Images of Canadianness

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IDENTITY, CULTURAL PRODUCTION AND THE VITALITY OF FRANCOPHONE COMMUNITIES OUTSIDE QUÉBEC

by Raymond M. HÉBERT

Over the past thirty years, many indicators of the vitality of Canada's francophone communities outside Québec have been developed, though very few have been applied empirically. The most obvious and widely used are demographic, including language transfer (or assimilation); the most complete recent compendium of data in this area can be found in Bernard (1990a, 1990b, 1990c). However, some authors have suggested that other factors contribute to the linguistic vitality of francophone communities: these include institutional completeness (Breton, 1964), legal and symbolic status (Breton, 1984), a combination of these factors (Giles, Bourhis & Taylor, 1977), socio-psychological factors (Landry, Allard & Théberge, 1991), and ideological and elite transformation (Hébert & Vaillancourt, 1971). Socio-economic status is also a factor, as can be inferred from Porter's (1965) work. We shall argue here that the quantity and quality of cultural production can also be used as an indicator of the vitality of francophone communities in Canada.

I THE DEMOGRAPHIC DECLINE OF FRANCOPHONE COMMUNITIES IN CANADA

Francophone communities virtually without exception have been in decline in both absolute and relative terms across Canada since the 1960's, under the impact of increased industrialization and urbanization in the post-war years. In recent decades, three additional factors reinforced the tendency towards assimilation of francophones to the anglophone majority: exogamy, declining fertility rates, and increased immigration.

Table 1 provides an overview of the distribution of francophones by mother tongue and language spoken at home in Canada and by province in 1991, as well as the rate of language transfer. In addition to these sociological and demographic changes, francophone communities outside Québec have had to confront a more subtle yet perhaps more traumatic change since Québec's Quiet Revolution in the 1960's. Indeed, with Québec's revived and modernized nationalism (McRoberts, 1988), the destruction of the old French-Canadian identity which included francophones from coast to coast and the subsequent creation by many members of Québec's elites of a new myth of the inevitability of Québec's separation, many francophones outside Québec felt compelled to define a new identity for themselves. No longer members of a French-Canadian nation which stretched from Newfoundland to British Columbia,

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1 One notable exception is Wilfrid Denis's application of Breton's institutional completeness model in a recent study. See Denis (1993).
2 Castonguay (1993) warns of pitfalls in the interpretation of Statistics Canada data in this field, due partly to changes in definitions and in the questions asked from census to census.
and cut off at least psychologically from their Québec cousins, they began to define localized, usually provincially-circumscribed, identities. Regarding the Franco-Ontarian identity, for instance, Marcel Martel (1993: 65) writes:

Cette identité émerge partiellement en réaction à la nouvelle identité caractérisée par un rétrécissement de l'espace territorial de la nation canadienne-française – le Québec devenant le territoire du Canada français – et par une extension de ses frontières culturelles afin d’y inclure sa mosaïque culturelle.

Table 1: Population of French Mother Tongue and Home Language, Canada and Provinces (1991)

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Province</th>
<th>(1) Mother Tongue</th>
<th>(2) Home Language</th>
<th>(3) Difference</th>
<th>Rate of Language Transfer (%)</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Newfoundland</td>
<td>2,270</td>
<td>1,230</td>
<td>1,040</td>
<td>45.8</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Prince Edward Island</td>
<td>5,590</td>
<td>2,935</td>
<td>2,655</td>
<td>47.5</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Nova Scotia</td>
<td>36,630</td>
<td>21,585</td>
<td>15,045</td>
<td>41.1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>New Brunswick</td>
<td>241,565</td>
<td>220,590</td>
<td>20,975</td>
<td>8.7</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Québec</td>
<td>5,556,105</td>
<td>4,604,020</td>
<td>(+)47,915</td>
<td>(+)0.01</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Ontario</td>
<td>485,395</td>
<td>300,085</td>
<td>185,310</td>
<td>38.2</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Manitoba</td>
<td>49,130</td>
<td>23,545</td>
<td>25,585</td>
<td>52.1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Saskatchewan</td>
<td>20,885</td>
<td>6,350</td>
<td>14,535</td>
<td>69.6</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Alberta</td>
<td>53,710</td>
<td>17,805</td>
<td>35,905</td>
<td>66.9</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>British Columbia</td>
<td>48,835</td>
<td>12,120</td>
<td>36,715</td>
<td>75.2</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Canada</td>
<td>6,502,865</td>
<td>6,211,235</td>
<td>291,630</td>
<td>4.5</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Canada excluding Québec</td>
<td>946,760</td>
<td>607,215</td>
<td>339,545</td>
<td>35.9</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

A Québec philosopher, Michel Morin (1992: 13), has taken up the same theme from the Québec perspective, pointing out the symbolic and other losses which this retrenchment has entailed for French-speaking Québécois themselves:

En nous inventant ainsi au tournant des années 1960 une nouvelle identité, nous avons pratiqué dans notre conscience une rupture avec toute notre histoire et, partant, aussi bien avec ce qu’elle a d’humiliant que de glorieux. Pour effacer la figure du “porteur d’eau” ou du vaincu, nous avons du même coup effacé celle, pourtant dominante sous le régime français, du découvreur, de l’explorateur, qui était aussi celle du guerrier et du conquérant.
Be that as it may, this rétrécissement or abandonment of the whole of Canada as French Canadian territory on the part of important segments of Québec’s élites and the parallel rise of the Québécois identity limited to the territory of that province left Francophones outside Québec searching for their own. In Martel’s (1993: 74) view, Québec nationalists since the 1960’s “modifient radicalement la géographie de l’espace culturel canadien-français. Ils entraînent l’ensemble de la collectivité canadienne-française à se définir en valorisant la langue et l’appartenance au territoire provincial.”

Still, it is an identity which francophone Québécois cannot completely eradicate from their own consciousness; as Paré (1994: 46) writes:

Canadienne-française, c’est le nom de l’autre dont on voudrait oublier le nom; c’est le jumeau trait-d’unionisé que la pensée québécoise moderne voudrait bien carrément mettre à l’écart, mais en vain.

