

# "STILL CRAZY AFTER ALL THESE YEARS"

## *The Uses of Madness in Recent Quebec Drama*

Jane Moss

**F**OR YEARS, MADMEN and madwomen have been spotlighted by Quebec dramatists, a fact which has not gone unnoticed by critics. Pierre Gobin's 1978 study, *Les Fou et ses doubles: figures de la dramaturgie québécoise*,<sup>1</sup> and my 1984 article, "Les Folles du Québec: The Theme of Madness in Quebec Women's Theater,"<sup>2</sup> analyzed the religious, political, economic, and social climate of Quebec in order to understand the forces responsible for the madness. In the last twenty-five years, Quebec society has been transformed and yet, despite the changes wrought by the Quiet Revolution, the Parti Québécois, and the Women's Movement, Quebec theatre is still obsessed with madness and mad characters. Normand Chaurette and René-Daniel Dubois, touted by Quebec critics as the shining stars of the new generation of dramatists, have both written plays centred on mad characters. But madness in these plays serves a wholly different function than it did in the works of their predecessor. In this paper, we will examine the new uses of madness.

Madness is no longer the pathological symptom of social injustice and psychological repression. In the plays of Chaurette and Dubois, the madness theme is not used for political or ideological purposes. It is more than an escape from an unbearable reality. It is the key to deconstructing reality which structures the play. The psychodramas of these young authors are mind games conducted by mad characters. Realistic decor, linear plot, unified personality, and simple meaning are discarded in favour of minimalist settings, dream logic, fragmented and multiple personalities, and multiple levels of interpretation. This new drama exposes theatrical conventions, brings the author and the text onto the stage and emphasizes its own intertextuality with ironic humour. Mental alienation has little or nothing to do with Quebec society in these anti-realistic plays, a point made by their frequent use of foreign characters, settings, and languages. The only plausible, apparent source of alienation in some cases is homosexuality.<sup>3</sup>

Commenting on recent French and Quebec theatre, Georges Banu and André-G. Bourassa have noted a trend towards fragmentation. Banu writes:

Lorsque les grands systèmes perdent leur certitude et que le Multiple fuit l'emprise du Un rassembleur, on s'attend à ce que la brisure et ce qu'elle amène, *le fragment*, investissent autant la culture que la vie.<sup>4</sup>

It is my contention that the phenomenon of the exploded text can best be explained by deconstructive theories. While Bourassa does not invoke the name of Derrida to explain the difficult, fragmented puzzle plays he describes, American critics Gerald Rabkin and Elinor Fuchs have remarked on deconstruction's impact on recent English and American experimental theatre. In a 1983 article, entitled "The Play of Misreading: Text/Theatre/Deconstruction," Rabkin invites American critics to renew the theoretical discussion of drama by examining the concepts of textuality, intertextuality, demystification, and misreading as described by Roland Barthes, Jacques Derrida, and the Yale Critics Geoffrey Hartman, J. Hillis Miller, Harold Bloom, and Paul de Man.<sup>5</sup> Although these deconstructionists have not concentrated on theatrical writing, their ideas can help us read the jumbled tangle of the fragmented text. Fuchs responds indirectly to Rabkin's call for deconstruction in her 1985 article, "Presence and the Revenge of Writing: Re-thinking Theatre after Derrida."<sup>6</sup> She points out that recently American dramatists "have begun to expose the normally 'occulted' textuality behind the phonocentric fabric of performance" (166) by placing "writing — as subject, activity, and artifact — at the center" (163). The devaluation of the actor's presence and the speech act in favour of the author's text and the writing act has a destabilizing effect on the play. Fuchs describes experimental plays which deconstruct theatrical illusion with their textuality, intertextuality, use of fragments and *mise en abyme* effects.

Chaurette and Dubois make use of the same deconstructive techniques but go one better in their attack on the logocentrism of Western metaphysics by presenting their texts through the fragmenting prism of madness. Once the spectator/reader has entered the stageworld of Chaurette's criminally insane actor (*Provincetown Playhouse, juillet 1919, j'avais 19 ans*), or visionary schoolgirl (*Fêtes d'Automne*), Dubois's dying Docteur Münch (*Adieu, docteur Münch*), or soon-to-be-murdered Russian princess in drag (*26 bis, impasse du Colonel Foisy*), there is no doubt that we are in a theatrical space of obsessional images, fragmented memories, and hallucinatory dreams where time and logic have lost all meaning.

