

**How to Plagiarize and Not Lose Originality. Bakhtin's Dialogical Discourse and the Statute of the Bastard - In Memory of Réjean Ducharme / *Como plagiar sem perder a originalidade. O discurso dialógico de Bakhtin e o estatuto do bastardo - Em memória de Réjean Ducharme***

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**ABSTRACT**

This article discusses the additional condition of the theoretical elaboration of literary discourse in the Bakhtinian multidimensional and interdisciplinary concept, that is, the construction of a relational discourse, or a poetics of the intertextual relation in the work of the writer Réjean Ducharme. Hyphenated as Canadian-French, Ducharme is given the identity statute of bastard, and is allowed or metaphorically authorized to devour and plagiarize in the practice of intertextual operations, such as citation, parody, recycling, and patchwork.

**KEYWORDS:** Bastard; Dialogism; Guerilla, Intertextuality; Plagiarism

**RESUMO**

*Aborda-se neste artigo a condição suplementar de elaboração teórica do discurso literário no conceito multidimensional e interdisciplinar bakhtiniano, ou seja, a construção de um discurso relacional, ou uma poética da relação intertextual na obra do escritor quebequense Réjean Ducharme. Hifenizado como canadense-francês, confere-se a Ducharme o estatuto identitário do bastardo, ao qual se permite, ou se autoriza metaforicamente, a devoração e o plágio na prática de operações intertextuais como a citação, a paródia, a reciclagem e a bricolagem.*

**PALAVRAS-CHAVE:** Bastardo; Dialogismo; Guerrilha; Intertextualidade; Plágio

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## Introduction

As Bakhtin's<sup>1</sup> dialogism and Kristeva's<sup>2</sup> intertextuality are taken as emblematic conceptual references, negative connotations of plagiarism become strategies for text production. Opposed to essentialist theories of text, the meaning of plagiarism today is not only positive, but also inevitable, as the philosophy and *practice of plagiarism* affect the dynamics and unstable drifts of meaning in the intersection of texts in the dialogical sphere of texts. It is in this additional condition of the theoretical elaboration of literary discourse in the Bakhtinian multidimensional and interdisciplinary concept, that is, the construction of a relational discourse or a poetics of the intertextual relation, that we approach the work of Réjean Ducharme,<sup>3</sup> a Quebecker writer who died in August 2017. We dedicate this article to him.

### 1 Original Authorship and Transtextual Relations: Réjean Ducharme's Enigma

Bakhtin, in *The Problem of Speech Genres*, discusses the inevitable presence of otherness, stating that "any utterance [...] reveals to us many half-concealed or completely concealed words of others with varying degrees of foreignness" (1986,

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<sup>1</sup> TN. Here the author makes reference to *Esthétique et théorie du roman* (1978), an essay collection in which are *Le problème du contenu, du matériau et de la forme dans l'œuvre littéraire*, *Du discours romanesque*, and *Formes du temps et du chronotope dans le roman*. The English version of these essays are published in two different essay collections: *The Problem of Content, Material, and Form in Verbal Art* was published in *Art and Answerability* (1990), and *Discourse in the Novel and Forms of Time and of the Chronotope in the Novel* were published in *The Dialogic Imagination* (1981). The references of these essays will be provided as they are cited in the article.

<sup>2</sup> TN. Here the author makes reference to Kristeva's *Sèméiôtikè – Recherches pour une sémanalyse* (1969), which has been translated into English as *Desire in Language: A Semiotic Approach to Literature and Art* (1980). The reference of this book will be provided as it is cited in the article.

<sup>3</sup> The Quebecker writer, playwright, scriptwriter and plastic artist (*bricoleur*) Réjean Ducharme, to whom this article is dedicated, was 76 years old when he died in Montreal on August 21, 2017. He was born in Saint-Félix-de-Valois, Lanaudière, Quebec on August 12, 1941. His mother, in an interview to the June 14, 1967 issue of *Informo*, a student newspaper, added some data to his biography, such as his high school attendance at the Collège des Clercs de Saint-Viateur in Berthierville, after having attended École Polytechnique à Montréal for six months. His mother died right after Ducharme was awarded the *Prix Gilles-Corbeil* in 1990 for his entire literary output. His life companion, Claire Richard, with whom he lived almost 50 years, was a Canadian television and movie actor. She also wrote the script of *Poverty and Other Delights*, a movie directed by Denys Arcand. Claire Richard, a stage name of Claire Gaudreault, was born in Quebec on March 23, 1928 and died in Montreal on June 4, 2016. She was Ducharme's representative in prize award ceremonies and interviews.

