapataman Nukum, comment je perçois la vie, Grand-mère. Recueil de poèmes Montagnais* (Mashteuiatsh: Piekuakami, 1995), p. 15.
[98] Ibid., p. 35.

language and the frankness of the words prevent the listener from blaming previous generations:

> Je suis un Indien…un sauvage…je ne sais rien…
>
> (…) mais pourtant la Terre dit….je suis mourante…je meurs…ils sont en train de me tuer…(…) nous n'avions rien fait de mal pour être ainsi tués…nous demandions seulement de rester sur nos terres….la terre de nos ancêtres…[99]

Jean Sioui also advocates living in simplicity and finding inspiration in Nature as Native ancestors did, but Yvon H. Couture is certainly the author who most praises Nature's benefits. As will be addressed in the next chapter, Nature continues to be at the centre of Native culture. In order to heal and be in tune with their identity, Native people need to acknowledge their origins and be proud of them. By setting ritual dramas that reveal Native internal conflicts and mythological cures, Yves Sioui Durand awakens Native sensitivity towards their own selves. In his analysis of myths from Native American tribes, Claude Lévi-Strauss revealed a common pattern in which there existed a hidden message in the narrative that brought imaginary solutions to real contradictions despite the very often seemingly incoherent sequence of events.[100] In his study, Lévi-Srauss systematically dissected every narrative and organised each component into sets of oppositions. The telling of the myth offered a resolution of the various contradictions in place. Yves Sioui Durand's mode of narration bears similarities with Lévi-Strauss' understanding of mythical representations. In *Atiskenandahate-Le voyage au pays des morts* and *Le Porteur des peines du monde*, Yves Sioui Durand's main opposition which is at the centre of both plays is the difficult reconciliation between traditional and modern identity. Throughout both plays previous modes of living and past traumatic scenes are evoked

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[99] Yves Sioui Durand, *Atiskenandahate. Le voyage au pays des morts*, pp. 22-25.
[100] Robert Deliège, *Lévi-Strauss Today, An Introduction to Structural Anthropology* (Oxford: Berg, 2004), pp. 95-107.

and placed in parallel with contemporary ways of life. In each play, the resolution of Native contemporary problems such as violence and alcoholism takes place at the end thanks to the confrontation of the main characters with spiritual entities. In *Atiskenandahate-Le voyage au pays des morts*, Soleil fights against Corbeau and Windigo to regain power and in *Le Porteur des peines du monde*, Le Porteur essentially fights with his dark thoughts incarnated by various apparitions such as le Loup de la Finance and Le Maître des Caribous. Tradition and modernity are finally connected again, and the circle of life is complete again from the Native point of view. In Lévi-Strauss's terms, the "savage mind" corresponds to a scientific mind for which everything is classified notably through the setting of oppositions as in his analysis of totemism. Lévi-Strauss' perception of the "savage mind" does not leave any room for emotion, joy, sorrow or love, but only for intellectual and logical thoughts. This is not the case for Yves Sioui Durand. Through the two plays mentioned, the author sends messages of hope: Native people do not have to be stuck in the situation they are at the moment. In the same way that the Master of the Caribou offers his strength to Le Porteur, Native beliefs will help Native people to be reborn. Native people do not have to fit in with White society. In both plays, the negation of Native origins in order to conform to white society is shown as leading to destruction. In scene four of *Le voyage au pays des morts*, the Sun has left the reservation to live in town and has turned into a drunk and a drug addict. He eventually kills the Moon, who refuses to leave the reservations.

Before writing, oral tradition was the method of transmitting moral values and ways of conduct within a Native nation. Stories that have been transmitted from generation to generation have been collected by non-Native people over the centuries. These narratives were generally perceived as folkloric entertainments by the non-

Native readers, whereas the story-teller would have seen them as a guide to living a good life. Bernard Assiniwi collected twenty-five oral stories[101] that he transcribed. He recorded them in several different communities throughout Canadian provinces. For each teller, Assiniwi specifies the date, the place and the nation of origin. Most of the stories explain the creation of the world; others give an explanation for the origin of certain plants or animals and their ways of life. Many of the stories end with a clearly stated moral. For example, in 'Wésukéchak et les oies sauvages,'[102] the aim of the story is to show that it is always wise to follow one's own experience over the advice of others. This point is illustrated by the sudden change of flight formation of some barnacle geese after the advice of Wésukéchak, a spirit. They have originally always flown in a V shape, but decide to fly in one line behind a unique leader to follow Wésukéchak's idea. Unfortunately they all get eaten by an eagle as none of them can see what is happening behind them. This legend was actually used as an answer at a meeting between some Canadian officials and a group of Native people. All the stories have talking animals and spirits. According to Diane Boudreau, these narratives involving talking animals were based on a period of time that was believed to have truly existed and were not considered myths, although it is doubtful that this is the case nowadays. These narratives of the past can however still offer some advice to their readers. Bernard Assiniwi wrote two other collections of traditional stories as well as stories for children. All these narratives contribute to keeping alive Native spiritual culture through a process of re-ownership. Keeping the memory of the ancestors alive helps assertion of identity as it entails the acknowledgement of a positive past that can be a therapeutic source for the present.

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[101] Bernard Assiniwi, *Windigo et la naissance du monde* (Hull: Vents d'Ouest, 1998).
[102] Ibid., p. 75-77.

In Native literature from Quebec, when evoking the past, authors also reveal many aspects of Native culture in the present. The reminiscence of the past for an ex-colonised people can be very challenging. Native authors have to find the right balance between highlighting positive aspects of previous times and preventing the past from being held up as a Golden era. Most of the writers since the 1970s have been inclined to write narratives about the past in order to put the record straight. The qualities of their ancestors are particularly underlined. With his novel, *La Saga des Béothuks* Bernard Assiniwi moved however from the overtly political and aggressive tone emerging in the 1970s, while still focusing on similar themes. There is a certain ambivalence to his approach. He does contribute to the creation of a Native discourse through this narrative as he presents the other side of history: the colonisation viewed by the colonised. However, the structure and writing of this text conform to non-Native structures and frameworks. Yet it can be argued that mimicking the master's voice leads to the birth of a counter-discourse and a Native voice. History is an important ingredient in the quest for authentic cultural identity. Yves Sioui Durand's texts relate to the past through mythological elements. His ritual dramas strive to reinterpret Native cultures and to construct new points of reference. Past and present get entangled in the storyline, encouraging the spectator to perceive time in a circular way. The audience is invited in his plays to connect and experience similar emotions in moments of catharsis. Past beliefs come to the rescue of present painful situations. The inclusion of contemporary problems in ancient myths has a dual effect. It creates continuity between past and present and regenerates a feeling of pride in Native ancestry. Yves Sioui Durand also proposes moral values that can help past and present scars to heal. His therapeutic theatre is based on a traditional conception of "art" as medicinal. One of his aims is to reclaim the Native capacity to dream. Native cultures

have been rooted in the power of dreams. The interpretation of dreams was of some significance for Native ancestors. Being able to reopen this cultural space contributes to the assertion of Native identity and sense of belonging. Within the definition and construction of identities, time is strongly connected to spatial representations. In fact, these two elements are inseparable in understanding the assertion of individual or collective identity in general. In the Native context, their ancestors' strong connection with their environment has been revived and reinterpreted within a contemporary understanding of the world and this represents an important cultural step.

Chapter Four

Place, Territory and Space

Ma pensée est intimement liée à la Terre,

De ses entrailles, j'ai goûté à la vie.

Elle m'a plongé dans les eaux profondes

De son sein maternel pour que je sente

Les battements de son Coeur, même lorsque je dors.[1]

Before the Europeans' arrival, the lives of Native people were traditionally closely connected to Nature's variations. Their daily activities were dictated by the weather and the seasons. In oral tradition, most of the themes reflected nature's laws and how humans should heed its examples or learn from the mistakes made by certain animals. Nowadays, Native people do not need to follow the seasons and are not dependent on their natural environment to survive. Yet despite the changes that have happened over centuries, they seem to have retained very strong feelings towards their surroundings and even the Earth as a whole. The spatial representations found in Native writing from Quebec correspond essentially to Quebec landscapes, with the exception of Newfoundland, South America, Hawaii and Haiti for a few authors. Scenes representing nature are favoured over those representing town or reservation. When towns are described, it is generally to carry negative aspects associated with White society and culture. Doreen Massey, a geographer, has underlined in *Geography Matters! A Reader*, the mutual interaction that exists between the social and the spatial. She qualifies the spatial as "socially constructed", and the social as being "spatially constructed too."[2] The conceptualization of space and place can both be considered as processes. There exists a clear interaction between the way we perceive our environment and what it is composed of. In this chapter, the term "place", will

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[1] Rita Mestokosho, *Eshi Uapatman Nukum comment je perçois la vie Grand-mère. Recueil de poèmes Montagnais*, p. 7.

[2] *Geography Matters! A Reader*, ed. by Doreen Massey and John Allen (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1984), p. 6.

essentially mean locality, a name on a map. Traditional geography envisages "places" as static and essentialized. However, as Doreen Massey remarks, the perception of time-space compression, global village, or speed-up time and communication, has affected this previous "sense of place."[3] The constant in and out movement within any community has disrupted the idea of a coherent and homogeneous local space. In the previous chapter, the past was shown as being reconstructed by Native authors in order to fulfil the desire and need of the present. Keeping in mind Stuart Hall's conception of cultural identity as production, it will be revealed that Native authors' spatial representations also contribute to the repossession of a cultural space and the assertion of identities. As for non-Native authors, a global sense of place - as opposed to a local one- can be noticed in most of their narratives. Yet, the specificity of the Native people's past and beliefs has resulted in the consideration of the global as the Earth itself, a natural element, not as a world of economic and political flow. In 2000, Rosemary Chapman published a study of selected Quebec authors in relation to their representation of space/place highlighting how this factor singularizes the chosen novels. Three different lines emerged from this analysis: space/place as "a dream of possession", "spatial oppression", and "a desire for mobility."[4] As will be shown shortly, Native Quebec authors have a different perception of their environment. For instance, Nature is never portrayed as menacing, but rather perceived as a refuge. Shurmer-Smith and Hannam add another point to the discussion which is the fact that "all places are imaginary, in the sense that they cannot exist for us beyond the image we are capable of forming of them in our minds."[5] When dealing with Native literature, the political context must not be forgotten. In the 1970s, Native texts were

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[3] Ibid., pp. 147-173.
[4] Rosemary Chapman, *Siting the Quebec Novel. The Representation of Space in Francophone Writing in Quebec* (Oxford: Peter Lang, 2000), pp. 271-272.
[5] Pamela Shurmer-Smith and Kevin Hannam. *Worlds of Desire. Realms of Power. A Cultural Geography* (London: Edward Arnold, 1994), p. 59.

openly criticising past and present governments. Since then, territorial claims have still been part of their narratives, but in a more subtle manner. Besides, the notion of territory has evolved through generations. Jean-Paul Lacasse, Professor of Law at the University of Ottawa, has highlighted this evolution in an article concerning the Innus.[6] Due to the vast territory the different Innu groups used to cover before colonisation, and the low density of the population, for them the idea of owning a piece of land or of borders did not exist in their mind. It was unconceivable and even absurd to sell or buy land, as incongruous as selling air or water. The land belonged to everyone, or rather humans were part of their own environment. Nowadays, the young generation tends to associate the idea of territory with their reservation/community. The decrease in the number of hunters occupying the former Innu territory (Nitassinan) has changed the perception of their land. Having to fight for a place to live has also affected their perception of territory. Despite differences between the ten Native nations of Quebec, they all share the same traditional conception of the Earth.

At the beginning of one of his plays, Yves Sioui Durand raises the idea that the notion of territory is wider than the concept of a piece of land. It comprehends the ancestral memory of Native people. Imagination and cosmogonic power are at the centre of this spatial perception:

> le territoire est une notion tout à fait différente de celle que traduit le mot 'terrain.' Le territoire est beaucoup plus vaste; il préside à la liberté, il en est la mémoire immédiate. (...). Le territoire, pour nous, Amérindiens d'aujourd'hui, c'est la mémoire ancestrale et la garantie réelle de notre propre liberté.[7]

In this chapter, the term "space" will refer to a process, not only linked to geographical representations, but also to a virtual and spiritual understanding of the world. In Yves Sioui Durand's theatre, the creation and expression of ancient spaces

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[6] Jean-Paul Lacasse, 'Le territoire dans l'univers Innu d'aujourd'hui,' in http:www.innu.ca/lacasse.htm.
[7] Yves Sioui Durand, *Le Porteur des peines du monde*, pp. 13-14.

opens up a dimension of freedom from present issues or past scars. It also contributes to establish a connection with traditional beliefs. Mother Earth embodies at the same time a guide and a precious matrix to protect. Western societies have predominantly considered nature in opposition to culture. This aspect is notably reflected in the ex-colonial division between civilised and uncivilised people. On the other hand, traditional societies have made sense of nature through their relationship with it. In contemporary Quebec, Native authors have found another zone that can correspond to their modern situation, and which overlaps the two aforementioned conceptions of nature: ecology. Indeed, in most of their writings, Native people are described as the protectors of the Earth. Oscillating between spiritual representations and political claims, Native literature from Quebec has produced its own literary category. Drawing on Homi K. Bhabha's evocation of a third space, it will be exposed how this literary sphere can in some ways be considered as a means of reowning a cultural space, hybrid and yet different.

I. Geographical Representations

In Western societies, views of nature and space have changed dramatically. The perceptions of local space and of the planet have evolved following the exchanges taking place between the different groups of humans inhabiting the earth, and also on-going technological progress. In the case of ex-colonised countries, such as Quebec, spatial representations can be part of a rather complex framing. Moreover, the inhabitants of Quebec have various potential places against which they can position themselves: the rest of Canada, America and France. Throughout the centuries Native people of Quebec have been confronted with political, economic and geographical changes that have also influenced their perception of their environment. Most of the time these changes occurred without their consent. These nomadic and semi-nomadic peoples were forced to settle down and live on a limited and determined territory. It is not surprising that territorial claims pervaded their first pieces of writing and still do to a lesser extent. The loss of their freedom of movement and the threat of further land dispossession have led them to conceive in part the idea of owning a territory. However, their texts also reflect a specific conceptualization of their own environment, which differs from the rest of the inhabitants of Quebec. Nature's beauty is described extensively, leaving no room for any positive evocation of anything "non-natural", such as cities built by White people. Although it is true that certain non-Native Quebec authors have also praised their country's landscapes, they never did so exclusively. As Rosemary Chapman pointed out in the aforementioned book, nature has also been depicted as an oppressive and dangerous enemy to fight against.