Some authors are more scathing in their condemnation of Québec’s attitude towards francophone minorities; Paré (1994: 47) for instance refers to the “rejet par le Québec de sa propre diaspora nord-américaine.”

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3 We shall avoid here attempting to define the actual content of this Québécois identity. Does it, for instance, include anglophones and allophones (persons speaking neither French nor English)? Most sovereignists today deny that the term has any specific ethnic connotation; however, an overwhelming majority of non-French Canadians in Québec reject the notion that sovereignists represent them, as even a cursory examination of provincial election results in Québec since 1976 illustrates. In the 1994 elections, almost 90% of non-French Canadians voted against the Parti Québécois. Mordecai Richler (1992: 77), the sovereignists’ bugbear, said it all with his inimitable, scathing wit: “Jews who have been Québécois for generations understand only too well that when thousands of flagwaving nationalists march through the streets roaring Le Québec aux Québécois!, they do not have in mind anybody named Ginsburg. Or MacGregor, come to think of it.” More recently, a member of the separatist Bloc Québécois in Ottawa, Philippe Paré, asked ethnic communities (other than Québécois francophones) to stay out of the referendum: “Just for once, couldn’t you let the next referendum be decided by old-stock Québécois?” In the Globe’s (March 1, 1995: A20) view, the incident highlights the fact that “The real reason for wanting to divide Québec from Canada (...) is to set up a new nation based on language and ethnicity—the language and ethnicity of the francophone majority.”

4 Paré (1992: 30-1) had developed this idea in an earlier work entitled Les littératures de l’exiguité.
II FRANCOPHONE IDENTITIES OUTSIDE QUÉBEC

Attempting to define francophone identities in Canada is a hazardous enterprise at best and one that must in part be speculative, given the vastness of the country and its great regional differences. In addition, there are obvious ideological differences among francophones themselves, be they Québécois or non-Québécois, regarding the national question: one can find many francophone Québécois who do not share the sovereignist dream and who therefore may reasonably be assumed to have a different conception of their own identity, or who may perhaps still have a strong French-Canadian component in their identity. Inevitably, as well, the identity question in the present pre-referendum context in Canada becomes a political as well as socio-cultural issue. The 37 percent of Québécois who voted for the federal Liberal party in the 1993 federal elections surely have no doubt about their own identity as both Québécois and Canadians; though many in this group were anglophones, the majority were francophones, some of whom perhaps still consider themselves to be French-Canadians in the traditional sense of the word. As Claude Denis (1994: 48) has pointed out:

Dans le contexte canadien actuel (...) le discours de l'identité est incapable de sérénité: c'est un discours de combat en même temps que de questionnement. On se demande, dans le cadre de conflits politiques (le débat constitutionnel par exemple) qui on est.

However fraught with these conceptual and ideological perils, we shall nevertheless attempt to define broadly the various francophone identities across Canada in light of recent scholarly research in this area. We shall then argue that the strength of these identities varies from region to region, and that this in turn leads to (or is caused by) variations in regional cultural production, which in turn increases or decreases the vitality of local francophone communities.

At the outset, it must be stated that the question of identity around the world is highly problematical in the late 20th century. In post-industrial societies, no longer is an identity given to us at birth by our ethnicity, our language, our religion, our history, our traditions: on the contrary, we are all active creators of our own identities, to a greater or lesser extent and more or less consciously. Julia Kristeva (quoted in Paratte, 1994: 227) poses this existential question and provides an answer:

3 Opinion polls at the end of 1994 consistently indicated that popular support for sovereignty in Québec did not exceed 45 percent; this means (assuming that the overwhelming majority of non-francophones would vote against sovereignty) that the francophone population is split down the middle on this fundamental question. The results of the 1995 referendum confirmed this: the sovereignty option was defeated by a razor-thin margin, with over 60 percent of Québec francophones voting in favor of sovereignty.
L'identité est-elle le résultat d'un déterminisme biologique et historique ou procède-t-elle d'un choix? Je suis de ceux qui croient que l'identité ce n'est pas l'origine: l'identité nous la choisissons. Ce n'est pas parce que je suis née en Bulgarie que je suis condamnée à choisir cette identité-là.

All francophones in Canada make a similar choice, more or less deliberately and more or less consciously, as do members of all ethnic groups in post-industrial societies. This means, then, that in such societies, there are more components to one's identity than the traditional ones listed above. It is possible to distinguish between at least two levels of identity, one global or universal, the other regional or local. At one level, we are all now, literally, citizens of the world. Because of the tremendous power, scope and ubiquity of the media, events in Croatia or Chechnya have the capacity to affect us immediately and profoundly. New and even more powerful technologies such as the Internet allow us to communicate and yes, identify with, people whom we have never met but who are every bit as real and significant to us, and often more so, than Grandma. For instance, recent research has documented the fact that Québec scientists publish over 95 percent of their work in English; even allowing for the fact that McGill University alone accounts for 40 percent of all scientific articles published in Québec, this figure indicates that most francophone scientists as well publish most of their articles in English. (R. Lacroix, M. Leclerc et al., and G. Paquin, quoted in Diallo, 1994: 68). Presumably these francophone scientists have found communities outside Québec with whom they share values that outweigh the value language which they otherwise prioritize in their everyday lives.

This contemporary phenomenon of multiple appartenance, or belongings, has been well described by Québec sociologist André Fortin (1994: 18), who posits the existence of two types of minorities, linguistic and cultural minorities on one hand, and structural or categorial minorities (groups based on common interests, sexual orientation, etc.) on the other. In this model, the traditional notion of majority dissolves; Fortin (1994: 19) refers to it as “l'insaisissable majorité.” Of more direct relevance here is that “le rapport à autrui qu'entretiennent les minorités est éclaté dans le temps et dans l'espace.” André Cloutier (1994: 34) has described the new environment in this way:

Ce qui apparaît, ce n'est plus seulement un “lieu” harmonieux, facilement circonscrit et capable de définir l'être de manière indubitable, mais plusieurs “lieux” plus ou moins radicalement distincts du “lieu” de la culture originelle et pouvant expliquer cette dernière.

