LANGUAGE and SOCIETY

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Focus on Youth

Winning and runner-up entries to the creative writing contest, "Put It in Words" sponsored by the Commissioner of Official Languages to celebrate the International Youth Year.

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Readers may send their comments and suggestions to the Editor, *Language and Society*, Office of the Commissioner of Official Languages, Ottawa, Canada K1A 0T8. Tel.: (613) 995-7717.

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Editor's note

To mark the importance of International Youth Year (1985), the Commissioner's Office organized a nationwide contest in which it invited young people between the ages of 15 and 24 to make a personal statement about a Canada where English and French have enjoyed equality of status since the Official Languages Act and the Constitution Act of 1982 made the country officially bilingual.

Some 1,500 young Anglophones and Francophones responded to the invitation, submitting a rich collection of short stories, fictional letters, video scripts, poems, cartoon strips and serious or humorous essays. Since the Commissioner also wished to assess the impact of the Youth Option (see *Annual Report 1985*), he engaged Canadian Facts, a survey firm, to ask Canadians, particularly those in the 15 to 24 year age group, for their views on language reform.

This issue of *Language and Society* reports on these activities and shares with its readers the feelings and attitudes of youth toward Canada's linguistic duality, the needs and aspirations of our national minorities, and the learning of English and French.

In his editorial, D'Iberville Fortier stresses the importance he attaches to the youth option and, while noting with pleasure that a large majority of those under 25 years of age advocate linguistic harmony and justice in Canada, draws attention to his serious concerns about what the future holds for our minority youth.

The authors of the second article, social researchers Stacy Churchill and Anthony Smith, conclude from their analysis of the data collected by Canadian Facts that English Canada, led by its young people, increasingly recognizes the virtues of bilingualism.

Two prominent observers of our socio-political scene, Jean-Paul L'Allier and Professor Kenneth McRae, reflect on what they gleaned from a careful reading of the works submitted by these young authors.

Last but by no means least, we pay homage to International Youth Year by publishing the winning and runner-up entries in the "Put It in Words" contest. Our readers can thus share the problems, concerns, hopes and dreams of these young authors.

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COMMISSIONER OF OFFICIAL LANGUAGES
COMMISSAIRE AUX LANGUES OFFICIELLES

Linguistic duality and the year 2000

D'IBERVILLE FORTIER

"The youth of a nation are the trustees of posterity."
BENJAMIN DISRAELI
Sybil

The Youth Option is one of the highest priorities for me, as it was for both my predecessors. The arrival of International Youth Year in 1985 presented an ideal opportunity to build on 15 years of dialogue with young Canadians by holding a contest in which members of the 15 to 24 year age group were invited to submit works of fiction on the art of living in a bilingual country.

The purpose of the contest was two-fold: to give young people a chance to make a truly Canadian contribution to the celebration of "their" year; and to help my colleagues and me determine whether the good work undertaken across Canada, especially in our schools, had borne fruit. We wanted to see if Canada had indeed derived the "benefits which can result from solutions attacking, during childhood and youth, the root of the problem: intercultural misunderstanding . . . and involuntary unilingualism," to use the words of Keith Spicer, the first Commissioner of Official Languages and initiator of the Youth Option.

A number of developments in this direction are revealed by an analysis of a representative sampling of some 1,500 contest entries.

- In the overwhelming majority of cases, references to the two linguistic communities were sympathetic, and there were very few expressions of ill will.
- Young people living in minority situations — both Anglophone and Francophone — participated in numbers well in excess of the proportion of the population they represent. It was evident that questions very much on their minds are bilingualism, relations with the majority-language group, official languages policy, and their own development and future as individuals.
- The many bilingual characters portrayed in their writings were shown in a better light than their unilingual counterparts.
- The most pessimistic and sometimes even downright defeatist views on the likelihood of their community's survival and the future of the French language in Canadian society came from young Francophones outside Quebec. Could it be that they, like many of their elders, have come to accept as inevitable the indifference and disdain in which their language and culture have so often been held in the past?

Realizing that only a handful of the four and a half million young people in Canada between the ages of 15 and 24 would participate in our contest, we decided to extend our investigation to the population at large by engaging a consulting firm, Canadian Facts, to conduct a nation-wide public opinion survey, with a special focus on young people.

The results of this survey are reported in greater detail in the following article. They show that an impressive proportion of Canadians readily accept the linguistic duality of their country, want young people to learn and master their second official language, and support the right of Francophone minorities to receive services in their language. Clearly, Canadians have taken to heart the B & B Commission's warning that their country was "passing through the greatest crisis in its history."

The findings relating to those between 15 and 24 years of age are particularly encouraging, especially when we see that a solid majority of young people in the English-speaking provinces, supported by their parents and grandparents, believe that the future of Canada depends on a generous and informed acceptance of its linguistic duality.

Has the Youth Option, to which we have devoted substantial funds and considerable effort over the years, been successful? There is much to suggest it has. As noted in Part V of our *Annual Report 1985*, there was a disappointingly small increase between 1971 and 1981 in the number of young bilingual Anglophones — Anglo-Quebecers excepted — between 15 and 24 years of age, and a regrettable decline in individual bilingualism among young Francophones outside Quebec, probably because some of them no longer consider themselves capable of carrying on a conversation in French. However, these observations apply only to individual bilingualism and cover only the first decade of language reform; they do not reflect the substantial changes in attitude which have taken place nor do they reflect the current climate of public opinion.

To my way of thinking, the findings of the Canadian Facts survey are far more meaningful: they reveal a more widespread concern than in the past for ensuring respect for minority language rights; broad acceptance of Canada's linguistic duality; and much greater public interest in effective teaching of the second official language.

All the evidence suggests that a major shift in beliefs and attitudes has occurred. To what may we attribute this change? One factor has undoubtedly been the effectiveness of official languages policy, which has made Canadians progressively more sensitive to the equality of our two official languages and to their importance for Canada. A second contributing factor has been the number of people who have fought on behalf of better second language teaching — school administrators, teachers and researchers, not to mention the thousands and thousands of parents who, through Canadian Parents for French and other groups, have not only worked tirelessly to promote immersion programs but have also supported the demands of Francophone minorities for French-language education consistent with their needs.

This is not to say that we can now afford to rest on our laurels. Today, even in areas where Anglophones and Francophones have lived side by side for generations, there is still conflict between various elements of the majority and minority over whether government services should be provided in both official languages and whether education should be made available in the language of the minority. Evidently, linguistic justice and equality do not figure in everyone's vision of Canada, but this is certainly not true of young people, who are eagerly awaiting the arrival of such guarantees. If we are to meet their expectations, we must at very least continue to stimulate their interest in learning their second official language (especially when there is not always a pressing reason to do so) and increase the opportunities for exchanges between our linguistic and cultural communities.

On the whole, relations between our two majorities have vastly improved. But what of our minorities? Here we can glean a great deal from the entries submitted by young people belonging to minority groups. Anglo-Quebecers make frequent references to cultural tensions and sometimes perceive themselves as "anomalies", while young Francophones outside Quebec discuss the high price they have to pay in their daily lives as they do what they can to preserve their language and culture.

During our 1985 colloquium, "The Minorities: Time for Solutions" (see *Language and Society*, No. 17, March 1986), their elders repeatedly stated that in their eyes the linguistic partnership was an "undertaking in trouble". For their part, our young contestants tell of their uncertainty and often evoke the spectre of assimilation. And yet, was not one of the elements of the original language reform plan to encourage the development of our Francophone communities so that they might play a role in building an original and dynamic Canada?

I would therefore urge all governments (in particular the federal government), as well as those responsible for our school systems, educators, heads of voluntary associations, business leaders and all Canadian parents to listen to what these young people have to say and to work with them to achieve one of their most cherished hopes: to live in a country of linguistic peace, justice and equality.

I would also encourage all Canadians to personally support the right of our minority youth to a sound education in their mother tongue, and to help them become no less than full partners in our society and our workforce without having to compromise their linguistic and cultural identity. After all, one measure of a society's respect or contempt for democratic ideals is the treatment it accords its minorities.

It is rewarding to see that Canadian youth seems to be in the vanguard of language reform in Canada. On the other hand, it is unfortunate that so few young people have yet tasted the fruits of this progress. In the words of André Malraux: "The drama of this world is that it has no vision of itself that extends beyond five years hence." Canadians have successfully met many challenges in the past. I am confident that they will respond to this challenge by transforming International Youth Year into a National Youth Decade, to the benefit particularly of young people in our minority communities.

Analysis of a recent national survey shows that support for bilingualism and minority language rights is increasing in English Canada. The challenge for public policy is now to keep pace with the changing climate of public opinion.

The emerging consensus

STACY CHURCHILL
ANTHONY SMITH

Stacy Churchill is a professor at the Ontario Institute for Studies in Education. He is the author of several studies dealing with the education of minority Francophones in different provinces of Canada, including most recently "Éducation et besoins des Franco-Ontariens" for the Council for Franco-Ontarian Education.

Anthony Smith was trained in Sociology at Leicester University in the United Kingdom and at Princeton, has taught at the University of Toronto, and has worked for the Ontario Institute for Studies in Education. He is president of Living Dimensions Limited, a company which designs and manages research evaluations and other social science projects.

A major shift in English-Canadian attitudes toward language reform is underway, led by the young. Compared with previous generations of Anglophones, the youth of English Canada now hold views of Canada's official languages which are much closer to the attitudes of Quebecers. Far more than their elders, they support the provision of minority-language services and are generally more sensitive to all aspects of language reform. This is the central conclusion derived from a national survey of public opinion prepared by Canadian Facts in September 1985 for the Office of the Commissioner of Official Languages.

The opinions of both language groups have always been an important point of reference for language reform in Canada. French-speaking Canadians have long been aware of the importance of language issues. While their faith in achieving progress has been tempered with skepticism, they have had a strong commitment to the linguistic duality of Canada, a commitment shaped by the perception that French was in an underprivileged position. Any steps towards linguistic equality thus implied an advance for French. Non-Francophone Canadians, on the other hand, were generally far less concerned with language matters until the late 1950s and early 1960s, when opinion leaders became increasingly worried about the poor state of relations between the two language groups.

The Royal Commission on Bilingualism and Biculturalism played a major role during the 1960s in communicating this concern to a broader public. By 1969, when the Official Languages Act was passed, public support was sufficient to permit a national commitment to a policy of offering federal services in both languages. However support was by no means universal, and it was unclear in which direction public opinion would move. Caution was the order of the day, particularly in view of the potential for a backlash in English Canada. Much of this caution has remained.

Twenty years have passed since the B & B Commission tabled its report. What has happened to public opinion in these two decades? Has it drifted away from the tacit consensus that allowed Canadian political leaders to institute the reforms embodied in the Official Languages Act? Perhaps more important, what does the future hold?

The national survey

In many respects, the under-25 generation has a crucial role to play in determining the shape of that future. The national survey conducted by Canadian Facts provides a strong indication of how positively they view the language duality of the country as well as a comprehensive basis for showing how their attitudes differ from those of older Canadians.

In September and October 1985, personal interviews were conducted with more than 4,000 Canadians. The

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The conclusion that non-Francophone youth outside Quebec are emerging as a major new force in Canadian opinion on language-related matters is an important finding, based on relatively unambiguous evidence.

interview covered some 31 items, providing a detailed profile of attitudes toward official languages and toward contact with, or training in, the minority official language of the respondent's province of residence.

The sample was designed to permit comparison of the views of Francophones with those of non-Francophones at a national level. Approximately 3,000 people were interviewed in English and 1,000 in French. We have used the term "Anglophones" or "English-speaking Canadians" to refer to those interviewed in English, while the term "Francophones" or "French-speaking Canadians" refers to those interviewed in French.

Although the survey included Anglophones within Quebec and members of the Francophone minorities outside Quebec, the numbers are too small either to permit inferences about the minorities or to significantly affect the national comparison between Anglophones and Francophones. Essentially, therefore, we have made a comparison between the French-speaking majority in Quebec and non-Francophones in what is traditionally, if incorrectly, called "English Canada".

For the authors, it was a rare surprise to see opinion data which reflect such remarkable consistency with respect to age and region of residence. True national patterns emerge and it is not difficult to account for the rare exceptions. The conclusion that non-Francophone youth outside Quebec are emerging as a major new force in Canadian opinion on language-related matters is an important finding, based on relatively unambiguous evidence.

Our analysis concentrates on age-related differences between those under 25 and older Canadians. The main topics covered are: differences in the language experiences of English-speaking and French-speaking Canadians, attitudes about the usefulness of knowing and studying the two official languages, recognition of the term "official language", support for services to the official language minorities, and policy implications of recent attitude changes.

Regional language contexts

In discussing the attitudes of our young people, it is important to keep in mind the very different language experiences of the young Francophone and the young Anglophone in Canada. The Francophone, even in the most unilingual sections of Quebec, cannot ignore the fact that French is, on the American continent, a minority language. The world "outside" is English speaking. In contrast, the young Canadian outside Quebec who learns English as either a mother tongue or as the language of the surrounding community has far less awareness of the French language. With a few exceptions, notably in parts of New Brunswick, Manitoba and Ontario, French is not a fact of everyday life in most of English Canada.

Not surprisingly, the differences in exposure to the other official language are directly reflected in the data. Francophones report much greater levels of contact with English: 52 per cent said they heard the other language 'practically every day' or 'once or twice a week', compared with only 21 per cent of Anglophones (Table 1).

TABLE 1

Contact with the other official language: percentage within category responding "practically every day" or "once or twice a week"

	English	*French*	*Total*
15-24	26	64	35
25-34	23	55	31
35-40	21	53	28
41-49	19	55	30
50 +	16	37	21
Total	21	52	29

Question: About how often do you hear (other official language) spoken in your community — other than in (other language) classes at school?

At the same time, even in these data, signs of change are evident, particularly among Anglophones. Reported contact with the other language is highest in the 15 to 24 age bracket for both language groups, and, generally speaking, the younger the group, the greater the contact with the other language. The age effect among Anglophones is remarkably consistent. Compare any two adjacent age categories, and the younger one reports having more contact by two or three percentage points. Though small, there appears to be some systematic effect at work here. While the age effect is similar among Francophones, it is less systematic.

Reported contact with the other language is highest in the 15-24 age bracket for both language groups.

How can these trends be accounted for? The data themselves permit no simple explanation. Despite increased contact with French by younger Anglophones, the fact remains that only 26 per cent of those between 15 and 24 said they heard French in their community at least once a week, yet even the oldest Francophones reported considerably more contact than this with English. This would seem to confirm the received wisdom that Quebecers are obliged to cope with English on a regular basis.

The higher levels of contact by the youngest Francophones may be explained by life-style differences. It is well known that the younger group accounts for the bulk of cinema-goers and provides the most assiduous consumers of popular culture such as recordings and video productions, the overwhelming majority of which are in English.

On a personal level, Canadians of all ages appear to have accepted that Canada's future involves both English and French, although many remain confused about the meaning of "official language" in the abstract.

Age-related differences within both the Anglophone and the Francophone groups may be explained by the number of years devoted to studying the second language in school. One could suggest as an initial hypothesis that "other-language awareness" — the tendency to notice the other language when it is spoken in the environment — is increased by having studied the second language in school. This would be consistent with the data in both groups (not reported here). For Anglophones, the older the respondents, the less schooling in French they are likely to have had. For the French, the reported years of schooling in English are relatively constant for those under 50 but there is an abrupt drop for the over-50 group. A factor contributing to the substantial awareness of English by Francophones under 50 derives from the widespread use of English in the workplace in Quebec. The over-50 group, however, would include numerous pensioners who might be less exposed to English since they are no longer in the work force.

English and French vs. "Official Languages"

Public policies in the last two decades have dramatically affected Canadians' attitudes toward their official languages. This is clearly indicated by age-related differences in perceptions about the value of knowing the other language.

One can draw some interesting conclusions about how Canadians have reacted to official languages policy and its implementation by comparing the types of questions asked in the survey. When questions are formulated *in terms of abstractions* about government responsibilities with respect to official languages, the responses are reserved and sometimes negative. But when respondents are asked *in a personal, direct way* about the value of English or French as a second language, they are much more positive. On a personal level, Canadians of all ages appear to have accepted that Canada's future involves both English and French, although many remain confused about the meaning of "official language" in the abstract.

Perceptions as to the usefulness of knowing the other language seem to proceed from the realities of the language context. Francophones are more than twice as likely as Anglophones to reply (Table 2a) that speaking the other language is

'very' or 'quite useful' to them right now (69 per cent vs. 31 per cent). However, in both language groups it is the young who most frequently consider that knowing the other language is 'very useful' or 'quite useful'. The relationship to age is evident in both language groups but particularly marked among Anglophones. The younger the English-speaking interviewee, the more likely he or she is to consider a knowledge of French useful.

TABLE 2

Usefulness of speaking the other language

2a. Usefulness of speaking the other language *now*: percentage within category who say very or quite useful

	English	*French*	*Total*
15-24	44	82	53
25-34	33	72	43
35-40	34	60	39
41-49	27	68	39
50 +	20	59	29
Total	31	69	40

Question: How useful would it be to you *right now* to be able to speak (the other official language) or speak it better?

2b. Usefulness of speaking the other language *in the future*: percentage who say very or quite useful

	English	*French*	*Total*
15-24	58	90	66
25-34	46	80	55
35-40	46	70	51
41-49	35	75	47
50 +	22	61	32
Total	41	75	49

Question: Thinking ahead to the future — say ten years from now — how useful do you think it would be to be able to speak (other official language)?

If young people tend to see the future of Canada as bilingual, so also do their parents and grandparents. This becomes evident when young people are made the focus of the question. Eighty per cent of Anglophones and 99 per cent of Francophones feel that bilingualism is 'very' or 'moderately important' in helping a young person get ahead (Table 3a). Contrast these percentages with the 41 per cent of Anglophones and 75 per cent of Francophones who feel that speaking the other language will be useful to them personally in the future (Table 2b).

Parents and grandparents in both language groups are about as likely to endorse bilingualism for the young as are the young themselves.

Similarly, support for compulsory teaching of both languages is high. Sixty-six per cent of Anglophones and 94 per cent of Francophones agreed that English and French should be required subjects in all Canadian schools (Table 3b). Finally, and perhaps again an important effect of public policy, perceptions of the value of language learning for the young show no age effect. Parents and grandparents in both language groups are about as likely to endorse bilingualism for the young as are the young themselves. Thus, whatever their feelings about the importance of the other language in their own lives, Canadians of all ages appear to have accepted that Canada's future involves both languages.

Key attitudes about bilingualism and its usefulness can be summed up as follows. Quebec Francophones show more interest than Anglophones outside Quebec in knowing both languages. In Quebec, the interest is high across

TABLE 3

Usefulness, to the young, of speaking other language

3a. Usefulness of bilingualism in helping a young person get ahead: percentage within category saying very or moderately important

	English	*French*	*Total*
15-24	78	98	83
25-34	78	99	83
35-40	82	100	86
41-49	84	99	89
50 +	80	99	85
Total	80	99	84

Question: How important do you think the ability to speak English and French is in helping a young person to get ahead in Canadian life today?

3b. Compulsory teaching of both languages in school: percentage within category agreeing

	English	*French*	*Total*
15-24	70	93	76
25-34	67	93	74
35-40	69	91	73
41-49	63	95	72
50 +	63	95	71
Total	66	94	73

Question: French and English should be required subjects in all Canadian Schools.

all age categories. Young Anglophones show considerably more personal interest in learning French than their parents and grandparents. However, parents and grandparents strongly believe in second-language learning for the young. Given that the demographics of official languages have changed little, these signs of increasing Anglophone commitment to bilingualism are heartening.

