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"Ça devient une question d'être maîtres chez nous": The Canadiens, Nordiques, and the Politics of Québécois Nationalism, 1979-1984

Terry Gitersos, *The University of Western Ontario*

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A thesis submitted in partial fulfillment of the requirements for the Doctor of Philosophy degree in Kinesiology

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“ÇA DEVIENT UNE QUESTION D’ÊTRE MAÎTRES CHEZ NOUS”: THE
CANADIENS, NORDIQUES, AND THE POLITICS OF QUÉBÉCOIS NATIONALISM,
1979-1984

(Spine title: Hockey and the Politics of Québécois Nationalism, 1979-1984)

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by

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Graduate Program in Kinesiology

A thesis submitted in partial fulfillment
of the requirements for the degree of
Doctor of Philosophy

The School of Graduate and Postdoctoral Studies
The University of Western Ontario
London, Ontario, Canada

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THE UNIVERSITY OF WESTERN ONTARIO
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Chair of the Thesis Examination Board

Abstract

This dissertation analyzes the discourses produced by the selected newspaper coverage of the Montréal Canadiens and Québec Nordiques, two professional hockey clubs based in the province of Québec, from 1979 to 1984. Sport has long provided a medium for national identification, and constitutes one of the most effective institutions through which the nation is imagined. This is especially true of Canada, where ice hockey has been celebrated as the country's national game and a window into the Canadian soul. However, sport is a malleable institution; in Québec, hockey has long served as a symbol, speaking to French Canadian national identity, imbued with its own significance independent of any pan-Canadian context.

The Montréal Canadiens, founded in 1909, were the sporting institution most intimately associated with French Canadian identity. However, following two decades of unprecedented social, political, and economic changes in Québec, newspaper journalists in the early 1980s questioned the Canadiens' monopoly over Québécois affections. As a result, the newspaper coverage of the rivalry between the Canadiens and the newly-formed Nordiques was anchored in Québec's neo-nationalist politics, and the teams became channels for debates about language, social change, the shape of Québec society, and the nature of Québec identity.

Through a critical discourse analysis of the newspaper coverage of the Canadiens and Nordiques in both French and English newspapers, I determined that the Nordiques were celebrated as an institution that both reflected and advanced the neo-nationalist project, while the Canadiens were depicted as having fallen out of step with the pace of Québec's social and political change. The neo-nationalist identity constructed through this newspaper coverage

normalized the French language as the foundation of Québécois identity, but, contrary to the claims of neo-nationalists themselves, also constructed ethnicity and biology as central to the neo-nationalist sense of self. The identity represented through this hockey coverage excluded and even demonized Québec residents, such as Anglophones, who deviated from these norms. These discourses exposed the deep schisms that existed in Québec society in the early 1980s.

Keywords

Montréal Canadiens, Québec Nordiques, Québec, hockey, nationalism, identity, politics, discourse, sport history.

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Chapter 1

1 Introduction

Alan Bairner, taking his cues from the Scottish political scientist James Kellas, has pointed out that sport is the most popular form of nationalist expression in most countries.¹ Indeed, sport has long been an indispensable tool for governments and nationalists, who have exploited sport's symbolism and popularity for political gain. For example, Barrie Houlihan, Richard Gruneau and David Whitson and others have pointed out the Canadian government's frequent promotion of ice hockey as a form of social glue in the pursuit of a distinctive Canadian national identity. Although hockey reflects and exacerbates several divisions in Canadian society, it has remained a remarkably durable institution throughout the twentieth century in large part because of its broad ranging appeal. Though excluding women, aboriginals, and other groups, over time hockey has historically cut across numerous social cleavages in Canada, the most important of which are region and, to a more limited extent, ethnicity. Hockey is played, watched, and obsessed over by fans in British Columbia, Newfoundland, and all points in between. Crucially for this dissertation, hockey has deep historical roots in Québec. As Gruneau and Whitson point out, no other cultural form has brought Canada's "two solitudes" together as frequently and effectively as hockey.²

Because sport is always contested terrain and, as Houlihan points out, an extremely malleable symbol, it can also be mobilized in the name of sub-state nationalism (where the boundaries of the imagined nation are smaller than the state in which it resides). While hockey has been constructed as the national game by Canadian politicians and nationalists, it was at the same time celebrated within Québec as the

province's national game and a social symbol speaking to Québécois national identity, imbued with its own significance independent of any pan-Canadian context. According to sport sociologist Jean Harvey, "French Canadians took up hockey and made it a symbol of their national identity, of their fight for survival and for the survival of their culture, on an English speaking continent and within a country dominated by English."³ Hockey came to be understood by Québec Francophones as a symbol of resistance, albeit a passive resistance that did little to disturb the province's political status quo. In this context, the meaning of hockey for French Canadians was similar to what, according to the Palestinian poet Mahmoud Darwish, soccer represented for the Arab world in the 1980s:

The game represents a breathing space, allowing a splintered homeland an opportunity to join together around something shared, a consensus in which, for each team, the boundary lines and the conditions of the relationship are clearly defined, whatever cunning hints may slip through and whatever repressed meanings spectators may project upon the game. A homeland, or a manifestation of its spirit, defends its dignity or its lead against the Other, without disturbing the internal arrangement of forces. The spectators take roles denied them in politics, giving them shape and projecting them onto the intelligence of muscles and the manoeuvres of the players in the movement toward one end – scoring a goal.⁴

Sub-state nations typically do not have national teams to support, in which case other sporting institutions can become the focus of identity politics. The best known examples of this phenomenon are the Spanish professional soccer teams Athletic Bilbao and FC Barcelona, which have served over time as vehicles for the articulation of Basque and Catalan nationalism and national identities.⁵ In Québec, the *Club de Hockey Canadien* (known commonly, and henceforth, as the Montréal Canadiens) has fulfilled this role since its foundation in 1909, and has become an important athletic, cultural, and political institution, and the *de facto* national team of Québec. The club's games against

the Montréal Maroons in the 1920s and 1930s, and the Toronto Maple Leafs after World War II, were interpreted often through the lens of French-English national rivalry.

Victories on the ice were celebrated as national triumphs. The club's best Francophone players became folk heroes, with books and songs written as testament to their social importance (as will be discussed in Chapter 2 of this dissertation).

But the Québec in which the Canadiens achieved popularity and nationalist significance was very different from the Québec of the 1970s and 1980s. By the 1960s, traditional variants of French Canadian nationalism – predicated on ethnicity, rural values, and the Catholic Church – gave way to neo-nationalism, which, as the name suggests, was drastically different from its predecessor. Concerned foremost with territoriality and the French language, and employing a rhetoric of decolonization borrowed from the radical left, neo-nationalism irrevocably changed the province. By the late 1970s, a raft of legislation enacted by neo-nationalist provincial governments made French the province's sole official language while putting restrictions on the use of English. And by 1980, not even Québec's place within Canada could be taken for granted: that year, in what represented the apotheosis of the neo-nationalist project, Québec residents voted on a referendum that promised to give the province political sovereignty. The proposal to pursue independence was defeated by a margin of twenty percent (sixty to forty).

The flowering of neo-nationalism coincided with the establishment in 1972 of a new professional hockey team that challenged the Canadiens' monopoly over French Canadian affections. Founded as a self-consciously Francophone project, the Québec Nordiques (based in Québec City, the provincial capital), joined the National Hockey

League (NHL) in 1979 and, throughout the 1980s, competed with the Canadiens for the Québec market. Their rivalry was anchored in Québec's neo-nationalist politics of the 1970s and 80s. The Canadiens and Nordiques were understood to represent drastically different political ideologies, and served as channels for debates about language, social change, the shape of Québec society, and the nature of Québécois national identity.

1.1 Statement of Purpose

In this dissertation, I analyse the discourse produced by the newspaper coverage of the Canadiens and Nordiques, unpack its meanings, and consider these in the context of the neo-nationalist socio-political project of the late 1970s and early 1980s. My ultimate purpose is to construct a cultural account of Québec nationalism through the lens of professional hockey in the 1980s. This last undertaking almost was attempted once before. Richard Handler, in the introduction to his excellent anthropological study of Québec nationalism, signalled that his original intention was to examine hockey. This plan was shelved eventually, and Handler wrote that “perhaps I was naive to expect political discussion in a non-political context such as hockey” (Handler eventually retreated to more orthodox anthropological ground, looking at folk dancing and other forms of folklore).⁶

Through a critical discourse analysis of the professional hockey journalism in Montréal and Québec City daily newspapers, I argue that the French media's coverage of the Canadiens-Nordiques rivalry from 1979 to 1984 reproduced some of Québec's dominant socio-political discourses and normalized neo-nationalist power within Québec. In articles about the Nordiques' and Canadiens' language of communication and ethnic composition, Francophone journalists enthusiastically championed neo-nationalist

language initiatives and agitated for their extension and implementation into the world of professional hockey. On the whole, these discourses championed a Québécois national identity rooted in the French language, in accordance with neo-nationalist orthodoxy. Yet Francophone journalists were also preoccupied with lineage and ethnicity, long since deemphasized in mainstream neo-nationalist discourse. While on one hand embracing European immigrant hockey players as “neo-Québécois,” journalistic treatments of the Canadiens’ and Nordiques’ playing style indicated a continuing preoccupation with ethnicity as a touchstone of identity, constructing a Québécois identity that was rooted in heredity as much as it was language or territory. Through the ensemble of these discourses, the new status quo of Francophone supremacy was powerfully reconfirmed in Québec, while often excluding English speakers as well as those who did not descend from the settlers of New France.

These discourses emerged precisely because of sport’s intimate relationship with nationalism and national identities and, more locally, hockey’s cultural importance and symbolic potency in Québec. In contravention of the oft-cited axiom that sport and politics do not or should not mix, the competition between the old, established Canadiens and the young, upstart Nordiques pushed neo-nationalism to the fore in debates about professional hockey. Many French hockey journalists identified the Nordiques as a vehicle for the promotion of neo-nationalism, as well as for the extension of the frantic social and political reforms of the 1960s and 70s into the domain of professional hockey. The political importance of hockey in Québec also transformed hockey players into political actors, and ensured that the supremacy of neo-nationalism was reconfirmed not only through the editorials of Francophone sportswriters, but through the utterances of

some of the Canadiens' and Nordiques' players, both Anglophone and Francophone. Questioned by journalists about the teams' language policies and their general impressions about living in Québec, players confirmed the central assumptions of neo-nationalist politics and identity. Yet, when Francophone players were afforded the opportunity during the 1980 referendum on Québec independence to play an active role in the furtherance of the neo-nationalist project, they shied away.

These discourses of nation, language, and identity were challenged in the sports pages of *The Gazette*, Montréal's lone remaining English language daily. *Gazette* sport journalists, employing a rhetoric of exodus, degradation, victimization, and cultural death that was common in the Anglophone community at the time, rejected the very basis of neo-nationalism and constructed it as an intolerant, racist, totalitarian ideology that actively discriminated against English speakers and immigrants in the pursuit of "cultural purity." Yet this challenge to Francophone power did not provide an alternate vision of Québec society, harkening back instead to the pre-nationalist status quo. *The Gazette* in effect rejected Francophone power in favour of an idealized past where its own readership was politically, economically, and culturally dominant.

1.2 Justification

This dissertation contributes to the body of knowledge in sport scholarship in two ways. First, I aspire to fill a gap in the literature concerning hockey and Québec. There is a small but growing array of works in this field, mostly dealing with either the formative years of Québec hockey, the sociocultural significance of the Canadiens, or the mythic status of one of the team's star players in the 1950s, Maurice "Rocket" Richard. No known academic work to date seriously has considered the Nordiques' meanings,

despite that club's challenge to the Canadiens' supremacy during the 1980s.

Furthermore, the academic literature concerning the Canadiens, for the most part, has taken the club's status as a nationalist touchstone for granted; this will be the first study that considers the Canadiens' precarious position in the 1980s, when the team's historical status as an important Québécois cultural institution was questioned openly by the French media.

Secondly, this dissertation contributes to the larger body of literature concerning sport and the nation. Thus far, studies in this sub-discipline usually have been case studies concerned with state nationalisms and identities. This dissertation is different in that it is a case study examining sport and the sub-state nation. In this respect it will serve as a North American counterpart to a few similar studies that have been conducted about soccer in Spain.⁷

1.3 Methodology

The theoretical base of this dissertation will be Benedict Anderson's theory of nations and nationalism, outlined in his influential book *Imagined Communities*.⁸ Invoking his work in a study of nationalism almost has become an academic cliché; however, Anderson's model is useful for this analysis for a few reasons. First, he argues that the study of nationalism must be historical. Anderson explains the differences between the modern nation and pre-modern cultural systems, such as religious communities and dynastic realms, as a function of changes in the apprehension of time. Medieval conceptions of time have been replaced by what Anderson refers to as "homogenous, empty time," defined historically and measured by clock and calendar.⁹ Nationalism, therefore, is a modern way of thinking that links fraternity, power, and time;

the modern nation understands itself as a sociological organism moving inexorably and linearly through history. Secondly, Anderson emphasizes the importance of the media in the construction of the nation and the mobilization of nationalism. The aforementioned changes in self-apprehension arose at the same time as the dawn of a capitalist mode of production, and, related to this, the invention and proliferation of the printing press. What Anderson calls “print-capitalism” laid the groundwork for national consciousness both by creating a new reading public, and simultaneously by mobilizing them for politico-religious purposes. In this, Anderson recognizes that nations cannot be separated from their narration. And finally, Anderson argues that the nation is subjective or “imagined,” liberating it from perennial or primordial theories. He argues that nations are modern, socially constructed political communities, intimately related to but not congruent to the states that house them, that were made possible only by a complex interaction between a mode of production (capitalism), a technology of communication (print), and human cultural diversity (language). It was this interaction that gave to languages, and the cultures with which they were associated, an objective, primordial sheen: printed newspapers and books in vernacular languages allowed the masses to discover a new glory in idioms that they had spoken all along.

While Anderson’s theory is useful for understanding how nations coalesce and evolve through history, it is less effective in explaining how nations are reproduced. Here, I turn to Michael Billig’s theory of “banal nationalism.”¹⁰ Billig, starting from the assumption that most studies of nationalism tend to concentrate on separatist or extremist movements, argues that nationalism is endemic, omnipresent, and ready to be mobilized in the wake of catalytic events. He argues that, in established nations, there is a continual

flagging, or reminding, of nationhood; citizens are reminded daily of their national identity through mundane, habitual practices such as reading a newspaper or attending a sporting event. For Billig, in other words, “national identity is to be found in the embodied habits of social life. Such habits include those of thinking and using language. To have a national identity is to possess ways of talking about nationhood.”¹¹ This argument links well with the theoretical considerations of Craig Calhoun. Calhoun argues that nationalism is, among other things, a discursive formation, a way of speaking that shapes consciousness. For Calhoun, nationalists “use a rhetoric, a way of speaking, a kind of language that carries with it connections to other events and actions, that enables or disables certain other ways of speaking or acting, or that is recognized by others as entailing certain consequences.”¹² Some features of this nationalist discourse include, but are not limited to: boundaries; indivisibility; sovereignty; an “ascending” notion of legitimacy; popular participation in collective affairs; direct membership; culture (including language, shared beliefs, and habitual practices); temporal depth; common descent or racial characteristics; and special historical relations to a certain territory.¹³ These ways of speaking and thinking, or more specifically the pattern formed by having a preponderance of them in discourse, play a crucial role in the imagining and construction of nations.

Nations are discursively produced and reproduced, and then disseminated through systems of education, mass communication, and what Eric Hobsbawm calls “invented traditions.”¹⁴ According to Hobsbawm, invented traditions are “set(s) of practices, normally governed by overtly or tacitly accepted rules and of a ritual or symbolic nature, which seek to inculcate certain values and norms of behaviour by repetition, which

automatically implies continuity with the past.”¹⁵ Hobsbawm identifies sport as one the most important modern invented traditions, and one that provides “a medium for national identification and factitious community.”¹⁶ Sport, as scholars have long understood, is a unique institution that serves as an ideal vehicle for nationalisms and national identities. Grant Jarvie outlined seven key arguments made by scholars researching the links between sport and nationalism, a few of which are important for and assimilated into this dissertation: that sport has certain properties that make it a possible instrument of national unity and integration; that sport can sometimes provide an outlet of emotional energy for frustrated peoples or nations; that sport helps to reinforce national consciousness and cultural nationalism; and that sport has itself sometimes contributed to nationalist struggles.¹⁷ In brief, Jarvie argues that sporting forms and relations help to reproduce, transform, and construct the image of a national community, allowing researchers to glean valuable insight about the construction of nations, political nationalisms, and national identities by studying sport.

1.4 Method

This dissertation will employ the method of critical discourse analysis developed by John E. Richardson.¹⁸ Richardson does not propose a new method per se, but has instead crafted a synthesis of various methods devised by scholars such as Norman Fairclough, Ruth Wodak, and Teun Van Dijk, designed to investigate the dialectical relationship between media, discourse, and society. For Richardson, a critical discourse analysis is an analysis of how discourse, language in use, relates to and is implicated in the (re)production of social relations. To this end, Richardson urges a three point analysis encompassing textual analysis, as well as a consideration of discursive and social

practices, which he has adapted specifically for analyzing newspapers. Though Richardson is himself primarily interested in class relations, his method of analysis can be utilized to explore the political and ideological implications of discourses of race, gender, and other social constructions. Consistent with the principal emphasis of the primary texts scrutinized, this dissertation's analysis focuses uniquely on the nation.

Richardson's textual analysis is an examination of a newspaper's written text in terms of content, sentence structure, text structure, and rhetoric. The second stage is an analysis of discursive practices, which entails interpreting the meaning of the text within a particular journalistic mode of production; this stage is concerned with how discourses are produced, disseminated, and received by their audiences. Finally, his analysis of social practices seeks to situate the text and discursive practices in relation to the wider society. Namely, Richardson poses three questions that a discourse analyst must answer about how discourse relates to and is implicated in the production and reproduction of social relations: "what does this text say about the society it was produced for? What influence or impact do we think that the text will have on social relations? Will it help to continue inequalities and other undesirable social practices, or will it help to break them down?"¹⁹ This, as discussed in more detail below, was the process I used to analyze my data.

Consistent with Richardson's emphasis on journalistic discourses, this dissertation relies almost exclusively on newspaper texts. The newspapers I used most frequently are the highest circulation dailies in both Montréal and Québec City: *La Presse*, *Le Journal de Montréal*, *Le Devoir* and *The Gazette* from Montréal, and *Le Soleil* and *Le Journal de Québec* from Québec City. To a lesser extent, I used other Montréal and Québec City

publications such as the *Montreal Star*, *Dimanche-Matin*, *Perspectives* (distributed in weekend editions of *Le Soleil* and *La Presse*), and *L'actualité*.

I examined every daily edition of each publication listed above from September 1, 1979 until April 30, 1984, on microfilm, even during those periods when professional hockey was on hiatus (June through August) and hockey journalism was relatively scarce. I examined the sports section, editorials, letters to the editor, and editorial cartoons in each edition, and cast a glance at the front page headlines to determine if there were hockey stories printed in other sections. I also regularly searched through additional sections in special circumstances: for example, I scrutinized the general news and politics sections during the 1980 referendum on Québec independence after finding a few referendum-themed hockey stories outside of the sports pages.

After deciding that I wished to proceed thematically rather than purely chronologically, I reserved those articles containing any information pertaining to something other than the day-to-day functioning of the hockey teams for analysis. This initial screening excluded articles that consisted *solely* of game previews, game recaps, injury reports, and trade rumours. The reserved articles were then subjected to an initial analysis designed to denote briefly what topic was being discussed, in whose words (journalists, players, club management, fans/readers, other), and in what newspaper. This initial analysis divided articles into six broad themes: the French language, the teams' ethno-linguistic composition, economics, marketing, the 1980 referendum, and miscellaneous. This coding almost immediately subdivided the articles into material for discrete chapters. There was a veritable mountain of reports dealing with the French language and the teams' ethno-linguistic composition, and I decided that both themes

would be the subject of individual chapters; likewise, many of the articles primarily concerning marketing also dealt with these two themes. While there was not enough material about the referendum for its own chapter, almost all the articles concerning it were filled with player quotes; combined with the other articles featuring player commentary, there was more than enough material to create a chapter for analysis. Likewise, there were enough articles about all themes in *The Gazette* to support an entire chapter about the English media. Articles dealing with economics were jettisoned completely, as the overwhelming majority dealt purely with dollars and cents, rather than political economy. I also discarded miscellaneous articles.

The one exception to this retention and coding process were articles dealing with playing style. This theme, after all, is usually taken up in pregame or postgame analyses, a group of articles I had ignored initially. But my own experiences living in Montréal (2000-2004) suggested that the style of hockey practiced by the Canadiens (and presumably the Nordiques) has symbolic significance, and would have been held up to scrutiny in the early 1980s. Therefore, I reserved articles describing the style that the Nordiques and Canadiens played (with speed, skilfully, offensively, defensively, physically, violently, etc.), setting them aside for analysis in a separate chapter.

Having divided these documents into material for discreet chapters, I then proceeded to analyze each group of articles in accordance with Richardson's method of critical discourse analysis. At the outset, I subjected the assembled texts to a textual analysis, which itself consisted of three different but interconnected components: first, I utilized a three-step lexical analysis, in which I initially inspected each individual word in the text and appraised them for meaning; second, I analysed each sentence's syntax,

transitivity, modality, and usage of rhetorical tropes; third, I subjected the articles to a macro-analysis, assessing them for overall narrative. This textual analysis was conducted for each chapter until thematic saturation was reached. Every article was subjected to this textual analysis; however, as will become clear in chapters 4 through 7, results were not distributed evenly across the categories mentioned above. For example, I utilize only a few examples related to syntax or transitivity, but many examples related to rhetorical tropes.

Next, I considered these textual meanings in light of the way text was produced; Richardson describes this level of analysis as an evaluation of discursive practices. This step proved difficult, as there have been very few in-depth studies examining the Québec media. Chapter 3 of this dissertation, as well as sections of Chapter 7, is pivotal for this step, as I lay out the unique discursive practices of Québec's French and English sport media; all newspaper articles in my sample were considered in the context of the practices elaborated in these chapters. Finally, all texts were appraised in the context of wider social practices, which is to say the social, political, and economic context that permeates and structures the activities and outputs of journalism. This wider context is introduced in Chapter 2, and at the beginnings of Chapter 4 through 8.

Finally, it should be clearly stated that the production and reproduction of nations is a complex, messy process. There is never a total consensus about what a nation should look like. Even where there may initially appear to be unanimity, skilled analysts can always locate fragments of other discourses in texts that challenge or contradict this apparent consensus. Such fragments will undoubtedly be clearly visible in the data presented in this dissertation. However, because of the size of my data set, recording and

elaborating upon every discourse embedded in the texts was virtually impossible.

Therefore the objective of this dissertation, as mentioned earlier, is to isolate and examine the *dominant* national discourses produced and reproduced in the sports coverage of Montréal and Québec City's largest newspapers; that is to say, the discourses that my analysis encountered most frequently.

1.5 Review of Literature

The body of literature in the field of sociocultural sport studies that examines the intersection of sport, nationalism, and national identity has to date been preoccupied by debates surrounding globalization, and sport's role in either advancing or resisting it. The title of Alan Bairner's influential book – *Sport, Nationalism, and Globalization* – provides an obvious example.²⁰ Given modern professional sport's status as a globalized commodity, I believe that sport scholars are well placed to comment on this debate, and generally they have taken a sceptical position on the withering away of nationalism, while at the same time accepting the magnitude of globalization's influence. Rather than accept theories of Americanization or “coca-colonization,” sport scholars such as Bairner, Barrie Houlihan,²¹ Grant Jarvie,²² and Joseph Maguire²³ have argued for more nuanced theories of globalization, characterized by what Bairner calls “hybridization” and “creolization.”²⁴ These studies have generated useful insights about the role of sport in the production and reproduction of national identities. Bairner, comparing case studies from Northern Ireland, Scotland, the Republic of Ireland, the United States, Canada, and Sweden, concluded that the linkage of sport and national identity is rarely straightforward, and that nuance can only be revealed by deep, rigorous examination of individual cases. Jarvie, meanwhile, submitted seven assumptions about the relation

between sport and the nation. The most important of these for this particular dissertation are as follows: that sport has qualities which make it a possible instrument of national unity and integration; that sport can provide an outlet of emotional energy for frustrated peoples and nations; that sport reinforces national consciousness and cultural nationalism; that sport has itself contributed to political struggles which have been closely linked to national politics; and finally, that sport is involved in the process of nationalism as a national reaction to dependency and uneven development. Houlihan argues that sport contributes to all four characteristics of the Western form of nationalism – territoriality, participation, citizenship, and civic education – and that its symbolism can be manipulated by politicians and, presumably, other cultural elites. However, after comparing Canada, Ireland, and England, Houlihan concluded that sports symbolism is highly malleable and as such very difficult to control.

Most of the research in sociocultural sport studies has concentrated on English-speaking, industrialized countries such as the United Kingdom, Ireland, Australia, and Canada, though this is beginning to change slowly. Houlihan and Bairner both examined Canada in their studies, but to date the best treatments of Canadian sport and national identity have come out of focused case studies. Wide-ranging histories of Canadian sport, such as those penned by Alan Metcalfe,²⁵ Colin Howell,²⁶ and Don Morrow and Kevin Wamsley,²⁷ have stressed the primacy of sport in the imagining of Canadian national identities. Other case studies have looked at specific aspects of the relationship between sport, political nationalism, and national identity in Canada. For example, Bruce Kidd's study of the 1976 Montréal Olympics examined the "bitter clash of nationalisms" between the Canadian federal government and its Québec provincial counterpart for

control over, among other things, the dominant imagery of the Games.²⁸ And Steven Jackson has published a series of papers looking at Canadian cultural anxieties in the 1980s with respect to race, immigration, and free trade by examining sports incidents such as Ben Johnson's disqualification from the 1988 Seoul Olympics, and the trade of Wayne Gretzky from the Edmonton Oilers to the Los Angeles Kings.²⁹

But as one might expect, most of the literature in this vein, both academic and non-academic, has been about ice hockey. One needs only to peruse the titles of some of the non-academic literature to get a sense for Canada's obsession with ice hockey and its centrality to Canadian national identity: *The Game of Our Lives*;³⁰ *Home Game*;³¹ *All Roads Lead to Hockey*;³² *The Meaning of Puck: How Hockey Explains Modern Canada*.³³ The most ambitious academic tome devoted to this subject is Richard Gruneau and David Whitson's seminal *Hockey Night in Canada*, which argues that hockey exerts a powerful grip on the imaginations and collective memories of Canadians, helping their ability to imagine a national community because of its naturalness, ubiquity, and history: hockey seems natural, because over time it has been broad ranging, cutting across numerous social cleavages even as it is at odds with other political and cultural tensions; ubiquitous, because of the incredible attention devoted to it by the mass media; and hockey has historical salience because it was invented in Canada and is therefore taken to be quintessentially Canadian.³⁴ Gruneau and Whitson reject the idea that hockey forms part of a Canadian "cultural manifest destiny," but instead postulate that hockey is a social construction that emerged out of a series of clashes and traditions against the backdrop of Canada's development as an industrial and consumer society. Hockey, therefore, is both myth and allegory: myth because it conceals the existence of

power structures that benefits some and works against others, and allegory because hockey is a story Canadians tell about being Canadian.

Michael Robidoux went one step further.³⁵ Arguing that hockey is probably the one expression of Canadian nationalism that has remained constant since Confederation, he postulated that hockey is more than just a symbol or a social construction, but a legitimate expression of national history and identity.³⁶ Simply put, Robidoux claimed that hockey *is* Canada, or at least a metaphorical representation of Canadian identity, and as such speaks to issues of gender, class, race, and ethnicity, albeit not always in an altogether positive way. Other authors have taken up this last point and emphasized that hockey in Canada has also served as a means of exclusion. Bruce Kidd, who, like Gruneau and Whitson, understands hockey's emergence in Canada as the end product of a series of cultural struggles, lamented the dominance of the elite professional National Hockey League (NHL) over the Canadian collective memory, arguing that it has distorted Canadian sport and Canadian culture by marginalizing alternate paradigms of sport, such as amateur sport, women's sport, and worker's sport.³⁷ Mary Louise Adams, while acknowledging that hockey has historically served as a signifier of Canadian-ness, demonstrated that hockey has also systematically excluded women and, looking at media reports of the 2002 Olympic Winter Games, has afforded men a chance to represent the nation in a way that is unavailable to women.³⁸ Robert Pitter, also refuting the ideal of hockey as a social bridge, contended that hockey has failed to bridge the gap between white Canadians and Canadians of colour and served instead to exclude aboriginal Canadians and people of colour.³⁹ By the same token, authors such as Marc Lavoie,⁴⁰

Neil Longley,⁴¹ and Bob Sirois⁴² have argued that hockey historically and systematically has excluded French Canadians in various ways.

As Gilles Janson accurately pointed out, there has been a surprising lack of research conducted on sport in Québec, including only a small, but growing, body of literature relating to hockey in Québec.⁴³ A few scholarly articles about hockey were published by Québec intellectuals in the 1970s: works by Hubert Aquin and Andrée Yanacopoulo,⁴⁴ Paul Rompré and Gaétan Saint-Pierre,⁴⁵ Renald Bérubé,⁴⁶ and J.R. Plante⁴⁷ have remained almost totally unexploited by contemporary academics. It was not until the late 1980s and 1990s that Francophone scholars took up this topic in earnest. Janson,⁴⁸ Donald Guay,⁴⁹ Michel Vigneault,⁵⁰ and Jean Harvey⁵¹ all examined the formative years of Québec hockey. Though hockey was incubated and codified in Montréal, it remained in its early years mostly a preserve of the city's Anglophone community. Guay and Janson interpreted early Francophone interest in hockey, and indeed all sport, as a function of French Canadian assimilation into British Canadian culture. This argument was rejected by Harvey,⁵² as well as Jean-Pierre Augustin and Christian Poirier,⁵³ who put forth the more convincing explanation that French Canadians' engagement with sport is an example of a subordinate people's appropriation of practices from the dominant culture.

Anouk Bélanger argued that hockey is a major part of French Canadian cultural identity, and has served historically as an outlet for collective frustrations as well as a vehicle for the popular expression of a national debate.⁵⁴ Bélanger postulated that Québec cultural anxieties gave rise to a "gay panic" that understood national oppression as a failure of Québec males' virility; through hockey, Québec males venerated superstar

players such as Maurice Richard and Guy Lafleur (both of the Canadiens) as powerful metaphors for a virile national pride. Though this last argument has come under fire from Augustin and Poirier, it is the only one of which I am aware that has linked hockey, Québécois national identity, and masculinity. Augustin and Poirier, in two articles (the second credited uniquely to Poirier), argued that hockey has been linked to French Canadian nationalism since Francophones began playing in the late nineteenth century.⁵⁵ Contending that hockey is a cultural production that generates a variety of meaning and social discourses, Augustin and Poirier understood players such as Richard, Jean Béliveau, and Lafleur as emblematic of divergent French Canadian identities: Richard symbolizing neo-nationalism, Béliveau federalism, and Lafleur somewhere in between. Harvey added that hockey, especially the Canadiens, has been an important signpost in the imagining of French Canadian identities;⁵⁶ this was the same argument advanced by James Herlan.⁵⁷ However Harvey contended that the Canadiens' importance in Québec eroded between 1965 and 1990 as globalization took hold, and that Francophones in Québec increasingly have looked to politics and business for national affirmation. Harvey, like Bélanger and Augustin and Poirier, briefly mentions the rise of the Québec Nordiques; despite the multiplicity of texts treating the influence of the Canadiens in Québec, there is still no comprehensive academic analysis of that club and its social significance.

This literature review would be incomplete without mentioning two recently published edited volumes which have made a significant contribution to the body of literature concerning hockey and Québec. *La vraie dureté du mental* is a collection of philosophical works published in Université Laval's "Quand la philosophie fait pop"

series, featuring four articles broadly related to hockey and national identity in Québec: Tony Patoine explored the links between hockey and Québec and pan-Canadian identities;⁵⁸ Jean-Claude Simard discussed the similarities between hockey and political combat in Québec;⁵⁹ Julie Peronne analyzed the process of Maurice “Rocket” Richard’s heroization,⁶⁰ and Anouk Bélanger and Fannie Valois-Nadeau further considered the mythology of the Canadiens and examined whether it has been eroded by the forces of globalization and corporate capitalism.⁶¹ The second collection, entitled *La Religion du Canadien de Montréal*, was edited by Olivier Bauer, a Université de Montréal theologian, and Jean-Marc Barreau. Continuing work begun by Bernard Émond in 1973,⁶² its essays used the metaphor of sport as religion to probe the grip that the Canadiens continue to exert over Québec. The most relevant essay for this dissertation is Bauer’s own lengthy work which considered whether the Canadiens can be considered as a civil religion in the Durkheimian sense, as well as the historical relationship between the team and the Catholic Church.⁶³

Other academic works have concentrated on specific Canadiens’ players, especially Maurice “Rocket” Richard. The infamous “Richard Riot”, when Canadiens fans rioted in 1955 in response to Richard being suspended for the remainder of the NHL season, has especially fascinated scholars. Jean Dupperault,⁶⁴ David Di Felice,⁶⁵ and Suzanne Laberge and Alexandre Dumas⁶⁶ have analyzed the Riot and its implications for Québec national identity from historical and sociological perspectives; all three works uphold the Riot’s dominant neo-nationalist reading. Howard Ramos and Kevin Gosine⁶⁷ and Gina Stoiciu⁶⁸ analyzed the media coverage of Richard’s death and concluded that Richard was a unique national icon. A spate of biographies has been written about

Richard. A comprehensive academic treatment of Richard was recently concluded by Université de Montréal literature professor Benoît Melançon,⁶⁹ who previously published numerous journal articles about Richard.⁷⁰ Melançon's effort is less a biography than a cultural history, pulling together the various texts in which Richard has been represented and deconstructing the Rocket's mythology and immortalization. A similar effort was undertaken by Cheryl Bodek for her Master's thesis at Bowling Green State University.⁷¹ Both of these works rely heavily on past Richard biographies, especially Jean-Marie Pellerin's richly sourced effort, which to this day remains the gold standard of Richard biographies.⁷²

There is a cottage industry of non-academic books about the Canadiens, and to a much lesser extent the Nordiques, written by journalists, the players themselves, and others. Especially useful for this study was former Montréal goaltender Ken Dryden's erudite memoir *The Game*, which briefly reflected on the reality of playing hockey in the supercharged political atmosphere that permeated Québec in the 1970s;⁷³ Hugh Hood's biography of Jean Béliveau, which also examined the Canadiens' mystique in some detail;⁷⁴ François Black's examination of the Canadiens from 1909 to 1960, based on his Master's thesis at the Université de Montréal;⁷⁵ the 1980 history of the Canadiens edited by Claude Mouton, a club employee;⁷⁶ Krys Goyens and Allan Turowetz's *Lions in Winter*, also about the Canadiens;⁷⁷ the 1978 book about the Nordiques' time in the WHA by *Le Soleil* scribe Claude Laroche and team owner Marius Fortier;⁷⁸ Laroche's 1982 update;⁷⁹ and Benoît Clairoux's useful 2001 effort, the most complete history of the Nordiques written to date.⁸⁰ The first book specifically concerning the Canadiens/Nordiques rivalry was published in September of 2009 by Jean-François

Chabot, a Radio-Canada sports journalist.⁸¹ The book, which concentrates mostly on the games themselves but without placing them in a larger social, cultural, or political context, was of minimal use to this project, as it is littered with factual inaccuracies, tangential personal anecdotes, and superficial analysis. A second book on the Canadiens/Nordiques rivalry, written by Steve Lasorsa and based on his master's thesis, was published just before the completion of this dissertation.⁸²

The politics of Québec in the 1960s, 70s, and 80s has a rich, comprehensive, and ever expanding body of literature. A handful of works in this canon were especially useful for this dissertation. Richard Handler's ethnographical account of Québec nationalism is an analysis of both positive and negative discourses in Québec nationalist politics, and an attempt to ascertain the relationship between nationalist ideology and mass belief.⁸³ The expansive works by William Coleman and Marc Levine also provided important political context for this study. Though I reject his theorization of French Canadian culture as objective, inherently rural, and timeless, Coleman called attention to the importance of class struggle in the development of Québec neo-nationalism.⁸⁴ Levine, meanwhile, underlined the importance of language as the *idée force* of Québec nationalism, the role of French in demarcating Québec as a distinct political community, and the importance of Montréal as the province's pivotal politico-linguistic battleground.⁸⁵ Karim Larose's historiographical analysis of French unilingualism, in which he traced the theoretical and political underpinnings of the movement that sought to establish French as Québec's sole official language, was likewise invaluable.⁸⁶ Equally instrumental was Sean Mills' examination of radical politics in 1960s Montréal, which took Québécois nationalism out of the standard English-French binary and deftly

placed it in the much wider context of Empire and global radical movements in the 1960s.⁸⁷ More useful historical context about Québec neo-nationalism and language policy is provided in works by Kenneth McRoberts,⁸⁸ Susan Mann Trofimenkoff,⁸⁹ Michael Behiels,⁹⁰ and Richard Jones,⁹¹ similar analyses, but from a Québec Anglophone perspective were undertaken by Sheila McLeod Arnopoulos and Dominique Clift,⁹² Ronald Rudin,⁹³ and Garth Stevenson.⁹⁴

Surprisingly, there exist very few useful texts examining the development of the Québec newspaper media. Studies by Paul Rutherford⁹⁵ and Arthur Siegel⁹⁶ have shed valuable light on the coalescence of newspapers in the twentieth century in Canada, with some emphasis on Québec. More useful in this regard were a handful of studies specifically examining the Québec print media, specifically the Francophone print media. The most recent and comprehensive of them is Florence Le Cam's engaging history.⁹⁷ In the same vein, Pierre Godin's history of the Québec print media was an invaluable resource.⁹⁸ So were two works by Armande Saint-Jean, a former SRC broadcaster, who ably traced the historical evolution of Québec journalists' professional ethics, a politicized, activist code that diverged from the idealized observe-and-report objectivity that characterized journalistic ethics in the rest of Canada.⁹⁹ Marc Raboy also addressed journalistic ethics, as well the great changes in the French media's reporting style after 1960 and Francophone journalists' radical politics during the 1960s and 1970s.¹⁰⁰ Raboy also discussed the drastic disconnect between reporters in the newsroom and their corporate bosses in the 1970s. Kathryn-Jane Hazel's study provided a basis for understanding the relationship between journalists, the media, and nationalist politics in contemporary Québec.¹⁰¹ Doing the same in a historical context was Jean Charron's

report, originally tabled to the Canadian government's Royal Commission on Electoral Reform and Party Financing.¹⁰² There has been no complete study of Québec's English language newspaper media to date, though a few articles, written by former journalists, crucially touched on the English media's relationship with Québécois nationalism and language legislation.¹⁰³

There are very few published works about sport journalism in Québec; indeed, I gleaned many of the insights in this dissertation on that subject from my newspaper data. Two Université Laval PhD dissertations from the early 1990s proved useful: Daniel Bélanger's descriptive study of Francophone sport journalists' working conditions,¹⁰⁴ and Normand Bourgeois' more expansive analysis.¹⁰⁵ One of Bourgeois' chapters, which laid bare Québec City sport journalists' disregard of objectivity, was adapted and published in an edited book about Québec's sporting culture.¹⁰⁶

1.6 Limitations

Newspaper articles comprise a very large percentage of the data analyzed in this dissertation. I initially hoped to access the Canadiens' and Nordiques' team archives, and to find pertinent texts at the Library and Archives of Canada, the Bibliothèque et Archives nationales du Québec, the Archives de Montréal and the Archives de Québec. However, I found no pertinent documents in most fonds, and was denied access completely to the rest. According to the Canadiens' archivist, Carl Lavigne, the team's archives are closed to the public; indeed, I am not aware of any historian who has been permitted access to the Canadiens' archives. The Nordiques' archives are housed by *La Fondation Nordiques*, a Québec City-based charity. Through the intervention of a third party, I attempted to access these archives. This effort also proved unsuccessful, though

it is unclear exactly why (it is possible that the *Fondation*, which does not employ an archivist, is simply ill-equipped to host researchers). I refined my research questions and selected my method with this limitation in mind so that the absence of these materials did not impact this dissertation in any perceived way; this limitation in effect became a delimitation.

1.7 Delimitations

This study spans the years from 1979 to 1984 inclusive, beginning with the entry of the Nordiques into the NHL, and culminating with the expiry of the five year television waiver that barred the Nordiques from television (enforced according to the terms of the NHL/WHA merger agreement). Since one of my central assumptions is that the Nordiques sought to project a nationalist appeal in large part because they were unable to market themselves conventionally through television broadcasts, I necessarily delimited my analysis to the time period when television was unavailable to the club. The Canadiens' and Nordiques' histories prior to 1979 will be discussed in some detail, mostly to provide context for this study. Events that occurred after 1984, such as the teams' playoff series in 1985 and 1993, the sale and departure of the Nordiques in 1995, the current linguistic controversies in Québec professional hockey, or the possibility of a new NHL team in Québec will not be considered in this study.

This dissertation is concerned only with the meanings of the Canadiens/Nordiques rivalry within Québec, and does not consider the teams in a larger pan-Canadian context. Of course, it is impossible to avoid pan-Canadian implications completely because neo-nationalism was defined in large part by its opposition to Québec's place in the Canadian federation and had as its end goal the separation of Québec from Canada. But I was

interested mostly in considering the Canadiens and Nordiques within the unique political context that characterized 1980s Québec. To this end, newspapers published outside of Québec, for example *The Globe and Mail*, were not consulted except for contextual information.

I have also chosen not to make globalization a central theme of this project, an omission that will place this dissertation at odds with much of the literature in sport studies concerning sport and the nation. Again, it was virtually impossible to avoid all discussion about globalization: for example, some of the data I analyzed dealt with the integration of players from Czechoslovakia into the Nordiques' roster, an obvious example of the globalization of professional hockey during the 1980s. But mainstream Québec nationalist rhetoric in the 1970s and 1980s, though certainly affected by discourses of Third World decolonization, for the most part was unconcerned with developments outside Québec. The biggest perceived threat to the nation was its status as an internal colony within the Canadian federation, and the subordinate status of the French language within Québec; neo-nationalist activists concentrated on reversing these conditions first and foremost. Public debates about Americanization, which had fuelled nationalist anxieties in English Canada since the 1960s, were subordinate in mainstream neo-nationalist discourse; consternation about contemporary issues such as “coca-colonization” or “McWorld” were still a long way off.

1.8 Language, Terminology, and Orthography

This dissertation's primary language is English. However, as readers will notice, there is quite a bit of French as well. I have attempted to convey a sense of the passion aroused and the colourful language employed in the press coverage of the Canadiens and

Nordiques in the early 1980s. As much of this journalistic output utilized colourful, idiomatic phraseology that is extraordinarily difficult to translate, I decided to reproduce it in its original language of production. However, rough English translations of French language citations will be provided, either in the endnotes or in parentheses.

Writing about Québec always presents researchers with terminological and orthographical issues. Ultimately, I have used terminology and orthography that I hope will conform to both my primary and secondary source material. I have decided to employ the terms “Francophone,” “Anglophone,” and “Allophone” to describe residents of Québec whose primary languages are French, English, and something else, respectively. These descriptors have been spelled with their first letters capitalized.

Similarly, I opted to spell Montréal and Québec (both the city and the province) with an acute accent on the first ‘e’ in each word (Montréal, Québec City, province of Québec). These are both words’ official English language spellings according to the two municipalities and the province. However, I decided against changing citations from my primary and secondary texts to conform to this choice of orthography. This will be particularly noticeable in the chapter that deals with the English language media, as Montréal’s *Gazette* spells Montréal and Québec without their accents.

1.9 Chapter Overview

I elected to approach this dissertation thematically rather than as a chronological narrative. Chapters 2 and 3 both provide essential contextual information. Chapter 2 builds the socio-political context of Québec in the 1980s. Particular attention was paid to the coalescence of neo-nationalism, which I identified as an ideology of action, designed to reverse the social, political, and economic inferiority of Francophones within the

province. I also assessed how professional hockey, especially the Canadiens, interacted with these shifting political currents. Chapter 3 is an analysis of the discursive practices of Québec's French media. I argued that the French hockey media was, in large part, characterized by an activist, overtly nationalist style of reporting that rejected the conservatism and apoliticism of conventional sport journalism. I also conjectured that the Nordiques' rise to prominence was due in large part to sympathetic reporting by these militant reporters.

Chapter 4 examines the Nordiques' decision to eliminate English language announcements at their home arena, the Colisée, in 1980, as well as the Canadiens' subsequent decision to retain bilingual announcements. I demonstrated that the Nordiques' decision was identified as consistent with both the theory and the political practice of French unilingualism, the central tenet in the neo-nationalist project. Chapter 5 scrutinized the French media's fixation with the Canadiens' and Nordiques' personnel transactions, which served as a vehicle for the reproduction of neo-nationalist discourses about the politics of labour and identity. Chapter 6 considers the teams' playing style wherein I argued that playing style is a most often an essentialist nationalist discourse. In the case of the Nordiques and Canadiens, this discourse was mobilized to explain the teams' divergent styles, referencing older essentialist discourses of French Canadian identity while simultaneously making clear who could rightfully claim this identity.

Chapter 7 examines the English media's coverage of the Canadiens and Nordiques through an analysis of *The Gazette*, Montréal's lone remaining English language newspaper. *The Gazette's* coverage was drastically different from that featured in the French media, serving instead as a vehicle for vociferous anti-nationalism. Chapter

8 ponders the situations of the players caught in this maelstrom. My analysis demonstrates that rather than eschewing political comment as is typical for professional athletes, both Anglophone and Francophone players in fact made utterances affirming and legitimizing the neo-nationalist project. Yet when Francophone players were afforded the opportunity to participate actively in the nation-building process during the 1980 referendum, they chose silence. The final chapter, number 9, will bring these disparate chapters together, recapitulate them, and provide a final analysis.

1.10 Endnotes

¹ Alan Bairner, *Sport Nationalism, and Globalization: European and North American Perspectives* (Albany: State University of New York Press, 2001): 17

² Richard Gruneau and David Whitson, *Hockey Night in Canada: Sport, Identities, and Cultural Politics* (Toronto: Garamond Press, 1993): 101

³ Jean Harvey, "Whose Sweater is This?: The Changing Meanings of Hockey in Québec" in *Artificial Ice: Hockey, Culture, and Commerce*, eds. David Whitson and Richard Gruneau (Peterborough, Ont.: Broadview Press, 2006): 34.

⁴ Mahmoud Darwish, *Memory for Forgetfulness: August, Beirut*, 1982, trans. Ibrahim Muhawi (Berkeley, Calif.: University of California Press, 1995): 103.

⁵ Some sub-state nations actually do have national teams. For example, both Catalonia and the Basque Country (Euskadi) have national soccer teams separate from the Spanish national team. Catalonia and Euskadi are not, however, officially sanctioned by FIFA and play only friendly international matches. As I will demonstrate in the next chapter, there has habitually been talk of assembling a Québec national hockey team, though these efforts are unlikely to amount to anything concrete.

⁶ Richard Handler, *Nationalism and the Politics of Culture in Québec* (Madison: University of Wisconsin Press, 1988): 11

⁷ See Jeremy MacClancy, "Nationalism at Play: The Basques of Vizcaya and Athletic Bilbao," in *Sport, Identity and Ethnicity*, ed. Jeremy MacClancy (Oxford; Herndon, Va.: Berg, 1996), 181-200; Juan Carlos Castillo, "Play Fresh, Play Local: The Case of Athletic Bilbao," *Sport in Society* 10, No. 4 (2007): 680-697; for a non-soccer specific study of sub-state nationalism and sport in Catalonia, see John Hargreaves, *Freedom for Catalonia?: Catalan Nationalism, Spanish Identity, and the Barcelona Olympic Games* (Cambridge; New York: Cambridge University Press, 2000).

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- ⁸ Benedict Anderson, *Imagined Communities: Reflections on Origin and Spread of Nationalism* (London; New York: Verso, 2006).
- ⁹ Anderson: 24-26.
- ¹⁰ Michael Billig, *Banal Nationalism* (London: Sage, 1995).
- ¹¹ Billig: 8
- ¹² Craig Calhoun, *Nationalism* (Buckingham, Eng.: Open University Press, 1997): 3-4.
- ¹³ Calhoun: 4-5.
- ¹⁴ Eric Hobsbawm, "Introduction: Inventing Traditions," in *The Invention of Tradition*, eds. Eric Hobsbawm and Terence Ranger (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1992): 1-14.
- ¹⁵ Hobsbawm, Introduction: 1
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Chapter 2

2 *La mise au jeu: Politics, Social Change, and Hockey in Québec (1960-1979)*

The notion that sport and politics should not mix is an oft-spoken cliché that has long enjoyed legitimacy in the world of professional sport and in society at large. This idea has been as prevalent in Québec as in other sporting cultures in Canada, North America, and the world. Witness, for example, the controversy surrounding the recent (2010) appointment of American-born Brian Gionta as captain of the Montréal Canadiens. Questions about whether Gionta, as a high profile member of an important sporting institution based in a majority French speaking city, should learn to communicate in French were brushed brusquely aside by journalists and politicians who considered such debate to be a violation of professional sports' cherished and inherent apoliticism.¹ This attitude is perhaps surprising given the Canadiens' historical status as a symbol of Québec national identity. While the Canadiens have undoubtedly played that role, professional hockey in Québec remained largely immune to the frantic socio-political activity that transformed the province in the 1960s and 70s.

The Sixties and Seventies in Québec were bound together by two constants: neo-nationalism and a desire for socio-political change. The election of the provincial Liberal Party in 1960 heralded the rise of neo-nationalism, which emphasized the French language, the provincial state, and territorialism, culminating in a referendum contested in 1980 that placed Québec's place within the Canadian federation in serious doubt. Neo-nationalism was an ideology of action: rooted in a critical reading of Québec power relations, neo-nationalism was characterized by a desire for structural reform meant to reverse the historical social, political, and economic inferiority of Francophones within

the province. But this political maelstrom, while touching virtually every institution in the province, left professional hockey more or less unaffected despite the fact that Francophones' inferiority in professional hockey mirrored their disadvantage in Québec as a whole. The Canadiens, a team that for generations was among the most powerful vehicles for French Canadian nationalism, were almost totally ignored by nationalist reformers. I conclude this chapter by providing two exceptions to Québec professional hockey's socio-political stasis: first, the resistance that coalesced around the legendary figure of Canadiens' superstar Maurice "Rocket" Richard; and secondly, Québec City lawyer Guy Bertrand's attempts to organize a separate national team for Québec in the 1970s.

2.1 A Loud Quiet Revolution

Like many other examinations of contemporary Québec, this one begins with the so-called Quiet Revolution. As historian Jocelyn Létourneau's work shows, the Quiet Revolution, which is usually delimited by the duration of Jean Lesage's provincial government (1960-1966), is collectively remembered as the province's rapid transformation from an insular, conservative society with rural, Catholic values to a modern, secular, urban-industrial welfare state. The Quiet Revolution, therefore, has been constructed as a profound social and political rupture, a sudden passage from the dark, oppressive *grande noirceur* (Great Darkness) presided over by Maurice Duplessis (1936-1939, 1944-1959) to a dynamic society led by Lesage's *équipe de tonnerre* ("thunder team").² Also, this period usually is portrayed as having spawned a new Québécois identity, based on territory and language rather than on religion and ethnicity. However, the Quiet Revolution has undergone and continues still to undergo revisionist

treatment from scholars. For example, Michael Behiels' pioneering research has demonstrated convincingly that the intellectual seeds of the Quiet Revolution were sown long before 1960.³ Recent works by scholars such as Michael Gauvreau have questioned the understanding of the Catholic Church as a monolithically regressive, corporatist institution, and argue that elements within the Church helped usher in the Quiet Revolution through involvement in institutions such as Catholic trade unions.⁴ Historian Sean Mills, declaring that "the narrative of the Quiet Revolution needs to be challenged for what it ignores, suppresses, and pushes to the margins of historical memory," positions Québec's tumultuous 1960s not as a socio-political process unique to the province, but anchored firmly in global social movements.⁵

There are two constants in most of these differing understandings of the Quiet Revolution: reformism and nationalism, which historian Paul-André Linteau describes as the two most important ideas of the Quiet Revolution.⁶ Nationalism and a desire for socio-political change were omnipresent in Quiet Revolution-era Québec, affecting virtually every facet of the province's social, political, and economic life. They are intimately bound up in one another and cannot be disentangled. All nationalist groups in 1960s Québec, even the most conservative ones, desired some degree of change, though these groups disagreed, often bitterly, about what these changes should entail or how deep they should go. Groups from across the political spectrum came to understand Québec independence, heretofore a pet project for conservatives, as a precondition for the socio-political change they hoped to enact. By the same token, nationalists often fused linguistic subordination with class alienation, urging widespread social reform in order to reverse the cultural, social, and economic subservience of Québec Francophones.

Both the Quiet Revolution's brand of nationalism and calls for social change were rooted in a similar reading of the province's power relations. Although the Québec economy expanded rapidly in the 1950s, prosperity was far from equally shared. The province was characterized by what political scientist Michael Hechter described as a "cultural division of labour," a segmented, stratified socio-economic hierarchy in which "there is an unequal distribution of resources between core and peripheral groups."⁷ Québec Francophones, as the statistics compiled by the federally appointed Royal Commission of Bilingualism and Biculturalism (RCBB) made explicitly clear, were as a group much worse off than Anglophones.⁸ This contrast was especially striking in Montréal, Québec's demographic center for its Francophone, Anglophone, and Allophone (people speaking a first language other than English or French) populations. Although Francophones comprised 60% of Montréal's male labour force in 1961, they represented only 37% of those earning more than \$5,000 per year; this proportion only shrank as the salary level increased.⁹ Conversely, Anglophones, making up only 24% of the city's labour force, totalled 56% of Montréal's best compensated earners.

Though it was not always the case – there were in 1960 long-standing Anglophone working class districts in Montréal's western precincts, while staunchly Francophone Outremont long has been one of the wealthiest and most exclusive districts in the city – this economic disparity was embedded demonstrably in the city's geography. Francophone neighbourhoods in Montréal's southwest and east ends, plagued by chronic unemployment, were among the poorest districts in the country, while English speakers and their institutions (such as the Montréal Stock Exchange and McGill University) dominated the city's downtown, financial district, and wealthiest neighbourhoods.

Gabrielle Roy's novel *The Tin Flute* (1945) – in which the impoverished Francophone district of Saint-Henri was dominated economically, culturally, and geographically by the elite Anglophone neighbourhood Westmount, which literally cast its shadow over Saint-Henri from its perch on the slopes of Mount Royal – forcefully captured the feelings of anger and alienation spawned by these geographies of power.¹⁰

Many Québec intellectuals attributed the plight of Francophones to Duplessis' iron-fisted rule. Duplessis' critics claim that he helped maintain “a power structure that systematically discriminated against French Canadians, keeping them in inferior positions at all levels of society.”¹¹ Opening the province to investment by American capital while simultaneously cracking down on striking workers, the Duplessis government consistently and violently protected the interests of capital to the detriment of the working class.¹² As Mills astutely points out, Duplessis' Québec was a province “that shared traits with societies classified as both ‘developed’ and ‘undeveloped.’”¹³ For example, while Québec was by far the largest producer of iron ore in Canada, the province did not have a single blast furnace and over 90% was shipped out in raw form, mostly to factories in the United States.¹⁴ Other than agriculture, not a single one of Québec's important industries were controlled by the Francophone majority in 1961: Francophone capital controlled only 37.5% of transportation and communications, 36.9% of the retail industry, 36.5% of the construction industry, 28.7% of wholesale trade, 10.2% of manufacturing, and a scant 2.2% of the mining industry.¹⁵ Forging an alliance with conservative elements in the Catholic Church and utilizing the discourse of traditional French Canadian nationalism, which emphasized rural values, ethnic purity, and Catholicism, Duplessis positioned himself as the paternalistic *chef* of the nation,

defending Québec against communism, materialism, atheism, feminism, and class warfare. This claim was supported by a network of conservative nationalist intellectuals, many of whom were also priests.¹⁶

It was against this backdrop that calls for broad social, economic, and political reforms were sounded. Lesage's Liberal Party successfully campaigned during the 1960 provincial election under the slogan "C'est le temps que ça change!" (It's time for a change!). Taking its ideological cues from the dissident journal *l'Action nationale* and the nationalist, anti-Duplessis newspaper *Le Devoir*, Lesage's governance was characterized by its reformism, especially in the economic sector, and its nationalism (or, as Linteau conflates them, "reformist nationalism"). As political scientist William D. Coleman shows, the Liberals embarked on a series of economic reforms designed to integrate Québec Francophones into the North American capitalist mainstream.¹⁷ This was accomplished in large part through the intervention of the provincial government, making the rapidly expanding Québec state the primary driver of economic development in the province. The Québec government nationalized entire industries, most notably hydroelectricity, passing control of them from private English Canadian or American corporations into the hands of newly established, Francophone-controlled state firms. The Liberals displayed their potent cocktail of nationalism and reformism most famously during the 1962 provincial election campaign, which was essentially contested as a plebiscite on hydroelectric nationalization. The Liberals campaigned under the slogan *Maîtres chez nous* (masters of our own house), a phrase that has gained iconic status in Québec political discourse.

The “house” in question was increasingly understood to be Québec, not Canada. The modernizing reforms of the Quiet Revolution, more than merely creating a Francophone business elite, also gave shape to new personal and collective identities, including the strain of nationalism that Québec scholars have labelled “neo-nationalism” (in order to distinguish it from “traditional” French Canadian nationalism). While traditional French Canadian nationalism was dominated by a concern for rural *survivance* (survival), neo-nationalism celebrated the urban experience; indeed, historian Marc Levine understands neo-nationalism as a doctrine of *survivance* adapted for urban life.¹⁸ Whereas French Canadians traditionally imagined the nation on the basis of ethnicity and religion, neo-nationalism championed territory and the French language. This shifting frame of self-identification prompted a change in how Québec Francophones understood their relationship to the Canadian and Québec states: rather than the Québec branch of a pan-Canadian minority (*French Canadians*), neo-nationalists, looking to the Québec state instead of to Ottawa, imagined themselves as a territorially bounded majority (*Québécois*), with the full range of civic rights that this implied. Conservative French Canadian nationalism, with its emphasis on ethnicity and notion of “racial” essentialism, did not disappear. Still, the neo-nationalism ushered in by the Quiet Revolution, with its messages of reform, modernization, Francophone empowerment, and Québec statism, became an endemic feature of Québec political discourse, shaping the agendas of all subsequent provincial governments. Indeed, as Linteau recounts, the Union Nationale (1966-1970), Liberal (1970-1976), and Parti Québécois (1976-1985) governments that succeeded Lesage all laid claim to the legacy of the Quiet Revolution, by making frequent and calculated use of its rhetoric.¹⁹

This transition from a “French Canadian” to a “Québécois” identity has often been described, using terms well-established in political studies, as a shift from “ethnic” (*jus sanguinis* – right of blood) to “civic” nationalism (*jus soli* – right of citizenship or territory). Debates about the shape of the Québec nation have occurred and continue to occur in this ethnic-civic nationalism framework, with, broadly, the heirs of the neo-nationalist project claiming a Québécois identity based on the French language and Québécois citizenship, and their opponents arguing that “Québecness” continues to be intimately linked to ethnicity in contrast to official government policies and discourse.²⁰ However, increasing numbers of scholars, citing the complexity and messiness of the nation-building process, have argued that nationalisms and national identities cannot be neatly encapsulated into discreet “civic” and “ethnic” boxes.²¹ Instead, as sociologist Rogers Brubaker has argued, by “escaping the constricting definitional antithesis between civic and ethnic or ethnocultural nationalism, we can see that state-framed nationalisms are often imbued with a strong cultural content and may be ethnicised as well” and, by the same token, “ethnic” nationalisms may also be permeated by “civic” ideals.²² In this spirit, without challenging the neo-nationalist project’s claim to a nationalism and Québécois identity based on language and territory, this dissertation will utilize the concepts “civic nationalism” and “ethnic nationalism” as infrequently as possible.

2.2 *En français au Québec!*: Language and Social Change

The neo-nationalist gaze shifted from economic reform to language rights and legislation at the end of the 1960s and through the 1970s. As Levine notes, there was no serious, sustained political debate in Québec over language rights before 1960; but by the end of the decade, language had become *the* political issue, a lightning rod that

simultaneously provoked debates about cultural and economic power and turned Québec, in the words of Pierre Godin, into a linguistic powder keg.²³ Inevitably, the main battleground was Montréal, with its large Francophone, Anglophone, and Allophone populations. Anglophone control of the economy had ensured English's status not only as the language of power, but as the language of upward mobility. The burden of bilingualism, even in workplaces with a Francophone majority, was on Francophone workers, as the *lingua franca* of intercultural communication was almost always English. The RCBB's preliminary report in 1965 demonstrated in statistical terms what many workers had known for some time: that economic prosperity was tied to knowledge of English. Unilingual Anglophones were Québec's best compensated workers, followed by bilingual Anglophones; bilingual Francophones were paid less, and unilingual Francophones less still.²⁴

English's status as the language of upward mobility did not go unnoticed by Montréal's growing Allophone population. By the 1960s, immigrant groups such as Italians (who had historically intermarried with French Canadians at a much higher rate than most other immigrant groups), Jews, Greeks and others sent their children to English language secondary schools, and, upon graduation, to English language universities. The insularity of many Francophone school districts that, still adhering to traditional nationalist doctrines, had little desire to contaminate French Canadian culture with outsiders, as well as the inadequate state of French language postsecondary education, facilitated immigrants' decision to integrate their children into the Anglophone community.²⁵ English's economic and cultural dominance in Montréal and the propensity for Allophones to integrate into the Anglophone community prompted many

nationalists to understand French as, in the words of radical left journal *Parti pris*, a “decomposing language.”²⁶ Calls for a coherent language policy enshrining French as Québec’s public *lingua franca*, language of the workplace, and default language of schooling dated back at least to the 1950s, but intensified in 1968 after Francophones and Italians clashed in the streets of Saint-Léonard, a Montréal suburb, after a demonstration over the language of schooling.²⁷

The Québec government’s first attempt at language reform, Bill 63, was unveiled in 1969 by the Union Nationale government. The government designed the bill to ensure that students schooled in English graduated with a working knowledge of French and that immigrants had access to French language courses. Still, Bill 63 confirmed the status quo of Québec as a bilingual province and did not curb immigrant access to English language schools. As such, many nationalists perceived Bill 63 as a sellout to Anglophone power; 50,000 of them demonstrated in front of the National Assembly in Québec City in protest of the legislation.²⁸ Attempting to quell popular discontent, Premier Jean-Jacques Bertrand convened the Gendron Commission, whose mandate was to investigate language issues in Québec broadly. The findings of the commission were published in 1973. Gendron recommended that French be made the sole official language of the province, thereby abolishing over one hundred years of *de facto* bilingualism in the province and making French the common language of all Québec residents. The report also proposed that French become the “language of the shop floor,” and that immigrants be prohibited from accessing English language schooling.²⁹ The Liberal government of Robert Bourassa acted specifically on those recommendations, passing Bill 22 in 1974. Bourassa thought Bill 22 to be a compromise between “Anglophone ‘Orangemen’ and

the separatist Parti Québécois³⁰ but instead it pleased nobody. Anglophones considered it overly draconian, while Francophone nationalists felt it was full of loopholes and did not go far enough: large, multinational corporations with regional offices in Québec appeared easily able to circumvent Bill 22 and continue to operate in English, and any student who could demonstrate requisite proficiency in English could access English language education.³¹

Disquiet over Bill 22 helped condemn the Bourassa government to a crushing electoral defeat in 1976 by the sovereigntist Parti Québécois (PQ). The PQ, led by former Lesage cabinet minister René Lévesque, promised to hold a referendum on “sovereignty-association” during their mandate, and was the first Québec political party advocating a form of Québec independence to win a provincial election. In the meantime, before the 1980 referendum, they sought to close the loopholes in the existing body of language law by enacting Bill 101, which tightened linguistic restrictions on education and commerce.³² English proficiency testing was abolished outright, and access to English public schooling was limited only to those schoolchildren with a parent who had been schooled in English in Québec. Meanwhile, all businesses that employed more than fifty people were obliged to conduct their operations in French, with only a few exceptions. In this sense Bill 101, also called *La charte de la langue française* (The Charter of the French Language), was a culmination of a process begun by Bill 63: as anthropologist Richard Handler explains, what Bill 63 timidly suggested, Bill 101 forcibly legislated.³³

2.3 The Radical Left and Neo-nationalism

Though occupying a central place in mainstream neo-nationalist ideology, unilingualism and Québec independence received support from all sectors of Francophone society. As Karim Larose has demonstrated, demands for unilingualism came from across the political spectrum, from right wing nationalists such as Raymond Barbeau to parties on the left such as the Rassemblement pour l'indépendance nationale (RIN), which became increasingly radical through the 1960s.³⁴ Likewise, Québec independence had constituencies both on the right and left, but as Sean Mills argues, it was the radical left's contribution to this debate that left a lasting mark on mainstream nationalist politics. The radical left understood Québec power relations in a broader frame of reference than mainstream neo-nationalists. While neo-nationalist historians such as Guy Frégault and Michel Brunet had written about Québec in terms of a colonized society, local activists, as Mills writes, "by reading their local situation through the broader frame of empire... came to interpret the power relations that shaped their everyday lives as part of a broader pattern of global oppression."³⁵ Beginning with Raoul Roy in 1959, many on the radical left utilized the ideas of postcolonial theorists such as Albert Memmi and Frantz Fanon as a framework to understand Québec as a colonial society, where cultural and linguistic survival could not be separated from economic and political power.

The solutions proposed by radical nationalists sometimes were similar to those presented by neo-nationalists. The ideological trajectory of the RIN is case in point. Formed in 1962 as a bourgeois nationalist party advocating little other than Québec independence, it was by 1966 conceptualizing Québec as a colony that shared essential characteristics with other oppressed countries such as Congo, Malaysia, and Rhodesia.

This understanding is laid out in a book written by the party's main theoretician, André d'Allemande, entitled *Le colonialisme au Québec*.³⁶ D'Allemande's proposed solution in that book hints at the common ground between radical nationalists and neo-nationalists. The means by which Québec liberation should occur were very similar to those presented by the bourgeois nationalist PQ ten years later: liberal democracy and an interventionist Québec government operating from outside the framework of the Canadian constitution.³⁷ Others, like the urban guerrillas who called themselves the *Front de libération de Québec* (FLQ), sought to liberate Québec through violent revolution. Their kidnapping of British Trade Consul James Cross and murder of Québec cabinet minister Pierre Laporte was met by the federal government with a suspension of *habeas corpus* and the imposition of the War Measures Act; poets, singers, artists, and various left wing intellectuals were arrested with no cause in the ensuing police excess, crippling the Québec radical left for years.³⁸

From time to time, radical and neo-nationalists fought shoulder to shoulder in the same struggles. *Opération McGill*, a movement described by Mills as Québec's "first mass demonstration over 'language rights'" that was initiated by McGill University radicals to francize and democratize Montréal's most prestigious English language university, was eventually expanded to include unions, students from Montréal's Francophone universities, and various others, before finally changing its name to the much more nationalistic *McGill français*.³⁹ The *Front du Québec français* (FQF), which mobilized after the St. Léonard riots and the unveiling of Bill 63 in order to protect French language rights, was a common front organization that included radical nationalists, bourgeois nationalists like the *Société Saint-Jean Baptiste*, and elements

from within the incipient PQ.⁴⁰ In the unprecedented labour unrest that rocked Québec throughout the 1970s, radicals and neo-nationalists walked off the job together. Many of the figures intimately involved in these struggles – Robert Burns, Pierre Bourgault, Pierre Vallières, and others – later joined the Parti Québécois, with Burns serving as a cabinet minister.

My intention here is not to suggest that the relationship between radical and neo-nationalism was synergistic, but to call attention to the radical left's multifaceted impact on mainstream neo-nationalism. Mills, for one, argues that the PQ came to power in 1976 with a program inspired by its complex interactions with various radical left wing movements in the 1970s.⁴¹ And while the push for socialist decolonization never enjoyed much support outside radical circles, its discourse has been used repeatedly and effectively by neo-nationalists in the political mainstream. References to Francophones as colonized people were common through the 1970s and 1980s. Leftist intellectuals applying Fanon's ideas as well as Aimé Césaire's notion of *négritude* (which roughly means "blackness") to Québec, most obviously in Pierre Vallières 1968 polemic *Nègres Blancs d'Amérique* (White Niggers of America), gave rise to a discourse of racial victimization that neo-nationalists appropriated in order to position Québec Francophones as being among the wretched of the earth. As Mills writes, "during the Sixties, Montréal was awash in a sea of racial metaphors: Francophone Quebeckers were the 'nègres blancs,' the 'indigenes' (indigenous people), their leaders the "roi nègres (nigger kings);"⁴² these metaphors thrived in spite of the existence of Montréal's Black community, which itself sounded calls for decolonization, and Québec's Indigenous

peoples, whose histories of colonization and claims to sovereignty clashed directly with Francophone nationalists.⁴³

In the same vein, the title of Michèle Lalonde's iconic anti-colonial protest poem, *Speak White*, became a sort of nationalist call-to-arms summarizing English linguistic, cultural, and economic imperialism.⁴⁴ Neo-nationalists such as Jacques Parizeau, the PQ leader during the second sovereignty-association referendum in 1995, have claimed that hearing the epithet directed at them was a formative event on their path to sovereignty.⁴⁵ René Lévesque also famously depicted the English speaking elite in colonial terms, as "Westmount Rhodesians."⁴⁶ These kinds of anti-imperialist references are, according to Craig Calhoun, *implicit* in the rhetoric of Québécois nationalism, inhibiting other ways of speaking or acting, and laying a claim to Québec's legitimacy as a potentially autonomous state.⁴⁷

2.4 *Les Canadiens sont là*: The Rise of the Habs

Few institutions were unaffected by the maelstrom of political activity that changed Québec in the 1960s and 1970s. One that went mostly ignored by nationalists and reformers alike was hockey, Québec's national sport. That no serious effort at socio-political change was extended to hockey is somewhat surprising because hockey reflected the same power relations that reformist nationalists identified and sought to reverse starting in the 1960s. Hockey was brought to Québec in 1870 by an Anglophone, Halifax native Fred Creighton, and was dominated at the end of the 19th century by private Anglophone clubs, especially the Montreal Amateur Athletic Association.⁴⁸ Hockey and, indeed, sport in general, was, as Gilles Janson describes, "an English reality": until the establishment of the multisport association *Le National* in 1894, Francophones who

desired to play hockey had to do so entirely in English, a state of affairs ensured by Anglophone socio-economic dominance.⁴⁹ This situation changed little as the game rapidly professionalized in the first two decades of the twentieth century; for example, Québec City's foremost early professional club, the Bulldogs, never once fielded a Francophone player in its forty-two year existence.⁵⁰

Even the foundation of the Montréal Canadiens (the team's official name to this day remains *Le Club de hockey Canadien*) in 1909, destined to become Québec's preeminent professional hockey club and among its most important social institutions, bears the trace of Anglophone social, cultural, and economic domination. The club was founded not by a Francophone, but by an Ontario mining magnate named J. Ambrose O'Brien. O'Brien, organizing a professional league called the National Hockey Association (NHA), sought to capitalize on ethno-linguistic rivalry in Montréal by founding a Francophone team to compete with the established Montreal Wanderers, who at that time were the most popular Anglophone professional club in the city (Canadiens-Wanderers matches were indeed extraordinarily well attended and very lucrative for O'Brien and the NHA).⁵¹

The name of the club – *Canadien* – was a direct appeal to French Canadian patriotism; in 1909, *Canadien* was a term used by Francophones to refer to themselves (Anglophones were qualified as *Canadiens anglais*). The club's foundation was therefore an English Canadian commercial venture that sought to sell a cocktail of professional hockey and national pride to French Canadians. Rather than benefitting Montréal's Francophones, the Canadiens' foundation almost certainly did initial harm to the state of Francophone hockey in Québec. Seeking to field a roster composed mostly of

French Canadians, the incipient club raided the rosters of smaller professional and amateur sides. This asset stripping led almost directly to the disappearance of all other Francophone amateur and professional hockey clubs in Montréal.⁵²

Despite this inauspicious debut, the Canadiens became wildly popular in Montréal by the 1920s, and, aided by television broadcasts of their games, in the province as a whole by the 1950s.⁵³ This was due in some measure to attrition – after the demise of the Montréal Maroons in 1938, the Canadiens were the only elite professional team remaining in Québec and received support from both Anglophone and Francophone hockey fans – as well as the team’s runaway success (the Canadiens, to this day, are by far the most successful club in NHL history, with 24 Stanley Cup victories).⁵⁴ But the most powerful reason for the Canadiens’ popularity is that the team carved out a special role for itself, in the words of sport sociologist Jean Harvey, “as a club that both collectively and in the persons of their individual French-Canadian heroes served as representatives or *porte-étendards* (standard bearers) of the aspirations of the French-Canadian people.”⁵⁵ The Canadiens’ games with the Toronto Maple Leafs acquired the symbolism of wider English-French rivalry; the team’s victories were read, as one writer put it, as “nothing less than a vindication of the race,”⁵⁶ and an antidote to the “perpetual loser” complex that some authors have claimed is endemic to Québécois masculinity.⁵⁷ In this sense, Canadiens’ games became a powerful tradition, a mechanism that brought large numbers of people together and an important medium, at least through the 1950s, through which French Canadians imagined themselves as a nation.

The team’s national(ist) importance is apparent in the plethora of nicknames that the team acquired by the 1950s, all of which are evocative of the rural, ethnic, religious

French Canadian nationalism that predominated before the Quiet Revolution. The Canadiens were the “Flying Frenchmen,” a sobriquet given to them by a New York sportswriter in the 1920s that linked the team’s ethnicity and supposed playing style; *les habitants*, a reference to the pre-industrial French speaking peasantry that had colonized the land; and *la Sainte-Flanelle*, literally the sacred flannel or the sacred uniform, which hints at the religious-like devotion that the club received from its supporters.

Interestingly, a theologian from the Université de Montréal, Olivier Bauer, has extended these ecclesiastic metaphors and in fact argued that the Canadiens constitute an institutionalized, popular, implicit, and civil Québécois religion.⁵⁸

The team’s nationalist appeal was bolstered by its virtual monopoly on Francophone players, thanks to a series of regulations, some which dated back to the early days of the NHA. The Canadiens were given the right of first refusal on all French Canadian players; later, the NHL ruled that no team was permitted to sponsor junior or minor pro teams within fifty miles of Montréal. Players who were initially “refused” by the Canadiens often ended up with the team anyway, as unilingual Francophones who came of the age in the 1950s and 1960s often preferred to play senior hockey in Québec rather than chance a career in a unilingual English organization like Toronto or Boston.⁵⁹ Though the institution of a universal entry draft in 1971 removed the Canadiens’ advantages in securing Francophone talent, the team by then had stockpiled enough Québécois players to ensure a definite French character through the end of the decade. The team’s superstar players – Aurèle Joliat in the 1920s, Maurice “Rocket” Richard in the 1950s, Jean Béliveau in the 1960s, Guy Lafleur in the 1970s – became powerful metaphors confirming national identity although, as Augustin and Poirier crucially

remind us, the identities read through these players were often very different and sometimes contradictory.⁶⁰

2.5 *Nègres blancs du hockey?*: The Francophone Experience in Elite Professional Hockey

The Canadiens' role as a nurturer of Francophone talent was symbolically even more important because of the struggles faced by Francophones elsewhere in the world of hockey. Both academic and non-academic authors have argued, using a variety of methodologies, that Francophones players have been discriminated against systematically in the upper echelons of elite professional hockey.⁶¹ David Marple, an American sociologist, comparing the experience of Francophones in elite hockey to African Americans in professional basketball, argued as early as 1975 that Francophone hockey players clearly had to outperform their Anglophone counterparts in order to find employment in the NHL or the minor pro American Hockey League (AHL), leagues whose managerial positions were filled almost exclusively by English-speaking Canadians. An Anglophone player, in other words, was always chosen over a Francophone of equal talent.⁶² Québécois researchers Roger Boileau and Rock Bélanger advanced similar arguments in 1982.⁶³

Economist Marc Lavoie, utilizing a range of statistical analyses as well as economic theories of discrimination, corroborated and extended these claims in a series of works. Arguing that Francophones had outperformed Anglophones in the NHL and were overrepresented at certain positions, Lavoie and his collaborators hypothesized that players whose contributions were not easily quantifiable, such as defencemen or low-scoring forwards, were ignored by a discriminatory scouting structure.⁶⁴ These barriers

ensured that only the best Francophone players – elite goal scorers or all-star goaltenders – were guaranteed the opportunity to ply their trade in the National Hockey League. Another economist, Neil Longley, has suggested that this discrimination has been especially severe on teams based in English-speaking Canada.⁶⁵ Lavoie, in a paper which was corroborated by research conducted by Bob Sirois (himself a former NHL player with the Washington Capitals), has also applied these hypotheses and analyses to the NHL Entry Draft.⁶⁶ The findings of these researchers have been questioned by some scholars who, while acknowledging that Francophones have been underrepresented in the National Hockey League, have rejected outright discrimination as an explanation for this phenomenon. Michel Boucher has argued that NHL teams prefer to sign Anglophone players because of the costs associated with integrating unilingual Francophone players into uniformly English-speaking environments; this hypothesis was also advanced more recently by Michael Krashinsky.⁶⁷ William D. Walsh, meanwhile, argues that Francophone underrepresentation is a function of Québec-born players practicing a different style of play than that valued by most NHL teams.⁶⁸ Walsh's hypothesis will be discussed in greater detail later in Chapter 6.