CHAURETTE IS A MONTREAL WRITER in his early thirties who has published four plays. In the "Introduction" to his first work, *Rêve d'une nuit d'hôpital*,<sup>7</sup> he explains his borrowing of the title of Emile Nelligan's poem by expressing his identification with Quebec's famous "poète maudit," who spent the

last forty years of his life in an insane asylum. The author's comment reveals an acute sense of the relationship between artistic dreams and madness: "Lui et moi, nous avons probablement les mêmes raisons de penser qu'au bout du rêve il y a toujours le risque d'un hôpital" (21). Fascination with the mad poet is a collective obsession in Quebec, as evidenced by two 1981 productions: Armand Laroche's *Nelligan blanc* (September 1981) and Michel Forgues's *Emile-Edwin Nelligan* (October 1981, reprise 1986).

Chaurette's "Introduction" makes it clear that he is not interested in biographical drama. He wants to recreate the hallucinatory reality of the deranged Nelligan with all its unbalanced, unreasonable dream logic:

En douze tableaux, j'ai voulu cerner quelque chose qui soit près du rêve, avec tout ce qu'il comporte de "logique" . . . (21)

*Rève d'une nuit d'hôpital* n'est pas seulement un récit dramatique centré sur la folie du personnage d'Emile. Les autres personnages, ceux qui l'environnent, y trouvent chacun une part de déraison, comme pour s'intégrer au seul espace possible qui les mette en présence du poète. (22)

Chaurette's insistence on deconstructing the conventions of realistic drama and on intertextuality are made clear in the "Prologue" pronounced by the Choir of voices who will later recite portions of Nelligan's poems. The Choir says:

Cela commence gravement mais en douceur.

C'est un raï de lumière qui jaillit comme une chose de métal, une lame ou un miroir.

A moins que ce ne soit une vision . . .

Le crucifix de bois se transfigure silencieusement en attendant que sonne l'ange-lus . . .

Et le temps va-t-il encore s'arrêter? Pourquoi faut-il que soit toujours cette chambre qui s'éclaire comme un théâtre?

Le poète a des vision!

Il entend les cloches, les portes s'ouvrir et se reformer, des Bateaux Ivres, des Vaisseaux d'Or, des flûtes, de la musique baroque et du Chopin. (31)

The asylum room where Emile's visions, fragmented memories, and infernal nightmares are acted out is a shifting, white closed space, the stylized theatre of the mad poet's mind. Time and space have no meaning here; the tableaux jump back and forth from school to asylum to Nelligan's childhood home to Montreal across an indeterminate time period while remaining fixed at twelve noon on Monday, July 11, 1932. Textuality and intertextuality are emphasized by numerous quotations from Nelligan's poems and by references to Baudelaire's *Fleurs du Mal* and Rimbaud's *Illuminations*. The danger of the poet's dream, of the visionary's quest for the ideal, is the risk of hellish madness described by Rimbaud's *Saison en enfer* and relived by Nelligan in Tableau 10 of *Rève d'une nuit d'hôpital* (81-83). Here, as in Chaurette's later plays, there is no clarification of the madness

question, no return to sanity. Dramatic characters and spectators alike experience the poetic madness which undermines the structures of reality and of theatre.

Chaurette's second play, *Provincetown Playhouse, juillet 1919, j'avais 19 ans*,<sup>8</sup> also takes place in the closed theatre of a mental patient's mind and deals with the fine line between artistic vision and insanity. It is a play within a play, the one-man show of a lunatic who conjures up the setting, props, lighting, music, characters, and audience he requires. Charles Charles has obsessively directed the same theatrical fantasy every night of the nineteen years he has passed in a Chicago mental asylum. He is replaying the performance of an experimental play written for a single staging on July 19, 1919, at the Provincetown Playhouse. Intended as the symbolic sacrifice or immolation of beauty, the play became a melodramatic murder mystery when it was discovered that the theatrical knife blows had killed a real victim, not just a symbol. While the two other actors were condemned to death, Charles Charles escaped hanging by declaring himself insane. Being a perfectionist devoted to the dream of making art and life coincide, he has become insane in order to play his role correctly. Towards the end of the play, Charles Charles admits he set up the murder to punish the infidelity of his lover, Winslow Byron, with the other actor, Alvan Jensen. Even when the mystery appears solved, the question remains whether the events of July 1919 were real or simply the hallucinations of a madman.