One might expect to see these positive attitudes reflected in support for official-language policies. However, while the data clearly indicate that support exists for providing bilingual services to Canadians, they also suggest that the nature of the policy debate often makes it difficult to mobilize or even develop awareness of this support.

A good indication of the policy problem is provided by the responses to the first question (Table 4) asked in the survey — before the interviewees had been "primed" by other questions. It forced the respondent to supply an answer without prompting: "To which language or languages does the term 'official language of Canada' apply?" This is a question measuring raw ability to recognize the key term used in government publications to describe language policy. Faced with this abstraction, less than half (42 per cent) the English-speaking respondents identified both English and French as official languages. The figure for French-speaking Canadians (63 per cent) was higher but still disappointingly low. Decidedly, abstract policy debates have had little impact on public knowledge.

But the future looks brighter. The frequency with which both the English and French languages are identified is strongly related to age among Anglophones. Anglophones aged 15 to 24 are most often correct in this identification: 54 per cent name both English and French. This percentage decreases across age categories to a low of

TABLE 4

Naming both English and French as official languages: percentage within category saying "English and French"

	English	*French*	*Total*
15-24	54	69	58
25-34	45	67	50
35-40	42	61	46
41-49	39	62	46
50 +	33	55	38
Total	42	63	48

Question: To which language or languages does the term "official language of Canada" apply?

33 per cent for the group 50 and over, with the largest drop (9 percentage points) between the 15 to 24 and the 25 to 34 age brackets. However, the youngest Anglophones still make the correct identification only about as often as the oldest Francophones and far less often than their French-speaking contemporaries, 69 per cent of whom correctly identified both English and French as Canada's official languages.

However, correct identification of official languages may be of little importance in the long run. Many Canadians remain confused about the precise meaning of the term "official languages". Much more significant are the attitudes to the other language itself and to those who speak that language. Canadians do not have to understand the concept of "official language" to empathize with the minorities.

Support for minority-language services

What do Canadians think about official languages as a matter of public policy? How do they respond when the topic is not language learning, but language rights? To judge from the attitudes portrayed by the survey data, a new consensus on matters of language policy is in the making, and the young are on its leading edge.

Historically, support for official-languages policy, particularly for minority linguistic rights, has been weaker in English Canada. Yet young English Canadians aged 15 to 24 now support minority linguis-

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tic rights almost as frequently as do French Canadians of all ages. They are much closer in their views to French-speaking residents of Quebec than to older Anglophones. In short, they are systematically different from their parents and grandparents.

The survey included two types of questions aimed at assessing support for services in the minority language of each province. Predictably, levels of support are generally lower when the question is phrased in terms of the more abstract concept of services provided by a particular sector, be it the federal government, the government of the province of interview, or business (Table 5). This contrasts with more positive responses when the issues are addressed in terms of the rights of the minority group to receive services in their own language from specific institutions such as the post office, hospitals and department stores (Table 6).

There is now general acceptance of the language duality of the country. Support among Francophones of all ages has been maintained at historic levels, while Anglophones have become more positive.

In general, for all seven questions reported on here, Francophones show much higher levels of support for service in the minority language than do Anglophones. As the national official-language minority, Francophones are supportive of the rights of Quebec Anglophones. Their support is consistent across all age categories and thus shows no sign of eroding across successive generations in Quebec.

Among Anglophones, on the other hand, there is a very strong relationship between support for minority rights and age on all seven questions. The youngest group shows the highest level of support and the differences between them and their elders are large: between 20 and 30 percentage points separate the 15 to 24 age group and those over 50 on all the questions. Indeed, young Anglophones seem to hold views very similar to those of Francophones. Comparing responses by those in the 15 to 24 age bracket on the three more abstract questions (Table 5), the mean difference is only 4 percentage points, with young Francophones answering "English and French" slightly more often than do young Anglophones. The differences between young Anglophones and young Francophones may be greater when the questions deal with service in the language of the minority in particular institutions (Table 6), but the same general trends are evident.

TABLE 5

Views of minority-language service by sector

5a. Service from the federal government: percentage within category saying English and French

	English	*French*	*Total*
15-24	84	88	85
25-34	74	87	77
35-40	65	91	70
41-49	64	89	71
50 +	57	87	65
Total	69	88	74

Question: In which language or languages should the federal government provide service to the public?

5b. Service from the provincial government: percentage within category saying English and French

	English	*French*	*Total*
15-24	68	71	69
25-34	57	70	61
35-40	49	72	54
41-49	45	66	51
50 +	42	73	50
Total	53	71	57

Question: In which languages should the government of (province of interview) provide service to the public?

5c. Service from business: percentage within category saying English and French

	English	*French*	*Total*
15-24	66	72	68
25-34	47	74	54
35-40	39	76	47
41-49	40	70	49
50 +	33	77	44
Total	46	74	53

Question: In which languages should business in (province of interview) provide services to the public?

What does the future hold?

Overall, then, this first review of data from the Canadian Facts survey yields a positive picture of attitudes to official languages. Although language policy has not

TABLE 6

Views of minority-language service by institution

6a. Education in minority language: percentage within category saying yes

	English	*French*	*Total*
15-24	83	91	85
25-34	71	86	75
35-40	68	87	72
41-49	65	82	70
50 +	56	88	64
Total	68	87	73

Question: Should (minority official-language) residents of (province of interview) be entitled to have their children educated in their own language?

6b. Hospital service in minority language: percentage within category saying yes

	English	*French*	*Total*
15-24	81	90	83
25-34	66	89	72
35-40	61	89	66
41-49	62	85	69
50 +	53	90	62
Total	65	89	71

Question: Should (minority-language) residents of (province of interview) be entitled to receive hospital services in their own language?

6c. Post Office service in the minority language: percentage within category saying yes

	English	*French*	*Total*
15-24	75	88	78
25-34	56	84	63
35-40	53	87	60
41-49	50	78	58
50 +	41	83	51
Total	55	84	62

Question: Should (minority-language) residents of (province of interview) be entitled to receive service in their own language when they buy stamps at the Post Office?

6d. Department store service in the minority language: percentage within category saying yes

	English	*French*	*Total*
15-24	58	83	64
25-34	40	82	51
35-40	37	83	46
41-49	32	72	44
50 +	31	83	44
Total	40	81	51

Question: Should (minority-language) residents of (province of interview) be entitled to receive services in their own language in a department store?

altered the distribution of English and French as spoken languages in Canada, it has apparently had a substantial impact on public opinion. There is now general acceptance of the language duality of the country. Support among Francophones of all ages has been maintained at historic levels, while Anglophones have become more positive. To a remarkable degree, they now endorse the rights of Francophones to receive services from key institutions in French and they see the future of Canada as bilingual. The attitudes of young Anglophones in particular seem to have been strongly influenced by the main directions of Canada's official-languages policy since the mid-sixties: they have now embraced the country's linguistic duality wholeheartedly.

Of course, language policy must not be taken to mean only federal policy. Many of the majority English-speaking provinces have also carried out important programs to extend public services in French. In the educational field, federal-provincial co-operation has enshrined minority-language education in the Canadian Charter of Rights and Freedoms (despite the Quebec government's official decision to abstain from endorsing the form and content of the constitutional changes). By and large, public policies of all levels of government have given French a more significant role in the lives of Canadians throughout the country.

And, it would appear, young English Canadians are ready for even more. The youngest group in the survey (aged 15 to 24) has generally not participated in French immersion programs in the lower years of elementary school, since the expansion of these programs occurred in the late 1970s and early 1980s. Yet their attitudes towards the other official language are very favourable. There is every reason to expect that the attitudes of the next generation of Anglophones, those now under 15, will be still more favourable.

It is, of course, possible that the young may be enamoured with official languages only when they are young, and that the enchantment may fade. It is even conceivable that commitment may turn to disillusionment in the face of a prevailing unilingualism that is resistant to the good intentions displayed by the survey. Here, however, we are prepared to make that leap of faith that goes beyond what can be inferred strictly from the data. It seems very likely to us that young people's attitudes toward official languages will last into adulthood. There is much general evidence on attitude formation to suggest that the critical years are adolescence and early adulthood, and that experience erodes principles only very slowly. If this is the case, the question to be asked in the future may not be the fearful one that has haunted policy makers in the past: "Will there be a backlash?" Instead, the relevant question may be: "How can the implementation of policy keep pace?"

"On the whole, these young authors show a remarkable degree of unanimity as to goals: with virtually no exceptions, they seek peace, harmony, and linguistic equality. Even those who fantasize about a violent, strife-ridden future do not approve such a scenario."

Youth speaks out

KENNETH D. McRAE
JEAN-PAUL L'ALLIER

Our task was to analyse from a socio-political standpoint the 20 winning and 12 publishable entries together with a selection of quotations drawn from a wider group of approximately 100 entries, to look at how these young people perceive and visualize their country, their fellow citizens, and especially their language milieu.

It soon became apparent that this material was not really a representative sample of the ideas of all young Canadians, and that it should not be analysed as if it were. For one thing, by entering the contest, the participants were showing a level of awareness of the language question that we could not assume was shared by all young people.

This was evident from the fact that both in Quebec and in the Anglophone provinces more entries were submitted in the minority language than would be expected in a normal distribution. From Quebec 31 per cent of entries were in English, while for the Anglophone provinces about 12 per cent of entries were in French. In some provinces the proportion of entries in French ran considerably higher: 15 per cent in Saskatchewan, 29 per cent in Manitoba, and 56 per cent in New Brunswick.

A further consideration was that our smaller group of winning and publishable entries was not necessarily representative — either in content or attitude — of the contest entries as a whole. What we were looking at in this group was a select sample of the work of some perceptive, motivated, articulate young people. While one could argue that these young writers may be among tomorrow's opinion leaders or intellectuals, it would be incorrect to take their views as representative of the ideas of young Canadians in general, or even of all the contest entrants as a group. After all, did not Jean-Jacques Rousseau emerge from obscurity to win the prize of the Academy of Dijon by directly challenging some of the most widely accepted ideas of his age?

In general, analysis of this material poses three major challenges. First, the unrepresentative nature of the winning and publishable entries makes any quantitative analysis of limited usefulness. Second, the subject matter in the essays is highly diversified, as multi-faceted as the Canadian scene itself, and this makes generalizations difficult. Finally, this was a *creative* writing contest. The imagination of the artist is not easily dissected by the analytical techniques of the social scientist. As one of the judges perceptively remarked, "the themes seemed clearest in the worst work ... since sophisticated prose tends to be ambiguous and works at a few levels at once." We concur in this view. In the best entries, the author's position is often unobtrusive or complex, and any direct didactic element is subtly camouflaged.

In spite of these difficulties, the thoughts, images, perceptions and ideas of young people in Canada can be extracted from these entries and analysed in terms of the perceptions and values they portray. Such analysis inevitably involves a subjective element, and at an early stage the two assessors agreed to look at these essays, independently, from their own personal standpoints, one Anglophone, the other Francophone. At this point we had no sense of the degree to which the two analyses might coincide or overlap.

Kenneth D. McRae is professor of political science at Carleton University in Ottawa. He has served as a research supervisor for the B. B. Commission, and his current research is on multilingual societies, including Canada.

Between 1970 and 1976, **Jean-Paul L'Allier** was a member of the Quebec cabinet, first as Minister of Communications, then as Minister of Cultural Affairs. He currently heads a consulting firm specializing in program and project evaluation.

Report of K.D. McRae

One should begin by complimenting these young authors on their achievements. In the entries we have examined, there is some good creative work: poems or lines of poems that touch us and stay in the mind, such as the rough but powerful imagery of Graham Finlay's *La langue québécoise*; characters in short stories that remain etched vividly long after the story is read, such as *Darryl* (Ieva Grants) or *Pépère* (Francis Thompson); amusing fables (such as Patrick Bronsard's *Au merveilleux pays des Shacks*), or serious essays that comment perceptively on the anomalies and asymmetries of the Canadian linguistic scene; and delightful tricks with words, as in Dean Hassan's sly reference to "These two enigmatic peoples of the Dysropean proto-culture."

One becomes increasingly aware of a simple, two-fold division of categories that serves to classify a large proportion of these works. One group is concerned primarily with the dilemma of the individual confronted with the need or opportunity to communicate in the other official language.

The second group is concerned with social settings that juxtapose differing or unfamiliar cultural and social values. The core issue for this group is often not so much language itself or formal communication as the cognitive or attitudinal change that results from contact.

Personal bilingualism

A good many of the authors bear witness to the difficulties involved in achieving personal bilingualism. The pain, the effort, the endless boring classroom hours spent in learning a second language, the memories of shame or ridicule after failure to meet a challenge — all these are feelingly depicted. Some of the characters carry lasting complexes from failure at a critical moment; others eventually succeed against earlier odds and triumph through persistence. These difficulties in coping with the second official language contribute to that much analysed phenomenon, the Canadian inferiority complex. They also tend to divert attention from the content of what is said to problems of its expression. By contrast, comfortable bilingualism is usually associated in these entries with self-confidence and social success.

In the fiction and non-fiction entries alike, the advantages of bilingualism are generally recognized and usually spelled out in economic terms. Virtually all of the writers view personal bilingualism first in instrumental terms, as an economic resource bringing tangible material gains. The message of the three gifts

Commentary by Jean-Paul L'Allier

In poems and stories, an impressive number of young Canadians responded to the Commissioner's invitation by openly expressing the fears, joys, uncertainties and hopes of life in a bilingual country.

They may have been guided by teachers, encouraged by parents, or simply attracted by the idea of entering a contest: nonetheless, these young authors show an exceptional awareness of the linguistic and cultural issues facing them and their country.

Although our analysis of even the best of their texts lacks the rigour of a truly scientific examination, it is undeniable that the situations these young people have depicted through a blend of reality and imagination bear a strange resemblance to the findings of serious, detailed studies and in-depth analyses.

Among the major aspirations expressed in their works, I would single out the following: a thirst for knowledge and discovery, a need for brotherhood and peace, a vague desire to do things differently from their parents, and an acceptance of their country's vastness and simplicity — a country that is basically made up of two major cultural entities pursuing parallel courses.

In their writings, these young people are more categorical than critical. They are prepared to hope for the best even as they state, with naive awareness, that there is little hope of achieving their personal goals or those they share with others.

Francophone perceptions

Francophones outside Quebec do not doubt the value of bilingualism: it must be encouraged and defended. But to them, being bilingual means more than simply learning English; it means taking pains to emphasize the French language, to remember it, and sometimes even to learn it all over again.

Our young authors hardly touch the political aspect of the problem, nor do they deal with the underlying causes of the obstacles they meet with every day.

With them as with their fellow Francophones in Quebec, bilingualism is essentially a matter of personal and economic growth — or, sometimes, of simple survival. Their texts, amply illustrating these themes, sometimes emphasize how the minority experience prevented their parents or close friends from obtaining their due. Obviously, they wish to avoid the same fate.

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of the genie is instructive in this regard: palaces and gold may be destroyed or stolen, but the benefits of bilingualism are lasting and also bring handsome material rewards:

> Je sais communiquer,
> J'ai un poste régulier,
> Je me fais bien payer,
> J'ai été fortunée.
> (Michelle Morra)

These lines are not untypical, and they speak volumes.

If the Francophone writers tend to emphasize the material benefits of personal bilingualism, this is a perception — and undoubtedly a correct one — of the differential opportunity structure of Canadian society. But the economic advantages of bilingualism are also recognized in a slightly different way by the Anglophone contestants, who tend to see it bringing wider and more interesting career opportunities at both the national and the international level. Beyond the economic factor, but with somewhat less emphasis, these young people see personal bilingualism as a cultural asset, as an aid to full development as a person, as an instrument for communication with fellow-citizens, as a world-wide passport for the international traveller, and as a path to amity among Canadians. For some Anglophones, personal bilingualism also eases the perennial problem of Canadian identity. A capacity to speak another language allows Canadians to feel distinct from — and even superior to — their American neighbours. On the other hand, those who are critical of official bilingualism ground their disapproval on a perception that personal bilingualism has become an increasing requirement in universities, government and the legal profession. When the authors depict immigrants of other languages, official bilingualism may be combined with retention of the immigrant language. Once again, the result is tangible material reward (Ingrid Mazzola's *Ils sont venus de loin ...*).

Some contestants, drawing upon a fertile imagination, reach out to resolve the central issue of language fluency by supernatural means. The genie that confers the gift of bilingualism (Michelle Morra), the book that contains the hidden key to all the world's tongues (Michel Desmarais), the gene of bilingualism introduced into the water supply (Rina Lee) — all these devices seem to acknowledge indirectly the burden and the difficulty of achieving personal bilingualism. Is it mere coincidence that these three entries were all submitted in French? Or is their resort to "magic" solutions an indication of a greater linguistic burden felt by young Francophones? The hypothesis of differential burden or differential language pressure is supported by other evidence. For Anglophones, personal bilingualism seems most often to be seen as an adornment, an enrichment, a cultural bonus (but also carrying economic benefits), while Francophones represent it as a burden, a hard reality, an economic price

(J.P. L'Allier)

But neither Canada's essential nature or Quebec's position within Confederation are called into question.

Rose-Marie Lafrance, a 22-year old teacher living in Quebec, went to teach French in Winnipeg for two years. Born in the Saguenay-Lac Saint-Jean region, she had always been able to ignore the problems arising from Canada's linguistic and cultural duality. As she freely admits, she really didn't care very much about the fate of Francophone minorities in Ontario and Manitoba.

Before her departure, she had only a vague idea of what it might mean to belong to a cultural minority. "Aujourd'hui," she writes, "je le sais et je constate, non sans tristesse, que les Francophones résidant à l'extérieur du Québec se dirigent lentement vers l'assimilation."

In Quebec, particularly in Montreal, she adds, "la minorité de langue anglaise se veut dynamique, visible et revendicatrice à ses heures. En comparaison, les Francophones de Saint-Boniface m'apparaissent discrets et effacés."

However, Rose-Marie writes without bitterness. She reports on what she has seen and perceived — a reality which many other young authors express, more or less clearly, each in his own way.

To belong to a Francophone minority outside Quebec, Northern Ontario or New Brunswick is to live a difficult life and pay a high price every day. A choice must be made between self-assertion and integration with the majority — while secretly hoping that our laws, Constitution, and governments will do their share to halt assimilation.

As for Francophone Quebecers, they march to the beat of a different drum from that of the previous generation. The vision of a Québécois nation is no longer their first concern.

Language and culture are not everything. In a consumer-oriented society, where the quality of life and the environment take priority, Quebec's young Francophones — just as their counterparts in the Anglophone provinces — are pragmatic realists. Without giving in to defeatism, they have chosen to live a more comfortable life rather than to defend positions and principles which "numbers no longer warrant."

To them, economic realities take top priority, and personal success requires a sound knowledge of the useful and unavoidable other language.

Anglophone views

By contrast, most young Anglophone participants see the value of learning French in cultural terms, as the source of the major difference between Canada and the United States and a means of developing better ties

(K.D. McRae)

to be paid for an elite career (but a price which most Francophones depicted in these entries nevertheless seem willing to pay).

If some contestants seek solutions in the realm of fantasy, others take refuge in romanticism. A common theme of the short stories and poetry alike is the ability of young people in particular to transcend the difficulties of bilingual communication through love, or sexual attraction, or even simple friendship. One can communicate in spite of language differences:

> Words, we did not really need,
> And yet, because we cared, we tried to learn.
> (Shelina Kassam)

As has been said before, such situations are an incentive to enhanced personal bilingualism.

An extension of this view is that what really matters in human communication stands apart from language or speech and is more important. The medium is *not* the message. Karen Connely's Monsieur Nolan, teaching French verbs to an inattentive Anglophone class, has more important things to tell them, and the students discover this only after his departure. Some of the more reflective contestants dismiss bilingualism as superficial discourse, a barrier that obscures more meaningful levels of language.