In his analysis, Cloutier appears to argue that this situation only applies to minority francophones in Canada; we would argue that this situation is now generalized to all post-industrial societies, including Québec.\(^5\)

\(^5\) One recent tragic example of this was the deaths, mere months apart, of two Québec adolescents who imitated the suicide of Kurt Cobain, founder of the American rock group Nirvana: it seems obvious that, in their embryonic value systems, Cobain's death was of higher symbolic importance than any
Claude Denis (1994: 50) has a somewhat different perspective, which one might perhaps describe as post-modern; in his view, identity is a product of discourse:

En ce qui concerne l'identité, plus rien n'est certain. Au niveau de la société, les réponses aux questions "Qui sommes-nous" et "Qui êtes-vous" ne paraissent plus évidentes. C'est alors que le discours de l'identité prend son envol. Les identités sont donc multiples, contingentes (par opposition à inhérentes à un individu ou groupe) et objets de luttes. Dans la constitution des solidarités sociales, l'identité prend ainsi le pas sur l'appartenance objective à un groupe. (...) L'identité a cette plasticité précisément parce qu'elle est un fait de discours.

If this is so, then the door is open wide to the political manipulation of identity by both nationalists and federalists in Canada, with the disturbing ethical and philosophical implications this has for a free society. A discussion of these issues is of course beyond the scope of this paper.

At another, perhaps more primary level, we live, eat, sleep, make love, play, and work in a highly specific context, surrounded by people Nature has given us (parents, children) and whom we have chosen (spouse, friends, coworkers). People in the first category necessarily share our ethnicity and usually our language and culture; people in the second category may or may not share these attributes. In more homogeneous societies, such as rural Québec, chances are most if not all people in both categories will share a common ethnicity, language and culture; in urban areas, in Québec and elsewhere, chances are there will be a much greater variety, especially among people in the second category. Among francophone minorities outside Québec, the situation is even more complex, since the very people Nature has given us (our parents, our children) may or may not share our language or our culture. To simplify, however, let us assume that at this primary level, our given or chosen identity includes one ethnicity, one language and one culture, though in reality the situation is much more complex.

Having made these distinctions, we can now attempt to describe the characteristics of the various francophone identities outside Québec. At the outset, and as a general proposition, it can be said that francophones outside Québec may or may not share the traditional view of themselves as French-Canadians; therefore, it is not correct to imply, as Martel and others do, that this identity is dead. The most one may say is that it has been rejected by many (but not all) francophones in Québec and by some (but probably not most) francophones outside Québec. Secondly, virtually all Canadian francophones grew up in the Catholic religion, and historically the Roman Catholic Church played a major if not dominant role in the establishment and maintenance of their communities, mainly before 1960. Most French-speaking Canadians, in Québec and elsewhere, remain at least nominally Catholic to this day. A third general

sovereignist dream. Indeed a sovereign Québec would be powerless, as is any contemporary State, to combat these cross-cultural influences.
statement that can be made about francophones outside Québec, with the exception of some Acadian communities in New Brunswick, is that they are much more exposed to English in their everyday lives than are most francophone communities in Québec. This means that most francophones living in all provinces except Québec are bilingual to at least some extent; most are fluently bilingual. This has led to the rise of what Roger Bernard has called a “bilingual identity” in some regions. According to Bernard (1994: 161), given the overpowering strength of English in the North American context, bilingualism affects an individual’s personality at the deepest level and thus becomes the basis of one’s personal identity; further:

dans l’univers du bilinguisme, le français, langue maternelle, qui est normalement porteur de la culture française, est devenu effectivement une langue seconde et l’anglais, la langue première.

Elsewhere, Bernard (1990 (1): 113) has concluded that:

très souvent, trop souvent, le bilinguisme, qui vient justifier et légitimer notre francité, conduit au transfert linguistique et à l’assimilation culturelle.

This theme is a recurrent one throughout Bernard’s three-volume study, and it appears in other studies, mainly of Franco-Ontarians (see, for instance, Heller & Lévy, 1993). Its logical conclusion is that bilingualism, in the context in which francophone minorities find themselves in Canada, is inherently negative since it leads to the death of one’s identity as a francophone. Bernard’s analysis is of course simply an extension of Québec nationalists’ view of the dangers which the English language represents as a contaminant of French culture in Québec and which found its ultimate legal expression in Bill 101 (the French language Charter) in 1977.

It also leads to outright condemnation of the policy of official bilingualism enshrined in The Official Languages Act adopted by the first Trudeau government in 1969 and revised by the Mulroney government in 1988, a policy which has allowed French-language communities across the country to survive and sometimes even thrive over the past thirty years. Typical is this statement by J.-L. Dion (1992: 388), a professor at the Université du Québec à Trois-Rivières:

La stratégie fédérale élaborée par P.E. Trudeau et qui fait aujourd’hui ses ravages en douce fut de remplacer cette appartenance [to France or Québec] par une mythologie du bilinguisme à la Canadian.