p.93).<sup>4</sup> He highlights, in *Discourse in the Novel*, social heteroglossia, which stems from socio-ideological languages in dialogical interaction:

Against the dialogizing background of other languages of the era and in direct dialogic interaction with them (in direct dialogues) each language begins to sound differently than it would have sounded “on its own,” as it were (without relating to others) (1981, p.412).<sup>5</sup>

It is important to point out that Bakhtin was the first to introduce the concept of text as subjectivity and communicability in literary theory. And Kristeva, in *Desire in Language: A Semiotic Approach to Literature and Art*, underscores the emptiness of the concept of subject-person and the subsequent ambivalence of writing. When defining intertextuality as a mosaic of quotations, she attests to the double nature of poetic language: “[...] any text is constructed as a mosaic of quotations; any text is the absorption and transformation of another. The notion of intertextuality replaces that of intersubjectivity, and poetic language is read as at least double” (1980, p.66).<sup>6</sup>

In *The Death of the Author*, Barthes states that a book does not carry an ultimate, single meaning; it is, on the contrary, “a tissue of signs, an imitation that is lost, infinitely deferred” (1997, p.147);<sup>7</sup> besides, it is language that speaks – not the author. He thus proposes to substitute the one who was taken as the owner of language for language itself. He defines *text* as

a multi-dimensional space in which a variety of writings, none of them original, blend and clash. The text is a tissue of quotations drawn from the innumerable centres of culture. [...] To give a text an Author is to impose a limit on that text, to furnish it with a final signified, to close the writing. [...] the birth of the reader must be at the cost of the death of the Author. [...] a text is made of multiple writings, drawn from many cultures and entering into mutual relations of dialogue, parody, contestation, but there is tane place where this multiplicity is focused and that place is the reader, not, as was hitherto said, the author. The

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<sup>4</sup> BAKHTIN, M. The Problem of Speech Genres. In: BAKHTIN, M. *Speech Genres and Other Late Essays*. Translated by Vern W. McGee and edited by Caryl Emerson and Michael Holquist. Austin, TX: University of Texas Press, 1986. pp.60-102.

<sup>5</sup> BAKHTIN, M. Discourse in the Novel. In: BAKHTIN, M. *The Dialogic Imagination: Four essays by M. M. Bakhtin*. Edited by Michael Holquist and translated by Caryl Emerson and Michael Holquist. Austin, TX: University of Texas Press, 1981. pp.259-422.

<sup>6</sup> KRISTEVA, J. *Desire in Language: A Semiotic Approach to Literature and Art*. Edited by Leon Roudiez and translated by Thomas Gora and Alice Jardine. New York: Columbia University Press, 1980.

<sup>7</sup> BARTHES, R. *The Death of the Author*. In: BARTHES, R. *Image Music Text*. Edited and translated by Stephen Heath. London: Fontana Press, 1977.

reader is the space on which all the quotations that make up a writing are inscribed without any of them being lost (1997, pp.146-148).<sup>8</sup>

On the cessation of the search for a fundamental unity of meaning, in *Theory of Text* Barthes states that

The intertext is a general field of anonymous formulae whose origin can scarcely ever be located; of unconscious or automatic quotations, given without quotation-marks. Epistemologically, the concept of intertext is what brings to the theory of the text the volume of sociality: the whole of language, anterior or contemporary, comes to the text, not following the path of a discoverable filiation or a willed imitation, but that of dissemination – an image which makes sure the text has the status not of a reproduction but of a productivity (1981, p.39).<sup>9</sup>

Genette (1997)<sup>10</sup> uses the image of a universal palimpsest to identify this intertextual flux as a play of relationships between hypertexts and hypotexts. He fits hypotexts and hypertexts into a definite typology or characterization, among which are citation, plagiarism, and parody.