Societal bilingualism

If many of the poems and short stories focus on personal bilingualism and problems of communication, others are concerned with the interaction of individuals, groups, and institutions in a plurilingual society. Most of the non-fiction entries also appear to fall within this second category. What stands out in the work of these young authors is an almost universal emphasis upon the cultural differences and distance between Anglophone and Francophone society in Canada. This is often most eloquently stated in the poetry:

> Nos cours d'école sont parallèles...
> Elles ne se rejoignent pas.
> (Sylvie Frigon)

Further, cultural distance persists in spite of a recognition of the common Canadian environment:

> We are different
> In our same world.
> (Nadene Sinclair)

This cultural distance is sometimes bridged or transcended, and sometimes not. But it never disappears altogether. From this we might conclude that Canada's underlying cultural duality, so often obscured by other aspects of cultural fragmentation, has come of age and is taken seriously by these young writers. No doubt Francophone Canadians have always been aware of

(J.P. L'Allier)

with other French-language communities throughout the world.

It is no exaggeration to say that Anglophone Canadians outside Quebec see French as something exotic. They speak French because one of their parents speaks it, because their family has frequently travelled abroad, or as the result of a cultural choice based on language-learning abilities. They never do it out of necessity. This point of view, which differentiates them from Francophone Canadians, will certainly influence their future behaviour.

Anglophone Quebecers see themselves both as an active minority within Quebec's Francophone majority and as an extension, in Quebec, of the Canadian majority.

Unlike Colin Lynch of Toronto, they do not say "quand je parle français et que j'entends ma voix et celle de celui qui me répond, je perçois un peu le mystère du moment, comme une chandelle qui s'allume dans une immense nuit." To them, being Anglophone in Quebec means living in an ambiguous situation: they are Quebecers, but not Francophones; they are Anglophones, but they come from Quebec.

However, they are optimistic because they see bilingualism gaining ground among Francophones at the same or even quicker pace as their fellow Anglophones are learning French.

Do they realize that, of the two linguistic minorities, they are the best organized, the best equipped and the most likely not only to survive but to flourish? Nothing is less certain.

A bilingual country? Well, everyone accepts bilingualism in principle and few oppose it in fact. However, the militancy of the '60s and '70s has vanished, at least in social and political terms.

Although older participants may use a slightly more political language than their juniors, it is nothing like what was heard in Canada only 10 or 20 years ago.

Shared Outlooks

Both Anglophone and Francophone young Canadians attach the most importance to personal values; they differ little in this regard from the youth of other Western nations with whom they form a true philosophical community. They all seek a better society, one without conflict, aggression, rigid borders or structures.

A recognition of Canadian duality, the need for friendly co-existence and the importance of human values are some of the broad principles which surface in most of the submissions. The younger generation focusses its attention on economic problems; the major

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this cultural distance, but it seems unlikely that Anglophone young people of 20 or 30 years ago would have exhibited a similar level of awareness. In this respect the Quiet Revolution, the separatist movement, and the political tensions of the 1960s and the 1970s have had their effect on intellectual awareness, and the result has been positive for intergroup relations.

The situation portrayed by these writers is not, however, healthy in all respects. Beyond the recognition of cultural differences, there is a second theme that touches on inequalities between the two cultures, on the differential power relationships in Canadian society. Sometimes this theme is handled subtly and deftly, by an unobtrusive remark, a gesture, or attitude; sometimes it is portrayed brutally and directly, taking the form of raw power or even violence. The relationship can be discerned in both Anglophone and Francophone writers and in the characters they have created. In the Francophones, it often takes the form of pessimism, resignation, acquiescence, or passivity. In Anglophones, it may appear as a feeling of superiority, of belonging to the majority group ("This is an English country and English should be the one language used."), or as an expression of sympathy for the underdog.

One sub-theme that deserves mention is the position of the linguistic minorities in both cultures. Some authors who have themselves lived the minority experience or who have observed it at close quarters showed a literary sensitivity and craftmanship far beyond their years. Among other things, their work shows us how the experience of the Francophone minorities can be different from that of Anglophones in Quebec. As one Francophone explains to his Anglophone friend, "Paul, when you're the only French family in town, you blend in or you move" (Michael O'Neill). For Anglo-Quebecers, on the other hand, the problem is not assimilative pressures, but rather non-acceptance by their Francophone neighbours. Some of these authors give us deep insight into the feelings of the minorities and the cultural tensions of their situation, but they tend to remain at a descriptive rather than a prescriptive level.

The entries in the fiction category are crowded with characters who feel or express prejudice, hostility or anger towards other ethnic or linguistic groups. The point of many a short story is how to cope with these feelings, or what events they lead to, or how the feelings are transmuted or softened by a critical event or incident. A few stories go beyond this level of hostility into active violence or murder, or into futuristic science-fiction scenarios of a nightmarish kind. Thus we have the licensed hunter and destroyer of Francophones in the Orwellian *Open Season*; the mass murderer Monika in *Private War*; or the atavistic violence — more chilling because it is so skilfully realistic and so plausibly universalist — in the untitled story by Ieva Grants on the fruit pickers.

(J.P. L'Allier)

cultural and political issues facing Canadians appear to be of less concern to it.

If we try to predict future trends from an examination of the submissions, we may expect that acceptance of a bilingual country will quickly gain ground among young people unless unforeseeable events aggravate latent oppositions and conflicts.

Evidently, the theme of the contest led most participants to write primarily about Anglophones and Francophones. In their definition of Canada, few included ethnic groups or new immigrants, who of necessity become members of one of the two official-language groups. Our young writers do not immediately associate immigrants with "the art of living in a bilingual country."

Nor is their definition the one put forth by men like Lester B. Pearson over a generation ago, by Pierre Trudeau later, or by Brian Mulroney today.

Canada, as seen through the eyes of these young people, is first and foremost a geographical entity: an immense country where brotherhood should prevail over conflicts of jurisdiction or organization; a poorly understood country, difficult to grasp as a whole except in terms of size.

To young people, bilingualism is an individual rather than an institutional issue. The country's existence does not require the two major language groups to integrate or fuse, but to co-exist in a spirit of self- and mutual respect.

To Quebecers, the inevitability of bilingualism could re-open the issue of Quebec being "as French as Ontario is English," as Gérard Pelletier once said. However, nothing expressed by today's youth and particularly by our participants, suggests that this controversy will be revived in coming years.

Young Canadians, regardless of their origin or linguistic allegiance, seem to have more in common than ever before, even though they still really know relatively little about one another. They feel the world is a harsh and pragmatic one, and dream of living according to humanistic values: kindness, beauty and love.

Improving their lot takes precedence, for them, over politics. The national issue seems to belong to another era, and cultural, even linguistic, concerns are only important insofar as they affect their existential concerns.

They do not think in terms of defending a political entity or building a nation, but in terms of inhabiting a territory that must be shared with others.

This acceptance of co-existence suggests — at least to young people — the possibility of taking bilingualism

(K.D. McRae)

It is true that some form of redemption or retribution usually occurs in these stories, but that is not quite the point. No doubt it is a good thing for criminals to repent of their acts, but it would be better if their crimes did not happen in the first place. There is an area here for concern and study, for as these entries demonstrate, it is a simple, easy step from some of the everyday fare of television and cinema to imaginary projections of ethnic violence in Canada.

The contestants themselves do not address this problem directly. Their experience lies elsewhere, and the remedies for prejudice and conflict that they propose are of a somewhat different kind. The most important and most frequently mentioned remedy for prejudice and hostility for these writers is undoubtedly increased personal contact. The subject matter for a large number of these young people is student exchanges, visits to another language region for study or work, travel in general, and other forms of meetings. The beneficial effects of contact are frequently cited directly or developed implicitly, and indeed for the fiction entries this is quite often the main point of the story. The general assumption seems to be that with increased contact, fundamentally rational individuals will understand each other better and intergroup relations will improve.

Another remedy is faith in the values of youth. Frequently, for these authors, it is the young who teach the old the values of openness and tolerance, who open up channels of communication hitherto closed. The idea is hardly a new one. It is part of a myth shared by every generation as it contemplates the state of the world left by its parents, a myth unfailingly attacked in turn by the new generation's progeny. However, one can also discern here a certain process of intergenerational attitudinal change: the language policies that so perturbed the 1960s have won wide acceptance among these contestants and have become for them part of the accepted Canadian mythology.

A third remedy for intercultural conflict is sport. One short story uses teamwork and effort for a common cause as the cement to bring linguistically diverse protagonists together to produce a typically Canadian, not-quite-but-almost-winning effort (Ray Weremczuk). Another emphasizes the unifying effect of sport — in this case hockey — on mass audiences and on the Canadian population at large (Steve Bowden).

Finally, some find a remedy for conflict in humour, in an ability to cut through the tensions and difficulties of societal bilingualism with laughter. Humorous entries are not very numerous, but they include a variety of cartoons, comic strips, fables, satire, and short stories. Among the more imaginative entries in this category, one author develops two complete competing language systems from representations of animal noises and the sounds of nature (Patrick Bronsard), while another chronicles the adventures of *Bip, the Bilingual Worm*

(J.P. L'Allier)

further in each of the regions while making it more practical, the focus being on needs rather than constitutional rights.

Peace before confrontation is a catchword for today's youth, but it is more than that: it is a rejection of past quarrels on the grounds that they don't seem to have gotten us anywhere.

Yes, their imagination is sometimes limited by ignorance of reality, the "art of living" often boils down to personal comfort, and bilingualism is sometimes evoked without conviction merely to comply with the contest's theme, but none of this matters very much if the submissions are read in order to understand young people's motivations.

Is it a question of age or era? The writings of these young people show them to be serene, generous, naive and worried. They seem fragile and eager, displaying a great thirst for beauty, happiness and justice. Because they are unfamiliar with the actual situation, young people would rather err on the side of openness and generosity than believe bogeyman stories about the past.

Majorities and minorities

On rereading the texts, those of Francophones outside Quebec seem to be the saddest, sometimes the most tragic or even the most defeatist. Their authors give the impression that they have no illusions about the survival, let alone the growth, of the French language.

Nonetheless, they are ready to believe that things are better elsewhere and remain willing to defend bilingualism by protecting their mother tongue, since they have already mastered English.

Some may speak of two nations, two cultures and two peoples in images of two rivers, two mountains, two brothers or two families: such is not the case for Francophones outside Quebec, who wonder how they can possibly survive without sooner or later falling victim to assimilation.

It would thus be hazardous to assume that young Francophones outside Quebec defend their dignity any more than their language or culture, when the economic environment will not allow them to grow unless they confine their use of French to the home.

Most often, it is Anglophones who speak of duality, in generous and unbiased terms, without mentioning religion or even Canadian history — which, in any case, is different for Francophones and Anglophones.

Stéphane Larose, a 21-year old from Repentigny, Quebec, tells the story of twin brothers, one of whom is Francophone and the other Anglophone. Although it may not be the most elegant text I read, it is probably the one which best and most succinctly describes the

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(Claudia Monsanto). Several others find humour in food labelling, making us aware that the country would be in even graver condition if it lacked bilingual cereal boxes.

On the whole, these young authors show a remarkable degree of unanimity as to goals: with virtually no exceptions, they seek peace, harmony, and linguistic equality. Even those who fantasize about a violent, strife-ridden future clearly do not approve such a scenario. On this point their attitudes appear to bear out the reputation of Canada as a peaceable kingdom. There are, however, varying degrees of optimism or pessimism concerning whether peaceful linguistic equality will prevail. My impression from this collection is that pessimism occurs more frequently on the Francophone side, but the sample, as noted earlier, is not necessarily representative of Canadian youth attitudes generally.

These young writers hold up a mirror for Canadian society to look at itself, and their work suggests to us questions about the fair treatment of minorities (linguistic and otherwise), or about the role of violence in society and in the media, that should be of concern for those involved in the education or socialization of young people. The problems we glimpse in this mirror are doubtless not burning issues at present. But the best time to work on attitudinal problems is when they are minor and manageable.

(J.P. L'Allier)

situation of the few young Quebecers who have thought on this subject. After a trying conversation with his English-speaking brother, the Francophone twin becomes absorbed in thought. He wonders: "Mais a-t-il raison de penser que le bilinguisme ne devrait s'appliquer qu'aux Francophones ? Pourquoi devrais-je savoir deux langues et mon frère seulement une ? Pourquoi ai-je ressenti cette bizarre impression qu'il voulait nous condamner, nous les Francophones, à une perpétuelle schizophrénie linguistique ou, pis encore, à une assimilation complète ? De toute façon, qu'est-ce qui est mieux : bien parler une langue ou mal en parler deux ?"

In a democracy, this is the eternal problem of balancing the power of majorities and minorities, of defining equality, and of exercising one's rights in spite of concrete, day-to-day obstacles.

In summary, regardless of the images they use, all the authors endorse one or the other of the following ideas: for young Anglophones, consciously trying to create a greater openness across Canada, bilingualism is a "question of culture"; for Francophones, who see it more as a tool to work with, bilingualism is a "question of survival".

Conclusion

For young people, the main use of language and culture is interpersonal communication. They assume that anything likely to improve the quality of life, of the environment, or of economic conditions is worth consideration. On the other hand, anything that creates discord, conflict and antagonism should be avoided.

Will this country ever become truly bilingual? Is it now as bilingual as it ever will be? Is it becoming unilingual, although officially bilingual? Such questions currently of concern to politicians and language experts are not answered by young people. In fact, they hardly seem interested.

In general, the increased openness, most evident among young Anglophones across Canada, toward the French fact is a remarkable gain when compared to the situation only one or two generations ago. However, the relative deterioration of the position and importance of French, at least outside Quebec, is certainly not Canada's gain.

Young people of every region, whether Anglophone or Francophone, avoid facing the issue in terms of ethnicity or politics, that is, in terms of power. Yet, their writings reflect unequal access to power, organizations and even economic development. It would seem that for many Francophones and Anglophones, such inequality is simply a fact of life.

However, if it is true that bilingualism is vital to this country, that genuine and practical recognition of the cultures which must coexist is a fundamental Canadian characteristic, then surely it should be recognized that constant attention must be paid to protecting the political basics. Thus, should not the civic, political and social education of children and young people put more emphasis on such concerns?

Young people are not interested in this route; the thought of collective effort no longer mobilizes them. Two contradictory conclusions thus emerge: on the one hand, events of the past few years leave us pessimistic if we consider that the federal government's national project is now two or three generations old. On the other hand, in light of the generosity, openness and willingness of young people to see both linguistic groups co-exist peacefully in Canada, anything seems possible, provided that we agree to reshape our ideas instead of clinging to concepts and doctrines which may sound familiar to people over 40 but do not interest youth.

Now that the goal of bilingualism seems to be more generally accepted, we obviously must show greater flexibility and imagination in meeting its challenge, thus continuing to live up to our country's uniqueness.

That, at least, is what stays with us after analysing these texts from all over Canada. A close look at what the participants are saying about official languages shows that it is no different from what young people are saying about the economy, the job market, employers and unions; it illustrates the basic structure of the society in which they wish to raise their children, and which will contrast with our society as much as society today contrasts with that of the '40s or '50s.

Beyond the two solitudes

FERNAND DORÉ

In honour of International Youth Year, this issue of *Language and Society* focusses on Canadian youth by publishing the best of the 1,500 entries submitted to the "Put It in Words" contest. The following pages contain the 20 winning texts (five in English and five in French from each of the two age categories) as well as 12 other entries considered to be of publication quality. The winning texts were selected by panels of established writers brought together by the Canada Council.

Although entrants were asked to express themselves in the written word, the contest was not intended to be a literary one. Essentially, its purpose was to offer young people an opportunity to give their views and feelings about the linguistic duality of their country. On that score, the Commissioner's editorial and the remarks of Kenneth McRae and Jean-Paul L'Allier have already provided the reader with considerable insight.

The nine panel members, all of them writers, commented in some detail on the creative merit of the entries and the language in which they were expressed. The reason we mention this here is that parents, teachers and educational authorities, as well as the private and public sectors, are attaching increasing importance to this question, no doubt because they have once again become aware of the major role played by language in the cultural, political and economic life of society. After all, the interaction of our thought process and language are well-known: if one is disorganized, the other will almost inevitably also be disorganized.

Two of the three Francophone panelists deplored the fact that so many of the French-language entries were poorly expressed. In the words of Marie Josée Thériault: "Those who have best mastered French are not Franco-Ontarians, not Franco-Manitobans, not Acadians, nor even Québécois of purely French background. The texts that are best written, almost faultless, and in the clearest and most elegant language, come from young people of European or Asian origin, born abroad." By contrast, five of the six Anglophone panelists said they were agreeably surprised by the high standard of English entries, with the exception of a number of poems.

These statements raise two questions. Were the demands and expectations of the Francophone judges higher than those of their Anglophone colleagues? And is there really a difference between the two groups in the level of language skills?

After reading a large number of the texts and the panelists' comments, Professor McRae noted that, if indeed young Anglophones have a better grasp of English than Francophones do of French, we should look into whether this is due to teaching methods, to less stringent academic standards or to sociolinguistic conditions prevailing in Canada and on the North American continent as a whole. In his view, the development of better teaching strategies and methods would certainly remedy the situation.

That said, we should be heartened by the fact that so many young people contributed to the continuing debate about Canada's present and future linguistic situation. These many expressions of opinion, both coinciding and conflicting, tell of the distress of young Francophones living in a minority situation; the reservations, suspicions, even grievances of Anglo-Quebecers; the fears of Francophone Quebecers that bilingualism might further corrupt an already threatened mother tongue; and the sometimes veiled, sometimes open hostility of some English-speaking Canadians toward the French fact. They also point up the futility of past conflicts and the need to accept linguistic and cultural differences and turn them to advantage. Last, and most important, they reveal the passionate desire of many young people in both language groups to build better linkages between the two solitudes and to fulfill their dream of a country in which peace, mutual recognition and respect may reign supreme.

We are grateful to the many contestants for expressing themselves so openly; variety and contrast, after all, are what give depth and breadth to a concert.

And now ...

over to our authors!

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Caroline Adderson

SHORT STORY

Waiting for Claudine

The glowing arrivals and departures screen gives me no hint that anything of significance will come out of this impending cultural liaison. I have reasons to be optimistic about Claudine, my English Immersion billet. But perhaps I have more reasons to be pessimistic. She won't be the first billet I will have met.

Fifteen years ago Solange came into my family's home in much the same way as Claudine will be entering mine. Then sixteen, a ball of frustration and anxiety, I gained no understanding of Solange, let alone the French culture.

My mother arranged that Solange would stay with us for six weeks while she took English classes at the university. My best and, I suppose, only friend, Beverly, was spending the summer in the Okanagan with her grandparents and my mother thought that Solange would be good for me. I knew immediately that she was medicine for my anti-social tendencies, so I was against her from the moment I heard her smooth and sensuous name.

And Solange was smooth and sensuous. I was smoking in my bedroom when my mother ushered her in. She was taller than I with black hair down to her waist and watery black eyes. Her clothes seemed strange. At that time I wore only T-shirts and jeans, but she wore what was taboo to me — a loose peasant skirt and a full blouse. She dropped her backpack on the floor and said 'Allo'.

'Hi.'

'My name is Solange.' She spoke with a strong accent, especially her 'i's'.

'Hi.'

'You are Judy?' She said: Joodee. That was one thing I liked. I felt like a different person.

'Yeah.'

She sat down on a chair opposite the bed and took off her cloth shoulder bag. Jumbling her hands around inside for a moment, she pulled out a blue cigarette package. She pursed her red lips and inserted the cigarette, lighting it with a wooden match.

'I like smoking. It's funny.' (SmokING; funnY.)

Funny? In a moment the room was filled with a rank odour that stung my nostrils.