While this academic debate is interesting, the recollections of Francophone NHL players themselves stand as more powerful testimony about the discrimination and anti-Francophone prejudice that existed in elite hockey. While many Francophone players enjoyed prejudice-free careers in various North American hockey outposts, others have bitterly commented on the discrimination they encountered and suffered through in elite hockey. Some NHL clubs, for example, prohibited the use of the French language. Goaltender Michel Larocque, traded to Toronto after a decade in Montréal, revealed that

his new teammates enforced an English-only policy in the dressing room;⁶⁹ meanwhile, defenceman Jean Hamel recalled that speaking French was subject to a fine during his tenure in St. Louis from 1972-74.⁷⁰ At the same time, the use of anti-Francophone ethnic slurs such as “frog,” “pea soup,” and “Pepsi” was an endemic part of the culture of professional hockey. The ethnic abuse hurled at Maurice “Rocket” Richard during his 1950s heyday became part of his legend. This phenomenon continued well into the 1980s: for example, following a November 1981 game between Montréal and St. Louis, Canadiens’ beat writers found the message “Fuck the Frogs” written on the chalkboard in the St. Louis locker room.⁷¹ Some English Canadian players and managers, making liberal use of these slurs, publicly announced their antipathy toward Francophones.⁷² These slurs have even been employed in some teams’ official media releases: an official game program sold by the Edmonton Oilers before a December 1979 game with Montréal used the epithets “frog” and “pea soup” in reference to Francophones.⁷³ These epithets have also been used by fans, most famously in a public telegram sent by an Alberta hockey fan to the Detroit Red Wings thanking the team for “keeping those french Canadians bastards (sic) (a reference to the Canadiens) out of the playoffs,” before celebrating that “we won’t have to hear those french names on the telecast for a change this year.”⁷⁴

This discrimination was the product of a Canadian hockey structure controlled by English Canadians managers and, in the professional ranks, English Canadian and American capital. The Canadian national team system inaugurated by Father David Bauer (1961-1970) mostly failed to incorporate Francophone coaches or managers. The 1976 and 1981 Canada Cup teams did not employ any Francophone administrators, and

struggled to find staff that could adequately communicate with the French media and translate documents such as official programs into French.⁷⁵ This state of affairs prompted some Francophones to grumble publicly about their experiences in the national team, and others to refuse to play for it outright: junior star Mario Lemieux, for example, citing institutional prejudice, took legal action to avoid having to play for Canada's national junior team in 1984.⁷⁶

Managerial opportunities in the NHL for Francophones were just as scarce, a situation that held as true in Montréal as anywhere else in the league. While the Canadiens fielded many prominent Francophone players through the 1970s, the team's owners and management were usually Anglophone. In Francophone hands since 1921, the team was purchased in 1957 by two brothers from the Molson family, very much a bedrock family of the Québec Anglophone elite; in 1971, the club passed to a consortium controlled by the Bronfman family before being sold to Molson Breweries in 1978. From 1940 through to 1979, the club's general managers – Tommy Gorman, Frank Selke, Sam Pollock, and Irving Grundman – were always Anglophones. Excluding a two year stint by Claude Ruel (1968-1970), the same was true of the team's head coaches. Other than interpersonal discussions between Francophone players, the language of communication at the club was English. As Anouk Bélanger points out, the Canadiens were in this respect no different than many other similarly sized Québec enterprises of the day: Francophone workers labouring for Anglophone bosses, producing profits for Anglo-Canadian capital.⁷⁷

2.6 Professional Hockey: The Opiate of the People?

Why, given its structural similarities to other sectors of Québec society, did nationalist reformers ignore hockey? Journalist, author, and political activist Hubert Aquin and sociologist Andrée Yanacopoulo, in one of the first Québec academic texts devoted to the sociocultural study of sport, argued in 1972 there existed “an antagonism” between who defined themselves as intellectuals and “les sportifs.”⁷⁸ This analysis was prescient, as few Québec intellectuals conducted serious academic analysis on hockey, or sport in general, through the 1970s. Those who did reproduced a common trope of the left in the 1960s and 1970s: sport was nothing but an opiate of the masses, an inherently regressive social institution. Paul Rompré, Gaétan St-Pierre, and Marcel Chouinard, using Québec examples, concluded that sport is a branch of the dominant capitalist ideology that promotes an ahistorical, depoliticized view of the world, and serves to obfuscate the conflicts and contradictions inherent in its production.⁷⁹ Bernard Émond, an anthropologist exploring the religious dimensions of sport, arrived at similar conclusions.⁸⁰ J.R. Plante understood sport as a social tool employed to create a false sense of interclass solidarity, thereby allowing the bourgeoisie to easily dominate the working class.⁸¹ Sport, in their final analyses, was by its very structure and nature conservative, and as such was unsuitable as a catalyst for meaningful resistance or social change. The actions, or lack thereof, of Québécois players themselves reinforced these interpretations. There was nobody remotely resembling a Québécois Jackie Robinson or Bill Russell or Bill Walton in the 1970s; instead Québécois hockey players, particularly those associated with the Canadiens, tended to declare themselves to be apolitical.⁸² The political information that leaked out about some players usually aligned them firmly with the status quo. For example, Canadiens’ legend Jean Béliveau, described by Christian

Poirier as “a federalist hero,” was outspokenly devoted to a united Canada and was often associated with the anti-nationalist federal Liberal Party;⁸³ a few years later, in the wake of the 1976 election, some members of the Canadiens spoke out against the newly elected PQ and in favour of the constitutional status quo.⁸⁴ Players with contrasting opinions kept them private.

While successive Québec governments, starting with the PQ in the late 1970s, designated sport as a tool in the construction of a nationalism and national identity based on citizenship rather than ethnicity,⁸⁵ I was only able to locate two examples of professional hockey serving as a vehicle for nationalist reformers. One is the career of the legendary Maurice “Rocket” Richard, unquestionably the most important player in the Canadiens’ history, who his primary biographer Jean-Marie Pellerin described as “the idol of a people.”⁸⁶ It was in large part due to Richard’s stature that the Canadiens finally secured a place in Québec’s national consciousness. The span of his career (1942-1960) coincided with the most successful era in the team’s history to that point: he retired with eight Stanley Cup Championships, at the time more than any player in NHL history. In 1945, he set an NHL record, unequalled until 1981, by scoring fifty goals in fifty games. He retired in 1960 as the NHL’s all-time leading goal and point scorer. His lightning-quick, physical, determined bursts up the ice were represented by some as symbolic of the aspirations of the nation. Reminisced French Canadian author Roch Carrier:

With muscles strained as taut as bowstrings, Maurice Richard lays claim to the territory of hockey. He occupies it with authority. And through this ritual, French-Canadians are regaining confidence in themselves, in their future. Each of them feels a little less defeated, a little less humiliated, a little more strong.⁸⁷

By the end of his career, Richard had transcended sport and ascended to mythical folk hero status in Québec. According to Québec literature scholar Carlo Lavoie, Québec

writers placed Richard in a pantheon of heroes composed not of other hockey players, but of larger-than-life figures such as the *courreur de bois* Étienne Brûlé, Ernest Hemingway, Louis Riel, Vincent Van Gogh, and Davy Crockett.⁸⁸ Roch Carrier's classic short story *The Hockey Sweater* brilliantly depicted Richard's almost saint-like status in Québec; all the boys in Carrier's village wore the same uniform number as Richard, taped their sticks the same way, and styled their hair exactly the same way as well.⁸⁹ Artists, such as Jean-Paul Riopelle, used the Rocket as inspiration for pieces of art.⁹⁰ Celebrated nationalist *chansonniers* (singer-songwriters) like Félix Leclerc, and a host of others, wrote and performed songs in his honour.⁹¹ Upon his death in 2000, one editorial referred to him as "bigger than the Pope."⁹² Befitting someone of this stature, Richard was afforded a state funeral, the occasion lived by Francophones, according to media scholar Gina Stoiciu, as "the departure of a model citizen, of a real Québécois, of a friend, of a family member and of a big brother."⁹³ Kevin Ramos and Howard Gosine described the newspaper coverage of Richard's funeral as one that "imbued him with the status as a socio-political symbol and hero for French Quebecers."⁹⁴

At the heart of the myth of the Rocket is a reading of Richard as a neo-nationalist icon. As literary critic Benoît Melançon has pointed out, this is too simple a depiction, one largely constructed by neo-nationalist mythmakers, that fails to capture the Rocket's complexity and contradictions.⁹⁵ For example, this construction takes little heed of Richard's actual political views: though he always refused to speak publicly about his political preferences, the best available evidence suggests that Richard was a supporter of Maurice Duplessis, neo-nationalists' chief antagonist before 1960, and may even have contributed money to Duplessis' re-election campaigns in 1952 and 1956.⁹⁶ But at the

same time, the Rocket was also an outspoken critic of the systemic injustices perpetrated against French Canadian in elite professional hockey. His violent reactions to the ethnic slurs that were frequently levelled against him and his teammates have now become legend. “Quand on crache sur ma race,” Richard was once quoted as saying, “le sang me monte à la tête” (When they spit on my race, blood rushes to my head).⁹⁷

In 1954, following the suspension of his teammate Bernard “Boom-Boom” Geoffrion for violent conduct, Richard described the referee who initially penalized Geoffrion in his regular newspaper column as a “mange-Canayen” (literally, one who eats French Canadians), a term used to denote hostility to French Canadians. In the same column, Richard accused NHL president Clarence Campbell of showing bias against Geoffrion and French Canadians in general, and for visibly cheering against the Canadiens when he attended games at the Forum. Richard ended the column with a clear call for action: “il faut un changement quelque part! (Something must change!)”⁹⁸ Richard retracted these comments under threat of disciplinary action, and gave up his newspaper column entirely, but not before writing that he was being denied his freedom of speech forcibly.⁹⁹ This incident has played an important role in the construction of Richard as a neo-nationalist icon: it casts him as a proud French Canadian, challenging the dominance of Anglo-Canadian power, and calling for change in the hockey industry before being silenced under threat of losing his livelihood. After retiring from professional hockey, Richard continued to protest against anti-Francophone discrimination in various forums well into the 1980s, especially through his columns in the Montréal newspapers *Dimanche-Matin* and *La Presse*.¹⁰⁰

The most politically symbolic episode of Richard's career is undoubtedly the Richard Riot, arguably the subject of more written works, songs, newspaper articles, and academic analyses than any other single event in Canadian sports history.¹⁰¹ The raw facts of the incident are as follows: the NHL suspended Richard for the balance of the year and the entirety of the NHL playoffs after a clash with a Boston Bruins player and a match official, putting the Canadiens' chances of winning the Stanley Cup in jeopardy; Francophones reacted angrily, with some journalists arguing that Richard's suspension was an attack on the nation; despite warnings from the Montréal police, NHL president Clarence Campbell decided to attend the next game at the Forum; fans attacked Campbell at the game; a tear gas canister was thrown, prompting authorities to call the game off; a mob then rioted and looted in downtown Montréal, prompting police to read the Riot Act; the violence only ceased once Richard himself appealed for calm over the radio. The most widely held interpretation of the Riot, according to Melançon, "predicates a good French Canadian (Maurice Richard) whose rights were trampled by a nasty English Canadian (Clarence Campbell). His compatriots took to the streets to defend him. The riot was French Canadian in character. It was a precursor of the liberation movement of the 1960s, most probably unbeknownst to its principal protagonist."¹⁰² Sport sociologists Suzanne Laberge and Alexandre Dumas uphold this view, calling the Riot "a catalyst of the movement for national affirmation."¹⁰³

Prominent neo-nationalists understood *l'affaire Richard* through this lens as it was occurring. Most famously, *Le Devoir* editor André Laurendeau, one of the intellectual fathers of neo-nationalism, penned a fiery editorial after the Riot rich with nationalist imagery and indignation. Entitled "On a tué mon frère Richard" ("they have

killed my brother Richard”), a direct reference to a famous speech given by Québec premier Honoré Mercier after the assassination of French-speaking Métis leader Louis Riel in 1885, Laurendeau opened with the observation that “it appears that French Canadian nationalism has found refuge in hockey.”¹⁰⁴ Laurendau linked the Riot with Anglo-Canadian domination and Francophone subordination. French Canadians, continued Laurendeau, “are suddenly tired of always having bosses, of always bowing in the face of authority.” Intimating that change would soon come (“Campbell va voir” – Campbell will see), Laurendeau finished by positioning the Riot as having exposed “what lies underneath the apparent indifference and the long passivity of French Canadians.” While Laurendeau’s editorial clearly and unequivocally identified hockey as a vehicle for the articulation of French Canadian nationalism, it also positioned the sport as a tool of Francophone resistance, and a potential catalyst for social change in Québec. In this sense, the Riot can be read as frustrated Quebeckers using the symbol of Richard to communicate forcefully their opposition to Anglo-Canadian social domination. Therefore, hockey, explains David Di Felice, “rather than functioning as a working-class opiate... provided the opportunity for working class Francophones to express their consciousness through recourse to riotous attack, fuelled by the oppressions of ‘race’ and ‘nation.’”¹⁰⁵ In other words, the Richard Riot demonstrated that hockey could be employed as a tool of resistance for Québec Francophones, as well as a catalyst for social change.

The second example of hockey being employed as an agent of nationalist reform is the one-man crusade led by Québec City lawyer and political activist Guy Bertrand. A disciple of the militant nationalist Marcel Chaput, Bertrand was one of the founding

members of the Parti Québécois in 1968.¹⁰⁶ After unsuccessfully standing for election as a PQ candidate in 1970, Bertrand turned his attention to his law practice, often taking on politically significant files. One such case was that involving *l'Association des Gens de l'Air du Québec* (AGAQ, often known colloquially as “les Gens de l’air”), a union composed of Québécois pilots and air traffic controllers, who in the mid-to-late 1970s challenged the validity of the Air Navigation Order (ANO). The ANO temporarily legislated English-only air traffic communication in Canadian airspace, even if both parties spoke French as a first language. The ANO was itself largely a federal government reaction to strikes by Anglophone pilots and air traffic controllers in 1976, protesting *de facto* bilingualism in Québec airspace.¹⁰⁷ The ANO, according to Sandford Borins, called into question “a right for which [Francophones] had long been struggling, and one that had appeared to be on the verge of recognition, namely, their right to speak French to each other, particularly at work, in Québec.”¹⁰⁸ The situation of the *Gens de l'air*, who distributed buttons reading “il y a du français dans l’air!” (“There is French in the air”), became a *cause célèbre* for nationalists, underscoring English’s continuing status as the province’s language of power. It is in this context that Bertrand litigated on their behalf in 1976-77.

Bertrand, who played basketball and hockey during his student days at McGill and Sherbrooke Universities, understood hockey the same way as he did the *Gens de l'air*. It was clear to Bertrand that Francophones suffered from discrimination in professional hockey. Touching on the findings of David Marple and employing racialized neo-nationalist discourse, Bertrand argued that Francophones in hockey shared a common plight with African American athletes in the United States:

A talent égal, on prend le joueur de language anglaise à tel point que la situation ressemble de plus en plus à ce qui se passe aux Etats-Unis ou dans les disciplines comme le baseball, le football, le ballon-panier, on préférera le joueur Blanc à celui de couleur à moins que ce dernier soit une super-vedette.¹⁰⁹

This was the case not just in the NHL, but also at the international level, where Bertrand argued that Francophone players and coaches were unfairly ignored on Canadian “national” teams.

Bertrand rejected the oft-uttered maxim that sport and politics were separate worlds that should not mix; to Bertrand that amounted to hypocrisy and exposed those who uttered the maxim as supporters of the status quo.¹¹⁰ Bertrand always insisted that hockey had a role to play in achieving Québec’s emancipation, but this change could only occur when Francophone sports figures themselves understood and revolted against their colonized existence: “tous les peuples colonisés sont complexés... ce qui est anormal, c’est de ne rien faire pour en sortir.”¹¹¹ Bertrand believed that hockey players, given their stature in Québec, did not have the option of detaching themselves from politics and encouraged several players for whom he served as council to be politically active. Two of these players, Michel Goulet and Pierre Lacroix, as I will discuss later, refused to play in the 1979-80 season until they had been permitted to sign French language contracts.

But Bertrand’s best known hockey endeavour was his effort to organize a Québec national ice hockey team that would regularly compete in international competitions, a quest which in fact continues to this day.¹¹² Équipe-Québec, as Bertrand’s initiative came to be called, was first announced during the Canada Cup in 1976 and resuscitated in advance of that same competition in 1981. Pointing both to Francophone subordination in Canadian hockey structures and the existence of “national” teams for stateless nations such as Scotland, Wales, and Northern Ireland, Bertrand argued that Équipe-Québec was

both a legitimate and realizable aspiration.¹¹³ Assailed by the Canadian hockey structure, ignored by the Québec government, and snubbed by most Francophone players, the *Équipe-Québec* initiative never achieved critical mass. However, Bertrand succeeded in organizing Québec City hockey fans in a boycott of the Canada Cup in 1981, at least partially in response to the absence of Francophone players on the Canadian team.¹¹⁴

2.7 Summary

Richard and Bertrand's activism demonstrate that professional hockey, nationalism, and a desire for social change have at times coexisted and interacted in Québec politics. But despite the powerful social and political symbolism associated with hockey, especially the *Montréal Canadiens*, sport remained for the most part untouched by the socio-political upheaval that shook Québec in the 1960s and 1970s. That upheaval, which symbolically began with the election of the Liberal Party in 1960, was simultaneously rooted in Québec's unique history and was a rupture within it; it was an insular local phenomenon that was simultaneously linked to social and political developments abroad. The tumult of the Sixties and Seventies crucially served as a backdrop for the rise of a new framework of national identity, which foregrounded the French language, the Québec state, and the province's territorial boundaries. Neo-nationalism, as it came to be called, inspired by its complex interactions with Québec's vibrant radical left, developed into an ideology concerned with social change, namely with reversing the social, political, and economic inferiority of Québec's Francophone population, to the exclusion of other subjugated groups, such as Québec's Indigenous peoples. Neo-nationalism, whose apotheosis was the 1980 referendum on sovereignty-association, dominated Québec politics throughout the 1970s until the present day. Very

few Québécois institutions emerged from the Sixties and Seventies unchanged. Professional sport was a notable exception, but this most conservative of institutions was eventually targeted by reformers beginning in 1979: activist Francophone sport journalists, who agitated for the reforms of the 1960s and 1970s to be applied in the National Hockey League. Their role in this movement is considered in the next chapter.

2.8 Endnotes

¹ See Sean Gordon, “Zut Alors! A U.S. Captain? Politicians Drop Gloves Over Habs’ French Content,” *The Globe and Mail*, 17 September 2010: A1. An official representing Canadian Prime Minister Stephen Harper said that “no political party should play wedge politics with the Montreal Canadiens.” A Liberal Party politician “burst out laughing” when told of comments questioning the Canadiens’ Francophone quotient.

² Jocelyn Létourneau, “L’Imaginaire historique des jeunes Québécois,” *Revue d’histoire de l’Amérique française* 41, No. 4 (1988): 553-574. Létourneau analyzes this through a questionnaire submitted to students who were too young to have first-hand experiences of either the Duplessis regime or the Quiet Revolution.

³ Michael D. Behiels, *Prelude to Quebec’s Quiet Revolution: Liberalism Versus Neo-nationalism, 1945-1960* (Kingston, Ont.: McGill-Queen’s University Press, 1985).

⁴ Michael Gauvreau, *The Catholic Origins of Quebec’s Quiet Revolution, 1931-1970* (Montreal; Kingston, Ont.: McGill-Queen’s University Press, 2005).

⁵ Sean Mills, *The Empire Within: Postcolonial Thought and Political Activism in Sixties Montreal* (Montréal: McGill-Queen’s University Press, 2010): 19-20.

⁶ Paul-André Linteau, et al., *Histoire du Québec contemporain* (Montreal: Boréal Express, 1986), 2:393.

⁷ Michael Hechter, *Internal Colonialism: The Celtic Fringe in British National Development* (London: Routledge & Keegan Paul, 1975): 37.

⁸ The RCBB found that Francophones were worse off than all groups except for two: Italians and Indigenous peoples. Men were also found to be much better off than women.

⁹ Marc V. Levine, *The Reconquest of Montreal: Language Policy and Social Change in a Bilingual City* (Philadelphia: Temple University Press, 1990): 23-25.

¹⁰ Gabrielle Roy, *The Tin Flute*, trans. Alan Brown (Toronto: McClelland & Stewart, 1980).

¹¹ Mills: 23.

¹² Susan Mann Trofimenkoff, *The Dream of Nation: A Social and Intellectual History of Quebec* (Toronto: Macmillan of Canada, 1982): 272.

¹³ Mills: 26.

¹⁴ William D. Coleman, *The Independence Movement in Quebec 1945-1980* (Toronto: University of Toronto Press, 1984): 96.

¹⁵ Coleman: 39.

¹⁶ Xavier Gélinas, *La droite intellectuelle québécoise et la Révolution tranquille* (Québec: Les Presses de l'Université Laval, 2007): 85-144.

¹⁷ Coleman: 91-129.

¹⁸ Levine: 33-39.

¹⁹ Linteau et al.: 395.

²⁰ For the contours of this debate, please see: Raymond Breton, "From Ethnic to Civic Nationalism: English Canada and Quebec," *Ethnic and Racial Studies* 11, No. 1 (1986): 85-102; Charles Taylor, *Rapprocher les solitudes* (Ste-Foy, QC: Les Presses de l'Université Laval, 1994); Gilles Bourque and Jules Duchastel, *L'identité fragmentée* (Saint-Laurent, QC: Fides, 1996); Joseph Carens, *Culture, Citizenship and Community* (Oxford: Oxford Community Press, 2000); Will Kymlicka, *Politics in the Vernacular: Nationalism, Multiculturalism and Citizenship* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2001); Alain-G. Gagnon and Raffaele Iacovino, *Federalism, Citizenship, and Quebec: Debating Multinationalism* (Toronto: University of Toronto Press: 2007).

²¹ Jeffrey Friedman, "Nationalisms in Theory and Reality," *Critical Review* 10, No. 2 (1996): 155-167; Bernard Yack, "The Myth of the Civic Nation," *Critical Review* 10, No. 2 (1996): 193-211; Nicholas Xenos, "Civic Nationalism: An Oxymoron," *Critical Review* 10, No. 2 (1996): 213-231

²² Rogers Brubaker, "Myths and Misconceptions in the Study of Nationalism," in *The State of the Nation: Ernest Gellner and the Theory of Nationalism*, ed. John A. Hall (Cambridge; New York: Cambridge University Press, 1998): 301.

²³ This became the name of one of Godin's books: Pierre Godin, *La poudrière linguistique* (Montréal: Boréal, 1990).

²⁴ Levine: 23-25.

²⁵ In 1969, Montréal Francophones were served by only one university (the Université de Montréal) while Anglophones were served by three (McGill University, Sir George Williams University, and Loyola University). Province wide, Francophones made up 83% of the population, but French was the language of instruction at only three of Québec's six universities. Meanwhile, Anglophones made up only 17% of the population, but occupied 42% of the seats at Québec universities.

²⁶ Mills: 140.

²⁷ Godin, 1990: 65-88. The violence ended only after the police read the Riot Act. It was the first time the Act had been read in Montréal since 1957.

²⁸ Kenneth McRoberts, *Misconceiving Canada: The Struggle for National Unity* (Toronto: Oxford University Press, 1997): 99.

²⁹ Edward McWhinney, *Quebec and the Constitution* (Toronto: University of Toronto Press, 1978): 59-61.

³⁰ Levine: 104.

³¹ Richard Jones, "Politics and the Reinforcement of the French Language in the Province of Quebec, 1960-1986," in *Quebec Since 1945: Selected Readings*, ed. Michael D. Behiels (Toronto: Copp Clark Pitman, 1987), 230-231. Indeed, the percentage of Allophone children attending English schools actually increased by 6.4% under Bill 22.

³² Kenneth McRoberts, *Quebec: Social Change and Political Crisis*, 3rd ed. (Toronto: McClelland & Stewart, 1993): 275-282.

³³ Richard Handler, *Nationalism and the Politics of Culture in Quebec* (Madison, Wis.: University of Wisconsin Press, 1988): 170.

³⁴ Karim Larose, *La langue de papier: Spéculations linguistiques au Québec* (Montreal: Presses de l'Université de Montréal, 2004).

³⁵ Mills: 7.

³⁶ André D'Allemagne, *Le colonialisme au Québec* (Montréal: Éditions RB, 1966): 13.

³⁷ Of course, the ends are very different: the RIN proposed a socialist government while most neo-nationalists never seriously considered taking Québec out of the North American capitalist mainstream.

³⁸ McRoberts, 1993: 200-201.

³⁹ Mills: 138.

⁴⁰ Godin, 1990, 155-184.

⁴¹ Mills: 216.

⁴² Mills: 75.

⁴³ For an examination of Montréal's vibrant Black Power movement, see Mills: 95-118. The tension between Québec's Indigenous peoples, who had themselves been subordinated by French colonists, and the neo-nationalist project exploded in 1990 during the Oka Crisis, where members of the Mohawk nation clashed with police in a land dispute. See Linda Pertusati, *In Defense of Mohawk Land: Ethnopolitical Conflict in Native North America* (Albany: State University of New York Press, 1997).

⁴⁴ Lalonde's poem has also served as a platform for Italo-Québécois poet Marco Micone ("Speak What?") to call on the province to embrace multiculturalism.

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- ⁴⁵ Graham Fraser, *René Lévesque and the Parti Québécois in Power*, 2nd ed. (Montréal: McGill-Queen's University Press, 2001): 11.
- ⁴⁶ McRoberts, 1993: 147.
- ⁴⁷ Craig J. Calhoun, *Nationalism* (Buckingham, Eng.: Open University Press, 1997): 4-5.
- ⁴⁸ Don Morrow, "The Powerhouse of Canadian Sport: The Montreal Amateur Athletic Association, Inception to 1909," *Journal of Sport History* 8, No. 3 (1981): 20-39. Not all Montréal Anglophones had access to these clubs: the city's Irish population, discriminated against on class, ethnic, and religious grounds, founded their own clubs, including the legendary Montréal Shamrocks. See Alan Metcalfe, *Canada Learns to Play: The Emergence of Organized Sport, 1807-1914* (Toronto: McClelland and Stewart, 1987): 196; Barbara S. Pinto, "Ain't Misbehavin': The Montreal Shamrock Lacrosse Club Fans, 1868 to 1884." PhD diss., The University of Western Ontario, 1990.
- ⁴⁹ Gilles Janson, *Emparons-nous du sport: Les Canadiens français et le sport au XIXe siècle* (Montréal: Guérin, 1995): 5-48.
- ⁵⁰ André Rousseau, "Les joueurs Francophones bannis pendant... 27 ans!" *Le Journal de Montréal*, 13 October 1979: 83.
- ⁵¹ D'Arcy Jenish, *The Montreal Canadiens: 100 Years of Glory* (Toronto: Doubleday Canada 2008): 7-13.
- ⁵² Michel Vigneault, "La naissance d'un sport organisé au Canada: Le hockey à Montréal, 1875-1917." PhD diss., Université Laval, 2001: 259-261.
- ⁵³ François Black, *Habitants et Glorieux: les Canadiens de 1909 à 1960* (Laval, QC.: Éditions Mille-Îles, 1997): 105-122.
- ⁵⁴ Jenish: 276.
- ⁵⁵ Jean Harvey, "Whose Sweater is This?: The Changing Meanings of Hockey in Québec" in *Artificial Ice: Hockey, Culture, and Commerce*, eds. David Whitson and Richard Gruneau (Peterborough, Ont.: Broadview Press, 2006): 39.
- ⁵⁶ Jenish: 125.
- ⁵⁷ Mathieu-Robert Sauvé, *Échecs et mâles. Les modèles masculins au Québec, du marquis de Montcalm à Jacques Parizeau* (Montréal: Les Intouchables, 2005).
- ⁵⁸ Olivier Bauer, "Le Canadien de Montréal est-il une religion," in *La Religion du Canadien de Montréal*, eds. Olivier Bauer and Jean-Marc Barreau (Montréal: Éditions Fides, 2009): 29-80.
- ⁵⁹ James Andrew Ross, "Hockey Capital: Commerce, Culture, and the National Hockey League, 1917-1967." PhD diss., The University of Western Ontario, 2008: 375.
- ⁶⁰ Jean-Pierre Augustin & Christian Poirier, "Les territoires symboliques du sport: le hockey comme élément identitaire du Québec," *Bulletin d'histoire politique* 9, No. 1 (2000): 115-117.

⁶¹ Hockey discrimination was one of the charges leveled against English Canada by Québécois journalist Normand Lester in his “black book” of grievances. Normand Lester, *Le Livre noir du Canada anglais*, Vol 3 (Montréal: Les Intouchables, 2003):13-82. Marc Lavoie has argued that Francophone athletes are discriminated against in other sport as well. See: Marc Lavoie, *Désavantage numérique: les Francophones dans la LNH* (Hull, Que.: Vents d’Ouest, 1998): 25-26

⁶² David Marple, “Analyse de la discrimination que subissent les Canadiens français au hockey professionnel,” *Mouvement* 10, No. 1 (1975): 7-13.

⁶³ Cited in M. Lavoie, 1998: 30

⁶⁴ Marc Lavoie, Gilles Grenier and Serge Coulombe, “Performance Differentials in the National Hockey League: Discrimination Versus Style-of-Play Thesis,” *Canadian Public Policy/Analyse de Politiques* 18, No. 4 (1992): 461-469; M. Lavoie, 1998.

⁶⁵ Neil Longley, “The Underrepresentation of French Canadians on English Canadian NHL Teams,” *Journal of Sports Economics* 1, No. 3 (2000): 236-256. Longley has also detailed salary discrimination against Francophones in the NHL: Neil Longley, “Salary Discrimination in the National Hockey League: The Effects of Team Location,” *Canadian Public Policy/Analyse de Politiques* 21, No. 4 (1995): 413-422.

⁶⁶ Marc Lavoie, “The Entry Draft in the National Hockey League: Discrimination, Style of Play, and Team Location,” *American Journal of Economics and Sociology* 62, No. 2 (2003): 383-405; Bob Sirois, *Le Québec mis en échec: La discrimination envers les Québécois dans la LNH* (Montréal: Les Editions de l’Homme, 2009).

⁶⁷ Michel Boucher, “Les Canadiens français dans la ligue nationale de hockey: une analyse statistique,” *L’Actualité économique* 60, No. 3 (1984): 308-325; Michael Krashinsky, “Do Hockey Teams Discriminate Against French Canadian Players?: A Comment on ‘Discrimination and Performance Differentials in the National Hockey League,’” *Canadian Public Policy/Analyse de Politiques* 15, No. 1 (1989): 94-97.

⁶⁸ William D. Walsh, “The Entry Problem of Francophones in the National Hockey League: A Systematic Interpretation,” *Canadian Public Policy/Analyse de Politiques* 18, No. 4 (1992): 443-460.

⁶⁹ Michel Lemieux, “Larocque malheureux,” *Dimanche-Matin*, 31 January 1982: 51.

⁷⁰ Michel Magny, “Jean Hamel arrive à Québec avec de nouveaux espoirs,” *La Presse*, 18 September 1981: Sports section, 9.

⁷¹ Yvon Pedneault, “Les Blues n’aiment pas les...frogs!” *Le Journal de Montréal*, 7 November 1981: 90.

⁷² One such example is that of Vancouver Canucks players Dave “Tiger” Williams, who caused a furor in 1981 when he referred to Francophones as “frogs” in an interview with the Vancouver Sun. The Canucks ensuing games in Québec against the Canadiens and Nordiques were characterized by violence, as those teams’ Francophone players attempted to physically assault Williams in retribution. See Ghyslain Luneau, “Les ‘Grenouilles’ attaquent le ‘Tigre,’” *Le Journal de Montréal*, 22 March 1981: 102.

⁷³ André Rousseau, “Bergeron de retour à Sorel,” *Le Journal de Montréal*, 29 December 1979: 58.

⁷⁴ Paul Rompré, Gaétan Saint-Pierre & Marcel Chouinard, “Essai de sémiologie du hockey. À propos de l’idéologie sportive,” *Stratégie* 2 (1972): 30.

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- ⁷⁵ Canadian Press, "Team Canada: aucun boss Francophone," *Le Soleil*, 19 June 1981: B2.
- ⁷⁶ Réjean Tremblay, "Il a tout à gagner à accepter l'invitation de Brian Kilrea," *La Presse*, 23 November 1983: Sports section, 5.
- ⁷⁷ Anouk Bélanger, "Le hockey au Québec, bien plus qu'un jeu: analyse sociologique de la place centrale du hockey dans le projet identitaire des Québécois," *Loisirs et Société* 19, No. 2 (1996): 541.
- ⁷⁸ Hubert Aquin and Andrée Yanacopoulo, "Éléments pour une phénoménologie du sport," in *Problèmes d'analyse symbolique*, eds. Pierre Pagé and Renée Legris (Montréal: Presses de l'Université du Québec, 1972): 130-131.
- ⁷⁹ Rompré, Saint-Pierre, and Chouinard: 53.
- ⁸⁰ Bernard Émond, "Essai d'interprétation religieuse du hockey," *Brèches* 1 (1973): 81-82.
- ⁸¹ J.R. Plante, "Crime et châtement au Forum (Un mythe à l'œuvre et à l'épreuve)," *Stratégie* 10 (1975): 41-65.
- ⁸² Ken Dryden, the Canadiens' articulate goaltender for most of the 1970s, recounted in his memoir that politics were expressly kept out of the Canadiens' locker room. Tellingly, Dryden, who became politically active almost as soon as he retired from hockey, only briefly discusses politics in his hockey memoir, a reminder that most hockey players endeavour to keep sports and politics separate. See Ken Dryden, *The Game: A Thoughtful and Provocative Look at Life in Hockey* (Toronto: Macmillan of Canada, 1983): 19-25.
- ⁸³ Christian Poirier, "Hockey et identité au Québec: L'évolution contrastée d'un sport national," in *Jeux, sports et francophonie: L'exemple du Canada*, eds. Jean-Pierre Augustin & Christine Dallaire (Pessac, France: Maison des Sciences de l'Homme d'Aquitaine, 2007): 196.
- ⁸⁴ Alain Bouchard, "Un idéal nationaliste qui passé aussi par le hockey," *Le Soleil*, 20 October 1979: F2.
- ⁸⁵ Jean Harvey, "Sport and Québec Nationalism: Ethnic or Civic Identity," in *Sport in Divided Societies*, eds. John Sugden & Alan Bairner (Oxford: Meyer & Meyer Sport, 2000): 31-50.
- ⁸⁶ That quote comprises part of the title of Pellerin's book: Jean-Marie Pellerin, *Maurice Richard: L'idole d'un peuple* (Montréal: Les Éditions de l'homme, 1976).
- ⁸⁷ Roch Carrier, *Our Life With the Rocket: The Maurice Richard Story*, trans. Sheila Fischman (Toronto: Viking, 2001): 71. For the National Film Board's animated adaptation, see "The Hockey Sweater (Le Chandail De Hockey) HD," *YouTube*: <http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=ZkJzV3x9Rd0> (accessed 7 December 2010).
- ⁸⁸ Carlo Lavoie, "Maurice Richard: du joueur à la figure," *Recherches sémiotiques/Semiotic Inquiry* 22, No. 1-2-3 (2002): 225.
- ⁸⁹ Roch Carrier, *The Hockey Sweater and Other Stories*, trans. Sheila Fischman (Toronto: House of Anansi Press, 1979).

⁹⁰ Benoît Melançon, *The Rocket: A Cultural History of Maurice Richard*, trans. Fred A. Reed (Vancouver: Greystone Books, 2009): 64.

⁹¹ Songwriters from outside Québec have also been inspired by Richard. See Robert G. Anstey, *Songs for the Rocket: A Collection of Notes and Comments With the Song Lyrics for Twenty-Seven Original Songs About Maurice 'Rocket' Richard* (Sardis, B.C.: West Coast Paradise Publishing, 2002).

⁹² Howard Ramos and Kevin Gosine, "'The Rocket': Newspaper Coverage of the Death of a Québec Cultural Icon, A Canadian Hockey Player," *Journal of Canadian Studies* 36, No. 4 (2002): 18.

⁹³ Gina Stoiciu, *Comment comprendre l'actualité: Communication et mise en scène* (Sainte-Foy, Que.: Presses de l'Université du Québec, 2006): 236.

⁹⁴ Ramos and Gosine: 21.

⁹⁵ Melançon: 211.

⁹⁶ Suzanne Laberge and Alexandre Dumas, "L'affaire Richard/Campbell : un catalyseur de l'affirmation des Canadiens français," *Bulletin d'histoire politique* 11, No. 2 (2003): 33.

⁹⁷ David Di Felice, "The 'Richard Riot': A Socio-Historical Examination of Sport, Culture, and the Construction of Symbolic Identities." MA thesis, Queen's University, 1999: 140.

⁹⁸ Pellerin: 227-228.

⁹⁹ Pellerin: 245.

¹⁰⁰ To give but one example, Richard alleged in 1980 via his *Dimanche-Matin* column that NHL teams systematically ignored Québec talent, and that Francophones had to be "two times better than someone else who comes from the West, Ontario, or the United States" in order to be noticed and drafted by an NHL team. Maurice Richard, "Le Canadien a réglé un problème en repêchant Doug Wickenheiser," *Dimanche-Matin*, 15 June 1980: 39.

¹⁰¹ Melançon provides an excellent and exhaustive review of the musical, literary, and cinematic interpretations of the Richard Riot. See Melançon: 129-170. Academic analyses of the Riot include Jean R. Dupperreault, "L'Affaire Richard: A Situational Analysis of the Montréal Hockey Riot of 1955," *Canadian Journal of Sport History* 2, No. 1 (1981): 66-83; Di Felice, 1999; David Di Felice, "The Formation of Class, Ethnic, and National Identities: The Case of the Richard Riot of 1955," in *Putting It On Ice, Volume 1: Hockey and Cultural Identities*, ed. Colin D. Howell (Halifax: Gorsebrook Research Institute, 2002): 83-98; Suzanne Laberge and Alexandre Dumas, "L'affaire Richard/Campbell : un catalyseur de l'affirmation des Canadiens français," *Bulletin d'histoire politique* 11, No. 2 (2003): 30-44. Pellerin also spends an entire chapter on it, and the Riot also figures prominently in virtually much every account, popular and academic, about the Canadiens.

¹⁰² Melançon: 171.

¹⁰³ Laberge and Dumas: 30. Dupperreault disagrees, arguing that it was the media who are to blame for whipping Canadiens fans into a riotous frenzy.

¹⁰⁴ Cited in Pellerin: 341-42.

¹⁰⁵ Di Felice, 2002: 92.

¹⁰⁶ Alain Bouchard, “Un idéal nationaliste qui passé aussi par le hockey,” *Le Soleil*, 20 October 1979: F2.

¹⁰⁷ Sandford F. Borins, *The Language of the Skies: The Bilingual Air Traffic Control Conflict in Canada* (Kingston, Ont.: McGill-Queen’s University Press, 1983): 118-151.

¹⁰⁸ Borins: 153. Brackets mine.

¹⁰⁹ André Bellemare, “Bertrand doute de l’avenir des Francophones,” *La Presse*, 06 February 1980: E5.
Translation: English speaking players will always be chosen when the choice is between two players of equal talent, to the point where the situation resembles more and more the situation in the United States, where White players are always chosen over coloured players in baseball, football, and basketball unless the latter is a superstar.

¹¹⁰ Alain Bouchard, “Un idéal nationaliste qui passé aussi par le hockey,” *Le Soleil*, 20 October 1979: F2.

¹¹¹ Alain Bouchard, “Les Francophones, en voie d’extinction,” *Le Soleil*, 05 February 1980: C2.
Translation: All colonized people have complexes... but it is abnormal to do nothing to end that situation.

¹¹² Rhéal Séguin, “Lawyer Proposes Solitudes on Ice,” *The Globe and Mail*, 03 November 2006: A3.

¹¹³ Guy Bertrand, “Quéstion de fierté et de gros sous,” *Le Soleil*, 20 August 1981: A7.

¹¹⁴ Canadian Press, “Quebec City Loses Cup Hockey,” *The Gazette*, 28 August 1981: 81.

Chapter 3

3 *Sang, Sexe, Sport et Société*: The Francophone Sport Media and Their Discursive Practices

This chapter seeks to sketch the discursive practices of Québec's Francophone newspapers from 1979 to 1984, and to establish that the sport pages of Québec's Francophone newspapers were well-suited to the production and reproduction of nationalist discourse from 1979 to 1984. This mission is on one hand straightforward, because the mass media's role in the transmission and reproduction of nationalisms and national identities is by now unquestioned. Combing through newspapers to glean insights on nationalisms and national identities is a well-entrenched and uncontroversial academic exercise. On the other hand, despite the intimate relationship between sport and the nation, sport reporting is best known for its parochialism and lack of critical engagement with subjects possessing even the slightest whiff of a political odour. Indeed, this tension between the norms of the media at large and those most closely associated with sport journalism permeated Québec sport journalism in the early 1980s. Two paradigms of sports reporting – one that closely adhered to “traditional” sport journalism and another that looked outside the field of sport – coexisted in Québec sport journalism in the early 1980s. Though I am ultimately more interested in one of these paradigms, a politically activist brand of sports reporting called *journalisme de combat* (combative journalism), I present both in this chapter. Subsequently, I discuss how these paradigms were adhered to in practice by reporters at Montréal and Québec City newspapers such as *Le Journal de Montréal*, *Le Journal de Québec* (Québec City), *La Presse* (Montréal), *Le Soleil* (Québec City), and *Dimanche-Matin* (Montréal). Finally, I argue that the emergence of *journalisme de combat* in the 1980s owed much to the arrival

in the NHL of the Québec Nordiques, whose rise carried the promise of a different professional hockey paradigm.

3.1 The Jockocracy: A Survey of Sport Journalism

Sport journalism has tended to be castigated as, in the famous words of many commentators, the toy department of the news media; the American sportscaster Howard Cosell also described sport journalism even more colourfully as an “intellectual thimble.”¹ Sport journalism’s bad reputation stems in large part from its historical tendency of systematically avoiding critical investigations in broader contexts. Garry Smith and Terry Valeriotte argue that sport journalists have dichotomous responsibilities: on one hand, they are bound by a code of ethics that emphasize objectivity, but on the other, they are simultaneously expected to cheerlead for the very industry that they are supposed to cover objectively.² The sport media’s role as a promotional vehicle has usually won out at the expense of social commentary. This is due in large part to commercial imperatives related to advertising revenue. Daily newspapers’ sport sections are extraordinarily popular, and attract a large number of mostly male readers who in many cases purchase the newspaper specifically for the sports section.³ The sports pages’ popularity has perpetuated what media scholar Mark Douglas Lowes described as “a tremendous synergy” between the daily sports press and the major league sport industry: newspapers use sport as a means to bring in new readers and increase circulation and advertising revenue, while sports organizations utilize their privileged place in daily sport coverage to drive interest in their leagues and attendance at their events.⁴

But this relationship is lopsided, as the uncritical orientation of the sport pages effectively permits the sports industry to control the message of sport-related communication. Explains Søren Schultz Jørgensen:

Sports editors of daily newspapers all over the world allow the sports industry to set the agenda and the priorities for coverage of sports events... the sports pages in daily newspapers are dominated by the particular types of sport, sports stars and international events which create the biggest turnovers on parameters such as advertising, sponsorship, numbers of television viewers and spectators in the stadium. Conversely, the sports press has great difficulties reporting anything that takes place outside the angle of television cameras and after the stadium spotlights have been turned off.⁵

The results of 2005's International Sports Press Survey, which analyzed over 10,000 sports articles from 37 newspapers in ten countries, suggest that this is the case in all newspaper-reading societies. Sport journalism, concluded Schultz Jørgensen, is a global culture, like sport itself; the priorities of sport journalism, therefore, "are more or less the same and it does not matter whether the newspaper is based in Washington, Bergen, Vienna or Bucharest."⁶ The survey's findings show that worldwide sports coverage was concerned overwhelmingly with the previewing and descriptive reporting of major league sporting events, with little emphasis placed on political or social issues pertaining to sport: only 5% of the articles analyzed touched on politics, 3% on money matters, and only 2.5% were concerned with sport and social issues.⁷ Later studies, such as that conducted by David Rowe, which analyzed the Australian sport media, arrived at similar conclusions:

Most sport journalism concentrates on anticipating, describing and reflecting on sports events, eschews problematic social issues, and consults prominent (especially celebrity) sportspeople. In this way, given the heightened socio-cultural prominence of sport made possible by intensive, cross-media representation and promotion, sport journalism has moved closer to an entertainment and celebrity journalism form that operates to sustain a sport star

system at the expense of other, more critical or inquisitorial frameworks informed by social sensibilities.⁸

This analysis echoes an observation made by sport media scholar Lawrence Wenner, who argues that the sports pages are most similar to the business, entertainment, real-estate, and travel sections of newspapers.⁹ Like these other sections, the sport pages present the world of sport as insular, self-contained and, as, in Rowe's words, "its own microcosm – a world within a world, insulated from the mundane demands of everyday life and struggle."¹⁰ Stories report on only a narrow range of themes, with little concern for socio-political problems beyond the realm of the sports industry. A sport story's source comes usually from the sports industry itself – either athletes, coaches, managers, or other sport media figures. The perspectives of "outsiders" are rarely, if ever, presented. These practices ensure that a positive view of the sports industry predominates in the sport section; self-criticism and trenchant socio-political analysis is avoided at all cost. And as former *New York Post* sportswriter Leonard Shecter wrote in 1970: "this leads to an easily discernable genre of sportswriting, the kind we get in most sports sections around the country – consistently bland and hero worshipful presented in a pedestrian, cliché-ridden writing style."¹¹

This insularity has allowed countless sport journalists to make the dubious claim that "sports and politics don't mix." This assumption makes what Shecter described as the "plodding conservatism" of the sport media clear: sport journalism, as traditionally practiced, served to sustain the sport world's status quo.¹² As Lowes writes, "sports news is ideological precisely because it constitutes a discourse that serves the promotional interests of the major-league sports industry's primary stakeholders – team owners, media commentators, equipment and apparel manufacturers, civic boosters, and the like."¹³

Newspapers justified their editorial decisions by arguing that the kind of sports coverage they provide is demanded by their readers.¹⁴ This is undoubtedly true; newspapers after all, exist to make a profit and as such must be responsive to their readers. But at the same time, this justification also provides a convenient rationalization for sport journalism's conservatism, while legitimizing newspapers' editorial choices. As Rowe wrote about sports sections:

(Sport journalism) is economically important in drawing readers (especially male) to general news publications, and so has the authority of its own popularity. Yet its practice is governed by ingrained occupational assumptions about what 'works' for this readership, drawing it away from the problems, issues and topics that permeate the social world to which sport is intimately connected. In doing so, it seeks reinforcement and affirmation from the largely closed circle of sources that creates the insular world of sport in the first place.¹⁵

There are therefore few opportunities for sport journalists to write critically about social issues from within the sports pages. Those who have tried have usually encountered resistance. For example, sport sociologist Harry Edwards claimed that ambitious sports reporters in the 1960s were stymied by their newspapers' institutional conservatism:

Many reporters are responsible, again not to society or to justice, but to their sports editor. These men, like the mass media they serve, tend to be of a conservative bent in social and political matters. Many a significant and worthwhile sports story has been 'deep-sixed' because the slant of the story clashed with the political and social attitudes of the sports editor. The dictum handed down from above runs, 'your job is to report the sporting news, not to initiate a crusade.'¹⁶

Socially conscious sports reporters in North America that ignored these directives faced ridicule, firing, and even blackballing from the profession. Smith provided the examples of George Kiseda and Jack Mann, American sport journalists who frequently clashed with their superiors for deigning to go beyond batting averages and race results. Both

lost jobs for daring to write critical articles. Shecter, remembering his own tenure as a sportswriter, recollected that proposed reports that critically questioned the sport industry were invariably suppressed.¹⁷ Critical sport journalists may also find themselves frozen out by the very sources that the current paradigm of sport journalism depends upon. Given these obstacles, it should come as no surprise that effective and celebrated critical sport journalists such as Dave Zirin have often built their careers largely from outside the aegis of the newspaper industry and other traditional sources of sport journalism.¹⁸

3.2 Nationalism, Québec Journalism, and the Struggle for Information (1960-1979)

The mass media's pivotal role in the transmission of nationalist ideologies has been well documented by scholars of nationalism. In fact, an understanding that media plays a pivotal role in nation building is one of the few notions upon which scholars from various different schools of thought in nationalism studies virtually all agree. For example, Eric Hobsbawm, who advocates conceptualizing nationalism as a modern phenomenon, views the rise of the mass media as a means by which "popular ideologies could be standardized, homogenized and transformed, as well as, obviously, exploited for the purposes of deliberate propaganda by private interests and states."¹⁹ By contrast, Anthony D. Smith, who argues that nations have pre-modern roots, agrees that it was the mass media which set the stage for the explosion of European nationalism in the eighteenth and nineteenth centuries: he affirms unequivocally that "the vehicle of nationalism and other Western ideas is the press" and that "a fairly regular correlation" exists between "the rise of nationalism and the mushrooming of local journalism."²⁰

Some scholars, such as Benedict Anderson, argue that the proliferation of communication technology is a pre-condition for the existence of the nation. Anderson, who was concerned primarily with the written word, argued that print-capitalism, that is to say the business of printing written works such as books and newspapers in vernacular languages, was not merely the catalyst for the emergence of nationalism, but “the key to the generation of wholly new ideas of simultaneity.”²¹ These new “print-languages,” transmitted through media such as novels and newspapers, therefore laid the foundation for national consciousness: the invention of the printing press and the commercial zeal of European printers to capitalize on emerging linguistic markets made it possible for people to visualize themselves, through newly standardized languages, as part of “imagined communities” that had previously not had any coherent sense of togetherness.

Anderson, focusing on the interconnectedness of nation, language, and communication media, argues that the nation only becomes imaginable through a complex interaction between a system of production, a technology of communications, and language. But if the media is crucial in the imagining of the nation, then it is likewise pivotal in its reproduction by constantly reminding the public that the nation exists and rallying communities around “national” symbols. Michael Billig highlights the importance of the mass media in perpetuating “banal nationalism” by “regularly flagging” the idea of nationhood through “routine practices and everyday discourses,” ensuring that their citizenry is “unmindfully reminded of their national identity.”²² Arguing that nationalism is the endemic condition of late capitalism and not merely the preserve of extremists, Billig details how newspapers and other media use a

...nationalized syntax of hegemony, simultaneously speaking to and for the nation, and representing the nation in both senses of ‘representation.’ They evoke

a national 'we', which includes the 'we' of reader and writer, as well as the 'we' of the universal audience.²³

In other words, the mass media produces and reproduces a world in which the nation is entrenched firmly at the centre. Newspapers and other media take the fundamental premises of nationalism for granted, and conduct all debates within the parameters of nationalist discourse. That the nation retains its privileged position today in a rapidly changing and globalizing world is in large part through the processes that Billig describes.

Billig exposes the power that newspaper journalists and editors have in the reproduction of the nation. Yet their role is not always passive or institutional: journalists have frequently played active roles in nationalist movements.²⁴ This has certainly been the case in Québec, where factions of the French media have been instrumental in the development, expression, and promulgation of modes of nationalism. Québec media historian Florence Le Cam in fact argues that participation in the nation building process has been one of the historical characteristics of Francophone journalism in Québec.²⁵ There is no better example than the Montréal daily *Le Devoir*. Founded in 1910 by Henri Bourassa with the stated mission of being an independent, Catholic, and nationalist daily, *Le Devoir* quickly became known as "the official organ of the nationalist movement in Québec."²⁶ In Bourassa's day this meant providing a forum for traditional French Canadian nationalism. During the 1940s and 1950s, under the leadership of Gérard Filion and André Laurendeau, the newspaper became an important site of resistance to the Duplessis regime and arguably the most significant site of neo-nationalist thought and action. *Le Devoir* was one of the loudest voices calling for socio-political change in Québec: for example, *Le Devoir* was a vocal supporter of the suppressed labour

movement and also published the first excerpts from *Les insolences du Frère Untel*, Marist Brother Jean-Paul Desbiens' influential anticlerical polemic directed at the church-run educational system.²⁷ It is not a stretch to say that Québec neo-nationalism would not exist as we know it without *Le Devoir*'s crucial intervention.

Yet it was only at the beginning of the Quiet Revolution (circa 1960-66) that the Québec news media as a whole assumed a professional orientation rooted in a specific collective and public identity. Le Cam argued that this identity is not just unique when compared to other social actors in Québec; it is also unique in the context of journalism in the Western world.²⁸ She and fellow media scholar François Demers identified four “discursive strategies” that “are fundamental components of a specific Québec professional identity:” participation in the construction of the Québec nation; a corporatist inclination; a duality between professional and unionist conceptions of the journalist occupation; and a tendency toward self-organization.²⁹ For the purposes of this study, this means that more than just presenting information, Québec's Francophone journalists believed themselves to be social and political activists; they were energetic participants and not passive chroniclers of the socio-political change of the 1960s and 1970s, both as nation builders and as trade unionists.

Scholars have identified three paradigmatic shifts in post-Quiet Revolution Québec journalism, though they disagree on exact timelines. The first was ushered in by the Quiet Revolution itself. According to media scholar Marc Raboy, the Quiet Revolution upset “the traditional conservatism of the mass media,” which, aside from *Le Devoir*, was characterized during the Duplessis years by “ideological harmony and social tranquility.”³⁰ From 1958 to 1967 there was an unprecedented changing-of-the-guard in

Québec journalism, as “every major newspaper in Québec either changed ownership, administrators, publisher, or editor-in-chief.”³¹ Québec newspapers hired scores of young journalists, many of whom were incipient neo-nationalists. Journalistic standards, which the aggressive authoritarianism of the Duplessis years had left eroded, improved. Yet, as media scholar and former Radio-Canada journalist Armande Saint-Jean astutely pointed out, at the same time as Québec journalists were conforming to the standards of excellence that existed elsewhere in North America, they were also socially and politically engaging to an extent that made objectivity impossible.³² These new journalists understood themselves as part of the province’s intellectual elite. News and information, according to them, “were the tools for building a democratic and modern society.”³³ They interpreted their social role as being agents of socio-political change, which they aggressively promoted in the pages of their newspapers.

Initially, this entailed supporting the reforms of the Liberal government. Media scholar Jean Charron described the period from 1960 to 1966 as a “consensual society,” where there was general agreement between government and media about what reforms should take place and what the shape of society should look like.³⁴ In this period, the media often functioned as *de facto* propagandists for the Lesage regime, explaining the government’s various undertakings to the masses and seeking to popularize them. If there was any criticism from the press, it was that the pace of reform was not quick enough. Journalists such as Laurendeau and Pelletier were frequently consulted by the Lesage Liberals, becoming important extragovernmental advisors; Esther Déom described *Le Devoir* as “the counselor and moral conscience of the Lesage government.”³⁵ Pierre Godin described this time as a “golden age” of print journalism in

Québec: information was abundant, the press exercised social leadership, and newspaper circulation soared across the board.

The breakdown of the consensual society was tied in large part to industrial action. Raboy declared that the 1964 strike at *La Presse* was the “end of the Quiet Revolution,” a turning point in journalists’ relationship with the state, and the beginning of another paradigm shift in Québec journalism. The *La Presse* strike was nothing less than a struggle for control of information, a fight that saw the newspaper’s management, supported by a government that had grown displeased with *La Presse*’s increasing criticism, attempting to re-take control of the newsroom from activist journalists. It was followed by further strikes: every major daily in Québec had one in the late 1960s or early 1970s. Some newspapers saw more than one strike (*La Presse* had three: one in 1964, a second in 1971-72 and finally a third in 1977-78). Striking journalists were often joined by workers from Québec’s militant anticapitalist and antigovernment unions; Raboy described the 1971-72 *La Presse* strike as unleashing “the first large-scale, union-based demonstration in Québec in recent times.”³⁶ It was this participation in the labour movement that most altered the journalistic paradigm at Québec’s French language newspapers. The difference in self-identification, according to Raboy, is best understood in a comparison of the 1964 and 1971 *La Presse* strikes: “In 1964, the information makers at the paper had demanded the right to cover current social changes; in 1971 they were part of those changes.”³⁷ Journalists stopped understanding themselves as part of the intellectual elite; they were now activist “information workers” rather than merely journalists.³⁸ News, according to Saint-Jean, “was viewed as a consciousness-raising tool whether the ideology was feminism or socialism, sovereignty or ecology.”³⁹

This consciousness-raising, especially the overt journalistic support for Québec independence, placed journalists at odds with both their bosses and with the provincial and federal governments. Proponents of independence such as *Rassemblement pour l'indépendance nationale* (RIN) firebrand Pierre Bourgault and future *Front de Libération de Québec* (FLQ) theoretician Pierre Vallières found homes in the *La Presse* newsroom in the early 1960s, prompting criticism from the federalist Lesage government that the paper was overly biased toward separatism.⁴⁰ There were similar complaints during the 1966 provincial election, which was characterized by unerringly positive coverage of the RIN, which at that time was very much a fringe group.⁴¹ Comparably positive coverage was reserved for René Lévesque's victorious Parti Québécois in the 1976 provincial election.⁴² A 1979 poll of Québec journalists found that a large majority considered themselves to be at least moderate sovereigntists, and 79% of those polled had supported the PQ in the 1976 provincial election.⁴³

The third paradigmatic shift was inaugurated by management's eventual success in wresting control of the newsroom away from activist journalists. The late 1960s and 1970s were characterized by the rapid corporatization of the Québec press: in 1965, the fourteen main Québec dailies were operated by fourteen different owners; by 1969, nine of the fourteen had become part of a corporate conglomerate; by 1979, the only major independent Québec daily left was *Le Devoir* (which remains independent to this day). This newly corporate press was concentrated in the hands of three firms: Paul Desmarais' Power Corp. (*La Presse*), Pierre Péladeau's Québecor (*Le Journal de Montréal*, *Le Journal de Québec*) and Jacques Francoeur's Unimédia (*Le Soleil* and *Dimanche-Matin*). There were almost immediate attempts at censorship; *La Presse* journalists complained of

pressure from above soon after Desmarais purchased the daily in 1967, and Desmarais himself unequivocally stated that “I will not tolerate my journalists openly supporting the independence movement at *La Presse*.”⁴⁴ At *Le Soleil*, attempts at censorship that had begun in the mid-1960s intensified.⁴⁵

These efforts at censorship were aided by both the provincial and federal governments. The Québec provincial government pressured newspapers as early as the mid-1960s to tone down their separatist rhetoric.⁴⁶ But it was the federal government’s intervention that proved most decisive. The October Crisis, according to Saint-Jean, had “tragic consequences... for Quebec journalism,” by eliminating free speech and, with federal troops patrolling the streets of Montréal and Québec City and scores of innocent people thrown in jail, fostering a climate of apprehension and fear that would last for years:

Recall that the War Measures Act was aimed at rupturing the direct media access that opponents of the Liberal Party had established with certain Montreal broadcast stations. Even before the crisis, various federal politicians had criticized the Quebec media for their alleged complacency regarding the FLQ’s intentions and actions. One of the lingering effects of the War Measures Act was, therefore, that it muted freedom of speech in the province... Equally negative was the War Measures Act’s long-term impact on professional attitudes. Many journalists testify that an atmosphere of suspicion lingered that fostered prudence and self-censorship among Quebec journalists long after the crisis had abated.⁴⁷

This atmosphere of self-censorship and apprehension is reflected in press reactions to the War Measures Act itself and the 1980 referendum on Québec independence. Only one Québec newspaper, *Le Devoir*, condemned the excesses of the War Measures Act. And no Québec newspaper officially supported independence during the referendum campaign, despite the overwhelming support for this option among Francophone journalists.⁴⁸ Newspapers suspended journalists who chose to play an active role in the

referendum campaign, and prevented others who desired to formally pronounce their pro-sovereignty orientation in editorials from doing so.⁴⁹ *Le Soleil*, presumably unable to find an editor who supported the status quo, adopted a policy of editorial neutrality, farcically choosing not to submit an opinion on the most important vote in Québec's political history. The cumulative effect of this censorship was a drastic curtailing of journalistic activism as journalists learned, in Esther Déom's words, that "the editorial page belongs to the employer."⁵⁰ Newspapers, reflecting the views of their owners rather than their journalists, rarely challenged the status quo in the 1980s.

3.3 Traditional Sport Journalism: *Le Journal de Montréal* and *Le Journal de Québec*

Le Journal de Montréal was founded by Pierre Péladeau in 1964. Péladeau capitalized on the strike at *La Presse* to introduce a new tabloid targeting Montréal's working class. *Le Journal de Québec*, for the Québec City market, was inaugurated in 1967. According to Pierre Godin, the Péladeau formula emphasized three S's – *sang* (blood), *sexe*, and *sport*. Sure enough, sports coverage dominated the *Journal* tabloids, often occupying over half the pages in the newspaper and frequently appearing on the front page. The rise to prominence of the *Journal* tabloids was in fact intimately related with their wall-to-wall sports coverage. According to Godin, *Le Journal de Montréal* became a serious player in the Québec press only when they lured Jacques Beauchamp, among the most famous Québécois sportswriters of the day, away from their erstwhile tabloid competitor, *Montréal-Matin*.⁵¹ Beauchamp's arrival was closely followed by the doubling of the *Journal*'s circulation, and the new tabloid soon surpassed *Montréal-Matin*, which quit publishing in 1978, as the highest circulation Montréal tabloid.⁵² The

Journal tabloids' standing in the Québec marketplace only improved from there: by the end of the 1970s, *Le Journal de Montréal* had surpassed *La Presse* as the highest circulating newspaper in the city (and therefore the province), while *Le Journal de Québec* was on the verge of eclipsing *Le Soleil* in Québec City. Their influence on other sports sections was manifest. Following the lead of Péladeau's tabloids, newspapers across Québec ramped up their sports coverage; for example, *Le Soleil*, which in 1971 only devoted 5.1% of its content to sport, dedicated 35.4% to sport in 1987.⁵³

The style of sport journalism practiced in the *Journal* tabloids was, generally, of the traditional, sports-and-politics-don't-mix variety. Consider *Journal de Québec* columnist and sports editor Claude Bédard's column entitled "Équipe-Québec, pour le sport ou la politique?" about Guy Bertrand's resuscitated Équipe-Québec initiative. The title made explicit Bédard's belief that sports and politics were discreet worlds that should not meet; a project such as Équipe-Québec must either be in the sport or the political sphere, it could not be part of both. In the end Bédard concluded that "le projet Équipe-Québec... dégage une trop forte odeur de politique," meaning that, in his view, it has nothing to do with sport and was thus unworthy of coverage in his sports section.⁵⁴ And indeed, I found few mentions of Équipe-Québec in *Le Journal de Québec* after Bédard's column.

Critical examinations of sport were rarely undertaken, and social problems such as discrimination were only ever brought up in specific circumstances. For example, following allegations of discrimination against Anglophone players by the Nordiques, Claude Cadorette, a Québec City-based reporter whose reports commonly appeared in both *Journal* tabloids (a common practice in the Québecor newspaper chain), claimed to

be discussing “la politique” only out of professional necessity: he had been urged to by a colleague, who reminded him that all the other newspapers would file reports on the matter.⁵⁵ On other occasions, these journalists began a broader socio-political analysis only to reject it resoundingly, preserving and reinforcing professional sport’s apolitical pretensions. Bédard, for example, not wanting to engage with a debate about discrimination in professional sport, absurdly claimed that discrimination against African-Americans existed in society, but certainly not in sport: “le sport n’est pas une question de race, de langue ou de religion. S’il en était, il n’y aurait sûrement pas autant de Noirs dans le sport majeur et on sait pourquoi.”⁵⁶ But most often, these issues were overlooked completely, ignored in favour of nuts-and-bolts breakdowns of hockey games, statistics tables, and interviews with players and coaches that had served the *Journal* tabloids so well since their foundation. This is not to say that *Journal* reporters *completely* ignored larger wider socio-political contexts, but that wider meaning, when it existed, was implicit and deeply embedded in their reports and columns.

This apolitical editorial line matches the tone of the *Journal* newspapers as a whole in that they eschewed socio-political analysis on the front pages in favour of sensationalistic coverage of fires, murders, and assaults. One former magazine editor described the *Journal* tabloids as “quick reads,” meant to be consumed in twenty or thirty minutes during a morning commute. Most *Journal* stories are reducible to their headlines and the accompanying photography (this is not true of the sports pages, which often contained the longest articles in the paper), a format that makes incisive analysis impossible. Unsurprisingly, *Le Journal de Montréal* did not possess a dedicated politics section until 1970, six years into its run, and did not station a reporter in Québec City to

comment on the happenings at the provincial legislature until a few years after that. The *Journal* newspapers never explicitly pronounced themselves for particular candidates during elections. And despite accusations from federalist politicians that the tabloids favoured independence during the referendum, neither paper chose a side, despite Péladeau's known support for René Lévesque and the PQ.

3.4 *Journalisme de combat: La Presse and Le Soleil*

The *Journal* tabloids' main competitors, *La Presse*, *Le Soleil*, and, to a lesser extent, Montréal Sunday tabloid *Dimanche-Matin*, featured a radically different paradigm of sports reporting, one bearing the clear imprint of the activist journalism that predominated in Québec during the 1960s and 1970s. These journalists made little claim to objectivity, were unafraid to be controversial, provided analysis that looked beyond the box score, consistently and explicitly wrote about sport in wider social, political, and economic contexts, and frequently championed causes that they deemed important (which, for these journalists, usually revolved around the national question). It was not uncommon for these journalists to devote an entire report or column to a subject only peripherally related to sport, or to use sport as a jumping off point to discuss the national question. Their political writings were explicit enough as to be unambiguous: rather than deeply embedding it the text, these journalists foregrounded their neo-nationalist beliefs in their reports and columns. In one of the only comprehensive studies of Québec sport journalism, Normand Bourgeois argued that the routine flouting of journalistic conventions made these reporters advocates rather than textbook journalists.⁵⁷ Following Bourgeois, I will use the term *journalisme de combat* to refer to this kind of activist sports reporting.⁵⁸ Bourgeois took this term from a statement uttered by *Le Soleil*'s long-

time columnist, Claude Larochelle, on the occasion of his induction into the Hockey Hall of Fame in 1989. Explaining his journalistic philosophy, Larochelle boldly declared: “je ne m’en cache pas, j’ai fait du journalisme de combat... j’ai passé des messages à travers le sport.”⁵⁹

Those reporters practicing *journalisme de combat* in the sports pages consciously understood themselves to be adhering to a different paradigm of sport journalism. Réjean Tremblay, the lead sports columnist at *La Presse*, frequently ruminated about the profession in his columns. These ruminations provide something approaching a manifesto for *journalisme de combat*. Tellingly, Tremblay rejected the term “sport journalist” (*journaliste sportif*) and its associated implications outright:

Je suis un journaliste qui oeuvre dans le sport. Je ne suis pas un journaliste ‘sportif.’ Si je le suis, c’est quand je joue au tennis. Le reste du temps, je suis au service du lecteur, pas du sport. Et si j’ai besoin d’un code de déontologie, alors j’ai besoin d’un code qui réagira pour toute la profession, pas seulement le journalisme ‘sportif.’⁶⁰

Tremblay made clear that he understood sport journalism not as its own insular world, but as a branch of journalism like any other, requiring the same intellectual toolbox as the politics or economics section. To this end, the tone of his editorials was distinctly intellectual: for example, he often used the sociological term “sport-spectacle”, indicating an understanding of the socially constructed nature of the sports he covered. Tremblay and his colleagues clearly understood sport not as something to glorify and to hype, but as an institution that should be subjected to the same scrutiny as other journalistic subjects. This approach necessitated taking a critical perspective and placing sport in wider social, political, and economic contexts:

Le journaliste ‘sportif’ est de moins en moins ‘sportif’ et de plus en plus ‘journaliste.’ S’il couvre encore les matchs, il passe des heures et des heures à

découvrir ce qui se passe au sein des corporations multinationales, des bureaux d'avocats, des compagnies de marketing qui vendent des produits ou une image via le sport. Plus critique, moins complice.⁶¹

To this end, Tremblay and other *journalistes de combat* cast their net much wider than the sport journalists at the *Journal* tabloids, seeking out opinions from outside the world of sport. They cited and discussed academic papers relating to Québec sport, and solicited opinions from Québécois sport academics such as Laval University physical education professor Gaston Marcotte, literary personalities such as the novelist and essayist Paul Ohl, and political figures, most notably Guy Bertrand.⁶²

The most prominent characteristic of *journalisme de combat* was its emphasis on the political dimension of sport. These journalists rejected resoundingly the sport journalism maxim that sport and politics should be kept separate. Wrote Tremblay:

Il n'y a rien de plus vide, de plus mensonger et de plus trompeur que ce vieux cliché qu'on sert encore aux gens qui veulent s'informer: il ne faut pas mêler le sport et la politique.

Cliché éculé qui sert surtout de soporifique pour garder une population dans une douce indifférence rentable pour ceux qui l'exploitent.

C'est tout le contraire. Le sport et la politique vont de pair parce que tout est politique. Le moindre geste, la moindre parole, le moindre symbole prend une valeur politique.⁶³

For Tremblay and journalists of his ilk, the “cliché” that sports and politics were separate spheres, propagated by journalists and other powerful figures in the sports industry, was a dangerous lie because it ultimately prevented people from becoming informed about the inner workings of the sport industry. For *journalistes de combat*, it was not sport itself that functioned as an opiate of the people, but traditional sport journalism, which blindly and uncritically accepted and disseminated the fallacies of the sports industry. Those who propagated the “hypocrisy” of apolitical sport, according to *Le Soleil*'s Alain

Bouchard, were merely aligning themselves with the status quo for commercial or ideological ends.⁶⁴

Arguments like these anchor *journalisme de combat* firmly in the tradition of the activist political journalism that dominated Québec's French newspapers in the 1960s and 1970s. And indeed, Francophone sport journalists were active in the information struggles of the 1960s and 70s: the bitter *La Presse* strike of 1977-78 actually started as a revolt of sport journalists rebelling against management's imposition of a new sports editor without consultation.⁶⁵ Like many of the journalists also involved in this struggle, the *cause célèbre* for *journalistes de combat* was Québec nationhood. Two things are important to note here. First, journalists were exactly the type of middle class professional, who, working intimately with the French language, tended to be attracted to Québec nationalism during the 1960s and 1970s. French language sport journalists were often linguistic trailblazers: for example, Radio-Canada play-by-play announcer René Lecavalier, who, during his career (1952-1985), quite literally developed much of the French language hockey lexicon from scratch, was rewarded with an honorary doctorate from the Université du Québec for "exemplary service to the French language."⁶⁶

Secondly, rather than being insulated from social struggle, Québec sport journalists experienced discrimination on a regular basis. Tremblay told a colloquium on language and society in 1982 that Francophone journalists faced systematic discrimination at the hands of (Anglophone-run) professional sports clubs; he described the relationship, using anticolonial rhetoric characteristic of neo-nationalism, as similar to that between colonizer and colonized.⁶⁷ These reporters were nationalists both in discourse and at the ballot box – Larochelle and Tremblay were both known supporters of

the PQ and both publicly admitted having voted for sovereignty – who advocated nationalist reform in their articles and columns.⁶⁸ As we will see in subsequent chapters, they used the rivalry between the Montréal Canadiens and the Québec Nordiques to condemn Francophone subordination, criticize language discrimination, and advocate a greater important role for the French language and Francophone players, athletes and management; they were in effect, though they themselves never phrased it this way, arguing for the political reforms of the 1960s and 1970s to be extended to Québec professional hockey. This fixation on the national question came at the expense of other issues; for example, gender and class analyses were absent from their writings, as were stories about women or Indigenous peoples in sport. Nevertheless, the activist stance adopted in *journalisme de combat* stands out as one of the precious few examples of socially conscious, overtly political sport journalism in twentieth century North America.

The activist reporting in Québec's sports sections did not go unnoticed outside the sport pages. For example, Graham Fraser, a columnist for Montréal's English-language daily, *The Gazette*, remarked in 1981 that the subordinate role of the French language was rarely written about anymore, except by sports reporters and in the odd editorial.⁶⁹ *The Gazette* also printed an editorial cartoon that sarcastically claimed that "sports writers are setting the PQ party line for our newspapers."⁷⁰ These comments raise an obvious question: since activist political journalism had been effectively muzzled by 1979, how did *journalisme de combat* manage to flourish in the same newspapers? The most likely answer lies in sports reporting's inferior status within the hierarchy of journalism. American football historian Michael Oriard put it best. "Because sport was not regarded as serious news," wrote Oriard, "sportswriters on most newspapers had far greater license

than other journalists.”⁷¹ The sports pages, as the “toy section” of the newspaper, are often, not just in Québec but everywhere, permitted to function as a semi-autonomous entity within the newspaper, even as the increased corporatization of the newspaper industry muzzled reporters in other departments. Media scholar Raymond Boyle concurred, arguing that sports departments have historically been “unchecked fiefdoms within newspaper organizations.”⁷²

This phenomenon may have been even more pronounced in Québec, where politics had traditionally dominated newspaper coverage. Surprisingly for a society where the relationship between sport and national identity have been so strong and unquestioned, sport has historically been taken even less seriously by the Québec intellectual class than elsewhere in North America. Hubert Aquin and Andrée Yanacopoulo as early as 1972 noted the snobbery shown by Québec elites to “les sportifs.”⁷³ This was later supported by sociologist Anouk Bélanger, who argued that while sport (specifically hockey) had played an important role in the Québécois collective memory, it has been virtually ignored by academics and intellectuals.⁷⁴ This is reflected in the content of French newspapers, where the sports section has either been treated as a cash cow that pays for the more important parts of the newspaper, or something to ignore completely. The sports page of *Le Devoir*, the daily of choice for Francophone intellectuals, stands as testament. Through the 1980s, *Le Devoir* treated its sports section as a necessarily evil: it was never longer than a page and was comprised almost completely of wire stories from the Canadian Press.⁷⁵ Sport-related stories outside the sport section were unthinkable; a columnist from a rival newspaper joked that getting a sports story into *Le Devoir* was “as tough as trying to get an ad for a massage parlor into

its lofty domain.”⁷⁶ *Le Devoir* appeared to be attempting to improve its sports coverage by giving journalist Richard Milo a daily column in September 1982, only to eliminate its sport section completely in 1992.⁷⁷

3.5 *Les Nordiques sont là*: Hockey and Sport Journalism

Of course, the *possibility* of pursuing a political agenda in the sports pages does not guarantee that a reporter will actually do so. Despite a smattering of socially conscious sport journalism in Québec, especially that which coalesced around the catalyst of Maurice “Rocket” Richard, the 1970s and 1980s appear to have been the first sustained period of political hockey journalism in Francophone newspapers. The increasingly activist orientation of Québécois journalism as a whole is certainly the most salient factor, but here I would like to discuss another: the establishment of a second Québec hockey team, the Québec City-based Nordiques. Founded in 1972 and playing initially in the maverick, made-for-TV World Hockey Association (WHA), the Nordiques became a vehicle for the hopes of activist sport journalists, a *tabula rasa* that came to symbolize what could be and what the Canadiens had ceased being: a Francophone owned, Francophone operated, French speaking hockey club that was intimately connected to its social and political milieu.

That the Nordiques, from their inception, had been intimately linked with neo-nationalism certainly helped their image with nationalist journalists. Originally denied a WHA franchise, a consortium of Québec City businessmen including insurance magnate Marius Fortier, property developer Paul Racine, and Quiet Revolutionary Jean Lesage, purchased the concession awarded to a San Francisco group and immediately moved the franchise to Québec City in advance of the WHA’s first regular season in 1972-73.

Reflecting on the team's first few years, Fortier explained that the foundation of the Nordiques had nationalist motives:

J'étais inspiré en outre par un aspect nationaliste. Une excessive prudence, pour ne pas dire la peur, a trop souvent fouillé les tripes du peuple québécois, l'amenant à se tapir dans l'ombre, lui interdisant parfois des réalisations audacieuses. On pouvait prouver à ce petit peuple, par le biais du sport, qu'il était possible de s'arracher à cette condition de porteur d'eau, et de monter une entreprise difficile malgré les railleries, les traquenards et les écueils.⁷⁸

In this appeal, Fortier places himself squarely in the tradition of the bourgeois thrust of the Quiet Revolution: his stated aim was no less than to carve out a spot in the hockey universe where Francophones could be *maîtres chez nous*, to secure a beachhead for Francophones in the world of hockey from which their historical inferiority could be reversed. To this end, the club from its inception made it a priority to sign high profile Francophone players from the NHL such as Gilbert Perreault, then one of the best players in the NHL, as well as the best Québec junior players. Jacques Richard, a Québec City junior hockey player drafted second overall by the NHL's Atlanta Flames, was said to be subject to immense "personal and political" pressure to sign with the Nordiques; *The Gazette* reported that "everyone from Jean Lesage to (*Le Soleil* columnist) Rollie Sabourin is leaning on him."⁷⁹

The Nordiques most sensational and symbolically successful raids targeted the Canadiens' roster, challenging Montréal's monopoly on Francophone talent. Their first high-profile capture was defenseman Jean-Claude Tremblay. Though money was certainly the most important factor in Tremblay's defection, he also cited language as a concern: by signing with the Nordiques, Tremblay, whose wife and children could not speak English, was seeking to pre-empt a trade to an Anglophone city and secure his professional future in a Francophone locale.⁸⁰ Language was also cited by the

Nordiques' next big capture – none other than Maurice “Rocket” Richard, who agreed to serve as the first head coach of the Nordiques while embroiled in a public feud with the Canadiens and the Molson family. At his first public appearance following his hiring, Richard said that “it feels good to be back in hockey. Especially in a place like Québec City, a French city. I’ll be able to coach young French Canadian boys, to teach them professional hockey.”⁸¹ Richard’s comments must be understood in the context of his simmering feud with the Canadiens and Molson. Highlighting Québec City’s status as a “French” hockey city implicitly suggested that Montréal was not; by the same token, defining his mission as coaching French Canadian boys insinuated that the Canadiens, who had enraged Richard by not considering him for the head coach’s role, no longer did. The Nordiques’ Francophone image was cemented by the composition of its all-Francophone front office and disproportionately Francophone player roster. Even *Le Devoir* paid attention to the new team, devoting half a page to the Nordiques’ first game and noting approvingly that “only three Québec players are of English extraction.”⁸²

The Nordiques made other gestures that projected a Québécois face, most notably by literally wrapping themselves in the Québec flag.⁸³ Before the 1974-75 season, the team added a fleur-de-lys, the flower on the Québec flag, to the shoulder trim of their red, white, and blue uniforms. More radical changes occurred in advance of the 1975-76 season: with the exception of the team logo, red was removed completely from the team’s uniforms, emphasizing blue and white; more fleurs-de-lys were added, this time to the bottom of the sweater; and most significantly, the away kit’s preeminent colour passed from dark blue to the shade of sea blue that dominates the Québec flag. The Nordiques’ new uniform was reminiscent enough of the Québec flag that it garnered the team

payments from the provincial government for helping to disseminate Québec's image abroad.⁸⁴

Though these gestures laid the groundwork for the Nordiques' later success in courting nationalist hockey fans, the Nordiques remained decidedly "small time" for the duration of their stint in the WHA. Though the WHA succeeded in luring some high profile NHL players with the promise of high salaries, the league was plagued by instability, shedding teams as quickly as it added others, and lurched from one financial crisis to the next. This instability, combined with many WHA teams' proclivity toward extreme violence, prompted hockey journalists, including those in Québec, to dismiss the WHA as a minor league operation.⁸⁵ The Nordiques, even after winning the WHA Championship in 1977, were for the most part ignored outside of Québec City and its surrounding area: while fans and the media appreciated the team for its Francophone orientation and aesthetically pleasing style of play, it was not conceived as being a legitimate rival to the Canadiens' provincial hegemony as long as it played in the WHA.