I.1. Territorial Claims

As mentioned previously, Native writers became more active in the 1970s. Social movements that started at the end of the 1960s intensified in the next decade. Between 1927 and 1951, a federal law prevented Native people from taking legal action to protect their rights, notably in terms of land.[8] Two major cases at the beginning of the 1970s then opened the path for more legal battles.[9] When looking at the fictional work included in this corpus in relation to political claims, An Antane Kapesh, an Innue, is perhaps the best example. In her autobiography, *Je suis une maudite sauvagesse*, she sets the tone from the first line:

> Quand le Blanc a voulu exploiter et détruire notre territoire, il n'a demandé de permission à personne, il n'a pas demandé aux Indiens s'ils étaient d'accord.[10]

Jean-Paul Lacasse has explained that the Innu have nowadays two different concepts of the notion of territory. Traditionally, the Innus' perception of the territory came from a customary use of the resources offered by it. They felt that they belonged to their land:

> En fait, l'Innu a un lien tellement intime avec le territoire qu'il considère lui appartenir. Cette idée d'appartenance à la terre engendre à son tour un attachement, une relation d'affection même, qui n'est pas toujours facile à saisir pour celui qui n'est pas Autochtone.[11]

The earth represented life and as such did not belong to anyone in particular. In fact, words such as "right of ownership", "land owner", do not exist in Innu. As Jean-Paul Lacasse explains, there are two words, "tipentamun" and "kanauentamun", that reflect their link to the land. The first expresses an idea of control and responsibility towards

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[8] Renée Dupuis, *Quel Canada pour les autochtones? La fin de l'exclusion* (Québec: Boréal, 2001), p. 99.
[9] The Cree against Hydro Quebec plans and the Nisga'as of New Brunswick concerning the claim of an Indian title in that state.
[10] An Antane Kapesh, *Je suis une maudite sauvagesse*, p. 9.
[11] Jean-Paul Lacasse, 'Le territoire dans l'univers Innu d'aujourd'hui,' in http:www.innu.ca/lacasse.htm, p. 3.

something and the second, the idea of looking after something. These concepts will be emphasised in the next section, as it relates space and time through the medium of ancestry. The second way of conceptualising the territory is similar to the non-Native one. The younger generation considers villages or communities as different territories, their own territories. These two conceptions confirm Doreen Massey's statement that space is socially constructed. Before colonisation, the various Native groups inhabiting Quebec had established relations that would enable them to move freely in their environment. Each group had adapted itself to the specificities of its own area. More recently, the exchanges - or absence of exchanges - taking place between the different groups, Native and non-Native included, have influenced Native people into becoming more aware of their rights of ownership. An Antane Kapesh published her autobiography in 1975. As indicated in Chapter Two, her autobiography is organised around nine chapters that represent themes the author chose to make direct criticism about White society through personal experience. Thoughout her narrative, she refers to the land the Innus have lost as "mon territoire" or "notre territoire." However, she never gives any precision regarding the exact boundaries of this territory. An Antane Kapesh mentions only the north and two towns: Schefferville, which is the name of the community of which she used to be Chief from 1965 till 1967, and Sept-Iles, the nearest town to Maliotenam, another reservation where she lived. In the first chapter, 'l'arrivée du Blanc sur notre territoire', the author expresses her anger against colonisation through the exposition of sets of thoughts that the colonisers did not show when dealing with Native ancestors:

> Le Blanc n'a jamais parlé de cela aux Indiens. 'J'exploiterai votre territoire et je le détruirai. Aujourd'hui, vous voyez, il est encore très propre et, vous le savez, toutes les sortes

> d'animaux que vous avez, les animaux indiens, sont encore propres. Plus tard, je gaspillerai et je salirai vos animaux, toutes les espèces d'animaux d'indiens.'[12]

First of all, it is interesting to notice that animals and land are most of the time inextricable when the notion of territory is being discussed. Although An Antane Kapesh told the story of her own experience and her personal view of the Native situation, the use of generic terms such as "les Indiens" and "le Blanc" in this first part tend to lead the reader into thinking that her idea of territory actually refers to the whole country and concerns all the Native people. This aspect is reinforced by the fact that the description of the evolution of White people's presence and attitude in her text could correspond to any situation in Quebec or Canada. The recurrent presence of the two words "notre territoire" added to the generic representation of Indian and White people renders the discourse politically assertive. Besides, the various places described in her narrative are all connected to a nefarious way of life or behaviour set by non-Native people. For instance, schools and hotels selling alcohol on the reservation are depicted as places that did not exist and were not needed before the arrival of the White man, and that contributed to the acculturation of Native people. The first schools created by the federal government were places where Native people were denied their indianity. Bars or alcohol-selling points on the reservations have certainly accentuated the feeling of alienation experienced by many Native people in their own community. In *Qu'as-tu fait de mon pays?*,[13] An Antane Kapesh's allegory expresses again the same criticisms in a very clear cut manner. The title of the story is self-explanatory as to who the country belongs to. The reader witnesses through the narrative the dispossession taking place in the child's life.[14] After having lost some territorial space, he loses his health, his independence, his language and his culture.

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[12] An Antane Kapesh, *Je suis une maudite sauvagesse*, p. 12.
[13] An Antane Kapesh, *Qu'as-tu fait de mon pays?* (Québec : les Editions Impossibles, 1979).
[14] See Chapter Two for a summary of the narrative.

The rapid succession of the actions punctuated by strong ironic comments turns the text into a powerful political statement. The extreme unfairness and unnaturalness of the invasion is clearly brought to the fore. This is also the only text that directly refers to Quebec and the Québécois, strongly criticising their past behaviour. An Antane Kapesh quotes the lines of one of Quebec's founding anthems in her narrative, but under a negative light. At the end of part three, the "polichinelles" are very excited because they are preparing the building of a railway which will enable them to make even more profit on Native land. Being really delighted about this new plan, they sing a newly created anthem:

> 'O-Ca-na-da-ter-re-de-nos-za-ieux…' chantent-ils avec ravissement.[15]

From the beginning of the book, the reader is told that the country described "belongs" to the child and his ancestors. Thus the presence of these few words in such a context makes the whole meaning of this song rather provocative and out of place. The ending of the story questions harshly the birth of Quebec identity, making it clear that the origin of its existence was based on the dispossession of Native territory:

> Tu es un immigrant. Quand tu es venu la première fois, tu étais très pauvre. Et à présent, d'où tires-tu ta richesse ? Eh bien, c'est avec mon territoire que tu t'es enrichi et c'est moi maintenant qui suis devenu pauvre à cause de toi.[16]

As indicated before, this narrative was created at a time when Native political movements asserted themselves more and more. Native texts published afterwards have not so far shown the same anger. However, the feeling of territorial dispossession can still be found in more recent works. The poems present in this corpus do not express such thoughts apart from a few poems written by Eléonore Sioui. In 'Fraternité', she refers to Quebec as "le pays des Wendats" when she retells the first meeting between her ancestors and the colonisers. She also alludes to the

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[15] Ibid., p. 42.
[16] Ibid., p. 80.

change of name given to the place Huron-Wendats live nowadays. Changing the names of places was a strategic act of empowerment performed by the colonisers. This occurred in any country of the world that has been conquered at a certain point in their history. Paul Carter refers to this process as way of creating history, spatial history:

> For by the act of place-naming, space is transformed symbolically into a place, that is, a space with a history.[17]

Bernard Assiniwi subtly denounces this act by placing in parallel three maps of Newfoundland with different names attached to it in *La Saga des Béothuks*: from "le monde d'Anin," "la terre des Béothuks," to "Terre-Neuve." Native authors tend to be very careful when using the names of places, of various elements of the environment they are describing. This is very often the case when Native words are used over French ones. The effect and the choice of this stylistic strategy will be discussed in the following chapter. Bernard Assiniwi has actually published two volumes of Canadian Native terms referring to places and historical figures,[18] highlighting the importance of the Native presence in Canadian culture. The mention of territorial dispossession is recurrent in Native Quebec literature. It should not be perceived as just a mournful theme as it is always paralleled with the idea that Native people are the ones who know how to treat the Earth in a respectful way. This will be developed later. In *Il n'y a plus d'indiens*, Bernard Assiniwi portrays through the narration of generational conflict the feeling of belonging to the land of the reservation. The whole story is based on the defence of the reservation subsoil. Gold Prospecting, a non-Native company, has managed to buy the subsoil of the reservation thanks to Paul Wagush's treason. The play highlights the legal difficulties encountered by Native people

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[17] Paul Carter, 'Spatial History,' in *Post-Colonial Studies, a Reader*, edited by Bill Ashcroft, Gareth Griffiths, Helen Tiffin (London: Routledge, 1995), p. 377.
[18] See bibliography at the end.

concerning their territorial rights. Native people do not own the land they live on. However, they cannot prevent themselves from seeing it as theirs. Reservations are the places where they lead their lives:

> On ne va pas laisser les étrangers passer ici, et faire de notre réserve une propriété commerciale! On est chez nous, maudit![19]

The constant reference to non-Native people as foreigners also reflects the feeling of belonging that Native people have towards their country and reasserts the fact that they are the original inhabitants, the *first* nations. The truth claim project evoked in the previous chapter is once again in place through spatial representations. Jean-Paul Sartre said that politically involved writers know that the word is action, that revealing things is changing them, and that it is only with this intention that one can reveal them.[20] An Antane Kapesh's decision to write seems to have been a demanding process and her determination shows the value of her project. She had to leave her reservation for a while and go to town to work on the translation and get it published. Doing so was a hard task for her.[21] Spatial representations in Native literature are not only envisaged in terms of territorial ownership or non-ownership, they also reflect Native positioning towards their own environment and how it moulds their identity.

I. 2. Quebec Landscapes and Other Places

Whether in poems, novels or plays, nature with all its components (animals, plants, minerals, planets etc...) plays an important part in Native narratives. In this section, these representations will be mainly looked at from a geographical and social perspective. The personification of some of nature's elements will be considered in

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[19] Bernard Assiniwi, *Il n'y a plus d'indiens* (Montréal: Leméac, 1983), p. 37.
[20] Jean-Paul Sartre, *Qu'est-ce que la littérature?* (Paris: Gallimard, 1948), p. 28.
[21] See the foreword of *Je suis une maudite sauvagesse* by An Antane Kapesh

the next section on imaginary territories. Due to their history, Native people have a perception of their environment which differs from the rest of the inhabitants of Quebec. First of all, Nature is never described as a threat. This does not mean that there are no scenes describing the difficulties undergone by Native ancestors to survive in their environment. In these situations, however, the characters facing natural obstacles always seem to understand them and revert to their own experience instead of seeing them as traps set by an enemy. The opening scene in *La Saga des Béothuks* shows Anin, one of the main characters, vigorously canoeing in order to avoid some reef before the break out of a storm. The dangers present in that situation have of course been set in order to emphasize the courage and the skills possessed by this major character. Later on in the narrative, the reader is told that it is a lack of forward planning that may kill you, not nature itself:

> Un voyageur sans tapatook est bien pauvre et ne peut compter que sur la cueillette sur la grève pour survivre. Quand le froid durcit la grève et que l'eau se couvre pour ne pas avoir froid, le voyageur imprévoyant meurt.[22]

In *Le Bras coupé*, Bernard Assiniwi changed the points of focalization when describing the characters' surroundings. The first two scenes of the book placed in parallel exemplify the differences between a Native and a non-Native perception of the same environment. In the first scene, Minji-Mendam half-awake is aware of the snow falling outside of his shelter and can explain all the sounds he hears without moving from his lying position. The scene thus described is very peaceful and the character appears to be merged with his own surroundings. The next scene, same morning and snow falling, portrays Bert Côté, a French Canadian, struggling with the cold, and cursing. This narrative, set in the 19th century, exposes in an interesting manner how space and places are socially constructed, and how Assiniwi's careful

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[22] Bernard Assiniwi, *La Saga des Béothuks*, p. 28.

distinction between the different characters' focalization contributes to the creation of a Native voice.

The first difference, which is also evoked by Doreen Massey in the introduction of *Geography Matters!*, comes from the conceptualization of a natural environment as a source of profit:

> The emergence of capitalism brought with it enormous changes in the dominant view of nature; from animate Mother Earth, to source of resources and profit, to the endlessly cataloguable and improvable.[23]

This aspect even today has not been accepted by Native people. However, one cannot deny that the absence of Native land ownership rights renders the whole process impossible. Assiniwi makes one of his White characters make the usual argument against Native people's land rights, which reinforces this idea of the earth as a source of profit:

> I don't give a shit about this land being theirs before. They never did anything with it and we had to develop it for them to benefit from it.[24]

The negative consequences of modern societies on the environment are criticised by all Native writers, but as it is linked to some of their ancestral beliefs, it will be developed in the next section. In *Le Bras coupé*, Assiniwi represented four main places which correspond to different types of characters. First, there is the village (never named, but situated near existent rivers and not far from Ottawa) with essentially three main places: the hotel bar, two shops and the church. The second place characterized by another set of inhabitants is la Pointe-aux-Algonquins. Situated further away, south from the White village in the forest, this Algonquin village is composed of habitations of different kinds: wig-whoms[25] and wooden houses. Menji-

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[23] *Geography Matters! A Reader*, p. 7.
[24] Bernard Assiniwi, *Le Bras coupé*, p. 64.
[25] Birch bark tents.

Mendam, the main Native character, is portrayed living outside the other groups, but still in the forest. Bert Côté's house is described closely at the beginning because of the point of focalization mentioned earlier on. As the reader sees the village through his eyes at the start of the narrative, it gives the impression that his house is on the edge of the village, enabling him to have a global view of it. All the places chosen in the White village illustrate the social dynamics between the different communities. The hotel bar and the church are divided into sections in order to separate the Natives from the non-Natives. In the hotel bar, there also exists a separation between French and English speakers and Native people:

> Dans cette salle, les tables alignées le long du mur étaient détenues par les Indiens, avec ici et là, un Canadien français assis parmi eux. Rétrécissant la circonférence de la pièce, les tables des Francophones voyaient de temps à autre un Amik-Inini s'y asseoir avec quelques amis de beuverie. Et le centre du plancher était entièrement occupé par les tables des Anglophones, rois commerçants de la région et pourvoyeurs des argents nécessaires à l'exploitation de la forêt.[26]

These spatial arrangements indeed occurred at the time. The sitting positions inside the church also highlight the hierarchy inside the society described. However, Assiniwi uses these depictions to stress the tensions between the different communities and especially to show the unfairness in the treatment of Native people. The hotel bar and the shops characterise two evils brought by White civilisation: alcohol and consumerism. These two locations represent places where exchanges occur between Native and non-Native people, but always with disastrous consequences for the former group. There is a striking division in Native literature from Quebec between positive scenes of nature associated with Native people and negative representations of man-made places such as towns and cities associated with

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[26] Bernard Assiniwi, *Le Bras coupé*, pp. 57-58.

non-Native people. These two different spheres represent the conflict between tradition and modernity, past and present. However, the oppositions are not represented in a way that would recall the Western division between culture and nature. In that sense, Assiniwi portrays two antagonistic worlds, but simply based on different ways of living in the same environment. As in *Le Bras coupé*, there are other texts showing the incursion of the member of one world into the other with painful consequences for Native people. For instance, several scenes taken from poems, plays or novels depict the loss of identity suffered by Native people who try to live as White people in towns. It is true that the opposition between the country and the city has been a familiar pattern in Quebec literature[27] (as in Western literature), the city evoking all human vices. However, in the case of Native writing, this opposition reflects more a cultural conflict than an economic or moral one. Towns represent the spread of White power over Native land. Environmental damages are associated with this progress. In *Le Porteur des peines du monde*, Le Loup de la Finance tries to tempt le Porteur with his money in order to enter the civilised world. The scene ends with le Porteur collapsing from exhaustion after having been manipulated, and he is covered with a pile of rubbish which has fallen from the sky:

> Le Porteur des peines du monde s'effondre...désormais 'indien-des-villes,' sans identité, perdu, seul et défait...La vie est violée sous l'envoûtement de la consommation...[28]

Eléonore Sioui also conveys this feeling in 'New World', which has already been quoted in Chapter Two. She describes Native people living in towns as soulless wanderers in the streets. Her comparing them to "disrooted trees"[29] is very significant.