'What the hell are you smoking?'

'Gitanes,' she replied. 'You like it?'

I was speechless for a moment, incredulous that anyone would choose something so foul to give themselves cancer with. I shook my head. She motioned that I should try a puff. My eyes widened at the thought and I refused. Out of courtesy, I offered her a drag of mine.

'Oh, that's for the babies,' she said with a laugh, 'I smoke that when I was two.'

Up until this point I was simply dazzled by her appearance and slightly miffed by her criticism, but the next thing she did almost knocked me off the bed. Laying her still-burning cigarette on the desk, she stood up, removed her sandals and began undressing. She stood before me, her brown, bare breasts looking at me and saying 'you've never seen anything like this before, have you?'. My Anglo-Saxon pure and proper heritage suddenly descended upon me like an avalanche and my jaw dropped. A small gurgling noise escaped me and Solange looked up from where she was digging through her backpack, innocent as Eve herself. My expression must have startled her. She quickly explained she was changing and hastily threw on another rather wrinkled blouse. I was never confronted by those breasts again as, in the future, she changed her clothes in the bathroom.

Our first morning together was typical of all the mornings that followed. When I stumbled to the table I was shocked to see my father, who was usually

grumbling in the kitchen over broken yolks, sitting at the table drinking coffee. I learned that Solange had risen at the same time and insisted that she prepare 'déjeuner'. My father, a lazy man at heart, was delighted. He casually informed me that they had been having a very 'charming' conversation on the changes that had happened to rue Ste-Catherine since my father frequented the smoked meat shops of his McGill days.

We were normally silent. Mom would read the paper and Dad would read a report and I was always reticent out of protest and grogginess. But throughout the meal Solange chatted and my father kept saying 'you should teach Judy to cook, she won't learn by me'. My mother nodded each time in agreement and remarked that it was a 'fabulous meal'. After the third ejaculation of this kind I had sufficiently lost my appetite and retired to my room to smoke.

At that point in my life I was experiencing all the common traumas of adolescence: estrangement from my parents, paranoia over my personal appearance and certainty that the entire world owed me something. And there was Solange, aggravating each of these conditions as a coarse cloth aggravates a sore. For I was always sore and, in her simplicity and straightforwardness, she was coarse. Where I loathed and resented all adult interference in my life, Solange spoke to adults on her own terms, like an equal. I was stout and red-headed with pudgy, insignificant features; she looked like a gypsy. And Solange seemed so sure of her place in the universe.

Once, in my absence, my mother arranged with Solange that I would take her to the beach. Basket in hand and unlit Gitane hanging from her lips, Solange boarded the bus and I followed. Luckily for me she met a classmate; but together in that mish-mash of 'ben ouis' and 'pis' she told lurid tales of horrible Judy and her ugliness and stupidity to this mop-headed French boy. I had no way of verifying if I had correctly interpreted their conversation, but that made no difference. I heard only what I wanted to hear, even if I couldn't understand a word of the language.

'Do you like French?' she asked as we reached the sand.

'How do I know? I can't understand it.'

'No. I mean do you like the *sound* of French?'

'No.'

'But why?' She was extremely surprised by my response.

'It's too fast. You run all your words together.'

'It's not true! French is beautiful. It is music. It's smooth.' (Smooth like the black-eyed Solange.) 'English is so...rough.'

'If you don't like English, why are you here?' I retorted, almost too quickly for my own liking.

'To be anyone in this world one must speak English. You are lucky to live here.'

I had never considered myself lucky before. 'Why don't you move here then?' The idea was distasteful, but I was her host, so I kept the conversation going, and asked.

'Oh, it's not my place, I'm French, not English.'

'What difference does it make?'

'All the difference. We are opposite.'

'Opposite?'

'Yes. You are on top and I am on the bottom. But we French make up for that in other ways.'

I was dumbfounded by her words. She, the raven, felt that I was on top. 'What are your ways?'

'We have our own dance and music. We have invented a unique language. On St-Jean-Baptiste Day we drink and eat tourtière and we praise the Virgin Mary that we are French and we are family.'

When it dawned on me that she was sharing something with me, I panicked. I took the basket from her and we ate lunch in silence. We went home in the same silence.

About a week later Solange began to get bored.

'Judy, don't you do anything?'

This was a sore point for me as my parents were always haranguing me over the same issue. I felt, however, that I did an amazing amount for one so young. Most of these activities, however, were acted out within the perimeters of my mind. 'No, I don't do anything.'

'In Montréal I like to go to cafés on rue St-Denis. This is a long street. Along each side are sidewalk cafés. At night there is music and in the morning there are fresh croissants. It's funny to go there.'

'Ha ha.'

Somehow I ended up in a Vancouver café with Solange. I felt that everyone was staring at how beautiful she was and the waiter, noticing her accent, spoke to her in French. We didn't talk. She just listened to the folk music (which I hated) and sipped her coffee. Obviously, she was in her milieu. I imagined her on rue St-Denis, a street that was surely lined with palm trees and coloured lights and people wearing peasant clothes. I felt very small.

'Let's go.'

'Hmm? Qu'y a-t-il?'

'I said, LET'S GO!'

There were no more cafés for Solange and I but we did go shopping. This was the Big Mistake for I knew the mere sight of a clothing store was enough to produce an anxiety attack. The trip, however, was on orders from my charmed father. We went to the Fourth Avenue second-hand stores.

Entering a rather run-down shop, Solange immediately gravitated toward what I considered the weirdest clothing: big skirts and blouses that were either faded or loud. Taking a handful of these motley garments, she disappeared into the fitting room. The smell of moth balls was suffocating. I began sweating. To calm myself I stood by the handbags and breathed deeply, pretending to be scrutinizing an Indian pattern stamped into the leather of a particularly hideous purse. Solange burst out of the changing room like a wildcat through a hoop. She was a panther hidden in the undergrowth of fabric.

'I don't like cats!' The store clerk heard my utterance and shot me a strange glance.

I went to the coats where I was more protected. The urge to stuff my head inside a coat was strong, but I would not suffer Solange's confused stare. I clenched my fists and shut my eyes, breathing with difficulty. Hours later, it seemed, Solange was whistling at me from the doorway.

When we arrived home, Solange made her big mistake. She had bought me a present.

'I don't want it,' I snapped.

'But I bought it for you.'

'Tough luck.'

'Here, I'll show it to you and if you don't like it, that's O.K.'

She couldn't see that I didn't want her ghosts in my house. 'NO!'

Out of the paper bag she pulled the purse with the Indian pattern. I felt a blast of flames roar from my lungs and out my throat. Solange dropped the purse and looked at me with terrified eyes.

'You cat. You devil. Are you trying to kill me? I can't be you! Ever since you came here you've been trying

to make me be you with your stupid cafés and your damned breakfasts! I hate you!'

Then she surprised me. 'I know that. You hated me from the beginning. You never gave me a chance. But I hate this city and all you English who hate me for being French. I hate the staring and the words on the street.'

'You ask for it. You think you're better. You want everyone to be bloody French.'

'I wasn't trying to make you French. I was trying to help you. I know you feel bad. I was trying to make you like yourself.'

I would have preferred a slap to that comment. 'LIES! LIES! I love myself, I'm beautiful and talented and charming. I'm English. I'll be successful because I'm English. You'll die in a ditch for being French.'

Solange lost control. She lost her English and she lost her head. When my mother came bursting into the room I was sobbing on the bed and Solange was tearing at her long black hair and screaming at the ceiling in fast and furious French.

Solange went back to Quebec a week early, missing all her exams. My parents apologized for me and begged her to stay, but she refused. A few days later I went to the Okanagan to stay with Beverly.

Two years later I was preparing to go to university in Alberta. My mother offered me some linens that were stored in a trunk in the basement. Under the towels I found the Indian purse. Inside was a note that read: To Judy, I hope we can understand better now, Love Solange. I folded the note and put it in my wallet.

Claudine, I hope we understand.

Caroline Adderson, 21, lives in Vancouver, B.C., comes from an English-speaking family and speaks both English and French. She attends the University of British Columbia where she is taking education and writing courses. She is a member of a number of citizens' groups, including Amnesty International, and works at a Vancouver community radio station.

(English 19-24)

Caroline Adderson, 21 ans, vit à Vancouver (Colombie-Britannique). Issue d'une famille de langue anglaise, elle parle les deux langues officielles. Elle poursuit actuellement des études en pédagogie et en rédaction libre à l'université de la Colombie-Britannique. Elle fait partie d'un certain nombre d'associations volontaires, dont Amnistie Internationale, et travaille à une station de radio communautaire à Vancouver.

(Anglais 19-24)

Marisa Akow

SATIRE

The Unofficial Official Languages Act

This Act, upon presentation by the Unofficial Commission of Official Languages, shall serve to define the status of the two established official languages of Canada. The Act is legal and binding, and applicable to all Canadians. No amendments shall be made simply because we don't *ever* want to have to write one of these things again.

Within the pages of this Act are the definitions of the terms Francophone and Anglophone as they apply to English- and French-speaking individuals within the bounds of the nation. These terms shall henceforth be used in reference to all Canadians, regardless of how silly they may sound.

We hope that this, The Unofficial Official Languages Act, will serve to clear up any and all questions in the minds of Canadians. We have a feeling, though, that it will, in reality, serve only to confuse them further.

The Unofficial Official Languages Act

Title

Title 1. May it be known that this Act shall henceforth be referred to as the "Unofficial" Official Languages Act.

Language Status

Declaration of Status

2.(1). The English & French languages shall henceforth be known as the official languages of Canada, with equal weight placed on each in the Parliament and Government of Canada and in certain subsidiary offices, the express purpose of which is to confuse the French, inconvenience the English and "tick off" all those seeking aid in said offices.

Clarification

(2). "Franglais" or any derivative thereof will not be recognized by the Parliament or Government of Canada, as in subsection (1), and any individual caught attempting to converse in said language or languages will be apprehended and prosecuted for the cruel and disgusting use of the official languages of the nation.

Specifics

(3). Phrases, such as "Le Big O" (referring to Le Stade olympique/Olympic Stadium) are not recognized under this Act, and are judged to be a poor reflection on the people of any county, district, city, town, or village in the province of Quebec. Individuals caught using said phrases in the stadium will be immediately prosecuted and forced to perform thirty consecutive "Waves" in the stands.

Enforcement

The Apostrophe "s"

3.(1). From this moment onward, all store-front signs and street signs within the boundaries of Quebec, as designated by the Government of Canada, shall be expressed in French only; all names of places terminating in an apostrophe "s" in the English language shall immediately be changed in the province of Quebec by removing said ending, the eventual result of which shall be the complete elimination of the use of the apostrophe "s" from the province of Quebec; further acts regarding the aforementioned matter shall be scheduled for debate at a future date by the Government of the Province of Quebec when they have nothing

better to do, which should be any day now.

Traffic Signs

(2). All traffic regulations across the nation shall, from this moment on, be expressed solely by the internationally recognized symbol and colour; all written instructions shall be removed, the purpose of which is to prevent traffic offenders from claiming ignorance of either language by saying "But officer, I don't speak French" or "Monsieur, je ne parle pas l'anglais" or any version thereof in either language. Such excuses are tired and insulting, not to mention degrading to the offenders, yet somehow always manage to pan out in court, and we're pretty peeved about it!

Government Offices

(3). The one you've been waiting for, right? Well, let it be known that employees of all government offices shall henceforth be fluent in both official languages to provide available services to both French- and English-speaking individuals. Any person not speaking one of the above languages will just have to wing it.

Federal Bilingual Districts

Establishment

4.(1). Under and in accordance with this Act, the Governor in Council or any member of his family (i.e. his wife, children, cousins, grandchildren, nieces... well you get the point), may, whenever they get the urge, establish one or more bilingual districts if they so choose.

Designation

(2). A bilingual district will be designated by the boundaries so imposed by the Governor in Council or any member of his family (as listed in major part in 4.(1) above) so long as the area complies with census regulations. Look them up yourself!

Alterations

(3). Alterations of established districts shall be permitted for various and sundry reasons which we have yet to decide upon, so long as they are approved by the Governor in Council (his family has no say in this one). Once proposed, said alterations shall take immediate precedence as long as he doesn't get carried away: maps cost a bundle nowadays.

Future Status of Canadians

Status of Canadians

5.(1). Henceforth (or "from now on" — whichever you prefer), Canadians shall be divided into two general categories to be defined in subsections (2) & (3); the purpose of this division is to promote unity within the existing bounds of the nation. (Go figure that one out.)

Francophone

(2). French-speaking residents living in the country known as Canada shall no longer be referred to as French-speaking residents, but shall instead be called "Francophones" as in the unofficial official definition which follows. Whether or not they like it means little to us. The definition of a "Francophone", as laid down by the Commission of Unofficial Official Languages,

is, as mentioned above, as follows:
Francophone — (FRANK-O-FONE) n. pl. FRANCOPHONES — any French-speaking individual living within the confines of the country of Canada who is foolish enough to dignify the title with a response; **-phonic**, adj. pertaining or relating to a Francophone; **-phobe**, n. — one who lives in dread fear of the French language or those who speak it; **-phobia**, n. — the fear of the French language in whole or in part; **-Nero**, n. — an actor who, among other roles portrayed Lancelot in the film version of "Camelot".

(3). English-speaking residents living in the country known as Canada shall no longer be referred to as English-speaking residents, but instead as "Anglophones", with the definition as follows:

Anglophone

Anglophone — (ANG-LOW-FONE) n. pl. ANGLOPHONES — any English-speaking individual living within the confines of the country of Canada who calls French-speaking residents Francophones.
— see definition of FRANCO-PHONE for all derivatives thereof, substituting ANGLO wherever applicable.
N.B. to our knowledge, there has never been an actor named Anglo Nero.

Interpretation

Definitions 6. Regarding this Act.

"Unofficial" "Unofficial" is used to distinguish this act from the Official Languages Act as tabled by the Government of Canada and to protect the author from all charges of plagiarism;

"henceforth" "henceforth" is used because it sounds better than "as of now" or "from now on"; in truth, we're not exactly certain what it means;

"Franglais" "Franglais" refers to that awful pseudo-language frequently used, most notably in the National Capital Region; we think it's ruddy awful;

"said" "said" refers to "previously mentioned" and is used so that we don't have to write it out more than once.

Conclusion

7.(1). Let it be known that this concludes the "Unofficial" Official Languages Act. If we have offended anyone, well that's tough — you can't please everybody.

Concluding Statement

(2). Further information regarding the "Unofficial" Official Languages Act cannot be obtained anywhere, so there is no point in looking.

Further Information

Marisa Akow, 18, lives in Ottawa, Ontario, and speaks both English and French. She is enrolled in science at the University of Ottawa, and has been active in the organization of student conferences such as the Forum for Youth on Drugs and Alcohol.

(English 15-18)

Marisa Akow, 18 ans, habite Ottawa (Ontario), et parle les deux langues officielles. Elle est actuellement inscrite à l'Université d'Ottawa où elle poursuit des études à la faculté des Sciences. Elle a pris une part active à l'organisation de conférences d'étudiants, dont le Forum pour la jeunesse sur la drogue et l'alcoolisme.

(Anglais 15-18)

Taran Boodoosingh

SCRIPT

Misinterpretations

Characters: Husband — H.
Wife — W.
Interpreter — I.

Story: Totally English man living with his totally French wife and their interpreter somewhere in Canada...

Scene I

(A round table in a small, bright kitchen, very clean. Wife seated at one side of table sipping coffee and reading paper. Interpreter seated next to her facing audience and staring straight ahead yawning every once in a while. Empty chair at end of table opposite wife. Light, contemporary background music playing.)

H. — (enters stage right straightening his tie) Good morning Honey. (H. sits)

I. — (to wife) Bonjour du Miel.

W. — (to husband) Bonjour ma Marmelade!

I. — (turns to husband) Good morning my marmalade.

H. — (helpfully) No, listen, honey is a term of endearment, like (pauses) "sweetheart" or "baby".

I. — (turns to wife) Du miel est une expression d'amour.

W. — (nodding head) Ah, oui.

I. — (to husband) Ah, yes.

H. — (to wife) Please pass the butter.

(butter is right in front of interpreter)

I. — (to wife) Passez le beurre s'il vous plaît.

W. — (reaching) Oh, ici. (passes it to interpreter)

I. — (passing it on to husband) Oh, here.

H. — (to wife) Thank you Sweetie. (starts to butter bread)

I. — (to wife) Merci, Bonbon.

W. — (to husband) De rien, mon Oeuf dur.

I. — (to husband) You're welcome my hard-boiled egg.

H. — (looks up surprised, then throws toast down) Okay, this has gone far enough. (to wife) Look, we've been married for three weeks and we've had to have *this* guy (indicates interpreter with a loaf of French bread) with us every dying minute of the day because we can't understand each other, and even with him here, I still don't think we understand. (pauses) He's costing me $27.50 an hour and eating all our groceries. There must be an easier way to cope with this language barrier. Maybe I could take a course in French, or you could study English, I don't know. (throws down bread and stands up taking a final sip of coffee) Anyway, we'll have to discuss this tonight, I've got to get to work.

(entire time husband is carrying on monologue, interpreter is translating for the wife in a barely audible voice)

H. — (puts on suitcoat) Bye-bye. (starts to walk out of kitchen)

I. — (burps loudly) Excuse me. Bye.

(Husband comes back in kitchen)

H. — (to interpreter) What?

I. — (to husband) Excusez. Quoi?

W. — (to interpreter) Quoi?

I. — (to wife) Excuse me. What?

(this brief exchange is done very quickly, one line immediately following the next)

(Husband sighs and raises eyes skyward. He walks out.)

S.F.X. — (door slamming)

(wife keeps eating, interpreter reads paper).

END OF SCENE 1
(background music rises and falls as scene 2 fades in)

NOTE: Background music fades out completely at beginning of scene 1 as soon as husband enters the kitchen.

Scene 2
(A living room. Small and brightly lit. Two easy chairs quite close together face the audience. A T.V. set is in front of these and the wife and interpreter are seated in these chairs watching. The interpreter is translating for the wife inaudibly, using a lot of gestures. The background music fades to sound of T.V.)

H. — (entering door stage left. Takes off jacket) (sighs) Boy, what a day.

I. — (to wife) Garçon, quel jour.

W. — (looks concerned) Oh!, relâche mon mari.

I. — Oh, relax my husband.

H. — Yeah, I think I will, but I have to use the bathroom first. (then turns quickly to interpreter) AND you don't have to translate that.

(Interpreter looks disappointed and punches fist through air)

(husband walks to bathroom stage right and shuts door. Wife and interpreter continue watching T.V.)

H. — (calling from bathroom) Honey, where's the toilet paper?

I. — (to wife) Où est le papier de toilette?

(wife jumps up and pulls toilet paper out of cupboard at back of room and hands it to interpreter, who takes it right into the bathroom.)

(bathroom door flies open and interpreter stumbles out as if thrown. He regains his balance and his composure, straightens his tie and sits. Husband comes out of bathroom and walks across the room glaring at interpreter)

END OF SCENE 2

Scene 3
(Bedroom. Small bed. Bedside table on husband's side of bed with lamp on it. Husband on one side of bed sitting up against a pillow he is sharing with the interpreter, who is scrunched in between husband and wife. Husband has pyjama top on. Interpreter has three piece suit on. Wife wearing nightgown. All three sit propped up against one pillow staring straight ahead.)

H. — (turning toward other two) Are you comfortable Sweetie?

I. — (turning to wife) Est-ce...

(husband interrupts)

H. — (sweetly) I was talking to you. (rests his hand on interpreter's and blinks eyes rapidly)

I. — (eyes wide) What?!!!

H. — You look lovely this evening. You really do.

(Interpreter jumps up, steps confusedly all over bed, then jumps off bed and exits stage right)

S.F.X. — (door slamming)

(Husband smiles, looks at wife who shrugs her shoulders, and turns off bedside lamp)

— background music rises: "Zappacosta" from the l.p. Zappacosta and "Start Again". Play entire song "Start Again" for ending while credits are rolling.