Chaurette's psychodrama mocks the notion of "théâtre de la vérité" by denying the existence of objective reality. Charles Charles demystifies theatrical illusion in the opening scene by introducing himself as an actor and playwright and by showing us the text of his play. The textuality of *Provincetown Playhouse* is deepened by the insertion of excerpts from Charles Charles's *Mémoires* between scenes (41, 51, 73, 79, 85). The devaluation of the performance or speech act, threatened by memory blanks and interrupted by late-arriving spectators, further underscores the primacy of the writing act. Chaurette plays with intertextuality by having his characters refer to classical Greek drama and to figures of modern drama, such as Stanislavski, Strasberg, O'Neill, and Moody (Tableau 5). He goes so far as to make Charles Charles defend his text against critics who found it confusing and obscure. The defence is an ironic defence of the misreading advocated by deconstructionists:

... on ne demande jamais à un auteur de raconter sa pièce, vous devriez savoir. Un auteur peut difficilement raconter avec objectivité. Il aura tendance à dire des choses qu'il n'aura pas réussi à faire passer dans l'écrit. Ou il attirera l'attention sur son aspect, à son avis, le mieux réussi... il va essayer de brouiller les pistes, expliquer à l'outrance, ce qui revient au même. Compliquer ce qui est simple, simplifier ce qui est compliqué. (88)

And, as the deconstructionists would have it, there is no closure to this text, no single interpretation, no univocal message. The lights go out but Charles Charles

assures us that tomorrow night, he will play out his obsessional fantasy again (“... ça n’en finira jamais...” [113]). The only coherence we find here is “a cohérence fautive” (85), the faulty and/or guilty coherence of a criminally insane man who claims that his writing proves his madness because “... J’écris des pièces que seul un fou peut écrire” (36).

The production of *Provincetown Playhouse* by “les Têtes heureuses” of Chicoutimi at the Ecole national de Théâtre in Montreal emphasized the two key themes: “écriture” and “folie.” Giant scrolls of printed paper covered the walls and ceiling of the stage, tangible evidence that the actor was playing on (and in) a text. The mental alienation represented by the two Charles Charles figures in Chaurette’s text — that is, Charles Charles at 19 and Charles Charles at 38 — increases in the “Têtes heureuses” production by having one actor play all four roles. In this way, the double and divided (Charles Charles; Charles at 19, Charles at 38) becomes multiple and fragmented. The theatre of madness is the theatre of the madman’s text.

Chaurette’s obsession with madness and writing has led some Quebec critics to speak of a familiar resemblance between the tragically insane writers of his plays.<sup>9</sup> In *Fêtes d’Automne*,<sup>10</sup> his third work, the central character is Joa, a schoolgirl poet who has written the text of her drama. Inspired by the writings of Danielle Sarréra, a young French girl who committed suicide at seventeen in 1949, Joa’s text is a mystical mélange: part schoolgirl diary, part erotic fantasy, part biblical vision, part sacred ceremony. It operates on so many levels — theatrical, poetic, mythic, and religious — that it defies interpretation. Any summary of the play is a misreading. On one level, *Fêtes d’Automne* is the story of Joa, a convent student who has hated her mother, Memnon, since a childhood accident years before. She finally revenges herself by bringing about Memnon’s death. On another level, it is a passion play inspired by the mysticism and eroticism of a young girl who confuses Christ’s call to love and a new life with an invitation to death. On still another level, it is a poet’s quest for creation through subversion and transgression of the established symbolic order. Joa, the daughter of Socrates and sister/lover of Christ, undermines the basic notions of Hellenic Judeo-Christian culture with her writing. Her madness undermines the rationalism characteristic of western thought and her eroticism profanes its sacred myths. As author/narrator/actor in her own text, she appropriates power over others and over her own destiny. Unfortunately, the poet’s dream of creation has tragic consequences for Joa as it did for Danielle Sarréra, for Charles Charles, for Emile Nelligan.