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[27] Rosemary Chapman, *Siting the Quebec Novel. The Representation of Space in Francophone Writing in Quebec*, p. 59
[28] Yves Sioui Durand, *Le Porteur des peines du monde*, p. 41.
[29] Eléonore Jiconsaseh Sioui, *Corps à Coeur éperdu*, p. 59.

Jean Sioui evokes his fear for the next generations who will not know their traditional surrounding as they will live in cities:

> Je sais qu'aujourd'hui mon enfant tu connaîtras le tumulte de la grande ville
>
> Je m'inquiète de savoir si un jour tu apprendras aussi les leçons de la nature.[30]

For Yvon Couture, towns are also associated with death and enclosure. In 'Trois pigeons,'[31] the Algonquin author centres his attention on a natural aspect inside the city: the presence of three pigeons on a pavement ignored by passers-by. He chose the word "cimetière" to qualify the town and the term "robots" to refer to the inhabitants. They both evoke lifeless images that strongly contrast with the pigeons' activity. In 'Kakagi,'[32] the beautiful features of a crow are contrasted with the litter he can find in the streets. Couture's particular dislike for city life and his love of nature are the core of all his books. The several years he spent as a hermit may have influenced his depiction of the world. In 'Fuir!',[33] the author expresses how he cannot live in town because his whole body actually rejects the idea. Through a description of fetid smells and noises, he manages to convey the horror of his experience. His only solution to this, as his title indicates, is to run away. He compares himself to a hunted animal whose survival instinct advises him to escape:

> Mon angoisse?
>
> Elle est la même
>
> Que celle du gibier
>
> Traqué par les chasseurs:
>
> C'est la manifestation
>
> De mon instinct de conservation.[34]

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[30] Jean Sioui, *Le Pas de l'indien, pensées W'endates*, p. 89.
[31] Yvon H. Couture, *Natura*, p. 12.
[32] Ibid., p.16
[33] Yvon H. Couture, *Aki Têwêgan, le tambour de la terre*, pp. 65-66.
[34] Ibid., p. 66.

As will be discussed in the next section, Nature is very often portrayed as a refuge. Mother Earth needs to be protected and is also there to protect her children. Another place which has not been described in a very favourable way is the reservation. It is only referred to by three authors: Rita Mestokosho, Yves Sioui Durand and Bernard Assiniwi. Assiniwi set his play *Il n'y a plus d'indiens* in a community in the north of Quebec. As analysed before, the whole play takes place in the reservation. The plot is centred on the conflict between tradition and modernity, which divides the members of the community. The lack of political and economic freedom clearly revealed during the play turns the reservation into a rather claustrophobic place. It is also a place that needs to be constantly defended from White invasion. The scarcity of possible employment for the young generation entices them to go and live in town as Tom Pezindawatch declares in scene two.[35] In *Le Voyage aux pays des morts*,[36] Yves Sioui Durand does not only expose domestic violence in Native communities, he directly questions the possibility of being satisfied by life in a reservation:

> que peut-il faire celui qui est né sur une réserve aujourd'hui...quel est son espoir?...comment peut-il avoir le sentiment de la Terre?... parfois, il n'a jamais vécu dans le bois...c'est un indien...mais il est comme déraciné, perdu...il vit dans une autre société...il est entré dans la vie d'aujourd'hui...[37]

Rita Mestokosho writes in a more personal tone about reservations. In 'J'imagine',[38] her evocation of her own experience denotes a complex relationship with her environment. On the one hand, her reservation represses a side of her personality and on the other hand, living there helps her assert her identity:

> Que vivre dans une communauté
>
> c'est apprendre jour après jour

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[35] Bernard Assiniwi, *Il n'y a plus d'indiens*, p. 12.
[36] Yves Sioui Durand, *Atiskenandahate. Le voyage aux pays des morts*, pp. 28-31.
[37] Ibid., p. 28.
[38] Rita Mestokosho, *Eshi Uapataman Nukum,comment je perçois la vie Grand-mère. Recueil de poèmes Montagnais*, p. 33.

Quelle est ma véritable identité

Dans l'espoir d'un meilleur jour.(...)

Ma réserve, mon ghetto, mon chez moi

Peu importe le nom que je te donne

Tu enfouis une partie de moi

Tu caches une partie de ma personne.[39]

Once again it is a rather sour picture that comes out in the end. In Chapter Two on Identity, was indicated that there exists a strong dichotomy at the heart of the assertion of Native identity. Living on reservations enables Native people to stay in touch with their traditions and to have a better chance of being understood by the society they live in. However, economic difficulties and the oppressiveness of societies in small communities very often contribute to Native people's decision to leave their reservation.

When studying the representations of places, non-Native people often consider them in terms of public and private, as well as gender. In the case of Native writing, it is important to differentiate the descriptions of traditional societies and modern ones. As aforementioned, the mode of living of Native people in Quebec has dramatically changed in a few centuries. It is interesting to note that one of the first traumatic changes in terms of habitation that disturbed the way Native societies worked was the presence of doors on their houses. Instead of having open houses or tents grouped in a way that the whole community could live at the same rhythm, families suddenly became separated with a new sense of privacy. This is paralleled by the rise of stress on the individual. In *La Saga des Béothuks*, Assiniwi depicts Beothuk society as a collective, even if a few characters stand out. The division of the society into clans sharing the same tent gives the impression that private spaces do not really exist. This

[39] Ibid., p. 33.

is also reinforced by the fact that even sexual acts were performed in the presence of the other members of the clan.[40] Due to the way tasks were divided, men and women were indeed attached to different places. Men would go hunting in the forest or fishing in the sea while women would dry and smoke animal skins in the camp or gather some seafood on the shore, for instance. However, men and women would also work together in the forest as women would deal with what the hunters caught. One should not deduce that certain places were forbidden for one of the sexes, apart from two cases. The first one is linked to women giving birth and the second one to political power. In all Native societies, men had to leave women on their own - or with the help of other women - to give birth. When Woasut, Anin's first wife, is about to give birth, Anin builds himself another shelter in order to leave Woasut in peace for her delivery.[41] In his collection of short stories, Assiniwi describes in the first two the conditions in which women gave birth. In 'La Découverte', Ikwé discovers that she is pregnant and proceeds as any woman before her has done:

> Au moment du soir où les épouses rejoignent leurs contraires sur les couches d'amour, Ikwé entra dans le wig-wham réservé aux femmes qui allaient donner naissance et à celles qui subissaient la purification lunaire du sang. L'habitation était construite en retrait des autres, dans un bosquet d'arbres aux épines toujours vertes et près d'un ruisseau. Elle y était seule.[42]

The second place which could have been forbidden to women (depending on the nation) was where the council met. Political decisions were very often discussed by elderly men. However, in Huron-Wendat societies, women also took part in them. In the narratives dealing with modern life, the representations of public and private places are similar to the non-Natives'. A house represents a family home, and bars or bingo rooms and churches are places where the various members of the communities

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[40] Bernard Assiniwi, *La Saga des Béothuks*, p. 119.
[41] Ibid., p. 95.
[42] Bernard Assiniwi, *Ikwé, la femme algonquienne*, p. 34.

can meet. There exists, however, a specific notion of inside/outside which is particular to Native literature. The inside world of the reservation is separated from the outside world composed mainly of non-Native people. As we have seen, the latter is not a welcoming place.

In Native literature from Quebec, most places depicted have no precise locations. Nature in itself is the subject. Forests, rivers and lakes are represented in a general manner and it is the beauty of the scenery described which is important. Yvon H. Couture is certainly the writer who is the most enthusiastic about revealing Nature's treasures. He wrote a short text about his joy in discovering a rainbow during one of his morning walks. The tone is emphatic:

> Partant de l'orée des Arbres, il s'étire en une courbe à peine prononcée, en s'accrochant au filet de brume recouvrant la Rivière, jusqu'au rocher...où je suis assis!!! O stupeur!!! C'est à mes pieds qu'il prend naissance...ou me traverse?[43]

Despite the fact that there is rarely the presence of a name to indicate where the reader may find the landscapes mentioned, they correspond to Canadian scenery. There are only a few authors who have chosen to evoke other places. The link between these places either reflects a quest for spirituality or aims at making a political statement. Spatial representations have so far referred to local places, highlighting the differences between a Native world and a White world. However, as the previous chapter demonstrated, there exists a tendency to build on past universal sufferings in order to counteract the ex-coloniser's discourse. Similarly, the mention of a more global space where other people are confronted with the domination of another group serves to reinforce Native people's discourse on living a harmonious life. Eléonore Sioui has written poems about Israel, Hawaii, Haiti, Arizona and South America. The poems on Israel and Haiti are political ones. They bear a criticism of

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[43] Yvon H. Couture, *Aki Têwêgan, le tambour de la terre*, pp. 61-62.

violence and oppression. In 'Arab-Jewish', the scenery represents a message of hope for the end of the conflict:

> While the trees and the flowers
>
> Continue to grow
>
> On the brown and reddish hillsides
>
> Of Jerusalem
>
> To let hope grow green again for the nation[44]

In 'La Citadelle',[45] Eléonore Sioui draws a very dark picture of the island and of Port-au-Prince. Poverty, death and slavery are the key images of this poem. As explained in the chapter on Identity, the choice of such places seems to appeal to the author, as it brings a communal understanding not just of Native people in Quebec, but of all the oppressed people in the world. The reference to South America[46] serves to bring together Native people of the Americas and to emphasize that they were the original inhabitants. Yves Sioui Durand has a few plays whose settings are outside Quebec. The feature common to these places is their strong connection with the presence of a certain Aboriginal assertion. His reference to himself as an "Asierindien", characterises his choice of places (Asia and America) for his quest to recreate a mythological space for Native people today. Due to their ancestors' beliefs and historical evolution, contemporary Native people have a different perception of spatiality and time. When Native authors move away from political discourses, nature becomes portrayed as one of the most important figures in their cultures.

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[44] Eléonore Sioui, *Corps à Coeur éperdu*, p. 50.
[45] Ibid., pp. 106-107.
[46] Ibid., p. 39.

II Imagined Territories, Mother Earth, Modern and Ancient Beliefs

Native conceptualization of their own environment has evolved throughout the Americas since first contact with European people. In order to preserve what was left from their ancestor's country, they had to learn how to think in a non-Native way. However, in Native literature the analysis of spatial representations reveals a specific way of understanding the world, which differs from the rest of the inhabitants of Quebec. In *Mapping the Sacred: Religion, Geography and Postcolonial Literature*, Jamie S. Scott explains in the introduction how the relation between religion, geography and literature goes back a long way.[47] It is true that Christianity has been a point of reference for many centuries in Western culture, but nowadays researchers in the three areas aforementioned are able to consider other forms of religion and to relate them to literature and geography. Jamie S. Scott quotes Mircea Eliade, a historian of religion, who defined his idea of 'sacred space', as "a site of individual and collective efforts to exercise a ritual sensibility."[48] In Native writing, then, Nature does appear as a sacred place. Setting aside the previous descriptions, most of the images evoked in the whole corpus show how the authors desire to express their strong connection with Nature as a whole on a sacred level. In 'Aatha, Protection de la terre', Eléonore Sioui summarised very clearly what herself and other authors have implied in their descriptions of scenes of nature:

> Manitou, Manitou, Manitou, Manitou
>
> La Nature, Toi et Nous
>
> Sommes un Tout

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[47] *Mapping the Sacred Religion, Geography and Postcolonial Literature*, ed. by Jamie S. Scott and Paul Simpson-Housley (Amsterdam-Atlanta: editions Rodopi B.V., 2001), pp. 13-28.
[48] Ibid., p. 16.

Manitou, Manitou, Manitou, Manitou (...)[49]

The structure of the poem with its repetitions of the name of their religious entity makes it sound like a religious litany or incantation. Yvon H. Couture has deliberately used Christian terminology in the titles of some of his poems: 'Le cantique de la forêt', 'Le cantique de l'eau.' In 'Le cantique de la forêt,'[50] Yvon H. Couture tells how trees have always been able to give him the spiritual comfort he needed. The last paragraph of this poem implies that the Creator communicates to humans through the beauty of Nature:

Comme si...
L' Artiste
Suprême
Etait venu
Lui-même
Jouer...
De ses...
Grandes Orgues.[51]

Words such as "grandes orgues" and "louange", which is used earlier in the poem, are taken from the Christian lexicon. In Native cultures, religious beliefs have always been very important, as the way of expressing Native faith was inspired by their own environment and integrated with their daily activities. For instance, the method of killing certain animals required precise ritualistic proceedings. And it was believed that showing a lack of respect to prey could prevent the hunter from having a successful future hunt. After several centuries of intensive Christian conversion, Native people have now integrated some of the coloniser's beliefs. In many of the texts present in this corpus, references to both ways of thinking are very often interlinked. Yvon H. Couture sometimes uses the term "mon Dieu", and in other instances, the term "Manitou." Rita Mestokosho also oscillates between the two types

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[49] Eléonore Jiconsasch Sioui, *Corps à Coeur éperdu*, p. 92.
[50] Yvon H. Couture, *Aki Têwêgan, le tambour de la terre*, p. 27.
[51] Ibid., p. 28.

of references when naming the originator of life on earth. However, the sacredness of Nature dominates their spiritual discourse.