This changed after the merger between the WHA and NHL in 1979, after which the WHA ceased operations immediately, and its four most financially stable teams – the Nordiques, Edmonton Oilers, Winnipeg Jets, and Hartford Whalers – joined the NHL in time for the 1979-80 season. The terms of the merger agreement were harsh for the WHA refugees, particularly, thanks to the Canadiens' intervention, for the Nordiques. Soon to be competitors on the ice, the teams' owners were also rivals in the boardroom: the Canadiens' proprietor, Molson, was embroiled in an intense fight for the Québec beer market with Carling-O'Keefe, the Nordiques' owner. Attempting to prevent Carling-O'Keefe from using the Nordiques as a promotional vehicle for their product (as Molson

had done for years with the Canadiens and through sponsorship deals with the other Canadian NHL teams), the Canadiens initially voted against the merger.⁸⁶ The Canadiens only reversed their position after the threat of a boycott of Molson products in Western Canada and Québec, accepting the merger but only with clauses that greatly impeded the Nordiques' ability to compete head-to-head with the Canadiens. According to the terms of the merger, the Nordiques were banned from television for their first five years in the NHL except for local broadcasts as well as those occasions when Molson, who controlled North American hockey broadcasting through its subsidiary, the Canadian Sports Network, provided its sanction.⁸⁷ Faced with the threat of the Molson-controlled teams renegeing on their support for the merger, the Nordiques assented to these draconian terms, although team officials would later describe the process as akin to having "a gun to the head."⁸⁸

In addition to depriving the team of an important source of capital, the terms of the merger presented serious constraints on how the Nordiques could market themselves outside of the Québec City metropolitan area. Thanks to the television restrictions, the Nordiques rarely appeared on Radio-Canada's flagship hockey program, the Molson-sponsored *Soirée du hockey*; on the few occasions that their games against the Canadiens were televised, the images were disseminated in a way that advantaged Molson and the Canadiens and marginalized Carling-O'Keefe and the Nordiques.⁸⁹ Radio broadcasts, with the exception of the province-wide SRC broadcasts that were controlled by Molson and favoured the Canadiens, were local affairs. Sports talk radio was also a local phenomenon, unknown outside of Montréal and Québec City, and only gained prominence in the mid-1980s and the 1990s. The only communication media with a

province-wide reach available to the Nordiques were newspapers, specifically the large Montréal and Québec City dailies: invisible on television and radio outside Québec City, newspapers were the only mass medium in which the Nordiques maintained a constant presence.

This reality gave sport newspaper journalists a level of control over the Nordiques' image reminiscent of the pre-television "golden age" of sports. If the Nordiques were to establish a fan base outside of Québec City, it would have to do so in large part through the coverage in newspapers such as *La Presse*, *Le Soleil*, *Le Journal de Montréal*, *Le Journal de Québec*, and *Dimanche-Matin*. Luckily for the Nordiques, volume of coverage was never a problem. Nordiques reporting dominated the sports sections of the two largest Québec City dailies, *Le Soleil* and *Le Journal de Québec*, both in terms of volume and frequency. Crucially, the Nordiques were also granted a privileged place by Montréal papers *La Presse*, *Le Journal de Montréal* and *Dimanche-Matin*, who each assigned a staff reporter to the Nordiques beat and often devoted column space to analyzing the team as well (by contrast, *The Gazette* did not assign a reporter to the Nordiques beat until 1984). Overall, the difference in the total volume of coverage between the Canadiens and Nordiques in the big Montréal and Québec City newspapers was negligible, as both teams received blanket coverage during the hockey season.

Understanding that the print media were instrumental in their intensifying rivalry, the two teams courted newspaper journalists assiduously in order to secure favourable coverage. The Nordiques were especially enthusiastic: for example, during the 1982 playoffs, the Nordiques hosted a banquet for those journalists covering the team's series

with the New York Islanders. The menu, specially prepared by one of Québec City's finest restaurants, was breathlessly recounted in the subsequent day's newspapers.⁹⁰ The team outdid itself two years later, transforming the entire press room into a traditional Québécois *cabane à sucre*, with food, wine, and maple taffy available in abundance for journalists.⁹¹ The Canadiens, without matching the Nordiques' extravagance, also made unprecedented efforts to court journalists.⁹² The Nordiques also hired people with backgrounds in print journalism to coordinate their public relations. The most notable appointment was Jean-Donat Legault, a former *Montréal-Matin* sport journalist, who was vice president of marketing for the Nordiques from 1980-81 to 1982-83. The Nordiques later hired Bernard Brisset, at that time *La Presse*'s primary Canadiens beat reporter, to charm his former Montréal colleagues.⁹³

Whether or not these efforts were effective is impossible to gauge, but they almost certainly contributed to allegations of journalistic bias. Letters to the editor accusing hockey journalists of bias were commonplace. *Le Soleil* was concerned enough about these charges of partiality in its hockey coverage that the newspaper's editor-in-chief, Claude Masson, publicly certified that its hockey journalists were paid by the newspaper and not the Nordiques, and revealed the sports section's budget for 1979-80.⁹⁴ These allegations match the accepted narrative of the Canadiens-Nordiques rivalry, which posits that the tension on the ice was mirrored by that in the press box, as Québec City and Montréal journalists openly and passionately rooted for their specific home teams. This is certainly the opinion of Radio-Canada journalist Jean-François Chabot, who has written the only book about the Canadiens-Nordiques rivalry. He presents ample evidence to back up his thesis, but most of it related to radio personalities: for example,

Québec City radio personality Michel Villeneuve's claim that Montréal sport radio hosts were on the Canadiens' payroll, and Villeneuve's on-air fisticuffs with his Montréal counterpart Pierre Trudel.⁹⁵

I did not observe a similar phenomenon in the five years' worth of newspaper research that I conducted. The most intense open conflict between Montréal and Québec City journalists that I observed was related to comments made about Québec City fans; the teams themselves were hardly mentioned.⁹⁶ This is not to imply that newspaper journalists were paragons of objectivity in their coverage of the Canadiens and Nordiques, because they certainly were not. Journalists' bias had little to do with rooting for the hometown team, but was instead more intimately connected to journalistic ethics and political ideology. Some reporters freely admitted their preferences: for example, while consistently asserting that he was a fan only of his local college hockey team, Réjean Tremblay never hid that he had a soft spot for the Nordiques and admired the way that the club was run.⁹⁷

3.6 Summary

Ultimately, journalists such as Tremblay played the most important role in allowing the Nordiques, cut off from television, to mount a serious challenge to the Canadiens' cultural hegemony. By disseminating the Nordiques' neo-nationalist image in columns and beat reports, journalists allowed the Nordiques to make a powerful symbolic appeal to nationalist Francophone hockey fans outside of the Québec City metropolitan area to fans that would previously have self-identified as Canadiens supporters. This kind of coverage was entirely consistent with the ethic of *journalisme de combat*, a paradigm of sports reporting unique to Francophone Québec that rejected

the traditional apolitical norms of sport journalism in favour of a style of reporting that recalled the political activism of Québec journalists in the 1960s and 70s. *Journalisme de combat*, predominant in *Le Soleil*, *La Presse*, and *Dimanche-Matin*, coexisted alongside traditional sport journalism, practiced mainly in *Le Journal de Montréal* and *Le Journal de Québec*. Both forms of reporting generated neo-nationalist discourse, although *journalisme de combat* did so much more explicitly. This will become clear in the next chapter, where I will analyze how the French language press covered the first language controversy in the rivalry between the Canadiens and Nordiques.

3.7 Endnotes

¹ Garry J. Smith, "A Study of a Sport Journalist," *International Review for the Sociology of Sport* 11, No. 3 (1976): 7.

² Garry J. Smith and Terry A. Valeriotte, "Ethics in Sport journalism," in *Fractured Focus: Sport as a Reflection of Society*, ed. Richard E. Lapchick (Lexington, Mass.; Toronto: Lexington Books, 1986): 320.

³ Smith: 6. Smith cites a 1971 study that calculated the number of readers who purchase newspapers exclusively for the sports pages at over 30%; it stands to reason that the percentage would have been roughly similar during the period of my study.

⁴ Mark Douglas Lowes, *Inside the Sports Pages: Work Routines, Professional Ideologies, and the Manufacture of Sports News* (Toronto: University of Toronto Press, 1999): 10.

⁵ Søren Schultz Jørgensen, "The World's Best Advertising Agency: The Sports Press," in *International Sports Survey 2005* (Copenhagen: House of Monday Morning: Play the Game, 2005): http://www.playthegame.org/upload/sport_press_survey_english.pdf, (accessed 01 November 2010).

⁶ Schultz Jørgensen: 3.

⁷ Schultz Jørgensen: 3.

⁸ David Rowe, "Sport Journalism: Still the 'Toy Department' of the News Media?" *Journalism* 8, Vol. 4 (2007): 400.

⁹ Lawrence Wenner, "Drugs, Sport, and Media Influence: Can Media Inspire Constructive Attitudinal Change?" *Journal of Sport and Social Issues* 18, Vol. 3 (August 1994): 285.

¹⁰ Rowe: 391.

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- ¹¹ Leonard Shecter, *The Jocks* (New York: Paperback Library, 1970): 20-21.
- ¹² Shecter: 54.
- ¹³ Lowes: 99.
- ¹⁴ Smith: 21; Schultz Jørgensen: 5.
- ¹⁵ Rowe: 400.
- ¹⁶ Harry Edwards, *The Revolt of the Black Athlete* (New York: The Free Press, 1969): 33.
- ¹⁷ Shecter: 19-20.
- ¹⁸ Zirin has recently been embraced by sports sociologists as an exemplar of socially relevant sport journalism. See C. Richard King, "Toward a Radical Sport Journalism: An Interview with Dave Zirin," *Journal of Sport and Social Issues* 32, No. 4 (2008): 333-344.
- ¹⁹ Eric J. Hobsbawm, *Nations and Nationalism Since 1870: Programme, Myth, Reality* (Cambridge; New York: Cambridge University Press, 1990): 141.
- ²⁰ Anthony D. Smith, *Theories of Nationalism* (London: Duckworth, 1983): 30.
- ²¹ Benedict Anderson, *Imagined Communities: Reflections on the Origin and Spread of Nationalism* (London: Verso Press, 1983): 37.
- ²² Michael Billig, *Banal Nationalism* (London: Sage, 1995): 154.
- ²³ Billig: 115.
- ²⁴ Scholars such as Hobsbawm and Tom Nairn have placed journalists at the centre of the 'petty-bourgeois intellectual' class that has typically dominated nationalist movements. See Hobsbawm, 1990: 117; Tom Nairn, *Faces of Nationalism: Janus Revisited* (London; New York: Verso, 1997): 51-52.
- ²⁵ Florence Le Cam, *Le journalisme imaginé. Histoire d'un projet professionnel au Québec* (Montréal; Léveac, 2009): 14-16.
- ²⁶ Michael D. Behiels, *Prelude to Quebec's Quiet Revolution: Liberalism Versus Neo-nationalism, 1945-1960* (Kingston, Ont.: McGill-Queen's University Press, 1985): 24.
- ²⁷ Behiels: 122; 155.
- ²⁸ Le Cam: 241.
- ²⁹ François Demers & Florence Le Cam, "The Fundamental Role Played by Unionism in the Self-Structuring of Professional Journalism from Québec," *Canadian Journal of Communication* 31, No. 3 (2006): 664-65.

³⁰ Marc Raboy, *Movements and Messages: Media and Radical Politics in Québec* (Toronto: Between The Lines, 1984): 30.

³¹ Raboy: 30.

³² Armande Saint-Jean, *Éthique de l'information: fondements et pratiques au Québec depuis 1960* (Montréal: Presses de l'Université de Montréal, 2002): 132.

³³ Armande Saint-Jean, "The Evolution of Journalistic Ethics in Quebec," *Deadlines and Diversity: Journalism Ethics in a Changing World*, eds. Valerie Alia, Brian Brennan, and Barry Hoffmaster (Halifax, Fernwood Publishing, 1996): 27.

³⁴ Jean Charron, "Relations Between Political Parties and the Media in Québec Election Campaigns," in *Reporting the Campaign: Election Coverage in Canada*, Vol. 22, Royal Commission on Electoral Reform and Party Financing, ed. Frederick D. Fletcher (Toronto: Dundurn, 1991): 36.

³⁵ Esther Déom, *40 ans de syndicalisme chez les journalistes québécois* (Montréal: Agence d'ARC, 1989): 70.

³⁶ Raboy: 83.

³⁷ Raboy: 80.

³⁸ Charron: 90; Pierre Godin, *La lutte pour l'information: histoire de la presse écrite au Québec* (Montréal: Le Jour, 1981): 135-139.

³⁹ Saint-Jean, 1996: 27.

⁴⁰ Godin, 1981: 124.

⁴¹ Arthur Siegel, *Politics and the Media in Canada* (Toronto; New York: McGraw-Hill Ryerson, 1983): 209.

⁴² Charron: 94.

⁴³ Charron: 92-93.

⁴⁴ Godin, 1981: 212; Raboy: 82.

⁴⁵ *Le Soleil* distributed a circular to its staff in 1964 advising them that articles advocating Québec independence would no longer be tolerated. See Déom: 91.

⁴⁶ Raboy: 44.

⁴⁷ Cited in Gertrude J. Robinson, *Constructing the Quebec Referendum: French and English Media Voices* (Toronto: University of Toronto Press, 1998): 39-40.

⁴⁸ *Le Devoir* was at the time without an editor, and as such unable to publish a true editorial. Instead, the newspaper's four main columnists pronounced themselves; three declared for independence, one argued against it.

⁴⁹ Robinson: 42-48.

⁵⁰ Déom: 181.

⁵¹ Beauchamp plied his trade at *Montréal-Matin* from 1943 to 1969, and in various Péladeau-owned newspapers until his death in 1988. Beauchamp was one of the first sportswriters to be enshrined in the Hockey Hall of Fame (1984). For more information, see his Québec sports hall of fame biography: "Jacques Beauchamp, bâtisseur," *Réseau des sports*: <http://www.rds.ca/pantheon/chroniques/205526.html> (accessed 15 December 2010).

⁵² Godin, 1981: 163-164.

⁵³ Daniel Bélanger, "Étude descriptive des conditions de travail des journalistes de sport dans les quotidiens de langue française au Québec." PhD diss., Université Laval, 1992.

⁵⁴ Claude Bédard, "Équipe Québec, pour le sport ou pour la politique," *Le Journal de Québec*, 27 August 1981: 82.

⁵⁵ Claude Cadorette, "La politique va-t-elle ruiner tant de bonne volonté chez les Nordiques," *Le Journal de Montréal*, 01 October 1980: 119.

⁵⁶ Claude Bédard, "Moller n'a pas volé la place d'un Québécois," *Le Journal de Québec*, 12 June 1981: 66. Translation: Sport is not a question of race, language or religion. If it was, then there wouldn't be as many Blacks in major league sport, and we all know why that is.

⁵⁷ Normand Bourgeois, "Les Nordiques et le nouveau Colisée: le combat de la presse sportive," in *La culture du sport au Québec*, eds. Jean-Pierre Augustin and Claude Sorbets (Talence, France: Maison des Sciences de l'Homme d'Aquitaine, 1996): 226-227. Bourgeois also made this point in his doctoral dissertation: Normand Bourgeois, "Le Journalism sportif: ambivalence et marginalité." PhD diss., Université Laval, 1993.

⁵⁸ Bourgeois, 1996: 217.

⁵⁹ Maurice Dumas, "Je ne m'en cache pas, j'ai fait du journalisme de combat," *Le Soleil*, 01 October 1989: S9. Translation: I won't hide it, I have practiced combat journalism. I have passed social messages through sport.

⁶⁰ Réjean Tremblay, "Au service du lecteur et non au service du sport," *La Presse*, 08 October 1983: F2. Translation: I am a journalist who works in sport. I am not a "sport journalist." If I am, it's only when I play tennis. The rest of the time, I am at the service of the reader and not at the service of sport. So if I need a deontological code, I require one that works for the entire profession, not just for sport journalism.

⁶¹ Réjean Tremblay, "Le journalisme sportif a changé!" *La Presse*, 06 December 1980: F1. Translation: The sport journalist is concerned less and less with sport and more and more with journalism. Beat reporters must spend hours and hours discovering what is happening at multinational corporations, lawyers offices, and marketing companies that sell their products or an image via sport. They are more critical, less compliant.

⁶² A great example is the coverage of the 1981 Canada Cup international hockey tournament. Arguing that Francophones had been unfairly excluded from Team Canada, and that the French language was being disrespected by the Team Canada hierarchy, *Le Soleil* and *La Presse* consistently solicited opinions from outside the sports industry to frame their argument. One article synthesized the academic research of David Marple and Gilles Roy, who argued that Francophones were, like African Americans in the United States, systematically discriminated against; this same article sought additional opinions from Marcotte: Claude Larochelle, “Analogies entre Noirs et Francophones,” *Le Soleil*, 19 August 1981: C1. Opinions were solicited from Guy Bertrand on numerous occasions. To give but two examples: Maurice Dumas, “Le Québec pour remplacer la Tchécoslovaquie?” *Le Soleil*, 10 July 1981: B2; Réjean Tremblay, “Hockey Canada n’a pas su ‘écouter son client,’” *La Presse*, 26 August 1981: Sports section, 7. It was also not uncommon for *Le Soleil* and *La Presse* to publish opinion pieces by figures from outside the sports world. To give two examples: Guy Bertrand, “Question de fierté et de gros sous,” *Le Soleil*, 20 August 1981: A7; Gaston Marcotte, “Gaston Marcotte accuse la LNH,” *Le Soleil*, 25 April 1984: C2.

⁶³ Réjean Tremblay, “Oui, la politique et le sport vont bien de pair!” *La Presse*, 09 September 1983: Sports section, 5. Translation: There is nothing more empty, more untruthful, and more deceiving than that old cliché provided to people who want to inform themselves: sport and politics should never be mixed. This is a hackneyed cliché that serves mostly as a means for keeping a population in a state of indifference useful only to those who exploit them. It is the exact opposite. Sport and politics go together because everything is political. Every gesture, every utterance, every symbol has political significance.

⁶⁴ Alain Bouchard, “Un idéal nationaliste qui passe aussi par le hockey,” *Le Soleil*, 20 October 1979: F2.

⁶⁵ Godin, 1981: 226-227.

⁶⁶ André Leclair, “Il faudra maintenant dire le ‘docteur’ René Lecavalier,” *Le Journal de Québec*, 24 November 1979: 6; Réjean Tremblay also won awards for his contributions to the French language. See Canadian Press, “Le journaliste Réjean Tremblay reçoit le prix Jules-Fournier,” *Le Devoir*, 25 February 1983: 5.

⁶⁷ Canadian Press, “La discrimination face aux journalistes Francophones au sein des clubs professionnels,” *Le Journal de Montréal*, 13 November 1982: 74.

⁶⁸ Larochelle’s admission was found in Maurice Dumas, “Je ne m’en cache pas, j’ai fait du journalisme de combat,” *Le Soleil*, 1 October 1989: S-9; Tremblay divulged his vote in Canadian Press, “La discrimination face aux journalistes Francophones au sein des clubs professionnels,” *Le Journal de Montréal*, 13 November 1982: 74.

⁶⁹ Graham Fraser, “Quebec’s Non-Francophones Are a Favoured Minority,” *The Gazette*, 20 October 1981: 9.

⁷⁰ *The Gazette*, Editorial Cartoon, November 25, 1982: B2.

⁷¹ Michael Oriard, *King Football: Sport and Spectacle in the Golden Age of Radio and Newsreels, Movies and Magazines, the Weekly & the Daily Press* (Chapel Hill, N.C.; London: University of North Carolina Press, 2001): 29.

⁷² Raymond Boyle, *Sport Journalism: Context and Issues* (London: Sage, 2006): 34.

⁷³ Hubert Aquin and Andrée Yanacopoulo, “Éléments pour une phénoménologie du sport,” in *Problèmes d’analyse symbolique*, eds. Pierre Pagé and Renée Legris (Montréal: Presses de l’Université du Québec, 1972): 130-131.

⁷⁴ Anouk Bélanger, “Le hockey au Québec, bien plus qu’un jeu: analyse sociologique de la place centrale du hockey dans le projet identitaire des Québécois,” *Loisirs et Société* 19, No. 2 (1996): 540.

⁷⁵ Canadian Press reports composed by Francophone journalists ran the gamut of styles, from standard sport journalism to journalism de combat.

⁷⁶ Tim Burke, “Even Staid Le Devoir is Hooked on Expos!” *The Gazette*, 13 September 1979: 57.

⁷⁷ D. Bélanger: 9.

⁷⁸ Marius Fortier and Claude Larochelle, *Les Nordiques et le circuit maudit* (Sainte-Foy, Que.: Lotographie, 1978): 67-68. Translation: Among other things, I was inspired by a nationalist aspect. Excessive prudence, perhaps even fear, has too often gripped the québécois people, prompting us to hide in the shadows, and preventing us from realizing our potential. [The Nordiques shareholders] could prove to our people, through the medium of sport, that it was possible to escape from this inferior status, to realize a difficult project despite the obstacles, traps, and pitfalls.

⁷⁹ Ted Blackman, “Pollock Survives ‘Shock’ of NHL Wheeling-Dealing,” *The Gazette*, 7 June 1972: 13. Richard signed with Atlanta, before joining the Nordiques in 1979-80.

⁸⁰ Herbert Bauch, “Tremblay Jumps to New Hockey League,” *The Gazette*, 21 July 1972: 1.

⁸¹ Herbert Bauch, “Rocket Returns – As Quebec WHA Pilot,” *The Gazette*, 28 July 1972: 15.

⁸² François Lemenu, “Une première expérience des plus intéressantes,” *Le Devoir*, 14 October 1972: 22.

⁸³ For more information about the Québec flag, see Hélène-Andrée Bizier and Claude Paulette, *Fleur de lys: d’hier à aujourd’hui* (Montréal : Art global, 1997).

⁸⁴ Benoît Aubin, “La bataille des Nordiques,” *L’actualité*, March 1980: 28.

⁸⁵ For more information about the constructed inferiority of the WHA, see Fortier and Larochelle, *Les Nordiques et le circuit maudit*.

⁸⁶ The Toronto Maple Leafs and Vancouver Canucks, both Molson clients, also voted against the merger.

⁸⁷ Exceptions were mostly confined to when the Nordiques played the Canadiens on a Molson broadcast.

⁸⁸ Claude Larochelle, “Les trois motifs des belligérants,” *Le Soleil*, 16 October 1980: C3.

⁸⁹ A clear example comes in the Nordiques’ first ever regular season home game against the Canadiens, televised on Soirée du hockey on October 28, 1979. During a pregame ceremony, SRC cameras cut away once Carling-O’Keefe executive Ronald Corey was announced, cutting back only after Corey had left the ice.

⁹⁰ Albert Ladouceur, “Tout un accueil à la presse,” *Le Journal de Montréal*, 02 May 1982: 75.

⁹¹ Bernard Brisset, “Bloc-Notes,” *La Presse*, 15 April 1984: Sports section, 35.

⁹² Bernard Brisset, “Bloc-Notes,” *La Presse*, 15 April 1984: Sports section, 35. Brisset notes that the Canadiens, for the first time ever, served a hot meal to counter the Nordiques’ sugar shack.

⁹³ Jean-François Chabot, *La grande rivalité Canadiens-Nordiques* (Montréal: Les Éditeurs Reunis, 2009): 206.

⁹⁴ Claude Masson, “Presse et Nordiques,” *Le Soleil*, 1 April 1980: A6.

⁹⁵ Chabot: 118.

⁹⁶ Claude Bédard, “Les bêtises d’un homme qui ne se renseigne pas,” *Le Journal de Québec*, 16 May 1980: 66.

⁹⁷ Réjean Tremblay, “Joyeux Noël aux gens de Québec... et aux autres,” *La Presse*, 24 December 1981: Sports section, 5.

Chapter 4

4 “Une grande victoire pour le Québec français”: Neo-nationalism and the Elimination of English at the Colisée

On October 28, 1979, the Québec Nordiques hosted the Montréal Canadiens for the first time in an NHL regular season game. It was not the first game between the province’s two elite professional teams – they had already played on October 13, in Montréal, a game won 3-1 by the Canadiens – but it was a momentous occasion in Québec professional hockey nonetheless. The Nordiques earned an unexpected 5-4 triumph over the defending Stanley Cup champions, but it was not the frenzied action on the ice that generated the occasion’s lasting impression. Instead, the choice of language used in the pre-game ceremony as well as in public address announcements throughout the night garnered the most attention. The pre-game ceremony, commemorating former Nordiques and Canadiens player Jean-Claude Tremblay, was conducted entirely in French, in sharp contrast to the precedent established in Montréal, where both English and French were used. The culmination of this ceremony was the speech made by Robbie Ftorek, the Nordiques’ captain, an American from Needham, Massachusetts. Speaking without notes, the unilingual Ftorek fumbled and struggled his way through a short speech made entirely in poorly accented French: “pour nous, Jean-Claude, uh... (applause)... tu es un grand étoile. Nous avons... nous avons... shit... nous avons belle chance pour toi... uh... (laughter mixed with applause)... et nous te souhaitons bonne chance.”¹ Ftorek’s effort elicited thunderous ovations. The ceremony ended with a rendition of the Canadian national anthem, sung entirely in French by Guy Lavoie, in

contrast with Roger Doucet's famous bilingual interpretation of *O Canada* at the Montréal Forum.²

In contrast to the unilingual French pre-game ceremony, in-game announcements such as player introductions and the announcement of goals and penalties were provided in both English and French, similar to the convention established in Montréal. These bilingual public address announcements prompted the most commentary after the game. A *Le Soleil* headline warned of “du bilinguisme de colonisé au Colisée;”³ *Le Soleil*'s gossip columnist, Pierre Champagne, described the use of English at the Colisée as “stupide” and “indécent” and urged Québec City fans to protest future uses of English with hearty booing.⁴ These denunciations of the Nordiques' bilingual announcements marked the beginning of a five month period where the public language of both the Colisée and the Forum was publicly scrutinized in the pages of Québec's Francophone newspapers. By March, 1980, the Nordiques had received the go-ahead from the NHL's Board of Governors to do away with English language announcements completely; the Canadiens, meanwhile, maintained their policy of bilingualism despite pressure from politicians and the French media to follow the Nordiques' example.

These debates were shaped by broader discourses of language, unilingualism, and bilingualism. The Nordiques' proposed policy of French unilingualism, and its subsequent ratification, was identified as validation for the neo-nationalist project of French unilingualism. In this context, the Nordiques' language policy also constituted an unequivocal rejection of both the theory and practical implementation of bilingualism, represented by the policy sustained at the Montréal Forum. To frame this argument, it is first necessary to provide an overview of the theoretical arguments that have been

presented in support of bilingualism and unilingualism in Québec. Following this overview, I trace the linguistic controversies of the first three months of the 1979-80 NHL season that became the backdrop to the Nordiques' proposed unilingualism while serving, at least partially, as justification for its implementation. Finally, using Richardson's method of discourse analysis outlined in the introduction, I examine the three waves of media debate that followed the Nordiques' announcement: the reaction to the announcement itself (January, 1980); the ensuing criticism of the Canadiens' bilingualism (February, 1980); and finally, the response to the ratification of the Nordiques' policy (March, 1980).

4.1 Official Bilingualism and the Official Languages Act

In Chapter 2, I briefly summarized the provincial language legislation that transformed Québec from a *de facto* bilingual society into a unilingual one that privileged and protected the French language. I will discuss French unilingualism in more detail further on in this chapter. But first, I shall examine the *federal* government's competing foray into language legislation, the Official Languages Act (1969), a law that extended federal bilingual services in both English and French across Canada. Though Prime Minister Lester B. Pearson (1963-1968), who convened the Royal Commission on Bilingualism and Biculturalism in 1963, presided over the first government to consider seriously a pan-Canadian language policy, official bilingualism is linked inextricably with his successor, Pierre Elliott Trudeau (1968-1979, 1980-84). Raised in a bilingual household in Montréal, Trudeau was a public intellectual during the 1950s; he fought against the *grande noirceur* (great darkness) of Premier Maurice Duplessis' authoritarian reign (1936-1939, 1944-1959), most prominently through his contributions to the liberal

and anti-clerical political journal *Cité Libre* and editing a book about the 1949 mining strike at Asbestos, Québec, one of the first touchstones of anti-Duplessis resistance.⁵ But unlike his counterparts in other stalwart anti-Duplessis organs such as the journal *L'action nationale* and *Le Devoir*, Trudeau was a staunch anti-nationalist. Indeed, Trudeau's anti-nationalism was one of the main reasons that he was recruited into the Liberal Party of Canada in 1965; he was identified by Pearson as somebody who could stand up to the rising tide of neo-nationalism and separatism that was quickly gaining cachet in Québec politics.⁶

Trudeau's understanding of nationalism was articulated most forcefully in his book *Federalism and the French Canadians*, a collection of his essays from *Cité Libre* and other sources. He argued that French Canadians' aspirations were best met within the framework of the Canadian federation, and urged them to "abandon their role of oppressed nation and decide to participate boldly and intelligently in the Canadian experience."⁷ In this book, Trudeau questioned the very idea of the nation by challenging naturalistic assumptions about the relationship between nations and the people that constitute them. "The nation," wrote Trudeau, "is not a biological reality – that is, a community that springs from the very nature of man."⁸ Instead, the nation, according to Trudeau, is a social construction whose emergence is best explained as an accident of human irrationality. For Trudeau, this fact rendered the nation, and the notion of the nation-state, "absurd" and even dangerous: "to insist that a particular nationality must have complete sovereign power is to pursue a self-destructive end."⁹ A state that defined its function in terms of ethnic particularism, or one that catered specifically to one segment of its population (as delineated by ethnic characteristics), was inevitably doomed

to chauvinism, intolerance, totalitarianism, and cataclysmic warfare.¹⁰ This last point spoke to Trudeau's almost blanket rejection of collectivism in favour of individual rights. He ultimately deemed nationalism to be malignant precisely because it subverted individual liberty. Tellingly, Trudeau quoted the nineteenth century French political philosopher Ernest Renan, who wrote one of the earliest tomes on the subject of nationalism: "man is neither bound to his language nor to his race; he is bound only to himself because he is a free agent, or in other words a moral being."¹¹

Although Trudeau did not mention unilingualism or bilingualism specifically in his writings, the language legislation he passed as Prime Minister must be understood through his theoretical understanding of the nation as a backwards and destructive construct, and his preference for individual over group rights. Trudeau's vision, writes historian Marc Levine, was of a "coast-to-coast bilingual Canada, in which minority (language) rights would be entrenched in a constitution and in which Francophones could maintain their language and culture while becoming full participants in Canadian life."¹² The Official Languages Act, ratified in 1969 and later strengthened in 1988, was designed to that effect. By transforming the Canadian state into an institution that could engage with both English and French speaking Canadians, it sought to ensure that individual citizens were able to communicate with the federal government in the language of their choice. Though the Official Languages Act was, as journalist, author, and current Commissioner of Official Languages Graham Fraser points out, a utilitarian device rather than a grandiloquent philosophical statement of intent, the legislation nevertheless was intended to catalyze significant changes in Canadian politics.¹³ It prompted a radical change in the functioning of the Canadian state, which had hitherto

conducted business almost entirely in English and excluded unilingual French speakers from key bureaucratic positions. And by extending individual language rights across Canada, Trudeau hoped that Québec Francophones would come to feel as comfortable in Toronto and Vancouver as they did in Montréal or Québec City. In the context of 1960s Canadian politics, this represented an attempt to head off the dangers posed by increasingly popular ideas such as French unilingualism and Québec separatism by reorienting the gaze of Québec Francophones from the province to the Canadian polity as a whole.

From this last perspective, the Official Languages Act must be considered a failure.¹⁴ While it undoubtedly prompted an influx of Québec Francophones into positions of power within the federal government, Ottawa's *lingua franca* continued to be English.¹⁵ Furthermore, the legislation was resisted fiercely outside Québec, compromising the extent to which Francophones could feel "at home" in other parts of the country. A common refrain in English speaking Canada was that the federal government was attempting to "force French down the throats" of unilingual English speakers.¹⁶ Members of Parliament, especially those representing Western Canadian constituencies, spoke out against the use of French. For example, one MP, evoking the spirit of British imperialism, insisted that "Wolfe defeated Montcalm [in 1759], and flew the British flag over Québec territory. The people of Québec should remember this before they demand too much."¹⁷ A retired naval officer, J.V. Andrew, wrote a much publicized book where he imagined official bilingualism as a conspiracy designed to "hand Canada over to the French Canadian race" and turn Canada into a unilingual French speaking country.¹⁸ Crises such as the *Gens de l'air* affair, where Francophone

pilots and air traffic controllers were temporarily stripped of the right to speak to each other in French in Canadian airspace, seemed to confirm that official bilingualism did nothing to protect the French language against an anglo-Canadian backlash.¹⁹ And there were even manifestations of francophobia in seemingly extrapolitical spaces, such as elite sport. Most famously, Montréal Canadiens public address announcer Claude Mouton was vociferously booed while uttering a few words of French at a 1976 Team Canada hockey game at Maple Leaf Gardens in Toronto.²⁰

4.2 Unilingualism in the Québec Context

The hostility directed at official bilingualism by English speaking Canadians was exceeded by the hostility directed toward it by French unilingualists and neo-nationalists within Québec. While Trudeau had hoped to reorient the gaze of Québec Francophones to Ottawa, neo-nationalists ensured that it remained fixed squarely on provincial politics by offering a made-in-Québec approach to language that was rooted firmly in the symbolic terrain of Québec nationhood. Neo-nationalists stressed the relationship between Québec nation and the French language; the end goal of the neo-nationalist project was to anchor Québécois national identity in the predominance of the French language. As discussed earlier, the emphasis on French speaks to a “civic” ideal of nationalism, rooted in the primacy and commonality of citizenship. And indeed, this has been and remains the central thrust of the neo-nationalist project.²¹ Yet, there existed a paradox in the movement for French unilingualism in the 1960s and 70s: while on one hand advancing a supra-ethnic form of citizenship centred on language, many of Québec unilingualism’s foundational texts simultaneously presupposed an organic, essentialist

relationship between language and national identity, a characteristic more indicative of “ethnic” nationalisms and identities.

Before expanding on this claim, it is first necessary to explain the linguistic relativity thesis, associated mostly with the ethnolinguist Benjamin Whorf. Briefly stated, Whorf argued that language is a psychological structure that functions not just as the vehicle for thought, but more importantly as its motor. Language dictated the way humans comprehended the world and cognitively organized reality. Whorf in effect argued for the primordality of language: language begets culture, not the other way around. According to Whorf:

Every language is a vast pattern system, different from others, in which are culturally ordained the forms and categories by which the personality not only communicates, but also analyzes nature, notices or neglects types of relationships and phenomena, channels his reasoning, and builds the house of his consciousness.²²

Linguists such as Michael Silverstein have pointed out that Whorf’s hypothesis was tailor-made for nationalist exploitation, and indeed, it had more than a passing resemblance to the worldview of eighteenth and nineteenth century romantic nationalists such as Johann Gottfried von Herder.²³ Applying Whorf’s analysis to Québec’s language conundrum yields an obvious, if simple, conclusion: accepting Whorfianism is to conclude that French Canadians can express themselves as French Canadians *only* by speaking French. Despite neo-nationalism’s emphasis on civic nationalism, the indelible imprint of Wharfianism is detectable in many of the ideology’s foundational texts. Take the writings of André D’Allemagne, one of the founders of the left wing separatist party *Rassemblement pour l’indépendance national* (RIN), the first Québécois political party to adopt unilingualism as a policy, and among the pivotal figures in the theoretical

exploration of French unilingualism. As Karim Larose, who effectuated the most impressive intellectual history of Québec unilingualism to date, argued, “au moment crucial de l’élaboration théorique de l’unilinguisme, D’Allemagne est celui qui consacre avec le plus de constance à la mise en lumière des enjeux et les dangers liés au bilinguisme, qu’il soit individuel ou collectif.”²⁴ D’Allemagne’s case for unilingualism and against bilingualism was built on an explicitly Whorfian understanding of language; D’Allemagne, who completed a Master’s degree at the Université de Montréal in linguistics, frequently cited Whorf in his writings.²⁵ D’Allemagne argued that language is essentially and organically linked to culture and that language is a way of thinking that shapes an individual’s thoughts. Language therefore created culture rather than acting merely as a vehicle for it: man, D’Allemagne argued, was a slave to his language, not the other way around. Man could speak *only* in his own language, the assumption being that every person naturally could possess only one language.

Consistent with the developing neo-nationalist orthodoxy, D’Allemagne identified French as the paramount constituent of Québécois culture. Identifying the French language as the basis for any nation building project going forward, D’Allemagne’s flirtations with Whorfianism suggest an understanding of language rooted at least in part in organic understandings of the nation: his acceptance of Whorfianism entailed, in effect, an assumption that people could not express themselves as Québécois without speaking French. This strain of linguistic essentialism was clearly identifiable in subsequent neo-nationalist writings. For example, René Lévesque wrote that “at the core of [the Québécois personality] is the fact that we speak French. Everything else depends on this one essential element and follows from it or leads us infallibly back to it.”²⁶ Jean

Lesage, in a speech given upon the inauguration of the provincial Ministry of Cultural Affairs, made a similar argument:

Of all the languages currently spoken in the world, the French language is the one that fits us best because of our own characteristics and our own mentality. We could no longer be French Canadian if we spoke another language because then we would adopt means of expression produced in a foreign culture.²⁷

This assumption about the organic link between language and culture also permeated government policy and language legislation. Bill 63, the first attempt at provincial language legislation in Québec, claimed that “language is more than just a mode of expression: it is an instrument that models thought, that gives culture its distinct character.”²⁸ The Parti Québécois government’s 1978 policy paper on cultural development, vividly representing the tension between essentialist and non-essentialist notions of language, similarly argued:

Even if English, Italian, and Greek can and should be freely spoken in Québec, everyone should at least be able to communicate by means of one common language. But the logical consequences must be accepted. A language is not simply a syntax or a string of words. It is an expression of the more meaningful aspects of community life.²⁹

Once accepted, understandings of the relationship between the French language and Québécois culture inevitably gave rise to intense concerns about threats to the language, and also helps to explain why provincial unilingualism exerted a greater ideological pull within Québec than federal bilingualism in the 1960s and 70s: the ability to communicate with the federal government in Alberta mattered little for those who understood the future vitality of the French language within their own province to be in question. In fact, many neo-nationalists understood bilingualism itself as posing the gravest threat to the French language. Though bilingualism had long been a fact of life for many French Canadian families, some theorists deemed integral bilingualism not just

undesirable, but impossible. In fact, in an argument that inverted histrionic claims made by English Canadian anti-bilingualists, many nationalists, especially radicals, argued that bilingualism was in fact a Trojan horse for English unilingualism. D'Allemagne, for example, theorized that linguistic accommodation or coexistence was impossible in a normal society, as one language would always seek to dominate the other.³⁰ Bilingualism was theorized as one of the most effective tools of colonialism, an insidious institution that concealed the unilateral domination of the colonizer's language while crushing indigenous languages and humiliating the population that spoke them. This notion of "linguistic colonialism," as D'Allemagne termed it, was prominent in neo-nationalist language discourse. To give but one example, the public intellectual Hubert Aquin argued that bilingualism could only be a byproduct of war, conquest, or colonialism; pan-Canadian bilingualism, therefore, was a myth, political sleight-of-hand designed to secure the English speaking colonizer's main objective, the assimilation of Canadian French speakers into the Anglophone polity.³¹ Bilingualism could only be, in the words of historian Michel Brunet, an "assimilationist bilingualism;"³² D'Allemagne, in his influential book *Le colonialisme au Québec*, described it graphically as "a bilingualism that kills."³³

To illustrate this, many nationalists pointed to the cultural degradation they claimed had been caused by bilingualism. The *joual* debate, which preoccupied Québec literary circles in the 1970s, is a fascinating example. *Joual*, briefly, is a dialect or patois of French that originated in the east end of Montréal and was characterized, among other things, by its frequent use of English words.³⁴ It was popularized by literary figures such as playwright Michel Tremblay, who championed *joual* as a distinct Québécois voice and

as a language of resistance.³⁵ But many in Québec also understood *joual* as an example of the cultural and linguistic degradation wrought by bilingualism. Consider the take of linguist André Sénécal:

The menace is most evident in the language of the lower strata of urban Québec whose bilingual patois is known as *joual*... the vernacular of the province is not only saturated with recognizable anglicisms... it is also corrupted by countless hidden borrowings... they are more injurious because they gain currency under the cloak of a French appearance. The inroads of English are most harmful when they affect the morphosyntactic system of French, a process that can critically undermine the speaker's identification with a dominant language and his ability to conceptualize and fully express reality.³⁶

The use of words such as *menace*, *saturate*, *corrupted*, *injurious*, and *harmful* is entirely consistent with this particular strain of neo-nationalist discourse on bilingualism. In the same vein, Jacques Godbout, discussing *joual*, compared the use of English to a case of syphilis caught from bilingualism: “nos mots français, ces mots dégradés, pourris par le bilinguisme, tuent longtempts toute pensée originale dans ce pays.”³⁷ These arguments were adapted and employed also by those who defended the use of *joual*. Poet Gérard Godin, criticizing those who saw *joual* as a threat to the French language, argued that there was little point mourning the death of a sick, rotting, decomposing culture.³⁸ Godin instead championed using *joual* as a device of “language terrorism” – a political use of language designed to expose the linguistic and cultural colonialism from which it emerged.³⁹

This examination of *joual* is meant to illustrate the framework through which one particularly influential group of neo-nationalists understood the French and English languages, and to point to the very real cultural fears associated with bilingualism. If, as anthropologist Richard Handler pointed out, neo-nationalism was characterized by a tension between the desire for cultural affirmation and a fear of cultural annihilation, then

this particular language discourse was concerned primarily with the latter.⁴⁰ It starkly presented language as a binary where bilingualism was impossible. There could only be French unilingualism or English unilingualism; in the words of Québécois socialist Raoul Roy, “we can have French unilingualism imposed by the [provincial] government or we can have English unilingualism imposed by the occupying forces.”⁴¹ Choosing bilingualism over French unilingualism was, in the view of those who reproduced this discourse, tantamount to linguistic and cultural suicide, compliance with colonialism, and a negation of the nation itself. Bilingualism, therefore, could not be the normal situation for a nation, like Québec, that desired to control its own destiny; the use of English had, to a certain extent, to be curtailed in order to provide space for the affirmation of French. The push for unilingualism was therefore, by this logic, as much about the elimination of English from certain public spheres as it was about the affirmation of French: many unilingualists identified the limiting of English as an important prerequisite in the survival of the French language and affirmation of the Québec nation. My analysis of the French language media’s coverage of the Nordiques’ decision to move from bilingualism to unilingualism reveals the prominence of this nationalist discourse in the sports pages of Québec’s French language newspaper.

4.3 To Boo or Not to Boo? Antecedents to the Nordiques’ Language Policy

The circumstances preceding the Nordiques’ announcement of their French-only policy must be noted. While a Francophone image followed the Nordiques from the WHA to the NHL, this was based almost entirely on symbolism – the colour and insignia on the team’s uniform, for example – and not the actions of the club itself, aggressively

pursuing a neo-nationalist agenda. I was unable to find any evidence in the media coverage I analyzed to suggest that the club had considered changing its language practices until after it had been criticized for bilingualism.⁴² This despite the fact that language controversies plagued the team before their inaugural NHL season had even begun. Michel Goulet and Pierre Lacroix, two young Nordiques' players, refused to sign their NHL contracts unless they were first provided legal French language translations. Lacroix, a unilingual Francophone, and Goulet, who spoke a bit of English, were represented, not coincidentally, by Guy Bertrand, the neo-nationalist lawyer and mastermind of the project to bring Québec a national hockey team.⁴³ After attempts by the league to force Goulet and Lacroix to sign an English language contract, the NHL eventually acquiesced and promised to draft legal French translations.⁴⁴

The coverage of this saga established a precedent for the French media's coverage of the Nordiques and Canadiens for the years to come. Goulet and Lacroix were portrayed as national heroes who stood up for "le respect du français" against an institution (the NHL) that, evoking the history of English dominance in the province, "il ne faut pas l'oublier, est situé en plein coeur de Montréal dans l'édifice Sun Life."⁴⁵ Goulet and Lacroix were also constructed as trailblazers, Québécois Jackie Robinsons, who "auront donc brisé la barrière de l'unilinguisme contractuel."⁴⁶ In contrast, difficult questions were asked of the Canadiens: why had their players or management not demanded French language contracts in the past? Réjean Tremblay of *La Presse* provided his own answers to this question:

Pourquoi? Parce qu'ils n'ont regardé que les signes de piastres probablement! Quand [Guy] Lafleur a fait sa grève l'an passé pour obtenir un nouveau contrat, il tenait tellement le Canadien par la gorge qu'il aurait pu obtenir un contrat en braille s'il avait exigé! Pourquoi n'ont-ils jamais exercé la moindre pression?

Parce qu'ils ne sont pas conscients que leur immense prestige pourrait leur permettre d'obtenir en une seule déclaration publique ce qui demanderait des mois de lutte à d'autres individus; parce qu'ils ne sont absolument pas intéressés à se mouiller pour aider autres Québécois moins privilégiés.⁴⁷

Tremblay's analysis is useful because it clearly situated the Canadiens as a regressive institution: in contrast to the Nordiques, the Canadiens and their players had power and prestige, but refused to utilize it for social, economic, and in this case, linguistic struggle. Utterances made by the Canadiens about French language contracts only reinforced this conservative image. The team's general manager Irving Grundman, a Montréal-born Anglophone, stated that he was prepared to accept French language contracts if the league furnished them, but made clear that the team itself would not take any particular measures to bring about this change.⁴⁸ Statements like these guaranteed that the Canadiens' conservatism became an ingrained presupposition in the writings of the French media. A telling example is a *Journal de Québec* report that quoted Bertrand discussing the opposition toward Goulet and Lacroix: "ce n'est pas tout le monde qui approuve cette initiative," he said. Though Bertrand did not mention anybody by name, and though no evidence was presented to ferret out who "tout le monde" referred to, the reporter, Claude Cadorette, himself made the inference that Bertrand was referring specifically to the Canadiens.⁴⁹

These apparently divergent positions on French language contracts made it easy for the French media to place the Nordiques and Canadiens into a linguistic binary that celebrated the Nordiques' Francophone orientation while, reproducing neo-nationalism's core theoretical assumptions, equated the Canadiens' bilingualism with English unilingualism. As *La Presse* wrote, "le Canadien est bilingue au niveau officiel... mais unilingue au niveau des communications internes. Les Nordiques sont essentiellement

francophones mais deviendront bilingues par nécessité.”⁵⁰ However, the Nordiques’ organization did little to exploit this situation at the beginning of the year. The team made no public statements that unequivocally supported Lacroix and Goulet’s initiatives. In fact, the only comment from the team was a brief and rather vague statement from General Manager Maurice Filion, asserting that the club would do everything in its power to ensure that the two players would be present at the first day of the team’s training camp.⁵¹ Team President Marcel Aubut, who quickly and forcefully made public statements during the next language controversy, remained conspicuously quiet.

This relative silence leads me to believe that the Nordiques, upon their entry into the NHL, had no designs on imposing French unilingualism at the Colisée, or any language policy at all for matches in Québec City. It is instead most likely that the club’s hand was forced by the media-fuelled language controversy that followed the first Canadiens-Nordiques game in Québec City. This controversy had two parts. The first consisted of the overwhelmingly negative French press reaction to the use of English in the Colisée, an anger exacerbated and intensified by a language complaint submitted to the NHL by Glenn Cole, an Anglophone journalist at *The Gazette*, who had inadvertently received a unilingual French fact sheet. Tremblay referred to this episode as an example of the “problems” that plague colonized countries.⁵² Similarly, a headline in *Le Soleil*’s sport section criticized “du bilinguisme de colonisé au Colisée,” equating the use of English at Nordiques’ games with the enduring colonization of Québec.⁵³ This theme was further extended by *Le Soleil*’s columnist Claude Larochelle in that same issue. In a furious tirade prompted by Cole’s complaint, Larochelle attacked the very underpinnings of federal bilingualism:

S'appuyant sur la démarche de [Glenn] Cole [of *The Gazette*], mais dans un geste plutôt caricatural sous forme de bonne boutade, [Francophone journalists] pourraient expédier une requête au bureau du président John Ziegler réclamant le bilinguisme dans les patinoires canadiennes de la Ligue nationale. Quoi de plus naturel puisque le Canada est bilingue, que les francophones y ont leur place, suivant les indications des Pierre Trudeau, Marc Lalonde, Jean Chrétien, Claude Ryan.

Il va de soi, et cela semble tout à fait naturel, qu'il n'y ait pas un seul mot de français aux amphithéâtres de Winnipeg ou d'Edmonton, et cela en dépit de forts groupes francophones habitant les banlieues de ces villes. A Edmonton, on répète les annonces au micro une deuxième fois, dans un style télégraphique, mais en anglais il va de soi. La documentation réservée à la presse est unilingue anglaise...

...Il n'y aurait pas de requête. Ce serait d'abord une mauvaise farce, une bien piètre caricature, et il ne vient surtout pas à l'esprit de personne d'imposer le français à nos amis de l'Ouest. Un certain Pierre Trudeau s'y est essayé avec les résultats que l'on connaît!

Ce serait d'ailleurs charrier dans les begonias, tout le monde le comprend. Mais en revanche pourquoi charrie-t-on au Colisée de Québec? Certes suivant l'idéal proclamé la main sur le coeur, ce devrait être donnant donnant dans ce pays. Mais puisque ça ne l'est pas, ça ne devrait pas être toujours aux porteurs d'eau du Québec de manifester leur générosité dans le bilinguisme.⁵⁴

Listing the architects of bilingualism – Trudeau, Lalonde, Chrétien, and Ryan –

Larochelle sarcastically asked what could be more natural than bilingualism in Edmonton and Winnipeg as well as in Québec City.⁵⁵ This rhetorical question was posed to frame Larochelle's main argument, that pan-Canadian bilingualism was a failure. Larochelle pointed out that Canadian cities such as Edmonton and Winnipeg did not maintain bilingual NHL operations, nor should such a language regime be forced upon them. The pan-Canadian bilingualist initiative of imposing French in Western Canada had been a failure, Larochelle asserted; invoking Trudeau's name here was tantamount to a rejection of the Official Languages Act. Larochelle finished by lamenting that the burden of bilingualism always fell on Québec. Though he stopped short of calling for

unilingualism at the Colisée, he revealed that the NHL had no statutes on its books governing language use. A follow up column two days later, citing contacts in the NHL's head office, confirmed that the league never had a language policy.⁵⁶ The Nordiques, therefore, were bilingual by choice; this, according to Larochelle, amounted to a “colonized gesture,” “servility,” and “complicity” with bilingualists.⁵⁷ The use of this kind of forceful language strongly suggested that the Nordiques' practice of bilingualism was wrong, reactionary, and even destructive for the French language and therefore Québécois culture. And though Larochelle did not call for unilingualism in so many words, the linguistic binary established in the neo-nationalist discourse discussed earlier in this chapter – that bilingualism was impossible, meaning that French or English unilingualism were the only realistic options – suggested that his column would have been understood through this lens.

Though Larochelle did not make an explicit call for French unilingualism, others did, notably Pierre Champagne, who maintained a running campaign in support of Colisée unilingualism from the pages of his *Le Soleil* gossip column. Champagne's perspective on language conformed closely to the neo-nationalist discourse. Immediately after the October 30 game, he described the use of French in the Colisée as “normal;” the use of English, meanwhile, was depicted as “stupid” and “indecent,” and, noting that hockey bilingualism existed only in Québec, urged fans to voice their displeasure with the use of English by heartily booing its use. He concluded by advising the Nordiques to revise their language policy to one that enforced unilingualism.⁵⁸ Champagne reiterated his call for unilingualism, and the booing of English, again in columns on November 14, November 20, November 21, December 11, and January 8, 1980, devoting parts of six

columns to the subject in just over two months.⁵⁹ In that January 8 column, Champagne claimed that his campaign had achieved results: he noted that English had recently been booed for the first time at the Colisée, upon which the public address announcer switched immediately to French, and that English was now only used, briefly, to announce goals and penalties.

The second factor that forced the Nordiques into action was the booing of French in other Canadian NHL arenas. In the space of three weeks in November and December, 1979, fans in Vancouver and Edmonton booed French language stanzas of the Canadian national anthem when it was sung before games pitting the local teams against the Canadiens.⁶⁰ Noting this, the Winnipeg Jets opted for an exclusively English rendition of *O Canada* during the Canadiens' visit.⁶¹ These events in western Canada were of great interest to the Francophone sport media. For example, André Rousseau of *Le Journal de Montréal* sarcastically described the booing as “une autre preuve de l'unité nationale exemplaire du pays.”⁶² Réjean Tremblay was quickest to link the booing and the Jets' decision to eliminate French completely from the national anthem to wider socio-political contexts. Noting that the anthem had been sung entirely in French in American cities such as Atlanta and St. Louis (to warm applause), he described the booing in “notre beau pays” as “le genre de huées qui méprisent, qui haïssent, qui puent.”⁶³ Emphasizing that French had recently been declared an official language in the province of Manitoba by a provincial court, Tremblay panned the Jets' decision as “cowardice in the face of racism and fanaticism” that legitimized the virulent francophobia that existed in English Canada:

Les racistes de Toronto, Vancouver, Winnipeg, et Edmonton ont donc gagné, c'est devenu mauvais, risqué, dangereux de prononcer quelques mots de français...

Et qu'on ne parle pas de poignées de fanatiques, j'étais à Toronto quand [Claude] Mouton avait été hué, [Bernard] Brisset était à Vancouver, Claude Brière et André Rousseau étaient à Edmonton et tous ont rapporté que le français avait été conspué par au moins la moitié de la foule. Ce sont des huées haineuses qui visent le Québec, qui nous visent, qui me visent. A-t-on déjà entendu des huées quand on chantait l'hymne suédois, l'hymne soviétique? Jamais, c'est le fait français qu'on hue.⁶⁴

It was left to Champagne to connect the booing in western Canada arenas with the continued use of English at Nordiques' games:

Demain soir, au Colisée de Québec, les Nordiques de Québec recontrent les Jets de Winnipeg. Comme le veut la tradition, l'annonceur officiel des Nordiques se fera un devoir d'annoncer, en français et en anglais, les buts de la partie.

Quand les Nordiques de Québec vont jouer à Winnipeg, une ville canadienne, capitale du Manitoba, où une grande minorité de la population parle le français, l'annonceur des Jets ne fait pas beaucoup d'efforts pour 'baragouiner' quelques mots de français. Or, la minorité francophone de Winnipeg et de beaucoup plus importante que la minorité anglophone de Québec. Pourquoi devons-nous toujours subir deux poids et deux mesures?

Si on ne dit pas un mot de français ni à Winnipeg, ni à Toronto, ni à Vancouver, ni à Edmonton, je ne vois pas pourquoi il faudrait parler en anglais à Québec. Amateurs de hockey, faites-le savoir vigoureusement demain soir. Les anglophones du Canada crieront 'O scandale' mais ils continueront à bouder le français dans leurs arénas respectifs. Nous, nous parlerons français dans le nôtre.⁶⁵

Tremblay and Champagne's arguments were rooted in a neo-nationalist understanding of bilingualism as a "double standard" that failed to establish a Canadian linguistic *quid pro quo* and therefore disadvantaged French at the expense of English. While the Canadiens and Nordiques faithfully provided services in both languages, French was rejected by Western Canadian crowds and, as Tremblay emphasized, eventually eliminated from their arenas. For reporters such as Tremblay and Champagne these incidents in Western Canada exposed bilingualism's failure to protect French outside Québec while ensuring the presence of English within the province. The answer to this problem, concluded

Champagne, was direct action: he finished his column by urging Québec hockey fans to “make this vigourously understood,” in other words to boo the use of English to pressure the Nordiques into changing their language policy.

4.4 The Elimination of *la langue de Shakespeare* at the Colisée

The Nordiques’ revamped language policy was announced on January 8, 1980 (ironically, the day after Champagne’s final exhortation to boo the use of English at the Colisée), and was ratified by the NHL’s Board of Governors later that year, in March. It consisted of nothing less than the complete elimination of English from all public address announcements. Announcements of goals and penalties, hitherto bilingual, would be made exclusively in French. Loud speakers mounted behind the players’ benches would provide simultaneous English translations for unilingual players and referees. *O Canada* would be sung only in French, unless the Nordiques were playing a Canadian-based opponent who reciprocated with a bilingual anthem in their own rink. In these cases the anthem would be split between English and French language stanzas. The Nordiques’ President, Marcel Aubut, never concealed that this change in language policy was a business decision designed to reinforce and fortify the team’s French Canadian image, but denied that there were any political overtones in the team’s decision. As he told Radio-Canada:

La décision du français ici, est dans la ligne de pensée du club qui est celle de promouvoir cette image canadienne-française du club. Ça, je ne nie pas du tout. L’administration c’est la seule dans le sport professionnel majeur en Amérique du Nord qui a une administration purement française. Nous sommes les seules. Et je suis bien fier de le dire... deuxièmement, comme on a toujours dit, à talent égal, nous préférons de chez nous, Canadien français. Troisièmement, nous portons un fleur de lis... partout en Amérique. Ces trois éléments là, ça prouve réellement que nous avons dans notre ligne de pensée le vouloir de garder cette image de

chez nous, cette image canadienne française que l'on veut pas du tout politiser... à savoir c'est un produit de chez nous.⁶⁶

Of course, the line between appealing to local pride or patriotism and appealing to *nationalism* is rather blurry. But despite what Aubut said publicly, the Nordiques' policy was constructed according to the logic of neo-nationalist linguistic theory and conformed closely to some neo-nationalist legislation. Aubut described his policy as “la décision du français,” but the policy was more concerned with English, or more specifically, its removal. Therefore, the policy can be understood as having been designed to “promote” the French language if one assumes the impossibility or destructiveness of bilingualism; that French can flourish *only* when English is no longer used. In this sense, the Nordiques' language gambit appropriated the arguments and methods of Bill 101 (the Charter of the French Language), the centrepiece of the PQ's language policy. Furthermore, the “reciprocity” proposed by the Nordiques – that the club would be willing to sing *O Canada* partly in English as a show of courtesy to visiting Canadian teams who reciprocated with French – also bore the hallmark of Canadian linguistic struggle. First of all, the policy was only for *Canadian* clubs and not for all NHL teams. Though the national anthem had been sung *entirely* in French in some American cities earlier in the year, the national anthem would be sung exclusively in French during those teams' visits to the Colisée. The Nordiques' reciprocity therefore spoke to pan-Canadian bilingualism in the same way as the PQ's offer of education language reciprocity to the other Canadian provinces (1978): the ultimate objective in both cases was to demonstrate the flimsiness of bilingualism by exposing English Canadian reluctance to employ French.⁶⁷

In other interviews, Aubut was more up front about the rationale for the Nordiques' language policy. Consider another interview with SRC radio:

On était un peu mal à l'aise quand on se présentait à Vancouver, Winnipeg, Edmonton et on chahutait quelques mots de français que l'on disait pour le bénéfice de nos joueurs unilingue français...

Parce que nous sommes au même pied que n'importe quelle franchise dans cette ligue maintenant. Québec est au même pied que Toronto, que Winnipeg, que Vancouver, et cetera. Et ils ont eux le loisir de décider eux-mêmes, sans consulter la ligue nationale de hockey quelle langue ils vont se parler pour annoncer dans leurs édifices respectifs. Alors ce n'est pas une question de français dans le hockey là, ça devient une question d'être maîtres chez nous, au même titre que... Toronto.⁶⁸

In this interview, Aubut admitted that the booing of French in western Canadian hockey rinks played an important role in the formulation of his language policy. Tellingly, he used the indefinite pronoun "on" twice, despite the fact the Nordiques themselves had not encountered a situation in the NHL where French was booed before a game (the booing had occurred prior to Canadiens games). Through this change in transitivity, Aubut assumed the voice of the nation: the Nordiques were adopting unilingualism in the name of all Québécois. He went on to state clearly that "ce n'est pas une question de français dans le hockey," but instead a question of the team's sovereignty, the ability of the Nordiques to act as *maîtres chez nous* within their own jurisdiction without consulting the league. The calculated use of the iconic nationalist slogan *maîtres chez nous* carried broad symbolic appeal for neo-nationalist audiences: it could have been read both as an allegory for the Québec separatist movement, or as a broad call for the affirmation of French in Québec independent of any sovereigntist connotations.

Utterances like those made by Aubut confirm that the Nordiques sent a dual message with their language policy. One, claiming that their policy was an essentially

non-political business decision, was directed to the league and the other NHL teams, who were likely unwilling to engage the Nordiques on political ground. The other carried thinly veiled neo-nationalist potency and was intended for consumption by Québécois hockey observers. Almost all sources in the French media, with the exception of Claude Bédard of *Le Journal de Québec*, received and reproduced this message (Bédard recited the familiar argument that the language policy was non-political because sport and politics naturally did not mix).⁶⁹ The French media's reaction unfolded in three separate stages. The first, in January, 1980, responded to the Nordiques' initial announcements of the policy. The second stage, in February, questioned the Canadiens' bilingualism. The last, in March, exulted in the ratification of the Nordiques' language policy by the NHL's Board of Governors. I will examine each of these subsets of coverage separately.

The initial announcement of the language policy in January was met with universal acclaim. I was unable to find a single statement in the French press that fundamentally disagreed with the Nordiques' language policy. Instead, the imposition of unilingualism at the Colisée was judged overwhelmingly to be a "normal" measure that confirmed the essential fact of Québec City's unilingualism; the media constructed this narrative of normalcy while simultaneously questioning the possibility and desirability of bilingualism. Discussing the reactions of the Nordiques' Anglophone players to the proposed measures, *Le Journal de Québec* declared their lack of resistance to unilingualism as logical and normal: "c'est comme demander à un francophone évoluant à Vancouver, s'il est gêné par le fait qu'on ne parle que l'anglais au Colisée du Pacifique."⁷⁰ Herein the media presented unilingualism, in both Québec City and Vancouver, as an objective "fact;" its naturalness was something intuitively understood

even by non-Francophone players. The inherent objectivity of unilingualism was reinforced by the unexpected support shown to the Nordiques by a group of Québec Anglophone businessmen. Québec City was as French as Toronto was English, their statement read: “il semble aussi injuste et irréaliste d’exiger de l’anglais à Québec que du français à Toronto. Vouloir imposer la langue seconde où cela n’est pas nécessaire ni souhaité, crée des animosités qui nuisent en fin de compte à l’utilisation des deux langues dans les régions du Canada où elles sont d’usage courant.”⁷¹ Here, bilingualism – the use of English in Québec City and the use of French in Toronto – was strongly castigated as “unjust” and “unrealistic.”

These reports reproduced the neo-nationalist language discourse that privileged unilingualism and portrayed bilingualism as illogical and impossible. It is unsurprising, therefore, that the Parti Québécois heartily applauded the Nordiques’ policy and highlighted it as consistent with the neo-nationalist project. Lucien Lessard, the provincial minister of the department that oversaw sport in Québec (Leisure, Hunting, and Fishing) wrote a letter to NHL President John Ziegler applauding Aubut for “cette démarche franche et respectueuse des Nordiques à l’intention de la culture de son public et de la très grande majorité des citoyens de Québec.”⁷² Lessard identified in the Nordiques’ “honest approach” the essential truth of the neo-nationalist understanding of Québec society and culture, as well as a reaffirmation of the neo-nationalist notion of citizenship based on the French language. Similarly, PQ MNA Jean-François Bertrand observed in the Nordiques’ policy confirmation of the soundness of his party’s own language initiatives. Bertrand spoke of his pleasure seeing a group of Québec businessmen (the Nordiques’ front office) make a decision to opt for French

“naturellement sans qu’aucune directive gouvernementale ou pression politique ne vienne leur forcer la main.”⁷³ Bertrand took the team’s policy as evidence that it was no longer necessary to coerce enterprises into unilingualism; the Nordiques had accepted the logic inherent in the Charter of the French Language and acted accordingly.

More than anything, this first wave of media reactions was characterized by intense criticism of the NHL, the league having responded negatively to the Nordiques’ announcement. Through a statement redacted completely in English,⁷⁴ NHL President John Ziegler initially opposed the Nordiques’ proposed policy, citing the NHL’s historical custom of bilingual or English-only public address announcements, and ordered Aubut to announce goals and penalties in both languages until the NHL’s Board of Governors could vote on the Nordiques’ proposition in March.⁷⁵ Ziegler’s opposition, and his failure to voice it in French, made him easy to caricature as an agent of Anglophone domination seeking to impose a destructive bilingualism. For example, Réjean Tremblay described Ziegler’s initial reaction as “colonisatrice,” explicitly linking Ziegler and his preferred linguistic arrangement, bilingualism, with colonial structures and practices.⁷⁶ Similarly, a headline in *Le Journal de Québec* proclaimed that Ziegler sought to “impose” English at le Colisée, referencing the neo-nationalist notion that posited bilingualism as a *status quo* that could only be instituted through colonial dominance.⁷⁷ An editorial in *Le Soleil* decreed that “la National Hockey League se croit en mesure de décider que les ‘pea soups’ locaux entendront les deux langues.”⁷⁸ The use of “National Hockey League” in English and the pejorative term “pea soup” is significant here: these terms located the NHL as a reactionary English language institution seeking to impose its language; they also denoted that the league was prejudiced against

Francophones, who were positioned conversely as victims, the subject of Anglophone aggression.

4.5 *Canadiens de Montréal* or Montreal Canadians?

Through this discourse of linguistic colonialism, the French press constructed the Nordiques' language policy as the latest episode in the historical struggle to preserve the French language in North America. Indicative of this, the *Le Soleil* editorial mentioned above evoked the memory of 1759, the date where control over Québec passed from France to England after a decisive battle on Québec City's Plains of Abraham.⁷⁹ And, demonstrating how closely the discourses of hockey and politics had merged, a *Journal de Québec* headline shouted "Y'a du français dans l'air du Colisée," appropriating the slogan used by the *Gens de l'air* during their struggle to use French in the civil aviation industry.⁸⁰ These contextualizations positioned the Nordiques organization as model neo-nationalists, bringing the struggle for the French language to new terrain. Tremblay expounded on this theme:

Mais, tranquillement, progressivement, les Nordiques s'imposent comme l'équipe des Québécois: uniforme bleu 'drapeau', fleurs de lys, direction francophone, mêmes les plus mordus fédéralistes francophones sont touchés par ces symboles nationalistes, le geste de Aubut d'imposer la prépondérance du français va encore élargir la clientèle morale des Nordiques.⁸¹

Tremblay's last paragraph in that column – "et pendant ce temps-là Roger Doucet devient un tout autre symbole au Forum"⁸² – foreshadowed the criticism that the Canadiens would absorb in February. The invoking of Doucet, the singer whose idiosyncratically bilingual interpretation of *O Canada* garnered him acclaim throughout Canada, positioned the Canadiens as the bilingual opposite of the Nordiques. True to this image, the Canadiens were quick to affirm their continuing devotion to bilingualism after the

Nordiques' initial announcement.⁸³ Some team employees even publicly voiced their support not just for bilingualism as a hockey policy, but as a political programme. For example, Claude Mouton, both the Canadiens' public address announcer and their director of public relations, pronounced himself in favour of official bilingualism in an interview with Radio-Canada by positively citing bilingual beer bottles and bilingual signs in the Vancouver airport as examples of measures taken "to recognize the French fact in Canada."⁸⁴ These public affirmations of bilingualism prompted journalists to speculate whether the Canadiens would vote against the Nordiques' language proposition in March.⁸⁵ Many journalists already assumed this to be a *fait accompli*, suggesting a presupposed understanding of the Canadiens as an essentially bilingual, and therefore Anglophone, institution that worked against the affirmation of the French language. Tremblay, for example, constructed an entire column around the argument that Molson, the Canadiens' owner, *could not* allow General Manager Irving Grundman to vote against the Nordiques' policy: the presupposition obviously revealed was that Grundman would probably be against unilingualism at the Colisée to begin with.⁸⁶

It was not long before calls were sounded for the Canadiens to follow the Nordiques and adopt French unilingualism at the Forum. Notably, Camille Laurin, the architect of Bill 101, describing the need for the Nordiques to struggle for unilingualism as "paradoxical" and "absurd," urged the Canadiens to adopt unilingualism or face investigation from the *Office de la langue française* (OLF), the body charged with enforcing compliance with provincial language legislation.⁸⁷ Laurin's pronouncement catalyzed a spirited back-and-forth debate in the media. Though a *La Presse* editorial described Laurin's desire to eliminate English at the Forum as a "totalitarian" strategy

aimed against minority groups,⁸⁸ most of the opposition to the proposed francization of the Forum crystallized in the English media. I will not discuss this reaction in detail here, as English media discourse will be examined in depth in Chapter 7; I bring it up now only because this negative reaction provided a platform for the French media to restate the tenets of neo-nationalist linguistic orthodoxy. Consider a letter to the editor in *La Presse*, rebuking the newspaper's criticism of Laurin. Beginning with the comment that Jean-Guy Dubuc, who had written the editorial in question, "reads *The Gazette* too often," it continued:

A la guerre linguistique, Monsieur Dubuc, nous y sommes conviés depuis un siècle et toutes nos stratégies ont jusqu'ici lamentablement échoué y compris la dernière de Pierre Trudeau. L'histoire du monde nous apprend que lorsqu'il y a deux langues en présence sur un même territoire, le respect de l'autre n'a jamais été une caractéristique de cette situation...

Alors que se déroule sous nos yeux cet évident ostricisme linguistique qui fait de nous des exilés de l'intérieur, il trouve chez nous des éditorialistes, des penseurs, pour nous dire que nous sommes mesquins de suggérer un environnement français au Forum de Montréal...

Je me dis qu'on doit être un peuple très malade pour se porter avec autant de désinvolture à la défense de ceux qui, linguistiquement, nous ont opprimés de façon si évidente... Que des éditorialistes proposent à des milliers de lecteurs des attitudes qui mèneront au 'génocide en douce' est affligeant.⁸⁹

This letter was notable because it plainly restated and defended neo-nationalist language orthodoxy. After invoking Trudeau's name to establish the failure of "strategies" like bilingualism, the author declared them all but impossible: two languages could not coexist, because one would always dominate the other. Sure enough, the author stated a desire for a "French environment" at the Forum, when in fact he was commenting on an environment without English: for him and other neo-nationalists, a French environment could exist *only* without the presence of English. The letter went on to position Québec

Francophones as suffering linguistic oppression, leading into an attack on Dubuc for defending the Canadiens' bilingualism (by criticizing Laurin): the respondent posited that this kind of "attitude," long term, could lead only to the "genocide" of the French language and Québécois culture. Though the Canadiens were never criticized directly, they were clearly depicted as complicit in this slow death: they were among the oppressive institutions that people like Dubuc had so "casually defended."

These themes were reiterated in a blistering column composed by *Dimanche-Matin* sportswriter Jerry Trudel. The title of the polemic – "bilinguisme... et bigotisme" – made its intention crystal clear. Attacking *The Gazette's* sports columnist Tim Burke as "a bastion of anglo-saxon bigotry," Trudel accused:

Chaque fois qu'il s'agit du Québec et du français, M. Burke a une indigestion. Il ne peut souffrir que le peuple français du Canada s'affirme et qu'il veuille revendiquer chez lui les droits et le respect de sa langue qui lui sont niés partout ailleurs dans ce pays supposément bilingue.⁹⁰

Here, Trudel resoundingly rejected bilingualism and advanced an understanding of it as a device (Canada is a "supposedly" bilingual country) that did nothing to prevent the denial of French language rights outside of Québec. Trudel presented unilingualism as the answer to this problem: only unilingualism allowed Francophones to affirm their rights and to obtain respect for the French language. This is the framework in which Trudel apprehended the Nordiques proposed unilingualism, and the Canadiens' rejection of it. Identifying the Canadiens' language practices as part and parcel of the trap set by bilingualism, and bilingualism itself as a ploy to safeguard English in Montréal, Trudel continued:

Le pays est bilingue, nous dit un certain Trudeau. Alors comment se fait-il, diable, qu'il n'y a qu'à Montréal que les annonces sont faites dans les deux langues? Ah oui, selon les normes établies pour l'application du bilinguisme, on

dit que le français peut être employé là où une certaine proportion de la population le justifie. Non, mais c'est-y bien arrangé, cette affaire-là? Ça veut dire que l'anglais peut être employé au Forum parce que la proportion de la population Anglophone à Montréal le justifie. Mais le français n'a pas le droit de cité à Toronto, Vancouver, Flin Flon, Antigonish et Baldur, en Saskatchewan parce que l'élément français y est en infime minorité.⁹¹

4.6 The Nordiques' *grande victoire*

The Canadiens eventually did vote in favour of the Nordiques' policy, but only after obtaining assurances that this vote did not compel them to move toward unilingualism at the Forum. The Nordiques also dropped their reciprocity initiative, which had promised to be very embarrassing for the Canadiens: since the Nordiques had guaranteed a bilingual *O Canada* when visited by teams who did the same, a visit by the Canadiens would have prompted a bilingual anthem, an uncomfortable reconfirmation of the Canadiens' bilingual/Anglophone image. Despite initial opposition from other owners of Canadian-based teams, the Nordiques' language policy passed unanimously.⁹² This vote amounted to a resounding rejection of pan-Canadian bilingualism, and not just in Québec City. Among Aubut's strongest supporters was Toronto Maple Leafs owner Harold Ballard, who took the Nordiques' victory as an excuse to keep French out of Maple Leaf Gardens; for Ballard, English unilingualism in Toronto was as "natural" as French unilingualism in Québec City.⁹³

The ratification of the Nordiques' unilingualism was celebrated unanimously in the French media. It was depicted as an important victory in the ongoing affirmation of French: *La Presse* described it as "une grande victoire pour le Québec français;"⁹⁴ *Le Journal de Montréal* declared it to be "une grande victoire" (a great victory),⁹⁵ Pierre Champagne, exulting in the triumph of his *cause célèbre* in *Le Soleil*, likewise hailed "une grande victoire."⁹⁶ This victory was deemed important enough for coverage outside

of the sports pages. *Le Soleil* devoted an editorial and an editorial cartoon to it, while *Le Devoir* also published an editorial on the subject. *Le Devoir*'s editorialist, Robert Décary, applauding the Nordiques for contesting "the supremacy of English," depicted the ratification of the Nordiques' policy as evidence of the "progress" made by the French language under the neo-nationalist project:

Cette victoire, qui est celle des amateurs et des Québécois, qui est celle aussi, ne l'oublions surtout pas, de ces pionniers, tels René Lecavalier, qui ont su garder ou rendre français les termes utilisés dans un sport qui échappait de plus en plus aux Québécois, témoigne du progrès remarquable de l'opération de francisation entreprise au Québec depuis quelques années...

Il y a là un message culturel et politique qui n'échappera qu'aux plus myopes des Québécois. Le caractère français du Québec, le caractère officiellement français du Québec, l'unilinguisme français officiel, ne font plus peur. Ils sont mêmes acceptés par un groupe d'individus, du Canada anglais et des Etats-Unis, qui ont pourtant la réputation d'être des réactionnaires. Et tout cela s'est fait dans le respect de ces joueurs qui ne comprennent pas le français, et sans exiger que les joueurs francophones soient traités avec la même générosité dans les autres villes du circuit. Les Québécois, et ceux qui font affaires au Québec, voguent allègrement vers une reconnaissance et une mise en oeuvre sereines de l'unilinguisme français au Québec.⁹⁷

Herein, Décary came close to pronouncing a final victory for unilingualism. For Décary, the ratification of the Nordiques' language policy was recognition of the common sense and normalcy of French unilingualism and, at the same time, noting that no provisions needed to be made for Francophones playing elsewhere in the NHL, the ill-conceived logic of pan-Canadian bilingualism. Décary hailed the fact that a group of English speaking "reactionaries" (NHL owners) had unanimously accepted the Nordiques' policy as evidence that Québec's linguistic status quo had become entrenched and uncontroversial. But it was not just the amorphous entity of the NHL that accepted unilingualism at le Colisée. Corporations such as Molson, owners of the Canadiens, and Carling O'Keefe, who owned the Nordiques, that had vociferously opposed Bill 101 at

the time of its tabling, were in effect rubber stamping unilingualism through the actions and votes of their hockey properties.

Le Soleil's editorial also narrated a discourse of normalcy. It described the Nordiques' "victory" as, in essence, a triumph of common sense, recognition that a city composed ninety nine percent of French speakers had the right to impose the language of the majority. The editorialist, Jacques Dumais, contrasted this policy with the bilingualism at the Forum, which he rejected as meaningless without reciprocity elsewhere in Canada:

Le bilinguisme intégral, s'il sied au Forum, doit aussi trouver sa contrepartie hors Québec, où, l'avons-nous oublié, la francophonie a parfois des prétentions sportives et culturelles. Mais là-bas, ladies and gentlemen, les francophones ont surtout le droit de comprendre la langue de la majorité s'ils veulent jouir d'un match de hockey.⁹⁸

This passage represented a wholesale rejection of bilingualism. Because English predominated in all other Canadian NHL rinks, the Nordiques' language policy signified, for Dumais, conformity to the Canadian linguistic status quo: unilingualism. Therefore, Dumais presented bilingualism, such as what existed at the Forum, as an aberration, a policy that did little for Francophones while enshrining the continuing presence of English within Québec.