Writing and madness determine the structure of *Fêtes d’Automne* as Joa narrates the text from the foreground of the bare stage. According to Chaurette’s instructions, “C’est le lieu de l’imaginaire... c’est dans cet espace... que surgissent les objets et les personnages créés par Joa” (3). This place of the imagination is also the place of nightmares and madness. The progression towards death and

transcendence follows the logic of Joa's obsessive fantasies rather than a linear plot or chronological order. Joa's writing pushes the plot along and becomes an object of discussion. When asked what she writes, Joa tells one character, "J'écris au jour le jour ce qu'il sera bon que je me rappelle, au cas où j'aurais trop peur" (79, 113). To another character she claims to have written "mon testament" (107). After Joa's death, her mother says, "Elle écrivait des phrases pleines d'incohérence . . . j'ai lu des phrases qui n'avaient aucun sens" (112-13). Incoherent as it may be, Joa's writing creates the play, dictates the madness of others and draws the spectator/reader into its dementia. The result is a difficult work which radically subverts reality, theatricality, and Christian myths, replacing them with a form of writing which eludes authoritative interpretation.

RATHER THAN ANALYZE the uses of madness in Chaurette's fourth published play, *La Société de Métis*,<sup>11</sup> let us move on to the work of the other rising young star of Quebec theatre in the 1980's, René-Daniel Dubois.<sup>12</sup> Like Chaurette, Dubois is a Montrealer in his early thirties. In addition to having written eight plays between 1980 and 1985 (five of them published by Leméac), Dubois acts, directs, and teaches. His brilliant interpretations of all the characters in *Adieu, docteur Münch* and *Ne blâmez jamais les Bédouins* have earned him much critical acclaim. Given Dubois's commitment to theatre as performance, it is not surprising that his plays do not always feature writers or the writing act. Their textuality and intertextuality differ from what we find in Chaurette's work. Dubois's plays dazzle the reader/spectator with literary allusions which run the gamut from Dante to Tintin, with cultural and scientific references from Darwin and Freud. His use of madness is also of a different nature. While Chaurette's characters drift into madness when they realize that their dreams of pure artistic creation and thirst for the ideal cannot be satisfied in the real world, Dubois's characters often seem caught in a cacophonous, hellish, nightmare world of doubt, solitude, and inanity. Their delirium is symptomatic of world chaos: their disintegration of being reflects the disconnectedness of modern life, their verbal delirium echoes the dissonance of world politics. Given the absence of logic, purpose, and meaning, there can be no representation of unity; there can only be a collage of fragmented characters speaking in different voices, accents, and languages.

*Adieu, docteur Münch*,<sup>13</sup> Dubois's second published play, is a good example of his use of a deranged character and an exploded text. The author himself played all twelve roles of this "Sonata for one actor" in the original production at the Café théâtre Nelligan, October 1981. Sitting in front of his own tombstone, the recently deceased Doctor Münch takes stock of his life. His first words, "Je suis le docteur Carl Octavius Münch. Et j'ai faim," announce two key themes: the need

to establish one's identity and the unsatisfied existential hunger for knowledge and meaning. As the anonymous Voice attempts to determine the facts needed to fill out the death certificate, Dr. Münch begins the bewildering process of questioning his identity, his past, and his beliefs. He is a world-famous medical doctor and the author of major scientific and linguistic texts. He is also a solitary man troubled by the hunger, doubt, and limp which are part of his being. As he searches for truths, he becomes frustrated, confused, and lost in a verbal delirium. Obsessions, fragmented memories, ideas, and artistic images besiege him in a deluge of words. As the monologue becomes a diatribe against modern life, Münch disintegrates into a hallucinated cast of others: the Statue of Liberty, the Pietà, Indian goddesses, disembodied telephone voices, laboratory rats, etc. There is no reintegration at the end of the play, no answers to all the questions, no conclusion. Doubt ("le monstre, l'hydre" [71]) has driven him mad:

Le doute! Le doute? Je m'égaré! Je sens que je m'égaré! Je perds pied. Je glisse sur les images. Mon axe éclate, se disperse. Je m'égaré. Je sens que je m'égaré! Soit! Égarons-nous! Dispersons-nous! (50)