Apart from distorting the nature of the official bilingualism policy itself, this statement ignores the fact that official bilingualism was the Trudeau government’s response to the contemporary nationalist movement in Québec which insisted upon defining the new Québécois identity which itself excluded Francophones not residing in Québec, as we have seen above. Several further comments regarding the nature of bilingualism

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7 It also ignores the fact that funding to francophone communities outside Québec through programs...
among francophones outside Québec are in order. First, as mentioned above, virtually all francophones outside Québec are bilingual to at least some degree, and most are fluently so. Secondly, the linguistic situation varies widely from one francophone community to another across Canada (including Québec). Generally, the greater the concentration of francophones and the more the French language is used on a daily basis and in many spheres of life, the livelier and more vital the community qua francophone community. This is documented in an interesting study on linguistic insecurity and diglossia in New Brunswick by Boudreau & Dubois (1992: 19-20). The authors compared two regions within New Brunswick, the North-East region, where francophones (Acadians) constitute the majority, and the South-East, where they are in the minority. Respondents in the South-East:

\[
\text{disent se sentir inférieurs aux autres locuteurs francophones, alors que les gens du Nord-Est disent se sentir au moins égaux aux autres locuteurs francophones en général et supérieurs aux autres locuteurs francophones de l'Acadie.}
\]

The authors (1992: 20) conclude:

\[
\text{Cette enquête confirme le lien de causalité entre le degré de diglossie d'une région et le degré de l'insécurité linguistique qui naît chez les locuteurs de cette même région (…) L'insécurité linguistique peut agir sur les performances écrites et orales des locuteurs qui se sentent investis de l'intérieur par des préjugés négatifs. (…) De plus, l'insécurité linguistique pourrait jouer un rôle déterminant dans le phénomène du transfert linguistique.}
\]

This analysis points to a different path from Bernard's. Indeed, bilingualism per se is not the culprit here; rather it is a psychological sense of feeling inferior to the English-speaking majority and even to other francophones within the same province. The policy response, rather than limiting bilingualism by imposing limits on the language which is perceived to be a threat (the Québec nationalists' response), should, in light of the Boudreau & Dubois study, be to enrich the quality and quantity of French in the lives of those living in the regions that are disadvantaged in this area. Indeed this is by and large what the national organization (Fédération des jeunes Canadiens français, 1991, vol. IV) which commissioned the Bernard studies recommended.

Finally, bilingualism is indeed seen as a positive value by most if not all francophones living outside Québec, and for good reason: it allows them to be integrated into their environment. If this situation did not obtain, francophones would be obliged to live in virtual isolation, in a state of perpetual alienation in relation to their social, economic and political environment, a state which could not be sustained over a long period. In addition many francophones actually find pleasure in attending English-language created under the Official Languages Act since 1969 has been in the order of many hundreds of millions of dollars, and that virtually all major francophone institutions outside Québec have received funding through programs created under this legislation since its inception. This has been a major factor in the survival and development of francophone communities outside Québec for the past 25 years.
cultural events, be they rock concerts or Gilbert and Sullivan operettas. It is entirely possible for a francophone in Moncton or Halifax or Winnipeg to attend a French-language play one evening and an English-language one the next; surely the result can only be the enrichment of one’s personality. In this context, the challenge for minority francophone communities is to maximize the French-language cultural content in their daily lives; hence the crucial nature of cultural production in the vitality of francophone communities across Canada.

In summary, francophones outside Québec broadly share three characteristics: first, most francophones, with the exception of Acadians (whose identity antedates the French-Canadian one), still think of themselves at some level as French Canadians, and still include francophone Québécois within that identity. Secondly, most are still at least nominally Catholic. Finally, most if not all francophones are exposed every day to massive doses of English in the workplace, in shopping malls and in the media; as a consequence, most if not all are bilingual and most if not all see this as a positive value.

Let us now examine more specifically the regional identities of francophones outside Québec.

2.1 Francophones in the Atlantic Provinces

The great majority of francophones in New Brunswick, Nova Scotia and Prince Edward Island, and many in Newfoundland, are of Acadian stock and hold to this identity to the point where their representatives at the national association representing all francophones outside Québec fought for and obtained a change in the association’s name which would recognize them explicitly. Paratte (1994: 200) has defined the nature of the space and identity of Acadians in Nova Scotia in the following terms:

Il y a donc bien un espace acadien réel, visible, audible, palpable, à commencer par un espace géographique aussi distinctif à certains égards que le bocage vendéen ou le marais poitevin: il n’est pas de région acadienne de la Nouvelle-Écosse qui ne soit avant tout rurale, et généralement proche de l’eau, rivières, baies et océan, ce qui appuie la réputation traditionnelle des Acadiens d’être des défricheurs d’eau.

Paratte’s description applies generally to Acadians in all the Atlantic provinces. Indeed, when researchers at the Université de Moncton decided in the early 1990’s to begin work on a linguistic atlas of Acadian dialects, they decided to focus upon maritime vocabulary of Acadian fishermen in New Brunswick, Nova Scotia and Prince Edward Island; the work will be entitled Atlas linguistique des côtes francophones de l’Atlantique (Babitch & Peronnet, 1992). However, Landry (1987: 258) points out that the first Acadians were mainly farmers and only became

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8 The association’s former name was La Fédération des Francophones hors-Québec (FFHQ); since 1991, it is called La Fédération des Communautés Francophones et Acadienne du Canada.
fishermen after 1760, after the deportation, when they were forced onto land that was less suitable for agriculture. Acadians also have the longest history of any settled European group on the North American continent, a history dating back to the foundation of Port Royal in 1604. Though his analysis focuses on Nova Scotia, Paratte (1994: 199) points out that this is also a major characteristic of the Acadian identity:

La dimension historique est fondamentale pour l'identité acadienne de cette province, où l'on parle beaucoup de projets de "village historique", de spectacles "son et lumière", de préservation de traditions: cette tendance, vraie à l'échelle de toute l'Acadie (...) est encore plus marquée dans une Acadie néo-écossaise.

There is some debate as to the geographical origins in France of the first wave of Acadian settlers in the middle of the 17th century, one common theory being that at least half of them would have come from the Poitou region, though historian P.D. Clarke (1994: 6) believes this population may have been more diverse than is commonly believed. On the other hand, Clarke (1994: 7) agrees that both the language and popular traditions imported from France were largely homogeneous:

En Acadie (...) la linguistique et l'ethnographie tendent à soutenir l'hypothèse de l'homogénéité de l'apport linguistique et des traditions populaires. D'où la thèse d'une communauté de valeurs d'origine régionale transportée en Acadie, bref, celle de la survie de la culture rabelaisienne en terre d'Amérique.