The sacredness of the natural world can be understood in different ways. First of all, it is important to underline the fact that Native writers -as most Native people- refer primarily to their own land when expressing their spiritual connection to Nature, but this relation does expand to the Earth as a whole. Life is sacred. As the land provides life, it is sacred too. Native people needed to kill animals to live, but always ate them after having thanked the dead animals for having given their lives to them. In his analysis of the Innu perception of their own territory, Jean-Paul Lacasse quoted the words of a few elderly Innus who did not understand how pieces of land could be sold or owned as they represented life itself.[52] This mode of perception is not exclusive to the Innus or the other Native nations in Quebec; they are shared by the rest of the nations in Canada. William Closson James's article on Rudy Wiebe's novel *A Discovery of Strangers* draws on the Dene's representation of the land in order to highlight the differences between European invaders and Native people in relation to Canadian landscapes.[53] He demonstrates how Dene's oral tradition –as well as others'- provides "definitions for the supernatural and terrestrial boundaries of the area in which they live, imparts the origins of their arrival there, and enables them to maintain a sense of place."[54] Thus spiritual and geographical aspects are seen as inseparable. Assiniwi's collections of traditional stories illustrate how Algonkian and Iroquoian oral traditions provided, and to a certain extent still provide, explanations for the origin of the Earth and every living being, as well as a cultural and social framework for these societies. Native people do not have an anthropocentric vision of

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[52] Jean-Paul Lacasse, 'Le territoire dans l'univers Innu d'aujourd'hui,' p.4.
[53] William Closson James." 'A land beyond words,' Rudy Wiebe's *A Discovery of Strangers*" in *Mapping the Sacred Religion, Geography and Postcolonial Literature*, ed. by Jamie S. Scott and Paul Simpson-Housley (Amsterdam-Atlanta: editions Rodopi B.V., 2001), pp. 71-89.
[54] Ibid., p. 76.

the world, but a cosmocentric one. The image of the circle pervades their conceptualization of the world itself and any part of it. As opposed to the European frame of mind, there exists no hierarchy in the world of the living for Native people. Humans are not considered to be superior to animals. In Native oral tradition, most of the stories include animals who very often talk and behave as humans. This anthropomorphic vision originates in the belief that there was an era when humans and animals used to converse together.[55] The myths of creation of the world, like those recorded by Assiniwi, emphasize the relationship between human beings and animals. Despite the variations between the different nations' stories, animals have all played an important role in the creation of the Earth. For the Algonquins, Michabou, the Big Hare, finds refuge on a raft after a great flood. With the help of other animals who dive to bring back a piece of earth to put on the raft, Michabou manages to create the Earth. The Iroquoian nations tell the story of Aataentsic, a pregnant woman who fell from the sky (where there was another world) and was rescued by several animals who placed her on a large turtle. Then as before, different animals dived to bring back a little soil to put on the turtle's back. In the Algonquin story, humans are created by Michabou out of the corpses of a bear and a moose. The Iroquoian myth has Aataentsic give birth to a girl, who is impregnated by the turtle or the wind and gives birth in turn to humans. In the Abenaki version, the Earth has always existed. The Great Spirit created a man and a woman out of a rock first, then unsatisfied, sculpted them out of a tree trunk. Whatever the exact components of the creation myths, these narratives show the closeness and interaction between animals and humans from the very beginning of time in Native cultures. Charles Coocoo, an Atikamekw, wrote his spiritual vision of life in forms of poems or small prose texts. The structure of his

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[55] Diane Boudreau, p. 27.

book[56] is organised around six themes: 'la création', 'la naissance', 'l'enfance', 'la maturité', 'la tradition' and 'la sagesse.' These themes are related to the human cycle of life. Yet every theme is portrayed through the evocation of natural elements such as the changing of seasons or the behaviour of certain animals and plants. For instance, the section entitled 'l'enfance' conflates six texts which describe a few moments in the life of a child, from being carried to its first steps. The first text, 'le porte-bébé', explains the origin of a baby carrier made out of birch. Thus through the intervention of the Creator, Nature participated in the well-being of the Atikamekws from its early stage:

> Iriniw *(homme)*, artisan comme son père Kice Manito *(grand esprit)*, se mit au travail et réfléchit à son oeuvre. Il avait vu son père tendre ses bras pleins de tendresse et d'amour dans l'immense jardin. Il fit alors une planche dont les quatre coins représentèrent cet immense jardin, un demi-cerceau représentant les bras tendus et finalement un butoir, symbolisant le soutien fraternel de Wikwasatikw *(bouleau)*. Le Tikanakan *(porte-bébé)* venait de voir le jour."[57]

This series of texts ends with a poem entitled 'petite plante.'[58] The author in this short poem looks for advice and comfort from a small plant. The presence of the poem in this section, in parallel with the description of Atikamekw childhood, reflects how in the author's mind the life cycles of plants and humans have a similar pattern and share the same spatial rights as human beings in the universe. This is reinforced by the author as he expresses his belief in the possibility of exchange of knowledge and emotions between the little plant and himself. Native people understand themselves to live in close kinship with the land they inhabit so that they consider their territory to be their very lifeblood. Many instances can be found in this corpus where the terminology used to refer to natural elements is identical to the one used to mention

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[56] Charles Coocoo, *Broderies sur mocassins* (Chicoutimi: JCL, 1988).
[57] Ibid., p. 27.
[58] Ibid., p. 32.

family members. For instance, the Earth is very often named Mother, the Sun called Grand-father and the Moon, Grand-mother. In a poem formulated as a message of hope for her own people,[59] Rita Mestokosho builds her discourse around the help Nature can give to desperate souls. The natural elements she mentions are portrayed in an anthropomorphic manner:

> N'entends-tu pas **ta soeur** la rivière qui t'appelle?
>
> Elle coule comme le sang dans tes veines
>
> N'écoutes-tu pas **ton frère** le vent qui te parle?
>
> Il te dit: Confie-moi un peu de ta peine.[60]

It is true that the personification of natural elements has also often been used by non-Native writers. However, their aim is aesthetic and not spiritual; their representations do not correspond to their understanding of reality. From a non-Native point of view, this anthropomorphic vision of the world could be defined as a virtual space, but in fact this choice of terminology reflects exactly how the Natives define their relationship with their environment. Their vision of the world is spiritual in the sense that their beliefs alter the way they perceive their surroundings.

In Native writing from Quebec, Nature is not only represented as a spiritual refuge, or as a blood relative, but also as a model for leading a harmonious life. Jean Sioui, a Huron-Wendat writer previously quoted, has based his whole book of thoughts on Natural references.[61] His philosophical thoughts, very often constructed as poems, are inspired from his observations of his surroundings. The author either explains his points by comparing human situations to scenes of nature or by directly describing Nature's beneficial effects on humankind. Yvon H. Couture expresses his philosophy around carefully chosen concise images. There are no precise

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[59] Rita Mestokosho, p. 15.
[60] Ibid., p. 15. Words in bold, my emphasis.
[61] Jean Sioui, *Le Pas de l'Indien, pensées wendates* (Québec: Le Loup de Gouttière, 1997)

geographical representations in this book, except one short text concerning the name given to a river in Lorette.[62] The natural elements chosen to illustrate the "right" behaviour to adopt in order to live in peace are similar to the ones found in other texts referring to nature's sacredness. Thus trees' roots can evoke perseverance (Sioui, p.13); the magnificence of the forests can entice a feeling of humility (Sioui, p. 52) and the Sun can inspire generosity (Sioui, p. 45) or positive feelings (Sioui, p.44). As opposed to Christian symbols, Nature is never portrayed as a temptress or an evil presence. In Native writing, man should respect nature, as it imparts its wisdom and its bounty on a daily basis. In fact, the relationship Native people consider having with nature possesses other layers. On one hand, Nature is thought of as a sacred place where Native spirituality is expressed and incarnated, and as such offers spiritual guidance. Charles Coocoo wrote a short poem called 'Nature sacrée', in which he defines the fusion of the human mind with nature as the way to spiritual elevation:

> Iriniw *(homme)* doit chercher un véhicule pour
> l'acheminement de son évolution
> spirituelle.
> L'esprit s'accouple avec la Nature pour
> Parfaire cette évolution.[63]

On the other hand, Nature in turn must also be protected. As shown before, the assertion of Native identity within Quebec has been tinted with ambivalent representations. The portrayal of Native people as defenders of Nature can be interpreted as the merging of ideas from two different origins. First of all, the image of the "bon sauvage" living in harmony with nature is as recurrent as the negative representations recalled in previous chapters. European writers created the myth of the noble savage by projecting consciously or unconsciously their own desires into the

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[62] Ibid., p. 66.
[63] Charles Coocoo, *Broderies sur mocassins*, p. 38.

new societies they had encountered. Secondly, it seems understandable that Native people should consider themselves as protectors of their environment as most of it has been taken from them and especially as it can be perceived as a legacy from their ancestors. The beginning of this chapter quoted a passage from one of Rita Mestokosho's poems, entitled 'Gardien de la terre.' For most of the Native writers of this corpus, it corresponds to the role Native people could play in our contemporary world. It is undoubtedly difficult to know how much performance for White people is at play. However, it seems to me that the evocation of their spirituality, which is entirely connected to their perception of nature, in their writings as well as their daily life, suggests a "genuine" concern for their environment. In 'Innu', Rita Mestokosho addresses herself to her own people, describing their present feelings. She ends her poem by declaring that their role is to try to convince people to protect this Earth:

> Ton message est celui de protéger la terre
> Je la protégerai aussi longtemps que je vivrai avec elle
> Mais je n'oublierai pas d'apprendre
> Et de partager aux autres
> Ton message si divin...[64]

With the last line, once again spirituality and space conceptualization get intertwined. This positioning of protectors of the Earth is very often paralleled with the criticism of modernity and non-Native culture. In 'Un peuple sans terre',[65] Rita Mestokosho expresses her worries about seeing the Earth disappear because of the non-Native insatiable quest for profit. She asks the non-Native not to destroy the Earth for future generations and states that Mother Nature is under her protection. This poem encapsulates many dimensions recurrent in Native writing from Quebec: present, past and future tied together, the protection of Nature, and the spiritual conceptualization

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[64] Rita Mestokosho, p. 11.
[65] Ibid., p. 25.

of terrestrial space. Eléonore Sioui joins her voice to the complaints against White people's modernisation, which entails serious consequences for the environment. 'Athrasqua atetson, Danger de mort'[66] is probably the most striking of her poems on the subject as it gives a rather grim picture of water pollution. She describes the chain of contamination, which in the end will destroy life as a whole. Yves Sioui Durand has also denounced capitalism in some of his plays by highlighting the negative effects it causes on the human race and the Earth as a whole. He also presented Native people as the defenders of the Earth. Both these authors have added the dimension that the Earth speaks through Native people's voices. For instance, Eléonore Sioui wrote a very short poem in which she claims that she feels the Earth rage coming through her arms.[67] In another one entitled 'Saconcheta, Venez au festin', the Amerindian heart is envisaged as the holder or recipient of Mother Earth's soul:

Le Coeur de l'Amérindien
Renferme l'essence
Les larmes, les sourires
De l'âme de la Terre Mère
Fécondée par le soleil (...)[68]

In *Atiskenandahate- Le voyage au pays des morts,* Yves Sioui Durand has placed in scene three an Indian from the past, who tells the audience what the Earth is saying to whoever is willing to listen. She claims that she is dying and that men are destroying her.[69] In *Le Porteur des peines du monde*, from the very beginning of the play the audience is told that "les Amérindiens sont aujourd'hui la voix ultime de la terre."[70] The capacity to listen to the Earth's messages is also illustrated by Rita Mestokosho's poetry. In 'Sous un feu de rocher', she produces a long enumeration of the aspects of

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[66] Eléonore Jiconsaseh Sioui, *Corps à Coeur éperdu*, p. 101.
[67] Ibid., p. 35.
[68] Ibid., p. 88.
[69] Yves Sioui Durand, *Atiskenandahate. Le voyage au pays des morts*, pp. 22-24.
[70] Yves Sioui Durand, *Le Porteur des peines du monde*, p. 12.

life she has learnt from her observations of Nature, but the most important thing, which ends this poem, is her discovery of the Earth's living presence and her necessity to listen to her:

> Mais c'est uniquement sous un feu de rocher
> A l'abri d'un hiver froid et solitaire
> Que j'ai entendu les battements de la terre
> Et c'est là que j'ai appris à écouter.[71]

The aptitude to read the environment and the Earth as a whole put forward by Native writers could be considered as a heritage from previous generations. It has been underlined in preceding pages that there are recurrent representations of Native ancestors' ways of life in contemporary writing. One of the striking features of these remembrances of the past is the evocation of the peaceful and harmonious life these men used to live. These peoples managed to survive and adapt themselves to the environment they lived in, by carefully reading the changes taking place around them.

Bernard Assiniwi's novels give the reader the impression that the characters perfectly blend with their natural space. This is due notably to the linguistic approach adopted by Assiniwi in some of his descriptions of the characters' actions. Assiniwi uses many similes which are composed of natural elements. For instance, the depictions of Anin's sensations and body at the beginning of the narrative are illustrated by comparisons to animals or plants:

> Sans attendre, Anin déguerpit comme le lièvre en sautant de roche en roche (...).[72]

> Anin grelottait comme une feuille de tremble au vent. (...)[73]

> Sa peau devint comme celle de l'oiseau qu'on vient de plumer pour le faire cuire.[74]

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[71] Rita Mestokosho, p. 17.
[72] Bernard Assiniwi, *La Saga des Béothuks*, p. 23.
[73] Ibid., p. 26.

Assiniwi is not the only author to make an abundant use of this type of imagery. It can also be found in many poems. For example, Charles Coocoo compares women to a "verbe de bourgeon",[75] or his people to seeds waiting to grow.[76] Nature appears at every level in Native writing. However, the linguistic aspect of it will be discussed in the next chapter. Through their texts, Native authors convey the impression that nature is indeed at the very core of their sense of self and identity, whether it is on a political, religious, historical or social level. It is important to clarify that Nature is not worshipped, but is considered as a sacred place that needs respect and protection.

The concept of space is linked not only to terrestrial representations; the descriptions of certain landscapes in Native writing focus on the importance of dreams. Traditionally, Native people used to analyse and take into account the meaning of their dreams. For instance, the dreams an Innu hunter had before his hunt would tell him if he would be successful or not. It has also been recalled that a Huron-Wendat who was ill could be cured by fulfilling what he or she had dreamt of.[77] Yves Sioui Durand has pointed out in an article on Native art in Quebec that it is necessary for the Quebec government to make more effort to value Native artistic expression. His main argument stresses the fact that the dispossession of imaginary territories must be stopped before Native people's access to their imagination and dreams, and consequently their cultures, disappear completely:

> (...) nous devons réclamer l'accès à notre imaginaire, l'accès par l'art aux sources de nos cultures basées sur le rêve. Sans rêves, c'est la mort![78]

As stated before, Yves Sioui Durand aims at redefining Native mythology. By this process, the author hopes to reopen a cultural space the coloniser's mind had taken

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[74] Ibid., p. 35.
[75] Charles Coocoo, *Broderies sur mocassins*, p. 21.
[76] Ibid., p. 35.
[77] Georges E. Sioui, *Les Wendats, une civilisation méconnue*, p. 303.
[78] Yves Sioui Durand, "Faire le Mantow-Mantowkasowin-l'art," in www.expressions.gc.ca/durandpaper_f.htm

over. It is undeniable that Nature inspires Native writers for their creations. In many instances, their descriptions can transform the simplest natural event into a mystical or magical appearance. In Yvon H. Couture's poetry, the reader feels very often part of a dreamed world when the texts are not too centred on the religious aspect of nature. This author particularly likes the depiction of ethereal landscapes. There exist many references to marmoreal moons, northern lights and starry nights. His style is very lyrical and leads the reader into a magical world. For instance, in 'Le sommeil d'Aki', Yvon H. Couture describes the Earth sleeping and manages to convey an impression of silence and peaceful quietness that the reader feels surrounded by:

> La Lune
> marmoréenne
> veillait
> elle aussi,
> sur sa fille
> endormie,
> la caressant
> de ses rayons
> de lumière
> blanche...[79]

The structure of the poem with its alignment of only one or two words creates a slow rhythm which contributes to the overall sensation of calm. The last two lines that end the poem could be seen as representing the movement of the planet breathing:

> Aki repose...
>
> Aki rêve...[80]

In several of his poems, Yvon H. Couture uses a first person narrative to recount his experiences. In many cases, he describes himself as floating away, flying like a bird. From this vantage point, free from the enclosure of his body, he shares with the reader the world he witnesses. The emphasis is put on the beautiful scenery he discovers

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[79] Yvon H. Couture, *Aki Têwêgan, le tambour de la terre*, p. 52.
[80] Ibid.

from this other perspective. The world of dreams has also been associated with the world of spirits, a place where it is possible to meet the ancestors. In *Le Porteur des peines du monde*, Yves Sioui Durand transports the audience into a world where past, present and future are intertwined. Le Porteur performs on the stage in a ritualistic space called the land of dreams.[81] It is considered to be a place of power and offering. This circular space is composed of the seeds of the four Huron-Wendat sacred plants: maize, beans, tobacco and squash. As the previous chapter revealed, the act of performing in Yves Sioui Durand's plays is much more complex than a simple entertainment. A strong feeling of spirituality emanates from it. Performing the play in the middle of a street has also created an in-between world where the borders are blurred and reality and imagination meet. In scene five, the encounter between "l'esprit du Cerf" or "le Maître des caribous" and Le porteur takes place thanks to the singing of an old Innu playing the drums. His song is a dream song, which enables Papakwsik'w, "le maitre des caribous" to appear. In scene six, Yves Sioui Durand indicates that what the audience witnesses is no longer a show and that Le Porteur has truly entered his ancestors' path. The power of dreams can be envisaged on two different levels. Traditionally, Native people considered that dreams were a sacred space where ancestors could be met or spiritual forces would give guidance to the dreamer. Through ritualistic drama, Yves Sioui Durand recreates this space in which the recalling of past events or spiritual entities helps to heal present situations. On the other hand, the narrator or storyteller can be seen as a dreamer who puts into place what is happening. In 'A Land beyond Words, Rudy Wiebe's *A Discovery of Strangers*,' William Closson James evokes the author's position with regard to