4.7 Summary

While *Le Soleil* celebrated unilingualism's validation in the Nordiques' language policy, another neo-nationalist milestone quickly approached: the May 1980 referendum on "sovereignty-association" in which residents of Québec would be asked to decide their political future was a mere two months away. The editorial cartoon that *Le Soleil* devoted to the Nordiques' "victory" (see Figure 1) featured a hockey player, wearing a

sweater festooned with several fleurs-de-lys reminiscent of the Nordiques' uniform, pushing a hockey puck marked *oui* (yes).⁹⁹ While this *oui* was almost certainly intended to speak to the Board of Governors' acceptance of the Nordiques' unilingualism, it could also be understood as a claim that the Nordiques, by applying neo-nationalist language policies to professional hockey, had served the cause of Québec independence. Both readings confirm that the Nordiques were, by the time of the referendum, without a shadow of a doubt the Québécois sporting institution most intimately associated with neo-nationalism. As a result, the PQ courted figures associated with the team to speak out in favour of independence during the referendum campaign. Yet Aubut, the most heavily wooed personality by far, rejected the PQ's overtures: Aubut, in fact, campaigned for the other side (the *non*), thereby revealing himself as a federalist.¹⁰⁰

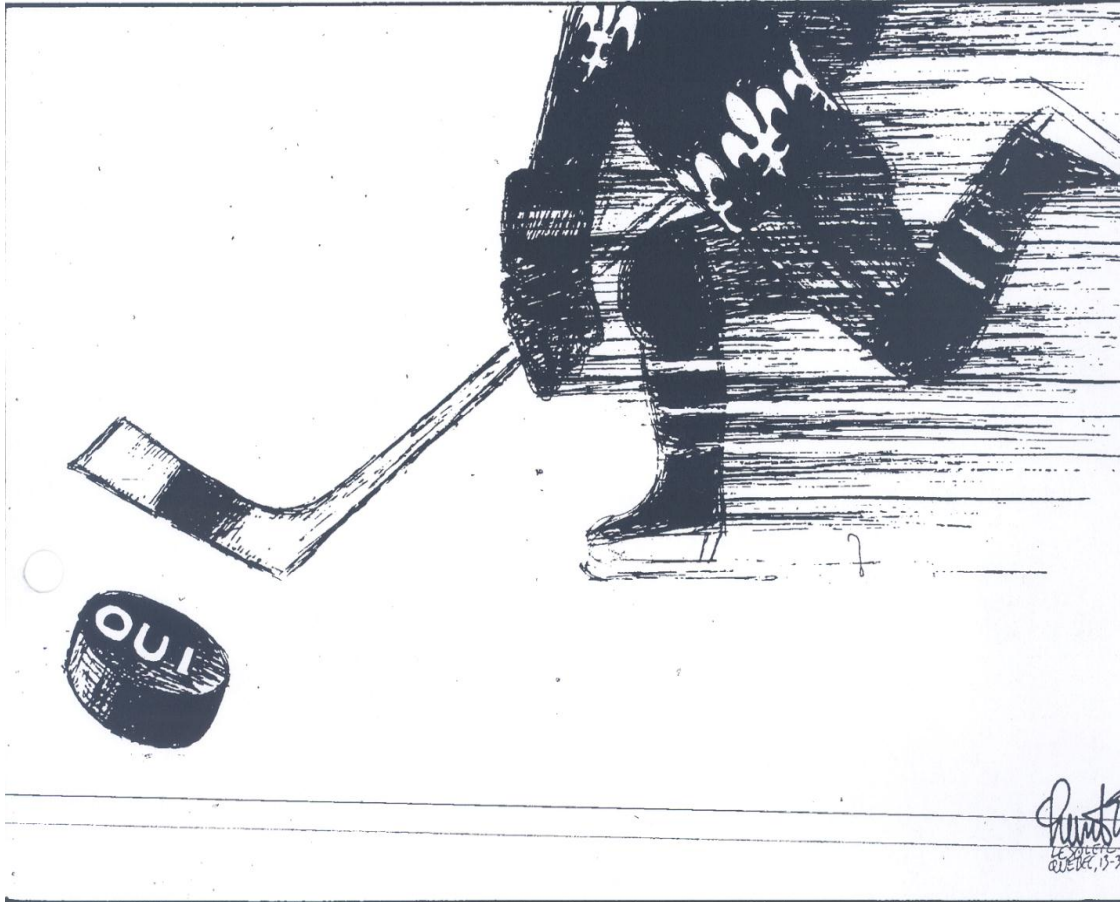


Figure 1: *Le Soleil*'s celebration of the ratification of the Nordiques' language policy, as well as a visual confirmation of the team's nationalistic appeal.¹⁰¹

The paradox of the Nordiques' neo-nationalist image is that the club was run by people who may not have agreed with some the ideologies the club arguably came to represent. Aubut's precise political ideas are unknown – a rumoured foray into federal or provincial politics never came to fruition – but the position he took during the referendum suggests that he had serious reservations about the direction that the PQ was leading the neo-nationalist project. But no matter his own political views, Aubut and his colleagues certainly exploited neo-nationalism to increase the Nordiques' appeal within Québec. Barred from television, the Nordiques, by cultivating a public image that resonated with

scores of Québec Francophones and could be disseminated easily in the pages of Québec's Francophone dailies, had discovered the most efficient way to publicize its product.

With the *Nordiques* embraced by neo-nationalists after the successful ratification of their language policy, the *Canadiens*, for the first time in many years, were read by some Québec Francophones as representative of something other than French Canada. While the *Nordiques* were feted, Montréal sportswriters assigned the *Canadiens* a retroactive Anglophone identity: one report in *La Presse*, for example, discussed the team in terms of “reinforcing their Anglophone image,” which presupposed that there was a pre-existing Anglophone image to reinforce in the first place.¹⁰² Judgments like this must be filtered through the prism of neo-nationalist language discourse. One of the more prominent discourses presupposed a Whorfian understanding of language as the motor of thought: those who articulated this discourse reproduced the belief that the Québécois people could only express themselves authentically through the medium of the French language. This line of thinking rendered bilingualism not just impossible, but dangerous. Many neo-nationalists argued that any system of bilingualism would only privilege English, the dominant colonial language. Bilingualism was simply a Trojan horse for English unilingualism; thus, bilingual institutions such as the federal government and the Montréal *Canadiens* were agents of English unilingualism who were helping to subvert Québécois culture. For these nationalists, it did not matter how much French the *Canadiens* spoke, but that they failed to follow the *Nordiques*' lead and do away with English. It was this pervasive English-ness, and the *Nordiques*' essential French-ness,

that came to characterize the media representations of the teams in the first half of the 1980s.

The French media's coverage of the Nordiques' adoption of unilingualism and the events that followed that announcement also had wider social implications. The articles in support of the Nordiques' unilingualism and criticizing the Canadiens' bilingualism naturalized the province's linguistic status quo. That English was eliminated at the Colisée was deemed by journalists a "normal" occurrence in a French speaking society, a stance that legitimized neo-nationalist language policies such as Bill 101 that restricted the use of other languages and enshrined French as Québec's only appropriate public language. This discourse also confirmed the French language as the crux of Québécois national identity; that this identity was *Québécois* was driven home by journalists' lack of interest in the implications of the Nordiques' policy beyond the province's borders (for example, that the ratification of the policy practically assured that French would no longer be heard in other Canadian NHL arenas). But these discourses, while empowering historically disadvantaged Francophones, also served to subordinate other groups by invalidating other public languages and notions of identity. I will discuss this theme – the validating and invalidating of alternate notions of identity – further in the next chapter.

4.8 Endnotes

¹ Société Radio-Canada, *La Soirée du hockey*, 28 October 28 1979. Translation: For us, Jean-Claude, uh... (applause)... you are a big star. We have... we have... shit... we have good luck for you... uh... (laughter mixed with applause)... and we wish you good luck.

² Andrew Podnieks, *A Canadian Saturday Night: Hockey and the Culture of a Country* (Vancouver: Greystone Books, 2006): 52.

³ *Le Soleil*, “Du bilinguisme de colonisé au Colisée,” 03 November 1979: D1. Translation: a colonized bilingualism at the Colisée.

⁴ Pierre Champagne, “Tout en français... ou presque au Colisée,” *Le Soleil*, 30 October 1979: A10. Translation: stupid, incident.

⁵ Pierre Elliott Trudeau, ed., *La grève de l'amiante* (Montréal: Éditions du jour, 1970).

⁶ Lester B. Pearson, *Mike: The Memoirs of the Right Honourable Lester B. Pearson* (Toronto: University of Toronto Press, 1975): 3:218

⁷ Pierre Elliott Trudeau, *Federalism and the French Canadians* (Macmillan of Canada: Toronto, 1968): 31

⁸ Trudeau, 1968: 156.

⁹ Trudeau, 1968: 156.

¹⁰ Trudeau, 1968: 4; 169.

¹¹ Trudeau, 1968: 159.

¹² Marc V. Levine, *The Reconquest of Montreal: Language Policy and Social Change in a Bilingual City* (Philadelphia: Temple University Press, 1990): 90-91. Brackets mine.

¹³ Graham Fraser, *Sorry, I Don't Speak French: Confronting the Canadian Crisis that Won't Go Away* (McClelland & Stewart: Toronto, 2006): 90. The Commissioner of Official Languages is a position created by the Official Languages Act, with the purpose of ensuring bilingualism in the federal government and working toward the equality of both languages in the country as a whole.

¹⁴ In English speaking Canada, the Official Languages Act prompted scores of parents to enrol their children in French immersion programs during elementary and secondary school. Indeed, the author's ability to communicate in French is a direct result of the Official Languages Act.

¹⁵ Fraser, 2006: 117.

¹⁶ Trudeau's memoirs recall that respectable western Canadian newspapers accused the government of attempting to “force French down the throat of every farmer in western Canada.” Pierre Elliott Trudeau, *Memoirs* (Toronto: McClelland & Stewart, 1993): 127

¹⁷ Fraser, 2006: 119. Brackets mine.

¹⁸ J.V. Andrew, *Bilingual Today, Unilingual Tomorrow: Trudeau's Master Plan and How It Can Be Stopped* (Richmond Hill, Ont.: BMG Publishing Ltd., 1977). Andrew claimed that his book sold 110,000 copies in ten printings, a fair number given a population of less than 24 million people in 1977. Cited in Fraser, 2006: 126.

¹⁹ Sandford F. Borins, *The Language of the Skies: The Bilingual Air Traffic Control Conflict in Canada* (Kingston, Ont.: McGill-Queen's University Press): 153-159.

²⁰ Trudeau complained afterward that this incident played into the hands of Québec separatists. Toronto Maple Leafs owner Conn Smythe, summarizing the prevailing sentiments in many part of English speaking Canada, responded that “shoving French down Canadians’ throats is sure not helping the cause of bilingualism.” Fraser, 2006: 120-121.

²¹ Alain-G. Gagnon and Raffaele Iacovino, *Federalism, Citizenship, and Quebec: Debating Multiculturalism* (Toronto: University of Toronto Press, 2007): 98.

²² Benjamin Whorf, *Language, Thought and Reality: Selected Writings of Benjamin Whorf* (Cambridge, Mass.: MIT Press, 1956): 252.

²³ Michael Silverstein, “Whorfianism and the Linguistic Imagination of Nationality,” in *Regimes of Language: Ideologies, Politics, and Identities* ed. Paul V. Kroskrity (Santa Fe, NM: School of American Research Press, 2000): 85-138.

²⁴ Karim Larose, *La langue de papier: Spéculations linguistiques au Québec* (Montréal: Presses de l’Université de Montréal, 2004): 87. Translation: In terms of the theoretical elaboration of unilingualism, D’Allemagne is the person who most consistently dedicated himself to illuminating the dangers of individual and collective bilingualism.

²⁵ Larose: 98.

²⁶ René Lévesque, *An Option for Québec* (Toronto; Montréal: McClelland & Stewart, 1968): 17. Brackets mine.

²⁷ Richard Handler, *Nationalism and the Politics of Culture in Quebec* (Madison, Wis.: University of Wisconsin Press, 1988): 161.

²⁸ Larose: 202.

²⁹ Cited in William D. Coleman, *The Independence Movement in Québec 1945-1980* (Toronto: University of Toronto Press, 1984): 253.

³⁰ Larose: 90.

³¹ Larose: 284.

³² Larose: 63.

³³ Larose, 90; André D’Allemagne, *Le colonialisme au Québec* (Montréal: Éditions RB, 1966): 13.

³⁴ Sherry Simon, *Translating Montréal: Episodes in the Life of a Divided City* (Montréal: McGill-Queen’s University Press, 2006): 33-36.

³⁵ Jane Dunnett, “Postcolonial Constructions in Québécois Theatre of the 1970s: The Example of *Mistero buffo*,” *Romance Studies* 24, No. 2 (2006): 117-131.

³⁶ André Sénécal, “The Growing Role of the Québec State in Language Corpus Planning,” *American Review of Canadian Studies* 13, Vol. 2 (1983): 53.

³⁷ Larose: 167. Translation: Our French words, those degraded words, made rotten by bilingualism, have for a long time killed original thought in this country.

³⁸ Larose: 180.

³⁹ Larose: 182.

⁴⁰ Handler: 47.

⁴¹ Larose: 76. Brackets mine.

⁴² *La Presse* reported that the Nordiques' policy had been made in conjunction with the *Office de la langue française*, the provincial body in charge of compliance with Bill 101. The meeting between the Nordiques and the OLF took place in December. Réjean Tremblay, "...c'est aussi de l'excellent marketing!" *La Presse*, 11 January 1980: C1. The meeting between the Nordiques and the OLF was also reported by the Canadian Press: Canadian Press, "Les Nordiques défient la LNH sur l'utilisation du français au Colisée," *Le Devoir*, 11 January 1980: 16.

⁴³ Claude Cadorette, "Goulet et Lacroix sont prêts à signer leur contrat, mais à la condition qu'il soit en français," *Le Journal de Québec*, 05 September 1979: 55.

⁴⁴ Marcel Blanchard, "La LNH plie face à Goulet et Lacroix," *Le Soleil*, 20 September 1979: C4.

⁴⁵ Réjean Tremblay, "Deux jeunes Québécois affrontent la LNH pour le respect du français," *La Presse*, 15 September 1979: D3. First translation: ...in the name of respect for the French language. Second translation: ... it must not be forgotten, is situated in the heart of Montréal in the Sun Life building.

⁴⁶ Albert Ladouceur, "Lacroix et Goulet sont comblés," *Le Journal de Québec*, 26 September 1979: 76. Translation: ...who will break the unilingual contract barrier.

This comparison to Robinson is even more poignant because Robinson broke the organized baseball colour line as a member of the Montréal Royals, in 1946.

⁴⁷ Réjean Tremblay, "Deux jeunes Québécois affrontent la LNH pour le respect du français," *La Presse*, 15 September 1979: D3. Translation: Why? Because they were probably looking at dollar signs! When Guy Lafleur went on strike last year to obtain a new contract, he had the Canadiens by the throat to the point where he could have demanded a contract in Braille! Why haven't they exerted even the smallest amount of pressure? Because they're not conscious that their immense prestige would allow them to obtain, with a single public declaration, that for which other individuals struggle for months; because they're absolutely not interested in involving themselves to help other less privileged Quebecers.

⁴⁸ Bernard Brisset, "Lafleur et Savard se défendent," *La Presse*, 17 September 1979: B2.

⁴⁹ Claude Cadorette, "Le fameux contrat est traduit en français," *Le Journal de Québec*, 20 September 1979: 75. Translation: ...not everybody approves of this initiative.

⁵⁰ Bernard Brisset, "Lafleur et Savard se défendent," *La Presse*, 17 September 1979: B2. Translation: The Canadiens are officially bilingual... but unilingual [English] in their internal communication. The Nordiques are essentially Francophone, but become bilingual when necessary.

⁵¹ Claude Cadorette, “Ils seront là dès le début du camp d’entraînement,” *Le Journal de Québec*, 08 September 1979: 68

⁵² Réjean Tremblay, “Canadien-Nordiques: on s’arrache la cote d’amour,” *La Presse*, 30 October 1979: B2.

⁵³ Translation: Colonized bilingualism at the Colisée.

⁵⁴ Claude Larochelle, “Aucune directive de la Ligue nationale,” *Le Soleil*, 03 November 1979: D2. Brackets mine. Translation: In a joking endorsement of Glenn Cole’s reasoning, Francophone journalists could send a request to the office of NHL President John Zeigler asking for bilingualism in all Canadian NHL rinks. What could be more natural since Canada is a bilingual country in which Francophones have their place, following the indications made by Pierre Trudeau, Marc Lalonde, Jean Chrétien, Claude Ryan. It goes without saying that there is not a single word of French spoken in the Winnipeg or Edmonton arenas, even though there are large groups of Francophones living in the suburbs of those cities. In Edmonton, they repeat the announcements a second time, in a telegraphic style, but in English of course. The documentation reserved for the press is unilingual English. There will not be any request. It would be a bad joke, and nobody here wishes to impose French on our Western Canadian friends. A certain Pierre Trudeau already tried that and we all know the results! This would be going too far, everyone agrees. But on the other end, why has it gone this far at the Colisée? Following the bilingual ideal, it should be give and take in this country. But since it’s not, it shouldn’t always be up to Francophones to carry the burden for bilingualism.

⁵⁵ Chrétien and Lalonde were French Canadian cabinet ministers under Trudeau, and vociferous supporters of coast-to-coast bilingualism. Claude Ryan, at this time the head of the Liberal Party of Québec, was strongly against Bill 101, and supported bilingualism at the provincial level.

⁵⁶ Claude Larochelle, “Aucun règlement de la LNH,” *Le Soleil*, 05 November 1979: C1.

⁵⁷ Claude Larochelle, “Aucune directive de la Ligue nationale,” *Le Soleil*, 03 November 1979: D2.

⁵⁸ Pierre Champagne, “Tout en français... ou presque au Colisée,” *Le Soleil*, 30 October 1979: A10.

⁵⁹ Pierre Champagne, “Le français au Colisée,” *Le Soleil*, 14 November 1979: A14; Pierre Champagne, “L’anglais au Colisée,” *Le Soleil*, 20 November 1979: A11; Pierre Champagne, “Le français des Nordiques,” *Le Soleil*, 21 November 1979: A16; Pierre Champagne, “L’anglais du Colisée,” *Le Soleil*, 11 December 1979: A16; Pierre Champagne, “Le français au Colisée,” *Le Soleil*, 08 January 1980: A11.

⁶⁰ Glenn Cole, “Booing Anthem New Low for Fans,” *The Gazette*, 20 November 1979: 67; André Rousseau, “...et ça continue!” *Le Journal de Montréal*, 15 December 1979: 79.

⁶¹ Claude Brière, “On n’a pas pris de chance à Winnipeg,” *Dimanche-Matin*, 16 December 1979: 63.

⁶² André Rousseau, “...et ça continue!” *Le Journal de Montréal*, 15 December 1979: 79. Translation: ...another example of the exemplary national unity in this country.

⁶³ Réjean Tremblay, “À quoi sert l’Ô Canada dans le sport commercial?” *La Presse*, 20 November 1979: D1. First translation: our great country. Second translation: ...the kind of booing that scorns, that hates, that stinks.

⁶⁴ Réjean Tremblay, “La peur pire que les huées,” *La Presse*, 18 December 1979: B2. Brackets mine. Translation: The racists of Toronto, Vancouver, Winnipeg and Edmonton have therefore won, it has become wrong, risqué, dangerous to pronounce a few words of French. And let’s not talk about a handful of fanatics, I was in Toronto when Mouton was booed, Brisset was in Vancouver, Brière and Rousseau were in Edmonton and all reported that French was booed by at least half of the crowd. This is hateful booing that targets Québec, that targets us, that targets me. Have we ever heard booing during the singing of the Swedish or Soviet national anthem? Never, because it’s the French fact that’s being booed.

⁶⁵ Pierre Champagne, “L’anglais du Colisée,” *Le Soleil*, 11 December 1979: A16. Translation: Tomorrow night, at the Colisée in Québec City, the Québec Nordiques play the Winnipeg Jets. As tradition dictates, the Nordiques’ public address announcer will dutifully announce, in French and in English, the goals scored. When the Québec Nordiques go play in Winnipeg, a Canadian city, capital of Manitoba, with a large French speaking minority, the Jets’ public address announcer does not make much of an effort to stumble through a few words of French. And yet, Winnipeg’s Francophone minority is much larger than the Anglophone minority in Québec City. Why must we always be subjected to these double standards? If there isn’t a word of French spoken in Winnipeg, Toronto, Vancouver, or Edmonton, I don’t see why there must be English in Québec City. Hockey fans, make this vigorously understood tomorrow night. The Anglophones in Canada will cry ‘what a scandal’, but they will continue to avoid French in their respective arenas. We will speak French in ours.

⁶⁶ Société Radio-Canada, *Contrechamp*, 12 February 1980. Translation: This decision is consistent with the club’s practice of promoting a French Canadian image. I do not deny this at all. Our administration is the only purely French administration in North American professional sport. We are the only ones. And I am very proud to say that... secondly, as we have always said, we will always prefer a French Canadian player of equal talent. Thirdly, we wear the fleur de lis around North America. These three elements prove that the club wants to keep this French Canadian image which we do not want to politicize... to identify us as a French Canadian product.

⁶⁷ Graham Fraser, *René Lévesque and the Parti Québécois in Power*, 2nd ed. (Montréal: McGill-Queen’s University Press, 2001): 109-112.

⁶⁸ Société Radio-Canada, *Dossiers*, 09 March 1980. Translation: It was uncomfortable when we went to Vancouver, Winnipeg, Edmonton and the few words of French that were spoken for our unilingual players were booed. Because we are on the same level as any other franchise in the NHL now. Québec is on the same level as Toronto, as Winnipeg, as Vancouver, et cetera. And they have the pleasure to decide themselves, without consulting the NHL, what language they will speak in their respective buildings. So this is not a question of speaking French at hockey games, it becomes a question of being maîtres chez nous at the same fashion as... Toronto.

⁶⁹ Claude Bédard, “Du français au Colisée et des Nordiques en anglais,” *Le Journal de Québec*, 17 January 1980: 66

⁷⁰ Claude Bédard, “Du français au Colisée et des Nordiques en anglais,” *Le Journal de Québec*, 17 January 1980: 66. Translation: It’s like asking a Francophone playing in Vancouver whether he’s disturbed by the fact that English only is spoken in the Pacific Coliseum.

⁷¹ Canadian Press, “Des hommes d’affaires appuient la bataille du français engagé par les Nordiques,” *Le Journal de Montréal*, 14 January 1980: 7. Translation: It seems just as unjust and unrealistic to enforce the use of English in Québec City as it would French in Toronto. Imposing the second language where it isn’t

necessary or wanted creates animosity that harms the use of both languages in regions of Canada where both are commonly used.

⁷² Canadian Press, “Le ministre Lessard écrit à Ziegler,” *La Presse*, 19 January 1980: C2. Translation: ... the Nordiques’ frank and honest approach to the culture of the public and of a very large majority of Québec citizens.

⁷³ Denis Angers, “Bertrand d’accord avec l’unilinguisme français au Colisée,” *Le Soleil*, 18 January 1980: A5. Translation: naturally without any government directive or political pressure to force [the Nordiques] hand.

⁷⁴ Claude Bédard, “Du français au Colisée et des Nordiques en anglais,” *Le Journal de Québec*, 17 January 1980: 66

⁷⁵ Maurice Dumas, “L’unilinguisme français au Colisée: la LNH s’oppose,” *Le Soleil*, 10 January 1980: C1.

⁷⁶ Réjean Tremblay, “...c’est aussi de l’excellent marketing!” *La Presse*, 11 January 1980: C1.

⁷⁷ United Press Canada, “Ziegler entend imposer l’anglais, au Colisée,” *Le Journal de Québec*, 12 January 1980: 4

⁷⁸ Jacques Dumais, “Un Colisée français,” *Le Soleil*, 15 January 1980: A6. Pea soup is a traditional part of the diet of Québec peasants. The term “pea soup” or “peasouper” became a francophobic slur, presumably used to denote French Canadians’ lack of sophistication. Translation: the National Hockey League believes itself able to decide that the local ‘pea soups’ will hear both languages.

⁷⁹ Jacques Dumais, “Un Colisée français,” *Le Soleil*, 15 January 1980: A6.

⁸⁰ Albert Ladouceur, “Y’a du français dans l’air du Colisée,” *Le Journal de Québec*, 10 January 1980: 61.

⁸¹ Réjean Tremblay, “...c’est aussi de l’excellent marketing!” *La Presse*, 11 January 1980: C1. Translation: But, quietly, progressively, the Nordiques are imposing themselves as the team of Quebeckers: blue ‘flag’ uniform, fleurs de lys, Francophone management, even the most hard boiled federalists are touched by these nationalist symbols. The Nordiques’ gesture to impose French at le Colisée will enlarge the Nordiques moral clientele.

⁸² Réjean Tremblay, “...c’est aussi de l’excellent marketing!” *La Presse*, 11 January 1980: C1. Translation: And during this time, Roger Doucet is becoming a completely different symbol at the Forum.

⁸³ Bernard Brisset, “Le Forum tient à son parfait bilinguisme,” *La Presse*, 12 January 1980: C5.

⁸⁴ Société Radio-Canada, *Dossiers*, 09 March 1980.

⁸⁵ Bernard Brisset, “Le Canadien votera-t-il contre Québec?” *La Presse*, 07 February 1980: C1.

⁸⁶ Réjean Tremblay, “Molson doit dire oui,” *La Presse*, 09 February 1980: D3.

⁸⁷ Canadian Press, “Laurin n’en revient pas,” *La Presse*, 13 February 1980: D6.

⁸⁸ Jean-Guy Dubuc, “Glissades de ministre,” *La Presse*, 15 February 1980: A4.

⁸⁹ Paul Daoust, letter to the editor, *La Presse*, 22 February 1980: A5. Translation: We have been engaged in a language war, Mr. Dubuc, for a century and all our strategies have failed including Pierre Trudeau's most recent one. World history teaches us that, when there are two languages in the same territory, the respect of the minority language has never been characteristic of that situation. While this linguistic ostracism happens in front of our eyes, we find here editorialists, thinkers, to tell us that we are mean-minded for suggesting a French environment at the Montréal Forum. I tell myself that this must be a very sick people for coming so casually to the defence of those who, linguistically, have oppressed us in so obvious a fashion. That editorialists propose to thousands of readers ideas that will lead to a 'soft genocide' is distressing.

⁹⁰ Jerry Trudel, "Bilinguisme... et bigotisme," *Dimanche-Matin*, 17 February 1980: 37. Translation: Any time the topic is Québec and French, Mr. Burke gets indigestion. He suffers when the French speakers of Canada affirm themselves and when they demand rights and respect for their language that are denied elsewhere in this supposedly bilingual country.

⁹¹ Jerry Trudel, "Bilinguisme... et bigotisme," *Dimanche-Matin*, 17 February 1980: 37. Translation: The country is bilingual, says a certain Trudeau. So how the hell does it work that Montréal is the only place where announcements are made in both languages? Ah yes, according to the norms established for bilingualism, French can be employed anywhere a certain proportion of the population justifies it. Well isn't that conveniently arranged? It means that English can be utilized in the Forum because of the proportion of Anglophones in Montréal justifies it. But French had no rights in Toronto, Vancouver, Flin Flon, Antigonish and Baldur, Saskatchewan, because the Francophone fact is a minute minority.

⁹² Michel Blanchard, "Le oui aux Nordiques ferait l'unanimité," *La Presse*, 11 March 1980: C1.

⁹³ Claude Larochelle, "L'audace donne les résultats," *Le Soleil*, 12 March 1980: C2.

⁹⁴ Michel Blanchard, "Le précédent influencera-t-il les Francophones du Forum?" *La Presse*, 12 March 1980: E4. Translation: a great victory for French Canada.

⁹⁵ Albert Ladouceur, "Au Colisée de Québec, l'unilinguisme français officiel," *Le Journal de Montréal*, 12 March 1980: 125

⁹⁶ Pierre Champagne, "Le français au Colisée: une victoire pour les Nordiques," *Le Soleil*, 13 March 1980: A13

⁹⁷ Robert Décary, "Un Colisée français," *Le Devoir*, 13 March 1980: 10. Translation: This victory, which belongs to hockey fans, to Quebeckers, and, let's not forget, to pioneers like René Lecavalier who managed to invent a French lexicon for a sport that that was becoming more and more distant from Quebeckers, testifies to the remarkable progress of the francization undertaken in Québec in the last few years... There is a cultural and political message here that will only escape the most myopic Quebeckers. The French character of Québec, the officially French character of Québec, official French unilingualism, are no longer scary. They are even accepted by a group of individuals, from English Canada and the United States, who have the reputation of being reactionaries. And all this while respecting those players who don't understand French, and without insisting that Francophones be treated the same way in the other cities in the league. Quebeckers, and those who do business in Québec, are sailing joyfully toward a serene understanding and implementation of French unilingualism in Québec.

⁹⁸ Jacques Dumais, “Quelle victoire?” *Le Soleil*, 13 March 1980: A6. Translation: Total bilingualism, if its seat is at the Forum, must also have a counterpart outside Québec where, it must be remembered, Francophones sometimes have sporting and cultural expectations. But over there, ladies and gentlemen, Francophones above all have the right to understand the language of the majority if they wish to enjoy a hockey game.

⁹⁹ The fleur-de-lys is one of the most recognizable and enduring symbols of Québec. Originally one of the emblems of the French royal family, the fleur-de-lys can be found prominently on the Québec flag, on the province’s licence plates (together with the provincial motto “Je me souviens,” which itself has nationalist connotations), and a host of other places.

¹⁰⁰ Donald Ramsay, “Nordique Boss Fools Lévesque,” *The Globe and Mail*, 03 May 1980: S7.

¹⁰¹ *Le Soleil*, Editorial Cartoon, 13 January 1980: A6. Reproduced with the permission of the Bibliothèque et Archives nationales du Québec.

¹⁰² Michel Blanchard, “Le précédent influencera-t-il les Francophones du Forum?” *La Presse*, 12 March 1980: E4.

Chapter 5

5 Redcoats and *Patriotes*: Discursive Wars over *Francophonisation* and National Identity

At the conclusion of the 1979-80 NHL regular season – one month after the ratification of the Nordiques’ language policy and one month before Québec’s referendum on sovereignty-association – Nordiques’ defenseman Gerry Hart publicly contemplated the Nordiques’ disappointing campaign.¹ According to Hart, identity politics played a paramount role in the Nordiques’ failure. Notably, he accused the club hierarchy of not icing the best talent at its disposal because of a personnel policy that privileged French-speaking players. “It just doesn’t work out when management tries to put together a team with a French image,” Hart argued. “Because of the draft you have to get the best available talent, whether it’s French or English-speaking. It’s the only way to progress and the team should use this line of thinking.”² Hart completed his reflection by openly pondering his future as well as the future of all Anglophone players in Québec City: “it was interesting for the Anglophone players to hear the President’s arguments [in regards to French unilingualism]... we Anglophones would like to know exactly where we stand in the future of this club.”³

With the 1980 referendum on Québec independence looming, Hart no doubt was voicing the concern of many Anglophones who worked in the province of Québec. His comments, transcribed in the sports sections of every Montréal and Québec City daily, also marked the beginning of a three year period (1980-83) during the demographic composition of the two Québec-based hockey clubs came under intense media scrutiny. This chapter examines this matter through a thorough analysis of the media coverage of the Nordiques,’ and especially the Canadiens,’ personnel transactions in the early 1980s.

This analysis is impossible without considering the relationship of the Québec labour movement to neo-nationalist language legislation. Hockey players are, after all, workers, and media coverage of the demographic composition of the Canadiens and Nordiques was linked to the discourse of linguistic and economic colonialism promulgated by the Québécois labour movement. This comprises the first part of this chapter. Next, I isolate the dominant discourse of Québécois identity produced by the Francophone hockey media. Then, I analyse the French media's representations of the Nordiques' and Canadiens' personnel moves in the context of these discourses of labour and identity. This discourse analysis consists of an examination of the construction of the Nordiques as a model neo-nationalist enterprise, one which worked toward the emancipation of Québécois workers by virtue of an assumed policy of *francophonisation* (the preferential hiring of ethnic French Canadians), as well as a breakdown of the press coverage of the allegations made by a few Nordiques players and ex-players about the club's apparent mistreatment of Anglophone players. My analysis then hones in on the Canadiens, who were unfavourably juxtaposed against the "Québécois" Nordiques. I scrutinize the media's analysis of the team's player personnel decisions, a series of moves that prompted an outflow of the Canadiens' established Francophone players. Finally, I examine the hiring of Ronald Corey as club president (1982) and the "joyous purge" of Grundman's regime (1983), which together were celebrated as acts that finally secured the reversal of Anglophone dominance at the Forum through *francophonisation*.

5.1 The Québec Labour Movement and the Politics of *Francophonisation*

The unilingualization of public communication – in other words, the right to be served exclusively in French (essentially, what the Nordiques’ language policy, discussed in the last chapter, aimed to secure) – was only one plank in the larger neo-nationalist project that sought to affirm the French speaking majority within Québec. As I explained in Chapter 2, establishing the primacy of French in the fields of education and commerce were arguably more important goals for neo-nationalists. In this section, I will discuss measures taken to secure the establishment of French as the primary language of the workplace, both in management positions and on the “shop floor.” Herein, the interests of mainstream, bourgeois neo-nationalists converged with those of Québec’s militant, anti-capitalist labour unions.

These unions, during the late 1960s and early 1970s developed a political economy of empire in order to explain the disparities between Anglophones and Francophones in the Québec job market. The argument formulated by Québec’s three largest unions – the Confédération des syndicats nationaux (CSN), the Fédération des travailleurs du Québec (FTQ), and the Centrale de l’enseignement du Québec (CEQ) – postulated that the use of language in the workplace could not be separated from structures of social, cultural, and economic power. To recapitulate briefly: various reports, most notably the Canadian federal government’s Royal Commission on Bilingualism and Biculturalism (RCBB), starkly described a cultural division of labour in the Québec workplace, where material wealth and upward mobility were tied to knowledge of the English language. The RCBB’s report provided statistics showing that those who knew the most English were usually much better compensated than those who

knew the least (unilingual French speakers). Unilingual Anglophones were found to have the highest average salary of any socio-linguistic group in the province, suggestive of a virtual monopoly over white collar managerial positions; in contrast, unilingual Francophones were nearly at the bottom of this salary hierarchy (Indigenous peoples, whose competing claims to sovereignty and self-determination were ignored by Francophone nationalists, were at the absolute bottom of this salary hierarchy).⁴ These conditions persisted through the 1960s, despite the decline of Montréal's Anglophone business elite and the creation of state enterprises such as Hydro-Québec that provided managerial jobs for a growing Francophone white collar middle class.⁵

In the early 1960s, Québec labour unions were part of the broad social consensus that characterized the first few years of the Quiet Revolution. As Québec labour historian Jacques Rouillard argued, the leadership and rank-and-file of the three largest Québec unions were, for the most part, nationalists. If this is true, this nationalism was initially of a very moderate variety. The FTQ, for example, urged a federal policy of coast-to-coast bilingualism in the early 1960s, anticipating the resolutely anti-nationalist Official Languages Act legislated in 1969 by Pierre Trudeau.⁶ Yet by 1972, all three major unions declared their uncompromising support for French unilingualism and Québec independence. A series of bitter strikes – foremost among which involved Francophone journalists at *La Presse*, *Le Soleil*, and *Le Devoir* – surely hardened union attitudes against the political and economic status quo. Just as importantly, the leadership and rank-and-file of the three big unions came to understand Québec through the lens of theories of empire. Like many journalists and radical nationalists, they came to perceive Québec as a colony: both an internal colony of Anglophone Canada but also, drawing on

the economic theory of scholars such as Andre Gunder Frank and Kari Levitt, both of whom worked in Montréal in the early 1960s and 1970s, as an economic colony of the United States.

Historian Sean Mills described how the anti-imperialist writings of figures such as Gunder Frank, Levitt, Frantz Fanon, and Jean-Paul Sartre were distributed and eagerly consumed at union meetings.⁷ The writings of Levitt, a political economist at Montréal's McGill University, were especially meaningful presumably because she dealt specifically with Québec. Consider the following passage:

For French Canada, modernization has meant not only dislocation and disruption of settled routines but also incorporation into the industrial system, and the new humiliation of daily dictation by the Anglophone. This is as true for the miner, the factory worker, the sales clerk, as it is for the professional and middle classes. Whereas the latter may have an educational advantage in terms of ability to function in the language of those who hold economic power, the humiliation is greater rather than less... The island of Anglophone privilege which extends from McGill University and Westmount to the western edge of Montréal and which controls much of the commercial and industrial life of the French-speaking province, acts as a constant abrasive to these frustrations.

The experience of linguistic domination also explains the lack of discrimination in French-Canadian resentment between English-Canadian and American domination... What difference, after all, to the French-Canadian worker in Arvida, whether orders are received in English from a foreman employed by a Canadian company like Alcan, or an American company, like Union Carbide?⁸

This is essentially an encapsulation of the collective stance that the Québec labour movement assumed in the late 1960s and early 1970s in the sense that it links linguistic and economic domination. Levitt argued that capitalism in Québec was inextricably linked with structures of colonialism, that Québécois workers were linguistically and economically dominated by English speakers (Levitt specifically pointed out those from Westmount and Montréal's West Island), and that national domination was rooted in capitalist exploitation. It also suggested that, as the radical journalist and writer Pierre

Vallières later explained, “the nationalism of a dominated people is the expression of antagonistic relations of exploitation which can only be resolved through political and economic independence.”⁹

According to Vallières and many other radicals, national liberation was the *sine qua non* for any meaningful social change or structural economic change in Québec: only national liberation could overthrow the cultural division of labour that privileged Anglophones and oppressed Francophones. This was the perspective adopted by the Québec labour movement during the late 1960s and 1970s. All three major unions endorsed Québec independence as part of their official platform by 1972, and were actively involved in nationalist struggles such as the battle for French unilingualism. Other than Québec independence, unilingualism was the most significant political change sought by Québec labour. The three big unions understood language as a labour issue because the dominance of English affected the ability of Francophone workers to find jobs, keep them, and be adequately compensated for them: French unilingualism was, according to a CSN communiqué, a “levier de la lutte contre la domination capitaliste.”¹⁰

This rationale was explained more thoroughly by the president of the FTQ in the 1970s, Louis Laberge:

C’est sans doute au plan linguistique que s’est manifestée de la façon la plus scandaleuse l’oppression nationale; pour le travailleur québécois francophone, ne pas être capable de travailler dans sa langue ou être réduit à des postes subalternes à cause de son unilinguisme, c’est être étranger dans son propre pays. Il est d’ailleurs significatif de voir que les salaires les plus bas, les emplois les moins intéressants et le chômage le plus fréquent sont encore, dans une bonne mesure, le lot des francophones unilingues et, dans une moindre mesure, celui des francophones bilingues.¹¹

It was with this in mind that the CSN officially aligned its support with French unilingualism in 1969, urging the provincial government to make French the sole

language of work in the province; the FTQ and the CEQ soon followed.¹² Labour was also intimately involved in the struggle against the province's first attempt at language legislation, Bill 63 (1969); this resolution ignored the workplace almost completely and instead innocuously encouraged corporate Québec to use more French, but without specifying what this meant in practice or establishing sanctions for enterprises that refused.¹³

In effect, the first official state acknowledgement of the gravity of the cultural division of labour came from the Commission of Inquiry on the Situation of the French Language and Linguistic Rights in Québec, henceforth referred to as the Gendron Commission (report tabled in 1973). Reiterating and confirming the findings of the RCBB, the Gendron Commission argued that French probably would not be spoken in the workplace unless there was an influx of Francophones into those workplaces:

The use of French as the language of work and the bilingualization of English-speaking senior personnel will become truly possible only when there are larger numbers of French-speaking individuals working at all administrative levels (*francophonisation*). The overrepresentation of the English-speaking element and the segregation of the two groups on the basis of language, constitute obstacles which, if not removed, will prevent any change in language usage within enterprises.¹⁴

To remedy this situation, the Gendron Commission urged the institution of a policy of affirmative action that would prioritize Francophones over non-Francophones, a process which I will refer to as *francophonisation*. The Commission's report argued that only this kind of coercive action, similar to affirmative action programs already adopted in the United States and elsewhere in the world, would begin to undo English's dominance in the Québec economy, unravel the cultural division of labour that had become entrenched,

affirm the French speaking majority, and guarantee that French became the *lingua franca* of the Québec workplace:

In our atmosphere of linguistic *laissez-faire*... those in control positions tend to impose their language on workers under their authority. In sectors dominated by English-speaking people, it is useless to attempt to correct the situation and increase the use of French without bringing in more French-speaking people – either at the upper echelons of as in the case of manufacturing, or at all occupational levels in the finance and head office sectors.¹⁵

The Commission itself urged the adoption of language legislation with quotas and timetables, albeit without any enforcement mechanisms. And although Bill 22 (1974), the province's second attempt at language legislation, implemented some of the suggestions of the Gendron Commission, it was, like Bill 63 before it, vague about the prospect of a *francophonisation* of the workplace, and as a result was rejected by most nationalists as well as by the three largest Québec unions.¹⁶

Workplace language redress would have to wait until the election of the neo-nationalist Parti Québécois (PQ) in 1976. Though the PQ enjoyed the support of Québec unions, especially the rank-and-file, it would be wrong to suggest that there existed a synergy between labour and the PQ. The PQ was a bourgeois nationalist party: it did not envisage any fundamental change in the economic system, maintained no official ties to the unions, and had not participated in class struggles such as the 1972 general strike.¹⁷ In fact, the PQ went out of its way to distance itself from the labour movement, often with strong public words condemning the unions' militancy.¹⁸ However, there was a convergence in interest on the subject of French in the workplace, and the PQ selectively utilized radical labour's rhetoric of linguistic oppression and social justice in order to frame and justify the language legislation it would adopt: Bill 1, based largely on a policy "White Paper"; and Bill 101, a revamped version of Bill 1 that was eventually signed into

law and is now called the Charter of the French Language (*La charte de la langue française*).

The White Paper I referred to – officially, *Québec's Policy on the French Language* – is the theoretical underpinning of the PQ's subsequent language legislation. This White Paper understood the language of the workplace as an important factor in the survival and affirmation of the French language and the Québécois people because “the economy is a complex world where the destiny of the French language in Québec is daily at stake.”¹⁹ Like Québec's labour unions, the White Paper identified English's long dominance in the halls of corporate Québec as one of the foremost structural factors that sealed the subordination of Québec Francophones. The White Paper, therefore, presented language legislation as a remedial measure concerned as much with the liberation of French Canadian wage earners as it was with the language they spoke: the White Paper announced that PQ language initiatives were not just limited, like Bill 22, to strengthening the French language, but would be structured to secure social justice for the people who spoke it and worked with it.²⁰ Central to these plans were statutes designed to make French the language of commerce in Québec. And while the White Paper offered few hints about the practical implementation of the language legislation to come, it did make clear that a *francophonisation* program would be incorporated:

Business firms could set themselves the following definite objective: to reflect, at every level and in every function of their personnel, the ethnic make-up of the population of Québec. There is nothing revolutionary about this; it is such an elementary principle of social justice that the United States, that paradise of private enterprise, had adopted it as the basis of its social hiring policy. Common sense must prevail here, in particular over manoeuvres that tend to mask it or water it down.²¹

It is important to highlight the identity claims being made in this passage. Contrary to its contentions, the White Paper indeed did propose a revolutionary understanding of Québécois identity in the form of the reference to “the ethnic make-up of the population of Québec:” though this paradigm of national identity has been commonly used since the 1950s and 60s, this was the first time that an official government document applied this specific and restrictive definition to the term “Québécois.” Rather than denoting a citizen of the province who could speak French well enough to use it at work, a Québécois was identified as a French speaker of French-Canadian descent, making a Manichean distinction between the intended beneficiaries of the ensuing language legislation (us) and *les autres* (the others). The White Paper also proposed mechanisms through which these workers could be accommodated: the *francophonisation* of Québec business would be enforced through a quota system, which would charge individual businesses with ensuring that a certain proportion of their workforces were “Québécois.”

Bill 1 (1977) provided clarification and concrete legislation where the White Paper provided relatively vague ideas. Bill 1 became notorious primarily for its unabashed support for *francophonisation* that was rooted in the definition of “Québécois” elucidated in the White Paper. Like the White Paper, Bill 1 identified *francophonisation* as the most efficient means of ensuring the presence of French in Québec workplaces. In calling for increased numbers of Québécois at every position, Bill 1 also made clear that, for its purposes, “Québécois” was equivalent to “ethnic French Canadian,” excluding Anglophones and Allophones that had been born and raised in Québec, no matter their proficiency in French.²² Unsurprisingly, Bill 1 was forcefully attacked by those who rejected the notion that Québécois identity should be built upon an ethnic base, prompting

the most intense language crisis of the 1970s.²³ On the other hand, scores of Quebeckers, especially neo-nationalists and trade unionists, heartily supported Bill 1 as it was, criticizing only that it did not go far enough (in the domain of education, especially). Bill 1 was, as political scientist William Coleman argues, “a close approximation to the ideal language policy as it would have been drafted by the coalition of the Francophone petite bourgeoisie and organized labour first formed in order to oppose Bill 63 in 1969.”²⁴ And indeed, a list of Bill 1’s unqualified supporters reads like a roll call of Québec nationalist organizations and trade unions: *Le Mouvement national des Québécois*, *Le Mouvement Québec français* and *La Société Saint-Jean-Baptiste* were just some of the nationalist organizations that mobilized to support Bill 1, along with the CSN, FTQ, and CEQ. Bill 1 signified, for these groups, the most logical and concrete step in the cultural, economic, and linguistic emancipation of the province. The CSN, for example, congratulated the government for putting “un frein à la subordination spécifique des travailleurs francophones en tant que travailleurs francophones.”²⁵ In this same vein is the reaction by Les Fils du Québec, a nationalist organization: it understood Bill 1 as “la suprême affirmation du fait français en Amérique, la victoire de la nation québécoise sur l’occupant anglophone, l’annulation de la défaite des plaines d’Abraham, et le magna carta culturelle des Québécois.”²⁶

Despite support from many neo-nationalists and unions, *francophonisation* was abandoned in Bill 101, Bill 1’s watered down successor, signalling the Québec state’s commitment to a Québécois identity divorced from ethnicity. Bill 101 defined a “Québécois” essentially as someone who could speak French, a much broader and less restrictive definition than that outlined in Bill 1: as one representative of the *Office de la*

langue française (OLF; the organization charged with enforcing compliance with Bill 101) remarked, even Queen Elizabeth of England would be able to qualify as a Francophone under Bill 101.²⁷ The vision of Québec society elucidated in Bill 101 – unilingual in many spheres, but ethnically pluralistic – became the backbone of the Québec state’s nation building project going forward.²⁸ But while official government discourse has consistently emphasized this vision, it would be naive to conclude that Bill 101 produced a consensus over *francophonisation*, the nature of Québécois identity, or the Québec social project.²⁹ The enthusiastic support initially given to Bill 1, particularly some nationalist organizations and trade unions, suggests that the adoption of Bill 101 did not resolve these debates but instead established an official discourse that has, over time, relegated alternative notions of society and identity to the sidelines. Rather, as political philosopher Jocelyn Maclure reminds us, social debate in Québec has been and continues to be plurivocal.³⁰ Instead of consensus, there has been an almost uninterrupted debate on the nature of Québécois identity as well as the desired shape of Québec society, a debate in which artists, writers, academics, politicians, and journalists served as major actors. As we will see in this chapter, Québec’s sport journalists, heavily influenced by trade unionist labour discourses, took an active part in these deliberations.

5.2 Irving Grundman: The “Usurper from High Finance”

It is first necessary to tease out precisely what Francophone journalists meant when they used word “Québécois” or “Francophone,” two descriptors used interchangeably in reports. This is best illustrated in depictions of Irving Grundman, a figure constructed as *l’autre* (the other). The son of Jewish immigrants, Grundman was born and raised in Montréal. He was not a “hockey man.” Instead, he was an

entrepreneur who painstakingly constructed a bowling alley empire from scratch before beginning with the Canadiens in their business operations unit.³¹ When Sam Pollock retired from his post as General Manager at the end of the 1977-78 NHL season, Grundman surprisingly was promoted to replace him, instead of the odds-on favourite, then-head coach Scotty Bowman. Grundman's first season in Montréal finished triumphantly, with a Stanley Cup victory. It was only the next season, 1979-80, where the French media began to ask questions about the recruitment strategy that he oversaw.

This is discussed in greater detail later in this chapter. For now, I argue that Grundman's identity was forwarded as an explanation, possibly *the* explanation, elucidating why the Canadiens had failed to restock the team with Québécois players; these explanations took for granted that Grundman, born and raised in Montréal and fluent in French, was *not* Québécois. Instead, the media consistently depicted Grundman as a foreigner, as the ethnic and cultural *autre*. This usually entailed portraying him as an Anglophone, but Grundman also frequently had his Jewishness flagged. For example, a profile in *L'actualité* constructed Grundman as neither Francophone nor Anglophone, but quoted a Canadiens employee who referred to the Forum as “la Synagogue;”³² another report described how some team observers had taken to describing the Forum as the “Closse St. Synagogue.”³³ This referential strategy, employing religious metaphors, is illustrative. The Forum was, because of the Canadiens' historical association with Roman Catholicism, considered a “temple” of hockey, and attending a hockey game a religious experience.³⁴ By contrast, by describing the Forum as a synagogue under Grundman's leadership, journalists constructed it as a place for *l'autre* to worship, not Québec Francophones; it became a Québécois sanctuary that had been hijacked by Jews.

Similarly, another profile in *La Presse*, pondering why Irving Grundman was so unpopular in comparison to Roger Samson (Grundman's analogue at the Montréal Manic soccer club), concluded that, in part, it was because Grundman was Jewish. While Samson was depicted as warm, enthusiastic, and passionate – qualities deemed typical of “Latin” cultures – the article speculated that, referencing centuries old anti-semitic stereotypes, Grundman's unpopularity was due to the perception that he was “un usurpateur de la haute finance.”³⁵ Nor was this an isolated depiction: an earlier column by *La Presse*'s Réjean Tremblay argued that the Canadiens comprised a microcosm of society, with “des francophones, des anglophones, des Juifs qui contrôlent la patente...”³⁶ Grundman himself evidently believed that his image problems were due in some part to anti-semitism.³⁷ And indeed, on at least one occasion, Grundman and his family were subjected to anti-semitic abuse by Québec hockey fans during a 1982 game in Québec City.³⁸

The above examples are not intended as evidence that Québécois nationalism was or is anti-semitic, although others have made precisely this argument.³⁹ Rather, they are meant to illustrate that Francophone journalists often wrote about Québécois identity in a way that, similarly to the aborted Bill 1, limited it to French-speakers of French Canadian ethnic origin. It is therefore unsurprising that Francophone journalists frequently represented Grundman as an impediment to Francophone affirmation and an obstacle to *francophonisation*. In this vein, the language Grundman used at the Forum was heavily scrutinized. Grundman was fluent enough in French to conduct interviews with Francophone reporters entirely in Molière's language; instances where he was reported to use English were constructed as an obstacle to a French Forum. A good example, as

transcribed in a *La Presse* article by Réjean Tremblay, came at the end of an hour long interview between Tremblay and Grundman, conducted entirely in French:

Avant de quitter le Forum, je suis allée saluer le nouveau patron d'Irving, M. Corey en personne.

On jasait depuis peu, debout au centre de son bureau, quand M. Grundman a fait son entrée.

On venait tout juste de terminer une long conversation d'une heure. En français.

'Excuse me, Ron, the lawyer (sic) is waiting for us. We should go.'

-I'll be there in a few minutes.

Compris?⁴⁰

This passage, through Tremblay's parting, sarcastic "compris?" unequivocally represented the use of French at the Forum as a smoke-screen, something utilized for journalists and public relations only, while English dominated in office communication. Most significant is that Grundman *forced* Corey, the Canadiens' new Francophone president who will be discussed later on in this chapter, to use English as his workplace language: Corey only switched to English because of Grundman's presence in the room. The reproduction of this scenario reiterated the argument made by neo-nationalists with regards to workplace language use, which posited that the language of work was always English when there was even one Anglophone present. So not only was Grundman's presence understood as an example of the continuation of Anglophone dominance in the Québec workplace, but his exchange with Corey suggested that his very presence prevented Francophones at the Forum from using their own language.

5.3 The Nordiques: Québec, Inc.?

As I discussed in the last chapter, the French media constructed the Nordiques as an important institution in the struggle for the affirmation of the French language by virtue of the team's French-only external communication policy. But the Nordiques' language initiatives did not stop with a rejection of official bilingualism: the club, by its own admission, also claimed to strive to secure as much French speaking talent as possible, both on the ice and in the front office. The club was eager to trumpet that their player recruitment policy favoured, to a certain extent, Francophones. "A talent égal... on choisira un francophone," repeated Nordiques officials on many occasions.⁴¹ But, as the Nordiques continually emphasized, this did not disqualify other groups from playing for the team. In fact, the Nordiques were among the first teams in the NHL to pursue European players aggressively, most notably Peter, Anton, and Marian Stastny, three Czechoslovakian brothers, the first two of whom were smuggled out of Austria in an operation befitting a Cold War spy novel.⁴²

But the spine of the team, at least for the first few years of its NHL tenure, was composed mostly of Québec Francophones. As with the Canadiens in the 1950s, the team's triumphs were taken as evidence that Québécois players were just as good as their English Canadian counterparts and, as such, served as a vehicle for Québécois affirmation and as living proof that enterprises with a Francophone workforce could flourish if given the opportunity. The outpouring of support for the Nordiques during the 1982 playoffs, where the team advanced to the NHL semifinals, is a case in point. A *Le Soleil* editorial lauded the team for proving that an enterprise controlled by and composed of Francophones could be a successful venture.⁴³ The President of the Québec Major Junior Hockey League (QMJHL), Paul Dumont, wrote the Nordiques a letter thanking

them for placing their confidence in Québec players;⁴⁴ by the same token, an anticipated increase in the number of QMJHL players selected in the upcoming 1982 draft was interpreted as a nod to the Nordiques' success with Québécois players.⁴⁵ The parallels between the success of the Nordiques and the neo-nationalist project did not go unnoticed by politicians: one Parti Québécois MNA compared the Nordiques' entry into and rise up the NHL ranks to the inevitable accession of Québec to political independence,⁴⁶ while Premier René Levesque publicly announced his allegiance to the Nordiques on account of their "Québécois" image.⁴⁷

The Nordiques' perceived preference for Francophone players became conventional wisdom in the hockey world, so much so that Québécois players, including those who had failed in other NHL stints, often approached the club to inquire about employment.⁴⁸ The Nordiques shrewdly sought to reinforce this public image of the club as both a breeding ground and as a hospice for otherwise ignored Québécois players. One illustrative example is the self-congratulation that followed the signing of Pierre Aubry, a young Québécois player who had gone undrafted despite a sparkling junior career in the QMJHL. "Ce n'est pas la première fois qu'un bon joueur de Québec est laissé de côté par les équipes professionnelles," explained Nordiques' coach Michel Bergeron, taking credit on behalf of the club for rescuing Aubry's professional career.⁴⁹ What went unmentioned is that the Nordiques were themselves one of the clubs that ignored Aubry: the Nordiques, like every other NHL team, had multiple opportunities to select Aubry in the draft but ultimately opted for other players.

The Nordiques' reputation for nurturing Francophones applied equally to managerial positions as well. With a Francophone president (Marcel Aubut), general

manager (Maurice Filion), scouting director (Gilles Léger), and coaching staff (comprised in 1979-80 of head coach Jacques Demers and assistant André Boudrias, and from 1980-84 of head coach Michel Bergeron and assistants Charles Thiffault and Simon Nolet), the French media lauded the Nordiques for having constructed an ideal Francophone workplace. Journalists readily assumed that the club exclusively sought out Francophones for management positions: the press never even considered, for example, that the club would hire anyone other than a Québec Francophone during its head coaching search in 1980.⁵⁰ This image was supported by facts. Aubut and Filion were the only Francophones serving in their respective positions in the entire league during the early 1980s, Montréal included; Bergeron was the first QMJHL coach to graduate to the NHL when he was hired in 1980;⁵¹ Nolet, upon joining the organization in 1982, publicly thanked the Nordiques for being the only organization in the NHL that provided Francophone coaches opportunities to learn on the job.⁵²

5.4 The Nordiques and the “Problem of Integration”

As with their adoption of a unilingual French language policy, the Nordiques’ perceived preference for Francophone personnel was constructed by the French media as a vindication of the neo-nationalist project, and the Nordiques themselves as a model neo-nationalist enterprise that had enacted the *francophonisation* stipulated in Bill 1. The best example of this is the coverage of the allegations made against the team by three Anglophone ex-players, who claimed that the Nordiques overtly discriminated against Anglophone players. Gerry Hart’s comments have already been transcribed in the introduction. Hart essentially argued that, in the words of a *La Presse* headline: “les anglophones ne se sentent pas chez eux à Québec.”⁵³ His argument revolved around two

central premises: that the Nordiques did not always ice the team's best players in order to buttress their Francophone image, meaning that deserving Anglophone players were held back in favour of undeserving Francophones; and that Anglophone players felt uncomfortable with the club's policy of French unilingualism, and were unsure about where it left them going forward.⁵⁴

Hart's concerns were, on the surface, treated respectfully and seriously by the French media. Rather than dismiss Hart's observations offhand, some reports and editorials agreed with him. Journalists quickly conceded that the Nordiques did have, in all likelihood, an integration problem. Yet this "problem" was not once depicted as outrageous or undesirable; rather, the French press presented this integration "problem" as a function of Québec City's unilingual French character, and, as Claude Larochelle of *Le Soleil* put it, "la dimension francophone *bien naturelle* de l'équipe."⁵⁵ Larochelle put this into context by contrasting the Nordiques' situation with the Canadiens:

[L'intégration des anglophones] prend un caractère particulier chez les Nordiques, une dimension qu'ont su éviter jusqu'ici les Canadiens de Montréal. A Montréal, les joueurs de langue anglaise ont le West Island comme partage, et s'il y a des vedettes francophones comme Guy Lafleur faisant la razzia des trophées, il trouve également des athlètes du Québec pour assumer une bonne part du sale boulot...

A Québec, le travail obscur et éreintant est le lot de quelques anglophones qui sont mal dans leur peau face aux vedettes aux plantureux revenus.⁵⁶

The last sentence conceded to Hart a point that he only made partially, that the Nordiques had inverted the cultural division of labour that had endured for so long in Québec; instead of unilingual Anglophones benefitting from the best positions and the most material rewards, Larochelle agreed with Hart that the choicest positions in Québec City were reserved for Francophones. Of course, Hart never mentioned anything about Anglophone dominance in his comments, which Larochelle used as a platform to give his

tacit approval of neo-nationalist arguments pertaining to the language of the workplace. While Larochelle wrote later in his report that the Nordiques needed to be proactive in attempting to find a solution, the situation was also depicted unproblematically as the normal state of affairs in Québec. Never did Larochelle question whether things *ought* to be different in Québec City. Instead, he presented the Nordiques' preference for Francophones, and Anglophones' inability to adapt to this, as an avoidable situation for a professional hockey club operating in a unilingual French city under Québec's language laws.

Claude Bédard of *Le Journal de Québec* reinforced this discourse by unfavourably comparing Hart's plight to that of the legions of Francophone players who had migrated to play hockey in other parts of Canada and the United States.⁵⁷ Larochelle, in a later column, repeated this comparison:

Plusieurs athlètes du Québec et leurs familles ont vécu cette rude transition. Nombre d'entre eux ont été plongés dans un milieu d'une culture différente un peu partout en Amérique du Nord. Ils ont finalement tiré leur épingle de jeu sans que personne ne s'attendrisse sur leur sort.

Comme je signalais à Gerry Hart récemment, l'athlète québécois qui débarque à Winnipeg ou Vancouver ne songe même pas à réclamer une proportion de francophones autour de lui et de demander des annonces en français à la patinoire!⁵⁸

By evoking the plight of others, Larochelle accepted that special measures must be in place for Francophone hockey players in Québec because of the disadvantages they faced outside of the province. Furthermore, echoing arguments made about the Nordiques' language policy, Larochelle posited that Anglophones like Hart should accept this state of affairs as a matter of social justice. Francophones, confronted with the socio-linguistic realities in English speaking cities, never asked for concessions or for special

accommodation in French; instead, they remained silent, accepted their subordination, and did their job. This retort undercut the respectful tone that Larochelle employed in his analysis of Hart's complaints. While on one hand writing that Hart's concerns were legitimate and should be considered seriously, he simultaneously positioned dissident Anglophone players as troublemakers, seeking to subvert Québec's new linguistic order (which was posited as the natural state of affairs in Québec). Anglophone players, Larochelle in effect argued, would be served better by silently accepting their subordination in the Québec workplace.

This analysis was vigorously reiterated the next time an Anglophone ex-Nordique questioned the team's orientation. During the team's 1980 training camp, Reggie Thomas strongly criticized the team for its personnel policy immediately after losing his post in Québec City. "I wouldn't be surprised if before the end of the year they trade three of four English players for two or three French players," Thomas said. "Honestly, I don't think there's an English player that's happy."⁵⁹ Echoing Hart's assertions, Thomas claimed that the Nordiques had broken up a successful unit because it was comprised completely of Anglophones: "it's still in the back of my mind that they did that because we were an all English line and we were going well. We've never been back together."⁶⁰ Thomas' criticism went beyond Hart's as well. Where Hart questioned the place of Anglophones in the team, Thomas insinuated that his release was the beginning of a purge of the team's Anglophones. And while Hart questioned whether the team iced the best possible personnel, Thomas blasted the Nordiques for overt prejudice: the organization, according to him, was sabotaging its Anglophone players voluntarily. Adding to this dissent was another ex-Nordique, Dave Farrish, who ironically had been

traded away from the Nordiques in the transaction that brought Thomas to Québec City. According to Farrish, there was a virtual conspiracy afoot in Québec City to drive Anglophones from the team. He himself claimed mistreatment at the hands of both the front office and prominent Francophone players. Poignantly, Farrish pinpointed the Nordiques' language policy as the thing that left Anglophone players most bemused: "how are Anglophone players supposed to feel at ease? We felt like strangers."⁶¹

Unlike the previous controversy, no journalists seriously took Thomas and Farrish's comments under consideration. Instead, the line parroted by the press was in agreement with the Nordiques' assertion that the criticism was "une vraie farce."⁶² Bédard, arguing that Thomas simply was not good enough to make the grade with a much improved team, and reminding his readers that "Québec est une ville différente de toutes les autres en Amérique," chastised Thomas and those who agreed with him for not considering the plight of Francophones plying their trade outside of Québec:

Thomas et tous ceux qui pensent comme lui, ne se sont jamais arrêtés à songer aux Québécois qui s'exilent pour poursuivre leur carrière. *Pour s'en sortir, ils ont été dans l'obligation de s'assimiler.* Pas une équipe américaine ou de l'Ouest canadien ne s'est pas préoccupée de leur trouver un milieu francophone, des professeurs qui parlent français pour enseigner à leurs enfants et des escortes pour les aider à mieux s'acclimater à leur nouveau milieu. Ils se débrouillent sans l'aide de personne.⁶³

Bédard's point was summed up in the title of his column: "si les francophones étaient si choyés" (if only Francophones were so pampered). Through this title and his column, Bédard identified Québec's Anglophone minority as having enjoyed a charmed existence, in contrast to Francophones, who elsewhere on the continent were dominated in the workplace and subjected to assimilationist pressures. The Nordiques, in this line of reasoning, were not discriminating against Anglophones: they provided opportunities for

Francophones to work in their native tongue, thereby helping them avoid the pitfalls of assimilation and linguistic domination. This was the brave new Québécois world that had been ushered in by neo-nationalist language legislation. It was up to Thomas and likeminded people to recognize this new reality, argued an editorial in *Le Soleil*:

Tous les Thomas du circuit et leurs disciples devraient cependant reconnaître qu'une ville française à 99 sur 100 ne peut abriter une équipe sportive dominée par des athlètes étrangers. En d'autres termes, les Nordiques ne doivent pas ressembler aux Expos ou aux Alouettes de Montréal...

Que cela plaise ou non, on conçoit les Nordiques avec un visage français, comme un microcosme de la société québécoise.⁶⁴

This editorial amounted to support for a policy of *francophonisation* as set out in Bill 1. The editorial did not call for *francophonisation* per se, because it assumed that the Nordiques already adhered to it. The editorialist, Jacques Dumais, justified the Nordiques' demographic composition not in terms of choice but in terms of duty and proportionality. Interestingly, Dumais drew a distinction between professional sports: the Nordiques *must not* look like the Expos or the Alouettes, two major league clubs in other sports dominated by foreign imports. Instead, the team should reflect Québec's demographics. Such a policy was presented not just as desirable, but routine, inevitable, and normal, "whether they like it or not."

So, to recapitulate briefly: the press reactions to Hart, Thomas, and Farrish's allegations reproduced some of the neo-nationalist discourse that emerged from social and legislative debates about the use of French in the workplace. First, reporters reinforced the normalcy of *francophonisation*. In fact, it went unquestioned: it was depicted as largely uncontroversial that a Québécois enterprise should reflect the province's demographic realities. Next, such a policy was identified as being critically

important in Québec in order to reverse the subordination that Francophones had suffered in the North American labour market. And finally, the ideal role for Anglophone workers was elucidated somewhat as well: while Anglophones should be accounted for and accommodated, there were limits to this accommodation, and Anglophones themselves (as represented by Hart, Thomas, and Farrish) were warned to keep in mind that they enjoyed privileges in Québec that Francophones had long been denied elsewhere in North America, and urged to silently accept the linguistic status quo.

5.5 The Ballad of *Les Maroons*: Media Requiems for a Francophone Institution

Despite these controversies in Québec City, the main battleground for *francophonisation* in hockey was Montréal, where the Canadiens, particularly when juxtaposed with the Nordiques, were accused of undergoing a reverse *francophonisation* – an *anglophonisation* – by conducting a purge of their long-established Francophone players. Fittingly, the first article I encountered that charged the Canadiens with *systematically* having “forgotten” Québec appeared a mere week after Reggie Thomas’ comments.⁶⁵ Inspired both by Thomas’ rant and by the Canadiens’ release of two Francophone players, Gilles Lupien and Normand Dupont, Réjean Tremblay insisted in *La Presse* that the Canadiens, like the Nordiques, had a “moral obligation” to field the best Francophone players because of the linguistic domination suffered by Francophone players in the hockey workplace.⁶⁶ This comment is fascinating: while there was no *legal* imperative to stock the team with Québec Francophone players, Tremblay still envisioned a moral obligation, demonstrating a strong desire for *francophonisation*. While he agreed that accusing the Canadiens of racism was ridiculous, one could certainly criticize the

team for “imprudence.” Tremblay finished the column with a call for the Canadiens to adopt the Nordiques’ recruitment policy, which stipulated that Francophone players would be favoured over Anglophones if their talent levels were equal. In Tremblay’s estimation therefore, the Canadiens’ “imprudence” stemmed from their failure to pursue a Bill 1-style personnel policy that would overthrow Francophone subordination in the workplace.

While Tremblay hesitated to accuse the Canadiens of prejudice, his colleague at *La Presse*, Canadiens’ beat writer Bernard Brisset, penned a blistering report where he argued that the team’s “French fact” was quickly disappearing, and accused the Canadiens specifically of causing this predicament in part through institutional anti-Francophone prejudice.⁶⁷ Employing logic that recalled the gloomy forecasts of demographic and cultural armageddon that underpinned so much of neo-nationalist discourse, Brisset argued that Anglophones would very soon form a majority in the Canadiens’ lineup if the Canadiens’ drafting and recruitment policies continued to favour them: the ‘frogs’ as Brisset pejoratively put it, were in danger. Brisset went on to ponder a question that would preoccupy Francophone sports journalists for the next few years. Half the Canadiens’ roster, he noted, was composed of Francophones, while the other half was comprised of Anglophones: was this an acceptable proportion? Brisset began to answer this question by citing the Canadiens’ historical importance in the province:

Évidemment, les Expos et les Alouettes n’ont pas à se préoccuper de la division linguistique dans leur rangs. Mais les amateurs se reconnaissent dans leur équipe de hockey ce qui n’est pas le cas avec les deux autres formées de joueurs américains pour la plupart.⁶⁸

Brisset, revealing a belief that the Canadiens should have an organic relationship with their populace, submitted an argument based on imperatives and “moral obligations.”

Like Tremblay, Brisset concluded that the Canadiens had the obligation to show a commitment to Québécois players like the Nordiques. So while a half Anglophone, half Francophone roster would fall short of the proportional representation urged in documents such as the White Paper on the French Language, Brisset and Tremblay both argued in effect that anything less would constitute a breach of the Canadiens' "moral obligation" to work toward the emancipation and affirmation of Québec Francophones.

This is the context in which the Canadiens' personnel decisions were scrutinized by the French media. Despite the assurances that they, like the Nordiques, would choose a Francophone over an Anglophone if the players' talents were equal, the Canadiens were continually depicted as failing to work for the affirmation of Québec Francophones in the workplace.⁶⁹ Every Francophone player's departure was met in the French media with a requiem for the Canadiens' status as a preeminent Québécois institution. The departure of Serge Savard in December, 1981 prompted Tremblay to lament that "d'ici deux ou trois ans, le Canadien sera moins qu'une équipe comme les autres."⁷⁰ Whereas the Canadiens previously symbolized Francophone empowerment, they risked losing their "âme" (soul) if they continued to purge the team of Francophones. Similar protestations followed the trade of Pierre Larouche a few weeks later.⁷¹ The departure of Guy Lapointe prompted Brisset to lament that "le ménage des frogs se poursuit chez le Canadien," the use of the epithet "frog" driving home the Canadiens' perceived hostility toward Québécois players;⁷² meanwhile, *Le Journal de Montréal* reminded its readers matter-of-factly that "il faut reconnaître que les Glorieux sont de moins en moins francophone" and that, after Lapointe's exit, "la liste s'allonge."⁷³ Likewise, the appointment of Bob Gainey, an Ontarian who had learned French during his tenure in

Montréal, as team captain was presented as evidence of the erosion of Francophone players' influence at the club.⁷⁴

The way that the French media most forcefully drove home the team's failure to conform to *francophonisation* was through unfavourable comparisons to the Montréal Maroons, the Canadiens' erstwhile Anglophone rivals from the 1920s and 1930s. Francophone journalists began calling the Canadiens "Les Maroons" beginning in December, 1981, and did so consistently for the better part of the next year.⁷⁵ The rationale for using this epithet is obvious: it was meant to underscore graphically that the Canadiens were now representative of Montréal's Anglophone minority; similarly sarcastic references to the Canadiens as the "Glorious," an English rendering of the team's traditional nickname *Les Glorieux*, served the same purpose.⁷⁶ Tremblay made this explicitly clear:

On ne veut que traduire par cet article littéraire, une réalité qui prend forme beaucoup plus rapidement qu'on l'avait prévu. Le Canadien, tel qu'on le connaissait, le Canadien en lequel se reconnaissaient tant de Montréalais, tant de Québécois, se meurt. À sa place, on retrouve une bonne équipe ordinaire, comme il y en a une dizaine d'autres dans la ligue Nationale, une équipe qui ne semble pas se préoccuper de cette tradition francophone que Sam Pollock avait réussi à préserver. Ce n'est pas grave, on aimera les Maroons comme on aime les Expos ou les Alouettes...

Ce n'est pas question d'être raciste, ça na pas d'importance en soi que les joueurs soient francos, anglos, suédois ou tchécos... C'est tout juste que le hockey est le seul sport majeur où des athlètes de chez-nous ont une chance de se faire valoir, tout juste qu'il existait une vieille tradition chez le Tricolore... et que la direction du Canadien ne semble pas le réaliser...⁷⁷

Here Tremblay touched on two narratives that emerged from the French media's coverage of the Canadiens in the early 1980s. First, that the Canadiens' relationship to Francophone Québec was weakened as a result of its *anglophonisation*; and second, that the Canadiens, as a Québec enterprise, had a political, moral, and cultral responsibility to

field a large number of Francophone players, both because of the historical subordination of Francophones in the world of sport, and because of an obligation to participate in the province's socio-political evolution.

The Canadiens' ethnic composition became a frequent press preoccupation, revealing an obsession with demographics and quotas. Francophone journalists monitored the number of Francophones featured in the Canadiens' lineup, and routinely published head counts in their newspapers. For instance, the arrival of a player named Jeff Brubaker was commemorated in *La Presse* as the moment when Francophone players became a minority in Montréal.⁷⁸ Games versus the Nordiques tended to prompt a head count, which usually proved uncomplimentary for the Canadiens.⁷⁹ Comparisons with other Francophone-heavy teams further underlined the Canadiens' failure to fulfill their "moral obligation" to work toward *francophonisation*. A Canadian Press report from January, 1982, following a game that pitted the Canadiens against the Buffalo Sabres, demonstrated this. The Canadiens fielded five Francophones in that game, while the Sabres, coached by ex-Canadiens coach and presumed francophobe Scotty Bowman,⁸⁰ iced six; this fact was taken as evidence that the Canadiens *needed* to remake their image.⁸¹ Letters to the editor in French language newspapers also engaged in these cultural headcounts, while linking events at the Forum more explicitly to wider socio-political contexts than the stories that prompted them. Case in point was a letter that was published in all three of Montréal's daily French language newspapers, *La Presse*, *Le Devoir*, and *Le Journal de Montréal*. It began: "actuellement, à l'heure de la francisation, l'équipe qui représente la deuxième ville française au monde compte 12 joueurs francophones contre 14 anglophones."⁸² This passage explicitly linked the Canadiens'

demographic composition to the neo-nationalist francisation project. After criticizing the Canadiens for not fielding enough Francophone players, the reader submitted his ideal solution:

Il ne s'agit pas d'éliminer les Anglais de Montréal... mais simplement de respecter les proportions démographiques de la Métropole... par exemple, nous pourrions avoir au sein du Tricolore au moins 14 joueurs francophones sur un total de 21, puisque Montréal est majoritairement française à 70%.⁸³

The solution proposed was a strict program of *francophonisation*, complete with affirmative action quotas, as suggested in Bill 1 and its associated White Paper: according to this view, the Canadiens' demography should correspond *exactly* to the percentages in Montréal.

5.6 Please call me *Robert: Un gars de chez nous?*

The personnel decision that generated the most anti-Canadiens opprobrium was likely the hiring of Bob Berry as head coach in 1981. When Berry's predecessor, Claude Ruel, stepped down at the end of the 1980-81 season, Francophone journalists urged the appointment of another Francophone coach as the minimum gesture required for the Canadiens to begin repairing its image.⁸⁴ In an open letter to Canadiens' President Morgan McCammon, Tremblay, for one, declared the hypothetical appointment of an Anglophone coach to be tantamount to anti-Francophone discrimination:

M. le président, il y a au Québec, des spécialistes en hockey comme on n'en trouve nulle part ailleurs... allez-vous tolérer encore longtemps que l'on commette de la discrimination envers ces cerveaux du hockey moderne? M. le président, allez-vous réaliser que le Québec a changé? Allez-vous réaliser que les Nordiques sont dirigés par les hommes qui s'appellent Aubut, Léger, Filion, Thiffault, Bergeron, Madden, Demers, Bernard, allez-vous réaliser qu'il y a des Saint-Jean, des Larivières, des Pelchat, des Delage, des Racette qui ont toujours été méprisés par la haute gomme du Forum?⁸⁵

Tremblay affirmed not only that Francophones had been discriminated against in Montréal, but that they had been “scorned” and humiliated. Tremblay reminded his readers that “Québec a changé” (Québec has changed), placing the plight of ignored Québécois coaches squarely in the frame of the struggle for Francophone valorisation in the workplace. So, hiring an Anglophone coach was not simply a matter of reconfirming the team’s “Maroons” image, but would run afoul of the entire neo-nationalist project.

Journalists made this unambiguously clear when Berry’s appointment was confirmed. Berry was a Montréal native who had been reared as a player in the Canadiens’ organization before beginning a coaching career; he had, most recently, received plaudits for his work as coach of the Los Angeles Kings. He did not speak much French upon his hiring; he did, however, promise to commence French lessons immediately.⁸⁶ Despite this, his hiring was universally panned by Francophone journalists who, like Réjean Tremblay, had been vocal in their desire for a Francophone head coach. There were reports that assigned Berry a Québec identity, reconfirming a Québec identity based on territoriality, yet these still drew a line between the Canadiens’ new coach and the Francophone majority. Maurice “Rocket” Richard’s column in *Dimanche-Matin* is an example: while accepting that Berry was indeed “un gars de chez nous,” a term frequently used to denote someone who is Québécois, he still declared himself disappointed that a Francophone had not been hired and argued that Berry *must* now ensure that he hired Francophone assistants.⁸⁷ Laroche employed the same trope in the pages of *Le Soleil*. Noting that while Berry could utter a few words in French thanks to “ses origines québécoises,” the Canadiens had still conformed to their tradition of hiring “des citoyens de tradition anglo-saxonne, imprégnés de cet environnement où la

language anglaise est l'instrument du travail.”⁸⁸ Berry's identity, while on one hand rooted firmly in the territorial Québec nation, was simultaneously reduced to the language of work utilized by his cultural group; Larochelle reinforced this discourse with a comparison to the Nordiques, who relied on “gens du pays,” referencing the classic nationalist folk song by Gilles Vigneault.⁸⁹ Even ostensibly positive portrayals of Berry branded him as irredeemably English. Seeking to underscore that loyalty was one of Berry's positive personality traits, *La Presse* called him a “loyaliste,” a reference to the English-speaking settlers loyal to the British crown that migrated en masse to Québec following the American Revolution, inadvertently linking Berry to the long history of British imperialism in Québec.⁹⁰

In the end, Berry's candidature and hiring were opposed not on hockey grounds but on account that his presence ultimately would continue the subordination of Francophones at the Forum. “Plus que jamais,” wrote Larochelle about Berry's hiring, “la langue de travail du club de hockey montréalais sera l'anglais.”⁹¹ Referencing the debates about the Nordiques' language policy, *La Presse*'s François Béliveau explained Berry's hiring as an unwelcomed result of the Canadiens' bilingualism that secured the team's Englishness:

Le Canadien, qui représente bien des traditions, a choisi de rester dans la lignée des Pollock, Toe Blake, Bowman, en embauchant Bob Berry à titre d'instructeur-chef, et poursuit comme le gouvernement Trudeau le rêve d'un heureux mariage entre francophone et anglophone.

Un rêve, puisque dans les faits, dans les petits mémos, la papeterie entre employés, les discussions entre joueurs et l'instructeur, l'anglais prédominera. L'image extérieure toutefois, celle que le bureau des relations publiques véhiculera, aura un cachet de bilinguisme.⁹²

Béliveau placed Berry in the tradition of other Anglophone managers (Pollock, Blake, Bowman) and described his hiring as consistent with Pierre Trudeau's official bilingualism, which as we saw in the last chapter, was rejected as detrimental to the French language. In the second paragraph, Béliveau dismissed bilingualism as an institution that would prevent the affirmation both of the French language and of Francophones: as with Grundman's presence as General Manager, Berry's hiring as coach was submitted as evidence that bilingualism was merely a smoke screen behind which the day-to-day operations of the Canadiens would continue in English. In this frame, Béliveau unequivocally portrayed Berry's hiring as a step back from *francophonisation* and deepened the team's image as an essentially Anglophone institution: as Béliveau later wrote, the Canadiens had abdicated their Francophone fan base to the Nordiques by having failed to "respond to the aspirations of the people."⁹³

5.7 "Une purge joyeuse": The *Francophonisation* of the Canadiens

The unenthusiastic reaction to Berry's unveiling as coach stands in sharp contrast to the unrestrained glee that characterized media reactions to the Canadiens' hiring of Ronald Corey, who despite his English sounding name was accepted by both the French and English media as a Francophone, as club president in 1982. Corey, a former sport journalist, had previously been an executive at Carling-O'Keefe, the brewery that owned the Nordiques; his hiring was so unexpected that *La Presse* described it like "as if the Ayatollah Khomeini converted to Buddhism."⁹⁴ Unsurprisingly given the discourses generated around the personae of Grundman and Berry, the most important factor for the Québec media was that Corey was, according to Larochelle, "le francophone que le

Canadien se devait d'aller chercher.⁹⁵ Report after report implied that, or perhaps hoped that, Corey's hiring was the beginning of a much longed for *francophonisation* of the Canadiens. *Le Soleil*, for example, reported that Corey's hiring was evidence that the Canadiens planned to build a "more representative" hockey team.⁹⁶ Meanwhile, the Canadiens' Francophone players were reported to have celebrated openly upon hearing news of Corey's appointment. Consider the reaction of one, Réjean Houle:

Avant de quitter la salle de conférence, Houle a eu le temps de griffonner quelques noms sur un bout de papier. Sous l'inscription Canadien, il a inscrit les noms de Ronald Corey, Jean Béliveau, François-Xavier Seigneur, Claude Mouton et Jacques Laperrière. Sous l'étiquette Molson, il a ensuite ajouté les noms de Jacques Allard, André Tranchemontagne et Frank Léveillé. À titre de représentants spéciaux, Houle a par la suite inscrit Maurice Richard et Yvan Cournoyer.