There is general agreement as well that a certain number of French-language dialects are unique to Canada's Acadian populations. Researchers also agree that Acadian culture is based on a strong oral tradition (Paratte, 1994: 206). However, according to Clarke (1994: 36), this tradition, deeply rooted in popular culture, is rapidly disappearing, having given way to what he calls modernism, which necessarily involves critical analysis, historiography, and the written word, all of which has constituted an assault on this tradition, giving rise to a new culture and a new way of remembering:

En l'espace de trois générations, la mémoire vivante en Acadie a disparu du champ d'énonciation public. (...) En effet, l'avènement de l'historiographie coïncide avec un sérieux effritement de la culture et de la mémoire populaires. (...) (L)a masse se rallia à une mémoire en accord avec la société moderne.

Despite its diminished influence in defining contemporary Acadian culture, however, the oral tradition remains a major core component of the Acadian identity. Finally, Acadians share powerful symbols that cross provincial boundaries and that reinforce their common identity as a nation: these include a distinctive flag, a national anthem, and a national feast day, August 15; all of these symbols date back to the late 19th century. These realities have led the Acadian sociologist Joseph Yvon Thériault (1995: 29-50) to describe the Acadian universe as being permanently divided between
l'acadïanïtï, the social and cultural sphere where the Acadian identity is forged, and the political sphere (le politique) which today is largely beyond the control of Acadians. This lack of control of le politique leads inevitably, in Thériault's (1995: 45) view, to the ethnicisation or the folklorisation of Acadia: "l'expulsion de l'identité hors du champ politique réduit cette dernière à l'ethnie." Thériault further distinguishes between ethnicity as a sociological fact and ethnicity as a movement, arguing that contemporary Acadia contains elements of a movement, "porteur d'un projet social ou politique."

Thériault's analysis thus rests on two sets of distinctions which might appear to some as spurious. First, the distinction between le politique, a mythical or mystical political space which would belong fully and exclusively to Acadians, and politics (la politique), a lower-level space where Acadians participate in elections and exercise their not inconsiderable power, particularly in New Brunswick, appears ingenuous; it certainly would be incomprehensible to the scores of Acadian politicians at all levels who currently wield real power in that province and who have scored major gains over the past thirty years in obtaining, for instance, a radically improved redistribution of state revenue in favor of the poorer Acadian regions and a virtually separate province-wide French-language school system. Secondly, Thériault's aim in distinguishing between ethnicity as a fact and ethnicity as a movement is a transparent attempt to raise Acadia to the status of a nation, despite very small numbers (a total of less than 300,000 in 1991, spread across four Canadian provinces; see table 1); this raises the issue of when an ethnic group is a nation and when it is not, an issue which is not resolved satisfactorily in Thériault's work. Indeed, if all ethnocultural groups, however small, are nations, then many of today's federations are truly multinational. Canada, for instance, would be home to over 100 nations, each of which, if one accepts Thériault's analysis, should be striving for ever-greater political autonomy. The implications for the modern state are mind-boggling.

Independently of Thériault's analysis, which is a reflection of much current thinking among Acadian intellectuals today, one can safely assert that the following elements constitute the core of the contemporary Acadian identity: a rural and maritime physical environment; a shared history and traditions dating back to the early 17th century; relatively narrow-based ethnic and linguistic origins; unique French-language dialects which remain alive to this day; a popular culture rooted largely in oral history; and distinctive national symbols.

2.2 Francophones in Ontario

The largest single group of people of French origin outside Québec is found in Ontario; however, this population is scattered over various regions of this huge province. Several of the large Franco-Ontarian communities are situated at or close to the Québec border; assimilation rates are lower there and it can reasonably be assumed that members of these populations share many elements of the Québécois identity, however defined.
Many others, on the other hand, are located in Southern and North-Western Ontario, where their existence has always been more precarious, in a social, economic and linguistic situation that has been described as being one of “marginalité absolue” (Paré, 1994: 60). Indeed, most if not all of these francophone populations have constituted a minority in the towns and villages where they live. A typical example is Sudbury, where one of the largest concentrations of Franco-Ontarians live: yet even here francophones constitute only 25 percent of a total population of about 100,000 (Paré, 1994: 48).

It emerges from Marcel Martel’s (1993) attempt at defining elements of the Franco-Ontarian identity that this minority was historically closer to Québec and therefore shared many of Québec’s traditional values, especially the Roman Catholic religion and an attachment to the soil heavily promoted by the Catholic clergy as an antidote to modernism and industrialization throughout the 19th century and the first half of the 20th. These three core values of religion, preservation of language in a hostile English environment and attachment to the soil attained almost mystical proportions, according to Martel (1993: 67):

Le tout est empreint de mysticisme. Les Canadiens français deviennent les exécutants d’une mission providentielle: celle de conserver et de répandre un héritage catholique et français, riche en actes héroïques ponctuant le développement de ce continent. (...) Ces valeurs culturelles s’épanouissent au sein de la famille et d’un réseau institutionnel formé principalement par les paroisses, les écoles, les organismes de défense des droits des Canadiens français et la presse. Tous ont pour mission d’inculquer la fierté française, de solidifier la foi catholique et d’insuffler le goût pour la ruralité.

In the early 1960’s, the rise of the Quiet Revolution in Québec and a new inward-looking nationalism there, along with the ongoing processes of secularization, industrialization, and urbanization, dealt mortal blows to all three pillars of the traditional Franco-Ontarian identity. The Franco-Ontarians’ physical proximity to Québec and the family ties many of them had with Québécois meant that Franco-Ontarians, perhaps more than others, were deeply disturbed when many members of Québec’s cultural and political elites abandoned the old French-Canadian dream of full duality, up to and even including the sovereignty of the French-Canadian nation across Canada, the mythic idea of “Canada, patrie des Canadiens français”, side-by-side with English-speaking Canada (Martel, 1993: 68-70).