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[81] Yves Sioui Durand, *Le Porteur des peines du monde*, p. 25.

storytellers. Wiebe's perception leads to rejecting Aristotle's division between the historian and the poet, in favour of a more inclusive role:

> Perhaps Wiebe is here suggesting that the role of the storyteller is not merely to record and report past events, nor to imagine in unfettered fashion a radically open future. The narrator is more like the prophet or dreamer who activates or helps make happen what is happening, but who is also present as an ingredient of the narrative itself and determinative of what will happen.[82]

This conception of narration can also be applied to Native authors of Quebec. Yves Sioui Durand's choice of genre and especially structural method exemplify it explicitly. Sioui Durand entices the spectators to enter the world presented to them. The line between the performance and reality becomes very often blurred. For instance, in scene six of *Le Porteur des peines du monde*, Le Porteur directly engages with the audience and asks for their help. In *La Conquête de Mexico*, a Mexican guide at the beginning of the play recounts the history of the temple and cathedral on Mexico-Tenochtitlan square where he is standing, as if the spectators were actually tourists visiting Mexico. The chorus also acts as street sellers showing statuettes to the audience and asking them if they would like to purchase them. Consequently, past, present and future get entangled; this process also helps bring mythological dimensions into everyday situations. It is true that performances enable a direct response from the audience, but books can also create a virtual space where the reader feels caught between reality and fiction. Assiniwi's *La Saga des Béothuks* brings this now extinct civilisation back to life for the reader. Telling stories is to a certain extent quintessential to mankind. Thomas King, a Native American writer, has recently

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[82] William Closson James," 'A land beyond words,' Rudy Wiebe's *A Discovery of Strangers*" in *Mapping the Sacred Religion, Geography and Postcolonial Literature*, p. 81.

published his 2003 CBC Massey lectures[83] in which he exposes his views on politics, history and Indian representations. His main point is reflected in his method of communication: the importance of storytelling. Every chapter or lecture is composed of narratives from which King derives his analysis of various topics. Whether oral or written, stories unravel who we are and how we perceive others and the world around us. As Thomas King states: "the truth about stories is that that's all we are."[84] To further assert his point, he quotes Gerald Vizenor, another Native American writer who declared that there was no centre to the world, but a story.[85] These comments about storytelling can be considered as being rooted in oral tradition. As indicated previously, names of places, objects or of animals were most of the time explained through the telling of a story. Thanks to stories, listeners could remember how to behave when faced with certain dilemmas or dangerous situations, for instance. By choosing to write and be published, Native authors know the difficulties and pressures that can be imposed on them by non-Natives. However, this creative space they choose to enter enables them to repossess a part of their cultures through the assertion of their own voices. It is undeniable that their writing is influenced by previous texts written by non-Native people and that they try to position themselves in relation to past Indian representations. Nevertheless, this aspect should not be perceived as cancelling their assertion of identity; writers have always been influenced by other writings or the society they live in. Contemporary Native writing and performances give the authors, and the readership or audience (when Native) an opportunity to combine tradition and modernity, while avoiding the limitations of a non-Native universalist framework. In an article on Third Space, Homi K. Bhabha criticized the

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[83] Thomas King, *The Truth about Stories, A Native Narrative* (Toronto: House of Anansi Press Inc., 2003).
[84] Ibid., p. 32.
[85] Ibid., p. 32.

valorisation of cultural diversity as another form of control perpetrated by the Western world.[86] Indeed, the need to classify and label an author or a book may appear as another form of intellectual domination. Yves Sioui Durand, for instance, has refused to be cited in Maurizio Gatti's anthology of Francophone Native writers from Quebec because he felt that his personal artistic quest did not correspond to the general editing line. He did not want to be labelled "Native author from Quebec" as he wants to be part of a transcultural movement. Native literature in French in Quebec has been increasingly more present since the 1970s. However, as indicated previously, Native writers still encounter many difficulties getting published, for example because of financial problems or differences in literary opinion. In order to be recognised and enjoy creative freedom, it seems necessary for minority writing to impose itself first as a group without eliminating differences of style. Authors could benefit from each other by exchanging ideas and giving support to one another, as it is the case for Native writers in English in the rest of Canada. Cultural diversity in the Quebec Native context appears to be a key aspect as it counteracts the dominant discourse representing a non-Native version of Indian. Chapter Two on Identity stressed the tension between Native authors' sense of belonging to the large group of Native people of Canada and the one composed by their own nation. Native writing can be perceived as a means of putting the record straight, asserting identity and essentially repossessing a cultural, political, and religious space that had been stolen from them. The use of an originally non-Native mode of expression with a Native frame of mind creates a literary sphere which differs from the rest of Quebec literature. The cyclical representation of time and the spiritual and mythological space present in Native writing contribute to the perception of their literature as the expression of a distinct

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[86] 'The Third Space: Interview with Homi Bhabha,' in *Identity, Community, Culture, Difference*, ed. by J. Rutherford (London: Lawrence and wishart, 1990), pp. 207-221.

culture within Quebec. Referring to Homi K. Bhabha's terminology, one could qualify such a space as a Third Space. Quebec writing has already been looked at as a form of postcolonial literature due to its historical background and its position as a minority inside the rest of English-speaking Canada. Native writing from Quebec thus ends up being positioned as a minority inside a minority. As a consequence, this marginal space allows Native writers to position themselves away from the centre while still interacting with some of the themes developed in Quebec literature. Homi K. Bhabha refers to "Third space" as a space where cultural aspects from different origins get entangled and whose origin cannot be traced. Third space thus represents a hybrid place where binary oppositions disappear. In this corpus, the texts that move away from the opposition coloniser/colonised can be considered as opening up a third space, especially when they concentrate on depicting nature. Native authors' use of the French language is also affected by a process of hybridity, as will be shown in the next chapter. The text or the stage becomes a place of negotiation in which cultural conflicts are raised and systems of representations made visible. For example, Jean Sioui's book of thoughts reflects the desire to transmit Huron-Wendat beliefs to Native and non-Native readers alike, thus generating a rather simplistic and didactic style.

The concept of space has been considered along two lines in this section: geographically and symbolically. In order for them to survive, Native people have been forced to change their relation to the land. A sense of right of ownership developed over centuries has led to its thematic presence in several of the works of this corpus. The political claim, heavily present in the texts of the 1970s, has little by little been replaced by a return to the representation of the land as a sacred place. As

opposed to many non-Native representations in Quebec literature, nature is always portrayed in a positive manner. The landscapes described rarely refer to precise locations. Nature's beauty is brought to the fore as an incentive to environmental respect. Natives' social relation to their environment has evolved as they are no longer dependent on Nature's bounty to survive like their ancestors were. However, their perception of their surroundings and especially the Earth as a whole bears the influence of ancient traditions. Despite their desire to reclaim the land they have lost, the depiction of Quebec scenery never reflects a feeling of possession. Natural elements such as trees, water, planets or animals are singled out and eloquently described. Whatever the genre of the text, these descriptions always highlight the importance of every living being and the idea that humans are not superior to any of them. The territorial perception of space expands to the conception of more abstract places. Nature's representations evoke the presence of a spiritual entity and consequently, it must be protected and listened to. Native people's positioning as protectors of the Earth goes against the capitalist approach based on maximising nature's products. Such a frame of mind leads to the disapproval of a society of consumerism and of city life. Yvon H. Couture wrote a poem in which he relates his distaste for television not only because it bombards us with so many violent images, but because he believes it imprisons your soul: the title being 'Danger! Capteur d'Ames.'[87] However, one may question the constant negative representations of towns, as a large part of Native populations live in big cities.

The evocation of a territorial dream space can be seen as another particularity of Native cultures. Not only do dreams serve to connect the dreamer to his/her ancestors, but as for non-Natives, they bring a sensation of hope and escapism. The reopening of

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[87] Yvon H Couture, *Aki Têwêgan, Le Tambour de la terre*, pp. 77-80.

such a space is made possible thanks to the retelling of ancient narratives or visions and their adaptation for contemporary readers. To assert Native identity/identities, authors need to create their own space within the written world already dominated by non-Native writers and readers. In order to do so, the tension between Native content and representations, and the non-Native readership, requires striking a certain equilibrium between being as faithful as possible to one's original intentions and bearing the market in mind. Resisting the dominant discourse leads Native authors to write from the margin. While writing in French means incursion into the main flow of narratives, the hybridity of the language reinforces the creation of a zone of negotiation, a Third Space. Indeed, some authors mix Native words with the French language, as these words reflect better the reality they are trying to portray. It can also be seen as a means of enticing the reader into a different world, a Native cultural space.

Chapter Five

Language

Premiers pas

Le minuscule petit tourne-vent qui sort
De la bouche de **Kokom**[1], est celui qui
Partage les souffles apaisants des
Nouveaux-nés. Les feuilles de
Wikwasatikw[2], d'une finesse de
Délicatesse font le ballet de séduction
Devant l'entrée de **pikokan**[3].
C'était le temps pour la Mère **Aski**[4] de
Faire une première étreinte d'affirmation
A son fils. Les légendaires premiers pas
Traditionnels de **Nipin**[5] devant
L'immensité, hors de son **Tikinakan**[6].

Kokom offrira en solo le doux
Murmure de **Kata tca nipaciw**[7],
Kata tca nipaciw... Assis sur les genoux
De **Kokom**, l'image complète de la vie.
L'allocution de **Kokom** était pleine de
Sérénité. La révérence des enfants,
Pour la Mère **Aski**. La croissance d'un
Peuple, prérogative d'etre fier.[8]

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[1] Grandmother in Atikamekw.
[2] Birch tree.
[3] House made of bark.
[4] The earth.
[5] Summer.
[6] Baby carrier.
[7] He is going to sleep.
[8] Charles Coocoo, *Broderies sur Mocassins*, p. 29.

This poem by Charles Coocoo is part of section three of his *Broderies sur mocassins* entitled 'l'enfance', and was published in 1988. As described in Chapter two, this collection of poems is organised around themes representing the different ages of life. In the poem, the author parallels the beginning of summer with the first steps of a child. Human life and its environment are once again presented as a whole, and the cyclical nature of life is also highlighted. Indeed, the line describing the child sitting on its grandmother's knees portrays the transmission of life through generations. The poem is divided into two stanzas with no rhyming lines, Charles Coocoo uses standard French mixed with Atikamekw words. The vocabulary in Atikamekw either refers to aspects typical of the Atikamekw world (such as *tikinakan*) or to natural elements. The repetition of "kata tca nipaciw" creates a certain rhythm that mimics the grandmother's whisper to the child. Charles Coocoo's first language is Atikamekw, it seems that the words he kept in his own language are more meaningful to him than their equivalent in French. He is not the only author mixing Native words with the French language. The reasons for this tend to vary, but they all contribute to the creation of a Native discourse and cultural literary space.

In postcolonial and third world literature, language issues are recurrently raised and can cause tensions between and within communities. The choice Native authors make to write in their own language or the ex-colonisers' raises complex issues such as cultural identity or authenticity. In African literature, authors such as Ngugi wa Thiong'o believe that Native authors[9] should write essentially in their own language because "language as culture is the collective memory bank of a people's experience in history."[10] On the other hand, Chinua Achebe, a Nigerian writer, considers the English language suitable for him to express his creativity and culture.

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[9] In the general sense of the term here.
[10] 'The Language of African Literature,' in *The Postcolonial Studies Reader*, ed. by Bill Ashcroft, Gareth Griffiths and Helen Tiffin (London: Routledge, 1995), pp. 285-290, p. 289.

In the French Caribbean, Native authors can write either in French or in Creole, which can widen or narrow their readership, and the choice they make places their work in the linguistic political arena. For example, Patrick Chamoiseau and Raphal Confiant have written several novels using the creole language and criticized Aimé Césaire, who preferred writing in French and put aside his "créolité." On the other hand, Edouard Glissant, another Caribbean author, makes a distinction between "langue" and "language."[11] He believes that a language is not rooted in a nation, and consequently he emphasizes more the communicative and poetic aspect of languages. At the heart of the debate lies the refusal or acceptance of the influence of the ex-coloniser's culture. Glissant's distinction may help to free authors writing in the ex-coloniser's language from a possible guilt complex. Due to its geographical and historical background, Quebec as a nation, views its language as an important feature of its specific culture, and devotes large amounts of its funding and energy to the preservation of its language. In 1977, the Quebec government enforced law 101, which declared French as the official language of the Province. While this political decision contributed to motivating new immigrants to register their children in French-speaking schools over English ones, it also reinforced the idea put forward by several intellectuals in the 1960s that French should be taught in a more grammatical and strict manner at school. The French language spoken in Quebec bears many lexical and syntactical differences in relation to the French spoken in France. The term 'joual,' which refers to a distorted French considered spoken by the Quebec working class (essentially in Montreal) came into public use in 1959 when André Laurendeau, editor of *Le Devoir*, wrote an article criticising the linguistic evolution undergone by French language in Quebec. A few Quebec authors in the 1960s,

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[11] Edouard Glissant, *Le Discours antillais* (Paris: Seuil, 1981).

notably Michel Tremblay, condemned the criticism of this form of language as it also meant the rejection and non-representation of a social stratum of Quebec society. Nowadays in Quebec literature, it is possible to find texts punctuated with Québécois expressions alongside texts written solely in 'classical' French. In Quebec literature, there exists a particularly acute awareness of the French language as a creative medium, and as an essential tool for identity assertion. The well-being and vivacity of the French language in Quebec seems to coincide with the *survivance* of Quebec culture in English-speaking Canada.

As related in the first chapter, Native people from Quebec did not have written languages before the arrival of the Europeans. Missionaries learnt the Native languages and transcribed them in order to convert the people to Christianity. Even if access to writing has enabled Native people in the long term to gain power to defend their rights, the process of transcriptions by non-Natives has altered their original languages. Indeed, these religious men interpreted Native languages with their own Western system of thoughts. After the Second World War, the acculturation that had already started with the dominant presence of the colonisers became intensified with the compulsory schooling of Native children. In the boarding schools, built only for Native people by the federal government, children were forbidden to speak their own languages and had to learn alien sets of values. Two out of the eleven Native nations inhabiting Quebec lost the use of their languages over the centuries: the Hurons and the Malecites. For them, French has become their mother tongue. Consequently, Native writers from these two groups are not linguistically torn when they decide to have their texts published. On the other hand, it is important to keep in mind that there exist many different situations in terms of Native peoples' relation to language. For instance, they may have only one parent of Native origin or, the experience of living

in towns may have led them to distance themselves from their own language. Moreover, English could also be considered a more functional medium enabling authors to widen their readership, notably Native people in the whole of Canada.