THE END

Taran Boodoosingh, 19, from Nappan, Nova Scotia, comes from an English-speaking family. He is a musician and also works as an announcer at a local radio station.

(English 19-24)

Taran Boodoosingh, 19 ans, de Nappan (Nouvelle-Écosse), est issu d'une famille de langue anglaise. Musicien, il travaille également en qualité d'annonceur à une station de radio locale.

(Anglais 19-24)

Steve Bowden

SHORT STORY

The Canadian Messiah

To some, the creation of the Canadian Messiah was thought to rank among the greatest of Canadian achievements, among which are numbered the Salk vaccine, igloos, and the rise of Dudley Doright to international fame. Many observers went even further, saying the coming of the Messiah was the most exciting thing in Canada since Anne Murray incorporated leather goods into her act.*

The Messiah's creation wasn't achieved by accident or on the spur of the moment. It was prompted by an onslaught of pessimistic articles in newspapers and magazines decrying a so-called lack of culture and inter-racial respect in Canada. One columnist denounced Canadian culture as pig slop, and went on to write that "...we possess a low self-esteem along with a great intolerance for the 'other' official language." Canadians were said to lack any entrepreneurial sense and were described as a class of people whose greatest ambitions could be realized with the addition of a second bathroom.

The country's despair became so pronounced that even the officials felt the pressure to put on an appearance of taking action. After much discussion, and a few secretaries, no conclusion was drawn. So they did the next best thing — they passed the buck. And in a big way.

The blank cheque (not a mere check, but a *cheque*) was officially mailed from Parliament Hill, addressed to a Special Joint Council formed from members of the Canada Council and the Canadian Research Council. Across town, eight weeks later, the cheque arrived. The work to create the Canadian Messiah could begin.

What was needed was an answer to all the pessimism and worry about Canada's culture. Since nobody could answer these doubts, the scientists decided that they had better design someone who could. That's where the artists came in. They told the scientists exactly what qualities the Messiah must possess if He were to be able to understand Canadian culture.

* This was simultaneous with the release of her album, 'Snowbird on a stick'.

To understand Canadian culture, He must be able to immerse himself into any part of it. He must be a natural chameleon, being able to look like an Indian (i.e. native Canadian) when on a reservation, to look Ukrainian in some parts of the West, and to be completely unintelligible when in Newfoundland. At His first conscious moment, He must have an equal knowledge of English and French pre-programmed into his brain. He must be able to read a book about life on the prairies without falling asleep before the dedication. He must also be able to eat a pound of flapjacks on a moment's notice.

The artists had given them a long list, but the scientists were the best genetic engineers that could be taken in on a scheme such as this.

One scientist, who had sworn his undying allegiance to his country and to a Queen who lived several thousand miles from it, ventured his opinion on the Messiah, who could be seen floating inside a plexiglass casing, beside the machines that had helped create Him and were now keeping Him alive.

"He looks so goddamn pale," he said.

"That's to be expected," replied a colleague. "He'll need an almost colourless skin to serve as a base when He transforms Himself at will into any of the races that make up the wonderful cultural mosaic that is Canada."

"Well, no matter what happens, at least we can say we did better than the Americans."

Both scientists smiled at this, as would any two Canadians, after having done the Yanks one better. They had surpassed their counterparts in the United States, who had also tried to create a man to "explain the ultimate nature of our culture," as one haughty pencil pusher put it. But the American scientists had been forced by Congress to integrate a "melting pot" philosophy into their design. As Manifest Destiny would have it, their attempts resulted in terrible acid-like creatures whose bodies dissolved the very ground that supported them, until they sank past the earth's mantle, creating volcanoes and disturbing fault lines in their wake. The only creature to maintain a stable constitution had to be destroyed when it was discovered it bore a distinct resemblance to Lyndon Johnson.

But the Canadian version did not possess these faults, and the great day for the Messiah's awakening approached quickly. The entire project was kept secret, however, since the scientists could not tell if He was truly the Messiah until they tested His reactions to some tried and true forms of Canadiana. His existence could not be made known to the public until He had been checked and double-checked. Canada could not afford to go through another disappointment at this stage.

The fluid that left Him suspended in the tank was slowly drained. The sensors on His body and head were removed, an injection was administered and He quickly reached consciousness.

"Where am I?" asked the Messiah.

"Can you say that in French?" asked a scientist.

"Où suis-je ?" demanda le Messie.

"My God! His accent is perfect!"

"Would you like something to drink?" enquired an attendant.

"I'd love a beer," was the Messiah's response.

A shiver of fear ran through them at this request. Although in itself it was a good sign, it meant that the Messiah would immediately have to go through one of His most difficult tests. The scientists had agreed that the first beer He should taste should be American. If He could not instinctively detect the inferior taste, then He was obviously not the Messiah.

The attendant delivered the 'beer', which was known south of the border as 'Pabst'.

The Messiah regarded the liquid with some suspicion, took one small sip, looked at the attendant with great annoyance and said:

"Excuse me, but I *did* ask for a *beer*, didn't I?"

And all the scientists gave a great cheer. And there was much partying and much patting on the backs and much beer was had.

Real beer, this time.

The Messiah had been informed of the press conference that would officially announce His coming. All the scientists and artists were gathered along a long table, blinded by the newsmen's camera lights, surrounded by their microphones. He was now officially late, but the councilmen consoled themselves, arguing that, like most Canadians, the Messiah was showing up late for an important event. When the minutes of waiting turned into an hour, they sent someone to His room. He was not there. He had vanished. Just like maple syrup on the kitchen table at breakfast time.

The media got a lot of mileage out of it, with headlines raging "MESSIAH GOES AWOL" and the like. Eventually, it all died down and other things attracted the public's attention. News of Riel's rebellion had just reached Yellowknife, the Supreme Court ruled that Canada's Constitution was invalid under the Charter of Rights, and there was an astonishingly good hockey player, emerging from the amateur ranks, who had never been drafted, and whom no one had heard of before.

There was no record of any of this player's previous accomplishments, not even in a House League. But he quickly surpassed all those around him, and as the draft had passed him by, many teams wanted to sign him. The first to get to him were the Toronto Maple Leafs.

He played the first four games of the season with the farm club. He was not noticeable in his first game, but in the next three games he was the second star once and first star twice. It was then that he was promoted to the parent NHL club.

He started on the fourth line, seeing only spot duty. He did not appear to be anything outstanding at first, but he was steadily improving. He made regular duty on the team's third line and his play improved dramatically. He was averaging a point a game after a while, and he was moved to the second line. After twenty games he averaged two points a game. Finally, he made the first line of the Leafs, and people were speculating that he might reach an unheard of three points a game average before you-know-who.

He was constantly hounded by the press, who were trying to write 'Moses' stories, all about him and the Leaf resurgence. From the way he filled up the papers, you'd think no one else was involved in hockey. There was nothing but him and his exploits, and not a word about his boss. It was this that lead to his demise.

Two minutes before the trading deadline he was traded to the Pittsburgh Penguins.

This hockey sensation was, of course, the Messiah. He retired rather than go to Pittsburgh, but the League Office held that the trade was still legal and so the Leafs got an aging veteran and a Junior with Teflon kneecaps in exchange for one of the best players in hockey, who would not now be playing hockey any longer.

The reason for all this? Well, as long as you're in Toronto, you may very well be the Messiah, but it doesn't stop Harold Ballard from playing God.

But what about the issue of Canadian Culture and Bilingualism? If you think He didn't teach us anything about ourselves and our culture, you're wrong.

The scientists all knew what He was doing. They recognized His face on those Hockey Night in Canada interviews. But they didn't do anything because they were Canadians, and therefore hockey fans. Besides, they knew you don't play hockey in English or French.

It wasn't that the Messiah didn't want to answer all these questions about culture or the question of two languages in one country. It was just that He, like all Canadians, knew that these things just aren't very important when there's a hockey game on.

Steve Bowden, 20, from Burlington, Ontario, has been writing seriously for about two years and hopes to complete a B.A. in English and later study law. In his leisure time he practices the ancient art of T'ai Chi.

(English 19-24)

Steve Bowden, 20 ans, de Burlington (Ontario), consacre beaucoup de temps à l'écriture depuis deux ans. Il espère obtenir un baccalauréat en anglais, puis poursuivre des études de droit. Dans ses loisirs il s'adonne au T'ai Chi.

(Anglais 19-24)

Karen Connelly

FICTIONAL JOURNAL

Learning the Language

September 10, 1984

Monsieur Nolan is my French teacher. He's skinny, pale, and noisy as a paper bag, shaken constantly by a rough cough. His hair hangs across his forehead like charcoal splashed with silver paint. The crow Patches caught last summer reminds me of him: all-black, mournful eyes. He looks so old sometimes, when he nods his head in a certain way, when he folds his hands across his knees. But he isn't old. Mrs. Belton told us this is his first year teaching. It's not hard to tell. He can hardly speak English. His sentences come so slowly that the class turns to dissecting him.

Megan said to me today, "He wears platform shoes. And an undershirt." She suppressed a giggle. Jeff and Andrew caught the undershirt criticism and sputtered laughter out loud.

Monsieur Nolan looked confused. He's so innocent, that's the problem. "What is the ... difficulty?" he said, haltingly, the words catching in his throat like snags in nylon. His pause for the right English words had taken too long.

Jeff answered, "No ... dif-fi-cul-ty ... at all ... sir." His face reddened; his body shook with the giggles like rain puddles under wind.

Mom says it's cruel to treat anyone like that. What can I do? He's a teacher. Teachers walk all over us and we survive. Besides, they are supposed to be able to defend themselves.

November 14, 1984

I tried to get out of my French option. And I failed. After I waited to see her for half an hour, Mrs. Belton invited me into her rawhide office. (Anything that's upholstered in there is wrapped in genuine dead leather. I felt like I was in a saddle when I sat down on a chair.) When I asked about French, she said to me, slack-jawed and wide-eyed, as if it was the most shocking request she'd ever dreamed of hearing, "But why do you want to leave?"

Because I am not learning any French. Monsieur Nolan can only speak his language, he cannot teach it. I'm frustrated because I do not know how to conjugate reflexive verbs, and he can't even define them. He doesn't know the English words. Je suis fatiguée à cause du français. I'm exhausted because of French. School has taught me that it is better to know useless things than to know nothing at all, and I know that, in the French room, there are eighteen window panes, two hundred and sixteen tiles in the ceiling and forty-eight light sections.

"Because French is boring", I said.

"Oh." Pause, a disappointed flatness slid over her face. Then out came the guilt tactic. "I don't think that's a very mature reason for refusing to be a productive member in Monsieur Nolan's class." She pronounced "mach-ure" *mat-ure*. Mom says people who do that should be fined; it's too snobbish. "Remember," Mrs. Belton continued, "French is very important in this country. Soon this entire school could be functioning bilingually..." She finished with this ominous prophecy, smiling.

Mrs. Belton is also called Madame Belton. She used to teach French.

January 7, 1985

Monsieur Nolan stood as straight as he could when we came into the classroom. He looked energetically determined, which was a change. "We are going to do something different," he said. He said it well, slowed only by his thick accent; there was no pausing for words.

"He probably practised last night in front of a mirror," Megan laughed. I refused to glance at her.

He shut the door and walked to the back of the room. A slide projector was propped up on top of two scruffy books. "Over the holidays, I was in Quebec," he said. "Maybe, I thought, you would be interested in these."

"That's a pretty hefty 'maybe'," someone whispered.

With the blinds down, the room darkened. Monsieur Nolan perched on a desk at the back of the room, clicking away the slides. They weren't what I expected. There were no photographs of Louis Riel-type monuments or Wilfred Laurier statues taken in writhing Montreal. There were no pictures of cities with their landmarks and their masses of people. A fox was caught in the camera, his legs thigh-deep in whiteness; he had a mouse in his mouth, its tail hanging between his teeth like a string of spaghetti. A herd of deer, each one in a different stage of bounce, was crossing the wind-rippled flatness of a lake. The frozen lake fringed into jagged evergreens. Spruce boughs were weighted with white, sagging to the ground. Every picture was like that, of animals or land. The wide grey wings of an owl flying at dusk up a pale-throated cutline spread across the screen. Everything glowed white and blue-shadowed snow, like paintings lit in a dark room.

The only picture of a human being was of a girl. She stood on cross-country skis, leaning on one of her poles. Near her stood a dog, sunk in snow, panting, his pink tongue and white canines bright against the fur of his dark muzzle. The girl had loose, long, black hair; she was smiling, perhaps laughing. Monsieur Nolan did not say who she was. I looked at him. He smiled, not to me, but to the girl on the screen; it was a flighty grin, momentary. Then his expression settled into its usual lines, but a different look, as light as gauze, covered his face. It was sadness. But he didn't look like an injured crow at all. He looked human this time, grey-faced, in some quiet pain.

January 18, 1985

I understand reflexive verbs.

February 4, 1985

The last ten minutes of class, he played us music written by a man named Gilles Vigneault. I'd never

heard of him until today, although everyone supposedly knows him in Quebec. It was all just a smooth blur of words that I couldn't understand because of language, my lack of it. Monsieur Nolan said that when he has the time, he will translate the words for us.

"Ha," said Megan, "he can't do it in English, the twit." That may or may not be true, I don't know. But even in French, the words had meaning. I'm just not sure what that meaning was, or of the importance of it. I only knew it was there. These are the words on the sheet he handed to us.

Mon Pays
Mon pays, ce n'est pas un pays, c'est l'hiver
Mon jardin, ce n'est pas un jardin, c'est la plaine
Mon chemin, ce n'est pas un chemin, c'est la neige
Mon pays ce n'est pas un pays, c'est l'hiver

...Où la neige au vent se marie/Dans ce pays de poudrerie
Mon père a fait bâtir maison/Et je m'en vais être fidèle
À sa manière à son modèle/La chambre d'amis sera telle
Qu'on viendra des autres saisons/
Pour se bâtir à côté d'elle...

Mon pays, ce n'est pas un pays, c'est l'hiver
Mon refrain, ce n'est pas un refrain, c'est rafale
Ma maison ce n'est pas ma maison, c'est froidure
Mon pays ce n'est pas un pays, c'est l'hiver

...Je crie.../À tous les hommes de la terre
Ma maison, c'est votre maison.

When the class finished, the halls spilled with talking people. It was like being clattered awake in the night by hailstones on the roof.

February 21, 1985

Mrs. Belton is sitting in on our classes, watching. She skulks at the back of the room sullen as a raven, periodically scratching down notes on a clipboard. We have our backs to her; we forget she's even there. But he's facing her while she looks him over, scanning him up and down like a horse at an auction. "What're his teeth like?" I can hear her say.

February 28, 1985

Worse things have happened, but not to me. Today was awful. We were supposed to have a dictation quiz, a dictée in French. Monsieur Nolan passed out papers and began rolling out French for us. Jeff whined. Jeff whined again, louder. "Monsieur, you're going too fast. I can't even write this fast in English," which is probably true: he's too stupid. But his whining spread like an easily communicable disease. Andrew picked it up, gave it to his friends. Megan splayed agony and injustice all over her face.

At first, Monsieur Nolan wasn't sure of the complaints. He shook his head, then opened his mouth to talk. Instead of words, he coughed, started hacking away like a sick car engine. His back curled. With one hand, he covered his mouth; with the other he balanced himself. But his hand slid off the paper-slick wood of his desk, knocking a stack of sheets into the air. He stretched to catch them, but they fanned out fast, everywhere, feathered and graceful, sliding away across the floor top. He still gagged as the last of the pile tipped off his desk in an avalanche of white.

It happened in less than a minute. It was only a chink of time, but it was an obvious mistake. And a teacher had made it, fallen down a level, clumsily. They witnessed it: he was as clumsy as themselves. The kids were laughing. They laughed and laughed, not even trying to hold it in their mouths.

Only when Mrs. Belton stood up did they remember she had again come to the class. She walked to the front, heels cracking on the papered floor. I thought she would drag us out individually to throttle us. She didn't. "Monsieur Nolan," she said quietly, "I'll see you outside."

March 4, 1985

The sub says he has pneumonia, he's very ill, he went back. Illness isn't the only reason, though.

Mom, who never liked her either, says Mrs. Belton should be shot, put out of our misery.

The room was empty of his books, the slide projector, certainly all his papers. The blackboard had some writing on it. Before he left us, he wrote out the translation to "Mon Pays," that was all. And enough.

"My Country"
My country is not a country, it is winter
My garden is not a garden, it is the plains
My path is not a path, it is snow
My country is not a country, it is winter

...Where the snow marries the wind/
In this country of powder
My father built a house/And I will be faithful
To his method and his model/The guestroom will be such
That other seasons will come/To build beside it.

My country is not a country, it is winter
My refrain is not a refrain, it is wind
My house is not a house, it is coldness
My country is not my country, it is winter

...I cry.../To all men of the earth
My house, is your house.

Karen Connelly, 16, lives in Calgary, Alberta, where she is in Grade 11. Looking forward to a career in journalism, she has already won a number of writing awards in Alberta and writes for the University of Calgary newspaper.

(English 15-18)

Karen Connelly, 16 ans, élève de 11e année, vit à Calgary (Alberta). Se destinant à une carrière en journalisme, elle a déjà remporté plusieurs prix de rédaction et écrit pour le journal de l'université de Calgary.

(Anglais 15-18)

Réal Robert Fillion
SHORT STORY

Words Come After

I was told that an old schoolmate of mine died recently in a head-on collision on some obscure, winding, and probably very pretty highway somewhere and nowhere in the Canadian Shield. This was my first encounter with death. He was only twenty-one.

The last time I saw him — which, much to my dismay, I cannot remember — was years ago. When I went off to the all-French high school, we lost track of one another. But by that time we had ceased to be buddies. The peak of our relationship was when we were in the sixth grade; we were eleven years old. We did everything together then. From street-hockey to bike-riding, to stealing a smoke behind his old man's garage. It was a special relationship as far as eleven-year-old kids go. Because aside from the usual rituals that must accompany the establishment of friendship: the shoulder-punching; the intimidating insults; the enumerating and comparison of "neat" possessions; the interminably long walk home after school — there was also the fact that he was a 6B student whereas I was a 6A student. This cattle brand-like distinction was a result of the separation into two distinct classes of those students who took all of their courses in French (except English, of course); that is, the "A" group, and those who took fifty per cent of their courses in French and the other fifty per cent in English. Place such a rigid classification on children and you have all the ingredients for a savoury civil war. (And the rather unwise labeling of "A" and "B" provided salt for the battle. It engendered the myth that the "A" group was more intelligent, since they were, after all, "A" students; and the counter-myth that the "B" group was stronger.)

However, for some unknown reason, Michel and I transcended the dichotomy, and became friends. It might have been because he lived near my place. It might have been that his toys complemented my stock of toys quite well. It might have been simply the fact that we were attracted to one another, in a way inexplicable, as is so much else in a child's life. Besides, children have no need for such explanations or reasons; they need only to feel recognized and accepted.

And our friendship was noticed, too. We were both known as traitors and were treated with disdain by both parties in question. Condemnation was not only confined to the irrational prejudices of children; parents also shared the same prejudice, and provided a whole arsenal of rational justifications to boot. Mine in particular.

Michel was not, of course, openly forbidden to play with me, because my parents, being grown-ups, knew that the distinction between "A" and "B" children was purely academic. There was no *real* distinction. After all, children are children. But the classification was there nonetheless, and not-so-subtle attitudes were adopted when Michel was over; not unobvious hints were dropped. In other words, disapproval was thick as fog whenever Michel was over.