Martel (1993: 74) does not indicate what if anything has replaced the old Franco-Ontarian identity; indeed, though he believes a process of redefinition has begun, he does not indicate how far along it is or even where it might lead, though he believes a starting point is a territorial attachment to their own province and the need for a new discourse to justify their legal rights relative to other ethnic groups:

This narrow conclusion, as compared to Martel’s own analysis regarding “what is to be done”, can be enriched somewhat if one adds to it elements of Paré’s (1994) analysis, which concludes that, in the absence of a strong, unified identity, Franco-Ontarian writers and intellectuals share a particular burden in this area. We shall return to Paré’s analysis below.

In summary, Franco-Ontarians, who are originally mainly emigrants from Québec, to this day share many characteristics with Québécois, including a shared language and a shared historical attachment to Roman Catholicism and to the land. As elsewhere, these values crumbled under the impact of urbanization, although to this day many Franco-Ontarians live in small towns and villages. The similarities in background of Franco-Ontarians to Québécois and their relative proximity to them made the rejection of the French Canadian identity by many Québécois in the 1960's more traumatic than elsewhere. However, starting in the early 1970's, attempts were made by artists, mainly in the Sudbury area, to define a new identity through their own cultural production.

2.3 Francophones in Western Canada

Most Francophones in Western Canada today can also trace their ancestry back to Québec; their forebears either immigrated directly from Québec or came to the West via the United States. However, settlement patterns and the local demographic context as it evolved through the 19th and early 20th century under the impact of massive immigration from Eastern Europe have meant that Francophones in the West today find themselves in quite different sociological circumstances from one province to another.

Two broad movements occurred in the 18th and 19th centuries which ensured that Francophones would play a major role in the colonization of the West. The first is aptly, and brilliantly, described in an essay by Nicolas van Schendel (1994) which at the same time describes the historical, Québec-rooted elements of this colonization along with its archetypal and symbolic components. Essentially, van Schendel (1994: 106) traces the beginning of this movement to the emergence of the coureur des bois in the 18th century, in almost dialectical opposition to the traditional figure of the habitant. The coureurs des bois were:
The coureurs des bois, whose explorations were initially limited to regions contiguous to New France before the Conquest in 1760, eventually became the first voyageurs, whose territory literally extended to all of North America through the late 18th and early 19th centuries. The voyageurs were the first people of European ancestry to set foot in many regions of what is now Western Canada. Many took to spending the winter in their new country, taking Indian wives à la façon du pays; this led to the emergence of a new nation, the Métis, whose rise ended tragically with the second Riel rebellion in Saskatchewan in 1885. The voyageurs disappeared in the middle of the 19th century with the end of the fur trade, leading, in van Schendel’s (1994: 109) analysis, to the emergence of a new mythic figure, the draveur, a sort of voyageur rapatrié, a voyageur who has come home to his roots in Québec but who cannot be entirely reconciled to the idea of putting down roots and becoming a staid habitant.

The second broad movement is that of the establishment of Roman Catholic dioceses and parishes across the West throughout the 19th century. Missionaries had of course often accompanied the voyageurs in their travels on the Great Lakes and elsewhere in North America during the eighteenth century; however, in the early 19th century, with the emergence of the Métis nation and the growing numbers of expatriate Québécois, or Canadiens who decided to settle on the Prairies, the Church decided to encourage this pattern of settlement and indeed often took the lead by founding parishes in various regions of the West. Thus, after the foundation of the first archdiocese of St. Boniface in Manitoba in the early 19th century, the Church gradually headed West, setting up parishes across Saskatchewan and Alberta and subsequently new dioceses in Regina and Calgary in the early 20th century (Painchaud, 1987).

Components of the identity of Francophones in Western Canada are therefore both similar to, but markedly different from, those of Québécois. On one hand, Western Francophones almost universally have a historic attachment to the Roman Catholic faith and generally have rural roots, since the patterns of settlement encouraged by the clergy were similar to those in Ontario and Québec in the 19th century. On the other hand, the voyageur heritage has perhaps contributed to another trait which can more rarely be found among contemporary Québec francophones and that is, a genuine openness to other ethnic groups and cultures, a full acceptance of them regardless of

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1 Without an official, clerically-sanctioned marriage ceremony.
their contribution or otherwise to French language and culture.

At the outset, the voyageurs were initially obliged for their very survival to develop links with the Indian populations they encountered, and it can perhaps be argued that some of this openness to other languages and cultures is an element in the identity of modern-day francophones in the West. Indeed, many have carried this openness to the extreme of losing their own language and culture entirely (see table 1)! In any case this element may be found in the works of many Francophone artists and writers, from the early works of Gabrielle Roy to contemporary Manitoba poets and songwriters.¹⁰

West of Manitoba, the definition of francophone identity becomes more and more problematic. Though the voyageur history and rural pattern of settlement led by the Church is common to all Western regions, and though, of course, most Western francophones are descendants of settlers from Québec (with the exception of British Columbia), these elements do not seem to have coalesced into a firm identity which could withstand industrialization, urbanization, and immigration, with the result that francophones in Saskatchewan, Alberta and British Columbia are in the throes of attempting to define their contemporary identity beyond the traditional French Canadian one inherited from their ancestors. Very little documentation on this topic exists on Saskatchewan and British Columbia, which is in itself significant. However, a number of authors have commented on the francophone identity in Alberta, and their analyses converge. Dubé (1994: 87) speaks of "une communauté qui semble avoir en quelque sorte refusé une conscience d'elle-même en ne produisant que très peu de discours." Godbout (1994: 111) has a possible explanation for this lack of production:

Il semble que la francophonie albertaine n'ait pas reçu un fondement historique et littéraire français qui soit adéquat pour maintenir sa langue et sa culture à un haut degré de vitalité.