Depending on the authors, texts may reflect resistance or ambivalence to colonial discourse. The presence of Francophone Native literature within the Quebec literary scene seems to create an enclave in which the use of the French language gives birth to a type of minor literature. Deleuze and Guattari have defined minor literature as a literature written in a "langue majeure" by a minority, but not in a minority language.[12] In their analysis, they pointed out three characteristics that they considered as important constituents of minor literature: language deterritorialization, the connection of the individual to a political immediacy, and a collective assemblage of enunciation.[13] Language deterritorialization can occur either through an impoverishment of the language or due to an artificial enrichment of the same language. This last characteristic implies that the presence of a collective voice dominates the narrative as social and political criteria strongly affect both content and form. Minor literature only exists in comparison to the idea of a "major" literature. In this case, major literature would refer to the rest of Quebec literature in French. However, within this literature certain parameters already exist that place Quebec literature –and language- in relation to French literature and language. In 'Postulat de la linguistique',[14] Deleuze and Guattari point out that Quebec language should also be envisaged in relation to English, as it too plays the role of a major language in Canada. These two authors highlight the fact that the notion of "major" and "minor" languages does not reflect two different languages, but rather two different usages and

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[12] Gilles Deleuze & Felix Guattari, *Kafka, pour une littérature mineure* (Paris: Minuit, 1975), p. 29.
[13] Ibid., p.33.
[14] Gilles Deleuze & Felix Guattari. 'Postulat de la linguistique,' in *Mille Plateaux* (Paris: Minuit, 1980), pp. 128-129.

perceptions of the same language. Native Quebec literature needs to be addressed within this linguistic context. As will be shown in the next section, Native literature in Quebec can be analysed using Deleuze and Guattari's definition of minor literature, however certain aspects do not completely correspond to this specific situation. In this literature, there exist variations of positioning towards the French language, which can indicate either ambivalence or resistance to the dominant non-Native cultural society. Ambivalence can be reflected by the need authors may feel to be acknowledged by the dominant society. By choosing to be published in French -when it is a matter of choice- these authors have to comply with Western editorial rules. On the other hand, writing in French can also give the opportunity for these authors to position themselves within the dominant discourse, and also resist it by adapting the French language to their own needs, for example, by mixing Native words with French as Coocoo did in the example above. Homi K. Bhabha evokes the creation of a Third Space where the hybridity of cultures and languages which happens in a postcolonial context makes it impossible to differentiate the cultures of origin. This process enables the authors to avoid the binary oppositions which have very often originated in colonial discourse. A few Native authors have to a certain extent managed to give birth to such a cultural space. As Native literature in Quebec is a rather recent phenomenon, their literary techniques are still heavily influenced by Western models. Yet, the simplicity of the French language used, especially in poetry, can be considered as a Native adaptation and deterritorialization of the language itself.

I. Writing in French: Ambivalence or Act of Resistance?

First of all, it is important to consider that the linguistic situation is not the same for every author. For instance, Charles Coocoo can write in Atikamekw, his mother tongue, or in French, whereas authors such as Bernard Assiniwi and Yves Sioui Durand, do not have a Native language as their mother tongue, so their approaches to writing narratives in French will differ. Yet in the works of Assiniwi and Sioui Durand, there exists an acute awareness of the use of French (and other languages) as a medium to transcribe a certain reality contingent to Native ways of life and thinking. Writing in French raises several questions that Bill Ashcroft has already pointed out in his article entitled 'Constitutive Graphonomy': "can writing in one language convey the reality of a different culture? And can a reader fully understand a different cultural reality being communicated in the text?"[15] His conclusion led him to consider texts as a space where meaning could occur –despite the distance between reader and writer- only because there is an agreement between reader and writer to use the same language. Standard French has been favoured over colloquial Québécois by Native authors. This choice can be justified on two different levels. First of all, Quebec language reflects Quebec culture. As stated, there exist many expressions and syntactical structures, which cannot be found in standard French. These expressions are part of the evolution and the specificity of Quebec culture. Native people do not perceive themselves as Québécois: there is no mention in their texts of their belonging to Quebec as a country. Therefore the use of standard French could enable them to distance themselves from the dominant culture. The second reason for this choice may have been influenced by the fact that it is easier to be published in standard French

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[15] Bill Ashcroft, 'Constitutive Graphonomy', in *The Postcolonial Studies Reader*, ed. by Bill Ashcroft, Gareth Griffiths and Helen Tiffin (London: Routledge, 1995), p. 299.

than Québécois. Even now, most articles or books published in Quebec are more likely to be reviewed if written in standard French. In order to create a Native discourse, a few authors have actually adapted the French language to their needs. For example, in *La Saga des Béothuks*, Bernard Assiniwi has managed to change the perception of time and space by using formulaic expressions in French in an unusual way. In chapter six, years are referred to as season cycles, days are counted in suns: "la saison de la tombée des feuilles",[16] "il y a dix soleils",[17] "depuis deux cycles complets des saisons."[18] When the characters or the narrator mention cardinal points, they actually use different terminology: "vers le froid, vers le vent et vers le soleil levant," which correspond to North, West and East. This process can be considered as an *interference* in the French language. Although this term is generally applied when one language shows a grammatical influence over another,[19] the lexical assemblages created by Assiniwi do interfere in the usual semantic organisation of the French language. From a formalist point of view, this phenomenon can be envisaged as a defamiliarisation of the language used. A French-speaker will understand the expression "il y a dix soleils", but will be unfamiliar with it. Assiniwi's aim was also to give the text a traditional and oral dimension, which contributes to his creation of an epic narrative.[20] Bernard Assiniwi spent most of his life promoting Native cultures, whether as the founder and director of the cultural section in the Ministry of Northern and Native affair, or a journalist essentially reporting on Native issues for Radio-Canada or as a writer. Assiniwi's professional experience reveals that writing and communicating information have been very important features in his career. He has

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[16] Bernard Assiniwi, *La Saga des Béothuks*, p. 53.
[17] Ibid., p. 56.
[18] Ibid., p. 57.
[19] Ismail S. Talib, *The Language of Postcolonial Literature. An introduction* (London: Routledge, 2002), p. 143.
[20] See Chapter Three.

written history books giving his own version of Native history in Quebec.[21] Chapter Three on Memory highlighted how many Native authors desired to put the record straight concerning their ancestors in order to assert their present identity and heal past scars. Thus it is not surprising to find in *La Saga des Béothuks* an abundance of detail about Beothuk society. Assiniwi takes great care in describing methods of fishing, hunting, and the creation of clothing and shelters. The reader is drawn into the Beothuks world not only because of the accumulation of information, but especially because of the presentation of the world through Beothuk eyes. The story of the invasion of Newfoundland from the Beothuk side creates a counter-discourse. This is partly due to the fact that French as an ex-coloniser's language is being moulded in order to represent a very different world. The presence of Beothuk words within the French language may unsettle the reader and create a Beothuk atmosphere. This aspect will be dealt with in the next section. Bernard Assiniwi's choice to write in standard French and imitate the style of classic sagas shows a desire for acknowledgment. This approach can be considered as ambivalent. However, by mimicking the ex-coloniser's mode of narration such as the colonial discourse of the discoverers,[22] Assiniwi underlines the fixity of colonial discourse and encourages the reader to question the authority of such a discourse. To counteract past representations made of Native people, Bernard Assiniwi has also reused some of the terminology non-Native people apply to the Natives in a derogatory way, and he has transposed them to White people. In fact, he has reversed the representations. For instance, there are several occasions when the Beothuks qualify White invaders as "sauvages" or "barbares." A similar linguistic aspect has already been mentioned in the chapter on

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[21] Bernard Assiniwi, *Histoires des Indiens du Haut et du Bas Canada*, tome 1,2,3 (Montréal: Leméac, 1973-1974).
[22] See Chapter Three on Memory.

Identity with reference to Eléonore Sioui's poem 'New World.'[23] The expression "new world" in the poem does not only evoke America's land, but also hope of the birth of a world where Native and non-Native people would live in a more equal society. In the same poem, the author describes her own people in terms of race, reusing the phrase "Red Indian," which has had a derogatory connotation for centuries. It is not the only occurrence of these words: the equivalent in French can also be found in some of her other poems and also in other authors such as Yvon H. Couture.[24] These writers bring a positive light on their racial differences and reclaim a pride in their origins. In order to validate their statements, it seems fitting to write in French, the ex-coloniser's language. As Bill Ashcroft's title for one of his books stated, "the Empire writes back." Undoubtedly, the situation in Quebec differs from African or Indian countries evoked in this book, but the need for Native writers to write back to the ex-oppressor in their own language shares similarities with writers from other ex-colonised peoples. However, this should not be regarded as the only concern for Native authors from Quebec. A large part of their literary writing reflects the enhancement of their cultures and the assertion of their identities without anti-colonial positioning. French can also be perceived by Native authors as a lingua franca, enabling the different First nations within Quebec to communicate with one another. It is also much easier to be published when choosing to write in the majority language. Indeed, the readership will be wider as illiteracy is still high among Native people. In *Le Bras coupé*, Bernard Assiniwi wrote in two different modes in order to depict the world of Native people and the one inhabited by White people. All the scenes with actions or events taking place between Native people are described with sets of repetitions. These repetitions give a sort of rhythm to the narrative and on

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[23] Eléonore Jiconsaseh Sioui, *Corps à Coeur éperdu*, p. 59.
[24] Yvon H. Couture, *Natura*, p. 26.

certain occasions help to emphasize the intensity of the events described. For example, towards the end of the story, Menji-mendam, the main character, realises that his revenge on those who cut off his hand has actually been a mistake that has distracted him from his role as a father. Assiniwi articulates this moment around a sequence of sentences starting by "il comprit que":

> Il comprit que ses propres enfants seraient montrés du doigt par ceux qui auront jugé sa race par ses actions personnelles.
>
> Il comprit qu'il serait longtemps difficile à ses descendants d'obtenir justice de la part de la désormais majorité non-sauvage de la population.
>
> Il comprit que si Ikwé avait vécu, elle aurait désapprouvé sa conduite et que l'obsession de cette présence aimée à ses côtés, chantant l'Air des Retrouvailles, n'était peut-être que la manifestation de ce mécontentement. (...)[25]

When the author does not repeat exactly the same words, he reiterates the meaning of the terms he has selected, which provides a similar effect. This technique and the use of formulaic expressions (as in *La Saga des Béothuks*) bring an oral dimension to the narrative as it imitates oral tradition strategies. Native authors from Quebec are more inclined to write poems and plays, which are generally better when orally performed. In poetry, Native authors express themselves in standard French with registers that vary from a personal to a more distant tone. As in the rest of Quebec poetry, there exist variations of style with regards to the presence or absence of stanzas, rhymes, alliterations, and assonances, but one can rarely find constructions such as an alexandrine for instance. Poems give more flexibility and a sense of spontaneity. For several writers they have even taken the form of a prayer. Rita Mestokosho, Eléonore Sioui and Charles Coocoo have in their collections many poems which praise the Great Spirit. They thank him for everything that has been created on Earth and ask for his guidance in certain instances. In order to convey their emotions or better represent

[25] Bernard Assiniwi, *Le Bras coupé*, p. 150.

the scene they are trying to depict, some authors play on the sonority of the words. A very good example for this can be found in one of Charles Coocoo's poems entitled "Clapotage":

> Ecoute! Le clapotis
>
> Regarde! Le clapotissement
>
> Touche! Le clapoteau
>
> Hume! Le clapotage
>
> Donne! Une claque amicale
>
> Qu'est-ce que tu dis, castor?
>
> Alerte! La vie vient de clapoter
>
> Au loin! Flic,flac,floc...[26]

This poem is constructed on the musicality of the sound [k] and the word "clapotis" – and similar lexical items- which evoke the sound of water being touched by a beaver. Again the theme of Nature pervades every Native author's work. Their representations of nature show their enthusiasm for life and survival. Writing also serves as a process for healing. In several Native communities in Quebec, therapeutic literary workshops have been created in order to help Native people express their problems in a more constructive manner: Native writing was born out of revolt and has evolved as a means of fighting back cultural oppression. Writing in French brings Native literature onto the Quebec literary scene and consequently, within the dominant culture. Despite the deterritorialization of certain terms or ideas taken from non-Native traditional conceptions and a connection of the individual to a political immediacy, Native literature in Quebec tends to follow a European mode of representation. It is however possible to notice an evolution in the work of certain authors such as Yvon H. Couture. In his first collection of poems, *Natura*,[27] this

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[26] Charles Coocoo, *Broderies sur mocassins*, p. 17.
[27] Yvon H. Couture, *Natura* (Val d'Or: D'ici et d'ailleurs, 1990).

Franco-Algonquin author has produced texts which denote a non-Native influence. This is notably due to his use of classical French poetical vocabulary such as "Sylve"[28] instead of "foret", "marmoréen"[29] instead of "glacial", or "vespéral"[30] for "du couchant." His poems are organised in rhyming stanzas with regular stresses. 'Petites floralies' corresponds to a typically classical portrayal of nature through poetry. This poem is composed of three stanzas. In the first one, the measure is based on four lines of five syllables. The last two stanzas are composed of alternate lines of five and six syllables. This regular and brief rhythm gives an impression of lightness, which illustrates the simplicity of the image being described:

> Deux pétales sont là
> Au creux de ma main;
> L'une est de lilas
> Et l'autre de jasmin.
>
> Une goutte de rosée
> Pendue à une brindille
> Comme une nymphe osée
> Devant mon oeil scintille;
>
> Et un parfum de miel
> Emane de cette flore
> Où le puissant Soleil
> Vient déverser son or.[31]

The comparison of the drop of dew to a nymph does not correspond to the traditional imaginative world of Native representations. In *Aki Têwêgan, le tambour de la terre*,

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[28] Ibid., p. 17.
[29] Ibid., p. 27.
[30] Ibid., p. 45.
[31] Ibid., p.19.