'Ça fait beaucoup de francophones, n'est-ce pas,' a-t-il noté avant d'aller s'entraîner avec le reste de ses coéquipiers.⁹⁷

Houle's point was clear: Corey's hiring was only the latest step in a process that was already well underway. Houle's interpretation, versions of which were published in several newspapers, presented a radical departure from the way the Canadiens had been portrayed over the past three years and demonstrated how media representations of the team would change after Corey's appointment. Rather than as a regressive, Anglophone institution that linguistically dominated French Canadians in the workplace, Houle's defence of the club suggested an organization controlled by Francophones that was increasingly in lockstep with the broader social changes that had transformed the province.

Thus, Corey's appointment was heralded as the coup that returned the Canadiens to their fans and to their Québécois roots. Claims that he had "saved" the team were commonplace in French language newspapers. For example, *Dimanche-Matin* described

fans accosting Corey on the street “comme s’il venait de sauver un monument historique de la démolition.”⁹⁸ Réjean Tremblay described a similar phenomenon:

L’image de Corey, celle d’un Québécois fonceur et moderne tranche nettement sur celle de M. Morgan McCammon... Ronald Corey permet une forme d’identification entre l’amateur et son équipe. Dans l’imagination populaire, il est possible de se faire accroire que le Canadien appartient à ses citoyens.⁹⁹

The examples provided made clear exactly for whom the club was “saved:” Tremblay wrote approvingly of Corey quickly organizing team excursions into Montréal’s Francophone east end for public appearances at stores such as *Sauvé et Frères* that typically catered to a French Canadian clientele. The evoking of Montréal’s geography is crucial. Tremblay clearly implied that the Canadiens previously did not venture into the east end, instead staying close by the Forum in the Anglophone west end.¹⁰⁰ By stressing that the Canadiens had returned to the east end, Tremblay constructed the Canadiens as agents in the *francophonisation* of the city’s urban life: the club itself was participating in the migration of socioeconomic power from the west end of the city to the east end.¹⁰¹

As enthusiastically as Corey’s hiring was heralded by the French language media, those reactions paled in comparison to the euphoria that greeted Corey’s first major act: the dismissal of Grundman, Berry, and scouting director Ronald Caron, the main architect along with Grundman of the Canadiens’ player recruitment policy. They were soon replaced by the team’s former star Serge Savard as General Manager, former Canadiens’ coach and scout Claude Ruel as director of scouting, and though Berry was reappointed as coach, he was stripped of his ability to name his own staff and had former Canadien Jacques Lemaire imposed as assistant coach and, essentially, head coach in waiting.¹⁰² Significantly, all three new appointees were Québec Francophones. Savard’s hiring was especially praised: French newspapers depicted him as a model Québécois and

emphasized his nationalist credentials. A highly favourable *La Presse* profile of Savard emphasized his nationalism and his business credentials.¹⁰³ Another profile in the same newspaper depicted Savard (and Corey) as emblematic of the new Francophone managerial class spawned by the reforms of the Quiet Revolution, as the two catalysts that brought a new reality to the Canadiens.¹⁰⁴

The media depicted this “joyous purge,” as *Le Soleil* called it, as irrefutable evidence of the triumph of the neo-nationalist project at the Forum. *Le Soleil* exulted that after “une interminable éclipse,” “le français deviendra la langue du travail au Forum.”¹⁰⁵ Corey, who had instigated these changes, was portrayed as an agent of *francophonisation*, as the key figure that had, in effect, decolonized the Canadiens. *Le Soleil* depicted him as a courageous figure who “a ébranlé les colonnes du temple, la longue tradition des Gorman, Selke, Pollock, Bowman, Grundman.”¹⁰⁶ Tremblay described the purge the exact opposite way that he described the Canadiens’ under Grundman’s leadership: as the liberation of an oppressed population’s cultural institution. Note that in the following passage, the term “populo” carried a pejorative connotation:

Ça faisait des décennies que le popolo avait la désagréable impression que le Canadien appartenait ‘aux autres’, qu’il était dirigé ‘par les autres’ et que lui, le monde ordinaire, n’était que toléré dans le Sanctuaire.¹⁰⁷

Tremblay linked the Canadiens’ *francophonisation* to broader discourses of Francophone emancipation. In fact, he constructed a narrative that is essentially a neo-nationalist allegory for the plight of Québec Francophones: dominated by *les autres*, its institutions co-opted, Corey had courageously taken strong remedial action that ended Francophones’ subordination in the Forum.

5.8 Summary

The Canadiens and Nordiques first faced off in the NHL playoffs in April 1982. In the wall-to-wall media coverage of the first “Battle of Québec,” one newspaper column stood out. In *Dimanche-Matin*, Jerry Trudel penned an astonishing column that, in the spirit of “the Battle of Québec,” cast the Nordiques and Canadiens as characters in the second battle of Québec, fought by British and French forces on the Plains of Abraham in Québec City in 1759.

Le 13 septembre 1759, deuxième siège de Québec ou Wolfe et Montcalm laissent leur peau. Et un jour arrive que les Anglais deviennent maîtres pas chez eux et fondent ‘The Gazette’ et plus tard les Maroons.

Les Maroons font une belle mort devant le Canadien et s’enfuient par la 401. Mais les fantômes des Plaines d’Abraham rôdent encore. Les Fleurdelysés s’emparent de Québec et insidieusement les Maroons renaissent sous le déguisement du Canadien. Astuce, ruse et boule de gomme! Et nous voici au siège de Québec III.

Mais les troupes de Bergeron étaient décimées à la veille de la grande bataille. C’est qu’une semaine plus tôt, le générale Berry avait ordonné à ses habits rouges de démoraliser l’ennemi avec incursions sournoises...

Quand même, le tonnerre gronde et les indigènes sont agités. L’intendant Filion à Québec tente de regrouper ses forces avec des soldats aguerris comme Wilfrid Paiement, Marc Tardif, Michel Goulet, Réal Cloutier, Alain Côté, Daniel Bouchard, une phalange de descendants des colons de la Nouvelle France auxquels, pour bonne mesure, on a ajouté trois mercenaires des vieux pays.

Meanwhile back on St. Catherine St. West, les Maroons passent leurs troupes en revue et pour la bataille de Québec et pour le repatriement de la Constitution. C’est avec fierté que défient au pas de l’oie devant le gouverneur Grundman les Robinson, Shutt, Napier, Wamsley, Acton, Wickenheiser, Langway, Engblom, Brubaker, Nilan, Risebrough auxquels on a ajouté un Lafleur, un Tremblay, un Houle pour se conformer à l’article de la loi qui dit le français est acceptable ‘where the number warrants.’¹⁰⁸

It is scarcely believable that a column so blunt, so over-the-top, so inflammatory would have been published in a reputable newspaper. Yet not only was it published, it is in fact a telling encapsulation of the kind of discourse disseminated by the French press in their

coverage of the Canadiens and Nordiques in the early 1980s. Indeed, a few days later, *La Presse* published a cartoon on the front page of their sport section that made almost exactly the same claims as Trudel's historical reimagination, but in pictorial form:

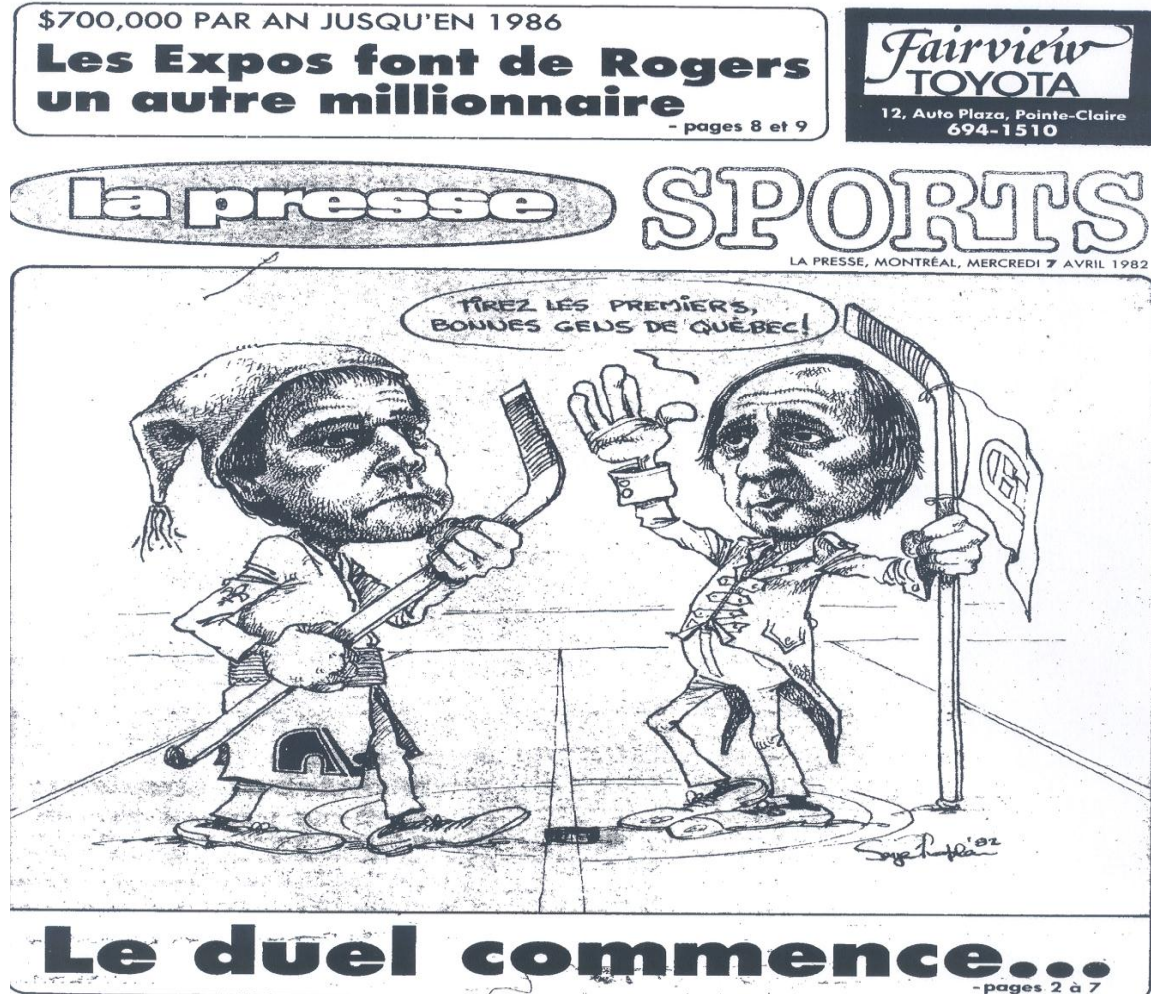


Figure 2: Canadiens' coach Bob Berry is imagined as a British redcoat, while Nordiques' coach is caricatured as a French Canadian *patriote* with a hockey stick instead of a gun.¹⁰⁹

To summarize, both Trudel and *La Presse* caricaturist Serge Chapleau portrayed the Nordiques as being representative of the French language and the French Canadian people. Trudel, guided by assumptions about national identity that were common in the

French language sport media in the early 1980s, identified the Nordiques as not merely the team of French Canadians but as the team representing the descendants of the colonists of New France. Chapleau took this a step further. He drew the Nordiques as a *patriote* from the Lower Canada Rebellion (1837), brandishing a hockey stick instead of a gun: so the Nordiques were not only visually identified with French Canadians, but as a force working for their emancipation, like the rebels of 1837. These representations were not unprecedented: the first act of Rick Salutin's play *Les Canadiens* also played on these themes, but placed the Canadiens in the role of the French forces on the Plains of Abraham.¹¹⁰ But in 1982, the Canadiens were constructed as the exact opposite: both Trudel and Chapleau imagined the club as the ethnic and cultural *autre*, as a colonist dressed in a British soldier's red coat. The team was characterized by Anglophone generals (Grundman and Barry), and Anglophone troops (Lafleur, Tremblay, and Houle are only there to provide a French veneer); their weapons, the instrument of oppression used by the red coats, was the English language, something Trudel established through the sarcastic use of English words, and snide comments about bilingualism and the repatriation of the Constitution.

This metaphor of hockey, while hyperbole, was also very serious: it rhetorically underscored that the issues being debated through the medium of NHL professional hockey were serious propositions that were linked to discourses of conquest and domination. The French media, via representations of the Canadiens and Nordiques, produced and reproduced neo-nationalist discourses pertaining to the language of the workplace and Québécois national identity, two items intimately connected in neo-nationalist theory and legislation and at the forefront of both the neo-nationalist and trade

unionist program of social justice. The French language media lauded the Nordiques, who already had inaugurated French as their language of public communication, as an ideal Québécois institution by virtue of having provided job opportunities to Québécois players and coaches, in the spirit of the ill-fated Bill 1. Allegations of anti-Anglophone discrimination from disgruntled ex-players were shrugged off as virtually irrelevant because discrimination in favour of Francophones was not necessarily seen as problematic: as neo-nationalist language legislation argued, only an influx of Québécois workers into an enterprise would ensure the reversal of colonial structures of domination that had enshrined English as the language of the workplace. Anglophones who wished to work in Québec, as hockey players or anything else, would simply have to conform to the new linguistic power structure.

The Canadiens' image suffered in comparison. In the early 1980s, there was an outflow of Francophone players from Montréal, prompting columns and editorials that constructed the Canadiens as a oppressive force in modern Québec, which is to say an institution that worked against the establishment of the French language as the *lingua franca* of the workplace. The media criticized the Canadiens for having severed what was believed to be an organic relationship between themselves and their Francophone fans, and lampooned the team as an emblem of Anglophone hegemony, the new Maroons. This kind of coverage helped to normalize an exclusive notion of Québécois identity. However, while the coverage of the Nordiques' language policy naturalized an identity rooted in use of the French language, the coverage of the Canadiens' personnel transactions suggested something different. Canadiens General Manager Irving Grundman, identified as the main culprit in the Canadiens' *anglophonisation*, spoke

fluent French, having been born and raised in Montréal. Yet he, along with fellow Montréaler Bob Berry, were denied Québécois identities and were constructed instead, in various ways, as the ethnic, cultural, and linguistic *autre*: as English speakers, Jews, Anglo-Saxons, even British redcoats. These shifting frames of reference had the same power effect: Grundman and Berry's treatment suggests a discourse that assumed a relatively exclusive Québécois national identity still rooted, to a certain extent, in ethnic particularism.

Of course none of this qualifies as war, but the Canadiens only began to rebuild their tattered reputation after a purge of their Anglophone managers – as Réjean Tremblay wrote in *La Presse*, after “General Corey” had commenced the “reconquest” of Québec.¹¹¹ The replacement of Grundman and Berry with Ronald Corey and Serge Savard prompted accolades from the French media, overjoyed that the Canadiens had finally committed to a program of *francophonisation*. The Canadiens finally appeared ready to engage with the Nordiques not just on the ice, but on the terrain of national identity. But it was precisely as a result of events on the ice that another debate about Québécois identity erupted. I examine this debate, about playing style, in the next chapter.

5.9 Endnotes

¹ Only five out of twenty-one teams failed to qualify for the NHL playoffs in 1979-80. The Nordiques were one of these five.

² Canadian Press, “Hart hits Quebec French policy,” *The Gazette*, 09 April 1980: 17

³ Original French: “Ça faisait plutôt curieux pour les joueurs Anglophones d’apprendre que les propos du président de l’équipe... Nous, Anglophones, allons nous situer où, exactement, dans l’avenir de cette équipe!” Claude Larochelle, “Intégrer les Anglophones dans l’équipe,” *Le Soleil*, 08 April 1980: B1; Claude Bédard, “Les Nordiques n’ont pas déçu,” *Le Journal de Montréal*, 08 April 1980: 85

⁴ Marc V. Levine, *The Reconquest of Montreal: Language Policy and Social Change in a Bilingual City* (Philadelphia: Temple University Press, 1990): 23-25.

⁵ Milton J. Esman, “Ethnic Politics and Economic Power,” *Comparative Politics* 19, No. 4 (1987): 400

⁶ Jacques Rouillard, *Histoire du syndicalisme au Québec : des origines à nos jours* (Montréal : Boréal, 1989): 323-324.

⁷ Sean Mills, *The Empire Within: Postcolonial Thought and Political Activism in Sixties Montreal* (Montréal: McGill-Queen’s University Press, 2010): 192.

⁸ Kari Levitt, *Silent Surrender: The Multinational Corporation in Canada* (Toronto: Macmillan of Canada, 1970): 147-148.

⁹ Pierre Vallières, *Choose!*, trans. Penelope Williams (Toronto: New Press, 1972): 21.

¹⁰ Jacques Rouillard, *L’expérience syndicale au Québec: ses rapports à l’État, à la nation et à l’opinion publique* (Montréal: VLB éditeur, 2009): 156. Translation: a lever in the fight against capitalist domination.

¹¹ Rouillard, 1989: 327. Translation: It is, without a doubt, in the linguistic field where the most scandalous national oppression has taken place; the Francophone worker, unable to work in his language, reduced to menial posts because of his unilingualism, is a stranger in his own country. It is telling that the lowest salaries, the worst jobs, and the most frequent unemployment are, for the most part, the lot of unilingual Francophones and, to a lesser extent, bilingual Francophones.

¹² Rouillard, 1989: 342-343

¹³ Levine: 165

¹⁴ Levine: 167

¹⁵ Levine: 167

¹⁶ Kenneth McRoberts, *Quebec: Social Change and Political Crisis*, 3rd ed. (Toronto: McClelland & Stewart, 1993): 227-231.

¹⁷ Robert Vandycke, “La question nationale: où en est la pensée marxiste?” *Recherches Sociographiques* 21, No. 1-2 (1980): 123

¹⁸ Ralph Peter Gützel, “The Confédération des syndicats nationaux (CSN), the Idea of Independence, and the Sovereigntist Movement, 1960-1980,” *Labour/Le Travail* 31 (1993): 165.

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- ¹⁹ Camille Laurin, Minister of State for Cultural Development, *Québec's Policy on the French Language Presented to the National Assembly and the People of Québec* (Québec: Éditeur officiel du Québec, 1977): 58.
- ²⁰ Laurin: 52.
- ²¹ Laurin: 99.
- ²² William D. Coleman, "From Bill 22 to Bill 101: The Politics of Language Under the Parti Québécois," *Canadian Journal of Political Science* 14, No. 3 (1981): 475-476
- ²³ Levine: 116-118.
- ²⁴ Coleman, 1981: 473.
- ²⁵ Rouillard, 2009: 158. Translation: the brakes on discrimination of Francophone workers as Francophone workers.
- ²⁶ Coleman, 1981: 473. Translation: ...the supreme affirmation of the French fact in North America, the victory of the Québécois nation over the Anglophone occupier, the annulment of the defeat on the Plains of Abraham, and the magna carta of Québec culture.
- ²⁷ Levine: 168
- ²⁸ Alain-G. Gagnon and Raffaele Iacovino, *Federalism, Citizenship, and Quebec: Debating Multiculturalism* (Toronto: University of Toronto Press, 2007): 98. Gagnon and Iacovino argue that "the jurisdictional battles of the Quiet Revolution and the linguistic conflicts of the 1970s culminated in a fully articulated discourse centred on citizenship in Québec."
- ²⁹ These debates are ongoing. For example, the controversial adoption of a "code of conduct" by the small Québec municipality of Hérouxville in 2007, criticized in some quarters as overtly racist, xenophobic, and islamophobic, kicked off another wave of debates about the nature of Québec identity, and strongly suggested that the term Québécois continues for many to identify French speakers of French Canadian ethnic origin. See Tim Nieguth and Aurélie Lacassagne, "Contesting the Nation: Reasonable Accommodation in Rural Québec," *Canadian Political Science Review* 3, No. 1 (2009): 1-16.
- ³⁰ Maclure's body of work is concerned with the examination of this plurivocality. For an examination in book length, see Jocelyn Maclure, *Québec Identity: The Challenge of Pluralism*, trans. Peter Feldstein (Montréal: McGill-Queen's University Press, 2003).
- ³¹ Réjean Tremblay, "Le dictateur des Canadiens," *L'actualité*, October 1979: 55-60.
- ³² Réjean Tremblay, "Le dictateur des Canadiens," *L'actualité*, October 1979: 58.
- ³³ Michael Farber, "Grundman a Winner Despite Forum Heat," *The Gazette*, 13 February 1982: F2. Another reference to the Forum as a Synagogue, see Yvon Pedneault, "F.-X. fait des courses," *Le Journal de Montréal*, 27 July 1982: 68.
- ³⁴ Université du Montréal theologian Olivier Bauer is currently working on a project exploring, among other things, whether the Canadiens themselves constitute a religion. This was elucidated in: Olivier

Bauer, "Le Canadien de Montréal est-il une religion," in *La Religion du Canadien de Montréal* eds. Olivier Bauer and Jean-Marc Barreau (Montréal: Éditions Fides, 2009): 29-80.

³⁵ Réjean Tremblay, "Entre Roger Samson et Irving Grundman, un monde..." *La Presse*, 20 June 1981: F2. Translation: a usurper from high finance.

³⁶ Réjean Tremblay, "C'est ben nous autres!" *La Presse*, 10 November 1979: D2. Translation: Francophones, Anglophones, Jews who control the pursestrings...

³⁷ Réjean Tremblay, "Entre Roger Samson et Irving Grundman, un monde..." *La Presse*, 20 June 1981: F2.

³⁸ André Rufiange, "Mémo à Irving Grundman," *Le Journal de Montréal*, 13 April 1982: 11. It was reported that Grundman and his family were harassed in their seats and called "maudit Juif" (damn Jew) by a few Nordiques fans. These depictions did not prevent other Grundman critics from using a different set of epithets: one letter to the editor in *La Presse* described the Canadiens' General Manager as "Führer Grundman." François Massue, letter to the editor, *La Presse*, 29 January 1980: A5.

³⁹ Political scientist and historian Esther Delisle has published several controversial works discussing the relationship between pre-Quiet Revolution French Canadian nationalism, fascism, and anti-semitism. See Esther Delisle, *The Traitor and the Jew: Anti-Semitism and Extremist Right-Wing Nationalism in Québec from 1929 to 1939*, trans. Madeleine Hébert, Claire Rothman, and Käthe Roth (Montréal: R. Davies Publishing, 1993); Esther Delisle, *Myths, Memories, & Lies: Québec's Intelligentsia and the Fascist Temptation, 1939-1960*, trans. Madeleine Hébert (Westmount, QC: Robert Davies Multimedia, 1998). More recently, Mordecai Richler, who achieved literary fame through his vivid depictions of Jewish life in Montréal, criticized the neo-nationalist project for its perceived anti-Semitism. See: Mordecai Richler, *Oh Canada! Oh Québec!: Requiem for a Divided Country* (Toronto: Penguin Books, 1992).

⁴⁰ Réjean Tremblay, "'Les gens s'arrêtent pour me serer la main. C'est bon.'" *La Presse*, 27 November 1982: D1. Translation: Before leaving the Forum, I went to salute Irving's new boss, Mr. Ronald Corey. We chatted for a while, standing in the middle of his office, when Grundman arrived. We had just finished an hour-long conversation. In French. Excuse me Ron, the lawyer (sic) is waiting for us. We should go. I'll be there in a few minutes... Understood?

⁴¹ Translation: A Francophone will be chosen if all else is equal. The first iteration of this policy that I encountered was made in the aftermath of Gerry Hart's complaints, in April 1980. See: Claude Larochelle, "Jamais un Francophone au prix du talent," *Le Soleil*, 15 April 1980: B2.

⁴² Wayne Parrish, "Stastnys: Canada is Beautiful Baffling," *The Gazette*, 10 January 1981: 73.

⁴³ Claude Masson, "La thérapie des Nordiques," *Le Soleil*, 6 May 1982: A4. The fact that the Nordiques were in fact owned by an English Canadian brewery, Carling O'Keefe, was not mentioned.

⁴⁴ Marc Lachapelle, "La victoire des Nordiques: un tonique pour le hockey junior majeur québécois," *Le Journal de Montréal*, 15 April 1982: 93

⁴⁵ Claude Cadorette, "Une boîte à surprise après les six premiers choix," *Le Journal de Québec*, 19 May 1982: 60

⁴⁶ Benoît Aubin, "La bataille des Nordiques," *L'actualité*, March 1980: 28

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- ⁴⁷ Richard Milo, “L’arbitrage, un nouvel outil de négociations,” *Le Devoir*, 27 January 1984: 11.
- ⁴⁸ Maurice Dumas, “Alain Daigle frappe à la porte des Nordiques,” *Le Soleil*, 25 June 1980: C1
- ⁴⁹ Associated Press, “Les Nordiques engagent un autre oublié,” *Le Journal de Montréal*, 25 June 1980: 115. Translation: This isn’t the first time that a good player from Québec has been case aside by professional clubs.
- ⁵⁰ Claude Bédard, “Michel Bergeron n’a plus qu’à se décider,” *Le Journal de Québec*, 23 May 1980: 66.
- ⁵¹ Ghyslain Luneau, “‘Le p’tit Tigre’ dans la jungle de Québec,” *Le Journal de Montréal*, 24 May 1980: 70
- ⁵² Michel Lemieux, “‘Les ouvertures sont rares pour les Canadiens-français,’” *Dimanche-Matin*, 04 July 1982: 31; Maurice Dumas, “Nolet: un bon gars avec du caractère,” *Le Soleil*, 17 July 1982: C2
- ⁵³ Canadian Press, “Les Anglophones ne se sentent pas chez eux à Québec,” *La Presse*, 09 April 1980: D4. Translation: Anglophones do not feel at home in Québec City.
- ⁵⁴ Claude Larochelle, “Intégrer les Anglophones dans l’équipe,” *Le Soleil*, 08 April 1980: B1
- ⁵⁵ Claude Larochelle, “Ferguson n’y échappe pas,” *Le Soleil*, 15 April 1980: B2. Translation: The team’s natural Francophone dimension.
- ⁵⁶ Claude Larochelle, “Intégrer les Anglophones dans l’équipe,” *Le Soleil*, 08 April 1980: B1. Brackets mine. Translation: [The integration of Anglophones] has a specific character with the Nordiques, which the Montréal Canadiens have known to avoid so far. In Montréal, English speaking players have the West Island to share, and if there are Francophone superstars like Guy Lafleur rounding up all the trophies, there are also Québec athletes who do a good part of the dirty work... In Québec City, the humble and exhausting work is the lot of a few Anglophones who feel bad about themselves when they compare themselves with stars with extravagant salaries.
- ⁵⁷ Claude Bédard, “Hart n’avait pas tort et n’avait pas raison,” *Le Journal de Québec*, 12 April 1980: 66
- ⁵⁸ Claude Larochelle, “Jamais un Francophone au prix du talent,” *Le Soleil*, 15 April 1980: B2. Translation: Many Québec athletes and their families lived through this difficult transition. Many of them have been thrown into a different culture in various North American locales. They made out alright without lamenting their situation. As I told Gerry Hart recently, the Québécois athlete who plays in Winnipeg or Vancouver doesn’t even think of asking for a group of Francophones to surround him, or to demand French language announcements at the rink!
- ⁵⁹ The Nordiques did not make a Francophone-for-Anglophone trade until 1982, almost three years after they debuted in the NHL, when they brought in goaltender John Garrett in exchange for another goalie, Michel Plasse. See Michael Farber, “Goalie Garrett an unlikely hero,” *The Gazette*, 23 April 1982: D1.
- ⁶⁰ Canadian Press, “Thomas Alleges Nordiques Favouing French Players,” *The Gazette*, 26 September 1980: 35
- ⁶¹ Canadian Press, “Encore un peu de fiel de Farrish,” *La Presse*, 29 September 1980: C5

⁶² Claude Larochelle, “Thomas ne faisait pas le poids,” *Le Soleil*, 26 September 1980: A1. Translation: a true farce.

⁶³ Claude Bédard, “Si les Francophones étaient aussi choyés,” *Le Journal de Montréal*, 27 September 1980: 71, emphasis mine. Translation: Thomas and all others who think like him have never stopped to think about those Quebecers who go abroad to pursue their careers. To cope, they were obligated to assimilate. Not a single team in the United States or Western Canada bothered to find them a Francophone milieu, French-speaking teachers for their children, or escorts to help them better adjust to their new environment. They managed without help from anyone.

⁶⁴ Jacques Dumais, “La bêtise de Thomas,” *Le Soleil*, 27 September 1980: A6. Translation: Thomas and all his disciples must recognize that a 99 percent French speaking city cannot house a team dominated by foreign athletes. In other words, the Nordiques should not look like the Expos or the Montréal Alouettes... Whether they like it or not, the Nordiques have been designed with a French face, like a microcosm of Québec society.

⁶⁵ Individual decisions were frequently questioned by the French press; case in point is the Canadiens’ selection of Saskatchewan native Doug Wickenheiser over Montréal product Denis Savard in the 1980 NHL Entry Draft. But these decisions were only identified as part of a larger pattern beginning in October, 1980.

⁶⁶ Réjean Tremblay, “Le Canadien a oublié le Québec,” *La Presse*, 03 October 1980: B2.

⁶⁷ Bernard Brisset, “Les ‘frogs’ sont menaces,” *La Presse*, 04 October 1980: F2. Brisset charged that Québec-based scouts were routinely ignored, and that Bert Templeton, the coach of the team’s minor league affiliate in Nova Scotia and a key figure in the team’s player development scheme, was a confirmed francophobe. Brisset’s assertion was seconded by *Le Soleil* scribe Claude Larochelle, and confirmed years later by Canadiens player Guy Carbonneau, who played for Templeton at this time. Claude Larochelle, “Ça gronde dans les parages du Forum,” *Le Soleil*, 10 October 1980: C1; Jean Beaunoyer, “Carbonneau oursuit sa route sans jamais élever la voix,” *La Presse*, 21 August 1982: C5

⁶⁸ Bernard Brisset, “Les ‘frogs’ sont menaces,” *La Presse*, 04 October 1980: F2. Translation: Obviously, the Expos and the Alouettes don’t preoccupy themselves with the linguistic divide in their rosters. But fans recognize themselves in their hockey team, which is not the case with those two other teams, which are composed mostly of young Americans for the most part.

⁶⁹ Marc Lachapelle, “À talent égal, nous repêchons le Québécois,” *Le Journal de Montréal*, 12 May 1982: 110. Canadiens General Manager Irving Grundman insisted that this had been the Canadiens’ policy all along. This claim is untrue: in the 1980 draft, Canadiens’ scouting director Ron Caron bluntly stated that the Canadiens did not consider the French fact in its personnel decisions.” See Marc Lachapelle, “Séance d’entrée de la ligue nationale,” *Le Journal de Montréal*, 11 June 1980: 125.

⁷⁰ Réjean Tremblay, “Le Grand Serge amène avec lui un gros morceau de l’âme du Canadien,” *La Presse*, 12 December 1981: H5. Translation: in the next two or three years, the Canadiens will become a team like any other.

⁷¹ See Tom Lapointe, “Larouche heureux d’être échangé,” *Le Soleil*, 22 December 1981: B3.

⁷² Bernard Brisset, “Bloc-Notes,” *La Presse*, 10 March 1982: Sports section, 3. The Canadiens’ cleaning out of their ‘frogs’ continues.

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- ⁷³ Ghyslain Luneau, “Un simple concours de circonstances,” *Le Journal de Montréal*, 10 March 1982: 111. Translation 1: the Glorious ones are less and less Francophone. Translation 2: the list (of departures) is getting bigger.
- ⁷⁴ Réjean Tremblay, “La laine se fait rare,” *La Presse*, 09 October 1981: Sports section, 5
- ⁷⁵ The first reference I found was in Claude Larochelle, “Les ‘Maroons’ s’interrogent comme jamais,” *Le Soleil*, 23 December 1981: C1.
- ⁷⁶ Réjean Tremblay, “Jean-D. ne perd pas de temps!” *La Presse*, 24 February 1982: Sports section, 5.
- ⁷⁷ Réjean Tremblay, “Et la tradition française?” *La Presse*, 05 January 1982: Sports section, 5. All that is meant to be conveyed by this literary device is a reality that has taken hold much quicker than anticipated. The Canadiens as we knew them, the Canadiens in which so many Montréalers and Québécois recognized themselves, is dying. In its place, we find an ordinary team, like ten others in the NHL, a team that doesn’t seem to care about the Francophone tradition that Sam Pollock (the Canadiens’ General Manager in the 1970s) managed to preserve. No big deal, the Maroons will be loved like the Expos or the Alouettes... It’s not a question of being racist, it’s not important if the players are francos, anglos, Swedish, or Czechs... It’s just that hockey is the only major sport where our athletes have the chance to be worth something, and just that Le Tricolore had this old tradition... and that the Canadiens’ management doesn’t seem to realize it.
- ⁷⁸ Bernard Brisset, “Dan Daoust est cédé aux Voyageurs,” *La Presse*, 08 October 1981: Sports section, 9
- ⁷⁹ Ghyslain Luneau, “Dale Hoganson, blessé,” *Le Journal de Québec*, 23 December 1981: 51
- ⁸⁰ Réjean Tremblay, for example, described Bowman as a tyrant who used language as a weapon against Québécois players. See Réjean Tremblay, “Docteur Bowman et Mister Hyde,” *L’actualité*, March 1978: 37. At least one of Bowman’s former players accused him of francophobia. See Claude Brière, “Un jour ou l’autre, il faudra régler le cas de Larouche,” *Dimanche-Matin*, 21 October 1979: 54.
- ⁸¹ Canadian Press, “Le Canadien: une image à refaire,” *Le Soleil*, 05 January 1982: C2
- ⁸² Gilles Proulx, Letter to the Editor, *La Presse*, 12 January 1981: A7; Gilles Proulx, Letter to the Editor, *Le Devoir*, 13 January 1981: 12; Gilles Proulx, Letter to the Editor, *Le Journal de Montréal*, 15 January 1981: 10. Translation: At this moment, in the time of francization, the team that represents the second biggest French speaking city in the world comprises 12 Francophone players and 14 Anglophones.
- ⁸³ Gilles Proulx, Letter to the Editor, *La Presse*, 12 January 1981: A7; Gilles Proulx, Letter to the Editor, *Le Devoir*, 13 January 1981: 12; Gilles Proulx, Letter to the Editor, *Le Journal de Montréal*, 15 January 1981: 10. Translation: It’s not a matter of eliminating the English from Montréal... but of simply respecting the demographics of the Metropolis (Montréal)... For example, we could have at least 14 Francophones with the Tricolore out of a total of 21 players, since Montréal has a 70% Francophone majority.
- ⁸⁴ Most Francophone journalists favoured Francophone replacements for Ruel, except for Claude Bédard of *Le Journal de Québec* who favoured Vancouver Canucks assistant coach Tom Watt. Even then, Bédard stressed Watt’s familiarity with French as a plus. Claude Bédard, “Tom Watt est le meilleur successeur de Claude Ruel,” *Le Journal de Québec*, 23 April 1981: 74.

⁸⁵ Réjean Tremblay, “Molson et McCammon bougeront-ils enfin?” *La Presse*, 13 April 1981: Sports section, 4. Translation: Mister President, there are in Québec hockey specialists that aren’t found anywhere else... are you still going to tolerate discrimination against these modern hockey brains? Mr. President, are you going to recognize that Québec has changed? Are you going to recognize that the Nordiques are directed by men named Aubut, Léger, Fillion, Thiffault, Bergeron, Madden, Demers, Bernard, and are you going to recognize that there are Saint-Jeans, Larivières, Pelchats, Delages, and Racettes that have always been scorned by the head honchos at the Forum?

⁸⁶ Bernard Brisset, “Grundman choisit la stabilité,” *La Presse*, 04 June 1981: Sports section, 3. To his immense credit, Berry followed through with his promise.

⁸⁷ Maurice Richard, “La réaction du Canadien m’a déçu,” *Dimanche-Matin*, 07 June 1981: 45.

⁸⁸ Claude Larochelle, “Retour du style Bowman au Forum,” *Le Soleil*, 04 June 1981: C2. Translation: Citizens from the Anglo-Saxon tradition, brought up in an environment where English is the language of the workplace.

⁸⁹ Gens du pays was adopted by the Parti Québécois as an unofficial anthem. For example, the song was prominently played at the official events that followed both the PQ’s election victory in 1976, and the non’s referendum loss in 1980. See Aline Lechaume, “Chanter le pays: sur les chemins de la chanson québécoise,” *Géographie et cultures* 21 (1997): 45-58.

⁹⁰ Jean Beaunoyer, “Bob Berry un ‘loyaliste’ tantôt sévère tantôt charmant,” *La Presse*, 06 June 1981: F1.

⁹¹ Claude Larochelle, “Retour du style Bowman au Forum,” *Le Soleil*, 04 June 1981: C2. Translation: More than ever... the working language of Montréal’s hockey team will be English.

⁹² François Béliveau, “Un coup de dé audacieux!” *La Presse*, 04 June 1981: Sports section, 4. Translation: The Canadiens, who represent many traditions, have chosen in the tradition of Pollock, Toe Blake, Bowman, to hire Bob Berry as head coach, and follow, like the Trudeau government, the dream of a happy marriage between Francophones and Anglophones. A dream, because in fact, in little memos, in interoffice communication, in discussions between players and coach, English will predominate. The image projected by the public relations desk, however, will have a veneer of bilingualism.

⁹³ François Béliveau, “Un coup de dé audacieux!” *La Presse*, 04 June 1981: Sports section, 4.

⁹⁴ Richard Chartier, “Ronald Corey déménagement au Forum!” *La Presse*, 13 November 1982: D1.

⁹⁵ Claude Larochelle, “‘Piraterie’ entre Montréal et Québec,” *Le Soleil*, 13 November 1982: F1. Translation: the Francophone that the Canadiens had to go out and get.

⁹⁶ Marcel Gaudette, “Ronald Corey: son choix c’est Molson (air connu),” *Le Soleil*, 13 November 1982: F2.

⁹⁷ Ghyslain Luneau, “‘Un coup de maître,’” *Le Journal de Montréal*, 13 November 1982: 93. Translation: Before leaving the conference room, Houle had the time to scrawl a few names on a piece of paper. Under “Canadiens,” he wrote the names Ronald Corey, Jean Béliveau, François-Xavier Seigneur, Claude Mouton, and Jacques Laperrière. Under the word Molson, he added the names Jacques Allard, André Tranchemontagne, and Frank Léveillé. For special representatives, he then wrote Maurice Richard and Yvan Cournoyer. ‘That’s a lot of Francophones’ isn’t it?’ he noted before going to train with his teammates.

⁹⁸ Claude Brière, “Je suis un peu gêné,” *Dimanche-Matin*, 21 November 1982: 52. Translation: as if he had saved a historic monument from demolition.

⁹⁹ Réjean Tremblay, “Pourquoi s’amuse-t-on maintenant au Forum?” *La Presse*, 24 December 1982: C2. Translation: Corey’s image, that of a modern Québécois go-getter stands out compared to Mr. Morgan McCammon... Ronald Corey allows there to be an identification between the fans and their team. In the popular imagination, it is possible to convince oneself that the Canadiens belong to the citizenry.

¹⁰⁰ The Montréal Forum was located just across Atwater Street from Westmount, a wealthy Anglophone enclave associated with corporate Montréal.

¹⁰¹ This metaphor of eastward movement becomes even more salient in the context of the eastward move of Montréal’s commercial core as a whole, spurred by the development of buildings such as Maison Radio-Canada and la Complexe Desjardins, from the Anglophone west end closer to the Francophone east end. See Clément Demers, “Le nouveau centre-ville de Montréal,” *Cahiers de géographie du Québec* 27, No. 71 (1983): 209-235.

¹⁰² Sure enough, Berry was fired again in less than a year and replaced as head coach by Lemaire.

¹⁰³ Réjean Tremblay, “L’important, c’est d’être voulu,” *La Presse*, 30 April 1983: D2.

¹⁰⁴ Réjean Tremblay, “Corey a redonné le Canadien à son milieu,” *La Presse*, 05 May 1983: Sports section, 5.

¹⁰⁵ Claude Larochelle, “‘Purge’ influencé par les Nordiques,” *Le Soleil*, 14 April 1983: C1. Translation 1: an interminable eclipse. Translation 2: French will become the language of the workplace at the Forum.

¹⁰⁶ Claude Larochelle, “Savard s’installera en maître absolu,” *Le Soleil*, 29 April 1983: C1. Translation: that shook the columns of the Forums, and the long tradition of the Gormans, Blakes, Pollacks, Bowmans, and Grundmans.

¹⁰⁷ Réjean Tremblay, “Savard est avec le Canadien pour les vingt prochaines années,” *La Presse*, 29 April 1983: Sports section, 5. Translation: For years the rabble has had the disagreeable impression that the Canadiens belonged to the other, that they were run by the other, and that they were merely tolerated in the Sanctuary.

¹⁰⁸ Jerry Trudel, “Le siège de Québec III,” *Dimanche-Matin*, 04 April 1982: 32. Translation: September 13, 1759, the second siege of Québec where Wolfe and Montcalm left their lives. And one day it happened that the English became masters not in their own houses and founded ‘*The Gazette*’ and later the Maroons. The Maroons died a good death at the hands of the Canadiens and fled up Highway 401. But the ghosts of the Plains of Abraham still lurk. The Fleurselysés seize control of Québec and insidiously the Maroons are reborn disguised as Canadiens. The plot thickens! Which bring us to the Third Siege of Québec. But Bergeron’s troops were decimated before the big battle. One week ago, General Berry ordered his redcoats to demoralize the enemy with underhanded attacks... Either way, thunder roars and the indigenous people have become agitated. Paymaster Filion in Québec attempts to rebuild his forces with battle hardened soldiers like Wilfrid Paiement, Marc Tardif, Michel Goulet, Réal Cloutier, Alain Côté, Daniel Bouchard, a phalanx of descendants of the colonists of New France to which, for good measure, was added three mercenaries from the Old Countries. Meanwhile back on St. Catherine St. West, the Maroons examine their troops for the Battle of Québec and for the repatriation of the constitution. It’s with pride that, in front

of General Grundman, goose step Robinson, Shutt, Napier, Wamsley, Acton, Wickenheiser, Langway, Engblom, Brubaker, Nilan, Risebrough, to whom were added Lafleur, Tremblay, and Houle, in order to obey to the letter that law that says that French is acceptable 'where the number warrants.'

¹⁰⁹ *La Presse*, Editorial Cartoon, 07 April 1982: Sports section, 1. Every effort was made to contact Serge Chapleau to ask for permission to reprint this cartoon.

¹¹⁰ Rick Salutin, *Les Canadiens: A Play* (Vancouver: Talonbooks, 1977): 27-45.

¹¹¹ Réjean Tremblay, "Le Canadien à la reconquête du Québec derrière le général Corey," *La Presse*, 04 May 1983: Sports section, 5. The articles subtitle read: "Les Nordiques repoussées derrière leurs remparts" (The Nordiques are pushed back behind their defences).

Chapter 6

6 Flying Frenchmen, *Pousseux de Puck*, and the Discourse of “National” Style

In February 1980, three months before Québec residents were to decide their political future in the referendum on sovereignty-association, neo-nationalist lawyer Guy Bertrand outlined his vision for a Québec international hockey team in an interview with *Le Soleil*. Hockey, according to Bertrand, would play an important role in Québec’s inexorable march to independence. Restating a piece of conventional hockey wisdom, the lawyer argued that Québécois hockey players practiced a distinct style of hockey that differentiated them from players hailing from the rest of Canada, a brand of play emphasizing spectacular offense, speed, skill, and creativity.¹ An international hockey team would not just be the symbol of an independent Québec, but its embodiment as well. Bertrand later claimed that this “national” style of hockey was completely distinct from the Canadian tradition, reminiscent instead of teams from the Soviet Union.² This style, argued Bertrand, could only flourish once Québec had secured its political independence.

Bertrand’s pronouncements, and the context in which they were made, reveal the political importance attached to the way Québécois athletes play hockey. Bertrand identified the style of hockey played in Québec as an expression of national culture, and a means of differentiating the Québec nation from the rest of Canada. This chapter situates professional hockey, specifically the rivalry between the Nordiques and Canadiens, as a vehicle for discourses of national identity that are rooted in notions of ethnic difference typically identified as part of “traditional” French Canadian nationalism. First, I make a

case for conceptualizing national performance styles foremost as a form of national identity discourse. Then, I argue that the roots of a Québécois style discourse, constructed through the successes of the Canadiens, can be traced to, and continue to reference, “racial” discourses usually identified as characteristic of pre-Quiet Revolution French Canadian nationalism. Finally, through a discourse analysis of texts found in Québec’s French newspapers from 1979 to 1984, I examine how this discourse of style was deployed in the Canadiens-Nordiques rivalry, constructing the Nordiques, through their style of play, as an embodiment of Québécois distinctiveness, usurping that role from the Canadiens, who were conversely depicted as foreign to the Québécois tradition and, as a result, deviant from the neo-nationalist social project.

6.1 Lionel Groulx and “Racial” Identity

Historian Jeffrey Vacante argued that “at the beginning of the twentieth century, it was common for French Canadians to claim that they possessed genetic and physical attributes that distinguished them as a race.”³ These ideas, it should be stressed, were not unique to Québec. In the nineteenth and early twentieth century, race theories were an accepted mode of conceptualizing social and cultural difference. As historian Kenan Malik explained, “the modern idea of race developed through the particularist categories of the Romantic reaction to Enlightenment rationalism.”⁴ A discourse of “race” emerged as an explanation for what were understood as objective and essential differences between not just European and colonial populations, but within European society itself. As Malik wrote:

The notion of race in the immediate post-Enlightenment world was most imprecise. The idea of ‘peoples’, ‘nations’, ‘classes’ and ‘races’ all merged together. Race often expressed a vague sense of difference and the

characterisation that this race was based variously on physical traits, languages, the aptitude for civilisation and the peculiarities of customs and behaviours.⁵

In Victorian Britain, for example, the discourse of race was deployed in order to naturalize differences in social class.⁶ It was also used by romantic nationalists as a basis for imagining the national community and for reifying differences between, for example, the Germans and the Dutch, or, more broadly, between “Teutonic” northern Europeans and “Latin blooded” populations of the Mediterranean basin.⁷

This brand of essentialism stands out in many seminal early French Canadian nationalist texts, such as those composed by the Catholic priest and nationalist historian Lionel Groulx, whose writings became the theoretical underpinning of the conservative nationalism that dominated Québec intellectual thought until the Quiet Revolution.⁸ Groulx emphasized “pure Latin blood” as one of the primary determinants of French Canadian nationality (the other being the religion of the Catholic Church in which Groulx served).⁹ French Canadian nationality, wrote Groulx, “...a pour fondement l’identité de sang, de tempérament, de caractère et de langage; elle suppose, dans un groupe humain, des ressemblances physiques, psychologiques et morales qui y déterminent la force active d’une parenté.”¹⁰ French Canadians were born with physical and psychological predispositions: “par notre naissance, par le sang que nous portons dans nos veines, par les hérédités dont notre être est chargé, nous sommes prédestinés à certaines façons de penser et de sentir.”¹¹ Being French Canadian was an innate mode of being, there was no element of choice in this matter: being born French Canadian determined how a French Canadian would behave. As anthropologist Richard Handler rephrased these ideas, “to be Québécois is to act Québécois, and to act Québécois comes naturally to those who are Québécois.”¹²

Governmental efforts to define and categorize French Canadian culture arrived at similar conclusions. The final report of the Royal Commission of Inquiry on Constitutional Problems (1956; colloquially known as the Tremblay Commission) understood the French Canadian nation as a product of its historical, psychological, and biological characteristics. As William Coleman explained:

In the commission's view, the critical factor that contributed to the uniqueness of a culture was its national genius. It was composed of native qualities of temperament that 'are themselves the fruits of a long-elaborated biological and psychological heredity. *Culture was not chosen but something into which one was born.* French-Canadian culture was lived and expressed by individuals who had their biological roots in French Canada and who thus had access to the French genius. Culture, by implication, did not constantly change with circumstances but was fixed and rooted in human nature.¹³ (Emphasis mine)

In other words, the Tremblay Commission avowed that hereditary uniqueness sealed the boundedness, homogeneity, and distinctiveness of French Canadian life. The French Canadian nation, in this respect, was understood as a unique socio-biological organism that was genetically predisposed to think, act, feel, and emote in particular ways.

As I explained in Chapter 2, "traditional" French Canadian nationalism, emphasizing heredity, agrarian values and Catholicism, had been judged by scholars as having been replaced by modern neo-nationalism, which foregrounds language and territoriality, during the Quiet Revolution. There is indeed much truth to this. But while older notions of national essence have certainly been deemphasized – Groulx himself amended his opinions about "race" and "pure blood" towards the end of his career¹⁴ – they have never disappeared from mainstream Québécois nationalist discourse, though the word "race" has fallen out of favour. For example, in Chapter 4, I described how neo-nationalists assigned primordial, deterministic properties to the French language. Also, Handler's fieldwork, during which he conducted scores of interviews with

Québécois nationalists from 1976 to 1984, suggested that essentialist notions of identity, unattached to language, have endured and remained salient in neo-nationalist discourse.¹⁵ Notions of blood and national genius were likewise employed strategically in speeches and legislation by the Parti Québécois (PQ). For example, René Lévesque described the “Québécois difference” as a “physical fact.”¹⁶ Famously, Lévesque used notions of ethnic identity to attack Pierre Trudeau during the referendum campaign: “his name is Pierre Elliott Trudeau and this is the Elliott side taking over, and that’s the English side, so we French Canadians in Québec can’t expect any sympathy from him.”¹⁷ The idea that Trudeau, by possessing an “English side” – his mother was of Scottish and French Canadian descent – could not be a *pure laine* (pure blooded) French Canadian, and was, as a result, driven to thwart the aspirations of Québec Francophones, revealed the enduring salience of biology as a determinant of culture, clashing with the neo-nationalist emphasis on language and citizenship and leaving nationalists open to charges of intolerance and anglophobia.¹⁸

6.2 Two Solitudes: French Canadian Finesse, Anglo-Canadian Brawn

As with neo-nationalist discourse as a whole, these notions of blood and national genius have permeated the culture of hockey, specifically in discussions about performance style. That Québec-bred players practice a unique “national” style of hockey, distinct from the dominant style in the rest of Canada, was and is largely taken for granted. Yet, interestingly, there was no mention of an emerging French Canadian style in Donald Guay’s detailed history of the early years of hockey in Québec,¹⁹ Michel’s Vigneault’s recounting of the early days of Montréal hockey,²⁰ or Gilles

Janson's study of the beginnings of Québec sport.²¹ The oldest reference to a unique French Canadian style of play that I was able to find was in *Two Solitudes*, the classic novel penned by Montréal writer Hugh MacLennan during World War II. MacLennan described a "French style of hockey, a team with small, stick-handling forwards and defensemen built like beer barrels."²²

Academics who addressed the idea of French Canadian hockey style have generally done so in debates about anti-Francophone discrimination in the National Hockey League. William D. Walsh, for example, identified the French Canadian style as the brand of hockey that is practiced in the Québec Major Junior Hockey League (QMJHL), the main development league for young Québec born players. Walsh argued that the average QMJHL player was significantly smaller than his counterparts in the Ontario Hockey League (OHL) and Western Hockey League (WHL), the most important hockey-breeding grounds for English speaking Canadians, and that QMJHL players were more offensively minded, less defensively inclined, and less disposed toward physical play and strategic violence than their counterparts in Western Canada and Ontario.²³ This, typically, is the taken-for-granted account of French Canadian style that has been reproduced by sports journalists and other hockey personalities. For example, Rick Martin, a Québec Francophone and former NHL all-star, remarked to *The Gazette* that "there definitely is a difference between players coming out of the West and Ontario compared to Québec. Especially in the defensive aspect of the game. West and Ontario players check better. In Québec they favour more of a skating style and more offence than defense."²⁴ At least one Canadian national team coach has justified not picking Québécois players by citing their all-offence, no-defence style unfavourably.²⁵ Canadian

Broadcasting Corporation commentator Don Cherry, a vocal supporter of the rough-and-tumble “Canadian” style of hockey, has lumped Québécois players in with Europeans as deviants from this tradition.²⁶

But there are also those who challenge the veracity of these accounts. At least one Québécois journalist, Richard Milo of *Le Devoir*, placed the Québec style firmly in the tradition of North American hockey, in contrast to the puck possession, pass-happy European style.²⁷ Researchers such as Marc Lavoie and Bob Sirois, armed with a battery of statistics, categorically rejected any notion of a distinct Québécois hockey style and argued that “the myth propagated even here in Québec that Francophone players are poor defensively” has served as a pretext for National Hockey League clubs to discriminate against Francophone players.²⁸ If Francophone players have conformed to the high-scoring stereotype, Lavoie and Sirois argued, it was only because NHL discrimination permitted only the very best Québécois players to emerge in the league.²⁹ Lavoie and Sirois’s arguments are far from watertight – the increasing sophistication of hockey statistics has exposed their analysis as relatively elementary – but they at the very least cast significant doubt upon the existence of a distinct Québécois style of hockey. The QMJHL’s own struggle with violent play, coupled with the success and popularity in Québec of the Ligue Nord-Américaine de Hockey, a low-level professional league composed mostly of Francophone players where skill is deemphasized in favour of extreme violence, further muddles the style myth.³⁰

Whether or not Québécois players *actually* play a different style of hockey than their English Canadian counterparts is largely irrelevant to my analysis. Instead, the significance of the perceived Québécois hockey style is that it has proven an ideal and

resilient carrier for the essentialist national discourses discussed above. So rather than treating performance style an embodied practice, I propose instead to treat it as a mythologizing nationalist discourse that promotes and reproduces an absolutist understanding of the nation, and, as such, an important tool for nationalists who wish to demonstrate the distinctiveness of the Québec nation. As we have seen, the nation is often imagined on the basis of concepts such as race, blood, or national essence. Nationalists themselves, scholar Anthony D. Smith argues, tend to believe in the primordialism and fixity of the nation: for them, the nation is a single socio-biological organism moving through time, in the course of which it has developed ways of expressing itself that are clearly and naturally distinct from other nations.³¹ Nationalists seek – in embodied practices – evidence of this distinctiveness. To quote Handler: “those who seek the sources of national identity interpret aspects of a social world as typifying that world, which is then understood to be territorially and sociologically bounded (‘the nation’) and in possession of ‘a’ culture composed of detached, object-like ‘traits.’”³² These “traits” are always conceived to be natural, inborn, and never arbitrary or random.

Two French scholars, Stéphane Beaud and Gérard Noiriel, advanced a similar understanding of national sport styles in a 1990 paper for the French history journal *Vingtième Siècle*.³³ Beaud and Noiriel argued that sport is a vector for nationalism, transmitting discourses and stereotypes that dominate, or previously dominated, a nation’s cultural life. Because sport has such an intimate relationship with national identity, nationalists invariably attempt to define and objectify a national style that is unique to their national group. Inevitably, Beaud and Noiriel argued, the “traits” of a national style become bound up with those national discourses and stereotypes that have

found refuge in sport. Wins and losses, as well as the manner by which these are achieved, are interpreted through the lens of the perceived inborn traits of the national group; the way a national team practices sport becomes understood as a manifestation of the national essence.

Beaud and Noiriel use the example of French soccer, and what French historian Alfred Wahl described as the “long and often absurd quest” to define a national style.³⁴ At the dawn of international soccer in the early twentieth century, when French teams lacked technique and were regularly battered by superior teams from the British Isles, relative French successes were understood to be a result of courage and resoluteness, which were both judged to be typical French characteristics. Though understandings of national style changed as the French national team evolved and improved, they remained rooted in the perceived innate ancestral qualities of the French nation. Gifted and wildly successful French sides of the 1980s were celebrated for “champagne football,” which analysts described as a “latin” and “romantic” style that reflected the “typically French” characteristics of quickness, improvisation, cleverness, and vivacity, characteristics which were necessary to compensate for the supposed physical deficiencies of French players relative to “large” and “heavy” Northern European teams, who were deemed to play a more methodical and physical style.³⁵ Thus, significantly, not only did the style discourse in French soccer provide an account of what it means to be French, but it also identified a stylistic *autre* (other), making crystal clear what the French were *not* (large, heavy, methodical, physical, northern Europeans).

The style discourse that has characterized French soccer is virtually identical to that which developed in relation to Québec hockey. Both styles are claimed to be based

on speed, quickness, and spectacular offensive play. Over time, both Québec hockey and French soccer have been presumed to be defensively deficient. In both instances, the styles of play have been assumed to be determined in large part by biology: it is their small stature that force “les p’tits français” (the little Frenchmen) to eschew physicality in favour of skill and vivacity, traits that are understood to be characteristic expressions of “latin temperament” or “French genius.” And finally, both style discourses are conveniently opposite to those associated with their greatest rivals: “northern Europeans” and English Canadians both loom as the big, physical, less skilled *autre*.

It is likely that the style discourse that emerged to give meaning to Québécois hockey coalesced around the Montréal Canadiens. The way the Canadiens historically have played has been constructed as an expression of the French Canadian essence, as evidence of that nation’s distinctiveness, by Anglophone and Francophone sources alike. The Canadiens’ style came to be identified as indelibly French Canadian for two reasons. First, as we have seen, the Canadiens, especially during their most successful periods, have indeed been built around a nucleus composed mostly of Québec Francophones. The Canadiens’ cultural primacy in Québec, supported by the NHL’s eligibility rules, ensured that few Francophones plied their trade with other NHL clubs before the institution of a universal entry draft in the early 1970s. So the Canadiens were not just the most French NHL team; they were the *only* French team in the NHL, simultaneously a breeding ground and a refuge for Francophone players.

Secondly, over time, the Canadiens indeed appear to have, for the most part, played a game predicated on speed, passing, and finesse. This notion of style is ubiquitous in discussions about the Canadiens, and references to the Canadiens’

flamboyant, crowd-pleasing style have become a compulsory part of any retrospective book written about the club. To choose one such example, Goyens and Turowetz, in their extensive team history, wrote that “the Canadiens would win, win, win. With style. With panache. With elan. They would skate faster than the other guys, score more (and more exciting) goals and play flashy, crowd-pleasing hockey.”³⁶ Another book about the Canadiens simply was entitled “Speed and Style.”³⁷ Iconic Canadiens players were given nicknames such as “The Stratford Streak” (Howie Morenz, also known as the “Mitchell Meteor”), “The Rocket” (Maurice Richard), “The Pocket Rocket” (Maurice’s brother Henri Richard), and “The Roadrunner” (Yvan Cournoyer) that emphasized their spectacular speed. It is important to note that this style of play differed from most of the other teams in the NHL, composed mostly of English Canadians, who played a more methodical, physical style. The differences, both in ethnic composition and style of play, between the Canadiens and other NHL clubs suggested a link between the Canadiens, their style, and French Canadian nationality. So at the same time as the Canadiens became a vehicle for the imagining of French Canadian national identity, the team’s style was being constructed as the manifestation of the French Canadian national essence.

This implied relationship between club, style, and nationality was never uncomplicated or without contradiction, but it has proved extremely resilient. The Canadiens’ reputation for uniquely quick-skating, free-flowing, spectacular hockey was first established in the 1920s, where according to the playwright Rick Salutin, who staged a production about the Canadiens, they already showed “the grace, *élan* and reckless speed for which they became famous.”³⁸ A New York sportswriter dubbed the team the “Flying Frenchmen,” a nickname that presupposed a link between the team’s style and its

ethnic composition.³⁹ The Canadiens' style was especially unique compared to two early all-Anglophone rivals: the "big, beefy, clunky" Montréal Wanderers,⁴⁰ and the Montréal Maroons, who practiced "slower-paced hardnosed hockey."⁴¹ The "Flying Frenchmen" label stuck despite the Canadiens perhaps not being as "Flying" or "French" as popularly portrayed.⁴² Howie Morenz, the Canadiens' unquestioned superstar, who was given nicknames such as the "Stratford Streak" and the "Mitchell Meteor" that emphasized his spectacular speed, was a German-Canadian from the heart of Protestant Ontario and had, hockey journalist Stan Fischler confirms, not "a drop of French blood in him."⁴³ Ottawa, Ontario native Joliat, meanwhile, "had a French name, but he was the son of a Swiss Protestant and he was the first to tell you his French was lousy."⁴⁴ And while the devotion of the Canadiens of that epoch to playing a clean, skilful game has become legendary, the team was certainly not averse to belligerent excess: key members of the team included notorious tough-men such as the Cleghorn brothers, Sprague and Odie, and Billy Coutu, a Francophone who was eventually banned from the NHL for life for violent play.⁴⁵

After a lean period for the team during the Great Depression and World War II, the association between the Canadiens' spectacular style of play and French Canadian nationality was reinforced during the 1950s, as the extraordinarily successful Montréal teams of that era practiced a spectacular brand of hockey described famously by Montréal journalist Andy O'Brien as "fire wagon hockey."⁴⁶ Observers, both Anglophone and Francophone, saw something unquestionably French Canadian in the Canadiens' style. The American journalist Herbert Warren Wind, in a book commissioned by the Canadiens, wrote about those teams that "one felt that their flamboyant style reflected not

only their Gallic temperament but a deep-rooted consciousness that, as the idols of French Canada, they had a responsibility to represent that minority region with heart and distinction.”⁴⁷ As in the 1920s, this style discourse developed against stereotypes of a national and stylistic other. The Canadiens’ greatest rivals, the Toronto Maple Leafs, a team composed of what *Dimanche-Matin* sportswriter Jerry Trudel described as “big muscles, strong wills... and square heads” practiced the methodical, physical style of play common in the rest of the NHL.⁴⁸

These sorts of comparisons were also applied within the team itself. Though continuing to field large numbers of French Canadians, the teams of the 1950s also incorporated Québec Anglophones such as Dickie Moore and Doug Harvey, and Anglophones from elsewhere in Canada such as Bert Olmstead and Ralph Backstrom. It became an accepted cliché that the Francophones on the team provided scoring and flair while Anglophones added muscle and defensive play. Gowens and Turowetz, for example, described those teams as a combination of “Gallic flair” and “Prairie hardnose.”⁴⁹ The team’s architect during this era, Frank Selke, saw his charges as the perfect combination of the French and English races:

Then there’s team spirit, and the strength that comes from two or more racial units on the club, each with a different approach mentally to the game. The player of English or German or Polish descent has the inborn urge to drive right in, to smash his way along. On the other hand, there’s the Gallic spirit of our French-Canadian players. They like to set up plays in almost dramatic fashion by passing the puck. They’re the artists of the game.⁵⁰

This style discourse endured through the 1970s, when the Canadiens won four consecutive Stanley Cup championships from 1975-76 to 1978-79. Ken Dryden, the goaltender on those championships teams, said about the team’s style that “it starts with speed. It is the essence of the Canadiens game... and [coach Scotty] Bowman

understands speed... He knows that with Lafleur, Lemaire, Shutt, Lapointe, Gainey, and others, speed is an edge we have on everyone else.”⁵¹ It was in the 1970s where the Canadiens’ style of play was first compared to the puck possession style exhibited by European clubs and national teams from the Soviet Union and Czechoslovakia (members of past Canadiens teams were quick to remind the Montréal press that their teams played exactly the same way).⁵² The Canadiens, as in the 1950s, took on the role of being not just the purveyors, but the defenders of skill in the NHL against more violent alternatives such as those employed very successfully by teams like the Philadelphia Flyers (the “Broad Street Bullies”) and the Boston Bruins (the “Big Bad Bruins”). The Canadiens’ victory over the Flyers in the 1976 Stanley Cup finals, the team’s first of four consecutive Stanley Cup championships, was feted in Québec and elsewhere as a triumph for skill over intimidation and thuggery, a victory that paved the way for smaller, quicker players to assert themselves.⁵³ As NHL teams abandoned the violent excesses of the 1970s and emphasized speed and skill, observers credited the Canadiens with having inspired this change; for example, the architect of the emerging offensive powerhouse Edmonton Oilers openly admitted to having based his team’s style of play on the 1970s Canadiens.⁵⁴

As with the teams of the 1950s, the 1970s Canadiens were described in terms of a cultural division of labour, reinforcing ideas of French and English Canadians’ inherent difference. This was not without contradiction: for example, Anglophones such as Steve Shutt and Larry Robinson were among the league’s best offensive players at their respective positions, while the team’s designated pugilists were Francophones (Pierre Bouchard and Gilles Lupien).⁵⁵ Despite any anomaly, ideas about the team’s ethnic division of labour persisted and were frequently linked to well worn stereotypes of

Francophone panache and no-nonsense Anglophone grit, often through the use of clichés that had little to do with hockey. One Montréal journalist, describing the propensity of “pop sociologists” to explain that “Lafleur and his *elan* represent the French Canadian; Gainey and his no-nonsense over-achieving, the English Canadian,” felt the need to add that “incidentally, lunch with Lafleur includes a \$15 bottle of wine; lunch with Gainey comes with two draft beers.”⁵⁶

To recapitulate: by their fourth consecutive Stanley Cup triumph in 1979, the Canadiens firmly became entrenched in the consciousness of Québec Francophones (and Anglophones) as playing a uniquely French Canadian or Québécois style of hockey. This fast, skilful, spectacular style was associated with the Canadiens, a team for years composed mostly of French Canadians, through its linking to notions of ethnic (or, using the language of another era, “racial”) distinctiveness that dominated Québec political discourse before the Quiet Revolution. This naturalization of performance style was strengthened by comparisons to the Anglophone *other*: the methodical, physical brand of hockey played by the other (predominately Anglophone) clubs in the NHL, as well as the club’s internal composition, which suggested an ethnic division of labour with Francophones counted upon for offensive fireworks and Anglophones expected to provide defense and muscle. The Canadiens, through their style, were constructed as the embodiment of the nation’s inherent distinctiveness, strengthening the team’s status as an important French Canadian cultural institution.

6.3 The 1980s Canadiens: *Pousseux de puck* and *taupins*

At the beginning of the 1980s, the Canadiens suffered through an undoubted stylistic stagnation, as the superstars from the 1970s aged, retired, or lapsed into

ineffectiveness. The French language press wrote about the Canadiens' stylistic stagnation upon the reappointment of Claude Ruel, a staunch believer in defensive play, as head coach in December 1979 (he had previously coached the team from 1968 to 1970). *Le Soleil* summarized his strategy in four points: "1 – 'garrochage' de rondelle dans les coins; 2 – blocage résolu du centre par les avants; 3 – coins de patinoire à gagner comme dans une bataille de tranchées; 4 – défenseurs jouant féroce­ment les bandes."⁵⁷ Rather than hockey as art, as the Canadiens were remembered as having played, Ruel preached hockey as physical battle, or even war. One of the terms used most frequently by the French press to describe the Canadiens during the Ruel years was *pousseux de puck*. Translated literally into English, it means "puck pusher." It is a term that can only be applied pejoratively, one that conjures images of players clumsily pushing the puck ahead of them rather than employing more refined techniques. To give but one example of how this term was used: one *Le Journal de Québec* article described the Canadiens' play as "bland," "uninspired," and claimed that the team "no longer resembles the Canadiens," but were now "pousseux de puck."⁵⁸ It is important to emphasize how widespread usage of this term was in the French media: in addition to columnists and beat reporters, the term was also employed by general columnists, by fans in letters to the editor, by former players, and even by Frank Selke, the architect of the "fire wagon hockey" teams of the 1950s.⁵⁹

Through the early 1980s, the image of the Canadiens as a team of *pousseux de puck* evolved to that of a gang of *taupins* (goons). This image of violence was especially prevalent during the 1983-84 season, which brought a regime change in Montréal in the shape of a new general manager, Serge Savard, one of the Canadiens' star defensemen

from the 1970s teams who was closely associated with the idealized French Canadian style of clean, fast, skilled hockey. He was also an outspoken critic of hockey violence: he was notable, for example, for describing the Canadiens' victory over the violent "Broad Street Bullies" Philadelphia Flyers team in the 1976 Stanley Cup Finals as "an important victory for hockey over violence and intimidation."⁶⁰ Upon being hired, Savard iterated that one of his priorities was to oversee a return to the team's historical style. He wanted to build "a skating team, one that can move the puck, and that begins with big, tall defencemen, guys who can bring it out of their own end;" in other words, the antithesis of the team's style over the past four years, and, coincidentally, remarkably similar to the description of French Canadian style forwarded by Hugh MacLennan in *Two Solitudes*.⁶¹

On the contrary, the French media soon declared the "new" Canadiens to be very much like Ruel's Canadiens, with the exception that they were much more violent. The regular season had not even begun before one reporter described the team as "les Boeufs de la Sainte-Catherine," comparing it to legendary violent sides such as the "Big Bad Bruins" and the "Broad Street Bullies."⁶² The sobriquet *Boeufs de la Sainte-Catherine*, with its use of a toponym, is itself an implicit reference to the "Broad Street Bullies" (the Canadiens' home ice, the Forum, was located on Sainte-Catherine Street in Montréal). Similarly, a Canadian Press article in *Le Soleil*, explained that the Canadiens' strategy "rappelle étrangement le style de jeu, le fameux 'système Shero', des Flyers de Philadelphie de 1974-1975. Du hockey simple, consistant à éliminer physiquement du jeu le dernier joueur à avoir eu possession de la rondelle."⁶³ Nicknames referencing the Flyers became a staple of the French language press coverage of the Canadiens: examples

found include “Beux de la rue Sainte-Catherine,”⁶⁴ “Beux de la Sainte-Catherine,”⁶⁵ “Beux du Forum,”⁶⁶ “Sainte-Catherine Street Bullies,”⁶⁷ “St. Catherine Bullies,”⁶⁸ “Bullies de la Sainte-Catherine,”⁶⁹ “Boulés de la Sainte-Catherine,”⁷⁰ and “Goons de la rue Sainte-Catherine.”⁷¹ The regular use of such monikers – *pousseux de puck*, *taupins*, *Boeufs de la Sainte-Catherine* – is reminiscent of references to the Canadiens as “Maroons” during the same time period in that it repealed the Canadiens’ historical “French Canadian” image, and instead constructed the club as representative of the national *other*. *La Presse* put it succinctly: the “new” Canadiens were “the old Flying Frenchmen.”⁷²

But what caused this metamorphosis? The blame for the Canadiens’ stylistic degradation under Ruel and Savard was repeatedly linked to the personnel changes, discussed in the preceding chapter, which brought an influx of Anglophone players into the Canadiens’ lineup, explicitly linking style to ethnicity. If the Canadiens had ceased practicing their traditional style, it was because foreigners, lacking “Latin temperament” and unable to express themselves on the ice like French Canadians, had been added to the roster. The players described as personifying the Canadiens’ evolution into *pousseux de puck* and *taupins* were almost always Anglophones, such as Keith Acton, an Ontarian who Claude Larochelle of *Le Soleil* held up as representing “la tendance vers les ‘bûcheux’, les gagnants de batailles dans les coins... l’anti-hockey déplorable qui n’a rien de la tradition des Habitants;”⁷³ Chris Nilan, a Bostonian once described by Maurice “Rocket” Richard in his *Dimanche-Matin* column as “un bourreau” (an executioner) who “has no place with the Canadiens,”⁷⁴ and visualized in a *Le Soleil* editorial cartoon as a knuckle-dragging gorilla (Figure 3, below);⁷⁵ and Kent Carlson, a young American

defenseman who, in a public relations debacle, undertook lessons with a professional boxing trainer in order to learn how to fight more effectively on the ice.⁷⁶ These players gained prominence within the team as Francophones such as Normand Dupont, Serge Savard (before his retirement as a player), Pierre Larouche, Guy Lapointe, and Gaston Gingras were jettisoned.



Figure 3: Canadiens player Chris Nilan depicted as a gorilla on skates, reinforcing the image of a violent Canadiens team. The caption translates to “Nilan disguised as a Canadien,” implying that players of Nilan’s style were not true Canadiens. The cartoon also makes clear what style of play Anglophones like Nilan were presumed to play.⁷⁷

Anglophone players were often discussed in terms of physiology and place of origin, without reference to specific hockey skills. Take, for example, the 1980 NHL Entry Draft. The Canadiens, in possession of the first overall pick, selected Regina, Saskatchewan native Doug Wickenheiser over Montréal native Denis Savard, who was

the desired choice of the French media. Media coverage of the draft explained the Canadiens' conundrum as a stark choice between a small, skilled *p'tit gars*, and a big, unskilled player from Western Canada. One pre-draft article, while enthusiastically describing Savard as "spectacular," and "an artist in a pair of skates," depicted Wickenheiser simply as "un boeuf de l'Ouest," which literally means "Western beef."⁷⁸ Another pre-draft article introduced Wickenheiser simply as "a fellow with an impressive physique... who has weight in his favour."⁷⁹

These discourses were linked to discourses of national identity after the Canadiens finally selected Wickenheiser. Larochelle proclaimed that Canadiens "ont tourné le dos à un surdoué du Québec, un bonhomme flamboyant dans le style de Guy Lafleur, pour opter pour un gars de 200 livres de Regina."⁸⁰ Another *Le Soleil* report, penned by Tom Lapointe, emphasized that Wickenheiser's selection fit perfectly in the Canadiens' master plan, going on to list other "armoires à glace" (tanks) chosen by the Canadiens in the draft, before lamenting that the Canadiens selected "only one *pure laine* Québécois." The use of these terms – especially *pure laine* – reinforces a Québécois identity constructed on biology and ethnic particularism. In this context, the Canadiens' draft decision became an act of disloyalty to the nation. The team was melodramatically constructed as having *turned its back* on a Francophone, failing in its moral obligation to provide Savard with an opportunity to affirm himself, in favour of *un boeuf de l'Ouest*. The failure to select Savard was not just the failure to add another Francophone to the roster: it was a failure to provide a precocious French Canadian a venue to practice the national culture.

According to the French press the Canadiens, by virtue of their stylistic preference for Anglophones, could no longer stake a claim to their historical role as a symbol of French Canadian identity. This was hammered home in the pages of Québec newspapers, again and again, in varying degrees of subtlety. One of the preferred rhetorical tropes used by the media was the use of English words to describe the club's style of play. The use of English terminology ("Flying Frenchmen," "fire wagon hockey," etc.) is actually very common in Québec's French language media (as is French terminology in Québec's English language newspapers), but in this context, the use of English served only to underline the Canadiens' foreignness and diminishing connection to the nation. To give a brief example, *Le Soleil* described the Canadiens as having become an "ordinary" team full of players like Keith Acton, the Anglophone archetype who was depicted, in English, as a "digger."⁸¹ A further example in the same vein: after a December, 1980 game pitting the Canadiens against the Nordiques, describing why "*les Glorieux* are no longer the unassailable and dominating force of the past," Larochelle wrote:

Le redressement de ce club est toujours possible, mais on constate une transformation avec les foudroyantes formations du Forum du passé, ce club haut en couleur se livrant a un spectacle électrisant, le 'fire wagon hockey,' un club de vitesse foudroyante, d'executions échevelées. Démarcation avec ce hockey chamarré qui s'est amorcé avec les départs d'Yvan Cournoyer, de Jacques Lemaire, le déclin de deux gros membres du 'Big Tree', Serge Savard et Guy Lapointe, et la participation réduite du moment des patineurs imaginatifs comme Pierre Larouche et Pierre Mondou...

Depuis le début de la présente saison, Claude Ruel, comme s'il se sentait dans la peau d'un entraîneur traqué, inquiet, hésite à ouvrir le robinet, à lâcher des fauves en liberté. 'Le digging' et 'le grinding', le 'creusage' et le 'broyage', pour parler français, sont à l'honneur. Les superbes Habitants sont-ils réduits à du hockey de 'piocheux' et de bûcheurs?⁸²

Here, Larochelle charged the Canadiens with having made a “transformation” from playing “fire wagon hockey” to playing “hockey de piocheux et de bûcheurs” – they had been “reduced” to playing workmanlike hockey. He imagined the problem at least partly due to the retirement, aging, or non-utilization of certain players. All the players listed – Cournoyer, Lemaire, Savard, Lapointe, Larouche, Mondou – are French Canadian, linking the team’s stylistic stagnation to the diminution of the team’s Francophone demographic. Again, Larochelle chose English words to explain the Canadiens’ new style of play: “le digging” and “le grinding.” Although literal French translations were later provided, *creusage* and *broyage*, these terms have no hockey significance in French and are never used in French language hockey coverage. The use of English here is significant because of, as we saw in Chapter 4, the neo-nationalist belief that Québec Francophones could legitimately express themselves *only* via the French language. So through the usage of English terms such as “digging” and “grinding” to describe the Canadiens, the team was constructed as *inherently* foreign, as having completely lost its French Canadian character and identity: the team’s style and orientation were so alien that they could not be described properly in French.

Thus, it was not a stretch to link the Canadiens’ foreign style with structures of Anglophone domination and Francophone oppression. Not only was the Canadiens’ style deemed to be un-French Canadian, but anti-French Canadian; the club was constructed as an institution that discriminated against Francophone players who failed to conform to the team’s new, foreign, style. Consider the language employed in these two examples from January, 1981. A headline in *Le Journal de Québec* blared that “la fougue de Chris Nilan est plus importante que les 50 buts de Larouche,” and described Pierre Larouche as

having been “humiliated” by Ruel’s decision to opt for Nilan, who was known more for his pugilism than his hockey skills.⁸³ Similarly, Larochelle described a state of affairs where “a talented puckhandler like Pierre Mondou” was “harassed” by “the bench” to “*dump it in* (written in English).”⁸⁴ The use of terms such as “humiliated” and “harassed” created the impression of a hostile atmosphere in which French Canadian players could not express themselves freely. If practicing a fast, skilful, offensive style of hockey is an expression of French Canadian identity, then “humiliating” or “harassing” players like Larouche and Mondou into playing differently (to *dump it in*, like English Canadians) becomes a veiled attempt to coerce Francophone hockey players into disregarding their own cultural practices. The Canadiens’ style therefore became a tool of assimilation and, as such, a form of oppression and English Canadian cultural imperialism.