Münch's derangement deconstructs the text; the monologue explodes into polyphonic dissonance as his identity disintegrates. His logorrhea undermines logic; despite his training in logic, linguistic, and scientific reasoning, he cannot find truth or meaning, and he gets lost in words which cannot describe the universe:

Si une portion d'une affirmation se révèle inadéquate à décrire l'univers ambiant, la somme, l'ensemble et l'addition des segments descriptifs composant le reste de cette dite affirmation, fût-il ou elle adéquat ou adéquate à la fin de décrire ce même univers ambiant en tant que tout, donc, par concordance interpolatoire aussi bien dans le détail que pour la somme, l'ensemble et l'addition de ces segments composant par juxtaposition. Cette somme, ensemble ou addition, voire cette somme, ensemble *et* addition, cette portion, si infime soit-elle en regard de cette somme, ensemble *et/ou* addition résiduelle, cette portion donc, par son inadéquation, entraînera l'ensemble de la proposition sous la rubrique infirmative!

Voyez-vous? (11)

As in the absurd world of Ionesco, logic and language break down. The disrupted syntax of the text reflects Münch's delirium and his memory blanks. Since communication has been disrupted in the modern world, the voices Münch hears can only utter fragments, the debris of language:

Mes premières années se sont passées à retrouver le bout d'une communication suspendue . . .  
Je ne l'ai jamais retrouvée. . . . Attendait-on seulement une réponse? . . . Ou n'ai-je rien compris?  
J'ai couru . . . J'ai couru . . . Sur un fil . . . Les fils m'ont conduit . . . bouts de phrases rencontrés au hasard d'un poteau d'un relais . . . et nouveau départ . . . Parfois . . . une courte suite . . . la brève amorce d'une réplique . . . mais jamais de conclusion . . . (41)

Just as Münch searched vainly for answers and conclusions, so the spectator/reader of *Adieu, docteur Münch* must abandon the search for a simple interpretation of this hallucinatory text. We must “dé-lire” with Münch as he tells us:

Je suis égaré, vous voulez me suivre et je suis égaré, alors je vous égare . . . je veux tant que vous voyiez! Je . . . Je vais vous raconter une histoire. Très cohérente! Je vous le promets! Ne partez pas . . . L’histoire du bébé littéral . . . Du bébé qui ne comprenait que ce qu’on lui signifiait clairement. Attendez! Ne partez pas . . . C’est une histoire . . . fausse, bien sûr . . . je ne connais pas la vérité, mais je connais cette histoire-là. . . . Prenez-la juste . . . du bout des doigts . . . (43)

Literal babies beware! No clear meaning here! The spectator/reader can only expect multiple levels of meaning, endlessly displaced.

Dubois’s third published play, *26 bis impasse du Colonel Foisy*,<sup>14</sup> also invites us to listen to the fragmented monologue of a bizarre character. The epigraph from James Joyce warns against interpretation: “Close your eyes. Stop being intelligent and listen” (5). The lone character, an aging, exiled Russian princess, adds her own advice at the beginning of the play: “Ne riez pas . . . seulement souriez. C’est plus chic” (7). Dubois labels *26 bis* a “texte sournois en un acte (et de nombreuses digression [sic] pour un auteur, une princesse russe et un valet.” For all its irony, humour, and outrageousness, it is a difficult, literary text dealing with the anguish of exile, unfulfilled desires, the failure of language, and fear of death. It is also a self-conscious text which ridicules its own theatricality, questions character/author and character/spectator relationships, and discusses other genres and other plays. Madame Michaela Droussetchvili Tetriakov interrupts her own monologue to complain about the text, the author, the critics, the audience, and her own memory lapses. She is also interrupted by the intrusion of the author into his own play and by an obsequious valet who has strayed in from Parisian boulevard comedy. Madame, “accablée d’un hénaurme accent slave,” wrapped in a moth-eaten boa and blowing cigarette smoke, addresses the audience while reclining on a Madame Récamier couch on an otherwise empty stage. Her eccentricity — she calls it her “crazyness” (66) using but misspelling the English word — is further exaggerated by Dubois’s insistence that she be played by a male actor in drag. “She” begins by telling the audience that shortly, her desperately passionate lover will burst through an imaginary door, threatening to shoot her with a revolver. The rest of the play is a collage of obsessive memories, flashbacks, a poem, literary commentaries, digressions, and intrusions leading up to the climactic murder.