Yvon H. Couture moves away from classical imagery and structure. 'Astrale odyssée'[32]is a poem published in *Natura* which relates the narrator's experience of his soul or mind flying over various landscapes. In *Aki Têwêgan*, the author reuses the same theme and some of the lines of this poem to write a similar one, 'Corps de Gloire.' The comparison between the two shows how Yvon H. Couture finally finds his own voice, which indicates a move towards orality and a less restrained style. He constructs 'Corps de gloire' in free verse whereas 'Astrale odyssée' is composed of nine rhyming stanzas of four lines each, each stanza has a regular number of syllables: six, nine or eight. The style of the second version has been refined and brings some lightness to the structure of the poem. For example, in 'Corps de Gloire', the first stanza of 'Astrale Odyssée' has been divided into a set of four lines followed by another set of two. Moreover, the recurrent use of ellipsis reinforces the floating image being described:

O si longtemps cloîtré
Par la matière ignoble,
Je suis libre d'errer
Enfin où bon me semble.[33]

O si longtemps
Cloîtré…
Par la matière
Abhorrée…

Enfin !
Je suis libre…[34]

However, Yves Sioui Durand, a Huron-Wendat playwright, is certainly the author who challenges artistic expression the most. This is mostly due to his intermixing of Native mythology and contemporary situations. Yves Sioui Durand's play *Atiskenandahate-Le voyage au pays des morts* has already been evoked in the

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[32] Ibid., p.17.
[33] ibid., p.17.
[34] Yvon H. Couture, *Aki Têwêgan, le tambour de la terre*, p. 42.

previous chapter for its specific time and spatial representations. Scene ten situated in Tableau two shows how the author has embedded religious beliefs and past mythology within present ways of thinking. The rhythm of the play corresponds to four sacred days, which symbolizes the four directions that the sun and the moon take on their daily journey. Each day is associated with a place, corresponding to a stage on the shamanic journey towards the land of the dead. Scene ten, which is situated in tableau two has "le désert de l'ombre" for setting. In scene seven, the audience are introduced to "Corbeau" and "Windigo" by two Native women as they relate the legend of the Sun and the Moon. Scene ten opens up on Soleil/aigle encountering Corbeau/vautour lying on the ground like a drunken tramp. Corbeau represents past generations and is considered to be a grandfather. The author's stage directions, however, also portray Corbeau as an antagonistic character, increasing the complexity of the underlying message. Yves Sioui Durand draws on Native collective memory to recall past traumatic events and also painful present situations. He counterbalances these negative aspects by showing mythological forces as strength for the present and the future of Native cultures. Corbeau represents the darkest side of the Native past with cultural and territorial loss due to White colonisation as well as its destructive effects such as alcohol and consumerism. Yet Corbeau possesses some ancient strength that Soleil/aigle will obtain by winning the fight over him. Having lost the first stage of the fight, Soleil finally beats Corbeau at the end of the scene. While exposing his criticism of certain past and present attitudes, Yves Sioui Durand's position is not straightforward. While Soleil blames Corbeau for having abandoned his children to their fate because of alcoholism and a lack of judgment, Corbeau points out that Soleil is no more respectable as he beats his wife and children.[35] In

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[35] Yves Sioui Durand, *Atiskenandahate. Le voyage au pays des morts*, p. 48.

order to make the audience accept the messages he wants to communicate, Sioui Durand does not choose a didactic tone. The dialogue between the two mythological characters is in colloquial Québécois. The use of Quebec French in this scene has a double effect. First of all, it creates mimesis and as a consequence, the opinions expressed by the two characters seem to echo common ideas –or thoughts, if not expressed openly- present in the Native and non-Native communities:

> Corbeau: J'ai perdu toutes mes chasses, toutes mes pièges...et mes rivières dans une p'tite barrique de whisky...[36]

Secondly, it serves to give a negative and pathetic portrait of the drunken black crow by making him more human. The repetition and the vulgarity of certain sentences reinforce the negative perception of this character:

> Corbeau: j'aime les belles femmes avec des gros seins et des gros...(...)
>
> J'mange des fesses... de caribous pis celles des femmes aussi...[37]

There are only two occurrences where Soleil expresses himself in standard French. These sudden changes correspond to Soleil's attempt to gather forces to overcome Corbeau, which he successfully does at the end of the passage. He uses standard French to assert power and authority:

> Soleil: Je suis l'aigle du jour. Je suis très haut...très haut. Je frappe comme l'éclair...Je frappe comme le tonnerre. On entend le tonnerre...Je suis le tonnerre. Je suis la lumière qui déchire la nuit de la mort. Je frappe avec toute ma puissance. Je m'arrache de ta pensée. Je vole...au pied des montagnes...[38]

In this instance, standard French is the medium that enables the author to interrupt the realistic effect previously created, and to lead the audience into a more formalised and even ritualistic space. In *Atiskenandahate-Le voyage au pays des morts*, the scenes requiring Québécois correspond either to everyday situations or to situations where a

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[36] Yves Sioui Durand, *Atiskenandahate. Le voyage au pays des morts*, p. 43.
[37] Ibid., pp. 42-43.
[38] Ibid., p. 49.

fight over power takes place. In the first case, the use of Québécois brings realism to the scene. Indeed, the characters speak in the language the people they represent. In the second case, making mythological figures argue in a colloquial Québécois humanizes these characters, enabling the audience to engage with their requests and feelings. Within the text, Yves Sioui Durand has also inserted passages constructed as poems in which the French is very lyrical. In scene fourteen, Soleil has finally entered the world of the Dead in order to come and rescue his sister Lune. Lune's body is laid down by Sagodyowe'hgo'wa's[39] feet. The scene is actually composed of a woman telling the audience about the disappearance of her people while in the background a traditional song for the dead is heard and a group of actors representing dead souls perform a ghost dance. The simplicity and clarity of the words and the presence of a leitmotiv enhance the message communicated. The author reminds the audience of past massacres, environmental destruction and their consequences for Native people. The repetition of the two lines "je suis une femme, ma peau est rouge" in between distressing descriptions manages to convey the absurdity of discrimination without expressing it openly. Despite the many traditional Native symbols and references in the play, the audience can still engage with the show because of the clarity of the language. This aspect coincides with Bill Ashcroft's statement on postcolonial literature as he thinks that "post-colonial writing affirms the primacy of the message."[40] The often significant distance between reader and writer enhances the role of a text as a site where negotiations can take place. The performance of a play adds visual dimensions that cannot fully be appreciated simply by reading it. Gestures and music are other important ways of communicating, which differ from the written mode. The simplicity of the language present in this text can be found in most of the

[39] Sagodyowe'hgo'wa is the master of the dead and ill people and is represented by a mask with a hooked face in Huron culture.
[40] Bill Ashcroft, 'Constitutive Graphonomy', in *The Postcolonial studies Reader*, p. 299.

poems in this corpus. In *Kafka, pour une littérature mineure*,[41] Deleuze and Guattari have considered the sobriety of language as an important factor in their definition of minor literature. However, there is such deterritorialization of the language that it becomes composed only of intensities: the use of language ceases to be informative or symbolic. This conception of language does not correspond to the French used in Native Quebec literature. In fact, it seems that the simplicity of the French language present in Native literary texts tends to transform it into a basic communicative tool. Poetry as a genre can be seen as a particular space created and adapted by the poet with great deliberation out of the usual flux of language-use. The images in place denote the poet's intention to convey a particular message thanks to particular linguistic combinations. In Native poetry, the metaphors chosen are most of the time based on observations of natural elements. For instance, Jean Sioui's poems exhort the reader to lead a wise and peaceful life through sets of examples from nature. In Native oral tradition, moral values were generally expressed in metaphorical and allegorical narratives inspired by their surroundings. This process provoked a visualisation of the issues being raised, and consequently made them more accessible to the listener. Jean Sioui's style seems to draw on this tradition. For example, one of his sections in *Le Pas de l'indien* is entitled 'la sagesse des rivières' as his system of imagery is aquatic. The vocabulary and the syntax are rather simplistic and clearly illustrate his point:

> Fais pour laisser à tes enfants
>
> Une douce trace comme le sillon de la vague
>
> Derrière un canot bien dirigé[42]

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[41] Gilles Deleuze & Felix Guattari, *Kafka, pour une littérature mineure* (Paris: Minuit, 1975).
[42] Jean Sioui, *Le Pas de l'Indien*, p. 66.

The use of the imperative form reinforces the impression of a common saying. As mentioned in the previous chapter, images of trees and roots are recurrent throughout the corpus and are used to express the Native's desire to reconnect with their cultural past and grow. Because of the presence of such metaphors, Quebec Native literature cannot be completely envisaged as a minor literature, as defined by Deleuze and Guattari. Its authors, too, use language that is patently symbolic or informative and does not entail the presence of intensities. Nevertheless, it is true that the simplicity of the language enables the authors to distance themselves from Western literary considerations, although their writing can be less valued by non-Natives because of this. It seems that the contextualisation of their work could lead to a better understanding of their choice of writing. The next section also reveals another linguistic adaptation made by Native authors to try to convey their cultural differences.

II. Hybridity of the French Language: Code-mixing and Interference, Creation of a Third Space

In *La Saga des Béothuks*, Bernard Assiniwi's didactic approach leads him to insert Beothuk words within the French language. This process has the effect of creating a Beothuk world and entices the reader to leave behind his/her usual cultural references. The scattering of words inside a text written in another language is called code-mixing. The aim of such a linguistic strategy varies, as it can be political, aesthetic, based on a desire for linguistic accuracy, or a combination of any of these reasons. Code-mixing only occurs in a few pieces of work in the whole corpus. Bernard Assiniwi's and Yves Sioui Durand's use of this strategy differs from the other authors as the languages they mix into the French language are not part of their daily life or even culture. The Beothuk language disappeared with its last speaker in 1829. In *Atiskenandahate. Le voyage au pays des morts*, Yves Sioui Durand, a Huron-Wendat, has embedded dialogues in Innu and Iroquois and in some instances mixed their words into the French text. Besides, Sioui Durand has also written some of the scenes in English and Spanish. The effect created by the presence of these two ex-colonisers' languages in the play is different from code-mixing with Native words, as we shall see. In *La Saga des Béothuks*, Assiniwi had a limited list of words that he could use as the Beothuk language is reduced to the lexical items left by Shanadiwtith before her death. This list of words (found at the end of Assiniwi's novel),[43] is mainly composed of verbs and nouns referring to plants, animals, objects or practical actions. Vocabulary related to feelings or thoughts has not been translated. The Beothuk words tend to be more numerous at the beginning of the narrative. In the third part,

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[43] Bernard Assiniwi, *La Saga des Béothuks*, pp. 509-515.

entitled 'Le génocide', the scarcity of the Beothuk words is paralleled with the change of narrative style, becoming more modern and more personal. This linguistic change highlights the changes occurring in Beothuk society due to the European domination of their territory. Indeed, their culture is on the verge of extinction at that point in the narrative. The hybridisation of the French in Assiniwi's novel could be seen as purely artificial because there exist no actual language differences between all the voices present in the story, including the narrators'. It could be argued that the addition of Beothuk words to the French language serves only to add some indianity to the text and does not appear as a culturally felt necessity, which could be considered as the creation of some exoticism. However, Bernard Assiniwi has constructed his narrative in order to retell the conquest from the Native side, mirroring acts of heroism supposedly perpetrated by the colonisers into destructive "savage" actions. Moreover, through the creation of this text, Bernard Assiniwi has given back a voice to the Beothuk nation, which lasts as long as a reading of the book. *La Saga des Béothuks* is an attempt to represent the Beothuk world with the intention of counterbalancing the negative depictions made by the ex-colonisers. Code-mixing can be seen as a means of representing realities alien to the dominant language users. For instance, the Beothuk words with which Assiniwi peppers the text represent objects used by the Beothuks in their everyday life, and consequently express some aspects of their culture. When encountering a new Beothuk word and because the translation is not always beside it, the reader has to grasp and remember the meaning of it, which leads him or her to enter another world. In *The Language of Postcolonial Literature*,[44] Ismail S.Talib remarks that English has been considered by Australian and New

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[44] Ismail S. Talib, *The Language of Postcolonial Literature. An Introdution* (London: Routledge, 2002), pp. 61-70.

Zealand authors to be insufficient to describe their landscapes and other specificities. Talib quotes John Tranter, an Australian poet commenting on this handicap:

> The problem was how to describe Nature as movingly as the Poet Laureate Mr. Wordsworth, when the nature was all wrong: vast deserts, noble savages who threw sharpened sticks at you and died of measles and smallpox while you watched, animals that seemed to have been made up as a joke, and a terrifying variety of poisonous snakes, deadly spiders...[45]

Interestingly, Talib states that it is within Aboriginal literature that one finds the richest occurrences of severing from colonial English, notably with the mixing of words from Aboriginal languages with English, and grammatical interferences. Oral tradition has also played an important part in the transformation of the English language by the Maoris and the Aborigines. The authors from these two minorities seem to be more linguistically creative and innovative than Native authors from Quebec despite the similar minority background. Indeed, it is easy to find examples of interferences - aboriginal syntax or ways of speaking applied to English - within their writings. Talib also gives the example of some Native Canadian authors who have deliberately incorporated dialogues in their own Native language inside the English text without providing any translation for them.[46] While following similar paths, Native Quebec authors are more inclined to use a didactic approach by almost always leaving translations of the Native terms they use. This can also be due to the difficulties they encounter getting published. Nevertheless, the language present in their narratives reveals the specificities of their cultures.

Rita Mestokosho, who has published texts in Innu as well as in French, has also on four occasions kept words in Innu in the French texts because they certainly carried more meaning for her. Once again the term for grandmother is used in the

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[45] Ibid., p. 60.
[46] Ibid., p. 69.

Native language with its masculine equivalent for grandfather.[47] In her last poem, she also refers to God as "Tshishe Manitu." In his collection of texts representing Native literature,[48] Maurizio Gatti has included several unpublished pieces of work. Among them, a poem written by Diom Romeo Saganash, a Cree, highlights the problems encountered by the hybridisation of races and cultures. The author has mixed a few sentences in Cree with the French. In most cases, it seems that the sentences are repeated in French in the following lines:

"Dandè è toutè-in?

Jè gon wè ji-madouin?"

Où vas-tu?

Pourquoi tu pleures?

Moush ni-mayim-goun

Majish ni shingadi-goun

Wèn ni, Mahiganou?

Wèn-ni?

Mes soeurs cries me traitent de Majish

Celle qui est laide

Mes soeurs québécoises m'accusent

De blanche manquée

The whole poem is not constructed in such a binary manner however. In the rest of the text, there are only scattered Cree words instead of full length sentences. In this case, code-mixing does not only serve to represent linguistically the hybridity of certain Native cultures, but also to encourage the reader to be more active and concentrate more on the text as a cultural space, where identity issues can be exposed and perhaps

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[47] Rita Mestokosho, *Eshi Uapatam Nukum,comment je perçois la vie Grand-mère. Recueil de poèmes Montagnais*, p.21 and p.23.
[48] Maurizio Gatti, ed., *Littérature amérindienne du Québec, Ecrits de langue française* (Montréal: Hurtubise, 2004)

temporarily resolved. The reader needs to look closely at the text in order to understand or guess the meaning of the sentences in Cree.

The insertion of another language within the French text has other effects on the narrative and the reader. As stated previously, an author can proceed to do so because s/he feels that it will bring more reality to the situation described. For example, in *Le Bras coupé*, Bernard Assiniwi authenticates the empirical effect of reality by making his British characters express themselves in English. Moreover, when they express themselves in French, the author represents them as linguistically struggling and making mistakes:

> Your femme y l'acheter ça quand tu malade avec des binnes pis l'acheter d'la flour pis all other things too! Y pas payé pour ça![49]

It is possible to find a third approach to the insertion of a language other than Quebec Native languages. For instance, Yves Sioui Durand has integrated English and Spanish in some of his plays not only to create some assumed realist effect, but to bring intensity to the dialogues. Indeed, the sudden change of language within dramatic situations draws the spectator's attention to external information in order to grasp the meaning of the scene –unless the language is understood- and especially repositions the perception of languages to their basic role, which is to communicate information between users. This process also forces the spectator –or reader- to get intellectually and emotionally involved. *La Conquête de Mexico*,[50] which is the latest published play by Yves Sioui Durand, was created by its author with the aim of expressing the visions of a Native ancestral culture from South America widening the scope of Native Quebec art. As stated, Yves Sioui Durand sees himself as an "asirindien," which implies that any aboriginal person from Asia and America is

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[49] Bernard Assiniwi, *Le Bras coupé*, p. 50.
[50] Yves Sioui Durand, *La Conquête de Mexico* (Montréal: Trait d'Union, 2001).

connected, and can relate to each other because of a similar understanding of the world, common suffering and a strong desire for survival. *La Conquête de Mexico* relates the fall of the Aztec civilisation and the massacre of a part of the population of Tenochtitlan –now, Mexico- with their emperor, Motecuhzoma, by the Spaniards. The story also evokes the treason of Malintzin[51] in a non-Manichean manner. The structure of the play is based on the ancient Aztec calendars. "Le calendrier de la pierre" is represented from the sixth month till its eighteenth month. There are then five days of darkness, before it starts all over again. The play ends on the fifth month, thus closing a circle. In *La Conquête de Mexico*, Yves Sioui Durand has mainly written the scenes in French, but there are a few passages with English words, and some lengthy pieces only in Spanish and in Nahua.[52] The presence of English is purely situational whereas the use of Spanish and Nahua bears other implications. English is present only at the beginning of the play, when a contemporary Mexican guide gives a tour of Mexico and tells its history to the audience. The use of Spanish by the guide also corresponds to an empirical representation of reality:

> O.K. Now!
>
> Ladies and gentlemen!
>
> Mesdames y Messieurs!
>
> Su atención por favor!
>
> Los Aztecas, les Aztèques,

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[51] Malintzin (c.1505– c.1529), known also as La Malinche and Doña Marina, was a Native American woman (almost certainly Nahua) from the Mexican Gulf Coast, who accompanied Hernàn Cortés and played an active and powerful role in the Spanish conquest of Mexico, acting as interpreter, advisor and intermediary. She was mistress to Cortés, and bore him a son. In Mexico today, Malinche remains iconically potent, seen in various often conflicting aspects, including the embodiment of treachery, the quintessential victim ("La Chingada"), or simply as symbolic mother of the new Mexican people.