[...] I am inclined to recognize five types of transtextual relationships. [...] The first type was explored some years ago by Julia Kristeva, under the name of intertextuality [...]. For my part I define it, no doubt in a more restrictive sense, as a relationship of copresence between two texts or among several texts: that is to say, eidetically and typically as the actual presence of one text within another. In its most explicit and literal form, it is the traditional practice of *quoting* (with quotation marks, with or without specific references). In another less explicit and canonical form, it is the practice of *plagiarism* (in Lautréamont, for instance), which is an undeclared but still literal borrowing (1997, pp.1-2; emphasis in original).<sup>11</sup>

Ducharme's textual output attests to the Bakhtinian concepts of dialogical resonance, viz., the emergence of other languages with varying degrees of otherness in dialogical interaction. It is thus Kristeva's poetic mosaic, Barthes' dissemination, and Genette's palimpsests. Cliche (1992, pp.81-82) points to the seduction of the riddles

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<sup>8</sup> For reference, see footnote 7.

<sup>9</sup> BARTHES, R. *Theory of Text*. In: YOUNG, R. (Ed.). *Untying the Text: A Post-Structuralist Reader*. London; Boston: Routledge & Kegan Paul, 1981. pp.31-47.

<sup>10</sup> GENETTE, G. *Palimpsests: Literature in the Second Degree*. Translated by Channa Newman and Claude Doubinsky. Lincoln, Nebraska: University of Nebraska Press, 1997.

<sup>11</sup> For reference, see footnote 10.

found in Ducharme's texts and highlights the play with meanings found in his own name:

Where do Ducharme's novels come from? From the novelist's own name. [...] It is odd that his name - Réjean Ducharme - is in a way particularly *Ducharmian*, once, according to the principle of homophony, it literally means the master of talent and seduction, the one who possesses charm, illusion, and enchantment. It is a name that, above all, allures readers to *devour* his novels. [...] Where do these novels come from? From the fear of the Name, the denial that traverses the text as if it were a phantom of destruction and annihilation (pp.81-82; emphasis in original).<sup>12</sup>

Ducharme becomes part of the history of Quebec literature in 1966, when, at 24 years old, he publishes his first novel, *L'Avalée des avalés*. This is when the first of his only two photographs were made public (the second one dates 1982). And because he refused to appear in public, he was known as the writer with no face (*l'écrivain sans visage*) or as the phantom novelist (*le romancier fantôme*). In an exclusive interview by writer and journalist Gérald Godin,<sup>13</sup> a friend of Ducharme's, he states that he does not want to be known:

I do not want my face to be known; I do not want any connection between my novel and me to be made. I do not want to be known, to be recognized as a writer. I want to be known as a man. I do not understand why people want to see me. I am not an interesting man.<sup>14</sup>

This intriguing confession creates an expectation about his relationship with literature. Nardout-Lafarge (2001, p.130) writes about it: “[...] the mythical effects of the author/narrator/character identification are born of the disappearance of the man in

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<sup>12</sup> TN. Quotation from texts written in French whose translation into English has not been published will be freely translated by me. In original: “D’où vient le roman ducharmien? Du nom même de son auteur. [...] Étrangement, le nom de l’auteur - Réjean Ducharme - est, d’une certaine façon, particulièrement ‘ducharmien’, puisqu’il signifie littéralement, selon le principe de l’homophonie - le sujet de la maîtrise et de la séduction, le régent du charme, de l’illusion et de l’enchantement. Nom, par avance, offert comme une proie à la dévoration du roman [...]. D’où viennent ces romans? De l’horreur du Nom, du déni qui passe dans le texte sous les traits d’un fantôme de destruction et d’anéantissement.”

<sup>13</sup> This information was given to me in Montreal in 1997 by Robert Lévesque, a writer, journalist, literary and theater critic. The interview was published in our Master's thesis (VIANNA NETO, 1998).

<sup>14</sup> In original: “Je ne veux pas que ma face soit connue, je ne veux pas qu’on fasse aucun lien entre moi et mon roman. Je ne veux pas être connu, je ne veux pas être pris pour un écrivain, mais pour un homme. Je ne comprends pas pourquoi les gens veulent me voir. Je ne suis pas un homme intéressant.”