Resistance by Francophone players such as Guy Lafleur, unquestionably the most popular Québécois player of the time, and Pierre Larouche against the Canadiens’ defense-first style were celebrated and given wide coverage in the French press. In this context, these players were cast in the role of patriots, freedom fighters even, speaking out against their oppression by publicizing the assimilationist qualities of the Canadiens’ new style. Given his stature as a Québécois hero, Lafleur’s criticism, which proclaimed that Ruel’s system robbed both himself and the Canadiens of their distinctiveness, was especially poignant. “*Je suis rendu comme tous les autres,*” he told *La Presse* (emphasis mine). “*Tout ce que je pense à faire c’est quand j’ai la rondelle, c’est de la lancer dans le coin et de courir après.*”⁸⁵

The player who best symbolized the “new” Canadiens’ rupture with their past and embracing of a foreign mode of expression, a Francophone named Normand Baron,

provided a cautionary tale in that respect. Baron's career trajectory reads like a Hollywood movie script. After a brief and undistinguished spell in major junior hockey, Baron quit the sport to pursue a successful career in bodybuilding, winning the "Mr. Montréal" and "Mr. Québec" competitions in 1981.⁸⁶ After more than five years away from competitive hockey, he appeared at the Forum in 1983 declaring his intention to try out for the team and become Guy Lafleur's "bodyguard."⁸⁷ Baron was granted an invitation to the team's training camp, where he impressed the Canadiens sufficiently to be assigned to the team's minor league affiliate in Halifax, Nova Scotia, where he "terrorized" the American Hockey League before being called up to the Canadiens in late March of 1984 to much derision from the French media.⁸⁸ Baron then played four matches for the Canadiens including one against the Nordiques, a game in which he attacked Nordiques player Rick Lapointe and attempted to goad another, Dale Hunter, into a fight (he had been quoted making threatening statements about Hunter before the game). And while post game reports certainly did not absolve Baron from responsibility, the Canadiens received most of the blame for *forcing* Baron into that situation, an action that according to *Le Soleil* "deserves sarcasm and derision."⁸⁹ *La Presse* quoted one of Baron's childhood friends (Nordiques' player Jimmy Mann, who himself had a violent reputation) as saying that "I'm sad for Normand, because he's trapped in a circle of violence. He's a good guy who would like to play good, hard, solid hockey. But it's his environment that makes him a fighter."⁹⁰ Like Lafleur and Larouche, Baron was presented as a victim, someone who preferred to practice hockey with skill and precision but instead was forced to perform the odious, culturally alien, job expected of him. In this context, Lafleur's outburst and Baron's plight, and how they were highlighted in the

press, constructed the Canadiens' style as a homogenizing, assimilationist force, one that robbed Québécois players of their distinctiveness and forced them to think and act in foreign ways.

6.4 The Nordiques: The New Flying Frenchmen

The Canadiens' image was tarnished even further when compared with the Nordiques.' Lauded for their stylistic approach upon entering the league, the Nordiques were described by some reporters as "Flying Frenchmen;"⁹¹ other observers compared them to the "fire wagon hockey" Canadiens teams of the 1950s,⁹² as well as the great Canadiens teams of the 1970s.⁹³ Opponents, Canadiens' players included, praised their attack effusively. For example, Montréal goaltender Richard Sévigny described the Nordiques' offence as the best in the NHL.⁹⁴ If the Canadiens lacked creative skaters, the Nordiques had too many: *Le Journal de Québec* described free scoring, quick skating Pierre Aubry as "a victim of the Nordiques' style" because, as Nordiques coach Michel Bergeron was quoted as saying, "we already have this type of player in abundance."⁹⁵ While workmanlike, defensive minded players had their place on the Nordiques roster, there were questions about how well these players fit in: Nordiques' player Gerry Hart's public complaints at the end of the 1979-1980 season also reproached the organization for showing undue favouritism to its offensive stars.⁹⁶

The Nordiques themselves aggressively sought to promote this image, despite some contradiction in the team's relationship to violence. While the team never denounced violence unequivocally, they spoke about it in a way that identified themselves as victims rather than perpetrators. For example, when the team called up a designated fighter named Paul Stewart in the middle of their first NHL season, the team's

coach at the time, Jacques Demers, emphasized that he had never encouraged that type of player, but no longer had the choice because other teams were targeting the Nordiques' skilled players.⁹⁷ So while Nordiques President Marcel Aubut pronounced himself in favour of a "virile and intelligent violence," it was justified as "le seul moyen pour de passer à travers l'ère de violence que connait le hockey professionnel."⁹⁸ The Nordiques *wanted* to play in the French Canadian style but were sometimes prevented, violently, from doing so by the other (mostly Anglophone) teams in the league. Statements made by various NHL figures, openly admitting that the most efficient way to defeat the Nordiques was with violence, advanced this impression.⁹⁹

While the French media declared that the Canadiens were personified in the early 1980s by their Anglophone "diggers" and *pousseux de puck*, the press constructed the Nordiques' style as being embodied by Québec Francophones and Europeans, who according to the style discourse that coalesced around Québec hockey, were the stylistic cousins of French Canadian players. An article in *Le Journal de Montréal*, pondering whether the Nordiques needed to modify their style in order to "find their way in this North American league," described the team as characterized by "d'habiles patineurs de la Tchécoslovaquie et la présence de fins techniciens comme Marc Tardif and Réal Cloutier."¹⁰⁰ Another piece from the same newspaper, contemplating whether two players named John Wensink and John Paddock could acclimate to the Nordiques' style of play, is an even better example. The Nordiques, with their style of play based on skating, improvisation, and offensive instinct, were declared to be the antithesis to Paddock and Wensink's previous training. In the end, it was determined that Paddock and Wensink, two Anglophones described as "elephants in a porcelain shop," could

simply not feel comfortable on the ice after watching “the poetry of the Slovaks” and “the virtuosity of the Tardifs and the Richards.”¹⁰¹ The style played by the likes of the Czechoslovakian Stastny brothers, Marc Tardif, and Jacques Richard, all either Europeans or French Canadian, was simply too different, too foreign for *pousseux de puck* like Paddock and Wensink, who belonged to a different tradition.

If the Forum was constructed as an oppressive milieu for Francophone hockey players, then the Colisée was a refuge from the barbarism of North American professional hockey, a place where local players could express themselves without the prospect of harassment or humiliation. Playing for the Nordiques was judged to have a redemptive effect for Québécois players who had spent their careers in an English Canadian or American milieu. Take, for example, the case of André “Moose” Dupont. Dupont, obtained from the Philadelphia Flyers in 1980, had the reputation as one of the most violent of the “Broad Street Bullies” during the 1970s, but was deemed to have completely changed his style in Québec City. In conjunction with an article about Dupont’s adjustment to playing with the Nordiques, *La Presse* printed a picture of Dupont during his Flyers days, helmetless, attempting to charge toward the Canadiens bench while being restrained by a referee. The caption reads: “THE OTHER EPOCH: the young ‘Moose’ hears a ‘call’ from the Canadiens bench and launches into a pursuit of his numerous enemies.” The caption finished by informing readers that “Dupont has changed.”¹⁰²

Games pitting the Nordiques versus the Canadiens, especially those won by the Nordiques, amplified the media discourse that posited the Nordiques as embodying of Québec’s ethnic distinctiveness and the Canadiens as emblematic of the Anglophone

other. To provide one example, Tom Lapointe of *Le Soleil* lamented, following the Normand Baron game in March 1984 (won handily by the Nordiques amid violent scenes), that “la réputation du magnifique Forum de Montréal, appelé longtemps le temple du hockey et des spectacles dans la métropole, en a encore pris un dur coup hier soir au dernier match de la saison régulière entre le Canadien et les Nordiques.”¹⁰³ The invocation of the Forum as a “temple of hockey” is telling. These religious metaphors presented the Forum as a building of worship, where Québécois hockey fans go to celebrate Québécois culture (in the form of the Canadiens’ hockey spectacle). Lapointe declared the “new” Canadiens as “imposters:” oafish, clumsy, talentless and foreign, the antithesis of the Flying Frenchmen of yore; through their new style of play, the Canadiens had defiled the temple.

Another example followed a March 1981 game, won by the Nordiques 4-0. This victory was interpreted by *Le Soleil* as a revalorisation of the French Canadian style and evidence of its effectiveness: the Nordiques had provided “proof” that “finesse, imagination, and improvisation win out over a robotic, defensive style.”¹⁰⁴ Emphasizing that the Nordiques had usurped the Canadiens’ position as the fastest, most skilled, and distinctive professional team in Québec, some journalists suggested that the Canadiens use their Québec City counterparts as a template by which to reshape their team. Among the lessons that merited consideration according to *La Presse* was that the Nordiques employed a coach and several players who had graduated from the Québec junior hockey system: “the Nordiques are showing the Canadiens that Québec talent is well worth *le boeuf de l’Ouest*.”¹⁰⁵ The implication here was not particularly subtle; the very clear inference was that the Canadiens would play better hockey, both in terms of style and

success, if they francized their roster and playing style by ceasing to draft players from Western Canada and concentrating their recruitment efforts on Québec.

Pronouncements like this were not limited to journalists; the Nordiques also used the pulpit provided by “Battle of Québec” games to market themselves as the only true purveyors of the traditional style of the province. After Normand Baron’s first game against the Nordiques in 1984, Bergeron declared:

Le Canadien a été mon équipe préférée pendant toute ma jeunesse et ce que j’ai vu ce soir me fait la peine...

Je préfère des joueurs comme Tremblay et Smith à Baron ou Nilan. Nous avons une belle rivalité avec le Canadien, nous présentions du bon hockey, mais ils ont tout gâché.

J’aurais pu envoyer Jimmy Mann sur la glace, mais j’ai trop de respect pour lui. Vous avez vu mes meilleurs joueurs, Peter Stastny, Michel Goulet, Dale Hunter, Mario Marois étaient tous en uniforme. C’est notre façon de respecter le public.¹⁰⁶

Bergeron’s allusion to his youth is the lynchpin of his argument. Described as *le p’tit gars de Rosemont* or *le p’tit gars de St-Michel* (both references to his neighbourhood of origin in Montréal) in press reports, Bergeron easily positioned himself as the Québécois everyman through his childhood history with the Canadiens: like all of the province’s hockey fans, the Canadiens held a special significance for Bergeron in his youth. But the Canadiens were no longer the Flying Frenchmen he had supported during his youth. They were the Canadiens of Nilan, the American *taupin*, and Baron, the former bodybuilder. The team’s new style of play was not just foreign, but “painful” for Francophones, like Bergeron, to watch. Not only was this style of play unrepresentative of French Canadians, it *disrespected* them: it disrespected French Canadian players, such as Baron, by forcing them to express themselves in a fashion which was foreign to them

(the antithesis of the style remembered by Bergeron in his youth), and it disrespected the public by giving them such a poor spectacle. The Nordiques, explicitly and implicitly, were positioned as the antithesis to the Canadiens: a team that eschewed violence, respected its players and fans, purveyors of Québec's distinct hockey style, an on-ice manifestation of Québec's distinctiveness.

6.5 Summary

Bergeron's comment is a useful encapsulation of at least five years' worth of French language media scrutiny of the Canadiens' and Nordiques' styles of play. I do not wish to leave the impression that the media's fixation with style ceased at the end of the 1983-84 season, which is the delimitation of this dissertation. If anything, it probably only increased. The Nordiques' last game of that season, in the playoffs against the victorious Canadiens, was punctuated by a bench clearing brawl which began at the end of the second period, and restarted in advance of the third period before the referees even had returned to the ice. At one point, even two brothers – Dale Hunter of the Nordiques and Mark Hunter of the Canadiens – threw punches at each other. Academics, editorialists, columnists, and fans all voiced their unqualified opposition to that disgraceful display of violence.¹⁰⁷ And though, as suggests Figure 4, the Canadiens were assigned the larger share of the blame for instigating the violence, the Nordiques were criticized equally.

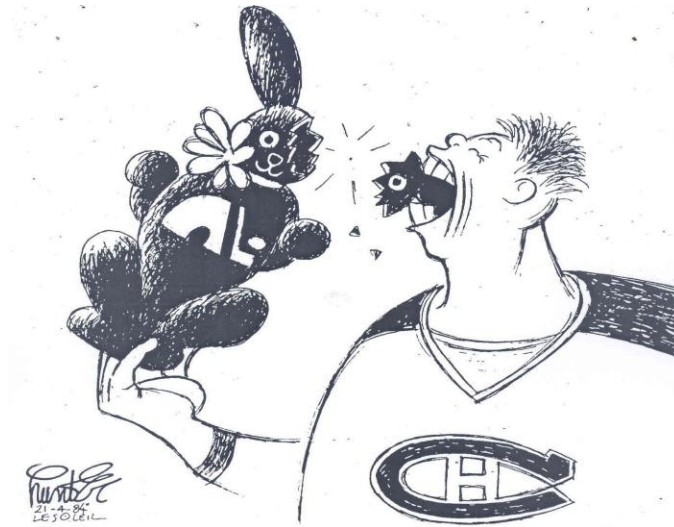


Figure 4: This cartoon references the “Good Friday brawl” between the Canadiens and Nordiques, one of the most violent on-ice incidents in recent hockey history. The French press usually blamed the Canadiens for the violence that sometimes plagued games between the two teams.¹⁰⁸

If nothing else, the reaction to the “Good Friday Brawl” suggests that Québec hockey spectators recoiled at displays of violence during hockey games and expected their teams to play a style that eschewed this kind of excess. Whether or not this is true is open to debate, but it gets to the heart of a style discourse that became associated with professional hockey in Québec, one referencing ethnic or “racial” discourses, which constructed Québécois players as playing a style that was the embodiment of French Canadian distinctiveness: fast, skilful, offensively spectacular, the polar opposite of how the game was assumed to be played elsewhere in Canada. The rivalry between the Montréal Canadiens and Québec Nordiques proved to be an effective vehicle for these discourses in the early 1980s. Through debates about hockey style, disparate images were constructed for the two teams, while reinforcing notions of national identity and

Québécois distinctiveness. The French media identified the Canadiens, the club around which the French Canadian discourse of style originally coalesced but suffering through an on-ice decline, as foreign, representative more of the ethnocultural other than with French Canada or Québec. Instead, they were a team exemplified by Anglophone *pousseux de puck* and *taupins* that, having broken with Québec's stylistic traditions, worked against the affirmation of Québec hockey players and no longer embodied the distinctiveness of the nation.

Meanwhile, Francophone journalists lauded the Nordiques for their spectacular offensive style, holding the team up as real “Flying Frenchmen,” a team that provided space for Québécois players to express themselves in “French Canadian” style. A very clear notion of what constituted this nation is perceptible in these discourses, as well as a clear idea of what the nation was *not*. The media's favourable descriptions of the Nordiques' style, and the players responsible for it, belie an exclusivist ideal of “Québécois” as being equivalent to “ethnic French Canadian.” Membership in the nation was a birthright, and members understood how to express their nationality intuitively. Therefore, the French media celebrated the Nordiques' triumphs over the *Boeufs de la Sainte-Catherine* – much like the Canadiens' victories over the Toronto Maple Leafs in the 1950s and 60s – as emblematic of Francophone supremacy. These wins were symbolic not just as evidence that French Canadian culture had survived, but had come into its own and reversed its historical inferiority.

Anglophones, constructed through this style discourse as the ethnic and cultural other, were excluded from the nation. Therefore, an obvious question arises. How did Québec Anglophones understand their relationship to the Québécois nation? I will

explore this in the next chapter, when I discuss the hockey reporting of *The Gazette*, Montréal's only English language daily.

6.6 Endnotes

¹ Alain Bouchard, "Les Francophones, en voie d'extinction," *Le Soleil*, 05 February 1980: C2

² Canadian Press, "Equipe-Québec lance un défi aux Russes," *Le Soleil*, 15 September 1981: C1.

³ Jeffrey Vacante, "Evolving Racial Identity and the Consolidation of Men's Authority in Early Twentieth-Century Quebec," *Canadian Historical Review* 88, No. 3 (2007): 414.

⁴ Kenan Malik, *The Meaning of Race: Race, History and Culture in Western Society* (Basingstoke, UK: Macmillan, 1996): 131.

⁵ Malik, 80

⁶ Malik: 91-100

⁷ William Z. Ripley, *The Races of Europe: A Sociological Study* (New York: D. Appleton, 1899).

⁸ Ronald Rudin, *Making History in Twentieth-Century Quebec* (Toronto: University of Toronto Press, 1997): 48-92.

⁹ Ironically, the descendants of most French Canadians came from Normandy and other regions of northern France. According to William Z. Ripley's typology of European races (see note 6), French Canadians would not necessarily be considered "Latin blooded."

¹⁰ Lionel Groulx, *Dix ans d'Action française* (Montreal: Bibliothèque de l'Action française, 1926): 258. Translation: ...is rooted in blood, in temperament, in character, and in language: it is embodied in the physical, psychological, and moral similarities of our *parenté*. *Parenté* refers to a relationship governed by blood.

¹¹ Lionel Groulx, *Directives* (Montreal: Les Editions du Zodiaque, 1937): 143. Translation: by birth, by the blood coursing through our veins, by inheritance, we are predestined to think and feel in certain ways.

¹² Richard Handler, *Nationalism and the Politics of Culture in Quebec* (Madison, Wis.: University of Wisconsin Press, 1988): 38.

¹³ William D. Coleman, *The Independence Movement in Quebec 1945-1980* (Toronto: University of Toronto Press, 1984): 76-77.

¹⁴ Rudin: 56-58.

¹⁵ Handler: 30-51.

¹⁶ Handler: 38.

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- ¹⁷ Pierre Elliott Trudeau, *Memoirs* (Toronto: McClelland & Stewart, 1993): 281.
- ¹⁸ For a forceful critique, see *Mordecai Richler, Belling the Cat: Essays, Reports, and Opinions* (Toronto: Alfred A. Knopf Canada, 1998): 326-333.
- ¹⁹ Donald Guay, *L'histoire du hockey au Québec: Origine et développement d'un phénomène culturel* (Chicoutimi, Que: JCL, 1990).
- ²⁰ Michel Vigneault, "La naissance d'un sport organisé au Canada: le hockey à Montréal, 1875-1917." PhD diss., Université Laval, 2001.
- ²¹ Gilles Janson, *Emparons-nous du sport: Les Canadiens français et le sport au XIXe siècle* (Montreal: Guérin, 1995).
- ²² Hugh MacLennan, *Two Solitudes* (Toronto: Macmillan of Canada, 1979): 71-72.
- ²³ William D. Walsh, "The Entry Problem of Francophones in the National Hockey League: A Systematic Interpretation," *Canadian Public Policy/Analyse de Politiques* 18, No. 4 (1992): 447.
- ²⁴ Herb Zurkowsky, "Junior Hockey Losing Battle To Keep Its Fans," *The Gazette*, 20 December 1980: 101.
- ²⁵ Guy Robillard, "Dave King n'aime pas le style des joueurs de l'Est du Canada," *Le Soleil*, 05 March 1984: C2.
- ²⁶ Cherry famously castigated "Europeans and French guys" for wearing protective facial visors, a piece of equipment he had repeatedly declared to be worn only by cowards. "Visors Comment Sparks Uproar," *CBC Digital Archives*: <http://archives.cbc.ca/sports/hockey/topics/1459-9681/> (accessed 14 July 2010).
- ²⁷ Richard Milo, "L'arbitrage, un nouvel outil de negotiations," *Le Devoir*, 27 January 1984: 11.
- ²⁸ Bob Sirois, *Le Québec mis en échec: La discrimination envers les Québécois dans la LNH* (Montréal: Les Editions de l'Homme, 2009): 10.
- ²⁹ This point is made forcefully in Marc Lavoie, Gilles Grenier and Serge Coulombe, "Performance Differentials in the National Hockey League: Discrimination Versus Style-of-Play Thesis," *Canadian Public Policy/Analyse de Politiques* 18, No. 4 (1992): 461-469; Marc Lavoie, *Désavantage numérique: les Francophones dans la LNH* (Hull, Que.: Vents d'Ouest, 1998); Marc Lavoie, "The Entry Draft in the National Hockey League: Discrimination, Style of Play, and Team Location," *American Journal of Economics and Sociology* 62, No. 2 (2003): 383-405.
- ³⁰ Mark Keast, "Hockey Fight in Canada," *Toronto Sun*, 29 January 2007: 6
- ³¹ Anthony D. Smith, *Nationalism* (Cambridge, UK: Polity Press, 2007): 52
- ³² Handler: 38
- ³³ Stéphane Beaud and Gérard Noiriel, "L'immigration dans le football," *Vingtième Siècle* 26 (1990): 83-96

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- ³⁴ Alfred Wahl, *Les archives du football* (Paris: Gallimard-Julliard, 1989): 205
- ³⁵ Geoff Hare and Hugh Dauncey, "The Coming of Age: The World Cup of France '98," in *Football Cultures and Identities*, eds. Gary Armstrong and Richard Giulianotti (Basingstoke, U.K.: Macmillan, 1999): 47; Wahl: 204
- ³⁶ Chrys Goyens and Allan Turowetz, *Lions in Winter* (Scarborough, Ont.: Prentice-Hall Canada, 1986): 2
- ³⁷ Stan Fischler, *Speed and Style, The Montreal Canadiens* (Scarborough, Ont.: Prentice-Hall of Canada, 1975)
- ³⁸ Rick Salutin, *Les Canadiens: a Play* (Vancouver: Talonbooks, 1977): 50
- ³⁹ Renald Bérubé, "Les Québécois, le hockey et le Graal," in *Voix et Images du Pays VII* (Montréal, Presses de l'Université du Québec, 1973): 195
- ⁴⁰ Salutin: 52
- ⁴¹ Goyens and Turowetz: 57
- ⁴² By the 1920-21 season, less than half of the Canadiens' roster was composed of Francophones. See François Black, *Habitants et Glorieux: les Canadiens de 1909 à 1960* (Laval, QC.: Éditions Mille-Îles, 1997): 45
- ⁴³ Fischler: 9. The Canadiens, mindful of Morenz's origins, attempted to market him as Swiss: see Salutin, *Les Canadiens*: 79. The way Morenz has been remembered was the subject of a fascinating recent article: Julie Perrone, "The King Has Two Bodies: Howie Morenz and the Fabrication of Memory," *Sport History Review* 41, No. 2 (2010): 95-110.
- ⁴⁴ Goyens and Turowetz: 39
- ⁴⁵ D'Arcy Jenish, *The Montreal Canadiens: 100 Years of Glory* (Toronto: Doubleday Canada, 2008): 55-56
- ⁴⁶ This term also became the title of O'Brien's book about the Canadiens: see Andy O'Brien, *Fire-wagon Hockey* (Toronto: Ryerson Press, 1967)
- ⁴⁷ Herbert Warren Wind, "Les Canadiens Sont Là," in *The Montreal Canadiens: A Hockey Dynasty*, ed. Claude Mouton (Toronto: Van Nostrand Reinhold, 1980): 25
- ⁴⁸ Jerry Trudel, "Quand la tête n'y est pas au hockey," *Dimanche-Matin*, 29 November 1981: 38
- ⁴⁹ Goyens and Turowetz: 157
- ⁵⁰ Jenish: 162
- ⁵¹ Ken Dryden, *The Game: A Reflective and Thought-Provoking Look at a Life in Hockey* (Toronto: Macmillan Canada, 1993): 39-40. Brackets mine.
- ⁵² Tim Burke, "Henri Ready to Meet Coaching Challenge," *The Gazette*, 13 May 1981: 59

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- ⁵³ Claude Brière, “Du hockey dégradant,” *Dimanche-Matin*, 18 May 1980: 37; Ghyslain Luneau, “Les Flyers auraient pu ruiner ma carrière,” *Le Journal de Québec*, 22 November 1980: 69; Bernard Brisset, “Notre style de jeu est meilleur,” *La Presse*, 28 October 1981: Sports section, 2
- ⁵⁴ Bernard Brisset, “En construisant les Oilers, Sather s’est inspiré du Canadien et des Soviétiques,” *La Presse*, 19 April 1983: Sports section, 3
- ⁵⁵ Jenish: 205-236
- ⁵⁶ Michael Farber, “Gainey: King of the Checkers,” *The Gazette*, 29 November 1980: 61
- ⁵⁷ Claude Larochelle, “Ruel et Grundman: un lourd défi à relever,” *Le Soleil*, 12 January 1981: B2.
Translation: 1 – dumping the puck into the corner; 2 – forwards resolutely blocking the centre of the rink; 3 – treating battles in the corners like trench warfare; 4 – defencemen playing ferociously along the boards.
- ⁵⁸ Claude Bédard, “Ce n’est plus le Canadien d’avant,” *Le Journal de Québec*, 23 December 1980: 50
- ⁵⁹ “Frank Selke: Il y a Lafleur, Robinson... et les ‘pousseux de rondelles,’” *Le Journal de Montréal*, 4 January 1981: 32-33
- ⁶⁰ Réjean Tremblay, “Que le vrai Serge Savard se lève!” *La Presse*, 5 January 1984: Sports section, 5
- ⁶¹ Tim Burke, “Savard Knows What He Wants,” *The Gazette*, 5 May 1983: D1
- ⁶² Guy Robillard, “Voici les ‘Boeufs de la Sainte-Catherine,’” *Le Soleil*, 15 September 1983: C3
- ⁶³ Daniel Caza, “Le Canadien y tient à son nouveau style de jeu,” *Le Soleil*, 5 January 1984: C3.
Translation: strangely reminiscent of the famous ‘Shero System’ of the 1974-75 Philadelphia Flyers. It’s simple hockey, consisting of physically eliminating the last player that had possession of the puck.
- ⁶⁴ Réjean Tremblay, “Que le vrai Serge Savard se lève!” *La Presse*, 5 January 1984: Sports section, 5.
“Beux” is a slang form of the word “boeufs.”
- ⁶⁵ Bernard Brisset, “Clavet a fourni de bons conseils à Kent Carlson,” *La Presse*, 24 January 1984: Sports section, 2
- ⁶⁶ Claude Larochelle, “Les ‘beux’, un accident de parcours,” *Le Soleil*, 21 February 1984: C1
- ⁶⁷ Bernard Brisset, “Les Glorieux veulent ressembler aux Islanders, pas à de mauvais Flyers,” *La Presse*, 5 January 1984: Sports section, 3
- ⁶⁸ Daniel Caza, “Le Canadien y tient à son nouveau style de jeu,” *Le Soleil*, 5 January 1984: C3
- ⁶⁹ Claude Larochelle, “Une chicane de corde à linge,” *Le Soleil*, 7 January 1984: C1
- ⁷⁰ Claude Larochelle, “Une chicane de corde à linge,” *Le Soleil*, 7 January 1984: C1
- ⁷¹ Yves Poulin, “Bergeron en avait marre des taupins,” *Le Soleil*, 30 March 1984: C1
- ⁷² Bernard Brisset, “Indiscipline aussi derrière le banc,” *La Presse*, 29 December 1983: Sports section, 3

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- ⁷³ Claude Larochelle, “La terre a tremblé au Forum,” *Le Soleil*, 10 January 1981: E1. Translation: a tendency towards *bûcheux* and winners of battles in the corner... deplorable anti-hockey that has nothing to do with the Habs’ tradition. The word *bûcheux* literally means “plumber,” and is used to describe workmanlike players; its synonym, *plombier*, is used in the same way.
- ⁷⁴ Maurice Richard, “Nilan, un bourreau qui n’a pas sa place chez le Canadien,” *Dimanche-Matin*, 29 November 1981: 46. *Bourreau* literally means executioner, or hangman. Its usage here references extreme hockey violence. Interesting words coming from Richard, who perpetrated far more violent acts during his career than Nilan committed in his.
- ⁷⁵ *Le Soleil*, Editorial Cartoon, 25 November 1981: A4
- ⁷⁶ Tom Lapointe, “Carlson avait appris sa leçon,” *Le Soleil*, 14 March 1984: E5
- ⁷⁷ *Le Soleil*, Editorial Cartoon, 25 November 1981: A4. Reproduced with the permission of the Bibliothèque et Archives nationales du Québec.
- ⁷⁸ Tom Lapointe, “La stature de Savard fait hésiter les Canadiens,” *Le Soleil*, 9 June 1980: C3
- ⁷⁹ Claude Larochelle, “Denis Savard a du Lafleur dans le corps,” *Le Soleil*, 10 June 1980: D1
- ⁸⁰ Claude Larochelle, “La LNH, le royaume des mastodontes,” *Le Soleil*, 13 June 1980: C1. Translation: ... turned their backs on a *surdoué* (extremely gifted player) from Québec, a flamboyant player in the mould of Guy Lafleur, in order to select a 200 pound guy from Regina. (The term *surdoué* refers to a person possessing extraordinary talent; almost, but not quite, a genius.)
- ⁸¹ Claude Larochelle, “Vif contraste entre deux entraîneurs,” *Le Soleil*, 6 November 1980: C1
- ⁸² Claude Larochelle, “Peter étourdi par la rivalité Québec-Montréal,” *Le Soleil*, 23 December 1980: C2. Translation: A turnaround is always possible, but one senses a transformation from the spectacular teams of yesteryear, from those colourful clubs devoted to an electrifying spectacle, from “fire wagon” hockey, from furious speed, from that frenzied style of play. The departure from this kind of hockey began with the departures of Yvon Cournoyer and Jacques Lemaire, the decline of two of the three members of the ‘Big Three’, Serge Savard and Guy Lapointe, and the reduced participation of imaginative skaters such as Pierre Larouche and Pierre Mondou. Since the beginning of the current season, Claude Ruel, anxious and embattled, has hesitated to let his players play freely. ‘Digging’ and ‘grinding’ are in vogue. Have these superb Habs been reduced to workmanlike hockey?
- ⁸³ Ghyslain Luneau, “La fougue de Chris Nilan est plus importante que les 50 buts de Larouche,” *Le Journal de Québec*, 31 January 1981: 61. Chris Nilan’s enthusiasm is more important than [Pierre] Larouche’s fifty goals.
- ⁸⁴ Claude Larochelle, “Ruel et Grundman: un lourd défi à relever,” *Le Soleil*, 12 January 1981: B2. Brackets mine.
- ⁸⁵ Bernard Brisset, “Ruel parle de changements,” *La Presse*, 2 February 1981: B1. Translation: I have become like all the others. All that I think about when I get the puck is dumping it into the corner and chasing after it.

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- ⁸⁶ Guy Robillard, “Normand Baron, un conte de fée!” *Le Devoir*, 23 March 1984: 15
- ⁸⁷ Bernard Brisset, “L’homme le plus fort que j’aie vu dans le hockey,” *La Presse*, 22 March 1984: Sports section, 4
- ⁸⁸ Guy Robillard, “Un autre boxeur se joint au Canadien,” *Le Soleil*, 22 March 1984: C1
- ⁸⁹ Claude Larochelle, “Que fait Savard dans ce cirque?” *Le Soleil*, 31 March 1984: C1
- ⁹⁰ Réjean Tremblay, “Bienvenue chez nous, Peter et Anton,” *La Presse*, 30 March 1984: Sports section, 5
- ⁹¹ Claude Bédard, “Ruskowski aime mieux les Hawks,” *Le Journal de Québec*, 23 October 1979: 58; Claude Bédard, “Les Nordiques se battront pour plus qu’une victoire,” *Le Journal de Québec*, 14 April 1981: 66
- ⁹² Claude Larochelle, “Tommy Ivan: pas la catastrophe pour les Nordiques,” *Le Soleil*, 29 October 1980: C1
- ⁹³ François Béliveau, “Dupont ne regrette pas l’autre époque,” *La Presse*, 25 February 1981: H6
- ⁹⁴ “Sévigny affirme que les Nordiques ont la meilleure attaque,” *Le Devoir*, 24 December 1981: 9
- ⁹⁵ Claude Cadorette, “A Fredericton: Pierre Aubry, une victime du style des Nordiques,” *Le Journal de Québec*, 15 December 1981: 54
- ⁹⁶ Canadian Press, “Les Anglophones ne se sentent pas chez eux à Québec,” *La Presse*, 9 April 1980: D4
- ⁹⁷ Pierre Ladouceur, “Demers n’avait plus le choix: il fallait un fier-à-bras,” *Le Journal de Québec*, 8 February 1980: 54
- ⁹⁸ Roch Desgagne, “Quand Aubut parle de violence...” *Le Soleil*, 10 November 1980: C4. Translation: ... the only way for the Nordiques to navigate the era of violence that professional hockey is living through.
- ⁹⁹ Claude Larochelle, “La vitesse des Nordiques: 4e de la ligue mais...” *Le Soleil*, 26 January 1980: H2
- ¹⁰⁰ Albert Ladouceur, “Le style de jeu des Nordiques ne frise pas la perfection,” *Le Journal de Montréal*, 13 March 1982: 93. Translation: skilful skaters from Czechoslovakia and intelligent technicians such as Marc Tardif and Réal Cloutier.
- ¹⁰¹ Claude Cadorette, “Le mariage des bras et du cerveau c’est pour quand?,” *Le Journal de Montréal*, 15 November 1980: 73
- ¹⁰² François Béliveau, “Dupont ne regretted pas l’autre époque,” *La Presse*, 25 February 1981: H6
- ¹⁰³ Tom Lapointe, “Un affreux sosie de la Sainte-Flanelle,” *Le Soleil*, 30 March 1984: C2. Translation: the reputation of the magnificent Montréal Forum, for so long known as the temple of spectacular hockey, received one more blow last night during the season’s last game between the Canadiens and the Nordiques... that team of imposters looked oafish, clumsy, and talentless. The Canadiens were unrecognizable.

¹⁰⁴ Maurice Dumas, “Québec humilie un Montréal sans âme,” *Le Soleil*, 30 March 1981: C1

¹⁰⁵ Réjean Tremblay, “Le Canadien a besoin d’un bon coup de vadrouille,” *La Presse*, 1 April 1981: Sports section, 5

¹⁰⁶ Ronald King, “Bergeron: ‘Nous avons une belle rivalité et ils ont tout gâché,’” *La Presse*, 30 March 1984: Sports section, 3. Translation: The Canadiens were my favourite team during my youth, so what I saw tonight really pains me. I prefer to watch players like (Mario) Tremblay and (Bobby) Smith over the likes of Baron or Nilan. We had a nice rivalry with the Canadiens, we played some good games, but they have gone and spoiled it. I could have sent Jimmy Mann on the ice to respond, but I have too much respect for him. My best players – Peter Stastny, Michel Goulet, Dale Hunter, Mario Marois – were all in uniform. That’s our way of respecting the public.

¹⁰⁷ Yves Poulin, “Les joueurs du Canadien avaient des orders...” *Le Soleil*, 21 April 1984: E1; *Le Soleil*, “Notre honte nationale,” 26 April 1984: A15; Gaston Marcotte, “Gaston Marcotte accuse la LNH,” *Le Soleil*, 26 April 1984: C2; Marcel Adam, “La prétendue rivalité entre Montréal et Québec,” *La Presse*, 26 April 1984: A6; Réjean Tremblay, “Marcotte a raison, au mauvais moment et de la mauvaise façon,” *La Presse*, 26 April 1984: Sports section, 5.

¹⁰⁸ *Le Soleil*, Editorial Cartoon, 21 April 1984: A14. Reproduced with the permission of the Bibliothèque et Archives nationales du Québec.

Chapter 7

7 “They Might Have Lined Them Up Against a Wall”: Hockey and Anti-nationalism in Montréal’s *Gazette*

Thus far, I have confined my analysis to the French media and to debates that occurred within Francophone society. However, in a political culture dominated by questions of language, there was and is a second significant linguistic community in Québec. Québec Anglophones have a long history in Québec as well as their own unique set of social and political institutions, including English language newspapers, radio, and television stations. Classified as a minority by neo-nationalists as well as by the Québec government’s language legislation, the Anglophone community went through its own identity shift in the late 1970s and 1980s. Whereas Francophones came to understand themselves as the Québec majority, rather than as part of a larger pan-Canadian minority, Québec’s Anglophones did the inverse: rather than the Québec branch of the Canadian majority, they were cast, and understood themselves, as a Québec minority. That the Anglophone community became increasingly heterogeneous by absorbing Allophone immigrants rendered this process of re-imagination that much more complex.¹ The first two parts of this chapter trace the contours of the Anglophone community, and provide a brief survey of its social and political discourses in the late 1970s and early 1980s.

This chapter also examines the discourse generated by the coverage of the *Canadiens* and the *Nordiques* in *The Gazette*, Montréal’s lone remaining English language daily after the demise of the *Montreal Star* in 1979, in light of the social and political context of the early 1980s. *The Gazette* was an important institution for English speakers, both Anglophone and Allophone. *The Gazette*’s hockey coverage certainly

provided a different perspective than the reporting featured in Francophone dailies such as *La Presse* or *Le Journal de Montréal*. *The Gazette's* sport section was, from 1979 to 1984, an important site in the construction of a discourse that rejected Québécois nationalism. This anti-nationalism is evaluated through a discourse analysis of the *Gazette's* hockey coverage. First, I examine the coverage of the Nordiques' decision to eliminate English announcements at the Forum. Like the French press, *The Gazette* reporters and readers understood the Nordiques as having brought the neo-nationalist struggle into the field of professional hockey. Next, I will analyze columns written by *The Gazette's* militantly anti-nationalist sports columnist, Tim Burke, who used hockey journalism as a launching pad to fulminate against what he understood as the excesses of Québécois nationalism. Burke, as the main sports columnist for the province's largest English newspaper, was afforded a widely read platform from which to communicate displeasure with neo-nationalism. Finally, given the importance of Allophones to the Anglophone community, I examine profiles of Québec most famous hockey playing immigrants, the Nordiques' three Stastny brothers, and how their relationship to the neo-nationalist project was constructed.

7.1 Les Anglo-Québécois: The Contours of the Community

It is a community that, even by the most optimistic estimates, has only come into being during the past forty years. It has been referred to, and has referred to itself, with several different names: English, English Quebecer, Anglophone, Anglo-Québécois. Some members would refuse any of these titles; until the tumultuous 1970s, the overwhelming majority of the community would have defined themselves simply as "Canadian."² This shifting frame of reference makes it essential to trace the contours of

Quebec's English speaking population (who I will refer to, for the most part, as "Anglophones," as is most common in the literature I consulted). As with Francophones, the most important tie that binds together Anglophones in Québec is language: Reed Scowen, a businessman, politician, journalist, and Anglophone community spokesperson, defined a member of the community as "someone, regardless of country of birth, regardless of ethnic origin, who lives in English in Quebec and wishes to continue to do so."³ Yet this definition is itself a contemporary construct. Once upon a time, the overwhelming majority of Québec's English speakers could trace their roots to England, Scotland, or Ireland: in 1931, 95% of Québec residents who primarily utilized English were of Anglo-Celtic extraction.⁴ Thanks to successive waves of immigration to Montréal, the dominance of the English language in North America, and the propensity of immigrants to send their children to English language schools, this was no longer the case by the 1970s, as Jews, Italians, Greeks, and other immigrants diversified the community tremendously.

However, among Québec's English speakers there was no sense that they constituted a community until, at least, the imposition of language legislation that limited the use of the English language in the 1970s. As I mentioned, Québec Anglophones previously would have defined themselves simply as Canadians; if they thought of themselves in politico-linguistic terms, it would have been as the Québec branch of the English speaking Canadian majority. Québec Anglophones, during the height of Montréal's metropolitan dominance, had close ties to the rest of Canada and were involved intimately in the pan-Canadian nation building process. They controlled Canadian commerce through their dominion over banking, railways, and other pan-

Canadian enterprises, thereby achieving extraordinary wealth. Montréal Anglophones living in the Golden Square Mile, a neighbourhood of mansions in the centre of the city near Mount Royal, at one time controlled 70% of Canada's wealth; this prompted Stephen Leacock, the English speaking Montréal writer and humourist, to describe the city's Anglophones as having "enjoyed a prestige in that era that not even the rich deserved."⁵

Stereotypes of Québec Anglophones as urban, wealthy capitalists have proven to be very resilient.⁶ But these stereotypes conceal the diversity of Québec's Anglophone community, even among those of Anglo-Celtic descent. Significant populations of English speakers lived rural lives in the Québec countryside, in districts along the Ottawa River and in the Eastern Townships; United Empire Loyalists were actually the first whites to settle permanently in the latter area.⁷ And within Montréal itself – home, by the 1980s, to three quarters of the province's English speakers – the community was characterized by its heterogeneity.⁸ By the 1990s, only one in four of Montréal's English speakers could trace their ancestry to the British Isles and community leaders were as likely to be Jewish, Italian, or Greek in ethnicity as English, Scottish, Irish, or Welsh.⁹ Crude stereotypes of Anglophones as conservative, unscrupulous capitalists ignore that many Anglophones were deeply implicated in the social struggle of the 1960s and 1970s. Historian Sean Mills has detailed how, for example, English speaking Montréalers of Caribbean provenance helped make the city one of the worldwide hubs of the Black Power movement, and how Anglophone McGill University radicals took to the streets urging an end to colonialism and imperialism both within the province and in the world at large.¹⁰ And while Anglophones continued to dominate wealthy, exclusive Montréal

enclaves such as Westmount, English speakers lived cheek by jowl with Francophones in working class neighbourhoods such as Verdun and Pointe-Saint-Charles; majority English speaking enclaves such as Little Burgundy (Blacks) and Griffintown (Irish Catholics) were among the poorest districts in the city.¹¹

These disparate parts coalesced into a community – indeed, into a *minority* – in the crucible of the political traumas of the 1960s, 70s, and 80s, specifically the language legislation that eliminated English as an official provincial language and restricted access to English language schools. As political scientist Garth Stevenson convincingly argued, the Quiet Revolution and the political tumult that followed effectively obliterated the “rules of the game” that had governed political relations between English and French speakers in Québec for over one hundred years. Before the Quiet Revolution, Stevenson pointed out, there existed a system of elite accommodation where Francophones were ceded control of provincial politics in exchange for Anglophone economic dominance.¹² The result was a political and social life divided into linguistically segregated spheres. And though novelist Hugh MacLennan’s notion of “Two Solitudes” has become something of an overused cliché to explain social and political relations between English and French speakers, there can be no denying that many, if not most, English and French speakers in Québec had infrequent contact with one another prior to 1960.¹³ Most Anglophones could not speak French: indeed, as Stevenson argued, they “had little reason to speak French and few were capable of doing so.”¹⁴ The geographical segregation of the two communities in Montréal was such that some Anglophones used to boast of never having ventured past Morgan’s department store in downtown Montréal, into the city’s French speaking east end.¹⁵ And while Québec Anglophones played

prominent roles in the federal government and civil service, they for the most part eschewed provincial politics, with the exception of those ministries that directly impacted their economic interests (finance, mines). Provincial politics were seen as unimportant and even second-rate: Québec politics classes at McGill University in the first sixty years of the twentieth century were derisively nicknamed “Pepsi Politics.”¹⁶

This, of course, changed beginning in the 1960s. The social and political underpinnings of the transformations in Québec society during the 1960s and 1970s already have been elaborated and need not be repeated here. But it is important to underline that Francophones’ desire to be *maîtres chez nous* entailed a diminution of Anglophone power: the elevation of Francophones in the economic sphere, for example, necessarily had to come at the expense of Anglophone dominance. But this dominance was already on the wane. By the 1960s, the Montréal Anglophone economic elite had become something of an anachronism:

As Canada moved into a closer economic relationship with the United States, and as direct investment by American firms became the major source of capital for Canadian development, Toronto began to replace Montréal as the economic link between Canada and its external markets and sources of capital. Southern Ontario, shaped like a wedge driven into the industrial heartland of the United States, naturally became the centre of branch-plant manufacturing. Toronto was the logical place for corporate headquarters and for many of the branch plants, and eventually for banking, insurance, advertising and other services... as their city and its economic role declined in importance, English-speaking Montrealers began to move away to Ontario, British Columbia, or the United States...

The opening of the St. Lawrence Seaway, just a few months before the death of Maurice Duplessis [1959], both symbolized and contributed to Montréal’s fate. Even trade with Great Britain and Europe could now bypass the city, as ocean-going ships proceeded directly to the Great Lakes.¹⁷

This economic decline, which stripped the Anglophone business elite of both political and economic power, rendered English speakers illequipped to resist the changes of the

1960s and 70s. The overwhelming majority of Anglophones vociferously opposed Bill 22 and Bill 101, but both passed nonetheless. The ratification of Bill 22 was an especially traumatic experience, as it symbolized the irrevocable rupture in the symbolic order of the province, the final breakdown in the “rules of the game” that governed political and social relations in Québec. It was passed by a Liberal government thought to be “friendly” to Québec Anglophones, a government which English speakers had supported overwhelmingly in the 1973 provincial election and in which Anglophones were well represented. Organized efforts to oppose the bill or to soften its provisions, from Anglophones both within and outside the party, came to no avail.¹⁸

7.2 Fear, Loathing, and Anti-nationalism in Anglophone Political Discourse

The trauma of Bill 22, the election of a Parti Québécois (PQ) government in 1976 that pledged to hold a referendum on Québec independence, and the passage of the even stricter Bill 101 altered the consciousness of Québec Anglophones. Whereas in 1960s, they would have considered themselves as the Québec branch of the pan-Canadian linguistic majority, by the passage of Bill 101 in 1977 Anglophones began to think of themselves as an embattled Québécois minority whose future vitality was threatened by the neo-nationalist project.¹⁹ Despite the structural and economic factors detailed in the preceding section, Québécois nationalism has been constructed in the Anglophone community’s dominant discourse as the single most important force in its decline:

The English-speaking community... firmly believes that the steady erosion of its economic and political influence has been due to the growing influence of French nationalism during the last fifteen years. This is the most widespread opinion in business circles, in cultural institutions, and in the media. It constitutes the most prominent feature of political meetings, and it has moved the English media to try

to demonstrate to the French majority how destructive nationalism and separatism could be.²⁰

In other words, all roads in the post-Bill 22 Anglophone community lead to nationalism: issues as diverse and distinct as separatism, the economy, and the future of English in Québec were blended together into one anti-nationalist discourse. In the only analysis to date of the Anglophone community's discourse, nationalist commentator Josée Legault has argued that the dominant discourse of Anglophone Québec is inherently political: it is an anti-nationalist discourse of resistance, characterized by liberal and egalitarian rhetoric, grounded in a defense of individual and minority rights reminiscent of (and inspired by) the political philosophy of Pierre Trudeau. While Legault uses these observations as a base from which to attack the Anglophone community, her basic premise is sound.²¹ Of particular importance for this chapter is the Anglophone community's resolute defense of bilingualism and unqualified rejection of unilingualism. Indeed, it is around this issue that the Anglophone community has most frequently and successfully mobilized. Legault convincingly argued that Anglophone discourse has constructed French unilingualism, and the laws that entrench it, as intolerant and oppressive.²² As Kenneth Price showed, Anglophone organizations and institutions have consistently articulated their opposition to the provisions of existing language laws that limit the rights of Québec residents to choose their language of communication, schooling, and work: Anglophone institutions and community leaders consistently presented a position "wherein the dignity of the individual is seen as prior to any claim of any abstract collective."²³

The Anglophone community's opposition to nationalism has often been expressed through a discourse of fear, victimization, alienation, and community disintegration.

Québécois nationalism and its language legislation have been depicted in the Anglophone community as a malevolent and destructive construct that has, as a goal, the long term harming or even extinguishing of the Anglophone minority in Québec. The prominent Anglophone capitalist (also the owner of the Montréal Expos baseball team) Samuel Bronfman voiced this concern graphically when he warned after the PQ was initially elected in 1976: “make no mistake, those bastards are out to kill us.”²⁴ In the same vein was the reaction to the Bill 101, which Québec Anglophones dismissed, in the words of political scientist Michael Stein, as “a repressive, highly discriminatory, even culturally genocidal document.”²⁵ This discourse of victimization and extinction has been reflected in the writings of community leaders such as Reed Scowen who compared Québec Anglophones to other oppressed minorities such as Jews, South Asians in Uganda, Indigenous peoples in North America, and Francophones in Manitoba.²⁶ According to Scowen, the oppression perpetrated upon the Anglophone community in defense of French has been historically callous: “the rhetoric that has been used and the legislative ramparts that have been erected are without parallel in the developed world.”²⁷

Some of the most shrill Anglophone discourse has constructed neo-nationalists in unflattering terms as fanatics or fundamentalists. This was the effect achieved when Scowen compared Bill 101 and sovereignty-association to a “religion;”²⁸ the Equality Party, a provincial organization devoted to securing the equality of English with French in Québec, described Québécois nationalism as a “crusade.”²⁹ In this vein, some Anglophones unfavourably have compared neo-nationalism to Nazism and other extremist or fundamentalist ideologies. An Anglophone Member of the National Assembly (MNA), Ken Fraser, described Bill 22, an initiative of his own political party,

as “Nazi legislation.”³⁰ McGill University professor Don Donderi, who was involved in the Equality Party, claimed that neo-nationalist language legislation had the same objectives as some anti-Jewish Nazi policies, and that Québec had inherited the mantle of being “the most retrograde corner of Western civilization” from Nazi Germany.³¹ The celebrated author Mordecai Richler, who did not hesitate to draw parallels between Québécois nationalism and Nazism, frequently described the agencies charged with the enforcement of Bill 101 as Gestapo-like “language cops” and “tongue troopers.”³²

7.3 The Tie That Binds: *The Gazette* and Québec’s English Language Media

Though these discourses have not at all been uncommon in the Anglophone community, some studies have concluded that most Québec Anglophones are less concerned with recriminations than with finding their place in Québec’s new status quo.³³ In an exodus that profoundly shook the community, scores of Anglophones, especially those of Anglo-Celtic origin, left Québec during the 1970s and 1980s. Those who remained, suggested the field notes of anthropologist Martha Radice, are deeply attached and committed to continuing their life in Québec (or at least in Montréal).³⁴ Why then, did the public discourse – or, as Legault terms it, the *dominant* discourse – of the Québec Anglophone community remain so confrontational and resolutely resistant to the neo-nationalist social project?

A partial explanation lies in the important role played by the English language media in Québec, of which exists unfortunately no comprehensive historical or sociological examination. But those scholars and observers who briefly have discussed these media have unanimously pointed to their fundamental significance. Reed Scowen,

for example, has pointed to the English media – newspapers, radio stations, and television stations – as an institution that binds the disparate strands of the community together.³⁵ In this sense, Montréal's last remaining English language daily newspaper, *The Gazette*, and other English language media, are important agents of representation. The termination of the *Montreal Star* in 1979 left *The Gazette* as the unchallenged daily voice of Montréal Anglophones (and, to a lesser extent, Anglophones elsewhere in the province). To illustrate the importance that these media institutions have in the community, the end of the *Montreal Star*, once the most widely read newspaper in Canada, was lamented as evidence of the decline of the community itself.³⁶ *The Gazette* had a very powerful claim, more than most other newspapers, as an authoritative voice and an agenda setter for its readership. This role became even more important because of the historical inability of many Québec Anglophones to communicate in French: in 1980s Montréal, for example, *The Gazette* was the only daily newspaper out of four that a unilingual Anglophone would have been able to read. The English media also helped in the integration of new arrivals into to the community. English speaking immigrants to Montréal, for example, were socialized into the community through consumption of *The Gazette* and other English media. Through these sources, new arrivals learned about the important issues facing the community. It was also through these media that members of the Anglophone minority learned about their community's relationship with Québec's Francophone majority.

In setting the parameters of the relationship between Anglophones and Francophones, the English media has come under heavy criticism for contributing to an aggressive, even irresponsible, anti-nationalist and perhaps even anti-Francophone

discourse. Interestingly, these criticisms have often come from Québec Anglophone journalists themselves. Arnopoulos and Clift, both former *Montreal Star* journalists, charged the English media with:

...contributing to an increase in collective anxiety and to a sense of isolation and powerlessness. In fact, until recently the English media's approach to events in Québec has been so negative as to encourage the exodus of their own audiences. The militancy that has developed on all issues surrounding the historical and constitutional rights of the English population tends to antagonize the French and to strengthen the influence of the more nationalist and aggressive elements.³⁷

David Waters, formerly of both *The Gazette* and the *Montreal Star*, blasted the English media for failing to inform its readers about the social changes that were taking place and would take place in the future. It is for this reason, according to Waters, that language legislation such as Bill 22 proved so traumatic.³⁸ This English media's reporting, according to David Thomas, a former reporter for *The Gazette*, has resulted in "a parochial perspective, converging on the immediate concerns of a minority. Major events are described in terms of their effects on a small segment of the society. *The Gazette* has become a journal for an ethnic minority in exile, much like the *Mexico City News*."³⁹

Joan Fraser, herself a long time journalist with *The Gazette*, makes a crucial point: by the 1970s, both the *Montreal Star* and *The Gazette* had been purchased by large North American media conglomerates. According to Fraser, the editorial content of the newspapers were produced in the interest of the Canadian elite, and not necessarily in the interest of journalists or the newspaper's audience.⁴⁰ Though there was nothing of the labour militancy that characterized the French press at *The Gazette* or the *Star* (though, it should be noted, the *Star* closed at the tail end of an eight month strike), there were public disagreements between journalists and management over the militantly anti-nationalist editorial line in the Montréal's two English newspapers during the 1970s.

Consider the reaction at the *Star* following an editorial during the 1970 provincial election. The editorial compared PQ leader René Lévesque to Alexander Kerensky, one of the leaders of the February Revolution in 1917 Russia whose provisional regime was eventually overthrown by the Bolsheviks later on that year.⁴¹ The purpose of such a comparison was obvious: it positioned Lévesque as someone who would soon be overthrown by nationalist extremists in an independent Québec.⁴² The editorial went on to claim that Québec Francophones had never truly understood democracy and therefore would be unable to govern an independent country.⁴³ In response to this column, thirty of what Fraser described as “the *Star*’s best journalists” signed a letter disassociating themselves from the newspaper’s editorial position; one year later, most of those journalists no longer worked for the *Star*.⁴⁴ Similarly, on the eve of the 1976 provincial election, *The Gazette* published a front page editorial by its editor, Ross Munro. It was the first time in *The Gazette*’s history that an editorial had been published on its front page. Like the 1970 editorial in the *Star*, Munro warned of the dark days that would follow a PQ election win, using arguments that not coincidentally echoed the line of the Liberal Party almost perfectly.⁴⁵ In response, thirty-six out of *The Gazette*’s 100-member editorial staff signed a public proclamation distancing themselves from Munro’s editorial.⁴⁶

Ultimately, the political discourse of *The Gazette* and the *Montreal Star* shared more in common with the militant anti-nationalist editorials of 1970 and 1976 than with the public disassociations that followed. Though the *Star* and *Gazette*, in Fraser’s estimation, subscribed to mainstream North American journalistic notions of objectivity and balance, their coverage of Québécois nationalism served a specific ideological

purpose. The English media, according to Waters, perfectly reflected the sentiments of the more extreme factions of its public, defending “unceasingly the attitudes and interests of its non-Francophone but often francophobic audience.”⁴⁷ Central tenets of the neo-nationalist social project, like unilingualism, were rejected out of hand: the English media, as Waters wrote, steadfastly “refused to accept the thesis that the French language and culture in Quebec were endangered in this part of North America.”⁴⁸ The *Star* and *Gazette*, recalled Fraser, treated the PQ as an enemy.⁴⁹ Waters concurred, enumerating the central tenets of the English media’s coverage of the party:

One was that beneath the party’s democratic surface, there lurked non-democratic forces waiting to seize power at an appropriate moment. Another was that the main thrust of the new party was not, as it claimed, a positive concern with the future of the Quebec people; but on the contrary, a negative desire to punish and restrict the English for imagined grievances and dangers, and to bring about the downfall of the country.⁵⁰

The English media bitterly resisted proposed language legislation, the centrepiece of the neo-nationalist project, and portrayed it as authoritarian in nature. The English media depicted Bills 22 and 101 as a dangerous set of statutes that abrogated individual rights, designed to smash the Anglophone community in the name of a distorted sense of collective Francophone rights and cultural purity.⁵¹ For example, the *Montreal Star* declared Bill 22 as “dangerously flawed... arbitrary, unfair, intrusive and unworkable.”⁵² Meanwhile, an anti-Bill 22 petition campaign was organised by John Robertson, a former *Gazette* sports columnist, and Liberal MNA George Springate (himself a former football player for the Canadian Football League’s Montréal Alouettes) at CFCF radio in Montréal, urging the federal government to use its power to strike down Bill 22.⁵³ Similar coverage was reserved for the unveiling of Bill 101:

The law's contents have been constantly illustrated by means of interviews and feature articles calculated to bring out its most vexatious and oppressive aspects. The people presented in human-interest stories are usually those who represent the most unfortunate situations arising out of government action or who express the most extreme viewpoints on its general aspects. The cumulative effect of these stories is to reinforce English stereotypes about the French. Québec emerges as an oppressive and inhospitable society, dominated by a group of fanatics eager to destroy personal rights and democracy.⁵⁴

7.4 Québec's English Sport Journalism

I was unable to find a single examination, academic or otherwise, analyzing the English language sport media in Montréal or the province as a whole. I observed both similarities and differences with the French media in *The Gazette's* hockey coverage. Both the English and French press featured extensive coverage of the Canadiens, with a beat reporter filing accounts of games, and columnists providing opinions and analysis in support. The most important similarity was, as will become clear over the course of this chapter, a disregard for journalistic "balance" and a willingness to file politically charged reports that were, in some cases, only peripherally related to sport.

Hockey, in general, was afforded much less space in *The Gazette* than in French language newspapers. *The Gazette*, for example, did not assign any reporters to cover the Nordiques from 1979-1984. *La Presse* and *Le Journal de Montréal*, on the other hand, both had a reporter travelling with the Nordiques and covered the Québec City team almost as intently as they did the Canadiens. Only in 1984 did regular articles about the Nordiques begin to appear in *The Gazette*; until that time, articles about the Toronto Maple Leafs and other Canadian NHL hockey clubs were as common as Nordiques-related content. *The Gazette* also did not maintain a Québec Major Junior Hockey League (QMJHL) beat, again in contrast to its French language counterparts. *The Gazette's* coverage also hints at the differences in the meaning, iconography and

mythology of hockey for Anglophone and Francophone audiences. A 1979 article by *Gazette* columnist Tim Burke is case in point. The title of Burke's column is "Hockey's Famed No. 9 Outlasting His Legend."⁵⁵ Burke was referring to Gordie Howe, who was playing his final NHL season. This was surprising because for French Canadians in 1979, still ascribing nationalist significance to hockey and the Canadiens specifically, Maurice "Rocket" Richard was the only possible player who could have been referred to as "Famed No. 9."

These differences suggest that Québec's Anglophone minority, on the whole, experienced and consumed sports differently than the Francophone majority: the community appears to have had different interests, and perhaps even a more diverse group of sporting idols. This interpretation is substantiated by differences in the coverage of other sports as well. Results of British professional soccer games were, for example, published frequently in *The Gazette*, ostensibly to cater to Montréal residents of Anglo-Celtic ancestry; soccer reports by contrast were almost completely nonexistent in French language newspapers. Community concerns are also apparent in the volume of reporting in *The Gazette* on intercollegiate sport, especially the teams representing the three English universities in the province, McGill, Concordia, and Bishop's University.⁵⁶ But on the other hand, *The Gazette's* coverage of Francophone athletes prominent on the world stage, such as marathoner Jacqueline Gareau, cross country skier Pierre Harvey, and speed skater Gaetan Boucher, was rather subdued, in contrast to the constant presence of these athletes in the pages of *La Presse* and *Le Journal de Montréal*. This suggests that *The Gazette*, like their Francophone counterparts, in seeking to make its coverage as relevant as possible to its readership, based its coverage at least in part on

notions of language and identity. I found no evidence in letters to the editor or in secondary texts that the newspaper's readership rejected this paradigm.

7.5 “Cut Out English? No Way!”: The Rejection of Unilingualism at the Forum

A defining characteristic of *The Gazette*'s hockey coverage, one that it shared with Montréal's French language dailies, was a fixation with language. This preoccupation was evident in *The Gazette*'s initial dispatches from Québec City in 1979, the year the Nordiques joined the NHL. *Gazette* columnist Michael Farber, writing about the Nordiques' first regular season game, described a foreboding atmosphere where the crowd “applauded as much for ancestry as it did for uniform.”⁵⁷ According to Farber, the most distinguishable feature of that maiden match – “hockey with a French accent” – was the intimidating use of French and the complete lack of English employed: rather than a “bilingual bonanza, like the Forum,” Nordiques games were conducted “in a grave French accent... the *langue officiel* spoken like a trooper by the public address announcer.”⁵⁸ Not only was the use of English rare, but English announcements were met with reprisals from the Francophone crowd, with one “leatherlung” shouting “*parle français!*” when the public address announcer attempted to use English.⁵⁹ Ultimately, Farber's description was a faithful replication of the linguistic discourse that characterized the English media during this same period. He depicted French as dominant, while simultaneously constructing English as being relegated to obscurity (the public address announcer barely used the language) and under assault (by catcalls from “leatherlungs”). He constructed the general atmosphere as intimidating and authoritarian: French was “spoken like a trooper”, echoing Mordecai Richler's dismissal of the OLF as

“tongue troopers.” Another Farber report from January, 1980, examining how Anglophones acclimatized to “fitting into the social fabric of a ‘foreign’ city,” elaborated upon these themes. Again, the report was preoccupied with how much French was spoken at the Colisée, making the case that to use so much French was absurd and defensible only in the interests of cultural purity: “currently,” wrote Farber, “in the interest of language purity, customers buy a *chien chaud* rather than a hot dog.”⁶⁰

Other *Gazette* reporters were equally preoccupied with the language used at Nordiques’ games. As was mentioned in Chapter 4, the newspaper’s Canadiens correspondent Glenn Cole lodged a complaint with the NHL following the first Canadiens-Nordiques game in Québec City, on account that he had been issued a unilingual French data sheet. As I described, this complaint was widely denounced in the French language media.

There was some negative reaction in Quebec and here to a complaint filed with the NHL about unilingual (French) statistics sheets at the Quebec Coliseum. The NHL public relations department claims English sheets are available. If they are, they were kept under tight wraps the night the Canadiens were in town. But why prepare two sheets? The Forum people capably do a bilingual sheet which is acceptable. For those of us who can understand French, there is no problem, but someone from Atlanta, New York, Toronto or Vancouver *avoir accroché* on a stats sheet might as well be in Chinese...⁶¹

Cole’s justification constructed unilingualism at the Colisée as absurd and inhospitable. He trumpeted the functionalism of English – French, conversely, is as infrequently spoken elsewhere in North America as Chinese – and made a case for bilingualism as was “capably” managed in the Forum. These comments, like Farber’s dispatches from Québec City, reveal a profound discomfort among *Gazette* sportswriters with what was understood as the Nordiques’ French unilingualism. This was the exact opposite reaction of Francophone journalists, who by the end of 1979 were urging the repeal of English at

the Colisée. In these opposing viewpoints, we get a glimpse of the polarized attitudes towards language in Québec in the 1970s and 1980s. Indeed, sportswriters' opinions on the Nordiques' use of French mirrored the cultural divisions over Bill 22: Francophones believing that the use of French did not go far enough, Anglophones protesting that it was draconian *in extremis*.

Given this early interest in the language of hockey in Québec City, it is somewhat surprising that *The Gazette* devoted relatively little attention to the preliminary announcement of the Nordiques' policy of unilingual French announcements. The scant coverage that was printed established a firm editorial line against unilingualism at the Colisée. The initial report on the change in policy was filed at the top of the newspaper's front page, with a headline proclaiming that the Nordiques were threatening to "defy" the NHL with French only;⁶² the use of the word "defy," especially given past *Gazette* rejections of unilingualism, implied that the Nordiques sought to overthrow the natural and logical linguistic order of the hockey world. This was further confirmed in an editorial cartoon (Figure 5, below), published the day after. *The Gazette's* cartoonist, Aislin, depicted René Lévesque as a hockey player, wearing a Nordiques' uniform. The inference was plainly obvious: the Nordiques had taken Levesque's nationalist struggle for unilingualism to the NHL. Next to Levesque is a hockey player in a Canadiens' uniform: Claude Ryan, the leader of the provincial Liberal Party and a notable critic of Bill 101. Ryan's caricature suggested that the Canadiens, in contrast to the Nordiques, remained steadfastly committed to bilingualism.



Figure 5: Liberal Party leader Claude Ryan and PQ leader René Lévesque depicted in the uniforms of the Canadiens and the Nordiques, respectively.⁶³

The Canadiens' position vis-à-vis unilingualism and bilingualism ultimately garnered the most attention in *The Gazette*. The call from Camille Laurin (the Cultural Affairs Minister, architect of Bill 101, and bogeyman for the Anglophone community) for the Canadiens to follow the Nordiques' unilingual lead was of especial interest. An article stating Laurin's position and soliciting the reactions of people on the street was displayed prominently on the front page of the newspaper; another article providing

further information about Laurin's stance, and the Canadiens' reaction, was placed on page 2. The fans interviewed presented the use of English at the Forum as the inalienable right of the Anglophone community; "I can understand French, but I have the right to have English announcements during the game," said one.⁶⁴ A second fan reiterated the city's bilingual character and positioned the push for unilingualism as the single biggest factor that caused strife between Francophones and Anglophones: "The French and English have always got along well. That's what Montréal is all about – it's a bilingual city. Why cause problems?"⁶⁵ This notion of unilingualism causing problems was expanded upon by a third fan, who proclaimed the possible imposition of unilingualism at the Forum as "an act of aggression against the English."⁶⁶

This issue galvanized readers of *The Gazette*: there appeared to have been more letters to the editor on this subject printed in *The Gazette* than any other sport-related issue in any Montréal or Québec City daily for the entirety of my newspaper-sampled five years.⁶⁷ The volume of letters printed also indicated that *The Gazette*'s editors earmarked this issue as one that transcended the sports pages, and a crucial one even for Anglophones who were not sports fans. For the most part, the letters replicated the positions stated above: that unilingualism was misguided, discriminatory, and led only to disunity; that using English at the Forum and in Montréal was the inalienable right of individual Anglophones; and that the institution of unilingualism at the Forum would amount to an act of anglophobic bigotry. To give a few examples, one correspondent chastised the Nordiques for "giv[ing] in to a minority of bigots;"⁶⁸ another letter described Laurin's propositions as "so ludicrous as to be embarrassing."⁶⁹ The

Nordiques' unilingualism and Laurin's call for the same policy to be applied at the Forum was "a question of discriminating against the minority", according to a third.⁷⁰

Tim Burke, *The Gazette's* primary sports columnist, reinforced and intensified this discourse. The title of one of his columns nicely encapsulated Burke's take on the matter: "Forget Bigotry in the Forum." Burke positioned Laurin and those who agree with him as extremists: Laurin was a "cultural ayatollah" who wanted to "erase" English from the Forum. Burke continued:

The anger wells up because it is just the latest of uncounted examples of plain old bullying masquerading in the name of cultural purity. The sorrow is for the needless meddling with one of our great Canadian institutions.

The Forum, when the Canadiens are there, is one of the great shrines of sport. More than that, it is the last showcase in this country for the efficacy of bicultural teamwork.

Laurin and his ilk evidently were inspired by the move by the Quebec Nordiques (owned by O'Keefe's) to eliminate announcements in English at their hockey games at the Coliseum. This was done, we were told, as an 'act of courtesy' to their overwhelmingly French-speaking fans (97 per cent).

Apparently the management of the Nordiques feels that the sound of the language of Shakespeare on Gallic ears is an unbearable discourtesy. Something like being vulnerable to measles.

It's about now that you'll hear arguments from our beloved nationalists that you can't sing a bar of 'O Canada' in French in Toronto, Edmonton or Vancouver without being booed.

And they're right – up to a point, and a very short one. The difference out there is that the boo-birds are usually refugees from the beer parlor whereas in Quebec it is the people who enact – and enforce – the laws who are the villains of divisiveness...

In short, the random bigotry and redneckery of English Canada is legislated and institutionalized here in the name of patriotism.⁷¹

This analysis contained all the hallmarks of *The Gazette's* and, as discussed later, Burke's anti-nationalism. First, Burke established a pan-Canadian frame of reference by

describing the Canadiens as a “great Canadian institution” that is one of the last showcases of biculturalism “in this country.” By widening his frame of reference to the country as a whole rather than solely the province, Burke assumed two positions. First, he embraced a Canadian identity and therefore rejected the Québécois identity favoured by neo-nationalists; this was reiterated later in the column when he praised the Forum’s national anthem singer, Roger Doucet, whom Burke described as “that wonderful Canadian and indefatigable anthemeer.” Second, Burke embraced bilingualism and “biculturalism,” thereby rejecting the made-in-Québec alternative, French unilingualism. He described unilingualism as “plain old bullying,” as well as legislated and institutionalized “bigotry and redneckery.” Reiterating one of the chief claims of Anglophone anti-nationalist discourse, Burke claimed that unilingualism was motivated by a quest for “cultural purity” and was profoundly anglophobic in character: for nationalists, the use of English was “an unbearable discourtesy” to the Francophone majority, “like being vulnerable to measles.” By the same token, later in the column, Burke explained that “only minds filled with mischief and vindictiveness could lean on the Forum to strike the language of 25 per cent of its fans.” Québécois nationalism, therefore, was clearly constructed as a dangerous, bigoted, and destructive political force that was intent on destroying not only a great institution (the Canadiens), but the community of Québec Anglophones as a whole.

7.6 Tim Burke: Anti-nationalist Fulminations in a Dying City

Tim Burke was, in the sports pages at least, neo-nationalism’s antagonist-in-chief. Droll and opinionated, Burke was unafraid to make his positions known on a variety of issues that had little to do with sport. He did not hide his social conservatism, his

nostalgia for a bygone era, or his virulent, aggressive anti-nationalism. Anger and bitterness about the current state of his city, and who he blamed for its predicament, permeated Burke's writing. A classic example was at the end of the column that I referenced immediately before the beginning of this section. He charged that those who wanted unilingualism at the Forum were imbued with a mentality "dedicated to converting Montreal from a once-great metropolis into a sickly, swollen Trois-Rivières."⁷² For Burke, and indeed for many Québec Anglophones, the neo-nationalist project, with its associated social unrest, language laws, and referenda on independence, caused Montréal's inexorable decline. Thanks to neo-nationalism, Montréal was now akin to Trois-Rivières, a mere provincial city. This comment certainly was tied to anxiety about Montréal's economic collapse, but also to fears of Francophone dominance and the mass exodus of Anglophones from Montréal and the province as a whole; Montréal could only become like Trois-Rivières, an overwhelmingly Francophone city, if its entire Anglophone population first departed.

Sure enough, Burke used his column as a place to chart the inexorable decline of the Anglophone community in Montréal. Entire columns became elegies to departed friends, some of whom were related only peripherally to sports, and for the Anglophone community in general. Case in point was a 1979 column devoted to Burke's friend Adrian Lunny, who after a middling tenure as a high school hockey player became a news photographer of some renown. Lunny, "the last of a prominent Westmount family, five generations, all to have left Quebec," stated as his reason for leaving the fact that "I am a stranger in my own city:"

They let us down here, especially the big companies. The little (English) guy hasn't a chance. When all the big outfits collapsed, you knew you didn't have a

chance. You take our family. After five generations, they've been obliterated from Quebec. I'm the last one to leave... Deserted by everybody, including the federal government. I'll remember that.⁷³

Lunny's was not the only personal interest story featured by Burke in his column. Yet it was the only *type* of personal interest story presented: not once did I observe one of Burke's columns discussing an Anglophone thriving in, or even managing, the social and political conditions of early 1980s Québec. Burke's column therefore depicted people like Lunny as the Anglophone everyman; he presented the themes expressed by Lunny – exodus, obliteration, deterioration, desertion – as the universal thoughts, qualities, and sentiments in the Anglophone community. 1980s Montréal was constructed in Burke's column as exceptionally bleak, a city in decline where Anglophones, with their community dwindling, could not prosper. This was the view of the city, and indeed the province, that dominated Burke's columns in the early 1980s.

Burke frequently employed rhetorical tropes such as parody, sarcasm, and hyperbole to highlight the hopelessness of early 80s Montréal and to underscore that nationalists were responsible for this deterioration. Consider an editorial cartoon (Figure 6) printed on April Fools' Day (April 1), 1982, drawn by Burke as part of a prearranged switch with Aislin, the regular cartoonist (Aislin took over Burke's sports column that day). Burke drew a map of North America, through the eyes of a Québécois nationalist. Québec was front and centre, in exaggerated proximity to France and Florida (where many Québécois "snowbirds" traveled to escape the winter), both also displayed prominently. Meanwhile, the Maritime Provinces were removed completely from the map and the rest of Canada was labelled "les autres" (the other). The cartoon made the case that Québécois nationalism was inward looking, divorced from the North American

mainstream, fixated only on the French speaking world and, by identifying the rest of Canada to be the other, dismissive and even aggressive against English speakers.

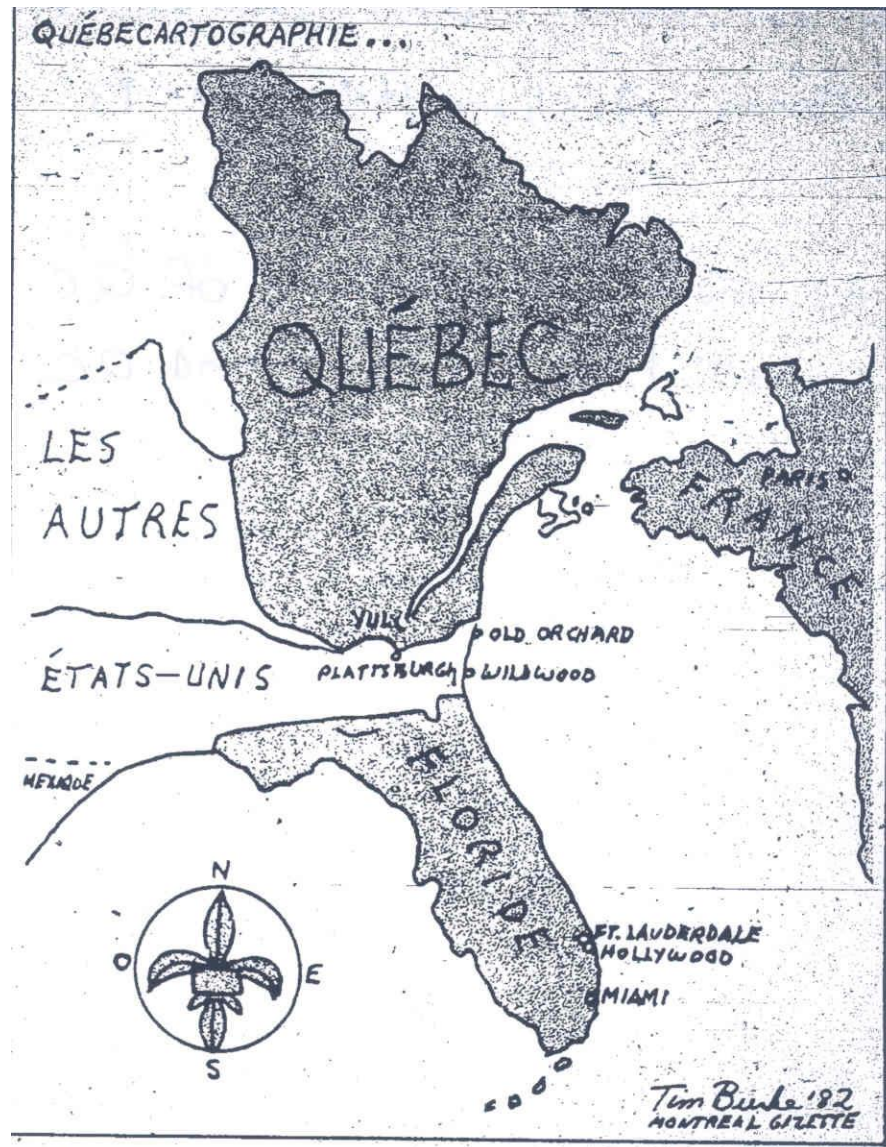


Figure 6: Tim Burke's interpretation of neo-nationalists' worldview.⁷⁴

Burke's use of parody was geared toward this purpose: to construct Québécois nationalism as a parochial and hateful ideology that accelerated the decline of a once thriving city. At times, Burke assumed what he considered to be the voice of Québec

nationalism, or give tongue-in-cheek suggestions to nationalists about how to better achieve their goals, the objective being to expose how ludicrous and destructive these goals were in the first place. Responding to reports that the *Office de la langue française* (OLF) was investigating the Canadiens to ensure compliance with provincial language legislation, Burke penned a column in the voice of “a stout advocate of Quebec’s quest for cultural purity,” suggesting ways the “language cops” could further improve the fan experience at the Forum:

Get out the airbrush and chisel and eliminate from all photos and plaques in the Forum the likenesses under which appear names like Morenz, Seibert, Cleghorn, Burke, Forman, Selke, Irvin, Lach, Blake, Durnan, Reardon, Quilty, Chamberlain, Curry, Harvey, Mosdell, Olmstead, Moore, Johnson, MacNeil, McNeil, Marshall, Mahovich, Duff, Ferguson, Backstrom, Harper, Pollock, Bowman, Dryden, Robinson, Gainey, Shutt, Risebrough, Jarvis, etc. etc.

Plaques and pics of so many of *les autres* on the walls is a grotesque distortion of the image conceived for the new Quebec.

Erase the passage from Dr. John McCrae’s war poem *In Flanders Fields* emblazoned across the wall of the Canadiens’ dressing room (‘to you, with failing hands, we pass the torch... etc.’). Not only is this contemptible form of inspiration in the condemned language, it was written by a Montreal surgeon, the worst kind of ‘White Rhodesian.’ Replace it with a steamy passage from one of Gerald Godin’s erotic masterpieces.⁷⁵

Burke also penned a tongue-in-cheek riposte to his own article, which assumed the voice of a conversation between him and “a highly reliable source in the OLF” in which the “source” admitted to being “guilty of some gestapo-style tactics in other cases.”⁷⁶

These two columns constructed Québécois nationalism as an extremist, discriminatory ideology (“gestapo-style”) that sought nothing less than the eradication of Anglophones from the province. To that end, English was described as the “condemned language.” But more than that, through the roll call of former Anglophone Canadiens’ players and the evoking of John McCrae’s poetry, Burke constructed Québécois

nationalists (“cultural purists”) as seeking to erase all traces of Anglophone contributions from the annals of Québec history. At the same time, Burke ridiculed Francophones for their own cultural achievements through his dismissal of Gerald Godin’s “erotic masterpieces” in contrast to McCrae’s *In Flanders Fields*. Godin, who not coincidentally was also the minister responsible for the OLF at the time of Burke’s column, was an acclaimed poet whose renown went beyond Québec’s borders.⁷⁷ Nonetheless, the implication made was that the Canadiens’ dressing room would be cheapened by substituting one of Godin’s poems for *In Flanders Fields*. This unfavourable contrast echoed the *Montreal Star*’s unseemly accusation from 1970 that Francophones did not understand democracy. In both cases, Francophones were presented mostly as hapless, and unable to manage the political and cultural life of the province without the intervention of Anglophones. Though a less inflammatory argument loomed beneath Burke’s comments – that Québec’s cultural life would be stronger with Anglophone contributions – the rhetorical device employed instead produced a discourse punctuated by Anglophone supremacy and francophobia; the notion that Godin’s poetry could be compared to McCrae’s was held up for Burke’s readers to ridicule.