[52] It is the language used by the Indigenous people who survived the massacre and who told Bernardo de Sahagun, a Franciscan, what had happened. This narrative and other texts are referred to as the Florence Codex.

Construisirent leur ville sacrée ici![53]

The passages in Nahua are quotations from the Florence Codex. They serve to bring some authenticity to the narration, but as they are rarely translated they create an aura of mystery. By doing so, Yves Sioui Durand also manages to reinforce the atmosphere of spirituality conveyed through the revelation of ancient predictions and beliefs present throughout the play. For example, in 'Uey Tecuilhhuitl, huitième mois, la roue des presages',[54] the author mixes French, Spanish and Nahua. As the scene describes the disastrous predictions foreseen by the people of Tenochtitlan-Mexico, the presence of sentences in an incomprehensible language strengthens the frightening aspect of the situation depicted. This is accentuated by the repetitions of such sentences by a group of characters:

Xilonen

O ya nitemoc!

Les femmes

Aya!

Xilonen

Ica nitemoc notzivac imiuh!

Les femmes

Aya![55]

In other scenes, such as 'Ochpaniztli, onzième mois, la fécondation céleste de Coatlicue', the use of Nahua sentences reflects the ritualistic aspect of the situation. Throughout the play, there is no linguistic continuity for each character; they occasionally speak in Spanish or Nahua within the flow of French. This aspect reinforces the fact that Yves Sioui Durand is more interested in the effect that the switch of languages will have on the audience than any verisimilitude. As he positions

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[53] Yves Sioui Durand, *La Conquête de Mexico*, p. 23.
[54] Ibid., pp. 55-66.
[55] Ibid., p58.

his writing as being part of a transcultural movement, the intermingling of cultures and languages contributes to the effect he desires to create. Homi K. Bhabha defines in an article entitled "Third Space" how the hybridity of cultures should not be considered as the emergence of two cultures bound together, but as a third space where "other positions emerge."[56] With his mixing of several languages and Western and Native conceptions of time, space and mythology, Sioui Durand does create such a space. Despite the fact that it is possible to distinguish between the different languages, the absence of linguistic coherence for each character contributes to the creation of a hybrid linguistic place. Among all Native Quebec authors writing in French, Sioui Durand is perhaps the writer who has managed to distance himself most from the traditional Western representations and modes of expression. Choosing to write plays also brings him closer to oral literature, notably as most of his plays have not been published and can only be seen in performance. By doing so, he places his art in the realm of modern oral tradition. It could certainly be argued that his choice of themes, such as the portrayal of Native people's closeness to nature, corresponds to an assumed vision of Native people by non-Native people. However, his refusal to apply to Western norms of artistic expression counterbalances this aspect. The understanding of some of his plays requires a certain knowledge of the specificities of Native cultures. In fact, the sheer density of Native cultural references in his plays may prevent them from being more widely appreciated.

The creation of a third space can also be perceived in some cases of Native poetry through the use of simplistic French. Indeed, by writing in French these authors succeed in penetrating the ex-coloniser's artistic sphere. Their use of the master's language does not only reflect a desire to be recognised, but the simplicity of

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[56] Homi K. Bhabha, 'The Third Space, Interview with Homi Bhabha.' In *Identity, Community,Culture, Difference*, edited by Jonathan Rutherford (London: Lawrence and Wishart, 1990), p. 211.

the language they write in portrays a refusal to submit to traditional Western literary expectations. Therefore the language they express themselves with becomes evacuated of any connection to France and Quebec literary form. What transpires is the importance of the messages they try to convey. Consequently, despite the origin of the language they have chosen to write in, the actual artistic result they achieve becomes their own, thus enabling the survival of different Native cultures and the repossession of a cultural space.

Conclusion

When I began this thesis, the only reference available on Native authors from Quebec was Diane Boudreau's chronological summary of oral and written literature from Quebec. Boudreau had ended her book with the hope that future researchers would eventually consider looking at Native writing from Quebec from a literary point of view and not only as a historical or social source of information on Native people. It seemed timely to analyse the Francophone counterpart to Native literature in English in Canada. Although numbers of these authors are still small and their output is limited at present - in comparison to Anglophone Native authors - it is possible to detect common literary strategies and preoccupations in their texts, strategies and occupations which create a completely different literary space within the literature produced in Quebec.

Native authors from Quebec try to define who Indians were, and are today. In their quest to assert their own identity, they are faced both with past representations and a desire to build a modern identity, an identity that might enable both present and future generations to take pride in their cultures and origins. The analysis of the selected corpus for this thesis (nine authors and seventeen works) has revealed the cultural specificities of this literature and the different strategies adopted by the authors to express their indianity. The contextualisation of Native literature from Quebec is essential to any understanding of the components of this literature. Native authors from Quebec are part of a minority within a minority. Despite centuries of White domination, Native people and cultures have managed to survive. In order to do so, they have been forced to adapt to dramatic changes. The trauma of these changes can still be traced in their recent writing. A postcolonial approach to the texts highlights similarities with other literatures produced by ex-colonised peoples such as Caribbean or African literature. Indeed, Native authors also deal with issues such as

cultural difference, history, hybridity or counter-discourse. As for most ex-oppressed peoples, Native people feel the need to assert their identity, notably by healing past scars and by giving their own vision of history. When asserting their identity, Native authors can position themselves in relation to their own nation, other Native nations or non-Native peoples. In their narratives, individual and collective voices represent, in part, the two antagonistic influences of modernity and tradition. In oral tradition, narratives served to guide and unite a community by showing its members sets of behaviour to adopt in order to live in harmony with each other and with their environment. It also provided an understanding of the world they lived in. The emphasis was not on the individual, unless a person's acts served as a model for the other members of the tribe. Modern societies have turned the self into a reflexive project within which personal improvement and success are often presented as the key to happiness. Native authors are caught between these two modes of thinking. Within their narratives, it is thus possible to find two different discourses, which are very often merged. In their poems, Rita Mestokosho, Eléonore Sioui and Jean Sioui tend to voice mainly their respective nations, yet there are a few occurrences of an individual voice in Eléonore Sioui's poetry when she writes about her own children, and in Rita Mestokosho's when she expresses her own poetic quest. In Bernard Assiniwi's and Yves Sioui Durand's works on the other hand, several Native nations are evoked. Although the specificities of each nation are clearly stated, both authors are more concerned with Native representations as a whole. Similarities exist between all these authors; there are recurrent themes and representations within their texts. For instance, past generations are not criticised and non-Native people are generally badly portrayed. Representing the past as a golden era is a common process in postcolonial

literature. As Frantz Fanon pointed out however, this can also be alienating for present generations. [57]

In order to create a certain continuity with their past, Native authors retell past events in the light of the present. Identities are constructed, and as Stuart Hall[58] suggests, can be perceived as an act of production, always in process. By narrating traditional ways of living and beliefs, and especially by adapting these to a modern context, Native authors move away from the idea of the disappearing Indian. In order to do so, the authors have chosen different strategies. Some of them have created a counter-discourse re-using the methods or terminology of the ex-coloniser: by denouncing the behaviour and acts of white people from the time of colonisation to the present, they highlight the qualities of their own cultures. In turn, the coloniser becomes the Other and as such is placed in opposition to the Natives who can position themselves discretely and assert their own identity. By doing so, Native identities are being essentialised because the setting of such oppositions creates generic representations of both sides. Native ancestors are represented as generous and peaceful people living in harmony with nature, whereas non-Native people are described as being destructive, profit-driven and deceitful. The use of this discourse can be seen as ambiguous in intent as it works to reinforce past representations. However, this use can also be perceived as an act of empowerment: it finally enables Native people to give their own vision of colonisation and shift power from the hands of the ex-coloniser. Rarely mentioned in school history books and rarely visible in Quebec culture (unless as a vision of the past or a social and political problem), Native authors are attempting to repossess a cultural space they had lost by making

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[57] See Chapter Two, p. 74.
[58] Stuart Hall, 'Cultural Identity and Diaspora,' in *Identity: Community, Culture, Difference*, ed. by Jonathan Ruthford (London: Lawrence and Wishart, 1990) pp. 51-58.

themselves present on the Quebec literary scene. In the Caribbean, thinkers such as Glissant, Chamoiseau and Confiant have replaced the essentialisms of the negritude movement with a view of identity as hybrid or creole. Native authors from Quebec oscillate between these two identity perceptions. Native authors create a Native discourse by setting the ex-coloniser's culture and behaviour in opposition to theirs, which, as mentioned before, tends to essentialise identities, but authors such as Yves Sioui Durand are more interested in highlighting the specificities of each nation and in establishing links or parallels between them. By establishing links between past events, modes of representations and present situations, Native authors from Quebec succeed in creating a cultural space that frees them from the idea of the disappearing Indian. They unlock past traumas and try to bring Native culture into modernity. It is undeniable however that they would be even more successful if they represented Native people living in towns other than the few negative allusions present in Eléonore Sioui's or Yvon H. Couture's poetry.

Within the corpus, the representation of the past is evoked following two different lines. For example, Bernard Assiniwi has constructed his discourse under the influence of European models. *La Saga des Béothuks* can be seen as a hybrid form, a cross between a historical novel and an epic story. The narrative is based on historical facts that Assiniwi has interpreted in order to fit his intent. Yet within the text, the presence of Beothuk words and the telling of events through Beothuk eyes bring out a certain indianity to the narrative. Yves Sioui Durand takes a very different approach to healing past scars: drawing on Native mythology, he has concentrated his work on the creation of plays that reopen Native imaginary space. The structures of his plays do not follow European standards. They are often based on old ritual dramas. His tendency to mix contemporary problems faced by Native people with Native mythical

stories recreates the Native belief that life should be envisaged as a circle. Charles Coocoo's collection of poems also recalls Natives' vision of the circularity of life. Each poem reveals the different stages of an Attikamek's life, and is paralleled with seasonal changes in nature.

Considering their ancestors' lives and beliefs, Native authors have moulded their modern identity in an effort to reconcile their culturally distant past with the world they now live in. Their focus on nature as part of their cultural inheritance is a key factor. They position themselves as protectors of the Earth. Their representations of their surroundings in their texts show the influence of traditional beliefs which imply that every single being and natural element is part of a whole and must be respected. Nature is portrayed as a sacred place and is rarely dissociated from spiritual evocation. Whatever the genre and the author, this perception of nature as sacred gives unity to Quebec Native discourse and distinguishes it from the rest of Quebec literature; the spiritual evocation of nature and the constant positive references to nature are two elements absent from Quebec literature. Nature is never romanticised or portrayed as in some of Quebec rural novels where the stress is more on domesticating Nature or on how threatening it can be. As Rita Mestokosho or Eléonore Sioui expressed in their poetry, Native people have a responsibility to protect the Earth and also should be inspired by it if they want to lead a peaceful life. Despite the fact that some of the authors' ancestors were nomadic people, Native authors from Quebec have not exploited nomadism as a theme in their narratives or structures. It is mentioned in passing when describing seasonal migrations of animals and consequently of Native ancestors. It may however be present in the fact that their territorial representations expand to the Earth and Nature as a whole instead of precise delimitations.

Since the 1970s, Native authors have moved away from the territorial claims that pervaded their texts to concentrate on a more abstract vision of their environment. This perception of the world parallels for some authors their conception of a Native person as a citizen of the world. It is true, however, that most of the time this global conception tends to refer only to aboriginal people. In the whole concept of "living in harmony", Bernard Assiniwi is the only author so far who has included non-Natives in his vision of harmony. The near absence of narratives with scenes taking place in cities also displays a certain contradiction with regard to Native concepts of "harmony" and "wholeness." Indeed, a large part of the Native population is not represented in this literature. This contrasts with the rest of Canadian Native literature in English. It is important to remember that Francophone Native literature from Quebec is at an early stage in its development, and as such is still trying to find its own voice. Yet, a wide range of authors have already borrowed Western literary genres and made them their own. For example, Yvon H. Couture has moved away from his first collection of poems constructed in a traditional classical French manner to write in a more spiritual and orally based style inspired by his own environment. With *La Saga des Béothuks*, Bernard Assiniwi has created a hybrid form based on European models as well as oral tradition. By mixing Beothuk words with the French, and relating history from the point of view of the Beothuks, he creates his version of a Native space.

The fact that Native authors write in French may be seen as a sign of acculturation (especially in the case of Native peoples like the Huron-Wendats, who lost their own language over time, so that French and English became their only options). When looking closely at the texts, analysis reveals that the type of French used by Native authors in Quebec is essentially standard French and not 'Québécois'.

Rita Mestokosho, Charles Coocoo, Roméo Saganash and Yvon H. Couture have added to the French a few words from their own languages, which reflect better the Native world they try to depict. Other authors such as Bernard Assiniwi and Yves Sioui Durand have also mixed Native words from different Native languages to the French text. Yves Sioui Durand has included passages in English and Spanish in one of his plays. The effect of such interferences and code-mixing serves different purposes. They may help to focus the reader's or the audience's attention and make them active participants, but they certainly lead the reader or audience to enter a Native space. Using the French medium has not only enabled Native authors to form a third space, a hybrid space created by mixing Native words with French, but it has also enabled the authors to be acknowledged and recognised in a much broader context, communicating Native ideas and voices within the ex-colonisers' arena. Authors such as Yves Sioui Durand have already produced a new and engaging literature with a mythological dimension involving dreams and visions that is unique within literature originating from Quebec. Yves Sioui Durand and Bernard Assiniwi are certainly the best known representatives of this literature. Their original and challenging mode of narrative structure and content has opened the path for future generations of Native authors in Quebec.

The first anthology of Francophone Native literature from Quebec was published in 2004. The coherent integration and resolution of questions such as the convenient dismissal of all non-Natives from the Native conception of harmony, and the ambiguity of intention within Native discourse, are themes which may have to be dealt with in present and future works. The Native Quebec writer, in the meantime, continues to confront an irreversible colonial legacy and attempts to repossess a lost cultural space, whether by addressing identity – what it means to have been and be

Native; the past – with its trauma and also cultural richness; space – whether territorial or imaginary; and language – how the choice of language used and how it is used shapes the perception and interpretation of Native discourse by Native and non-Native alike.

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