After presenting the results of a content analysis of textbooks mainly written by Québec based Roman Catholic clerics used in the schooling of French Canadians in Alberta between 1906 and 1944, Godbout (1994: 125-6) concludes:

L'élève franco-albertain n'avait donc pas de matériel historique et littéraire auquel il pouvait s'identifier localement, dans lequel il pouvait enraciner sa langue et sa culture chez lui. (...) [L']absence chez les Franco-Albertains de préfiguration authentiquement française pertinente à leur milieu a mené à une configuration chez eux d'une histoire et d'une littérature ambivalentes, donc déstabilisantes, où la "fusion des horizons" linguistiques et culturels du français et de l'anglais ne se fait guère et une confusion de ces horizons en résulte.

¹⁰Regarding the many (and sympathetic) references to other ethnic groups in the work of Gabrielle Roy, see Bartosova (1994). Regarding contemporary writers, see Hébert (1994).
Whatever its causes, Roger Parent (1994: 244) acknowledges this cultural confusion, or the vacuum facing the Franco-Albertan artist, in the following terms:

Quoi faire alors dans le cas d’une société éclatée, fragmentée où la culture est encore à dire, où l’artiste n’a pas cet écran de structures sociales sur lequel projeter l’image de son œuvre? L’artiste doit alors créer dans un vide, ne sachant ni exactement quel est son public, ni quel est son horizon d’attentes, et parfois, ni même comment bien parler sa propre langue (...) Au théâtre, ce problème se trouve aggravé par le fait que les artistes d’origine franco-albertaine ne savent pas trop en quoi consiste leur identité.

This is broadly the context, in terms of identity, which confronts francophone artists throughout the Western provinces, especially those West of Manitoba. What are the implications of this regional analysis of identity for cultural production per se? We shall argue here that there is a link between the quality and quantity of cultural production and the strength of the regional identity, however defined.

III  IDENTITY AND CULTURAL PRODUCTION

Broadly speaking, the strongest Francophone identities outside Québec, based upon the overview presented above, appear to be found in Acadia (especially in New Brunswick), Ontario and Manitoba. In all of these provinces, traditions and history were transmitted mainly orally through most of the 19th and 20th centuries; however, since the early 1970’s, a strong written tradition has evolved, along with the emergence of strong role models among artists. Some of these include Antonine Maillet in New Brunswick, with her immensely popular works such as La Sagouine and Pélagie-la-Charrette (which won the prestigious “Prix Goncourt” in 1979, and thereby “consecrated” Maillet as a writer of international status); the artists’ cooperative CANO in North-Western Ontario, whose songs, poetry and theater virtually redefined the Franco-Ontarian identity in the 1970’s; and Gabrielle Roy and Daniel Lavoie in Manitoba, whose combined work spans several decades.

Behind each of these internationally-renowne d artists or groups in each of these provinces, literally dozens of others have followed. In Acadia, a history of Acadian literature was published in 1983 which traces the beginnings of this literature back to the 17th century. The contemporary period, however, is not documented extensively in this work, fortunately, according to Leblanc (1988: 187), since “il est impossible

11 The analysis of themes, or “les thématiques,” that may be found in the works of minority Francophone artists is beyond the scope of this paper. However, an essential, and ground-breaking, work on this topic is François Paré’s Théories de la fragilité (1994).

12 Coopérative des artistes du Nouvel-Ontario, a loose collective of actors, singers, musicians, poets and others. Major figures associated with this movement include André Pauement, Gaston Tremblay, Patrice Desbiens, Brigitte Haentjens, Rachel Pauement, and others. Later the group became a folk-rock group, under the direction of Marcel Aymar. See Paré (1994: 48-9).

In Ontario, cultural production blossomed in the North-Western region starting in the early 1970's, as mentioned above. Two authors, Shannon Hengen and François Paré, recently documented this tremendous explosion of creative activity which lasted until the mid-1980's and the effects of which are still being felt today. Hengen's (1991: 60) focus is on the "Théâtre du Nouvel-Ontario"; where its development is traced from its beginnings in a church basement in the late 1960's to its "final stage, ongoing" of "having won province-wide acceptance and official approbation by the Ontario Arts Council." The troupe mounted 87 plays between 1972 and 1991, 44 of which were original creations or co-productions and many of which toured in Ontario and elsewhere. An interesting effort mentioned by Hengen was the 1990 mounting of a bilingual version of Shakespeare's Romeo and Juliet, with French translations of the Capulet family's speeches by Jean-Marc Dalpé, a popular contemporary Franco-Ontarian playwright. "With great success," according to Hengen (1991: 55):

> the British Renaissance classic renders poetically a political situation which has vexed Canadians since the British defeated the French in Montreal in 1760: the status of French language and culture in an anglophone milieu. For the young couple's determination to surmount inherited obstacles and forge a new alliance resembles efforts in contemporary Canadian culture toward a more integrally bicultural state.

We therefore apparently have here an authentic attempt at confronting the meaning of bilingualism in the Franco-Ontarian identity, bilingualism itself being, in the view of some, highly vexations, as we have seen. Indeed, Hengen (1991: 59) quotes Arnpoulos as having pointed out that "[t]he search for a new cultural identity was what the Théâtre du Nouvel-Ontario was all about." Although the "Théâtre du Nouvel-Ontario" has gone from success to success over the past 25 years, much creative activity has simultaneously been occurring in other fields in Sudbury and

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surrounding area. Paré (1994: 47) echoes Arnopoulos in arguing that the North-Western Ontario movement, which he describes as "une forme (...) d'institution littéraire autonome", had as its primary objective "la formulation d'une littérature franco-ontarienne (...) spécifique et dont l'objectif ultime est la production de critères d'identité collective pour les Franco-Ontariens. Cette littérature et cette identité collective seraient essentiellement différentes de celles des Acadiens, des Franco-Manitobains et des autres peuples de la fragmentation canadienne."