But we were friends. And friends are what children are all about. But, I guess, even children are not invincible, though they would probably deny it if they understood the word. The point is that children do not deal with words (*sticks and stones will break my bones but words will never hurt me*), in whatever language. They deal in gestures. They deal with signs. Words come after. Always after. Anyway, in the end, we couldn't sustain our precarious, self-conscious relationship. Not with the events near the end of our sixth grade. For if friends are what children are all about, children are what families are all about. We were forced to choose.

To this day, I do not really understand what was happening that year. It was all so abstract and unrelated to my immediate concerns. There was a push by the "A" group (the parents, that is) to make our school a completely French school. It was argued that there were enough French-speaking families in the area to justify such an institution. It was argued that the school *must* follow completely the "A" program, for otherwise it would be impossible to preserve the French language and heritage. The opposition, that is the "B" program, argued that this was rather un-Canadian behaviour. Canada is a *bilingual* country, now. This is no longer 1759. The battles are over. Canada is a peace-loving country. Let's try and accommodate everyone. Let's be friends. This latter position was, on the surface, much more acceptable, even to my immature mind. However, the former position was much more self-conscious, and appeared to stem from a deeper source, as my parents constantly reminded everyone. It could even take on poetic dimensions. You see, its proponents would say (their brows creased with firm intention and conviction), in the West, we are a minority. And as such we must struggle that much harder in order to survive as a living, breathing, historically-justified entity. We must demand our rights. We must preserve our culture. And to do this, we must adopt the means suitable to our end. We are like a small fire in the vast darkness of the English world. We must kindle that fire, we must blow continuously on its ever-diminishing coals, so that it may burn to warm the lives of our children and theirs after that. We must protect the flickering flame of our language against the tireless wind of the "majority". We must strive not to be assimilated, not to give up the soul of our ancestors. We must cohere into a solid unity, and not allow ourselves to be submerged into the immensity that surrounds us. We must not, like a helpless, flowing liquid, be immersed into the soil we have rightfully claimed as our own.

But not many people read poetry. On the other hand, commonsense convinces quickly and effectively. It was a battle between the past and the future. And the winning argument was: the past is dead; Canada belongs to the future.

So much for words. After the poets come the activists, who take from the poets certain lines and turn them into slogans. Single lines. Preferably short ones, so that they can be placed on the face of an angry poster.

The "A" group, helpless in a dialogue of rationales and budgets, decided to strike. A peaceful enough revolution. But in the eyes of an eleven year old, a revolution all the same. My relationship with Michel, frowned upon but tolerated, must come to an end. I

could not ask why, because I was told that I had to fight to survive.

I was given a poster on a stick; I was told not to go to classes; I was told to march up and down the sidewalk in front of the school. With the poster and my head held high.

Of course, I was thrilled. I had permission to miss classes. There was actually something more important than school. And most of all, I was sent on a mission.

Though I don't even remember what was written on my sign, it didn't matter, as long as I carried a sign. For even if I didn't understand fully what it was the sign meant, I knew what it meant to carry a sign.

But the sign got very heavy as the day wore on. I was no longer happy that I was missing classes, and would give anything to be able to put down my sign and sit down, or run off and play.

The bell rang and all the "unchosen" raced out into the sunshine, shouting and screaming and laughing, and making all the other sounds children make at the end of the day.

We were told to march on. Now was the time to display the most courage. So we shuffled along, our signs held up crookedly, our faces grim, our feet tired and sore.

And then I saw Michel. He was standing on the corner across the street. His shoulders were slumped over, his lunchbox hanging loosely in his hand. I hadn't seen him in a long time, not even secretly, with the preparations for the strike and all. My face lit up and I lifted my sign up high and tried to get his attention by waving it at him like I was waving a flag.

He just turned and walked away, his head hung low. I had forgotten about the words on my sign.

When I was told that Michel had died on that distant highway, this was the memory of him that presented itself to my mind. After the initial shock of hearing a familiar name associated with the word death, it was the roundshouldered image of Michel walking away that flashed in my mind. Once the unreality of the news faded, once I had decided that I had no reason to doubt the statement, sadness slowly fell over me in splotches, like waterlogged snowflakes until I was wet with emptiness. And I realized then that it was impossible to walk away from one's past. A past, not filled with words, not classified and categorized, not a dead past; but a past alive with signs. Gestures and signs. The words, in whatever language, always come after.

Réal Robert Fillion, 21, from Winnipeg, Manitoba, comes from a French-speaking family. He speaks and writes both official languages. He has taken time off from his studies at the University of Winnipeg to write. He currently lives in France and is in the final stages of his first novel.

(English 19-24)

Réal Robert Fillion, 21 ans, de Winnipeg (Manitoba), est né de parents francophones ; il parle et écrit les deux langues officielles.Il a choisi d'interrompre ses études à l'université de Winnipeg pour se consacrer à l'écriture. Il vit actuellement en France où il termine son premier roman.

(Anglais 19-24)

Anne Toner Fung
POEM

Complément

The English language is my Home —
By chance, and miles;
The place my parents came to stay was Anglophone:
So the English language is my home.

Its weathered brick knows well my gaze.
My rearranging touch is there:
An architect, I've altered lines;
Its walls have felt my paraphrase.

At night I sleep in English dreams.
Its colour decorates my thoughts.
I eat its food, I hear its rhyme.
I build my life with English beams.

But doorways opened wide upon,
Mere comfort of familiar words,
Need the final complément:
To touch, to know les autres gens.

Anne Toner Fung, 23, lives in Markham, Ontario, and has enjoyed a multilingual family environment. Her mother speaks English, French and Hungarian, her father English and French and her husband English and Chinese. A mother of two children, she tutors on a part-time basis, occasionally writes for a local newspaper, and creates children's stories.

(English 19-24)

Anne Toner Fung, 23 ans, résidente de Markham (Ontario), a toujours vécu en milieu multilingue. Sa mère parle l'anglais, le français et le hongrois, son père, l'anglais et le français, et son mari, l'anglais et le chinois. Mère de deux enfants, elle donne des leçons particulières à temps partiel, écrit à l'occasion pour un journal local et crée des histoires pour enfants.

(Anglais 19-24)

Katie Jaimet
SHORT STORY

Private War

"Police have not yet released any information as to the identity of the person who has caused the deaths of seven people in Quebec City and the surrounding area. Sergeant Lacroix says that his deputies have been questioning neighbours of the victims, but no suspects have been arrested.

"Air Canada will raise the price..."

The emotionless voice continued its monologue to thousands of people across the country, but I turned it off from my private box and stared moodily down at my tablecloth.

Tonight I would cover the elementary school art show. Maybe tomorrow a survey on how much high-school kids were charging for lawn-mowing this year. I glanced out of my window, hoping to see a crime committed.

I inform the police, and they arrive in a flash, giving me just enough time to muffle myself in a trenchcoat and don my grey hat with the card in its band, bearing the insignia "PRESS". Intrepidly, I dash out to interview the foul criminal, when suddenly I realize I'm still wearing my fuzzy pink house slippers.

I slunk out of my dream and sighed. I was too tired to go to the art show tonight. The little monsters and their paintings would have to find someone else to harass. I started composing the article in my mind:

"The Lady Elizabeth art show displayed the works of many talented and enthusiastic young artists".

There is no freedom of the press where kiddie's art shows are concerned.

I was just beginning to enjoy the companionship of "Saturday Night At The Movies" (I think of Elwy as The Universal Grandfather), when my buzzer informed me that I had a visitor waiting in the lobby. I pressed the admittance button. I make it a policy never to ask who it is. A journalist's life is full of unexpected dangers.

Monika was an old school friend, so when she turned out to be the author of my unknown buzz, I left Elwy to his old movies, put on some coffee, and got out a package of Matzos.

When she had first appeared, I had been too delighted to notice, but now I observed something in her ambiance which puzzled me. Her eyes had a strange, restful look, the kind that Renaissance painters used to strive for in their portraits of nuns. Deep wrinkles and pores caricatured her face. Her body was slouched in the chair, motionless, her index finger alone moving, like the tail of a waiting cat, drawing curved, tangled lines on the tablecloth.

"What would you do," she murmured, as I put down the coffee, "if I told you I was a murderer?"

"Interview you," I laughed, but her pervasive, melancholy silence was reply enough to cut my laugh short; my laughter seemed to echo, ghostly.

"Gilles Sarault was the first," she began, "and the easiest of course. I knew him. He used to teach me French, out of Tintin comic books. That was where I got my idea. It was not just a question of murder. It was a question of an unsolvable murder, which means complicating as many elements as you can, because if they can't figure out the Modus Operandi, you'll be dead of old age before they get around to figuring out the murderer.

In one of these comic books, there was a secret society of sheiks. They wore funny hats, and when someone was giving them trouble, they shot a dart into him. The dart had poison on it, poison which induces madness. Poison...I was always good at darts, and that form of death appealed to me.

I knew him. I knew where he would be at four in the afternoon. Or at four in the morning for that matter. He had an extension cord on his television, and he used to sit outside, watching football. At three o'clock, Sunday, I put on my track suit, hid my darts in the car, drove over and parked about ten blocks from his place. Then I jogged over, hiding the darts in my K-way.

Do you know why no-one could identify the killer? Nobody looks at a jogger because if they do, that little jingle from the Participaction commercial starts nagging them, and they start feeling guilty. A jogger is a perfect disguise, because people try consciously not to notice joggers.

I had put a strong enough poison in the dart, and I aimed right for the back of the neck, right at the base of the skull. I saw him stiffen as the dart hit. It did not take long. The bloodstream took the poison immediately to the brain. The brain, that's where people die from. Not the heart, the brain. He tried to turn around and look, but I guess his neck muscles were paralysed. I think he knew who it was. I hope he did. When he was quite still, I went over, pulled it out, and swabbed the little blood off. That was the beauty. The hair covered the tiny hole the dart made, so I knew the police would never notice it unless they were looking specifically. Modus Operandi?" She smiled — it was almost sublime, calm; so discordant with the bizarre story.

"Why?" I breathed, demanding rationality of this mad situation.

"We were lovers. That is, I loved him. When he found out I was pregnant, he left. What happened to the love? I lost my naïveté. It's not love that gets you through those long days and years, trying to give a child a half-decent life. It's not faith in God either, because God seems so far away, and the cold, hard, stifling city so close. I said to myself, "Okay, you left me, but I'm going to prove I can live without you." Every day for two years I hated him for what he was.

"He left, and you had the courage to carry on." I said.

"No! How could I hate that, his callous struggle for independence? Perhaps I would have done the same myself if I could have. No, I hated him because he was an arrogant Québecois. And after his death, there were more."

She paused, and I tried to think of something to say. Then she continued, her voice a strange mixture of pride and self-disgust.

"It was my own private war, as justifiable and as unjustifiable as any war in history." The sound of approaching police sirens diverted her.

"They will be coming for me. I left the dart in last time."

"Why?"

"Do you remember when we were very little, and we used to cry because we didn't understand how Hitler could hate so many people?"

I nodded but could not make myself equate the gentle girl and this mad, haggard woman. Hate had altered her completely.

"Now I know," she whispered, "because it's happening in Canada now. Every little part struggling so hard for independence, blaming the others." She shook her head, drank cold coffee with her dry lips.

I waited silently for the police, disturbed by the amount of truth in what she had said.

They arrived with an anticlimactic tap on the door. Monika went, slouched and docile. At the request of the sergeant, I followed them, leaving my intrepid "PRESS" hat hanging in the closet.

Katie Jaimet, 15, lives in Ottawa, Ontario, speaks and writes both English and French and is in grade 11 at Lisgar Collegiate. Since her kindergarten days, she has been enrolled in French immersion classes. Most of her friends are bilingual.

(English 15-18)

Katie Jaimet, 15 ans, vit à Ottawa (Ontario), et parle et écrit les deux langues officielles. Elle est en 11e année à l'école secondaire Lisgar. Elle est inscrite, depuis la maternelle, à des programmes d'immersion en français. La plupart de ses amis sont bilingues.

(Anglais 15-18)

Janet Munsil

SCRIPT

The Language Barrier

(A play for radio or stage)

CHARACTERS: Two young women. KATE is an Anglophone, CHÉRIE is a Francophone.

SETTING: The stage is bare. A white tape line runs down the centre of the stage floor, perpendicular to the audience. When the curtain opens, CHÉRIE is standing to the left of the line, KATE is standing to the right.

KATE: May I cross the line?

CHÉRIE: Non. Ne le fais pas.

KATE: I can't understand you.

CHÉRIE: (slowly) Je te parlerai plus lentement.

KATE: I still can't understand you.

CHÉRIE: Je te parlerai plus fort.

KATE: I still can't understand you.

CHÉRIE: I will speak your language. I am Chérie. Salut.

KATE: (with painful enunciation) Je m'appelle Kate. Enchantée de faire votre connaissance.

(CHÉRIE laughs. KATE continues in frustration.)

KATE: Have I said something wrong?

CHÉRIE: Enchantée! Where did you learn this?

KATE: In my grammar book. Page 135, Chapter 12, Exercise 3. "Enchantée de faire votre connaissance."

CHÉRIE: C'est drôle. You are a funny girl, you know that?

KATE: (bewildered and defeated) But that's what I was taught. (pause) Then you don't say that in real life?

CHÉRIE: No. (shaking her head) Funny girl.

KATE: Then what do you say?

CHÉRIE: Salut.

KATE: Salut. Salut. That's all? Salut?

CHÉRIE: Of course.

KATE: And that means, "It's nice to meet you"?

CHÉRIE: Bien sûr. I am enchanted to make your acquaintance. (laughs) It also means hello, goodbye, have a nice day. Veux-tu un morceau de gâteau?

KATE: Non, merci.

CHÉRIE: Did you understand that which I just said?

KATE: (pause) Yes. Maybe.

CHÉRIE: What did I say?

KATE: (uncertain) You asked if I wanted a piece of cake?

CHÉRIE: Yes! Now, would you like a piece of cake?

KATE: (more forceful) No. Thank you. May I come closer?

CHÉRIE: I have told you. You may not cross the line. You are not ready. (pause) You will get skinny and die if you do not eat something.

KATE: I'm not hungry. (pause) Je veux comprendre ce que...(falters)

CHÉRIE: Do not worry. I have spoke English since I was a child. I will speak more loud and slow for you. I will make you understand. You do not have to speak my language.

KATE: But I want to. I want to learn!

CHÉRIE: But you already understand that which I say to you.

KATE: But only in my language. I want to learn. I have good marks. (correcting herself) J'ai de bonnes notes.

CHÉRIE: I'm here because my name was pulled out from a hat, and now it is my job to aid you. Would you like a pink towel or a green one with stripes?

KATE: I don't care. It doesn't matter to me.

CHÉRIE: I am trying to be nice to you. You accept my hospitality, if you please.

KATE: It's just a towel.

CHÉRIE: Which one do you wish?

KATE: The pink one?

CHÉRIE: Good. On it I will embroider your name in pearls. Do you like me?

KATE: You're very nice to me.

CHÉRIE: But do you like me? You don't like me much, I can tell.

KATE: Sure. Sure I do.

CHÉRIE: Now that we are friends, we must run to a photo booth to be photographed together. Would you be uncomfortable if I smoked?

KATE: Yes. Oui.

CHÉRIE: But you said you liked me. I thought we had made a friendship together.

KATE: But all I did was answer your question!

CHÉRIE: You must learn to say what you mean. Do you have a suitcase?

KATE: Yes.

CHÉRIE: What color is it?

KATE: Blue.

CHÉRIE: Bleu. May I get it for you? I insist.

KATE: It's all right. I can manage.

CHÉRIE: Okay. (pause) Is something wrong, funny girl?

KATE: No. I'm fine. I'm just a little tired. Je suis fatiguée. That's all.

CHÉRIE: You do not like it here, do you?

KATE: Sure, I like it. It's nice here.

CHÉRIE: Tell the truth to me.

KATE: Really, I'm having a wonderful time. May I cross the line?

CHÉRIE: No. Do not cross the line. I can tell that you do not like it here. (pause) Would you like to borrow my coat? As-tu froid?

KATE: Pardon me? Please speak louder.

CHÉRIE: As-tu froid?

KATE: Please speak slower.

CHÉRIE: Are you cold?

KATE: I wish you'd speak to me in French. The wind is pretty strong.

CHÉRIE: Would you like my coat to wear?

KATE: No, I'm fine.

CHÉRIE: Would you like to borrow my shoes?

KATE: No, my shoes are fine. Merci.

CHÉRIE: De rien. Are you afraid of me?

KATE: Of course not. But I don't understand everything you say. I can't tell if you're just making fun of me. Like I was walking around with a "kick-me" sign on my back.

CHÉRIE: You do that, too?

KATE: What? Do what?

CHÉRIE: (pointing to her own back) "Kick-me".

KATE: Yes. I mean, no. A long time ago. You do that?

CHÉRIE: Of course. It's funny.

KATE: I don't think it's funny. I wouldn't take advantage of someone who didn't know what was going on.

CHÉRIE: (pause) You have had a sign on your back?

KATE: Yes. Oui. I feel so stupid. I practised everything I was going to say to you and now it's all gone.

CHÉRIE: You are uncomfortable here and you do not like me even when I am nice to you. That is why.

KATE: It has nothing to do with you.

CHÉRIE: Then what is it?

KATE: Your language. You really do speak another language, just like it said you would in my textbook.

CHÉRIE: It's not so unusual. Bus drivers, mailmen, mechanics, mothers, fathers, cousins, mothers-in-law, and babies speak it too.

KATE: Babies?

CHÉRIE: The tiniest tiny babies, from the moment they are born.

KATE: May I come closer?

CHÉRIE: Do not cross the line. Would you like some Chinese food? Would you like some maple syrup?

KATE: No. Please speak to me in French. I want to learn.

CHÉRIE: But you do not understand.

KATE: But I'm trying to understand. I'm trying to think in your language. Let me try.

CHÉRIE: Not until you understand. (pause) But you may ask questions from me. Ask one now.

KATE: But I don't have one right now.

CHÉRIE: Then why do you need my help? You are lucky. I speak your language. You do not speak mine.

KATE: But I want to. Here. How do you say, "I can't go now"?

CHÉRIE: Funny girl. C'est facile. "Je n'ai ni le temps, ni l'argent, pour faire un voyage en ce moment."

KATE: That was beautiful.

CHÉRIE: Yes.

KATE: And you have to say all that?

CHÉRIE: Yes.

KATE: I may never learn this language.

CHÉRIE: It does not matter.

KATE: It matters to me. Speak to me in French.

CHÉRIE: Oui? En français? D'accord...

KATE: (alarmed) No! Not yet. I'm not ready yet. Give me a minute. (glances over her shoulder) I want to be prepared for this. I have to make sure you're talking to me and not someone else. How will I know when I'm being spoken to?

CHÉRIE: You must understand first.

KATE: When will I understand?

CHÉRIE: When you cross the line.

KATE: May I cross the line?

CHÉRIE: No. You do not yet understand.

KATE: But how can I understand if I don't cross the line? (silence) What will I understand? The language? The people?

CHÉRIE: Would you like to watch television?

KATE: Please speak louder. I can't hear you.

CHÉRIE: Veux-tu regarder la télévision?

KATE: No. Non, merci. At home they call you frogs. What do you call us?

CHÉRIE: Blockheads. Would you like to listen to modern music? Would you like to read a good book?

KATE: No.

CHÉRIE: Say it in French.

KATE: Non.

CHÉRIE: See? You are now bilingual.

KATE: May I cross the line, then?

CHÉRIE: No. Do not cross the line. Would you like a tuna sandwich? A taxi? A bowl of pea soup? A megaphone? A red sports car? A new watch?

KATE: An understanding.