Madame’s madness ironically justifies the subversion of the text, the demystification of its dramatic conventions. Always addressing the audience directly, “she” never forgets she is a character in a play created by an author. When she forgets her lines she says:

Merde, encore un blanc!



Mes dernières lignes étaient tout au bas d'une page, l'auteur vient de tourner, et je ne sais plus où j'en suis . . . (10)

At one point, she speaks to readers and students of the text:

Je ne sais pas si vous me lisez à la maison, si vous me coupez en tranches au Cegep ou si vous m'écoutez au théâtre, mais c'est du gratiné . . . si j'ose dire. Je n'ai pas l'accent russe pour le seul plaisir de faire baver les acteurs. . . C'est de la classe! Ces deux lignes-là, c'est de l'anthologie Théâtre du Nouveau Monde. (22)

Another interruption comes when she objects to a portion of her text:

C'est hors de question! Auteur! Je réclame l'auteur! . . .  
Je refuse de jouer cette scène là! Nan, nan, et re-nannan! (22)

Even her death scene reminds us that she is only a character in a play.

Intertextuality reinforces the textuality of *26 bis* with irony and humour. Some of the "nombreuses digressions" are mock defences of Dubois's earlier work against the critics; comments on naturalism, melodrama, comedy of the absurd, and pure theatre; allusions to Tremblay plays. References to Verdi, Tennessee Williams, Proust, Darwin, Freud, Jung, and others demonstrate "Madame's" broad culture. There is even a marxist analysis of LaFontaine's milkmaid fable!

All of these reminders of the play's status as a theatrical text within a cultural tradition serve not only to demystify the writing act but also to fragment the life story being told by the main character. Memories of her life in exile, her wandering, and her search for love are interrupted, begun again, recreated with new variations. The discontinuity of the de-centred text seems to prove her madness. She herself understands that her craziness is related to her exile and her unfulfilled desire. In a flashback to a bar pick-up scene, she links the sources of her alienation:

Of course, I'm crazy. . . .

Of course my mother tongue is not English. So what? For non-understandable expression of unspeakable self-burning, this language will do as well as any other that I use so badly can. (65-66)

With the exception of his most recent play (*Being at home with Claude*), Dubois's other plays (*Panique à Longueuil*, *Ne blâmez jamais les Bédouins*) also subvert the conventions of realistic theatre by presenting bizarre characters in nightmarish hallucinations open to multiple interpretations.<sup>15</sup> If this madness is a new form of existential madness, brought on by the unbearable banality and solitude of the real world, it is also a literary madness which deconstructs reality through the act of writing.

The mad characters of Dubois and Chaurette are not the oppressed or repressed victims of Quebec society who people earlier Quebec plays. Their madness has little to do with social, nationalistic, or ideological messages. It is rather a "maladie de l'imaginaire," a "dérèglement des sens" exploited for its power to subvert and

destabilize. Chaurette and Dubois, each in his own way, use madness to create a demystified theatrical discourse, to invent a sort of metatheatre which constantly multiplies its levels of meaning to reflect the fragmented mind of the mad character and to draw attention to the impossibility of fixing truths and to the power of writing over speech.