favor of the man of letters.”<sup>15</sup> From sparse data on his biography, we highlight the epigraph published on the first edition of *L’Avalée des avalés*. It was Ducharme’s answer to Claude Gallimard, when the latter asked the former about his birth as a writer: “I was born only once in 1941, and it happened in Saint Felix of Valois in the province of Quebec.”<sup>16</sup> In 1967, when he was 17 years old, his second novel *Le nez qui voque* was published on the initiative of writer Raymond Queneau. Due to the maturity of the text, suspicions arose that the name Réjean Ducharme was actually a pseudonym under which a mature writer was kept secret, in his forties, as perhaps the literary critic Naim Kattan or Queneau himself. When his third novel, *L’Océantume*, was published in 1968, suspicions about his very existence grew stronger. In the following years, he published the novels *La fille de Christophe Colomb* (1969), *L’hiver de force* (1973), *Les enfantômes* (1976), *Dévadé* (1990), *Va savoir* (1994), and *Gros mots* (1999).<sup>17</sup>

Hyphenated as French-Canadian, a *bastard* identity is conferred on him. This allows, or metaphorically authorizes, the practice of *devouring* or *plagiarizing* when carrying out intertextual operations, such as quotation, parody, recycling and bricolage.<sup>18</sup> An intellectual gastrolatrous, Ducharme rewrites, in a certain way, Rabelais’s Pantagruel through Bérénice Einberg, the protagonist of *L’Avalée des avalés*, who is described, in the novel, as *l’avalée des avalés dans la va(l)lée des avalés*, that is, *the one who was devoured by the devoured in the valley of the devoured*. The immense valley (*la va(l)lée*), described as a big open mouth that voraciously swallows man in his existential journey, is the place where she has an encounter with the bewildering reality that surrounds her and *essentially* operates words. In the play of engendering boundaries with the unlimited, in which the victory of the small over the big, of otherness and

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<sup>15</sup> In original: “[...] des effets mythifiants d’identification auteur/narrateur/personnage naissent de cette disparition de l’homme au profit de l’homme de lettres”.

<sup>16</sup> In original: “Je ne suis né qu’une fois, en 1941. Cela s’est fait à Saint-Félix-de-Valois, dans la province de Québec.”

<sup>17</sup> Ducharme also composed songs to Robert Charlebois, wrote the scripts to Francis Mankiewicz’s films *Les bons débarras* (1978) and *Les beaux souvenirs* (1981). He was an artist, a plastic artist (*bricoleur*), and playwright. He wrote the following plays: *Ha! ha!...: le manteau d’arlequin*. Théâtre Français et du monde entier (1982), *Inès Pérée et Inat Tendu* (1976), *Le Cid maghané*, and *Le Marquis qui perdit* (still unpublished). As a plastic artist, he signed his collage sculptures, that is, bricolages, which were called *Trophoux*, under his pseudonym *Roch Plante*. In 2017, after his death, Les Éditions du Passage Publishing House (in Outrement, Québec) published an edition of his drawings, hitherto unpublished. Rolf Puls, a former editor of Gallimard Publishing House and Ducharme’s friend, writes the introduction of the book, which is dedicated to Claire Richard.

<sup>18</sup> Bricolage is the intertextual collage of fragments of different texts.

difference over identity and universal is achieved, everything devours the narrator: the excessive, the unmeasured, the small, the fragile:

Everything devours me. When my eyes are closed, it is through my womb that I am devoured, and it is within my womb that I annihilate myself. When my eyes are open, I am devoured by what I see; it is in the womb that I suffocate on what I see. I am devoured by the overly large river, the overly high sky, the overly fragile flowers, the overly fearful butterflies, the overly beautiful face of my mother (DUCHARME, 1966, p.9).<sup>19</sup>

In her unmeasured voracity and the exercise of her eschatological eating, Bérénice devours the Earth after having been devoured by it: “[...] devour everything, spread myself over everything, embrace everything, impose my rules on everything, submit everything: from the core of the search to the core of the earth itself” (DUCHARME, 1966, p.216).<sup>20</sup> This Ducharmian devouring is revealed not only in Bérénice, but also in Mille Milles, the copy writer of *Le nez qui voque*. Both are intellectual gastrolatrous and narrative doubles. In the narrative, Bérénice Einberg metaphorizes literature, alluding not only to the discourse of representation, transgression and transfiguration of reality, but also to the (unconventional) additional place of theoretical elaboration of literary discourse in the Bakhtinian multidimensional and interdisciplinary concept. Bérénice devours and is devoured in the complex process of transfiguration of reading into writing, of the intertextual and dialogical operation between the cultural anteriority of the bastard’s library *pater*, the Quebec locus under construction, and the following section (in Barthes’ manner): “[...] in what is called inter-textuality, we must include texts which come *after*: the sources of a text are not only *before* it, they are also *after* it” (BARTHES, 1994, p.230; emphasis in original).<sup>21</sup> In *Le nez qui voque* Mille Milles’ writing is the place to practice anarchic dynamism in which opposing fields, once confronted, claim the truths they create as discourses resist each other by means of a play that is established by parodic ambiguity, that is,