CHÉRIE: Speak slower. I cannot hear you.

KATE: I want to cross the line.

CHÉRIE: Do not cross the line. Would you like a marionette? Some chopsticks? A glass of rainwater?

KATE: No. No. No. Au revoir.

CHÉRIE: You are leaving?

KATE: Yes. Oui.

CHÉRIE: I cannot understand you. Speak louder.

KATE: Goodbye. Salut and au revoir.

CHÉRIE: I cannot understand you.

KATE: Then cross the line.

(blackout)

Janet Munsil, 18, is an English-speaking Canadian from Port Alberni, British Columbia. Currently in her second year of dramatic arts at the University of Victoria, she eventually would like to study oriental theatre in Japan. Like many young Canadians, she has participated in an exchange program, during which she visited Quebec. She has had several children's stories published.

(English 15-18)

Janet Munsil, 18 ans, est une Canadienne anglophone de Port Alberni (Colombie-Britannique). Actuellement en deuxième année d'art dramatique à l'université de Victoria, elle espère se rendre un jour au Japon pour y étudier le théâtre oriental. Comme de nombreux jeunes canadiens, elle a participé à un programme d'échange qui lui a permis de séjourner au Québec. Elle a publié plusieurs histoires pour enfants.

(Anglais 15-18)

Emily Paradis

SHORT STORY

The Nocturnal Parade

I live on Avenue Athene. It is an avenue of ornate stone buildings. Black gates open into narrow green and grey courtyards; balconies with curlicued railings and leaded, thick-paned doors look out over the street. The street itself is almost always empty. It is at the very heart of a turn-of-the-century area of the city. The neighbourhood is hexagonal, with straight, narrow avenues bordered with tombstone buildings — an old maze in a Victorian garden whose hedges are hard apartment-houses.

The avenue is isolated. The rest of the city is invisible to us, except at night when its lights twinkle and we become a dusty satellite in a galaxy of vibrant stars. The neighbourhood, and especially this street, is a cemetery. The people never speak; they are divided by language. Those not divided by language are separated by something deeper. We are a colony of hermit-like families. We are only human.

It doesn't surprise me, then, on this rainy afternoon, that few signs of life are visible on the avenue or in the buildings. Nor does it seem odd that a child plays all alone on the street. But her game stirs something in me, some strange sense of recognition. She is scampering squirrel-like and silver, back and forth along the street, gathering streamers and trinkets left there by...? And then, like a forgotten dream, it is triggered in my mind — the nocturnal parade.

It began yesterday evening, a typically misty one. The sun disappears here early in the afternoon, because of the wall of buildings. It is rarely sunny anyhow, even during the day. Nevertheless, the only evidence that these buildings are not abandoned is when, at dusk, strangers emerge like the risen dead from behind the glass doors, and sit on their balconies.

That ritual we were repeating yesterday, in the damp, darkening air, when gay, bright music suddenly danced up from the street through the mist.

The dull cadavers could not, of course, prevent the music from reaching their balconies, from filling the air around them. Nor could they resist as it manipulated their feet with its lightness and drew them, in small embarrassed groups, through the gas-lit corridors, down the dusky stairs, and out into the street.

I found myself there with the rest of them. Still, no one spoke, no one commented on the strangeness of the situation, no one questioned anyone else. The groups remained scattered. I was alone. The music continued, filling the small avenue.

For a moment, darkness was nearly complete, and then the streetlamps came on. The subtly multihued vaporous globes bathed the street in their gentle light. It was the first time I had witnessed this beautiful phenomenon.

Through the sudden light, I noticed an extraordinary form approaching me. It was a ragdoll clown, life-sized, wearing a fanciful violet outfit ringed in green, with rufflets and socks of lace. His face was very white. He spoke to me in French. "C'est la Veille de l'Unité", he cried. He produced some pots of paint and a brush. "Fardez-moi le visage, s'il vous plaît. Je dois me préparer. On commencera bientôt."

"Je suis anglaise", I said, unwilling to understand him. "Who are you, and what is going on? What is the music?"

"Paint my face, and I will explain", he replied.

He did not launch into a monologue, but only uttered sentences and phrases at random while I painted him. He would be completely silent, speak for a moment, and become once again expressionless. He spoke in English and French.

As I drew semilunar eyebrows,

"It is the Eve of Unity."

As I painted blue and black eyes,

"Nous demeurons tous ici. N'est-ce pas incroyable qu'on ne rencontre jamais d'autres dans la rue ou dans les ascenceurs?"

As I blackened a star on his cheek,

"A parade is planned. We need everyone's help. Tomorrow is the day, and we must announce it to the rooftops with our clarinets and flutes."

This last burst of poeticism gave me pause. He held up a gilt-backed mirror.

"As I feared", he sighed. "Pierrot."

He drew a playing card, the 10 of diamonds, from his sleeve.

"This will show that you've had a guide," he said. "Go and see what you can do to help. Perhaps you will lose such bias."

He turned abruptly and skipped away like a child.

For the first time, I looked all around me.

The sidewalks were empty, but the street was crowded with people. No, not only people — props of all kinds: wagons and floats, musical instruments, papier mâché pantomime heads. And people, people milling around all these: people standing alone (having just come from balconies); people speaking or listening to others (just learning to speak, perhaps); people dancing, singing, laughing, dressing, preparing, painting, creating, sparkling — the parade people. Nous demeurons tous ici. I thought of his words. How could these mausoleum walls have concealed such vitality?

All was awash in that glorious, gentle light. The colours had always been indistinct from behind my fortified French doors.

My passport, the card, in hand, I ventured forth.

I approached a magician robed in white and draped with a red cape. He was young; what seemed to be a band of pure light held his long hair back off his face. I was stricken by his grave beauty.

Our eyes met; I raised my card to him. He drew a purple carnation from a fold of his cape, and held it out to me. "Tenez ça, s'il vous plaît, pour un moment. Plus haut, plus haut," he commanded as I took it. He gestured with his hands. I raised the carnation above my head, and held it upright, the sanguine flower open to the murky sky. "Parfait", he murmured, and his voice strengthened, and he cried, "et, alors!"

With a sweep of his cloak, he released a white dove into the air. She flew to me, flapped and faltered about my head, seized the carnation in her beak, and returned to the magician.

"Bon, ma chérie, ma petite," he cooed to her as she lit on his shoulder and fondled his cheek. He took the carnation from her. "Ça signifie la paix," he told me solemnly and slowly. "Elle est la paix. Et la fleur est le sang. La paix enlève le sang. Vous comprenez? Le sang. Merci pour votre aide. Nous sommes prêts, maintenant. Nous avons pratiqué assez."

I was dismissed. As I turned to go, I saw him remove his belt (a blue snake swallowing its tail when clasped, how strange, how strange!) and brush the dove with it. She vanished.

La paix, I thought. Peace.

I approached three laughing adolescents wearing enormous papier mâché masks. One was a lion, one a horse, and one a bear. Each carried a basket of chestnuts, jujubes, and slips of coloured paper. They obviously intended to toss these to the crowds that would line the streets.

They welcomed me with open arms; one, a young woman, the lion, embraced me. "Isn't it exciting!" she cried. "We're almost there!" She offered me her basket and I withdrew two slips of paper.

One was orange. It said:

UNITY IS NOT ASSIMILATION

The other, blue, was inscribed:

UNITY IS DUALITY IN HARMONY

Appropriately radical thoughts for youth, I mused. But I folded them carefully nonetheless and dropped them in my breast pocket.

I turned and went towards a float. It was a wagon which was draped with heavy velvet, like a canopied bed. The fabric was midnight blue, embroidered with gold stars. At the back was a flap held open with thick rope; candlelight flickered from the opening. I climbed in without a thought of what ideas awaited me, or what language would bring them. And, without permission.

"Who is that?" bellowed a man who seemed too obese to fit in the wagon, even alone. His shoulders filled the back, and the candle threw demonic light above his black eyes.

I showed him my card, unable to speak at all.

"You wish to play?" he asked. "I need to work on my routine before we set off."

In front of him, on the table with the candle, was a gameboard. I recognized it from my childhood: Snakes and Ladders. The game pieces were more ornate, though — ivory and shaped like chessmen. We had always used pennies.

I rolled the dice a few times, but didn't get very far. Luck was against me. Snakes were everywhere. As I played, the man, suddenly grown quite sociable, delivered a tourguide speech:

"The Catholic Religion, with its near-pagan rituals, its cloak of forbidden mystery, and its worldly wealth and power, is the greatest contribution made by the French to our national heritage. Its burden and stigma has inspired many of our greatest writers. With it, the French brought the grand tradition of the Vatican, the great art of the world, and an enormous ... (he faltered) ... um ... *chunk* of history." He paused, smiled, rubbed his vast stomach. "They also brought the Mardi Gras."

Oh, stupid fat man, I thought. I wish he'd stop. I was irritated at losing. I slid down a snake.

"I have to go," I interrupted him. "I know it's only child's play, but it's too difficult for me."

As I climbed out of the wagon I realized what that game had been, what I had done. I smiled to myself.

The evening wore on. I helped musicians to patch their clothes and pointed shoes. I gathered flocks of children together, and sang Franglais songs to keep them awake and occupied. I filled baskets with candy and canteens with tea. All around me, others helped in much the same way. Occasionally I would see a card or a carnation or some other such sign being brandished. People looked increasingly vibrant.

A woman about my age came towards me.

"Est-ce que je pourrais vous aider?" she asked musically.

I was taken aback. "No," I said. "I mean, I was going to ask if *you* need help."

"Ah!" she laughed. We both laughed.

"You seemed to be part of the parade," I explained.

"Vous aussi." She smiled. "Mon nom est madame Larivière."

"I am Miss Beecham," I replied.

In the earliest morning hours, the parade was finally all together. A cheer went up, the sweet music began, streamers and jellybeans and flower-petals flew. The parade moved up the street and disappeared around a corner of the maze.

Everyone went home to bed.

And now there is a girl on the street, picking up the remains. I suddenly long to speak to someone, anyone, who had been a part of the parade, who had seen it. I need to see if the unity still exists.

I walk down to the avenue and go towards the child. She turns an inquisitive mischievous face to me. She is about five years old.

"Are those your souvenirs from the parade?" I ask in an adult way. I am stricken by her answer.

"What parade?" she asks. "Je ne l'ai pas vue. Was there one? When? Est-ce que je l'ai manquée? Oh, non! C'est terrible! I thought I heard parade music in my sleep!" And, in her innocence, she weeps.

But, how can she? If only she realized. She is already far beyond the parade's desired effects. I comfort her as best I can, and turn away.

Just as I am thinking that I will forever be incapable of such duality, that it is the domain of innocent minds and dream-parades, I catch sight of Madame Larivière, bending graceful as a stream over her balcony railing. She is hanging laundry in the clearing air, from a line over a courtyard.

She catches sight of me. Our eyes meet. Sudden remembrance widens her eyes. She looks at me, and we say, yes, I was there. Yes, I recognize you. Yes, it's really true. Oh how wonderful!

We don't speak, or embrace, or even smile, but all of this passes between us.

Just as there are divisions deeper than language, there are also unions more powerful than words.

And the afternoon sun breaks for the first time in months on the walls of Avenue Athene.

Emily Paradis, 17, speaks and writes both English and French. Her home is in Orangeville, Ontario, but she is currently studying English and philosophy at St. Michael's College, University of Toronto. Her success in winning creative writing contests has fuelled her ambition to be a writer.

(English 15-18)

Emily Paradis, 17 ans, parle et écrit les deux langues officielles. Résidente de Orangeville (Ontario), elle poursuit des études d'anglais et de philosophie au collège St. Michael's de l'université de Toronto. Les prix littéraires qu'elle a remportés lui ont donné le goût de se consacrer à l'écriture.

(Anglais 15-18)

Graham Finlay
POEM

La langue québécoise

Spoken with a growl, it carries
The swearing of men held
By the magnet of the wilderness,
The sound of ancient drums
Atop rocky cliffs
Lashed by sea and cannon;
The creak of Riel's trap door and
The scrape of Church and State;
The tractor's grunting in hard spring soil;
The growl of the drill in the mines,
Where the iron runs deep and red in the rock;
The rasp of machines in the factory and
The deep unison of a Latin response.
It is made of living rock,
Worn away by time and nature:
On this rock is built a culture.

In English schools, French is laid out on the black slab,
Like well polished soapstone in highway boutiques,
without craft.
It is spoken once a day, slowly
Like a prayer or a spell.
Many say it should be spoken
Other than it is. Do not believe it.
Were this true, then we are better sculptors,
Better players in our chalk dust,
Than God.

Graham Finlay, 18, comes from Toronto, Ontario, and is taking first year Arts at the University of Ottawa. He speaks English, some French, and is working as a page in the House of Commons. He plans to major in philosophy and minor in English and history.

Graham Finlay, 18 ans, vient de Toronto (Ontario) et est inscrit à la faculté des Arts de l'Université d'Ottawa. Il parle l'anglais et a une certaine connaissance du français. Il travaille comme page à la Chambre des communes. Il entend se spécialiser en philosophie tout en étudiant l'anglais et l'histoire en tant que matières secondaires.

Joel Giroux
SHORT STORY

Boy!

It was a hot day, and the awful stickiness of our wool suits was making us all irritable. I could see Uncle René in my head, laughing at us now, driving to his funeral over pock-marked and punctured country roads. Uncle René had never thought much of funerals. He had wanted to be cremated but Aunt Jacqueline decided he would be buried.

"Why waste money on me then? I'll be dead, fer chrissake!" he would spout. "You're going in de ground, you," she would argue. I would listen to them from their kitchen table, eating Aunt Jacqueline's famous coffee cake. I used to love going to Uncle René's place, if only for the food and the wonderful genial war between husband and wife. There weren't going to be any more of those, I thought selfishly.

"Jesus," said Michel, René's oldest son, "these roads are pretty bad, anh boy?" He looked back at me through the rearview mirror. I smiled and shrugged, then looked down at my knees. I was stuck in the back with Thislain, our legs pressing together at every turn. "Sorry," I mumbled. He nodded and turned to look out the window.

"Nice view eh?" I prompted. He clamped his knees firmly together like a vice, his hands planted at his sides. I sat there in silence, an undefinable hollow space opening up somewhere under my feet. I remembered a time ten years earlier I had spent a summer at Uncle René's. Thislain and I had been the closest of friends. I was the middle-class Anglo kid from Anytown, Ontario, and he was the French speaking rogue from Hull. We were attached to each other, not by choice, but by necessity.

All of Thislain's friends were off at summer camp, or on vacation, and Michel and Dominique were working on a construction team in Ottawa. So we stuck together like blood brothers, like Siamese twins, our peripheral vision catching each other's every move, speaking only to pass the time. After a while, though, our words began to mean more. We stopped watching each other and began to listen to what we were

saying. We held some small strand of understanding between the two of us, and we clutched it like it was some precious and fragile crystal. But now, watching Thislain with his face pressed against the window, a small, sad fog building up on the clear glass where his nose and mouth were, I could feel our glimmer of understanding becoming that cold abyss I had felt underneath me earlier.

Michel broke the silence. "Fait chaud, anh?" He began to tell jokes in French to the rest of us while gravel crackled beneath the wheels of the rented Cadillac. Thislain continued to stare stone-faced out the window.

"You OK?" I asked. Again he shrugged.

"You're getting good at that," I half chuckled, then realized it wasn't funny. Thislain looked pale and displaced. Michel's joking supplied a deadly background score for Thislain's brooding, making him more and more upset.

"Uh, guys," I mumbled, "Maybe we should stop. Thislain looks sick."

"What the hell is that boy mumbling about?" laughed Michel. Dominique joined in.

"Never could understand English that well, boy, and sure as hell you aren't helping me any, anh?"

"Thislain is going to throw up," I declared, loud enough to maybe startle them. Dominique turned to look at Thislain.

"He's alright," said Dominique solemnly. He looked at me and grinned sympathetically. "Don't worry, boy," he began, "as soon as we get off this bloody road, he'll be fine."

Michel and Dominique's jokes were getting louder. I could feel that dark, cold abyss opening up beneath my feet again, faster; this time, our fragile crystal falling with me. I looked over at Thislain. He was crying. Now it was my turn to stare out the window.

The jokes grew quicker and cruder, their bulk a heaviness sinking me further into the abyss. I could hear Thislain's tears hit the plastic floor cover like crystal shards. I was falling without resistance now, a lead weight in water. I couldn't say anything. I couldn't say: 'Thislain, there's nothing more we can do; nothing more you can do'. And then I felt my whole head go under.

STOP!

Silence. I lifted my face slowly from the headrest in front of me, the separation making a sucking sound as I pulled away. I looked up. Michel and Dominique were staring at me. I turned my head to look outside. I jolted forward, expecting movement. We had stopped.

"You let out quite the bloody yell there, boy," said Michel, "I just about wet my Sunday pants fer chrissake!" Dominique was looking at me with a perplexed stare. I met his eyes and grinned sheepishly.

"I'm ...sorry," I mumbled. I began to cry. "Sorry," I said again. Dominique turned away. And then, just as I was beginning to feel the abyss sealing up over my head forever, Thislain began to laugh. Little hiccups at first, then a guffaw that began a steady crescendo into high-pitched yelps. Dominique and Michel stared at each other. I looked down at my lap to see if I might have wet myself; I hadn't.

The tears were still coming, either down my nose and into my mouth, or welling up in my eyes and staining the knees of my suit.

"I thing it's about time we got de hell outta here, anh boy?" asked Michel. Thislain broke in.

"Hey!" he cried. The three of us looked at him, his hand grasping Michel's shoulder. "He's no boy!" he said. Before I could defend myself, he added: "Il est mon cousin."

And he's mine, too.

Joel Giroux, 16, speaks English and a little French. A native of Sharbot Lake, Ontario, he describes himself as a "lapsed nationalist", writes poetry, plays and songs and believes that the best new writers hail from Canada and Australia.

Joel Giroux, 16 ans, parle l'anglais et un peu le français. Originaire de Sharbot Lake (Ontario), il se décrit lui-même comme un «nationaliste non-pratiquant». Il écrit des poèmes, des pièces de théâtre et des chansons, et estime que les meilleurs écrivains de l'heure sont d'origine canadienne et australienne.

Naomi Guttman

POETRY

Of Two Tongues: Three Poems

Bilingual

In English we call it
French-kissing
two tongues in one mouth.

It's only a matter of time
before one's got to leave.
Then you're stuck

with a word that doesn't quite say
all you want it to. And the one
you're looking for

is in someone else's mouth.

Tête à Tête

I came to understand two people talking.
The twists of the tongue. The way you played
with meaning. This was an acquisition
of a sort.

But soon I said: "Ça ne va pas marcher."
Or words like that, in my broken
French. "Parce que," I ventured,

"T'es roman-tale, et j'suis sentimen-tique."

For the first time, for the last,
I saw silence stop your laughter
at the joke you had taught me
that we now both understood.

Riposte

Under your tongue
I'd often been speechless.

Now meet you tongue-ripe in the street;
eventually it comes around to me, this sidling
sliding of tongues:

"Peut-être..." you say. "Maybe
we could get together."
"Pourquoi?" I ask, but think: ***For what?***
You say it would be interesting
to meet for a beer.

A sudden sour taste breaks unbeckoned
unbecoming off my tongue. Salty words
in your sweet language:
"J'en ai déjà eu assez."

Naomi Guttman, 24, comes from a bilingual family and speaks both English and French. She is currently studying at Warren Wilson College in North Carolina where she is completing her master's degree in creative writing. Her home is in Montreal, Quebec.

Naomi Guttman, 24 ans, est issue d'une famille bilingue et parle le français et l'anglais. Elle étudie actuellement au collège Warren Wilson, en Caroline du Nord, où elle termine une maîtrise en rédaction libre. Elle réside normalement à Montréal (Québec).