The frequency of Burke’s angry denunciations increased in 1983 and 1984, prompted perhaps by the Canadiens’ own francization efforts. Certainly, the Canadiens’ purge of their front office in 1983 – when, most notably, General Manager Irving Grundman, an Anglophone, was sacked by Ronald Corey, the team’s new Francophone president – prompted scathing columns from Burke. Again drawing from the apocalyptic Anglophone discourse of deterioration and nationalist fundamentalism, Burke constructed the firings as evidence of “how sick this city has become:”

It's only fortunate that we remain sluggardly, half-baked quasi-Canadians. With the Nicaragua mentality that has taken hold here, they wouldn't just have run off the Grundmans, Berry and Caron. Left to their own impulses, they might have lined them up against a wall.⁷⁸

Burke again constructs nationalists – “they” – as fundamentalists, imbued with “a Nicaragua mentality,” a metaphor that was especially poignant in 1983 at the height of the savage Contra War in Nicaragua. Burke associated the nationalist mentality with violence, and not just through the allusion to the bloody war in Central America: Burke explicitly wrote that left to their own devices, “they might have lined [Grundman’s regime] up against a wall (brackets mine).” Burke also referred to “they” wiping out “another head office.” Here, Burke used the Canadiens as a metaphor for the city itself. The “departure” of the Canadiens’ front office was constructed in the same vein as the exodus of (predominately Anglophone-staffed) enterprises during the late 1970s and early 1980s: it was presented as evidence of a “Nicaragua mentality,” an act of symbolic nationalist violence against Montréal Anglophones, one of the root causes of the Anglophone exodus from Montréal, and evidence of the city’s continuing deterioration.

Burke’s use of the Canadiens as a metaphor for the decline of Montréal intensified in 1983-84, as the Canadiens suffered through their worst regular season in years. According to Burke, the Canadiens reflected the very essence of the city:

Montrealers have always boasted – correctly – that the Canadiens were a reflection of their city’s soul: mystical, exciting, triumphant... the most glowing of all testimonials to the efficacy of two cultures working in harmony.

You don’t hear any gloating now because the saddest part of it all is that the ’83-’84 Canadiens probably are as close a reflection as anything to Montreal in its *new reality*.⁷⁹

By linking the plight of the city to the plight of the team, Burke alluded to two periods in

Montréal/Canadiens history: when the team and the city were ascendant, and when the team and city were in decline. He envisioned the driving force of the glory days as “two cultures working in harmony.” Montréal’s and the Canadiens’ decline was represented as a function of the breakdown in the “harmony” between Francophones and Anglophones; the “new reality” that Burke had fulminated against for years in his column was Francophone dominance and the oppression and exodus of Anglophones. Though the column could be read as a parable about the value of intercultural cooperation, in the context of Burke’s prior columns, and *The Gazette*’s anti-nationalist discourse, it became something else. Given Burke’s past criticism of the francization of the Canadiens’ brain trust and the “Nicaragua mentality” thereby demonstrated, the column was most realistically a warning that the neo-nationalist project – the “new reality” against which Burke had been railing for years – would continue to ruin Montréal as it appeared to have ruined the Canadiens.

7.7 The Stastny Brothers and Immigration in Québec

Sometimes lost in the pessimistic Anglophone reaction to neo-nationalist language legislation was the fact that many of Bill 22 and Bill 101’s most controversial statutes were not directly focused on any members of the Anglophone community. Take education for example. Children who had begun their education in English, children who had yet to commence their education but had a sibling already in the English school system, as well as those children whose parents had been educated in English in Québec, were guaranteed under Bill 101 the right to receive the entirety of their education in English. In fact, Bill 101’s coercive education clauses were concerned with people who did not yet live in the province: newly arrived immigrants to Québec, who were

mandated under Bill 101 to send their children to French primary and secondary schools, with the expectation that those children would then integrate into French-speaking Québécois society.

Allophones often have been lumped into the Anglophone community. There is good reason for this. Before the ratification of Bill 101, most Allophones integrated into the Anglophone community through institutions such as the English language school system. Many Allophones declared themselves against French unilingualism and in favour of the continuation of parents' rights to choose the language of education for their children. This was the central issue, for example, when Francophones and Italians clashed on the streets of Saint-Léonard in 1968.⁸⁰ It is equally true that many Allophones have become leaders or spokespeople for Québec Anglophone institutions. But while there are clearly similarities and affinities between Québec's Anglophones and Allophones, there are also important differences. As Martha Radice astutely pointed out, Montréal, where Allophones have been overwhelmingly concentrated since the beginning of the twentieth century, never "belonged" to them as it did to Anglophones of Anglo-Celtic origin.⁸¹ Immigrants in fact suffered through many of the same disadvantages in early twentieth century Montréal as Francophones. Take the example of Montréal's Jewish community, who Stevenson described as "honorary Protestants" because of their enthusiastic adoption of the English language and upward mobility:

The Jews gained fluency in English but not much else from their status as honorary 'Protestants.' The real Protestants excluded them from living in certain suburbs, discouraged them from working for the chartered banks, and imposed a discriminatory quota on Jewish applications to McGill University. A socio-economic study of Montreal in 1938 reported that the larger law firms, defined as those with seven or more lawyers, had eighty-five lawyers of British extraction, twenty of French extraction, and no Jews. Jews were also excluded from golf clubs, yacht clubs and fraternities.⁸²

The story was for the same for other immigrant groups as well: for example, the ballyhooed findings of the Royal Commission on Bilingualism and Biculturalism, which caused a furore by confirming the existence of an economic hierarchy with Anglophones at the top and Francophones near the bottom, also reported that Italians made lower average salaries than even Francophones (and Québec's Indigenous people even lower still).⁸³ Thus, it is difficult to link most Québec Allophones to the narrative of domination, deterioration, desertion, and dethronement that has characterized English language media discourse in Québec.

Most Allophones lived and live in a social space between Anglophones and Francophones. Québec's two dominant linguistic communities have both identified the successful assimilation of new immigrants as imperative for their future vitality, and accordingly have courted them assiduously. Of course, absorbing immigrants is especially important for the cultural and political survival of the Anglophone community, given its numerical inferiority and lack of political power at the provincial level. But newcomers to Québec ultimately are not predisposed to either linguistic community, according to Arnopoulos and Clift:

It is important to understand that newcomers to Quebec have no particular loyalty to either of the language communities. Integration is a slow process that can take two or three generations depending upon the culture of origin. Even children born here often feel more Italian, Greek, or Portuguese, for example, than Canadian or Québécois. In their new country, immigrants identify more with North America than with the limited area of Quebec.⁸⁴ They would like to speak both English and French, but tend to prefer English. The newcomers, however, want to stay in the good books of both language communities and so they will try to strike a balance that will serve both their economic interests and their social integration.⁸⁵

So many newly arrived immigrants in Montréal were (and still are), to use hockey terminology, free agents. Given the discourses of identity that coalesced around the

Canadiens and Nordiques in the early 1980s, it was perhaps inevitable that immigrant hockey players for either of these two teams would find themselves in a tug-of-war between the Anglophone and French media, with both sides attempting to claim the new arrival(s) as part of their own community.

Though European players began filtering into North American professional hockey in the 1970s, most notably in the World Hockey Association (WHA), the NHL did not truly begin its internationalization until the 1980s, when this trickle of players from Europe became a steady stream. According to the NHL, only 4.8% of the players selected in the 1979 NHL Entry Draft were trained in Europe; by 1981, that proportion had risen to 15.2%.⁸⁶ The majority of these players hailed from Sweden and Finland; players from the Soviet Union and Czechoslovakia, traditionally the other two European hockey powers, were usually not permitted to ply their trade abroad. However, this did not prevent some Czechoslovakian hockey players from defecting and joining WHA and NHL teams in the late 1970s and early 1980s. Vaclav Nedomansky was the first Czechoslovakian player to defect to North America in 1974, followed by Richard Farda that same year; the third Czechoslovak defector was Jiri Crha in 1980.⁸⁷

The fourth and fifth were Peter and Anton Stastny, brothers who, in a manoeuvre orchestrated by the Nordiques, abandoned their team during a tournament in Innsbruck, Austria in August, 1980 and crossed the “iron curtain” in time for the 1980-81 NHL season. Peter and Anton were joined a year later by their older brother, Marian, after protracted negotiations between the Nordiques and Czechoslovakian authorities. The Stastny brothers, particularly Peter, were among the best players in the world and became the driving force behind the Nordiques’ success in 1980-81 and in subsequent years.⁸⁸

As such, though perhaps unexpectedly because of the team's careful construction of a "Québécois" image, the Nordiques made Peter and the Stastnys a focus of their marketing campaigns. One such strategy involved the crafting of a nickname for Peter, "le Dieu slovaque" (The Slovakian God), to contrast with the nickname of the Canadiens' superstar Guy Lafleur, "le Démon blond" (The Blonde Demon).⁸⁹ This nickname was notable because it foregrounded Stastny's Slovakian ethnicity, making explicitly clear that he was not a Québécois *pure laine*. And indeed, the brothers' ethnicity was a problem for some. Fans periodically lamented in letters and comments to the French language press that the Nordiques were "too European" (the Nordiques added a fourth Czechoslovakian defector, Miroslav Frycer, in time for the 1981-82 season).⁹⁰ And the public relations director who dreamed up Peter's divine nickname claimed after his tenure with the club had ended that the presence of the Stastnys on the roster had blocked marketing opportunities for Francophone players.⁹¹

Because their defection eliminated the possibility of returning to Czechoslovakia while it was under Communist control, the brothers' presence in North America carried with it an air of permanence. So unlike many other migrant athletes, the Stastnys were immigrants in the truest sense of the word; for better or worse, Québec City was their home. The brothers' high profile prompted a slew of media reports, both in the French and English press, discussing their adjustment to living in Québec City and their acculturation into Québécois society. Both the French and English media claimed the Stastnys as part of their respective communities. It was in the French media's reporting of the Stastny brothers that the neo-nationalist ideal of a Québécois identity based on the French language and territorial citizenship was most visible. For Francophone reporters,

the Stastnys were without a doubt *neo-Québécois*: the brothers and their spouses would both learn French, and their children would be educated in French language schools. Upon learning that Peter's wife, Darina, was pregnant with the couple's first child, *Le Journal de Québec* proclaimed that the newborn Stastny would be indistinguishable from any other French speaking child in Québec City: "l'enfant sera un Québécois. Il parlera français et ressemblera à tous les bouts-de-choux de la Vieille Capitale."⁹² By 1984, commentators proclaimed that the Stastnys had successfully assimilated into Francophone Québec society. Upon being granted their Canadian citizenship, Réjean Tremblay of *La Presse* declared that "Peter et Anton Stastny sont maintenant aussi Québécois que Normand Rochefort."⁹³

The depiction of the Stastnys in *The Gazette* was completely different: they were constructed as citizens who shared the same interests and faced the same linguistic and acculturation challenges in unilingual Québec as Anglophones. Unlike the French press, who highlighted the Stastnys' progress in learning French, *The Gazette* emphasized the brothers' facility with and desire to speak English. One *Gazette* feature in particular, written during the 1982-83 season, constructed the Stastnys as citizens who were prevented from integrating with the Anglophone community because of unfair language legislation. Penned by Barry Kliff and entitled "Quebec No Paradise for Stastnys," it made the case that the Stastnys had encountered myriad problems since settling in Québec City, and were therefore unlikely to remain in the province after their playing days. Kliff enumerated the problems the Stastnys had faced: language laws, few close friends, a strong case of homesickness, high taxes. The objective of Kliff's article, as it related to language, could be ascertained from that list: language legislation was

positioned not just as *a* problem, but as the *primary* problem to the brothers’

acculturation into North American life. Kliff elaborated:

Like other Quebec parents, the Stastnys are worried about their children’s educations.

Because of Quebec’s language charter, Marian’s six-year-old son, Robert, was expelled from an English elementary school in Ste. Foy earlier this year. Daughter Eva, 8, attends French school but will soon take private English lessons.

Bilingualism – trilingualism for that matter – is important for all the Stastnys, but they want their children educated in English. Peter and Anton are hopeful the language law will change before their toddlers are old enough to attend school.

After spending two hours practising hockey one day last week, Marian said he was going to talk to Nordiques’ management about getting his son back into an English school.

‘To survive in North America you need to speak English,’ Marian said. ‘Almost everything is done in English.’

In the meantime, the Stastnys doubt French will ever become more than a third language. They speak Slovak at home (‘I can never see us speaking French at home or between the brothers,’ says Peter.) and English everywhere else, including practices at the Colisee.⁹⁴

Though the article was written specifically about one immigrant family in Québec City, many of the motifs of the dominant Anglophone discourse on language legislation were reproduced in Kliff’s article. The aforementioned passage constructed Bill 101 as illogical, unfair, and tyrannical: Québec’s language charter, after all, had caused Marian’s son to be “expelled” from school. Moreover, the article argued that French was unnecessary for life in North America. The Stastnys estimated that French would be nothing more than a third language. English, on the other hand, was much more important; as Marian said, almost perfectly reprising standard Anglophone arguments about the necessity of bilingualism and the impossibility of unilingualism in Québec, “to survive in North America you need to speak English.”

Kliff's feature prompted much criticism from the French media, who considered it an attack on Québec's language legislation and the people who supported such legislation. The *Journal de Montréal* described the article as essentially racist,⁹⁵ while others used it as a platform to rail against English media discourse in general, most notably by Réjean Tremblay.⁹⁶ The most notable thing about these reactions was that the French media exclusively blamed *The Gazette* for the article. The Stastnys, around whose quotes the story was structured, were not singled out for criticism at all. The brothers, showing a keen political awareness that would help Peter in his future career as a member of the European Parliament for Slovakia, claimed that the quotes attributed to them were fabricated. The Stastnys' managing of this situation will be examined in more depth in the next chapter: essentially, they denounced the story as false in the French media, while admitting to *The Gazette* that they had not been misquoted.⁹⁷ Follow-up articles continued to depict the brothers' adjustment to Québec society as normal, albeit not without the usual difficulties that all immigrants faced upon arrival in a new land. *Dimanche-Matin*, for example, emphasized that Marian's son had been readmitted to an English school, while his daughter happily attended a French school.⁹⁸ *Le Journal de Montréal* accurately highlighted that the brothers had recently purchased property in Québec City, including a downtown bar.⁹⁹

The reaction against Kliff's article in the French press prompted a counter reaction in *The Gazette*, in the form of a commentary posted on *The Gazette*'s editorial page, by Hubert Bauch, a reporter in its Ottawa bureau:

It is sad to hear people like Réjean Tremblay of *La Presse*, whose work generally glows with a lucid kind of sensitivity, foaming three days later about plots to smash the Quebec people and so on, just because someone had the insight to probe the impact of Quebec City on a family of immigrant hockey players.

Sad because it flaunts the reactionary mindset that has seized segments of the Québécois media, particularly since 1976. It is a defensive jingoist reflex that seeks to suppress stories that tend, even remotely or inadvertently, to cast the Québécois nation-state orthodoxy in less than a worshipful light...

...Over the years I've learned to avoid these little people and their little arguments because they tend to be as obstinately and mindlessly doctrinaire as a sect of southern Baptist snake handlers. But this wretched Stastny business moves me to intemperance, because I have vivid memories of what it was like to be a European immigrant in Quebec City, from Germany as it happens, and the Stastny brothers' story brought it all back to me in living colour.¹⁰⁰

Throughout the entire commentary Bauch does not once mention language legislation, the issue which prompted the angry denunciations in the French media in the first place. Instead, later on in the commentary, Bauch recasted Kliff's article as one concerned fundamentally with homesickness, and attacked Francophone journalists for linking this sentiment with "plots to smash the Québec people." Bauch's comment accomplished two goals. First, by employing a referential strategy that used a variety of epithets such as "foaming," "suppress," "reactionary," "mindlessly doctrinaire," "Baptist snake handlers" and many others, Bauch reinforced and reconfirmed the Anglophone discourse that constructed Québécois nationalism as a form of zealotry with almost religious intensity. In this case, it was presented even as an authoritarian brand of extremism that sought to stifle dissent and control the message of the English press.

Second, the commentary also continued the courtship of immigrants by the Anglophone community by constructing Québécois nationalists – charged with having rejected the notion that immigrants may be homesick – as unresponsive to the needs and concerns of newly arrived immigrants. That Bauch was himself an immigrant was significant. The majority of his commentary reminisced about his own acculturation in Québec City; the Stastnys' plight brought back his own experiences "in living colour."

After recalling his own struggles as a young immigrant for several paragraphs, Bauch wrote that:

To suggest that any of this is intended as an attack on the Quebec people and their aspirations to self-affirmation and dignity and everything else smacks of the kind of brownshirt media management that characterized a political situation my parents and many other immigrants came here to escape.¹⁰¹

Of course, the French media was almost singularly concerned with the negative depiction of Québec's language laws in Kliff's article, and by the concern, raised by the Stastnys themselves, that the quotes in the article had been fabricated. By ignoring this, and mischaracterizing the French sport media's outburst, using Nazi imagery, as a "brownshirt" (the Nazi SA were often referred to as "brownshirts") reaction against immigrant homesickness, Bauch constructed French media discourse as militantly anti-immigrant and repressive, and Québécois nationalism as an ideology unable and unfit to respond to the needs and aspirations of new arrivals.

7.8 Summary

The furore over the Stastny brothers' circumstances demonstrated, among other things, that *The Gazette's* sports coverage, as much as its French language counterparts, was fixated in the early 1980s with the neo-nationalist project. But unlike the French press, which reproduced the logic of neo-nationalist theory in its sports coverage, *The Gazette's* hockey discourse was as staunchly and resolutely anti-nationalist, a tone matching the dominant discourse of that newspaper as a whole. Rather than celebrating the social and political changes that had occurred and were still going on in Québec, *The Gazette's* sportswriters lamented the withering away of another era. And rather than urging more change, *The Gazette's* hockey coverage reflected a reversion to the pre-Bill 22 status quo: for example, *The Gazette's* coverage of the Nordiques' French-only

language policy became a forum, both for reporters and for fans in letters to the editors, to voice their opposition to French unilingualism and support for the bilingualism that had been lost in the language reform of the 1970s.

The Gazette's hockey coverage mirrored the discourse of Montréal's Anglophone community, a group that had endured a precipitous decrease in political and economic influence since the beginning of the 1960s; an exodus that stripped the community of many of its best and brightest; and a government that they believed systematically excluded them from the province's collective life. It was a bleak time for Montréal Anglophones, something reflected in Tim Burke's almost apocalyptic columns that presented Montréal as a dying city ruined by bigoted nationalists who sought nothing less than the total elimination of Anglophones from Québec. At the same time, Montréal's Anglophone community had changed a great deal since the Quiet Revolution, by virtue of the fact that Allophones had taken a more prominent place in the community. The attention given to the Stastny brothers and their adaptation to life in Québec City demonstrated two things: one, Allophones' importance to Anglophone Québec; and two, *The Gazette's* claims that the neo-nationalist project was incompatible with the aspirations of immigrants reflected a continuing effort on the part of the Anglophone community to court them.

During the 1980s, a series of publications written by or about Québec's Anglophone community argued that the community had undergone a transformation in identity; rather than the Québec branch of the Canadian majority, the province's English speakers had accepted and adapted to their new status as a Québec minority. *The Gazette's* hockey coverage suggested that this transition was far from smooth. Articles

about the politics of the Canadiens/Nordiques rivalry were characterized by an unwillingness to countenance the most basic tenets of the new neo-nationalist status quo, including the notion of identity that it ushered in. Integral to this new status quo was an identity that represented the province as its primary frame of reference. Yet *The Gazette*'s anti-nationalism was often articulated within the discursive framework of pan-Canadian political culture and iconography: the Canadiens, for example, were consistently constructed as a “great Canadian institution” corrupted by bigoted nationalists. And while none of this suggested an outright rejection of Québec public life – one did not have to be a nationalist to participate in Québec's public life – it did hint at a community that was considerably out of step with and suspicious of the Québec-centric political culture that prevailed in the province, and that yearned for the halcyon days of yore.

Québec Anglophones very definitely were outliers in Québec political debates in the early 1980s, but they were far from the only such group. Hockey players plying their trade in Québec for either the Canadiens or Nordiques, especially those not hailing from Québec, were another. The hockey players' case is considered in the next chapter.

7.9 Endnotes

¹ A term only used in Québec, “Allophone” refers to someone who's mother tongue is something other than English or French (it comes from the Greek word *allos*, which means “other”).

² Garth Stevenson, *Community Besieged: The Anglophone Minority and the Politics of Quebec* (Montréal: McGill-Queen's University Press, 1999): 87.

³ Reed Scowen, *A Different Vision: The English in Quebec in the 1990s* (Don Mills, Ont.: Maxwell Macmillan Canada, 1991): 64.

⁴ Ronald Rudin, *The Forgotten Quebecers: A History of English-Speaking Quebec, 1759-1980* (Québec City: Institut québécois de recherche sur la culture, 1985): 33.

⁵ Rudin, 1985: 205.

⁶ Sheila McLeod Arnopoulos and Dominique Clift, *The English Fact in Québec*, 2nd ed. (Kingston, Ont.: McGill-Queen's University Press, 1984): 4. Though Québec Anglophones have, in recent years, stressed their community's diversity, many continue to stress commerce, individualism, thrift, and the Protestant work ethic as fundamental characteristics of their community. Consider Reed Scowen's depiction of "a group whose instincts, developed over generations of successful individual effort, are averse to collective initiative." As Martha Radice says, this characterization would surely be challenged by Anglophones of Chinese, Caribbean, or Italian descent. See Scowen: 100; Martha Radice, *Feeling Comfortable?: The Urban Experience of Anglo-Montrealers* (Sainte-Foy, Que: Presses de l'Université Laval, 2000): 4.

⁷ See Appendix 1 for a map of Québec pinpointing these areas.

⁸ Rudin, 1985: 24.

⁹ Radice: 31

¹⁰ Sean Mills, *The Empire Within: Postcolonial Thought and Political Activism in Sixties Montreal* (Montreal: McGill-Queen's University Press, 2010): 95-118; 143-154.

¹¹ Montréal's Irish community played an important role in the historical development of sport in the city, and indeed, in Canada. See, for example, Barbara S. Pinto, "Ain't Misbehavin': The Montreal Shamrock Lacrosse Club Fans, 1868 to 1884." PhD diss., The University of Western Ontario, 1990.

¹² Stevenson: 23-61.

¹³ MacLennan coined the term "Two Solitudes" in his classic novel of the same name. See Hugh MacLennan, *Two Solitudes* (Toronto: Macmillan of Canada, 1979).

¹⁴ Stevenson: 63

¹⁵ Stevenson: 63. Radice's ethnography shows that as of 2000, many Montréal Anglophones still do not venture into the Francophone east end very often. Radice: 60.

¹⁶ Stevenson: 66. "Pepsi" is a francophobic epithet, referring to French Canadians' alleged preference for that brand of cola.

¹⁷ Stevenson: 69. Brackets mine.

¹⁸ Michael Stein, "Changing Anglo-Quebecer Self Consciousness," in *The English of Quebec: From Majority to Minority Status*, eds. Gary Caldwell and Éric Waddell (Québec City: Institut québécois de recherche sur la culture, 1982): 113

¹⁹ Leslie Laczko, "Feelings of Threat Among English-Speaking Quebecers," in *Modernization and the Canadian State*, eds. Daniel Glenday, Hubert Guindon, and Allan Turowetz (Toronto: Macmillan of Canada, 1978): 283. Laczko argues that the way Francophones imagined the Anglophone community also changed: they were no longer *les anglais*, but instead *la minorité Anglophone*.

²⁰ Arnopoulos and Clift: 95.

²¹ On the other hand, Legault's assertion that this discourse serves as a mask for notions of anglo-saxon superiority is downright laughable, given the strong presence of Anglophones of Irish, Jewish, Italian, and Greek origin in the community. Her claim that Anglophones have refused to accept their minority status is also highly questionable. See Josée Legault, *L'invention d'une minorité: les Anglo-Québécois* (Montréal: Boréal, 1992): 18-19.

²² Legault: 120.

²³ Kenneth A. Price, "The Social Construction of Ethnicity: The Case of English Montrealers." PhD diss., York University, 1980: 303-304. These kinds of arguments were submitted, on behalf of the community as a whole, to government committees charged with managing public debate about Bill 101 in 1977. Price points out the inconsistency of submitting briefs *on behalf of a group* which passionately argue in favour of individual rights.

²⁴ Marc V. Levine, *The Reconquest of Montreal: Language Policy and Social Change in a Bilingual City* (Philadelphia: Temple University Press, 1990): 111.

²⁵ Stein: 115.

²⁶ Scowen: 17.

²⁷ Scowen: 80.

²⁸ Scowen: 21.

²⁹ Legault: 121.

³⁰ Stevenson: 122.

³¹ Legault: 124.

³² Levine: 169.

³³ Radice: 29-50; 87-126.

³⁴ Radice: 29-50; 87-126.

³⁵ Scowen: 25.

³⁶ Joan Fraser, "Les Anglophones québécois et leur médias," in *Les journalistes: dans les coulisses de l'information*, eds. Florian Sauvageau, Gilles Lesage, and Jean de Bonville (Montréal: Québec/Amérique, 1980): 185. The demise in 1969 of Québec City's daily English language newspaper, the *Quebec Chronicle-Telegraph*, prompted similar reactions in Québec City.

³⁷ Arnopoulos and Clift: 125.

³⁸ David Waters, "The English Media and the New Quebec," in *The English of Quebec: From Majority to Minority Status*, eds. Gary Caldwell and Éric Waddell (Québec City: Institut québécois de recherche sur la culture, 1982): 311.

³⁹ David Thomas, "The Anglo Press in the Seventies: Conspiracy or Just Plain Incompetence?" in *The English of Quebec: From Majority to Minority Status*, eds. Gary Caldwell and Éric Waddell (Québec City: Institut québécois de recherche sur la culture, 1982): 352-353.

⁴⁰ Fraser: 188.

⁴¹ Fraser: 192

⁴² The PQ promised to immediately declare independence if it won the election.

⁴³ This notion that French Canadians had not yet grasped democracy appears to have been a standard part of Anglophone discourse in Québec. See Price: 339-343.

⁴⁴ Fraser: 192.

⁴⁵ Thomas: 349. Dropping its promise from the 1970 and 1973 election, the PQ did not pledge an immediate declaration of independence in its 1976 election campaign. Rather, it campaigned on the nebulous promise of "good government," promising a referendum on "sovereignty-association" a few years down the road.

⁴⁶ Thomas: 350-351.

⁴⁷ Waters: 311.

⁴⁸ Waters: 319

⁴⁹ Fraser: 193.

⁵⁰ Waters: 320.

⁵¹ Levine: 103.

⁵² Cited in Stevenson: 121.

⁵³ Fraser: 195.

⁵⁴ Arnopoulos and Clift: 135.

⁵⁵ Tim Burke, "Hockey's Famed No. 9 Outlasting His Legend," *The Gazette*, 30 November 1979: 17.

⁵⁶ Football coverage was especially prominent. At the time, none of Québec's French language universities maintained football programs; Université Laval was the first to establish one, in 1995.

⁵⁷ Michael Farber, "Nordiques' First Foray Into Majors a Memorable Evening of History," *The Gazette*, 11 October 1979: 22.

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- ⁵⁸ Michael Farber, "Nordiques' First Foray Into Majors a Memorable Evening of History," *The Gazette*, 11 October 1979: 22.
- ⁵⁹ Michael Farber, "Nordiques' First Foray Into Majors a Memorable Evening of History," *The Gazette*, 11 October 1979: 22.
- ⁶⁰ Michael Farber, "Skate is on Other Foot in Quebec City," *The Gazette*, 05 January 1980: 61.
- ⁶¹ Glenn Cole, "It's Time for Proper Change in Unbalanced NHL Schedule," *The Gazette*, 06 November 1979: 65.
- ⁶² *The Gazette*, "Nordiques Threaten to Defy NHL with French Only," 11 January 1980: 1.
- ⁶³ *The Gazette*, Editorial Cartoon, 12 January 1980: 22. Reproduced with the permission of Terry Mosher.
- ⁶⁴ Pat Orwen, "Cut Out English at Forum? No Way, Say Fans," *The Gazette*, 15 February 1980: 1.
- ⁶⁵ Pat Orwen, "Cut Out English at Forum? No Way, Say Fans," *The Gazette*, 15 February 1980: 2.
- ⁶⁶ Pat Orwen, "Cut Out English at Forum? No Way, Say Fans," *The Gazette*, 15 February 1980: 2.
- ⁶⁷ Briefly, I examined every issue of *The Gazette* from September 1 1979, to April 30, 1984. For detailed information on my sampling methods, see Chapter 1.
- ⁶⁸ R. Courtemanche, Letter to the editor, *The Gazette*, 22 January 1980: 8. Brackets mine.
- ⁶⁹ Bernard Bernstein, Letter to the editor, *The Gazette*, 21 February 1980: 6.
- ⁷⁰ T. MacDonald, Letter to the editor, *The Gazette*, 25 February 1980: 8.
- ⁷¹ Tim Burke, "Forget Bigotry at the Forum," *The Gazette*, 15 February 1980: 29.
- ⁷² Tim Burke, "Forget Bigotry at the Forum," *The Gazette*, 15 February 1980: 29.
- ⁷³ Tim Burke, "A Slightly Bitter Taste Lingers From Some Honeyed Times," *The Gazette*, 30 October 1979: 21.
- ⁷⁴ *The Gazette*, Editorial Cartoon, 01 April 1982: B2. Reproduced with the permission of Tim Burke.
- ⁷⁵ Tim Burke, "Hey! Why Stop at Anglo Signs?" *The Gazette*, 11 August 1983: C11
- ⁷⁶ Tim Burke, "Ex-Expo Fox Gets Last Laugh," *The Gazette*, 25 August 1983: C1.
- ⁷⁷ For a comprehensive examination of Godin's legacy, see Lucille Beaudry, Robert Comeau, and Guy Lachapelle, *Gérald Godin, un poète en politique: essai* (Montréal: Hexagone, 2000).
- ⁷⁸ Tim Burke, "Firings Will Not Revive Dynasty," *The Gazette*, 14 April 1983: B11.
- ⁷⁹ Tim Burke, "Canadiens Stir Feelings of Pity," *The Gazette*, 29 March 1984: G1.

⁸⁰ Pierre Godin, *La poudrière linguistique* (Montréal: Boréal, 1990): 65-88.

⁸¹ Radice: 4.

⁸² Stevenson: 45-46.

⁸³ Levine: 23-25.

⁸⁴ This was hilariously illustrated in the 2003 film *Mambo Italiano*, about the trials and tribulations of an Italian immigrant family in Montréal. At the beginning of the film, the patriarch of the family reflects on his immigration experience. Wanting to immigrate to “America,” he discovered upon arrival that there was a “real America,” the United States, and a “fake America,” Canada. He then discovered that there was a “real Canada,” Ontario, and a “fake Canada,” Québec. He ended up in the “fake America” and the “fake Canada” but ultimately didn’t care; the ultimate goal, after all, was to escape poverty in Sicily.

⁸⁵ Arnopoulos and Clift: 143.

⁸⁶ “Hockey In Europe,” *National Hockey League*: <http://www.nhl.com/futures/europe.html> (accessed 28 February 2011).

⁸⁷ Jacquie McNish and James Golla, “2 Czech Defectors Join Nordiques,” *The Globe and Mail*, 27 August 1980: 2.

⁸⁸ In recognition of his talents, Peter was awarded the Calder Memorial Trophy, awarded annually to the best first-year player in the NHL, in 1981.

⁸⁹ Claude Larochelle, “Le Dieu slovaque,” *Le Soleil*, 28 December 1981: C2.

⁹⁰ For example: Gilles Proulx, Letter to the Editor, *La Presse*, 12 January 1981; François Roy, “Les Nordiques n’ont pas déçu leurs partisans,” *Le Soleil*, 06 May 1982: C3.

⁹¹ Maurice Dumas, “Les Stastnys à la place de Cloutier, Tardif et Richard,” *Le Soleil*, 10 November 1983: C2.

⁹² Albert Ladouceur, “Darina est enceinte d’un futur québécois,” *Le Journal de Québec*, 27 August 1980: 69. Translation: the child will be Québécois. It will speak French and look like all the munchkins in the Old Capital (Québec City). (As it happens, the child in question, Yan Stastny, spent most of his childhood in the United States after Peter was traded in 1990, and would represent the United States in international hockey competitions.)

⁹³ Réjean Tremblay, “Ils pouvaient choisir,” *La Presse*, 04 April 1984: Sports section, 5. Translation: Peter and Anton Stastny are now as Québécois as Normand Rochefort (one of the Nordiques’ Francophone players).

⁹⁴ Barry Kliff, “Quebec No Paradise for Stastnys,” *The Gazette*, 06 November 1982: G1.

⁹⁵ Claude Cadorette, “Des faussetés,” *Le Journal de Montréal*, 07 November 1982: 67.

⁹⁶ Tremblay’s riposte: “Ceux qui n’auraient pas lu le reportage publié dans *The Gazette* de samedi comprendront vite si on leur explique que l’article se situe dans la plus belle veine de *The Gazette*. En

gros, comme l'a si aimablement déjà souligné Tim Burke, les Anglophones du Québec font à peu près face aux mêmes misères que les Juifs devant les Nazis en Allemagne. D'ailleurs, Burke l'a écrit il flotte autant de fleurs de lys au Stade olympique que de croix gammées à Nuremberg. Et merci pour l'association! Les raffineries de l'est doivent être des fours crématoires camouflés." Translation: Those who have not read the report published in Saturday's *Gazette* will understand when we explain that the article is in the same vein as others in that newspaper. Basically, as Tim Burke has already so kindly explained, Québec Anglophones roughly face the same hardships as Jews in Nazi Germany. Burke has written, there are as many fleur de lys at Olympic Stadium as there were swastikas at Nuremberg. Thanks for making that link! The oil refineries in the east end (of Montréal) must then be camouflaged crematoria. Réjean Tremblay, "J'aime bien le réplique d'Anton," *La Presse*, 09 November 1982: Sports section, 5.

⁹⁷ Michel Lemieux, "Qu'est-ce que c'est que cette histoire?" *Dimanche-Matin*, 07 November 1982: 43; Claude Cadorette, "Des faussetés," *Le Journal de Montréal*, 07 November 1982: 67; André Bellemare, "Les frères Stastny réagissent violemment à l'article de *The Gazette*," *Le Devoir*, 08 November 1982: 10; *The Gazette*, "Stastny Now Saying He Wasn't Misquoted," 10 November 1982: E2.

⁹⁸ Michel Lemieux, "Qu'est-ce que c'est que cette histoire?" *Dimanche-Matin*, 07 November 1982: 43

⁹⁹ Claude Cadorette, "Des faussetés," *Le Journal de Montréal*, 07 November 1982: 67

¹⁰⁰ Hubert Bauch, "I Too Remember Being an Immigrant in Quebec City," *The Gazette*, 18 November 1982: B2.

¹⁰¹ Hubert Bauch, "I Too Remember Being an Immigrant in Quebec City," *The Gazette*, 18 November 1982: B2.

Chapter 8

8 Rhetoric in the Room: NHL Hockey Players, Neo-nationalism, and Public Commentary

One of the more interesting sections of former Canadiens goaltender Ken Dryden's memoir is his recollection about how the Canadiens' players interacted with the political context of the city and province in which they plied their trade. Dryden recalled that players were acutely aware of what was happening outside the walls of the Forum. In fact, it was an event that occurred *inside* the walls of the Forum that drove home the situation to Dryden: on the night of the Parti Québécois's (PQ) election victory (15 November 1976), Dryden recalled the fans in the stands paying more attention to the Forum's scoreboard, where election results were being flashed periodically, than to the Canadiens' game.¹ While Dryden reported that political banter was reasonably common in the dressing room, there was a definite sense that these matters were best discussed, jokingly, within the team. Indeed, Dryden and his teammates sought to avoid direct engagement with politics away from the friendly confines of the Forum, despite the politically tinged "incidents" that embroiled the team so frequently.² In effect, Dryden and his teammates divided their lives into two separate spheres: their work life, which consisted of everything related to hockey, and their private lives, which consisted of everything not related to hockey. These spheres did not intersect. In their functions as Montréal Canadiens' players, their job was to play hockey, practice hockey, and to interact with the media on subjects related to hockey. Public engagement with politics was not part of their job descriptions, and indeed was not an issue in their work.³ There was no reason to speak about it publicly.

After the arrival of the Québec Nordiques into the NHL in September 1979 (Dryden retired in May 1979), players employed in Québec no longer could neatly segregate their lives in such a fashion. As we have seen in previous chapters, the Nordiques, because of their French-only language policy, presumed preference for Francophone players and managers, and alleged “Québec” style of play, became a lightning rod for neo-nationalist discourses and media debates about language, citizenship, and identity. For Nordiques and Canadiens players, this entailed a partial convergence of the hitherto distinct public and private spheres. With politics and language linked so directly and explicitly to professional hockey, the media *expected* them to comment publicly on political matters because these matters suddenly were salient to their jobs as hockey players: it was as legitimate for reporters to ask a Nordiques’ player about the team’s language policy as its penalty killing strategy. And indeed, from 1979 to 1984, the media asked Nordiques and Canadiens players, both Anglophone and Francophone, to comment publicly about topics that ranged from the importance and utility of speaking French to the 1980 referendum.

This chapter analyzes how the Canadiens’ and Nordiques’ players interacted with their socio-political context and how the French media depicted these interactions. Though I am ultimately most interested in how the sport media covered *what* players said, at the outset I propose an explanation for *why* players made political utterances in the first place, instead of sloughing off reporters’ questions with a “no comment.” Next, I present a discourse analysis of players’ comments in three different incidences. First, I look at the 1980 referendum on Québec independence, where the Canadiens’ and Nordiques’ Francophone players were courted by the media to pronounce their voting

intentions. Next, I examine how the Canadiens' and Nordiques' Anglophone players publicly represented their relationship to the French language. Finally, I analyze the comments made by Nordiques' players, both Anglophone and Francophone, in the aftermath of the criticisms against the team levelled by ex-Nordiques Gerry Hart, Reggie Thomas, and Dave Farrish.

8.1 Hockey Avec a French Accent: The Media-Player Relationship in Québec

Like all professional athletes, NHL players are labourers in a capitalist context, “working for subsistence as well as for economic gain, producing millions of dollars for team owners, stadiums, and cities, as well as for myriad business and agencies that market produces directly or indirectly through the organization and/or the league.”⁴ The most important part of this labour occurs on the ice. However, there are a host of other work duties that NHL players must effectuate. Because of the close links between professional sports organizations and the media that cover them, interacting with newspaper, radio, and television journalists became a mandatory component of the professional athlete's labour. This relationship between professional sport and its media partners is one of mutual convenience and need: through the twentieth century, it was characterized by an increasingly deep corporate integration.⁵ Professional sport leagues such as the NHL simply could not exist in their current forms without the wall-to-wall coverage afforded to them by the sport media. Historically, hockey owes its initial popularity and rise to the status of a “national” institution in large part to favourable newspaper coverage.⁶ This occurred at least in part through the media's spotlighting of the individuals who played the game. Newspapers, in both English and French Canada,

constructed the game's players, using very colourful and vivid language, into mythical, larger-than-life heroes:

As the new century unfolded there was more attention paid to individual players, to their skills, styles, and personalities. Telegraphers began to rely more on players' names when telling stories of game action. At the same time journalists began to write about the most skilled players in a mythic style of language that spoke to popular desires for larger-than-life events and personalities.⁷

The attention devoted to hockey players in the media increased as the *Hockey Night in Canada* and *Soirée du hockey* franchises transformed NHL hockey from a local or regional phenomenon into a national brand whose overwhelming stature slowly crowded out other sport paradigms.⁸ NHL players such as Maurice "Rocket" Richard, Gordie Howe, Bobby Hull and many others became well known national celebrities in Canada, their images, exploits, and faces diffused through newspapers reports, television broadcasts, and other media such as trading cards. Star treatment was not limited to the sport's megastars. The sport's popularity and the intense coverage afforded to it in the Canadian media ensured that lesser known players became celebrities in their own right, especially those playing in Canadian markets such as Toronto and Montréal (and later Vancouver, Edmonton, Calgary, Winnipeg, and Québec City).⁹

Despite the increasing importance of television through the 1950s, 60s, and 70s, newspapers maintained an important role as the sole daily provider of hockey news. Much of the hockey content in newspapers was structured around interactions between players and reporters. A typical sports section in Montréal during the late 1970s featured a recap of a game played the night before; a preview of the Canadiens' next game; a report detailing the team's injuries; a profile of a player who had recently arrived from another NHL team or from the Canadiens' minor league system. All these reports

required extensive quotes from players, and in fact were inconceivable without player utterances to frame and add colour and depth to them. So if the NHL was dependent on the media for its expansion and popularity, the inverse is also true: the hockey press, needing content to fill its pages, required the active participation of NHL players. The league, recognizing the value of player-reporter interactions, opened its teams' dressing rooms, giving reporters unfiltered access to the athletes. The sight of journalists, microphone or paper in hand, firing off questions to a half-naked, sweating hockey player immediately upon the conclusion of an NHL game has become so common as to be unremarkable.¹⁰ Predictable access to players was and is the rule for both home and away games. Not only have hockey journalists been fixtures in the dressing room and the practice rink, but they have traveled, eaten, and socialized with players on long road trips.¹¹ However, if reporters must interact with players as part of the terms of their employment, the inverse is also true. Some professional sports leagues have instituted rules obligating teams to make their players available at specific times.¹² Players who have refused to speak with the media in rule contravention have been subject to disciplinary action, such as fines.¹³

Interactions between NHL players and reporters tended to be routine. Both parties have an interest in reproducing what communications scholar Kelly Poniatowski described as the "good-guy mentality," a public narrative rooted in hegemonic notions of whiteness that constructs NHL players as uniquely hard-working, dedicated, intelligent, friendly, caring, and family oriented.¹⁴ This is surely a public narrative that the NHL was eager to have reproduced and, indeed, it has gone mostly unquestioned in the hockey media: both print and television media have projected and reinforced this homespun

image then and now.¹⁵ Players that have successfully reproduced the good-guy mentality have been celebrated. Take, for example, the unexpected December 2008 bus trip undertaken by the Chicago Blackhawks to attend the funeral of their general manager's father: the ensuing media coverage constructed the Blackhawks' gesture as evidence of hockey players' honest, affable, accommodating, unselfish, family-oriented nature.¹⁶ Conversely, players who have failed to adhere to the good-guy mentality have been condemned as deviants, and have even had punitive action taken against them. The best recent example is that of contemporary NHL player Sean Avery, who taunted an adversary in front of television cameras for dating his ex-girlfriend – or, as Avery memorably put it, his “sloppy seconds” – and was promptly suspended by the NHL and sacked by his employers at the time, the Dallas Stars, for inappropriate conduct. Furthermore, many of his teammates at the time were quite vocal in criticizing Avery for his remarks, with several requesting that his contract be terminated.¹⁷

So, for hockey players, interaction with the media remains a matter of making the right utterance in the right context. For the most part, this has entailed reproducing the good-guy mentality; publicly contravening this public behavioural code can have disastrous consequences. Luckily for players, the resonance of the good-guy mentality does not change from city to city, nor does the necessity for journalists to incorporate player quotations into their reports. Media-savvy players know generally what kind of questions they will be asked and understand how to answer them satisfactorily; reporters, meanwhile, understand what kind of answers they are likely to receive and tailor their questions accordingly. As a result, interactions between players and interviewers are largely predictable, with players making heavy use of easy-to-recite clichés.¹⁸ The same

utterance employed successfully in Vancouver is almost certain to pass muster in Philadelphia, or Boston, or Los Angeles.

The province of Québec stands as an exception exception regarding the development of the nature of this media-player interaction; the ability to make the right utterance in the right context is not always as straightforward as in other NHL markets because Québec's hockey context has been and continues to be very unique. Though there is no evidence that the good-guy mentality is less salient in Québec than anywhere else in North America, activist Francophone reporters have expected players, at least since 1979, to go beyond the usual clichés and comment on the politics of language, nation and culture, topics that are ordinarily not broached in other NHL cities. A contemporary example is useful in demonstrating this. Upon being named captain of the Canadiens in 2010, Brian Gionta, a unilingual Anglophone, was immediately queried about whether he planned on learning French as part of his captain's duties. Gionta's response was illuminating:

We're embracing the culture. We live here in Montréal. It's a great place to be. We're going to do our best and learn it. I can't make promises that I'll be able to speak it fluently, but I'll try. It's part of being here, whether you're captain or not. You want to accept the culture and learn. We're in the process of that now and we'll see where that goes.¹⁹

Gionta, who played only one year in Montréal before being appointed captain, demonstrated a keen awareness of that market's unique context. He pledged to try and learn French, and intimated that his wife and children would do the same. According to Gionta, this kind of cultural engagement is "part of being here, whether you're captain or not."

Making the wrong utterance in such a context can have catastrophic ramifications for a player's career in Québec. Gionta, by openly embracing French and then using it publicly a few weeks later, proved his cultural competence and ensured a tensionless working relationship with the French media.²⁰ But not all Canadiens' players have been as judicious with their words as Gionta. Gionta's predecessor Saku Koivu suffered through a strained relationship with this same media corps. He was, according to *The Gazette*, "chased out of Montreal... the French press tarred and feathered Koivu for the despicable crime of failing to speak French."²¹ The same is true of one of Koivu's predecessors, Mike Keane. Keane, another unilingual Anglophone, proclaimed in 1995 that his inability to communicate in French was "not a problem" and that he had no plan to learn the language.²² This remark prompted calls for his ousting as captain, lasting hostility from the French media, and Keane's jettisoning just a few months later.

Gionta, Koivu, and Keane's utterances were not made in a vacuum. They were proclaimed in response to questions submitted by Francophone reporters and they were uttered in a context – a language-obsessed Québec where neo-nationalist language assumptions were entrenched – where repeating the standard mantra that sport and politics do not or should not mix was likely to be deemed unacceptable by nationalist journalists still agitating for change in the field of professional hockey. This is the context in which Canadiens and Nordiques players interacted with the local media in Montréal and Québec City from 1979 to 1984; players were routinely requested to comment on issues such as language, nationalism, and Québec independence. The media *expected* NHL hockey players, as residents of the province, to have opinions about these matters, and *expected* players to articulate these opinions upon request. Ultimately, these

players were counted on to confirm and reiterate the validity of the neo-nationalist project, or at least not explicitly to refute it publicly. Koivu and Keane's experiences suggest that players who failed to do so may have been subjected to the full fury of the French media.

It was not always immediately apparent what constituted a "safe" utterance in that context, especially for players who were unfamiliar with the wider political developments in Québec society. Francophone players' confusing and sometimes contradictory statements during the 1980 referendum demonstrated that interacting with the French media could be difficult even for Québec-born players.

8.2 Holding Out for a Neo-Nationalist Hero: The Case of the 1980 Referendum

There was, from 1979 to 1984, a clear attempt by the part of the French media to christen a national(ist) hockey hero, to designate a successor to Maurice "Rocket" Richard. Richard retired from the Canadiens in 1960, the same year that the Quiet Revolution began to unleash the social changes that irrevocably altered the province over the next twenty years. As Jean-Pierre Augustin and Christian Poirier recounted, the two Canadiens superstars that followed Richard did not conform to the Rocket's precedent.²³ Jean Béliveau was in fact known to be against Québec nationalism, his personal politics in the tradition of the bilingual, pan-Canadian vision outlined by Pierre Trudeau. Béliveau's successor as the Canadiens' big ticket attraction, Guy Lafleur, was politically conflicted, but ultimately more concerned with endorsement opportunities than with politics. When Lafleur spoke out publicly in the early 1980s about matters other than hockey, it was to criticize Québec's tax regime and to threaten to play in the United

States.²⁴ These complaints were understood by some in the media as a veiled attack on the egalitarianism of the neo-nationalist project; and indeed, as Figure 7 (below) depicts, Lafleur's outburst earned him the ire of René Lévesque and other nationalist politicians.

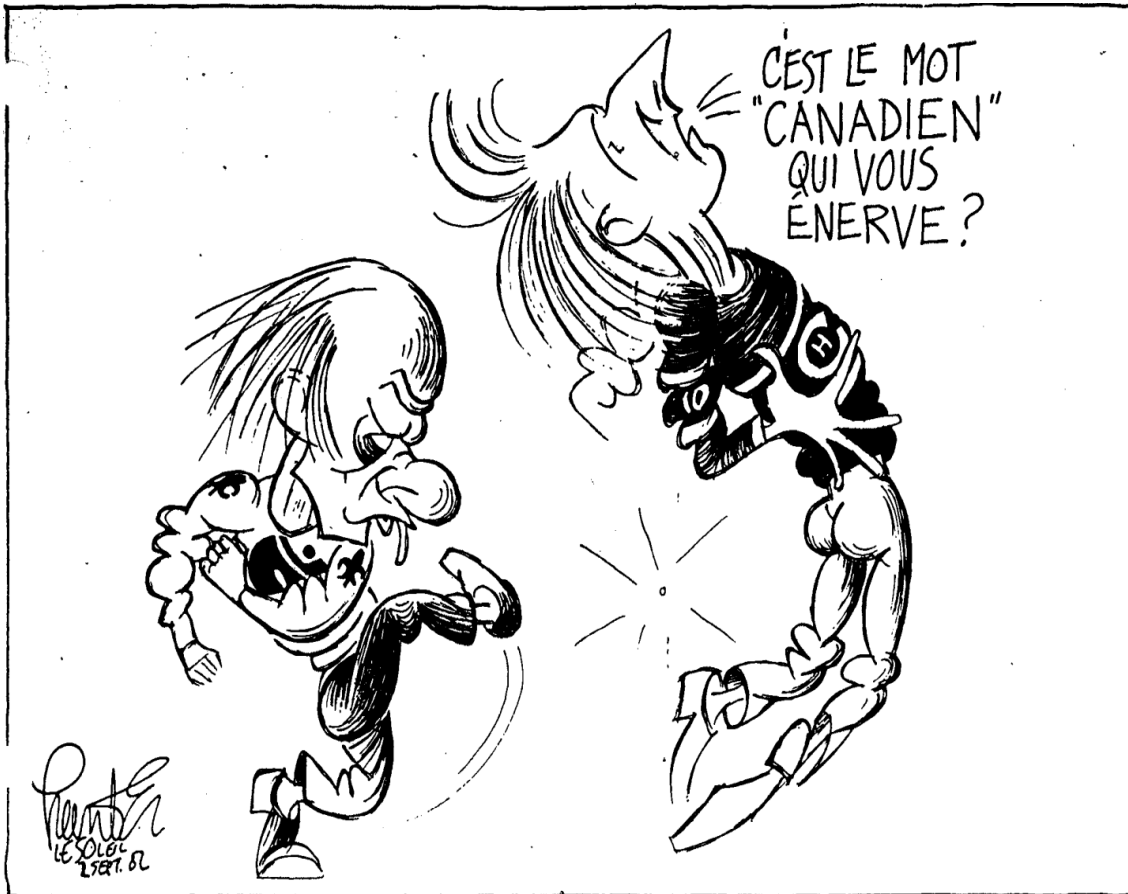


Figure 7: René Lévesque, in a Nordiques' uniform, kicks the Canadiens' Guy Lafleur in the backside after the latter criticized the province's tax regime. Lévesque was drawn in a Nordiques' uniform, confirming the extent to which that team was associated with Québécois nationalism.²⁵

Other than Lafleur, the Canadiens' teams of the late 1970s fielded a host of high-profile Francophone players, most of whom avoided public comment on political matters; furthermore, that group's most politically active member, Serge Savard (the team's future

general manager), rejected neo-nationalism, preferring to align himself with the conservative nationalist Union Nationale instead.²⁶ The Canadiens' Francophone players made very few *formal* political utterances in the early 1980s (in the sense of openly supporting a political party or taking a position on the political controversies of the day). However, I did find one example of neo-nationalist sentiment among the Canadiens' players. Veteran winger Réjean Houle told *La Presse* that "je suis un frog et je suis fier de l'être. Je suis nationaliste pas indépendantiste et je suis en faveur de la loi 101 sauf quelques articles..."²⁷ This was the sole deviation from the Canadiens' collective political silence that I uncovered.

The French media's hope of constructing a neo-nationalist hockey hero shifted to the Nordiques, and especially to three young Francophones in Québec City. All three players had hired the nationalist lawyer Guy Bertrand as their agent. Réal Cloutier, the team's highest scorer in their first NHL season, was courted intensely. An extended October 1979 profile in *La Presse* hinted at Cloutier's neo-nationalist leanings: for example, it revealed that Cloutier himself had approached Bertrand to represent him (significant, because Bertrand was already one of the province's most vocal nationalists), and that he had agreed, presumably out of nationalist pride, to promote Daoust hockey skates (Daoust was a Québec-based company). In that profile, Bertrand himself described Cloutier as part of a new breed of politically conscious Québécois player, contrasting him favourably with Béliveau and Lafleur:

[Cloutier] a choisi de faire face à la musique et je dirais même, de devenir prophète dans son pays. Pas tout à fait comme Béliveau ou Lafleur qui s'est choisi un avocat anglais et qui a tenté d'envoyer son fils à l'école anglaise, mais qui n'a pas pû à cause de la loi 101.²⁸

However, Cloutier stressed that he was apolitical. Instead, it was two other Bertrand clients who received plaudits for their activism during the Nordiques' first NHL training camp. Two young Francophones, Michel Goulet and Pierre Lacroix, refused to sign NHL contracts until they were issued official French translations. As I discussed in Chapter 4, Goulet and Lacroix were praised effusively by Francophone journalists, and their refusal to sign English contracts was constructed as an example of nationalist resistance.²⁹ However, lost in the positive reaction to Goulet and Lacroix's stand was the fact that neither player made statements unequivocally situating their contract situation in a neo-nationalist frame. Quite the opposite: Goulet in fact declared that he was prepared to sign an English contract if a French one was not made available.³⁰

Media efforts to construct a neo-nationalist hockey icon reached their apogee during the campaign for the referendum on Québec independence, in 1980. The referendum was no less than the single most important political decision in Québec's history and the apotheosis of the neo-nationalist project: held in May, 1980, it determined whether Québec would form its own sovereign state or remain as a province within the Canadian federation. In the end, a passionate and often bitter campaign culminated in a victory for the "non" (anti-independence) forces. 59.6% of the population voted against independence, including overwhelming majorities of the Anglophone and Allophone populations; the Francophone vote was split almost evenly.³¹

There was tremendous interest in the Francophone sport media about which athletes, if any, would publicly support Québec independence. The Parti Québécois-headed provincial government made its constitutional proposal on November 1, 1979 (the specific referendum question and date were decided later); a mere two weeks later, on

November 17, Réjean Tremblay speculated in *La Presse* about which athletes were likely to abandon their “facile political passivity” and pronounce public support for the PQ’s referendum campaign.³² The article disclosed three important assumptions relating to the participation of hockey players in the referendum campaign. First, all the players discussed were Francophones, revealing an understanding of the referendum as a decision that ultimately would be made by Francophones (the nation). Second, that not supporting independence, for Francophone athletes, was “facile political passivity.” Finally, citing unnamed PQ staff, Tremblay determined that the Nordiques’ players were much more likely than the Canadiens’ players to join the political fray. Lafleur and Savard were depicted as lost causes: Lafleur was dismissed as a lackey of Anglophone capital, while Savard was assumed to have shown his true political colours in 1975 when he torpedoed Guy Bertrand’s initial call for a Québec national hockey team. On the other hand, Tremblay claimed that Réal Cloutier’s support for independence had been secured; the only question was whether he would have “assez de cran” (enough guts) to declare his intention publicly.³³ And indeed, Cloutier came under increasing scrutiny to voice his opinion as May 20 approached.

The most interesting aspect of Tremblay’s initial article concerned both teams’ referendum activity policies. Marcel Aubut, the Nordiques’ president, said:

Nous allons rencontrer les joueurs et réfléchir sur la situation; on aimerait mieux ne pas mêler sport et politique: c’est pourquoi on ne voit jamais de politicien sur la glace du Colisée pour une cérémonie officielle. On va peut-être demander à nos joueurs de rester discrets, je ne sais pas trop, on va en jaser.³⁴

Aubut and the Nordiques discovered the political and commercial benefits of expressly mixing sport with politics when they introduced their French-only language policy a few months later. Still, Aubut’s response revealed that the Nordiques’ were nervous about

the possibility of their players voicing their political preferences. Silence was their preferred option, as it was in Montréal. The Canadiens' desire for discretion was forcefully articulated by Béliveau, who at the time was a Canadiens vice-president:

Nos joueurs agiront selon leur sens du devoir , nous n'avons pas l'intention d'émettre quelques recommandations que ce soit; cependant, je voudrais faire remarquer que les hockeyeurs professionnels déjà soumis à la pression d'une saison régulière et des séries éliminatoires, aux prises avec un calendrier de voyage très chargé, n'ont pas grand temps à consacrer à la politique.³⁵

Though he began by asserting that every player would be free to follow their own conscience, Béliveau made it explicitly clear immediately afterward, by invoking the players' professional responsibilities, that the team *expected* its players to remain silent. According to Béliveau, extraordinarily busy professional hockey players would not have the time to involve themselves in politics. Therefore, Canadiens players who spoke out during the referendum campaign would be in contravention of their employment responsibilities. For this reason, Béliveau's statement should be read as a call for his employees to remain quiet during the referendum campaign. Indeed, *Dimanche-Matin* reported two days before the May vote that the Canadiens officially had ordered their players to refrain from speaking out.³⁶

So, during the referendum campaign, there was a tension between the Canadiens' and Nordiques' expectations for players to remain silent and the French media's expectations for players to voice their opinions (preferably in favour of independence). Players, accustomed to a predictable relationship with the print media, were unsure how to respond to questions relating to the referendum. Looking first at the Canadiens, some players chose to remain completely silent. I did not find, for example, a single utterance made by Lafleur about the referendum in any of the Montréal or Québec City dailies, not

even a “no comment.” The only Canadiens’ players whose opinions were revealed were Mario Tremblay, Michel Larocque, and Normand Dupont. In an article that appeared in *La Presse*’s politics section, Réjean Tremblay described his namesake Mario leading “une cabale joyeuse, riieuse... a tambour battant... pour le oui” (a joyous cabal beating the drum in favour of independence).³⁷ Clearly intending to represent his namesake as a proud nationalist, Réjean quoted Mario thundering against two hundred years of Anglophone control in Québec. But a close reading of the article revealed ambiguity: Mario Tremblay’s comments were not made to the newspaperman but to his teammate Bob Gainey, and may very well have been made in jest. Larocque and Dupont were not quoted at all. In fact, an article published a few weeks later in *Le Soleil* reported that Larocque was embarrassed at having his preference exposed.³⁸ It appears very possible that Réjean Tremblay published off-the-record comments or uncontextualized conversations among teammates. And indeed, Mario Tremblay, Larocque, and Dupont did not play any further public role in the referendum debate, and I was unable to find any further comments attributed to them relating to the question of independence in any context.

No Canadiens (or Nordiques) player spoke out against independence. It is exceedingly likely, based on their previous and future comments, that this was the preferred option for at least a few of the Canadiens’ Francophone players. These players did their utmost to present themselves as undecided or even leaning toward voting “oui” (for independence). For example, Réjean Houle, who a few months after the referendum revealed in *La Presse* that he was a nationalist but not in favour of independence, declared himself to be undecided.³⁹ He very well may have been at that time; but it is

also likely that he preferred silence in lieu of potentially risking the ire of his team or the French media by pronouncing himself one way or another. Serge Savard's comments over the course of the campaign also revealed this tension. As previously mentioned, the French media assumed that Savard's past political activities assured a *non* vote. Yet Savard presented himself to the media as undecided, and even leaning towards voting for independence. In March, Savard divulged nothing other than the revelation that he had refused the presidency of the "non" committee (anti-independence) in his home district of Taillon.⁴⁰ Savard then informed *Le Soleil* a few weeks later that while he had at one point been a certainty to vote again independence, "c'est de moins en moins certain que je voterai dans ce sens-là," promising to make his decision known after the Canadiens' season had terminated.⁴¹ The Canadiens' season ended on April 27, more than three weeks before the referendum, but Savard never announced his voting intention.

There were parallel dynamics in Québec City among the Nordiques. Nobody exemplified the tension between personal responsibility, professional obligations, and media pressures better than Réal Cloutier. Cloutier, of course, had been anointed at the beginning of his NHL career as a neo-nationalist hero for a new Québec. Indeed, it was assumed that his association with Guy Bertrand meant that Cloutier was in favour of independence.⁴² As such, Cloutier was under tremendous pressure not just to declare in favour of sovereignty but to take an active role in the campaign.⁴³ A feature interview given to *Le Journal de Québec* revealed a young man who did not want to speak out but felt as though he should, or even that he must. On one hand, Cloutier recognized that his stature in Québec gave his word a particular impact; he told the reporter, André Leclair, that "tu sais très bien qu'avec moi ce n'est pas la même chose que pour n'importe qui..."

dès que j'ouvrirai la bouche sur se sujet brûlant les journalistes auront le crayon en mains."⁴⁴ Tellingly, Cloutier was quoted as speaking in the future tense (*j'ouvrirai*) instead of the conditional (*j'ouvrirais*), implying that he expected, or was widely expected by the media, eventually to pronounce his opinion. And indeed, Cloutier discussed the likelihood of holding a press conference to that end; like Savard, he never did.

But Cloutier also clarified that his preference was to remain silent. In the following paragraph, Cloutier described public participation in the referendum as incompatible with his job as a professional hockey player:

Je ne peux pas prendre parti parce que, tu vois, je ferais 50% de satisfaits et 50% d'insatisfaits, et mon opinion serait accueillie avec les mêmes divisions qu'on retrouve dans les sondages. En tant que professionnel du hockey qui gagne ma vie en faisant du sport, j'ai besoin de l'appui de tous les amateurs, et non pas seulement d'une minorité. Je ne peux pas m'aliéner une partie de mes supporteurs à cause d'une question, qui, au fond, ne touche pas du tout le hockey.⁴⁵

Though Cloutier's conclusion echoed the policies of his own employers (as well as the Canadiens), the logic employed to justify player silence was somewhat different. Cloutier in effect argued that players who picked the wrong side risked alienating their team's fans. As fan support was integral to professional hockey players' success, the only way to steer clear of this predicament was to avoid commenting on touchy social or political issues completely. In this, Cloutier echoed the comments of Serge Savard, who also underlined a fan backlash as a reason for athletes to remain silent during the referendum campaign:

Ce n'est pas encore très bien vu, au Québec, de prendre publiquement position sur des questions semblables, lorsqu'on est athlète. C'est curieux, quand on se rend compte qu'aux États-Unis, par exemple, c'est devenu chose courante. Ici, c'est

encore un peu le réflexe de ‘jouer de fermez-là’ mais j’estime que cette situation commence à évoluer.⁴⁶

Savard represented speaking out publicly about social and political issues that have no immediate link to players’ jobs as hockey players as socially unacceptable. Though the content of their comments was likely to be judged more harshly than whether they spoke out at all, Cloutier and Savard’s reflections suggest a feeling of apprehension among players with respect to referendum participation. They felt constrained against referendum campaign participation by their own team’s policies, by the fear of alienating their supporters, as well as by social norms that they interpreted to deem athlete participation in societal debates as unacceptable.

Given that these constraints were clearly felt at least by Cloutier and Savard, it is unsurprising that no hockey players participated actively in the referendum campaign. Even Maurice “Rocket” Richard refused to become involved. Understanding the burden of being a political symbol, he opted to cast his vote privately: “j’ai déjà été un symbole dans un passé turbulent et je souhaite maintenant voter tranquillement comme tout autre citoyen.”⁴⁷ Journalists by then had given up on the emergence of a neo-nationalist hockey hero through the referendum campaign; Réjean Tremblay wrote that it was a waste of time searching in a field as conservative as the professional hockey world.⁴⁸ Yet two players eventually did emerge, on the eve of the vote, in support of independence: Michel Goulet and Pierre Lacroix, the two young Nordiques who had refused at the beginning of the NHL season to sign English language contracts. Not only did Goulet and Lacroix publicly declare their voting intentions, but they appeared at a Québec City rally with René Lévesque and other sports figures voting in favour of independence.⁴⁹ Both made statements at the rally that drew heavily from mainstream neo-nationalist

discourses. Reconfirming the narrative that constructed Québécois distinctiveness as an undeniable, objective fact, Lacroix recalled the sense of foreignness that he felt upon travelling outside of Québec for the first time. Canada and Québec were irrevocably different in language, culture, and mentality; for that reason, the same reason that a Canadian would vote in favour of staying in Canada, Lacroix would vote for Québec independence.⁵⁰

Goulet, on the other hand, described how his experience in attempting to procure French language contracts had radicalized him:

En 1979, j'ai été humilié d'apprendre que, pour jouer au hockey à Québec, chez les Nordiques de Québec de la LNH, je devais signer un contrat rédigé anglais seulement.

Avec Pierre Lacroix, j'ai entrepris tous les démarches nécessaires pour que mes droits de francophones soient reconnus, au moins au Québec.

C'est à cette occasion que j'ai compris qu'un Québécois n'avait pas les mêmes droits qu'un Canadien. Je dirai 'OUI,' au referendum, pour que le Québec obtienne enfin le statut d'égalité avec le Canada.⁵¹

Like Lacroix, Goulet's statement was rooted in neo-nationalist orthodoxy. He described being "humiliated" when he realized that playing in the NHL for a Québec-based team required him to sign an English contract, thereby linking his situation to the plight of other Québécois workers who were forced to have a working understanding of English in order to progress in their professional lives. This episode instilled in Goulet the understanding that "les Québécois" did not have the same rights as other (Anglophone) Canadians; this statement drew on neo-nationalist notions of colonization and domination to represent the French language as existing in a permanently subordinate position within the Canadian federation. Goulet's decision to vote for independence therefore amounted to an understanding that the subordination of the French language could only be reversed

in an independent Québec. In this manner, Goulet presented independence as the only solution for the decolonization of Québec, and therefore the logical and inevitable next step in the neo-nationalist project.

Lacroix and Goulet's statements were completely unambiguous; they left no doubt about the players' political beliefs. Sure enough, the statements prompted attempts by the print media to fashion Goulet and Lacroix into neo-nationalist icons. In a column entitled "Qui se souvient?" (the title is a play on Québec's official motto, "je me souviens" ["I remember"], which itself has become a nationalist rallying cry and a permanent slogan on every Quebec license plate), Réjean Tremblay positioned Goulet and Lacroix as two politically engaged Québécois athletes, part of a new breed of social role model, who had courageously made a stand in spite of the possible repercussions. According to Tremblay, Goulet and Lacroix had been warned of the consequences that would accompany them revealing their voting intentions: Tremblay reported that NHL sources told him that Goulet and Lacroix would become marked men on the ice because of their politics and that "ils vont porter leur geste comme une marque au front pour le reste de leur carrière."⁵²

Yet Goulet's own statements after the referendum belied Tremblay's heroic construction to a certain extent. Take one such statement for example, reported in another piece written by Tremblay:

Je suis fils de cultivateur et je me suis bien rendu compte que le gouvernement avait passé de bonnes lois pour la protection des agriculteurs. En examinant d'autres de ses politiques, j'ai décidé de lui faire confiance dans le domaine constitutionnel également; ce fut une décision personnelle et je ne regrette pas une seconde de l'avoir prise.⁵³

In this passage, Goulet distanced himself from the zeal of the statement he made at the pre-referendum rally. Gone were the discourses of humiliation, subordination, and inequality, replaced by a discussion of government policy. It is unclear what prompted this. It is possible that the Nordiques, the league, or both, asked he and Lacroix to cease discussing politics in public. He could have also been jeered by fans as Cloutier and Savard had feared, or targeted with violence by other players as Tremblay mentioned. Either way, Goulet's change in discourse suggested that, as players like Savard and Cloutier had suggested, there may have been repercussions for NHL players who made their political opinions known. Indeed, I did not find a single political utterance attributed to either Goulet or Lacroix in the rest of my study, nor did I find any evidence of any political engagement off the ice: after the referendum, it appears that both Goulet and Lacroix clearly decided that political silence, for an NHL player, was golden.

8.3 French Immersion: Anglophone Players and the French Language

As the previous section about the 1980 referendum attests, professional hockey players in Québec generally preferred to refrain from speaking to the press about their own political beliefs. The few who did – Goulet and Lacroix – eventually retreated into silence. Political discourse produced by players seeped into the province's sports sections nonetheless. For example, from 1979 to 1984, the media repeatedly requested that hockey players on the Canadiens and Nordiques pronounce their feelings about the French language. Players, both Anglophone and Francophone, consistently spoke about the value and the necessity of speaking French in Québec as part of their acculturation into their teams and into Québécois society. Anglophones and Allophones provided

almost all of this commentary. The reason for this is rather obvious: given the discourses analyzed in previous chapters, Francophone journalists were likely to have considered that Francophone players' relationship to the French language did not require elucidation. This was not the case for the Canadiens' and Nordiques' Anglophones and Allophones. A few of them spoke fluent French, and indeed, the act of speaking French for an Anglophone player in Montréal or Québec City – which in the context of the early 1980s was itself something of a political statement – had very clear and tangible benefits. Take the example of Curt Brackenbury, a British Columbian who joined the WHA Nordiques in 1976 and remained with the club upon its entry into the NHL, and who spoke French fluently enough to converse with Francophone reporters uniquely in French. Brackenbury's ability to speak French was constructed in media reports as evidence of his professionalism, leadership, and indispensability to the Nordiques' cause. His linguistic capabilities, for example, were credited with allowing him to act as a bridge between the Nordiques' Anglophones and Francophones.⁵⁴ Similarly, Brackenbury's purchase of an electronic translator was lauded in *Le Journal de Montréal* as “un geste louable” (a commendable gesture) that should serve as an example to his teammates;⁵⁵ similarly, his efforts to teach French to some of his Anglophone teammates were praised by journalists as further evidence of his leadership.⁵⁶

There is also evidence that making efforts to speak French could increase a player's popularity greatly. As mentioned in Chapter 4, Nordiques captain Robbie Ftorek was given a rapturous ovation and was widely commended for stumbling through a short speech in French during the Nordiques' first home game against the Canadiens in 1979, a gesture that prompted a report in *Le Devoir* describing him as the Nordiques' “nouvelle

idole” (new idol);⁵⁷ similarly, Peter Stastny on two occasions spoke a few sentences of French at public functions to great media acclaim.⁵⁸ And speaking French certainly helped Anglophone players’ visibility in the province. Brackenbury’s language skills, for example, paved the way for him to serve as a guest on popular prime time television talk shows.⁵⁹ Similarly, Canadiens forward Bob Gainey’s facility in French netted him an award and off-ice publicity.⁶⁰

Given the province’s political context, the positive media coverage afforded to Anglophone French speakers in Montréal and Québec City, and the tangible benefits linked to this coverage, it is unsurprising that the Canadiens’ and Nordiques’ unilingual Anglophones, as well as those who were not fluently bilingual, eagerly sought to associate themselves with Molière’s language. Of the players who discussed their relationship to French, all either were known to speak it fluently (like Brackenbury and Gainey), claimed to speak it privately,⁶¹ professed to be in the process of learning it,⁶² or verbalized their eagerness to begin learning it.⁶³ I did not find a single remark made by an Anglophone player disassociating themselves from French, downplaying its social importance, or claiming that they would not strive to learn it. Instead, Anglophone players, demonstrating a keen awareness both of the political climate and the answers that their interviewers wanted to hear, constructed speaking French as part of the normal integration process into their new milieu and an unproblematic obligation related to their employment.

Simply speaking, the Canadiens’ and Nordiques’ players constructed French, through their stated enthusiasm to learn it, as the key to life in Québec. The Canadiens’ Doug Wickenheiser, for example, discussing his desire to “perfect” his French, stated that

“je suis venu ici avec l’attitude positive d’un gars intéressé à connaître les gens et à s’intégrer au milieu.”⁶⁴ Wickenheiser explicitly linked “perfecting” one’s French with meeting people and integrating into the social milieu; this of course cannot happen without a solid grasp of the language. This remark reproduced one of the central tenets of the neo-nationalist project as it pertained to language: Wickenheiser constructed French as the preeminent public language in Québec, without which meaningful integration into Québécois public life was impossible. This was given additional potency in the article with the unveiling of Wickenheiser’s place of residence, a shared apartment in Montréal’s Anglophone West Island. French, therefore, became not just the key to accessing Québécois public life, but the means through which Wickenheiser was able to break out of his geographical segregation.

The importance placed by Anglophone players on speaking French was simultaneously a rebuke of bilingualism: they invariably emphasized the need to speak French in Québec, not the necessity of speaking both languages. This despite the fact that English very much was required in their day-to-day lives: the main language of internal communication for both the Nordiques and Canadiens, especially among players, was English. Yet the value of speaking English, either at work or in a wider context, was never discussed publicly. If bilingualism was broached, it was done in the context of individual bilingualism, of Anglophone hockey players desiring or needing to learn to speak French in addition to English. For example, upon being drafted by the club, the Nordiques’ Randy Moller pronounced his excitement in having the opportunity to become bilingual.⁶⁵ But in this context, bilingualism meant learning French, as Moller already spoke English. As such, his pronouncement in favour of bilingualism served as a

reconfirmation of the primacy of French in Québec. This was understood very well by *Le Soleil*, the newspaper in which Moller's comments were published; its headline announced that "Moller a hâte d'être Québécois" (Moller looks forward to be Québécois). And while the use of the word "Québécois" in this context could refer to Québec City or the province as a whole, in either sense it portrayed French as essential to settling in Québec.

Hart, Thomas, and Farrish's critiques aside, the closest any player came to rejecting the province's linguistic order was the *Gazette* article in which the Stastny brothers were quoted as questioning the value of their kids speaking French (instead of English). As I pointed out in the preceding chapter, the article came as something of a shock for the French media, who had carefully constructed the Stastnys as model immigrants who had integrated successfully into the Francophone community. This notion of the Stastnys as model immigrants was based in large part on the brothers' own comments to the French media, where they invariably emphasized the progress that their families had made with their French.⁶⁶ Take comments made by Marian about his son and daughter: "ma fille et mon garçon ont maintenant beaucoup d'amis et ils parlent français couramment. Je suis fier de ma fille de sept ans. Elle fréquente l'école française et elle est déjà l'une des meilleures de sa classe."⁶⁷ Like the French media, Marian characterized his kids, by virtue of their facility with French, as essentially indistinguishable from their Québécois classmates. French, the city's sole public language, was the means through which Marian's daughter had integrated into school life. This was of course the exact educational programme that French unilingualists had strived to impose on Allophone immigrants since the late 1960s.

Even when Marian's son became embroiled in a Bill 101 controversy – he was expelled from his English school in apparent contravention of the provincial language charter – the Nordiques' star continued to emphasize the importance of French in his family's new life. He claimed, for example, that his son spoke “perfect” French but had asked himself for the opportunity to improve his English.⁶⁸ Marian's justification for his son attending English school was essentially that hockey players were subject to being traded or released at any time and as such were not assured to spend over three years in Québec (temporary residents spending three years or less in Québec were able to choose the schooling language of their choice for their children), was accepted unreservedly by the French media.⁶⁹

Barry Kliff's profile of the Stastny brothers in *The Gazette* challenged these narratives, and instead depicted the brothers as struggling with and ultimately rejecting aspects of the neo-nationalist language project: the irregularities with Marian's son's schooling were examined in detail, and Peter was quoted saying that French would never assume a central place in the brothers' lives.⁷⁰ Showing a keen understanding of the socio-political tensions that they had inflamed, the brothers disassociated themselves from Kliff's article (even though Kliff's evidence showing that the Stastnys had rejected French was circumstantial at best). Contacted the day after the article was published in *The Gazette*, Peter told *Dimanche-Matin* that Kliff's piece was “99% false;”⁷¹ Marian repeated this assertion to *Le Journal de Montréal*, with Peter dismissing the article as “un tissu de mensonges” (a pack of lies).⁷² The brothers also assassinated Kliff's character: Peter expressed dismay that “there are these kinds of journalists,” while his brother Marian exclaimed that “something isn't right with that guy.”⁷³ Given *The Gazette's*

reputation (among French speakers) for virulent francophobia, the Stastnys' denials were accepted more or less without reservation by the French media, even after the brothers eventually admitted that the quotes had been correctly attributed, in their proper context.⁷⁴

But ultimately the Stastnys were redeemed not through their denunciations of Kliff and his article but, once again, by embracing the French language and reaffirming its centrality to Québécois culture. Marian, citing his ownership of a local restaurant, rhetorically asked whether he would have invested in Québec City if he did not feel culturally secure there.⁷⁵ Marian clearly intended to present his restaurant as an important symbol. Since it was unfeasible – and indeed illegal after the passage of Bill 101 – to conduct commercial activity in Québec City primarily in English, he presented the restaurant as irrefutable evidence of his engagement with and acculturation into French speaking society.

The youngest brother, Anton, also discussed his relationship with the French language in a comment made to *Dimanche-Matin*:

Le français, c'est comme toute autre langue que vous devez apprendre si vous allez vous établir dans un pays dont vous ignorez le signification du moindre mot. Moi, je n'y vois rien d'inconvénient. Je parle français déjà et je considère que c'est un enrichissement inestimable que d'avoir eu la chance d'ajouter cet aspect à ma culture.⁷⁶

Through that utterance, Anton underscored the normality of speaking French in Québec. Rather than being “inconvenient,” learning French was depicted as a duty and a necessity. Anton unequivocally constructed French as the sole public language of Québec, highlighting the language's importance through the banality of its use. Learning French was no different than learning any other language in a foreign country: it was

presented as the key to negotiating quotidian life in Québec, as well as the medium through which acculturation occurred (these, of course, are the minimum aims of neo-nationalist language policies). Like other players before him, Anton foregrounded his own linguistic progress, claiming that he already spoke French. In other words, he presented himself as having fulfilled his obligation as a Québec resident; that the process left him enriched was the icing on the proverbial cake.