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<sup>19</sup> In original: “Tout m’avale. Quand j’ai les yeux fermés, c’est par mon ventre que je suis avalée, c’est dans mon ventre que j’étouffe. Quand j’ai les yeux ouverts, c’est par ce que je vois que je suis avalée, c’est dans le ventre de ce que je vois que je suffoque. Je suis avalée par le fleuve trop grand, par le ciel trop haut, par les fleurs trop fragiles, par les papillons trop craintifs, par le visage trop beau de ma mère.”

<sup>20</sup> In original: “[...] tout avaler, me répandre sur tout, tout englober, imposer ma loi à tout, tout soumettre: du noyau de la pêche au noyau de la terre elle-même.”

<sup>21</sup> BARTHES, R. *The Semiotic Challenge*. Translated by Richard Howard. Berkeley, California: University of California Press, 1994.

appropriation, rewriting, and irony. These are strategies that produce dialogism, movement, fragmentation and polyphonic discursive multiplication, which constitute Ducharme's unfinalized text.

In the search of identity reinvention, characteristics that make the figure of the *bastard* visible are identified in Mille Milles' cultural practices. It is in this discursive play, in which tensions are created between different cultural references based on which social values and codes are attempted to be legitimized, that the *bastard* takes form. The figure breaks with several of these cultural references and appropriates others for himself in an attempt to create self-engenderment in *bastardization*, reaffiliation in the search of authenticity that is "nourished by local or continental (so-called American) references" (BOUCHARD, 2002, p.6).<sup>22</sup> Mille Milles, à la *bastard*, is transformed from creature into creator, hoping to reinvent the world: "By conferring divine powers on me, I intended to change reality and things, obstinately making them adapt to a simple and rigid definition that I called self. [...] I am at most the world" (DUCHARME, 1967, pp.240-241).<sup>23</sup>

The overwhelmingly vast universe of letters is the place where Mille Milles essentially practices the word as he encounters the bewildering reality that surrounds him. The title bricolage - *Le nez qui voque* - reveals the montage of the book's key syntagma - *une équivoque*, an equivocation.<sup>24</sup> What is the equivocation announced in the title? The enticement of the enigma condemns writer Mille Milles (a navigator and passerby) to drift in the *waters* of the narrative or to wander in the maze of the alleys of Ducharme's *narrative city*, collecting, as a *bricoleur*, the pieces necessary for the recycling of the text and the solution of the enigma announced. Carrying the stigma imprinted in his name (Thousand Miles), the character reproduces the infinite and realizes the author's *mise en abyme*, the narrative bric-à-brac, as the journey and foundation of his own existence, which consists of irremediably multiplying (not unraveling) the equivocation, the undecidability of the narrative sign.

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<sup>22</sup>In original: "[...] nourrie de références locales ou continentales dites 'américaines'."

<sup>23</sup> In original: "Je prétendais, m'arrogant des pouvoirs divins, changer la réalité et les choses, les amener à force d'opiniâtreté à s'adapter à une définition simple et rigide que j'appelais moi. [...] Je suis, tout au plus, le monde."

<sup>24</sup> Through the apocope of the noun *nez* and the substitution of the definite article *le* for the indefinite article *une*, the initial value of *une équivoque* is given.

Accordingly, Ducharme's text contributes to the creation of a new identity discourse in the core of the Quiet Revolution,<sup>25</sup> allowing a French-Canadian from Quebec to become a Quebecker. The journey of the *bastard* is, therefore, identified by Bouchard (2002, pp.6-7) in the identity discourse produced in literature and social sciences: "[...] first, the rejection of the nourishing mother country, its traditions, norms, models; then, the institution of new references, resulting from a symbolic reappropriation of the past, the land, the language, the self and the other."<sup>26</sup> In *Le nez qui voque* Mille Milles inserts two 'l's in the word *patriotism*, creating the word *patrillotisme*, which dilutes the meaning of *patriotism* as a national paradigm and adds to the signifier the sound of a differentiated social-cultural-linguistic supplement, in which *outside* codes are inscribed many times with no representation in the standard language:

Let's talk a little about Canada, the immaculate theme. [...] Against the flow, let's run towards the white regions of human activity. Let's turn to religion, arts, work, racism, and *patrillotism*. [...] Those who do not cross (the border), who were already on this side, are the Canadians among the Americans, the ones who were bought – this is what the Americans who crossed the border came here to buy (DUCHARME, 1967, pp.147-148).<sup>27</sup>

Neither French nor English, the bastard born in the Americas seeks, through the (re)invention of his identity, the anchoring of his *ethoethnocultural* singularity on American soil: "People say there are 20 million Canadians. Where do they live? Where did they go? Where are they? There's no Canadian in Canada. Where are the 20 million

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<sup>25</sup> Rosa Vianna Neto (1999, pp.57-74) states that the context of the 1960s was marked by the displacement of national identities, manifest in social-political-cultural movements that disputed and broke with Western hegemonic canons, such as the May 1968 events in France, the hippie movement, the counterculture movement at Woodstock (USA) and the Quiet Revolution in Quebec. The latter shook institutions and promoted changes in ethical, cultural and ideological structures. It witnessed internal divisions and contradictions that particularly identify Quebec *ethos*. Ducharme's first narratives stage the criticism of the dominant culture and provide a reading of the social and cultural formations of the 1960s and 1970s.

<sup>26</sup> In original: "[...] d'abord le rejet de la mère patrie nourricière, de ses traditions, normes et modèles, puis l'institution de nouvelles références issues d'une ré-appropriation symbolique du passé, du territoire, de la langue, de soi et de l'autre".

<sup>27</sup> In original: "Parlons un peu du Canada, sujet immaculé. [...] À contre-courant, courons vers les régions blanches de l'activité humaine. Portons-nous vers la religion, les arts, le travail, le racisme et le patrillotisme. [...] Ceux qui n'ont pas sauté, qui étaient déjà de ce côté-ci, ce sont les Canadiens d'entre les Américains, ce sont les achetés, c'est cela que les Américains qui ont sauté sont venus acheter."

Canadians? Where are we?” (DUCHARME, 1966, p.148).<sup>28</sup> As Ducharme ironically cites Canada’s national anthem, he announces his proposal to deconstruct the social-political-cultural formations that mobilized the French-Canadian imaginary: “O Canada, my native land, my ancestors, your face, your breasts, your glorious coat of arms” (DUCHARME, 1966, p.148).<sup>29</sup>

It is in the play between migrations, that is, the displacement between borders, the deconstruction and remapping of plays of territorialization, that Ducharme creates the nucleus that generates the narrative plot of some of his novels, such as in *Le nez qui voque*: “Canada is a vast empty country, a land with no houses and no men, fewer in the south, fewer along the border of the Un-United States, fewer where Americans crossed the border” (DUCHARME, 1966, p.147).<sup>30</sup> As the founder of Ducharme’s heteroglot parody in the narrative, Mille Milles exercises irony when he says that Canada is *acana*: “The word Canada would have derived from the Spaniards *aca* and *nada*, which mean nothing here [...] Poor Mille Milles! Totally alone!” (DUCHARME, 1966, p.15).<sup>31</sup>

The deconstruction of the United States and its reconstruction in the Un-United States adds to the parodic material seen in the quotation. This is one of his exercises of subversion of order: the practice of cartographic, political and cultural (re)territorializations. This is due to a redefinition of borders, re-established by the strong dynamics of variations in the social-political-cultural constructions produced by the culture and identity homogenization dictated by the hegemonic policy of the USA’s *Big Brother*. This is related to the migrant cultural representations and their possibilities to intervene in the power play in the Americas, where the construction of Americanness is a strategy of transnational action and redefinition of the theoretical construct of borders. It is worth remembering that the so called periphery regions and countries experience a new form of colonialism, a neocolonialism applied by capitalist globalization and

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<sup>28</sup> In original: “Ils disent qu’il y a vingt millions de Canadiens. Où vivent-ils? Où sont-ils partis? Où sont-ils tous? Il n’y a pas un seul Canadien au Canada. Où sont les vingt millions de Canadiens? Où sommes nous?”

<sup>29</sup> In original: “Ô Canada, ma patrie, mes aïeux, ton front, tes seins, tes fleurons glorieux!”