Paré (1994: 49) vividly describes the breadth and scope of the movement, encompassing poets, playwrights, musicians, university professors, publishers, and even potters. However, he is more pessimistic than both Hengen and Arnopoulos in his conclusion. First, he points out that many of the main figures of the movement left Ontario for Québec in the late 1980's. Secondly, in his view the movement had within its own parameters as defined by its founders the seeds of its own disappearance: a strong emphasis on orality and spontaneity (which meant that many of the group's creations literally went up in smoke), a rejection of intellectual life in favour of a direct appeal to a less-educated public [Paré (1994: 57) points out that the group even cut itself off from the university, "l'un des plus importants agents de diffusion du littéraire dans toute société"], and an ideological (or perhaps psychological) insistence upon remaining marginal. Paré (1994: 60-1) concludes that literature cannot "transformer la souffrance accumulée de décennies de marginalisation en discours rédempteur", that "l'écriture, contrairement à ce que voulait CANO, n'engendre sans doute pas l'identité collective..."

Paré's conclusion in terms of the relationship between cultural production and identity cannot be sustained if one examines the experience of another small minority, the Franco-Manitoban one, where the artistic community has a history and ideological underpinnings since the late 1960's that are quite different from those of francophones in North-Western Ontario. First, contrary to the Sudbury region, French-speaking Manitoba did not see the rise of a movement of artists as such, only a gradual building up of an artistic community whose members have only loose links among themselves. Secondly, not being a movement, this community did not have a common ideology, nor even common origins (though most artists in Manitoba were born and raised in the province, many have come from elsewhere, mainly Québec, and have settled permanently in Manitoba). Third, from the beginning its production was written, recorded, and published, contrary to the Sudbury artists with their ideological emphasis upon orality. Finally, Franco-Manitoban artists have never disdained the university; indeed, some of their strongest support over the years has come from the local French-language university, Collège Universitaire de Saint-Boniface (Leveillé, 1994: 94) and, to a lesser extent, the two English-language universities in Winnipeg.

Francophone artists in Manitoba, it can persuasively be argued, have had a major role in defining and enhancing a strong Franco-Manitoban identity over the past 25 or 30 years. Building sometimes on geography (the Prairies and, to a lesser extent, the North), sometimes on history (Louis Riel, the Métis, the Voyageurs), sometimes on the
bilingual reality (through the publication, for instance, of poems written in both English and French simultaneously – see Tessier, 1994), sometimes on the “openness to others” or the universality mentioned above, contemporary francophone writers, poets, playwrights and songwriters have produced hundreds of works which have both reflected and contributed to defining the Franco-Manitoban identity. In terms of style, their production has ranged from the narrowly folkloric and provincial to the post-modern (Léveillé, 1994). Seen through the cultural products of its artists, the francophone identity in Manitoba appears to have the following elements (Hébert, 1994: 77):

After this brief overview of identity and cultural production in Acadia (and New Brunswick specifically) and French-speaking Ontario and Manitoba, it must be pointed out that cultural production, as one heads West and East, is much weaker both qualitatively and quantitatively. In Alberta, for instance, there are half as many francophone writers as there are in Manitoba (Parent, 1994: 241), although the size of the francophone community in that province is not much smaller than that of Manitoba, though the rate of language transfer there has been much greater (see table 1). In addition, two major works by Francophones published in recent times in Alberta were written in English, an ominous sign in the sense that these authors apparently were not sufficiently confident in their writing abilities in French to publish in the language, a possibility raised by Dubé (1989: 103). This is quite a different phenomenon from that of writers in Manitoba, Ontario and elsewhere who integrate English in their work as a means of *apprivoiser* the language, taming it, making it less of a threat to the francophone identity by exercising it in this way. In British Columbia, no significant works by francophone writers have been identified in the recent literature. In Newfoundland, francophone culture remains essentially an oral one (Thomas, 1994); this, coupled with the very small numbers of people who still speak French at home has led to a situation where virtually no creative writing in French occurs in that province.

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17 For a broad description and analysis of this production, see Hébert (1994).
19 A maximum of 3,000, according to Thomas (1994: 103); 1,250 according to the 1991 Canadian Census, see table 1.
IV CONCLUSION

Our brief overview of the components of identity among francophone minorities across Canada and our even briefer description of cultural production in French across the country leads us to formulate the following propositions: the stronger the identity within a francophone minority, the greater the cultural production among members of that minority. In turn, perhaps, this increased cultural production leads to an even greater strengthening of that identity. Conversely, the weaker the identity to begin with, the more difficulty artists have in expressing it in their work and the fewer works they produce.

On this criterion, only three francophone communities outside Québec can be said to have a strong identity and a concomitant relatively high level of cultural production: these are the Acadian community, centered in but not limited to New Brunswick; the Franco-Ontarian community; and the Franco-Manitoban community. Based on recent literature, the French-speaking communities in Saskatchewan, Alberta and British Columbia can be said to have both weak identities and a low level of cultural production, as can the small francophone communities of Newfoundland and Prince Edward Island. On the surface, this indicator would appear to correlate broadly with other, more traditional indicators of the vitality of francophone communities outside Québec such as rates of language transfer and institutional completeness, although more research would be needed to establish a more direct and rigorous correlation among these various indicators. Our conclusion must therefore be viewed more as a working hypothesis to guide future research in this area.

One final point: it is not clear from the literature which comes first, a strong identity or a high level of cultural production. The experience of the three communities with the strongest identities differ considerably. Acadian identity survived for centuries with virtually no written cultural production; the contemporary Franco-Ontarian community's identity, at least in the North-West region, was produced virtually single-handedly by a dynamic group of artists in the 1970's and 1980's; while in Manitoba cultural production developed in an uncoordinated fashion starting in the 1960's, albeit with very strong role models such as Gabrielle Roy and Daniel Lavoie, and with a relatively strong identity related to the province's foundation by Louis Riel at the outset. Which comes first: a strong identity or copious, high-quality cultural production? Based on the experience of the various francophone communities in Canada outside Québec over the past thirty years, there appears to be no firm answer to this question; however, what is clear is that one is impossible without the other and that, without either, the future of small linguistic communities is grim.
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