Kelvin S. Houston

POEM

(Untitled)

We, whose voices are bound
By rights, and Law, and Acts
Of Parliament, and who cling to words
And songs we think our own,
Should learn a lesson
From the Loon,
Who claims no right to sing,
But sings;
And cares not
That his song
Is heard,
But merely
That his place
Is understood.

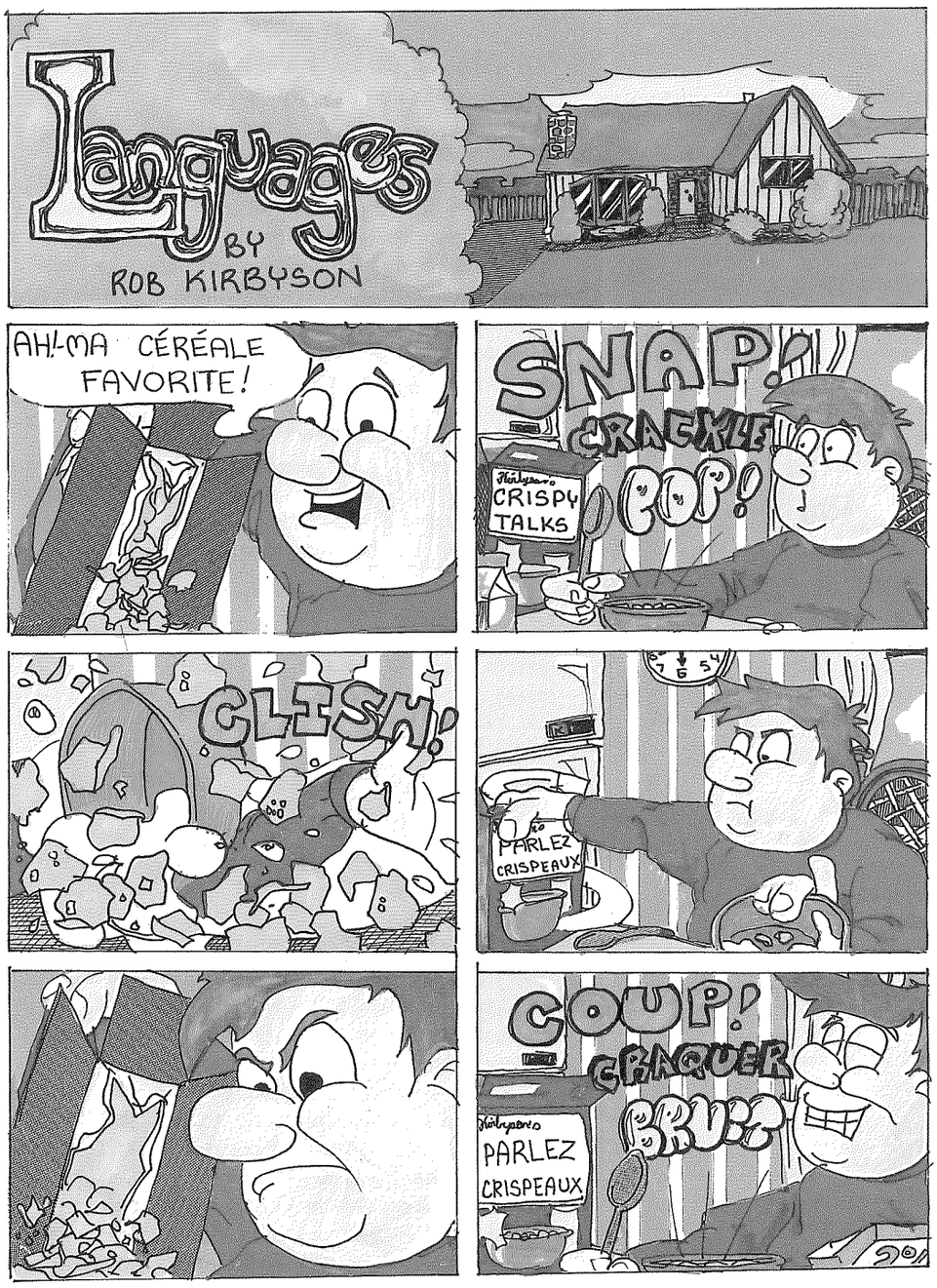
Kelvin S. Houston, 24, lives in Kelowna, British Columbia, and has studied at the University of Santa Clara, California, where he obtained a Montessori Competency Certificate. He has been writing and painting since the age of 10 and says that Canada has an abundance of wealth and beauty and "many sources of inspiration and creativity".

Kelvin Houston, 24 ans, vit à Kelowna (Colombie-Britannique). Il a étudié à l'université de Santa Clara, en Californie, où il a obtenu un certificat d'aptitude Montessori. Il écrit et peint depuis l'âge de 10 ans. Il affirme que le Canada offre de «très nombreuses sources d'inspiration et de créativité».

Rob Kirbyson

COMIC STRIP

Languages



Rob Kirbyson, 15, lives in Winnipeg, Manitoba, and comes from an English-speaking family. An honour student, he enjoys mathematics and art. He eventually hopes to pursue a career in cartooning, a field he has been interested in for several years and in which he is already an award winner.

Rob Kirbyson, 15 ans, vit à Winnipeg (Manitoba), et vient d'une famille anglophone. Étudiant émérite, il aime surtout les mathématiques et l'art. Il souhaite éventuellement se consacrer au dessin humoristique, discipline qui l'intéresse depuis quelques années et dans laquelle il s'est déjà distingué en remportant un prix.

Sara McDonald
POEM

exile

home from Montreal west
into the empty prairies
souvenirs in the bag beside me
and in my hand the book my friend
gave to me at the train station
Marie-Claire Blais poems
in French and English on facing pages

I want to crawl between the words
the French words only half
of which I understand
(when I spoke my French in Montreal
the answer always came in English)
I want to crawl between the words
feel them run languidly over me
like a slow moving river like this train
running headlong into the night

I want to read the poems in the original
the French words woven
from an unbroken skein of language
but my eyes stray to the English
I'm sure it's not the same
(when you are alone in a room full of strangers
why do you always feel they are speaking of you)
I sent postcards home in my high school French
the neat practiced phrases

I did not find what I came for the stories
I have read remain stories
the circle is closed to me
births and deaths prayers and passions
I was lost in the city of churches
with nothing to believe in or rebel against
I did not find what I came for

Sara McDonald, 21, comes from Saskatoon, Saskatchewan, and is taking undergraduate studies in Arts, majoring in English, at the University of Saskatchewan. She has studied creative writing at the Saskatchewan School of the Arts and was the 1985 winner of the W.O. Mitchell Scholarship.

Sara McDonald, 21 ans, vient de Saskatoon (Saskatchewan). Elle étudie à l'université de la Saskatchewan en vue d'un diplôme en lettres et sciences humaines, avec spécialisation en anglais. Elle a étudié en rédaction libre à l'école des Arts de la Saskatchewan et a obtenu, en 1985, la bourse W.O. Mitchell.

Anna Quon
SCRIPT

The Weather North of Canada

(A very short play)

The following play, which has nothing at all to do with the title, involves five characters:

SIMON ARCHER:
a young Canadian civil servant who is dropped out of the sky onto the roof of a house belonging to some bizzare people. He dresses conscientiously so as not to make any kind of statement, which he finds annoying in others. At the beginning of the play, he is uneasy, because there is something strange about Isodora, and the house, and especially Pecker, when he finally appears. This feeling grows in him and he wants to run away from them, out into the snow, which would be a very silly thing to do. They are nice people, really. He tells them about Canada, and why the French- and the English-speaking Canadians have not killed one another off. He has a good time eating fish, then he disappears into the black of night.

PECKER:
a man of uncertain provenance who dresses like a parrot. He wears a green lab coat, a black felt hat, many scarves, and large boots. He is not as spooky as Dr. Who, nor as drunk as John A. Macdonald, but in bad light, he could pass for either. Pecker is warm-hearted, energetic, and sometimes forgets he is talking to human beings instead of to himself. He is probably mad, or maybe senile, as he is many hundreds of years old. He was last seen knitting in the middle of an ice flow.

ISODORA and ROMINKA:
two sisters, middle aged, not at all good-looking, very grouchy, and childish. They usually have their mutual back turned to the audience, as they busy themselves with washing dishes and cooking. They mumble loudly when they talk and scowl perpetually; though they love Pecker dearly, they don't treat him very well. CHELLIA is far more mature, sweet, and unselfish; thank goodness she is the one Isodora and Rominka will emulate as they grow older, for it would be intolerable for her to share the same body with them. All three women are dressed identically;

when any one of them enters the action, the other two attend to the kitchen, standing with their backs to the audience.

The stage is dark except for a small, central area. Downstage centre there are three rough chairs, painted red, arranged around a small table. A door to the left is painted bright yellow; beside it is a coat stand; a door to the left is bright green. At right, upstage of the green door is a wood stove. In the background is a stand holding a large sink on its right side and a very old phonograph to the left. Music is old, warm, waltz-like. Isodora is washing dishes, her back turned to the audience. Simon Archer is sitting uneasily in a chair facing the audience, drinking tea.

PECKER (entering through the yellow door in a whirl of green coat, unbuttoned, and multi-coloured scarves, obviously pleased with himself. Simon rises): Isodora, lady of my heart, Pecker is home! Look what I found lying in the snow. (He pulls a fish out of an inside pocket and presents it to her) For you, my lovely. (Sees Simon) My God, what's that?

ISODORA: Canajan

PECKER: A what?

ISODORA: Can-a-jan

PECKER: No!

SIMON: Yes,

PECKER: No, certainly not. I have known Canadians, and they dress much more warmly, and generally with more taste. They don't look at all like this man here.

ISODORA: Rude. (She turns off the phonograph.)

SIMON: Please, I'm Simon Archer, hello, I've just come from Ottawa—

PECKER: I avoid that sort of place.

SIMON: I've come to inform you of a change in government. The postal plane was not willing to stop.

PECKER: Have you really, well sit down then!

SIMON: That's all I've got to say.

ISODORA: Good-bye.

PECKER: Wait a minute! This is so very exciting; (Simon sits down) tell us, how did you happen to travel so far from your home country? I'm sure someone from the next town could have brought us the news; we're flattered of course—

SIMON: Excuse me, pardon me a moment. (scratches arm absent-mindedly) A little thing has been bothering me for a while.

PECKER: Bedbugs, perhaps? Fleas? Do you own a dog?

SIMON: Uh, no. Am I not in Canada this very moment, and are you not Canadians yourselves?

PECKER (amused): No.

SIMON: Please, just generally, what nationality are you?

PECKER (very amused): Oh, I don't know.

SIMON: You couldn't be Russian, could you?

ISODORA (snorts)

PECKER: Certainly not, I don't even know how to speak it. Isodora does, don't you Is? We are quite alone on this little island of ours. In fact, you are the first guest we've had for more than five years. The last one was a deluded seagull.

SIMON: I'm so relieved — you see, I saw smoke from your chimney and I told the pilot to drop me

off here. And he did; luckily you have quite a lot of snow on your roof. Your — wife heard the thump—

PECKER: My wife? Rominka? You silly ass, I couldn't marry such a wonderfully spiteful old woman. I'd ruin her. She is my friend.

SIMON: I thought her name was Isodora?

PECKER: What?

SIMON: Isodora?

PECKER: Oh, I see. Yes. She has three names, Isodora, Rominka, and Chellia. Lovely aren't they? Chellia hasn't appeared recently as the other two are not on speaking terms and she must keep one company while the other comes out and sulks. Now, if she came herself, Isodora and Rominka would tear one another to bits.

SIMON (by now confused, and a little frightened): Oh... how can you tell?

PECKER: Which one she is, you mean?

SIMON (dazed): I suppose so.

PECKER: Well that depends doesn't it? On the time of day, the weather, what she's had for lunch.

ROMINKA: Cod (Rominka sets about serving tea; she refills everyone's cups often.)

SIMON (suddenly believing he is in the presence not only of eccentrics but madmen): This is all terribly exciting, but I musn't stay — as you are obviously not voting Canadians, you won't be interested in what I was going to say anyway so I'll just go to the nearest town and wait for the plane—

ROMINKA: Have a safe trip.

PECKER: No, no, no, stay. I have a few things to ask about the state of the nation.

SIMON (desperately): Oh God.

PECKER: My brother's best friend's uncle was Canadian you see.

SIMON: How unusual—

PECKER: Yes, I think so; therefore, I have a personal interest. I should like very much to know how the French and the British are getting along.

SIMON: Well...

PECKER: Do they interbreed?

SIMON (aghast): Of course!

PECKER: Oh well, our brother's best friend's uncle was our last visitor before the seagull, and he didn't seem to consider them the same species. I thought that was rather odd; he was a Frenchman you know. I can't remember his precise words—

SIMON: That's really alright—

ROMINKA (mumbles)

PECKER: Yes that was it! Well there you go, not a very couth man. But tell me, how do the French and the English get along? This sort of thing really interests me, as I collect stamps.

SIMON: What?

PECKER: What?

SIMON: Right. (He wants to answer politely but is not certain how to be polite to someone who is crazy, and slightly exasperated.) Well, the relationship is — I don't, uh — well, how do you describe a relationship between two very large groups of people, unless you're talking about a war or a hockey game?

PECKER: Oh, so it's not violent is it?

SIMON: No, not usually.

PECKER (disappointed): Oh. (hopefully) Perhaps it's like a bad marriage. (unwillingly) A good marriage?

SIMON: Well, just a plain marriage I should think. For better or for worse.

PECKER: That has a horribly final ring to it.

SIMON: What?

PECKER: I was hoping to start a collection of stamps from the country of Quebec.

SIMON: I'm sorry but it's not as bad as all that.

PECKER: Ah well, everything in its own good time. (brightly) Would you like to see some home movies? Penguins, babies and Disney World, reassuring things like that. They always make me feel better when I've met with some disappointment.

SIMON: I really must be going—

ROMINKA (with plates in one hand and a pot of something in the other): Sit down please. Supper is served.

SIMON: But we've just had— (gestures at the tea cups.)

PECKER: Do sit down. Rominka is capable of the most mysterious things with fish.

SIMON: Alright

PECKER: Delicious as usual. Simon, you are a pleasant young man, but you don't talk much. Obviously you are not very French.

SIMON: I'm not at all, to my knowledge.

PECKER: Hmmm. Pass the salt please, Isodora.

SIMON (Realizing she has undergone another personality change, he moves his chair quickly away from her, agitated): I'm sorry, it's just a bit unnerving. I really shouldn't stay, I think.

PECKER (leaning towards him with mystically intense concentration): Relax, please.

SIMON (dazed. His attitude has visibly changed — he is puzzled and compliant): Alright.

PECKER: Now, tell us more about Canada. We live sheltered lives on this island of ours.

SIMON: Well... it is big... very large.

PECKER: Aha. Do the French and the English still live in two different parts of the country? Have they got a fence in between them or something?

SIMON: No, no. You don't seem to understand — it's all very civilized... people live where they want to. There are areas which are mostly French- or English-speaking but that's because of historical and cultural forces. Most people stay in the area they were brought up in out of convenience, or because they're more comfortable there.

PECKER: So they don't feel comfortable with one another? I don't blame them. A funny sort of nation that is, where half the people can't talk to the other half.

SIMON: But they do — I mean why not? Is it such a bad thing to have to learn another language? Everyone should — everyone in the world. And where I live, people make the effort — because they want to. They care to make Canada English and French both, not to submerge or destroy one another. That would just be useless. And not very happy.

PECKER: Look, I don't understand. For example, if I went to the Middle East and told people they'd be much happier and better off learning one another's language and respecting one another's cultures I

would meet with a horrible death. It would be true, but for them impossible to believe. The English and the French have been the same way throughout history. What has made the difference? I think you must give people pills—

SIMON: That's ridiculous. (tries harder) I mean, just because you are left-handed you wouldn't cut off your right hand, would you? And you wouldn't try to force other people to be left-handed, either. That would be highly unnatural — barbaric.

PECKER (admiring): That's very good — what?

SIMON: It's like this — I am not English or French — I am Canadian. I speak English, but I know a bit of French too, and I do not classify myself in terms of the sounds that come out of my mouth. I don't live where many people speak French, but when I go to those places, I don't feel like I am in a hostile country. I like it — it's exciting, and romantic. I like to walk down the street and not know what a sign says, but go into the shop anyway and find out. And it's not just novelty — I do like the French language, it's beautiful. And I like many people who speak it. I will be married to one next summer.

PECKER: Congratulations... but this must all be very modern, or you are broad-minded and ahead of your time. Does everyone in your country feel the same way?

SIMON: Well, evidently my fiancée does. It's so much more fun, and infinitely more practical to be bilingual in a country that's been built on two cultures, than to stubbornly go on in one language and be lost half the time. And even if it were more pleasant and economically beneficial to go our separate ways — we couldn't. Canada wouldn't exist anymore. I could talk all night about this you know — it's partly my job, when I am in Ottawa, to—

ISODORA: Fish good?

SIMON: Yes, lovely thank you.

ISODORA: Good.

SIMON (rises): Well, now I think I really should go; it's getting dark.

PECKER (also rises. Isodora clears the dishes): I'll accompany you, we'll go by snowmobile. The closest town is quite a ways away — ten miles, actually.

SIMON: Alright. (hesitates) But then why don't you have any visitors? Ten miles is hardly enough to isolate you from the rest of the world...

PECKER (handing Simon his coat and putting on his own): Oh, we go to town often enough, but not many people come here. I know it's probably a cliché by now, but we don't quite speak the same language.

SIMON (laughing): Oh, right.

ISODORA: Good-bye.

SIMON (outside the door): Good-bye, and thank you, the fish was very nice.

ISODORA (grumbles)

PECKER: I'll be back soon, Is darling.

(The door closes and the lights grow dimmer. Isodora suddenly stops washing the dishes and turns around to smile at the audience. She turns on the phonograph and starts to hum along. Pecker opens the door suddenly.)

PECKER: Hello, I forgot my hat, I — Chellia, is that you?

CHELLIA: Oh, hello Pecker. Yes it's finally me! Isodora and Rominka have decided that as long as they've got to share one head and one body for the rest of their lives, they'd better start getting along. I'm so relieved; they've been a pair of idiots for such a long time, I'm thoroughly sick of them both. It's so nice to have someone else to talk to for once!

PECKER: I can well imagine. That reminds me, we've just had a visitor — a Canadian, if you'll believe it.

CHELLIA: I know. Impressive wasn't he? I hope he wasn't offended by the two babies, they were shockingly rude. I was cringing the whole time.

PECKER: No; I'll explain to him on the way, though he knows more about that sort of thing than I do. In any case, I'm so glad you're back. You look well. See you in two hours. Oh yes, tell them both it was the best fish I've had in two hundred years. (He blows her a kiss and closes the door.)

CHELLIA: Fine, take care. (She dries her hands on her apron; to the audience) Oh, that's the end. Good-bye (exit through green door — lights out.)

Anna Quon, 16, is from Dartmouth, Nova Scotia, and speaks both English and French. Her father is of Chinese origin and her mother is an English-speaking Canadian. Active in letter-writing campaigns for Amnesty International, she also writes poetry and draws recreationally. After finishing secondary school, she plans to enroll in Arts at the university level.

Anna Quon, 16 ans, vit à Dartmouth (Nouvelle-Écosse), et parle les deux langues officielles. Son père est d'origine chinoise et sa mère est canadienne anglophone. Elle participe activement à des campagnes de rédaction de lettres pour Amnistie Internationale, écrit des poèmes et dessine pour son plaisir. Après avoir terminé ses études secondaires, elle souhaite étudier les lettres et les sciences humaines à l'université.