8.4 Defending the Team, Defending the Nation

The *Gazette* profile featuring the Stastnys was the most significant player challenge to the unilingual French status quo other than the comments made by Gerry Hart, Reggie Thomas, and Dave Farrish. Those three players questioned the Nordiques' direction by criticizing the club's alleged fixation with the French language and with fielding a roster composed primarily of Francophone players. Interestingly, Hart, Thomas, and Farrish were not always dissidents: before their parting comments, they, like their teammates, had made utterances that drew on nationalist discourse and associated themselves with French. Farrish, upon his arrival in Québec City, took care to emphasize his pre-existing knowledge of French, arguing that his acclimatization would be comparatively easy.⁷⁷ Hart meanwhile, who compromised his place on the roster by speaking out against the Nordiques' language policy, began his tenure in Québec City by making the following comment to *The Gazette*:

Since I've been here, I've developed a certain empathy toward the French position. I guess I lacked patience, but now I'm looking at it from the other side of the glass. Quebec, within the framework of Canada, is worthy of some special consideration and, maybe, special legislation to protect its identity. This could become an extinct culture.⁷⁸

In that quote, Hart reproduced many of the central assumptions of neo-nationalist identity politics. He constructed Québec's identity as unique and fundamentally distinct from the rest of Canada; furthermore, he argued that this identity was "French," and that it was in danger of extinction. Though Hart discussed Québec in a Canadian framework, he advocated "special consideration" or "special legislation" for the province, foreshadowing the intense constitutional debates about "distinct society" or "special status" that would dominate Canadian politics in the latter half of the 1980s.⁷⁹

These comments were forgotten in the wake of Hart, Thomas, and Farrish's subsequent criticisms. The players were, as I have shown, severely criticized by Francophone reporters, who wholeheartedly supported the Nordiques' French language policy and perceived preference for Francophone players. Fascinatingly, the media reaction was almost perfectly replicated by the Nordiques' players, both Francophone and Anglophone. Not a single player voiced anything close to public support for Hart, Thomas and Farrish's claims. In fact, some subtly suggested that Hart, Thomas, and Farrish, having failed to integrate into the province's cultural milieu, were at fault for their own unhappiness. This was accomplished in part through highlighting the struggles of Francophone players elsewhere in North America, the implication being that adjusting to a new language regime was a normal and uncontroversial process. Take the remark made by Robbie Ftorek, in response to Hart:

Je sais que pour plusieurs joueurs et leurs épouses, cette première saison à Québec n'a pas été facile mais il ne faut pas s'imaginer qu'un francophone qui arrive à Los Angeles ou ailleurs au Canada ou aux États-Unis, trouve la vie facile, au départ.

C'est une situation à laquelle il faudra nous adapter.⁸⁰

Ftorek's defence of the organization was unmistakable. By evoking English speaking locales such as Los Angeles, Ftorek defended the Nordiques' right to French unilingualism in the context of the English unilingualism that characterized the rest of the hockey world. Whereas Hart presented the Nordiques' language as questionable at best and deviant at worst, Ftorek underlined its normalcy: Anglophone players' difficulties were to be expected, and were no different than the struggles faced by Francophone players in Anglophone locales like Los Angeles. Ftorek concluded his comments by making clear that adapting to this situation was an imperative: it is something players *must* do. Hart's unhappiness, therefore, was chalked up to his own failings: it was due to a lack of integrative effort, not the Nordiques' language policy.

These comments suggested a discourse that positioned Anglophones (or Allophones) disadvantaged by neo-nationalist language legislation as responsible for their own hardships. This was confirmed by responses to Thomas and Farrish's allegations that the Nordiques' had systematically favoured Francophone players at the expense of Anglophones. Witness the denials made by Paul Baxter and Curt Brackenbury, both of whom had been cited favourably for having learned French during their tenures in Québec. Though both players had moved on (Brackenbury by then played for the Edmonton Oilers and Baxter for the Pittsburgh Penguins), both rejected Thomas and Farrish's claims of endemic Anglophone unhappiness in Québec City. Said Baxter:

J'ai toujours été traité royalement à Québec. Mais pour être heureux dans cette ville il te faut faire des efforts. Apprendre le français. Ainsi la vie devient plus agréable.

Bien sûr qu'il y avait des petits problèmes. Mais j'ai vu ça partout où j'ai joué. Il y en a chez toutes les équipes. Moi j'ai tenté dès mon arrivée de m'intégrer. C'est pour ça que j'étais vraiment heureux.⁸¹

Baxter explicitly linked good treatment, happiness, and integration as an Anglophone hockey player in Québec City with learning French. Baxter represented his successful tenure as a Nordique as a simple function of his ability to speak French: it was only after he made that effort that he was truly happy. The implication of this stance for Thomas and Farrish's complaints were clear. The problem was not with the Nordiques' policies but with the unhappy players themselves, for having failed to make the required effort to learn French (though Farrish, as I pointed out, claimed some knowledge of French at the beginning of his Nordiques' career). And though Brackenbury did not make this linkage himself, stating only that he was always very happy in Québec City, *Le Journal de Québec*, which printed his comments, did: "Brackenbury, on le sait, a été le hockeyeur Anglophone qui a fait le plus d'efforts pour s'intégrer à la communauté francophone..."⁸² Brackenbury's success was depicted as a function of his efforts to learn French: Thomas and Farrish's failure to feel comfortable in Québec was not a wider societal problem, but the end result of their own lack of effort.

A third player, goaltender Michel Dion, also reinforced this narrative. According to Dion, Québec City's unilingualism was a sociological and political fact. Linking the province's enduring Francophone character to Thomas and Farrish's maladjustment, Dion situated the controversy in the long social and political struggle to preserve the French language:

Je comprends fort bien que les joueurs anglophones à Québec sont mal 'couverts' par les journalistes mais ce serait la même chose pour un francophone ailleurs. Ce n'est pas la faute des Québécois. Ils ne peuvent pas s'exprimer en français. Comment voulez-vous que la radio ou la télévision les interviewent? C'est

d'ailleurs à eux de s'intégrer. Nous sommes ici chez nous et c'est notre culture. Nos ancêtres se sont battus pour ça. Et quand nous allons chez eux, nous essayons nous-mêmes de nous intégrer. Ils ne seraient pas malheureux s'ils apprenaient à parler le français.⁸³

Like his Anglophone teammates, Dion blamed Thomas and Farrish for their integration problems in Québec City. Identifying French as the essential fact of Québécois life – the thing for which his ancestors had fought – Dion argued that his former teammates' unhappiness was as a result of their failure to learn the province's public language. It was “up to them to integrate,” and Thomas and Farrish had failed in that endeavour. In contrasting their failure with Francophones' attempts at integration “chez eux” (in English speaking locales), Dion positioned life for English speakers in Québec City as a matter of effort and respect. The wider implications are clear: Dion implied that those unwilling or unable to speak French were bad citizens who were unwilling to integrate into the province's public culture, and who were disrespectful to the ancestral struggle to preserve the French language in North America.

Other Nordiques' players who spoke out against Thomas and Farrish defended both the team and its presumed policy (even though team representatives vigorously denied Thomas and Farrish's allegations). Ftorek, for example, declared that he had no problem if the Nordiques preferred Francophone players over Anglophones.⁸⁴ He in fact declared this policy to be perfectly normal, arguing that teams outside of Québec favoured Anglophones.⁸⁵ As I demonstrated in Chapter 5, these were the exact arguments used by neo-nationalist hockey journalists to normalize and justify the Nordiques' significant Francophone quotient: by underlining the plight of Francophone players outside of Québec, Ftorek argued in essence that a preference for Francophone employees was politically justified inside Québec because of the discrimination that

prevailed against them elsewhere on the continent. Other players reiterated this position. Dale Hoganson, for example, told *La Presse* that Thomas had left Québec City without “understanding the situation.” This comment was left uncontextualized, but coming as it did immediately after Ftorek’s contributions, Hoganson’s take should be understood in the same framework as Ftorek’s: Thomas had failed to grasp the historic discrimination of Francophone players outside Québec, and as a result did not understand the Nordiques’ justifiable desire to favour Francophone players over Anglophones.

Like Ftorek and Hoganson, Nordiques defenseman François Lacombe framed his response in the context of Anglophone privilege and the historical difficulties faced by Francophones in the NHL:

C’est curieux, en 13 années dans le hockey professionnel, je n’ai jamais entendu un francophone se plaindre de la sorte quand il a été obligé de s’expatrier aux États-Unis ou dans une autre ville canadienne anglaise où il n’était pas facile pour lui d’intégrer dans ce milieu...

Nous, ailleurs, il fallait se débrouiller seul pour organiser notre vie, contrairement aux joueurs anglophones qui arrivent à Québec, et au point de vue hockey, il arrivait souvent que les joueurs canadiens de langue française passent après un anglophone aux talents égaux.⁸⁶

First and foremost, Lacombe depicted his ex-teammates as ungrateful, delegitimizing their criticisms. Citing historical Francophone subordination, he argued that Francophone players had suffered silently through much stiffer challenges. Through these arguments, Lacombe legitimized both the Nordiques’ player recruitment policy and its alleged discrimination against Anglophones. Lacombe’s comments also, in a larger framework, legitimized similar policies in the province at large: if Francophone hockey players prospered in Québec City, then it could only be because neo-nationalist social and political reforms had empowered the Nordiques’ to reverse their historical subordination.

8.5 Summary

The relationship between NHL players and the Québec sport media was and is special; because of the province's social and political context, as well as the activism of the French sport media, players were expected to do more than repeat clichés in their public utterances. They were asked instead, by Francophone journalists, from 1979 to 1984, to provide commentary on a range of Québec's most pressing political issues. During the 1980 referendum on Québec independence, players, caught between their own consciences and the expectations foisted upon them by the media and their teams, opted to remain silent. Many Francophone players from the Canadiens and Nordiques were afforded the opportunity to pronounce their political views publicly during the referendum campaign. Indeed, those supporting independence were sure to be celebrated as neo-nationalist icons, but only two, Michel Goulet and Pierre Lacroix, ultimately chose to speak out (though the votes of others players became public).

In other contexts, especially in the course of discussions rooted more directly in the hockey universe, players in both Montréal and Québec City freely discussed matters that cut straight to the heart of debates about language, nation, and identity. Several Anglophone players, for example, made statements about the necessity of speaking French in Québec. These players confirmed French's status as the sole public language and the key to public life in the province. They depicted learning French as a normal and banal part of life in Québec; as workers plying their trade in the province, it was part of their job. The importance or utility of English or bilingualism was never discussed, leaving the province's new linguistic status quo – French unilingualism, protected by language legislation – unchallenged. Of course, there were dissident players who questioned this status quo. But three of them, the Stastny brothers, later disassociated

themselves from quotes questioning neo-nationalist language legislation, and reproduced the neo-nationalist discourse that proclaimed Québec to be a unilingual French speaking society. That the Stastnys were immigrants was also important: their public acceptance of the province's linguistic order legitimized the provisions of Bill 101 that regulated the language of schooling for young Allophones, furthering the notion that French was the sole language of immigrant integration.

Also voicing reservations were Gerry Hart, Reggie Thomas, and Dave Farrish, three ex-Nordique players dubious of the Nordiques' French-only language policy, and the team's perceived preference for Francophone players at the expense of Anglophones. Yet Nordiques players shouted down their former teammates, and, replicating the arguments of nationalist hockey journalists almost perfectly, firmly backed their team's orientation. They depicted unilingualism consistently as reasonable, normal, and justified in light of previous Francophone subordination. Furthermore, Hart, Thomas and Farrish were assailed for not having learned French, and their unhappiness was passed off as a function of their own lack of integrative effort. The treatment of Hart, Thomas, and Farrish exposed a certain degree of intolerance, a discourse where people who questioned the neo-nationalist project were shouted down and blamed for their own struggles. Neo-nationalism, through such a discourse, was presented as a sacred cow that could not be blamed for social ills. If Québec Anglophones and immigrants struggled with French unilingualism, it was because they weren't trying hard enough.

This speaks to the power of neo-nationalism in the early 1980s: it had become so deeply entrenched in Francophone society that public figures in the province – who may very well have not believed in what they were saying – had little choice than to speak

positively about it. The hockey players' utterances analyzed in this chapter suggest that some aspects of the neo-nationalist project were less controversial than others. The status of French as Québec's sole public language – and the language legislation that enshrined and protected this – was defended *ad infinitum*. But the case of the referendum in 1980 demonstrated that Québec independence was an altogether different proposition. Whereas players expertly, almost nonchalantly, defended French's dominance, they remained silent during the referendum, for the most part. This speaks to a lack of a societal consensus about independence; and indeed, by the end of their second term in office, even the PQ government was downplaying sovereignty in favour of the more nebulous goal of “national affirmation.”⁸⁷

8.6 Endnotes

¹ Ken Dryden, *The Game: A Thoughtful and Provocative Look at Life in Hockey* (Toronto: Macmillan of Canada, 1983): 20-21; Dryden recounted the same anecdote to Rick Salutin, who discussed it in: Rick Salutin, *Les Canadiens: A Play* (Vancouver: Talonbooks, 1977): 18-19

² Dryden, *The Game*: 24

³ Dryden, *The Game*: 25

⁴ Michael A. Robidoux, *Men at Play: A Working Understanding of Professional Hockey* (Montreal: McGill-Queen's University Press, 2001): 17.

⁵ David Whitson, “Circuits of Promotion: Media, Marketing and the Globalization of Sport,” in *Mediasport*, ed. Lawrence A. Wenner (London; New York: Routledge, 1998): 59

⁶ Richard Gruneau and David Whitson, *Hockey Night in Canada: Sport, Identities and Cultural Politics* (Toronto: Garamond Press, 1993): 80

⁷ Gruneau and Whitson, *Hockey Night in Canada*: 85

⁸ Bruce Kidd, *The Struggle for Canadian Sport* (Toronto; Buffalo: University of Toronto Press, 1996): 232-261.

⁹ Gordon W. Russell's survey of teenaged hockey players in Canada suggested that NHL players toiling on local teams, frequently mentioned by the media, were more likely to be adopted as heroes than other players regardless of skill. See Gordon W. Russell, "Hero Selection by Canadian Ice Hockey Players: Skill or Aggression," *Canadian Journal of Applied Sport Sciences* 4, No. 4 (1979): 309-313.

¹⁰ This is not to say that the presence of reporters in the locker room is liked by athletes. In fact, athletes have tended to consider reporters in the locker room as invaders of their domain. There have been periodic confrontations between reporters and players in the locker room, including some incidences between male players and female reporters. See Linda K. Fuller, "Reporters' Rights to the Locker Room," *Gender Issues* 12, No. 1 (1992): 39-45.

¹¹ Mark Douglas Lowes, *Inside the Sports Pages: Work Routines, Professional Ideologies, and the Manufacture of Sports News* (Toronto: University of Toronto Press, 1999): 34-35.

¹² Professional sports franchises have in the past revoked access to their players from reporters who have written stories deemed to have portrayed the team in a negative light. See Lowes, *Inside the Sports Pages*: 85-87.

¹³ Fines for not speaking to the media have been especially common in the National Football League and the National Basketball Association. See Lowes, *Inside the Sports Pages*: 85-87.

¹⁴ Kelly L. Poniatowski, "NBC's Portrayal of U.S. and Canadian Hockey Players on the Olympic Stage: A Textual Analysis of Gender, Race, and Nationality Issues in the Commentary," PhD diss., The Pennsylvania State University, 2008: 146 -155.

¹⁵ Poniatowski found in his analysis of the 2006 Olympic hockey coverage that players, regardless of nationality, were constructed in this manner. See Poniatowski, *NBC's Portrayal*: 146-155.

¹⁶ Wayne Scanlan, "Blackhawks in Canadian Hinterland: Millionaires Behaving Properly," *Ottawa Citizen*, 10 December 2008: <http://communities.canada.com/ottawacitizen/blogs/hockeyscanner/archive/2008/12/10/blackhawks-in-canadian-hinterland-millionaires-behaving-properly.aspx> (accessed 17 April 2011).

¹⁷ "Avery Suspended Indefinitely for Comments Related to Ex-Girlfriend," *ESPN*, 03 December 2008: <http://sports.espn.go.com/nhl/news/story?id=3740267> (accessed 17 April 2011).

¹⁸ Hockey clichés have become so familiar to hockey fans that they became the basis for an award winning commercial for a sporting goods outlet. See "Sportchek Hockey Talk Commercial," *YouTube*: <http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=N63LeOyB8x8> (accessed 17 April 2011).

¹⁹ Canadian Press, "Gionta becomes Montreal Canadiens' second American captain, 28th in team history," *The Hockey News*, 29 September 2010: <http://www.thehockeynews.com/articles/35331-Montreal-Canadiens-name-Brian-Gionta-captain-Gill-Markov-remain-alternates.html> (accessed 17 April 2011).

²⁰ "Brian Gionta Interview," *Canadian Broadcasting Corporation*, 14 October 2010: <http://www.cbc.ca/homerun/2010/10/14/jennifer-abel-2/> (accessed 17 April 2011).

²¹ Jack Todd, "Jack Todd: Koivu Was Chased out of Montreal," *The Gazette*, 24 January 2011: <http://www.montrealgazette.com/life/food-wine/Jack+Todd+Koivu+chased+Montreal/4153967/story.html> (accessed 17 April 2011).

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- ²² André Picard, "Linguistic Slapshot Hits Habs' Captain," *The Globe and Mail*, 14 September 1995: C8.
- ²³ Jean-Pierre Augustin & Christian Poirier, "Les territoires symboliques du sport: le hockey comme élément identitaire du Québec," *Bulletin d'histoire politique* 9, No. 1 (2000): 117.
- ²⁴ Ghyslain Luneau, "Lafleur n'a pas été épargné par les percepteurs d'impôt," *Le Journal de Québec*, 20 December 1980: 60.
- ²⁵ *Le Soleil*, Editorial Cartoon, 02 September 1982: A14. Reproduced with the permission of the Bibliothèque et Archives nationales du Québec.
- ²⁶ Réjean Tremblay, "Serge Savard Inc." *L'actualité*, March 1979: 55-61.
- ²⁷ Jean Beaunoyer, "'J'ai dit un gros merci à Bobby Hull, il nous a mis au monde,'" *La Presse*, 10 January 1981: F2. Translation: I'm a frog and proud to be one. I'm a nationalist but not a sovereigntist and I'm in favour of Bill 101 except for a few clauses...
- ²⁸ Jean Beaunoyer, "Cloutier super-star," *La Presse*, 13 October 1979: D1. Brackets mine. Translation: Cloutier chose to face the music and I would say, to become a prophet in his country. Not like Béliveau and Lafleur, who chose an English lawyer and tried to send his son to an English school, but could not because of Bill 101.
- ²⁹ Marcel Blanchard, "La LNH plie face à Goulet et Lacroix," *La Presse*, 20 September 1979: C4. Blanchard revealed in his article that Goulet and Lacroix were sent telegrams of congratulations by various nationalist organizations praising them for their stand.
- ³⁰ Albert Ladouceur, "Lacroix et Goulet sont comblés," *Le Journal de Québec*, 26 September 1979: 76.
- ³¹ Paul-André Linteau, et al., *Histoire du Québec contemporain* (Montreal: Boréal Express, 1986), 2: 656.
- ³² Réjean Tremblay, "Les grandes vedettes du sport diront-elles OUI?" *La Presse*, 17 November 1979: A1.
- ³³ Réjean Tremblay, "Les grandes vedettes du sport diront-elles OUI?" *La Presse*, 17 November 1979: A2.
- ³⁴ Réjean Tremblay, "Les grandes vedettes du sport diront-elles OUI?" *La Presse*, 17 November 1979: A2. Translation: We will meet with the players and reflect on the situation; we would prefer not to mix sports and politics which is why you will never see a politician on the Colisée's ice for an official ceremony. Perhaps we will ask our players to remain discreet, but I'm not sure, we will talk about it.
- ³⁵ Réjean Tremblay, "Les grandes vedettes du sport diront-elles OUI?" *La Presse*, 17 November 1979: A2. Translation: Our players will act according to their sense of duty, we do not intend to make any recommendations whatsoever; however, I would point out that professional hockey players under the pressure of a regular season and playoffs, faced with a busy travel schedule, have little time to devote to politics.
- ³⁶ Gilles St-Jean, "Des athlètes pour le OUI... qui ne peuvent pas tous se prononcer," *Dimanche-Matin*, 18 May 1980: 2.

³⁷ Réjean Tremblay, “La fièvre référendaire gagne le Sanctuaire des Glorieux,” *La Presse*, 22 March 1980: C1.

³⁸ Alain Bouchard, “Le OUI en avance chez les dieux du stade,” *Le Soleil*, 12 April 1980: B3.

³⁹ Réjean Tremblay, “La fièvre référendaire gagne le Sanctuaire des Glorieux,” *La Presse*, 22 March 1980: C1.

⁴⁰ Réjean Tremblay, “La fièvre référendaire gagne le Sanctuaire des Glorieux,” *La Presse*, 22 March 1980: C1.

⁴¹ Alain Bouchard, “Le OUI en avance chez les dieux du stade,” *Le Soleil*, 12 April 1980: B3. Translation: it’s less and less certain that I will vote that way.

⁴² Alain Bouchard, “Le OUI en avance chez les dieux du stade,” *Le Soleil*, 12 April 1980: B3.

⁴³ Bertrand was at the forefront of the efforts to enlist Cloutier for the pro-independence forces. Réjean Lacombe, “Au jour le jour,” *Le Soleil*, 13 May 1980: B2.

⁴⁴ André Leclair, “Oui ou non? Réal ‘Buddy’ Cloutier hésite encore à se prononcer,” *Le Journal de Québec*, 24 April 1980: 7. Translation: You know very well that it’s not the same for me as with others... when I will open my mouth about on this issue the journalists will have their pencils ready.

⁴⁵ André Leclair, “Oui ou non? Réal ‘Buddy’ Cloutier hésite encore à se prononcer,” *Le Journal de Québec*, 24 April 1980: 7. Translation: I cannot take sides because, you see, I would satisfy 50% and dissatisfy 50%, and my opinion would be met with the same divisions that we see in the polls now. As a professional hockey player, I need the support of all fans, not just a minority. I can’t alienate some of my fans because of an issue that, in the end, has nothing to do with hockey.

⁴⁶ Alain Bouchard, “Le OUI en avance chez les dieux du stade,” *Le Soleil*, 12 April 1980: B3. Translation: In Québec it still is not well accepted for athletes to take public positions on these kinds of questions. It’s odd when you realize that in the United States, this has become commonplace. Here, the reflex is “shut up and play” but I think this situation is beginning to change.

⁴⁷ Réjean Tremblay, “Qui vaut la peine d’être sollicité?” *La Presse*, 13 May 1980: C3. Translation: I have already been a symbol in a turbulent past and now I want to vote quietly like any other citizen.

⁴⁸ Réjean Tremblay, “Qui vaut la peine d’être sollicité?” *La Presse*, 13 May 1980: C3

⁴⁹ Gilles Pilon, “L’heure du choix,” *Le Journal de Montréal*, 18 May 1980: 5. There was no shortage of athletes who pronounced themselves for independence. Arguably the most famous ones other than Goulet and Lacroix (and Mario Tremblay, Bunny Larocque, and Normand Dupont) were Jacques and Raymond Rougeau, scions of a prominent pro wrestling and sports promotion family, who later achieved worldwide fame in the World Wrestling Federation. Serendipitously, Jacques Rougeau would play a character called “The Mountie” in the early 1990s – one of the very symbols of the country he ostensibly rejected in 1980.

⁵⁰ André Leclair, “Ouis athlétiques!” *Le Journal de Québec*, 20 May 1980: 6

⁵¹ André Leclair, “Ouis athlétiques!” *Le Journal de Québec*, 20 May 1980: 6. Translation: In 1979, I was humiliated to learn that to play hockey in Québec City for the NHL’s Québec Nordiques, I had to sign a

contract redacted in English. With Pierre Lacroix, I undertook the necessary measures for my Francophone rights to be recognized, at least in Québec. It was then that I realized that Quebecers did not have the same rights as Canadians. I will vote ‘YES’ in the referendum, so that Québec can finally achieve equal status with Canada.

⁵² Réjean Tremblay, “Qui se souvient?” *La Presse*, 01 November 1980: F2. Translation: they will be marked by their decision for the rest of their careers.

⁵³ Réjean Tremblay, “Un habitant qui a dit oui – mais au hockey,” *Perspectives*, 07 February 1981: 7. Translation: I am the son of a farmer and I became aware that the government had passed good laws for the protection of farmers. In reviewing its others policies, I decided to trust it in the constitutional domain as well; it was a personal decision and I do not regret taking it at all.

⁵⁴ Albert Ladouceur, “Curt Brackenbury, le portrait-robot des Nordiques,” *Le Journal de Québec*, 24 September 1979: 59.

⁵⁵ Albert Ladouceur, ““Je me contenterai de stopper les rondelles,”” *Le Journal de Montréal*, 07 October 1979: 70.

⁵⁶ “Réal Cloutier de nouveau blessé,” *Dimanche-Matin*, 07 October 1979: 56.

⁵⁷ Canadian Press, “Robbie Ftorek, la nouvelle idole des Nordiques,” *Le Devoir*, 30 October 1979: 20.

⁵⁸ Albert Ladouceur, “Les héros d’un soir,” *Le Journal de Québec*, 29 April 1981: 63; Maurice Dumas, “Peter Stastny: un joueur comblé,” *Le Soleil*, 10 June 1981: D1.

⁵⁹ Albert Ladouceur, “Cloutier, invité de Jasmin,” *Le Journal de Québec*, 22 February 1980: 55.

⁶⁰ Ghyslain Luneau, “J’ai vite réalisé les avantages à parler le français,” *Le Journal de Montréal*, 26 January 1980: 65.

⁶¹ Bernard Brisset, “Il faudra s’y faire: Shutt se sent Québécois pure laine!” *La Presse*, 15 January 1982: Sports section, 2. Canadiens’ forward Steve Shutt claimed to speak French in the summer on fishing trips with Francophone friends, but to lack the necessary vocabulary to give interviews in French.

⁶² Claude Larochelle, “Larivière, un Anglophone bien dans sa peau à Québec,” *Le Soleil*, 22 December 1979: F1; Canadian Press, “Ryan Walter fait des progrès en français,” *Le Soleil*, 03 December 1983: C3.

⁶³ Albert Ladouceur, “Plein de bonne volonté,” *Le Journal de Québec*, 09 October 1980: 82; Jean Beaunoyer, ““Un noir ne peut pas avoir Guy Lafleur pour idole,”” *La Presse*, 14 November 1980: B3; Bernard Brisset, “Wickenheiser bien résigné à patienter,” *La Presse*, 30 December 1980: D1; Maurice Dumas, “Moller a hâte d’être Québécois,” *Le Soleil*, 11 June 1981: C1; Claude Bédard, “David Shaw n’avait pas pensé à Québec,” *Le Journal de Québec*, 10 June 1982: 74; François Béliveau, “Rick Lapointe croit à sa nouvelle équipe,” *La Presse*, 05 August 1983: Sports section, 16.

⁶⁴ Bernard Brisset, “Wickenheiser bien résigné à patienter,” *La Presse*, 30 December 1980: D1. Translation: I came here with the positive attitude of a person anxious to meet people and integrate into the milieu.

⁶⁵ Maurice Dumas, “Moller a hâte d’être Québécois,” *Le Soleil*, 11 June 1981: C1

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- ⁶⁶ Claude Cadorette, "Peter Stastny, une force de la nature," *Le Journal de Québec*, 25 March 1982: 79; Albert Ladouceur, "Marian analyse sévèrement sa première saison," *Le Journal de Québec*, 05 April 1982: 71.
- ⁶⁷ Claude Cadorette, "Les enfants de Marian Stastny lui ont reproché d'avoir déserté," *Le Journal de Montréal*, 19 November 1981: 125. Translation: My daughter and my son now have many friends and they speak French fluently. I am proud of my seven year old daughter. She attends a French school and is already one of the best in the class.
- ⁶⁸ André Bellemare, "Marian et la loi 101," *La Presse*, 30 October 1982: E2.
- ⁶⁹ Albert Ladouceur, "Marian Stastny aux prises avec la loi 101," *Le Journal de Montréal*, 29 October 1982: 62.
- ⁷⁰ Barry Kliff, "Quebec No Paradise for Stastnys," *The Gazette*, 06 November 1982: G1.
- ⁷¹ Michel Lemieux, "'C'est faux à 99%,'" *Dimanche-Matin*, 07 November 1982: 42.
- ⁷² Claude Cadorette, "'Des faussetés,'" *Le Journal de Montréal*, 07 November 1982: 67.
- ⁷³ Michel Lemieux, "'C'est faux à 99%,'" *Dimanche-Matin*, 07 November 1982: 42.
- ⁷⁴ Canadian Press, "Peter Stastny affirme avoir été bien cité," *Le Journal de Montréal*, 11 November 1982: 111; "Stastny Now Saying He Wasn't Quoted," *The Gazette*, 10 November 1982: E2. Only one article in the French press questioned the Stastnys sincerity: Yvon Pedneault, "Les gens de Québec devront juger de la sincérité des Stastny," *Le Journal de Montréal*, 09 November 1982: 84.
- ⁷⁵ André Bellemare, "Les frères Stastny réagissent violemment à l'article de *The Gazette*," *Le Devoir*, 08 November 1982: 10.
- ⁷⁶ Michel Lemieux, "'Qu'est-ce que c'est que cette histoire?'" *Dimanche-Matin*, 07 November 1982: 43. Translation: French is like any other language you must learn if you establish yourself in a country where you do not know the meaning of a single word. I don't see anything inconvenient [about learning French]. I already speak French and I consider it an enriching addition to my own culture.
- ⁷⁷ Maurice Dumas, "Farrish prêt à relever le défi d'une jeune équipe," *Le Soleil*, 21 September 1979: C2.
- ⁷⁸ Michael Farber, "Skate is on the Other Foot in Quebec City," *The Gazette*, 05 January 1980: 61.
- ⁷⁹ Kenneth McRoberts, *Quebec: Social Change and Political Crisis*, 3rd ed. (Toronto: McClelland & Stewart, 1993): 396-404.
- ⁸⁰ Claude Cadorette, "Selon Ftorek, on n'a pas éliminé le problème," *Le Journal de Montréal*, 14 May 1980: 123. Translation: I know that for several players and their spouses, the first season in Québec City is not easy but we must not forget that a Francophone that arrives in Los Angeles or elsewhere in Canada or the United States finds the life easy at first. It's a situation we must adapt to.
- ⁸¹ Michel Lemieux, "Le racisme n'a pas toujours la même odeur," *Dimanche-Matin*, 05 October 1980: 50. Translation: I was always treated royally in Québec City. But to be happy in this city you have to make an

effort. Learn French. After that, life becomes more enjoyable. Sure there were little problems. I've seen the same everywhere I've played. That's why I tried to integrate myself upon my arrival. That's why I was truly happy [in Québec City].

⁸² Claude Cadorette, "Les Nordiques Anglophobes: 'de la bouille pour les chats,'" *Le Journal de Québec*, 11 October 1980: 66. Translation: Brackenbury, we all know, was the Anglophone hockey player who made the most effort to integrate into the Francophone community...

⁸³ François Béliveau, "Dion: 'Ils ne seraient pas malheureux s'ils apprenaient le français,'" *La Presse*, 27 September 1980: F14. I understand very well that English players in Québec are not well covered by journalists, but it would be the same for a Francophone elsewhere. That's not the fault of Quebecers. They can't speak French. How can radio or television interview them? It's up to them to integrate. This is our homeland and our culture. Our ancestors fought for this. When we go to their homelands, we try our best to integrate. They wouldn't be as unhappy if they learned to speak French.

⁸⁴ Alain Bouchard, "Accusations de Thomas: plusieurs joueurs surpris," *Le Soleil*, 27 September 1980: B1.

⁸⁵ François Béliveau, "Dion: 'Ils ne seraient pas malheureux s'ils apprenaient le français,'" *La Presse*, 27 September 1980: F14.

⁸⁶ Canadian Press, "Racisme: des joueurs répliquent," *Le Soleil*, 01 October 1980: C2. Translation: It's curious, in 13 years of professional hockey, I never heard a Francophone complain this way when he was forced to move to the United States or to another English Canadian city where integration was difficult. We have had to fend for ourselves in organizing our lives, unlike English players who come to Québec, and from a hockey point of view, many French language players have been passed up in favour of English players of equal talent.

⁸⁷ Kenneth McRoberts, *Misconceiving Canada: The Struggle for National Unity* (Toronto: Oxford University Press, 1997): 178.

9 *Prolongation*: Epilogue and Conclusion

The Québec Nordiques no longer exist. Unable to find local private sector investors, Marcel Aubut, who in 1988 became the team's principal owner, rejected a bailout offer from the provincial government and sold the franchise to a group from Denver in 1995.¹ The franchise relocated to Colorado and rechristened itself the Colorado Avalanche, winning the Stanley Cup in its first year in Denver with a roster composed almost entirely of players who had finished the preceding season in Québec City. However, the dream of NHL hockey in Québec City has, in recent years, been resuscitated. In September, 2010, between 75,000 and 100,000 residents of Québec City, clad in Nordiques paraphernalia, attended a rally to show support for the return of an NHL team to the city.² Yet without the emergence of a deep-pocketed owner and a new arena to replace the creaking Colisée, the return of the Nordiques remains a pipe dream at the time of this writing.

Meanwhile, the Canadiens remain one of the NHL's bedrock franchises. Though the team is no longer the on-ice juggernaut of decades past, it has become a cash cow since leaving the cozy confines of the Forum for a larger arena: *Forbes* ranked the Canadiens as the third most valuable NHL franchise in 2010, and the sale of the team that year for \$575 million, once again to members of the Molson family, was the richest in the NHL's history.³ The team's popularity in Québec remains as strong as ever: through the team's broadcast contract with *Réseau des sports*, a French language sports network, the Canadiens are ubiquitous throughout the province. All signs point to the Canadiens' continuing popularity in Québec.

Looking back from 2011, the Canadiens' success and the Nordiques' demise seem preordained. While true in hindsight, the events that transpired from 1979 to 1984 belie this interpretation of the past. During those five years, the Canadiens and Nordiques were embroiled in an intense competition for the Québec marketplace. Limited by the terms of the NHL's merger agreement with its erstwhile competitor, the World Hockey Association (WHA), which denied them access to television for the first five years of their NHL existence, the Nordiques, using easily understood symbols and discourses disseminated through the medium of Québec's French language newspapers, directed their appeal to Québec nationalists. In this sense, they were remarkably successful, though it is difficult to pinpoint exactly to what extent. *La Presse* scribe Réjean Tremblay told CBC Radio in 1982 that the Canadiens' and Nordiques' support divided almost perfectly along political and linguistic lines: "let's say the [Parti Québécois] is blue, and the Liberal Party is red. If you take the political map and put it on the map we had at *La Presse* with the teams' support, blue for the Nordiques and red for the Canadiens, it's exactly the same."⁴ Tremblay's declaration has to be taken with a grain of salt – no matter the team's appeal, it is difficult to envisage PQ-voting districts in the east end of Montréal overwhelmingly supporting the Nordiques – but it speaks to the inroads made by the Nordiques among Francophones (who comprised the PQ's core support) in Québec.

The Canadiens admitted as much. In 1983, immediately after the hiring of Serge Savard as Canadiens general manager, Ronald Corey, the team's president, confessed to the Canadian Press that "il n'y a pas de doute que les Nordiques étaient plus proches de la clientèle francophone."⁵ There is ample evidence, both anecdotal and scientific, to

confirm this. The *La Presse* map to which Tremblay alluded showed strong Nordiques support across the province, especially in those regions inhabited by Francophones who had voted for the PQ in the 1976 election.⁶ Commenting on the local support that turned out to root for the Nordiques in games against the Canadiens at the Forum, Tim Burke, *The Gazette's* acerbic columnist, joked that the Canadiens' home games against the Nordiques were now like road games "because of the narrow nationalism so prevalent in the city these days."⁷ A 1984 study conducted by *Le Soleil* and a Québec-based behavioural science organization suggested that though the Canadiens remained the province's most popular hockey team overall, the Nordiques were the most popular team in much of Québec's nationalist heartland.⁸ However, this same study also suggested that the Canadiens, after hiring Corey, Savard, and other visible francophones, were on their way to re-establishing their supremacy. Interpreting the results of this study, Jacques Thibeault, a physical education professor at the Université de Québec à Chicoutimi, explained that "Montréal cesse d'être une organisation juive: on remplace Irving Grundman par Ronald Corey et Serge Savard. L'image nationaliste cesse de jouer en faveur des Nordiques."⁹

Thibeault's assertion hints at the complex interaction between nationality, language, ethnicity, and hockey in Québec, which I probed in this dissertation. Sport, to borrow Benedict Anderson's phraseology, is one of the primary media through which the nation is imagined. Attending a sporting event, or reading about sport in the newspaper, to appropriate Michael Billig's argument, is one of the mundane, "banal" everyday practices through which ideas about the nation are reproduced and disseminated. Thus, sport is often infused with discourses of the national, and researchers can glean valuable

insights about the construction of nations, nationalisms, and national identities by studying sport. This was the purpose of this dissertation: to analyse the discourse produced by the newspaper coverage of the Canadiens and Nordiques, unpack its meanings, and consider these in the context of the neo-nationalist socio-political project of the late 1970s and early 1980s. My ultimate purpose was to construct a cultural account of Québec nationalism through the lens of the reporting of professional hockey in the 1980s.

Such an endeavour is impossible without an appreciation for the Canadiens' historical significance and centrality in the imagining of the French Canadian nation. With a monopoly on the best Francophone hockey players, the Canadiens became a symbol of this nation, and the team's numerous victories were celebrated as manifestations of French Canadian supremacy. The apogee of this relationship between polity and hockey team was in 1955, when the Canadiens' fans rioted in the streets of Montréal to protest a suspension levied against their hero, Maurice "Rocket" Richard, an event that both at the time and after the fact was assigned nationalist significance.

Retrospectively, most observers have understood the Richard Riot as one of first stirrings of the Quiet Revolution, the name given to the profound social, political, and economic changes that deeply transformed Québec in the 1960s. Among the most important metamorphoses prompted by the Quiet Revolution's reforms was a shift in national identity. Where Québec Francophones traditionally described themselves as French Canadians – conservative, agrarian, Catholic, content to struggle for *survivance* at the periphery of the Canadian federation – the crucible of the Quiet Revolution forged a new brand of nationalism, called neo-nationalism. Rooted in the urban experience, neo-

nationalism emphasized the French language and the Québec state (which many nationalists hoped would eventually become sovereign). Rather than a minority struggling against the entire weight of English speaking Canada, neo-nationalists understood themselves as a majority within the borders of Québec, which became the new site of action; in short, neo-nationalists imagined themselves as *Québécois* rather than French Canadians. Though significantly different from the radical nationalism alongside which it grew, neo-nationalism appropriated much of its rhetoric, imagining Québec as an internal colony, oppressed linguistically, politically, and economically by English Canadians (especially those who lived inside Québec itself). For nationalists, the solution to these problems was decolonization – Francophone economic control, the dominance of the French language, and political sovereignty for the Québec state. To these ends, provincial governments during the 1960s and 70s enacted a series of laws strengthening French’s status at the expense of English and, in 1980, held a referendum that proposed Québec’s eventual independence. Though this last initiative ultimately failed, neo-nationalism was entrenched by 1980 as Québec’s dominant political ideology.

Québec changed, but the Canadiens did not change with it. The club in fact reflected the power relations that neo-nationalists hoped to overturn, with Francophone labour (the players) toiling for Anglophone bosses (coaches, the front office, owners) in an English speaking environment. It took the arrival of the Nordiques in the NHL, and the intervention of the French hockey media to make the Canadiens’ stasis clear. Founded as a self-consciously Québécois project and sporting uniforms based on the design of the Québec flag, the Nordiques from their inception sought to stack their roster and front office with the best Francophone talent available to them; this eventuated

during a decade where the Canadiens' monopoly over Francophone talent, guaranteed by NHL statutes, came to an end. In the Nordiques, Francophone hockey reporters – practicing an activist, unapologetically political, and nationalist brand of journalism called *journalisme de combat* – saw the possibility of a hockey paradigm different than that offered by the Canadiens, one where the status quo ushered in by the neo-nationalist project was reflected in the world of hockey.

The Nordiques, in their first year in the NHL, appeared to confirm these hopes. The team's hand forced by a media campaign against the use of English at the Colisée, the Nordiques eliminated English language public announcements in 1980. This decision was celebrated by journalists who understood French unilingualism, through a neo-nationalist lens, as the only method that would ensure the survival and flourishing of the French language. The Nordiques' decision mimicked Bill 101, the language legislation passed by the PQ in 1977 that confirmed French as the only official language of Québec, imposed restrictions on the public use of English, and officially established the French language as the primary signpost of a "civic" Québec identity. In this, the Nordiques were applauded for having brought the neo-nationalist language legislation to the field of hockey. Conversely, the Canadiens, who resisted pressure to follow the Nordiques' lead, instead maintaining their long-practiced custom of bilingual announcements, were attacked as a regressive and "Anglophone" institution. Through the French media's coverage of the Nordiques' and Canadiens' language policies, French was reconfirmed as the *only* legitimate public language in Québec, while English was constructed as a vestige of colonialism and an impediment to the collective self-actualization of the Québécois people.

The French media also focused attention on the ethno-linguistic composition of the two teams. The Nordiques were praised for their Francophone management, Francophone coaches, and a stated policy that favoured, assuming equal talent, Francophone players. With these policies, the Nordiques were represented as having gone *beyond* neo-nationalist legislation by conducting a *francophonisation* – a policy of preferential hiring ensuring the dominance of French (and Francophones) in the workplace – of their hockey club. Accusations levelled by former Nordiques, alleging systemic anti-Anglophone discrimination and Anglophone unhappiness, only exacerbated this positive impression. Meanwhile the Canadiens, who after the hiring of Bob Berry as head coach in 1981 had an Anglophone owner, general manager, head coach, and, in the estimation of some journalists, an increasingly Anglophone player roster, were severely criticized for failing to follow the Nordiques' lead; the Canadiens had, suggested their critics, forgotten Québec. It was only after the purge of the Canadiens' front office and the appointments of a Francophone president (Corey) and general manager (Savard) that this criticism ceased. The discourse produced by the French media's coverage of the Nordiques' and Canadiens' personnel decisions provides valuable insight about the nature of Québécois identity: it implies that neo-nationalists, despite their emphasis on language and territory as the touchstones of Québécois identity, continued to hold notions of identity rooted in ethnic particularism.

Exclusivist discourses of identity also permeated the French media's coverage of the Canadiens' and Nordiques' playing styles. The Nordiques were extolled for playing a fast, skillful, attacking style of hockey that, throughout the Canadiens' glory days, had been identified as the "traditional" French Canadian style. Through the practice of this

style, the Nordiques were judged to embody Francophones' inborn distinctiveness vis-à-vis English Canada, a notion deepened by the fact that its foremost practitioners were Francophones and Europeans players (Europeans were long described as Francophones' stylistic cousins). The Canadiens, in contrast, were pilloried for deviating from this style and practicing a "foreign" – in other words, English Canadian – style. This lapse was represented not just as an aesthetic consideration: according to this discourse, the Canadiens' "new" brand of hockey stripped the team's Francophone players of their individuality, reduced them to automata, and prevented them from expressing themselves in ways that came naturally to members of the Québécois nation. Herein, it became clear that neo-nationalists, drawing on older identity discourses, continued to imagine Québécois identity on the basis of biology and "race." This makes crystal clear what the nation is, but also what the nation is *not*: ethnic discourses of identity unequivocally excludes those unable to claim French Canadian lineage from the Québécois nation.

These discourses emerged, and were imbued with added power, because of the cultural salience of sport and the complex interactions between sport and the nation. Despite ingrained assumptions that sport and politics do not or should not interact, these two entities have done exactly that over and over again in Québec, specifically as it relates to hockey. Given its cultural importance, hockey, particularly its "major league," mediated variety, has served as an exemplary vector for Québécois nationalisms and national identities. The rivalry between the Canadiens and Nordiques – especially considering the divergent politics that those teams came to represent – was in effect a tailor-made vehicle for the promotion of neo-nationalism, as well as for the extension of the neo-nationalist project into the domain of professional hockey. But it also provided

space for challenging neo-nationalism as well. The constructions of nation that emerged from the French media's coverage of the Canadiens and Nordiques were vociferously and bitterly rejected by Anglophone hockey journalists at *The Gazette*, Montréal's only English language daily. In fact, through its promotion of the Canadiens' bilingualism and the team's status as a Canadian institution, *Gazette* journalists rejected Québécois identity paradigms in favour of a pan-Canadian frame of reference. Using, like their Francophone colleagues, hockey coverage as a platform for wider social and political discussions, *Gazette* sports journalists fulminated against neo-nationalism, which they constructed as a bigoted, racist ideology that was responsible for the exodus of Québec's Anglophone community, the subordination of Allophones, and the overall decline of Montréal.

Media discourses were not only generated by journalists, but by Canadiens and Nordiques players themselves through their public utterances. Constantly asked by Francophone journalists to comment about political issues that had impacted the hockey world, Nordiques and Canadiens players, both Francophone and Anglophone, consistently reproduced neo-nationalist assumptions about language, nation, and identity. For example, they confirmed the province's linguistic status quo by openly depicting French as the sole public language and key to quotidian life in Québec, and accepted the Nordiques' presumed *francophonisation* as a normal and justifiable policy in light of past discrimination against Francophones. Nordiques players were also instrumental in delegitimizing the dissenting voices of ex-teammates; if players were unhappy in Québec City, the general consensus claimed, it was through a lack of integrative effort and not because of flawed policies or ideologies. Despite their public backing for some of the central tenets of neo-nationalism, when Francophone players were afforded the chance to

participate actively in neo-nationalist struggle by playing an active role in the 1980 referendum on Québec independence, they chose to remain silent. The two who did speak in favour of independence, later distanced themselves from their words.

These discourses reveal that the neo-nationalism had, by the early 1980s, become entrenched. This success is of course relative. Hardened nationalists of that era would have pointed to the constitutional “humiliation” of 1982, where a new Canadian constitution was concluded without Québec’s signature, as evidence that Québec would forever remain in a subordinate position unless it won independence.¹⁰ And the PQ suffered a stunning defeat at the polls in 1985.¹¹ However, at the same time, the media coverage of the *Canadiens* and *Nordiques* demonstrates that, in the early 1980s, political discussions, even those about hockey, were filtered through a neo-nationalist lens. This was as true of the English media as its French counterpart: even *The Gazette’s* anti-nationalist rhetoric assumed, and then dissented against, neo-nationalism’s ascendancy. The definition of “power” favoured by John E. Richardson’s method of critical discourse analysis, borrowed from the social theorist Stephen Lukes, holds that “A exercises power over B when A affects B in a manner contrary to B’s interests.”¹² This definition does not compliment my findings perfectly; after all, the *Nordiques* eliminated English at the Colisée in order to appeal in better fashion to the Québec market and to make larger profits, something that was entirely in the team’s interests; likewise, the *Canadiens* made a public show of francizing their front office for these same financial reasons. But if not for neo-nationalism’s power, these ends would certainly have been pursued in drastically different ways. The institution of French unilingualism at the Colisée would have become a pragmatic and less impactful initiative, rather than a socially and politically

relevant one. There would not have been any urgency for the Canadiens to recruit Francophones, other than out of a vague sense of local pride (which counts for little at the box office). And there would have been no chance of Anglophone players lining up to extol the virtues of the French language; without the power exerted by neo-nationalism, questions about language would have been brushed off with a minimum of fuss.

The power of these discourses is also apparent in their ability to normalize, to a certain extent, social exclusion. The media's coverage of the Canadiens and Nordiques exposed deep schisms in Québec society. The most obvious cleavages brought to the fore were between Francophones and Anglophones, with Allophones situated somewhere uncomfortably in the middle. The articles I analyzed about the Canadiens and Nordiques generated a discourse that normalized a notion of Québécois identity that excluded Anglophones. This identity was organized, primarily, around the French language; and indeed, it is the common use of French that forms the basis of the civic identity that neo-nationalists have emphasized.¹³ Through the French media's coverage of the Nordiques and Canadiens, language itself became a tool of social exclusion. Consider the French media's defense of the Nordiques' language policy: it applauded the affirmation of French through the elimination of English, legitimizing and normalizing legislation (Bill 101) that put severe restrictions on the use of English. English, the preferred language of a large minority of Québec's citizens, was identified as an impediment to the decolonization of the Québécois people; the implication is that the Québécois people were those who had been disadvantaged in the past by the use of English. But on the other hand, the French media's coverage of the Czechoslovak Stastny brothers' relationship to the French language and Québec society suggests that a social space for

non-native French speakers was indeed available: the brothers' Québécois identity was enthusiastically championed in the pages of the Québec's French newspapers, even after reports in the English media appeared to cast doubt on it.

But the French media's normalization of ethnicity as a central tenet of Québécois national identity also suggests exclusion. The media constructions of Canadiens' General Manager Irving Grundman (1978-1983) and head coach Bob Berry (1981-1984) are particularly telling. Grundman and Berry, both natives of Montréal and both able to communicate with the media in French (an aptitude Berry developed over the course of his tenure as coach),¹⁴ were depicted, by their very presence, as impediments to the Canadiens' *francophonisation*. These representations effectively stripped Grundman and Berry of a Québécois identity: they were instead depicted mostly as Anglophones, but also as Jews, Anglo-Saxons and British Redcoats, all of which cast them as foreigners in their own hometown. The implication was crystal clear: the presence of Anglophones in key institutions was an impediment to the progress of the Québec nation; this nation, by implication, must include only Francophones. This exclusive notion of identity was reinforced by the French media's writings about the Canadiens' and Nordiques' style of play: the idea that the "national" style of play could only be practiced by those possessing French Canadian bloodlines reduced Québécois identity to biology. So despite the claims of neo-nationalists throughout the 1980s, the discourses that emerged from the coverage of the Canadiens and Nordiques in the early 1980s suggested that Québécois identity was not purely a "civic" construction, but one that continued to be imagined to a certain extent on the basis of heredity. Québécois identity was, therefore, constructed through NHL hockey coverage in such a way that excluded, in one form or another, some of the

province's citizens; indeed, the discourses analyzed in this dissertation suggest that for some residents of Québec, national identity was very much a binary divided between *us* and *them*.

Social divisions during the 1979-1984 era were not only reflected in the French media's coverage: *The Gazette's* coverage revealed a militant anti-nationalism that refused steadfastly to engage with the neo-nationalist project. Ignoring structural and economic factors, *Gazette* sportswriters (and indeed, journalists in other departments) blamed neo-nationalism for the community's loss of economic and political power. This anger was reflected in the fiery editorials in which *Gazette* sportswriters attacked perceived neo-nationalist excesses. But too often, *The Gazette's* discourse anchored this critique in sepia-tinged recollections of the time before the Quiet Revolution, when Montréal's Anglophone community held political and economic power over not just the city, but the province and the country as a whole. But these halcyon days were also a period where Québec's Francophone majority was, as a whole, deeply disadvantaged; this Anglophone ascendancy came at the price of Francophone subordination. The failure to acknowledge this fact, and to make the associated realization that neo-nationalism had gone a long way in reversing this subordination, shows a remarkable coldness in the face of legitimate Francophone grievances, and a reluctance to engage with neo-nationalism in any meaningful way. The discourses that emerged from *The Gazette's* coverage of the Canadiens and Nordiques suggest that if Francophone notions of Québécois identity excluded Anglophones, many Anglophones had already chosen to exclude themselves. Certainly, this was not the case for the Anglophone community as a

whole. But *The Gazette's* hockey coverage suggests that this “Angryphone” discourse remained powerful in English speaking Montréal in the early 1980s.

Journalisme de combat had as an end goal social change; the columns and reports written by Réjean Tremblay, Claude Larochelle, and their colleagues were intended not as idle bombast, but to try and provoke permanent neo-nationalist reforms in the field of professional hockey. In this, they both succeeded and failed. The Nordiques did indeed bring neo-nationalist language policies into the sphere of professional hockey, but the Canadiens resisted calls to follow suit despite severe criticism, persisting instead with bilingualism. Today, with the Nordiques long gone, the Canadiens' paradigm has been re-conventionalized. Bilingualism is, once again, part of professional hockey's standard package in Québec; this status quo is beamed across Québec, Canada, and North America via the NHL's broadcast partners. The Canadiens in the early 1980s underwent enough of a *francophonisation* to stave off media criticism, and won Stanley Cups in 1986 and 1993 with a solid nucleus of Québécois players. This situation has only partially persisted. On one hand, the Canadiens have employed Francophone general managers and head coaches almost exclusively since Grundman and Berry's firings; on the other, the Canadiens concluded the 2010-2011 season with only two Québécois players out of twenty.¹⁵ The composition of the Canadiens' roster continues to arouse periodic controversy, but with the percentage of NHL hockey players hailing from Québec dwindling and the Canadiens' monopoly on these players long expired, it is difficult to envision the Canadiens reproducing the demographics of the Flying Frenchmen teams of yore.¹⁶

Sport sociologist Jean Harvey has argued that Québec's affection for the Canadiens has irrevocably changed in the face of globalization: whereas the Canadiens were once connected intimately with the nation, this relationship has weakened and been replaced by a different bond, one founded primarily on local and provincial boosterism.¹⁷ The Canadiens, in Harvey's estimation, have become an NHL hockey team like all the others. There is no reason to doubt Harvey's analysis at this time, although I would add that the line between Québec boosterism and Québec nationalism is often very blurry. The return of the Nordiques would make for an interesting litmus test. The Nordiques' legacy is that they forced hockey journalists and fans in Québec to re-evaluate exactly what they expected from their professional hockey teams. What should they look like? Who should play for them? What language should they speak? How should they play? What relationship should they have to the wider society? The return of the Nordiques, and a renewed competition with the Canadiens for the Québec marketplace, would once again prompt these questions, especially if it occurred against the backdrop of a nationalist revival.

9.1 Endnotes

¹ James Christie, David Shoalts, and Rhéal Séguin, "Les Nordiques Say Finis," *The Globe and Mail*, 26 May 1995: C12.

² Chris Stevenson, "J'ai ma place! Québec City Turns Blue in Push to Bring Back Beloved Nordiques," *Toronto Sun*, 03 October 2010: 32.

³ Nathan Vardi, "Oh Canadiens: Inside the Richest Deal in NHL History," *Forbes*, 02 December 2010: <http://www.forbes.com/forbes/2010/1220/nhl-valuations-10-geoff-molson-montreal-canadiens-thin-ice.html> (accessed 16 May 2011).

⁴ “The Battle of Quebec,” *CBC Digital Archives*: <http://archives.cbc.ca/sports/hockey/clips/11358/> (accessed 16 May 2011). Brackets mine.

⁵ Canadian Press, “Corey veut se faire discret,” *Le Soleil*, 03 June 1983: C1. Translation: There’s no doubt that the Nordiques were closer to the Francophone clientele.

⁶ Réjean Tremblay, “Les Nordiques envahissent les bastions du Canadien,” *La Presse*, 28 February 1981: F1.

⁷ Tim Burke, “Pick Canadiens in Three Straight,” *The Gazette*, 07 April 1982: G1.

⁸ Alain Bouchard, “L’espoir d’un changement qui ne s’est pas produit,” *Le Soleil*, 27 March 1984: C1.

⁹ Alain Bouchard, “L’espoir d’un changement qui ne s’est pas produit,” *Le Soleil*, 27 March 1984: C1. Brackets mine. Translation: Montréal ceased being a Jewish organization: they replaced Irving Grundman with Ronald Corey and Serge Savard. The nationalist image no longer played in favour of the Nordiques.

¹⁰ Kenneth McRoberts, *Quebec: Social Change and Political Crisis*, 3rd ed. (Toronto: McClelland & Stewart, 1993): 355-358.

¹¹ McRoberts: 385-387.

¹² John E. Richardson, *Analysing Newspapers: An Approach from Critical Discourse Analysis* (Basingstoke, UK; New York: Palgrave MacMillan, 2007): 32.

¹³ Alain-G. Gagnon and Raffaele Iacovino, *Federalism, Citizenship, and Quebec: Debating Multiculturalism* (Toronto: University of Toronto Press, 2007): 96-99.

¹⁴ Ghyslain Luneau, “Faudra bientôt l’appeler Robert,” *Le Journal de Montréal*, 04 March 1982: 111.

¹⁵ Nor were these two players, Mathieu Darche and David Desharnais, among the team’s best. Darche finished tenth in team scoring with a relatively paltry twenty-six points.

¹⁶ One of the more histrionic accusations was levelled by PQ MNA Pierre Curzi, who described a “federalist plot” to exclude Francophones from the Canadiens. Canadian Press, “PQ Leader: Habs Now a Federalist Tool,” *msn.ca*, 15 September 2010: <http://sports.ca.msn.com/nhl/news/cp-article.aspx?cp-documentid=25590032> (accessed 17 May 2011).

¹⁷ Jean Harvey, “Whose Sweater is This?: The Changing Meanings of Hockey in Québec,” in *Artificial Ice: Hockey, Culture, and Commerce* eds. David Whitson and Richard Gruneau (Peterborough, Ont.: Broadview Press, 2006): 48-49.

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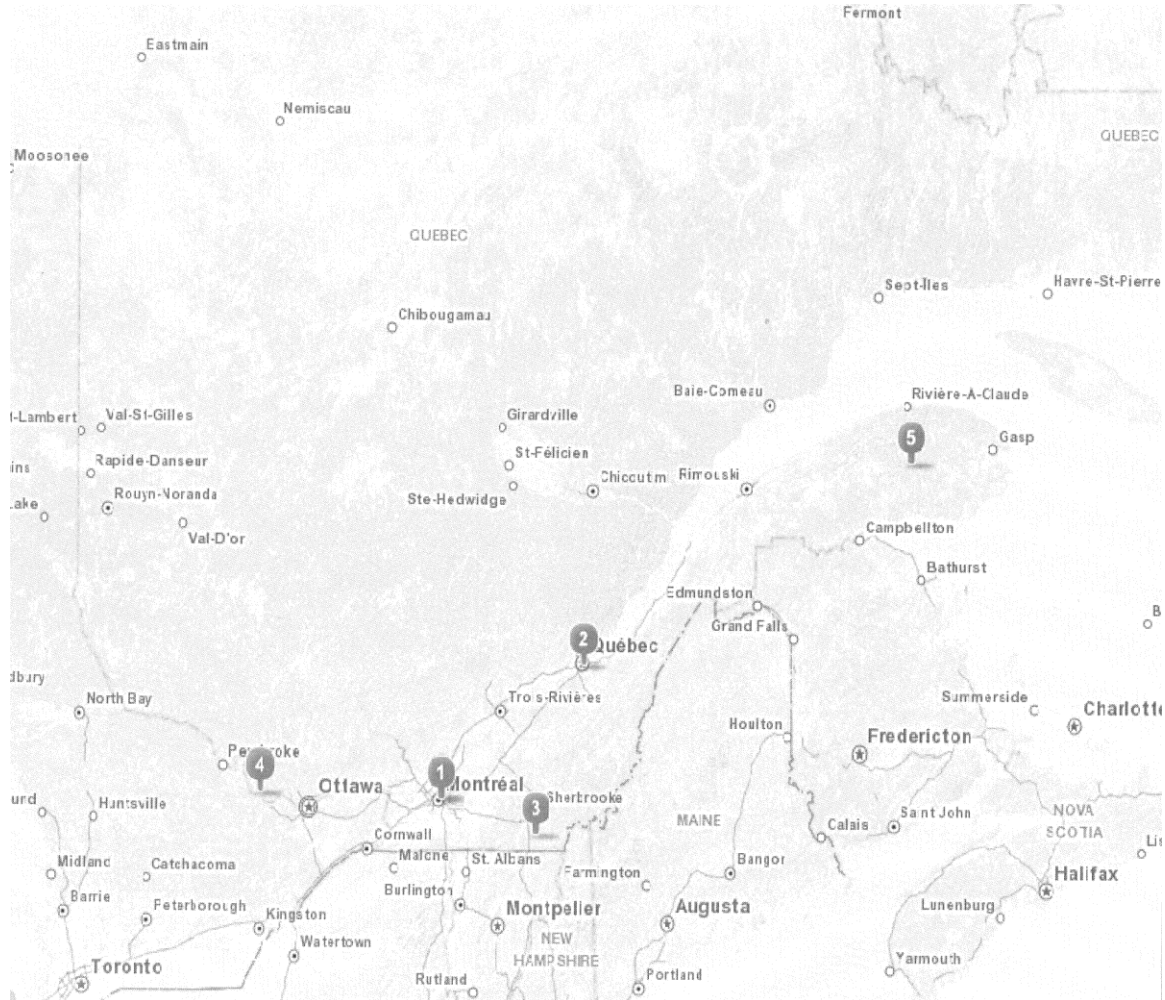
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Appendices

Appendix A: Map of Québec



This map depicts the St. Lawrence River valley, where the majority of Québec's population is concentrated. Montréal (1) is the largest city in Québec, and the population and cultural centre for the province's Francophones, Anglophones, and Allophones. By contrast, Québec City (2), the province's capital city, is overwhelmingly populated by Francophones. Prior to the 1980s, there were sizeable Anglophone populations living in the Eastern Townships (3), the Ottawa River Valley (4), and the Gaspé Peninsula (5).

Map source: <http://www.mapquest.com> (accessed 09 May 2011)

Appendix B: Map of Montréal



The Canadiens' home arena from 1979-1984 was the Forum (1), located in the west end of downtown Montréal. The east end of downtown is St-Laurent Boulevard (2), often considered the traditional dividing line between the Anglophone west and Francophone east precincts of the city. The best known Anglophone neighbourhood in Montréal is Westmount (3), which was held up by nationalists as a symbol of Anglophone wealth and power. Westmount literally cast its shadow over the Francophone working class neighbourhood of St-Henri (4), a situation which was evocatively depicted in Gabrielle

Roy's novel *The Tin Flute*. Located in the mostly Francophone east end, St-Leonard (5) was the site of the first major language crisis in Québec history, as Francophones and Italians clashed in the streets in a dispute related to English schooling access. Mount Royal (6) is the city's central landmark, on which many of the city's most affluent neighbourhoods were erected.

Map source: <http://www.mapquest.com> (accessed 09 May 2011)

Appendix C: Glossary

Allophone: A resident of Québec who identifies neither French nor English as their mother tongue. Allophones form the newest of Québec's three linguistic communities. Allophone is often used as a synonym for "immigrant," although many immigrants and their offspring identify with either the Francophone or Anglophone communities.

Anglophone: A resident of Québec who identifies English as their mother tongue. Anglophones are one of Québec's three linguistic communities. Once comprised exclusively of people of Anglo-Celtic origin, the Anglophone community had incorporated Jews, Italians, Greeks, and other immigrants by the early 1980s.

Aubut, Marcel: The president of the Nordiques from 1978 to 1995. Aubut was a driving force behind the WHA-NHL merger, as well as the Nordiques' policy of French unilingualism at the Colisée (1980). In contrast to the nationalist image he painstakingly helped to construct for the Nordiques, Aubut was a devoted federalist, voting against independence in the 1980 referendum.

Béliveau, Jean: One of the greatest players in NHL history, Béliveau played for the Canadiens from 1953 to 1971, before serving as a vice president from 1971 to 1993. In contrast to his predecessor as the Canadiens' superstar, Maurice "Rocket" Richard, Béliveau was a staunch anti-nationalist whose political views aligned with Pierre Trudeau's pan-Canadian vision.

Berry, Bob: The coach of the Canadiens from 1981 to 1984. An Anglophone native of Montréal, his hiring was denounced by the French media as evidence of the continuing dominance of English at the Forum.

Bertrand, Guy: A nationalist activist, lawyer, and hockey agent. Bertrand came to prominence as one of the lawyers for the *Gens de l'air* in 1976-77. He was also the mastermind behind the initiative to secure Québec its own representative national hockey team. Two of his NHL clients, Michel Goulet and Pierre Lacroix, refused to sign NHL contracts until they were provided with official French translations.

Bill 1: The precursor to Bill 101. The main difference between Bill 1 and Bill 101 was that the former contained affirmative action-style quotas designed to ensure the dominance of French in the workplace. Overwhelmingly rejected by Anglophones and Allophones, the unveiling of Bill 1 precipitated a serious language crisis in 1977.

Bill 22: Passed in 1974 before being supplanted by Bill 101 in 1977, Bill 22 declared French to be the sole official language in Québec. Bill 22 was unpopular in all sectors of Québec society. It was denounced by nationalists for failing to do away with linguistic freedom of choice in the public school system and for seemingly leaving too many loopholes relating to the use of French in the workplace. Anglophones, conversely, rejected it as overly draconian.

Bill 63: Passed in 1969 before being supplanted by Bill 22 in 1974, Bill 63 was the first piece of legislation dealing with language in Québec's history. Bill 63 enshrined bilingualism, which had long been the linguistic *status quo* in Québec. Affirming the

rights of individual parents to choose their children's language of schooling, Bill 63 was overwhelmingly rejected by nationalists.

Bill 101: Also known as the Charter of the French Language. Passed in 1977, Bill 101 reconfirmed French as Québec's sole official language, and enshrined French as the dominant language of public communication, schooling, and the workplace. Most controversially, Bill 101 removed parents' freedom of choice in the public school system, ensuring that immigrants would be educated in French and (presumably) integrate into the Francophone community.

Cloutier, Réal: A Nordiques player from 1974 to 1983. The team's most prominent player at the time of the 1980 referendum, Cloutier came under intense pressure from the French media to declare his voting intentions. At that time, Cloutier was represented by Guy Bertrand.

Colisée: The Nordiques' home arena for the entirety of the team's existence (1972-1995). It is located in Québec City.

Corey, Ronald: The Canadiens' president from 1982 to 1999. His hiring was celebrated by the French press, who understood it as the beginning of a belated *francophonisation* of the team's front office. Corey's 1983 purge of the Canadiens' front office, and ensuing hirings, were interpreted as a continuation of this *francophonisation* process.

D'Allemagne, André: A nationalist linguist, writer, activist, politician, and theorist of French unilingualism. D'Allemagne envisioned Québec as a colonized society in which French was in continuous danger. Identifying bilingualism as a colonial structure that

concealed *de facto* English unilingualism, D'Allemagne called for a policy of French unilingualism. He was one of the first voices to call for French unilingualism.

Devoir, Le: French language daily newspaper based in Montréal, founded in 1910. *Le Devoir* played a pivotal role in the anti-Duplessis resistance of the 1950s, as well as in the emergence of neo-nationalism. Known as the newspaper of the Québec intelligentsia, *Le Devoir* maintained the least comprehensive sports section of any Montréal or Québec City newspaper in the early 1980s, discontinuing the section completely in 1992. *Le Devoir* remains the largest independently-owned Québec newspaper.

Duplessis, Maurice: Premier of Québec from 1936 to 1939, and from 1944 to 1959. His conservative, authoritarian rule is remembered as the last gasp of traditional French Canadian nationalism before it was supplanted by neo-nationalism. Many prominent Québec artists, intellectuals, and politicians of the 1960s and 1970s first came to prominence as participants in anti-Duplessis resistance.

Forum: The Canadiens' home arena from 1926 to 1996. It was located in the west end of downtown Montréal.

Francophone: A resident of Québec who identifies French as their mother tongue. Francophones are one of Québec's three linguistic communities, and by far the largest. Once comprised exclusively by people of French Canadian origin, the Francophone community has been diversified somewhat by immigration.

Francophonisation: Refers generally to the preferential hiring of Francophones to ensure the dominance of French in the workplace. A *francophonisation* program involving an

affirmative action initiative and hiring quotas was among the most controversial statues in Bill 1; these were dropped in Bill 101.

Ftorek, Robbie: A Nordiques player from 1979 to 1981, during which period he served as the team's first NHL captain.

Gazette, The: English language daily newspaper based in Montréal, founded in 1778. After the demise of the *Montreal Star* in 1979, *The Gazette* became Montréal's only English language daily. *The Gazette's* editorial line since the 1970s has been staunchly anti-nationalist, something reflected in the tone of its hockey coverage in the early 1980s. *The Gazette* was owned by the Southam newspaper chain in the early 1980s.

Gendron Commission: Officially called the Commission of Inquiry on the Situation of the French Language and Linguistic Rights in Quebec, the Gendron Commission's report (published in 1973) recommended the legislation of French as the sole official language in Québec, the prohibition of English language schooling for immigrants, and the institution of a *francophonisation* program in the workplace. The Commission's report was the basis for Bill 22.

Gens de l'air: A union composed of Francophone pilots and air traffic controllers who challenged a federal law mandating English as the only language of air traffic communication in Canadian airspace. One of their litigators in this challenge was Guy Bertrand. The *Gens de l'air* became a *cause célèbre* for nationalists.

Goulet, Michel: Nordiques player from 1979 to 1990. In 1979, along with Pierre Lacroix, he refused to sign an NHL contract unless he was presented first with a legal

French translation. During the 1980 referendum, Goulet pronounced himself in favour of independence and gave a short speech to a pro-independence rally in Montréal.

Groulx, Lionel: Catholic clergyman, historian, and nationalist thinker (1878-1967).

Groulx's writings formed the basis of traditional French Canadian nationalism, which emphasized agrarianism, Catholicism, and ethnicity.

Grundman, Irving: The Canadiens' general manager from 1978 to 1983. The son of Jewish immigrants to Montréal, Grundman was usually identified as an Anglophone. Grundman's player recruitment policies, which were presumed to favour Anglophones, were questioned by nationalist journalists in the early 1980s.

Hart, Gerry: Nordiques player from 1979 to 1980. During his short tenure with the Nordiques, Hart accused the club's hierarchy of not fielding the best talent at its disposal because of a personnel policy that privileged French-speaking players. Hart also questioned the team's French-only language policy.

Journal de Montreal, Le: French language daily tabloid based in Montréal, founded in 1964. Emphasizing the "three s's" of *sang* (blood), *sexe* and *sport*, *Le Journal de Montréal* by 1979 was the highest circulating daily newspaper in Québec. Its hockey reporters practiced a traditional brand of sports journalism, eschewing the overt nationalist activism of some of its competitors. *Le Journal de Montréal* has been owned since its founding by Québecor.

Journal de Québec, Le: French language daily tabloid based in Québec City, founded in 1967. Emphasizing the "three s's" of *sang* (blood), *sexe* and *sport*, *Le Journal de Québec*

by 1979 was close to supplanting *Le Soleil* as the highest circulating daily in Québec City. Its hockey reporters practiced a traditional brand of sports journalism, eschewing the overt nationalist activism of some of its competitors. *Le Journal de Québec* has been owned since its founding by Québecor.

Journalisme de combat: A variant of sports journalism, distinct to Francophone Québec, that rejected traditional journalistic objectivity in favour of a politically engaged, activist, nationalist brand of reporting that sought to relate sport to wider political developments in society. This was the dominant brand of hockey journalism practiced in the early 1980s at *La Presse*, *Le Soleil*, and *Dimanche-Matin*.

Lacroix, Pierre: Nordiques player from 1979 to 1982. In 1979, along with Michel Goulet, he refused to sign an NHL contract unless he was presented first with a legal French translation. During the 1980 referendum, Lacroix pronounced himself in favour of independence and gave a short speech to a pro-independence rally in Montréal.

Lafleur, Guy: Canadiens player from 1971 to 1984. One of the greatest players in NHL history, Lafleur's fast, skilful style of play was understood to exemplify the historic style both of the Canadiens and of the French Canadian nation. Rarely discussing his political views, Lafleur was criticized by some journalists and nationalists as an accomplice to Anglophone power in Québec.

Laurin, Camille: Member of the Parti Québécois government from 1976 to 1985. As Minister of Cultural Development, Laurin was the architect of both Bill 1 and Bill 101.

In 1980, he called for the Canadiens to adopt French unilingualism at the Forum, or face investigation by the *Office de la langue française*.

Lesage, Jean: Premier of Québec from 1960 to 1966. His government instituted a series of deep reforms that formed the basis of the Quiet Revolution. Lesage later served as a Nordiques executive from 1972 until his death in 1980. Lesage's behind the scenes networking were pivotal in securing a WHA franchise, and the expansion of the Colisée into an NHL-standard arena.

Lévesque, René: Premier of Québec from 1976 to 1985. Lévesque, who as a cabinet minister under Lesage was the driving force behind the nationalization of Hydro-Québec, abandoned the Liberal Party in 1967 and founded the Parti Québécois in 1968. His was the first provincial government to unequivocally support Québec independence, putting it to a referendum in 1980. During the early 1980s, Lévesque was forthright in his support for the Nordiques.

Maîtres chez nous: A rallying cry for Québec nationalists, meaning “masters in our own house.” It is best remembered as the slogan for Jean Lesage's Liberal Party in the 1962 provincial election.

Montréal Canadiens: The oldest and most successful NHL hockey team, with 24 Stanley Cup championships. Through their success and their monopoly on Francophone players such as Maurice Richard, Jean Béliveau, and Guy Lafleur, the Canadiens became a symbol of French Canadian national identity. This lofty status came under question in the early 1980s, following the ascension of the Québec Nordiques to the NHL.

National Hockey League (NHL): Founded in 1917, the NHL is the richest and most visible professional hockey league in North America. The Canadiens were a founding member of the league, while the Nordiques joined in 1979.

Neo-nationalism: The variant of nationalism that emerged during the Quiet Revolution, promoting an identity founded on the French language and territoriality. The two central tenets of the neo-nationalist project were the promotion and protection of the French language, and Québec independence. Neo-nationalism is the dominant political ideology in Québec, and all provincial governments since 1960 have been impacted by it.

October Crisis: Refers to the events of October, 1970 that were prompted by the kidnapping of a British diplomat and a Québec cabinet minister in Montréal by a radical nationalist group, the *Front de Libération de Québec*. Pierre Trudeau's federal government invoked the War Measures Act, suspending *habeas corpus* and giving the police and army sweeping powers. Scores of leftist and nationalist intellectuals and journalists were arrested without cause, effectively crippling the radical left and silencing radical journalism in Québec.

Office de la langue française (OLF): Formed in 1961, it was strengthened by the ratification of Bill 101 in 1977, the provisions of which the OLF enforces. Though its responsibilities are varied, the OLF is best known for overseeing francization operations of public administration and businesses. The OLF is reviled by the Anglophone community, who have dismissed its agents as the “language police.”

Official Languages Act: Enacted by Pierre Trudeau in 1969, the Official Languages Act declared English and French as Canada's official languages, giving them equal legal status in the federal government. Designed to counteract neo-nationalism by reorienting Francophones' gaze from the provincial to the federal state, the Official Languages Act is reviled by nationalists, who criticize it for failing to address the status of French, and indeed for enshrining the status of English, within Québec.

Parti Québécois (PQ): Québec's foremost nationalist and separatist political party. Founded in 1968 as a merger of three smaller groups, the PQ's goals have been to win Québec's political, economic, and social independence. Headed by René Lévesque, the PQ became in 1976 the first sovereigntist party to win a provincial election. Despite the failure of the 1980 referendum on independence, the PQ was re-elected in 1981.

Presse, La: French language daily based in Montréal, founded in 1884. *La Presse's* hockey journalists, led by the firebrand columnist Réjean Tremblay, practiced *journalisme de combat*. During the early 1980s, *La Presse* was owned by Power Corporation of Canada, a large industrial conglomerate.

Québec Nordiques: A professional hockey team that played in the WHA from 1972 to 1979, and the NHL from 1979 to 1995. Through their policy of French unilingualism and their preponderance of Francophone players, coaches, and managers, the Nordiques became closely linked with neo-nationalism in the early 1980s.

Quiet Revolution: Generally considered to have lasted from 1960 to 1966, the Quiet Revolution was the rapid transformation of Québec from an insular, conservative society

with rural, Catholic values to a modern, secular, urban-industrial welfare state. The Quiet Revolution also gave rise to neo-nationalism, supplanting other paradigms of nationalism that emphasized lineage, agrarianism, and Catholicism.

Referendum: The 1980 referendum asked Québec residents whether the province should pursue a path toward political independence. René Lévesque headed the “oui” (pro-independence forces), while Pierre Trudeau was the *de facto* leader of the “non” (anti-independence) committee. The proposal to pursue independence was defeated by a margin of twenty percent (sixty percent to forty percent).

Richard, Maurice “Rocket”: One of the greatest players in NHL history, Richard played for the Canadiens from 1942 to 1960. Through his stellar play and unconcealed nationalism, Richard became a Québec folk hero. His suspension in 1955 prompted Canadiens fans to riot in his defense, an event some have interpreted as an early stirring of the Quiet Revolution. Briefly the coach of the Nordiques in 1972, Richard wrote weekly columns for the Sunday tabloid *Dimanche-Matin* in the early 1980s.

Royal Commission on Bilingualism and Biculturalism (RCBB): Convened by the federal government in response to the emergence of neo-nationalism, the RCBB’s findings were a profound shock in both English and French speaking Canada. Tabling its final report in 1969, the RCBB presented statistical evidence that demonstrated powerfully Francophone disadvantage within Québec. Both Bill 63 and the Official Languages Act were drafted to solve the problems highlighted by the RCBB.

Savard, Serge: Canadiens' player from 1967 to 1981, and the team's general manager from 1983 to 1995. As the most politically active of the Canadiens' players in the late 70s and early 80s, Savard came under intense pressure to declare his voting intention during the 1980 referendum. As general manager, his hiring was celebrated as evidence of the Canadiens' *francophonisation*, though the style that his team practiced came under scrutiny.

Soleil, Le: French language daily based in Québec City, founded in 1896. *Le Soleil's* hockey journalists practiced *journalisme de combat*, especially columnist Claude Larochelle. *Le Soleil* was owned by the media conglomerate Unimédia in the early 1980s.

Stanley Cup: The trophy awarded to the National Hockey League's playoff champion. The Canadiens have won 24 Stanley Cups, by far the most in NHL history.

Stastny, Anton, Marian, and Peter: Three brothers from Czechoslovakia, all of whom were Nordiques players in the early 1980s (Anton: 1980-1989; Marian: 1981-1985; Peter: 1980-1990). As immigrants in Québec, the Stastny brothers were courted by both the French and English media. A profile in *The Gazette* quoted the Stastnys criticizing some provisions of Bill 101, though the brothers vehemently denied making those utterances afterward.

Thomas, Reggie: Nordiques player from 1979 to 1980. After being released from the club, Thomas criticized the Nordiques' hiring practices as discriminatory and alleged

endemic Anglophone unhappiness at the club. Thomas' accusations were vehemently denied both by the club's management and by his former teammates.

Trudeau, Pierre: Prime Minister of Canada from 1968 to 1979, and from 1980 to 1984. A staunch anti-nationalist, Trudeau theorized nationalism as a backwards and destructive construct with no role to play in modern societies. Designed as a measure to counter Québec nationalism, Trudeau's government passed the Official Languages Act in 1969, giving English and French equal status as official languages at the federal level. Later, Trudeau was the *de facto* leader of the anti-independence forces during the 1980 referendum.

World Hockey Association (WHA): North American professional hockey league active from 1972 to 1979. The Nordiques played in the WHA for its entire existence, winning the WHA playoff championship (Avco Cup) in 1977. Plagued by instability and money problems, the WHA merged with the NHL in 1979, and its four most financially viable clubs, including the Nordiques, joined the NHL for the 1979-80 season.

Curriculum Vitae

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Gitersos, Terry Vaios. "Les 'frogs' sont menacés: Media Representations of the Nordiques and Canadiens, 1979-1981." *Sport History Review* 40, No. 1 (2009): 69-81.