## NOTES

- <sup>1</sup> Pierre Gobin, *Le Fou et ses doubles: figures de la dramaturgie québécoise* (Montréal: les Presses de l'Université de Montréal, 1978).
- <sup>2</sup> Jane Moss, "Les Folles du Québec: The Theme of Madness in Québec Women's Theater," *The French Review*, 57, no. 5 (April 1984).
- <sup>3</sup> There is an interesting relationship between homosexuality and madness in the works of Chaurette and Dubois which should be examined separately. Any discussion of this topic should also include Michel Marc Bouchard, author of *La contre-nature de Chryssippe Tanguay, écologiste* (Montréal: Leméac, 1984).
- <sup>4</sup> Georges Banu, "Le fragment: crise et ou renouvellement?" in *Id., le Théâtre, sorties de secours* (Paris: Aubier, 1984), p. 13, quoted by André-G. Bourassa, "Une nouvelle écriture scénique: le théâtre en morceaux," *Lettres québécoises*, 42 (Été 1986), 38.
- <sup>5</sup> Gerald Rabkin, "The Play of Misreading: Text/Theatre/Deconstruction," *Performing Arts Journal*, 19, VII, no. 1 (1983), 44-60.
- <sup>6</sup> Elinor Fuchs, "Presence and the Revenge of Writing: Re-thinking Theatre After Derrida," *Performing Arts Journal*, 26/27 (1985), 163-73.
- <sup>7</sup> Normand Chaurette, *Rêve d'une nuit d'hôpital* (Montréal: Leméac, 1980).
- <sup>8</sup> Normand Chaurette, *Provincetown Playhouse, juillet 1919, j'avais 19 ans* (Montréal: Leméac, 1981). See reviews by Gilles Lapointe in *Jeu*, 23 (1982), 156-57; Jane Moss in *Canadian Literature*, 96 (Spring 1983), 143-45; Diane Cotnoir in *Jeu*, 38 (1986), 104-05; and Jean-Cléo Godin's article, "Deux Dramaturges de l'avenir?" in *Etudes littéraires*, 18, no. 3 (Hiver 1985), 113-22.
- <sup>9</sup> See Stéphane Lépine's review of *Fêtes d'automne* in *Jeu*, 24 (1982), 120-22, and Monic Robillard's preface "Portrait de l'Artiste," *La Société de Métis* (Montréal: Leméac, 1983), p. 23.
- <sup>10</sup> Normand Chaurette, *Fêtes d'Automne* (Montréal: Leméac, 1982). See my review in *Canadian Literature*, 98 (Autumn 1983), 89-90, and Robert Lévesque's article in *Le Devoir*, 20 mars 1982, pp. 17-18.
- <sup>11</sup> Normand Chaurette, *La Société de Métis* (Montréal: Leméac, 1983). See Chaurette's comments on the origin of the play, "La Chinoise," in *Jeu*, 32 (1984), 79-86, and my review in *Canadian Literature*, 102 (Autmun 1984), 100.
- <sup>12</sup> See Godin's article and Diane Pavlovic, "Le déploiement d'un cri: sur deux oeuvres de René-Daniel Dubois," *Jeu*, 32 (1984), 87-97.
- <sup>13</sup> René-Daniel Dubois, *Adieu, docteur Münch* (Montréal: Leméac, 1982). The published text has an excellent introduction by Michel Larouche, pp. ix-xxiii. See also reviews by Gilles Lapointe in *Jeu*, 24 (1982), 119-20, and Jane Moss, *Canadian Literature*, 98 (Autumn 1983), 88.

- <sup>14</sup> René-Daniel Dubois, *26 bis, impasse du Colonel Foisy* (Montréal: Leméac, 1983). See Pavlovic's article and my review in *Canadian Literature*, 102 (Autumn 1984), 172-73.
- <sup>15</sup> René-Daniel Dubois, *Panique à Longueil* (Montréal: Leméac, 1980); *Ne blâmez jamais les Bédouins* (Montréal: Leméac, 1984); *Being at home with Claude* (Montréal: Leméac, 1986). See Pavlovic, and reviews by André Dionne in *Lettres québécoises*, 35 (Automne 1984), 60; *Lettres québécoises*, 41 (Printemps 1986), 55.

## THE PROBLEM OF SEEING

*(After a day at the beach)*

*Robert Hilles*

The problem of seeing is knowing  
when to stop. What do you eliminate  
because something reminds you of  
the summer your father stripped bare  
and dove off the dock into the lake  
water settling above him forever  
as he called from the shore behind you,  
frightened of his new heights.

As you turned to him, life and death blurred  
trees along the shore, were twisted from their roots  
birds formed a black cloud above your head.  
Your hands felt below the water for your body,  
for a pocket of air to grasp.  
Turning still, you fell into a dizzy dream.

Your father's hands reached beneath you  
until there was air everywhere.  
His mouth near yours as wet as eternity,  
his lips a warm ring around you.  
He dragged you towards the shore  
calling to a distant figure on the shore.  
After lying in the sun for hours with  
hands wrinkled from the water, you  
watched your father back his old  
Ford slowly towards the water as though  
preparing to tow the lake away.