<sup>30</sup> In original: “Le Canada est un vaste pays vide, une terre sans maisons et sans hommes, sauf au sud, sauf le long de la frontière des États-Désunis, sauf là où les Américains ont débordé.”

<sup>31</sup> In original: “Le mot Canada serait né des espagnols *aca* et *nada* qui signifient: rien ici [...]. Pauvre Mille Milles! [...] Tout seul!”

managed predominantly by the United States. This is what Ducharme exercises in his irony, rejecting depression, boredom, lethargy, but also neocolonialist exploitation:

Sleep, Canada, sleep; I sleep with you. Let's keep lying down, Canada, until a worthwhile sunrise. [...] Canada is. Canada is or isn't? [...] In Canada at this moment there's nobody who's not American, except for the ambassador of Mars. [...] Who, in Canada, does not belong to the race of hot dogs, hamburgers, bar-b-q, chips, toasts, buildings, stop signs, Reader's Digest, Life, Metro-Goldwyn-Mayer, rock 'n' roll,<sup>32</sup> and cereal? Who among us, my brethren, is not an apostle of Popeye, Woodpecker, Father Knows Best, Dodge, Plymouth, Chrysler, husky carburetor, the cha cha cha, Coca-Cola, Seven-up, Jerry Lewis, and Charles Boyer? Who has the guts to punch in the face of the singers paid by Pepsi salespeople, the ones who sing that we are no more and no less than the Pepsi generation? I would like to inform those who do not know, who do not tune in Canadian radio stations, that Pepsi is a liquid from the Un-United States, a type of Coca-Cola. I guarantee it (DUCHARME, 1966, pp.148-149).<sup>33</sup>

*La fille de Christophe Colomb*, a chronicle of the *finding* of the Americas, which is orphaned at birth from the writing of its father, may fall in the hands of readers whose different repertoires may lead them to accept it exceptionally well or to refuse it categorically, as Derrida would say about writing when analyzing Plato in Edmond Jabès and the Question of the Book:

Absence of the writer too. For to write is to draw back. Not to retire into one's tent, in order to write, but to draw back from one's writing itself. To be grounded far from one's language, to emancipate it or lose one's hold on it, to let it make its way alone and unarmed. To leave speech. [...]. To let it speak alone, which it can do only in its written form. To leave writing is to be there only in order to provide

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<sup>32</sup> Ducharme's critique to the ethnocentric WASP model.

<sup>33</sup> In original: "Dors, Canada, dors; je dors avec toi. Restons couchés, Canada, jusqu'à ce qu'un soleil qui en vaille la peine se lève. [...] Le Canada est. Le Canada est-il ou n'est-il pas? [...] Au Canada, maintenant, il n'y a plus que l'ambassadeur de la planète Mars qui ne soit américain. [...] Qui, au Canada, n'est pas de la race des hot-dogs, des hamburgers, du bar-b-q, des chips, des toasts, des buildings, des stops, du Reader's Digest, de Life, de la Metro Goldwyn-Mayer, du rock'n roll et du bouillie-bouillie? Qui d'entre nous, mes frères, n'est pas un apôtre de Popeye, de Woody the Woodpecker, de Papa a raison, de la Dodge, de la Plymouth, de la Chrysler, des carburateurs enrhumés, du cha-cha-cha, du Coca-Cola, du Seven-up, de Jerry Lewis et de Tcharles Boyer? Qui, ici, a le courage d'aller casser la gueule aux chanteurs payés par les vendeurs de Pepsi, chanteurs qui chantent ni plus ni moins que nous sommes de la génération Pepsi? Pour ceux qui ne seraient pas au courant, qui ne captent pas les postes de radio canadiennes, je précise que le Pepsi est un liquide des États-Désunis, une sorte de Coca-Cola."

its passageway, to be the diaphanous element of its going forth: everything and nothing (DERRIDA, 2001, p.85).<sup>34</sup>

In it, the narrator, Ducharme's narrative double, nourishes the borders of the imaginary with extraordinary adventures in exotic and distant places (such as Marco Polo in, for example, *Sinbad the Sailor*). Little concerned about the issue, he warns those who may be interested: "So, my metaphors? You don't like them? Just beat it!" (DUCHARME, 1969, p.182).<sup>35</sup> Alternatively, he offers, ironically, another reading clue, other tracks: "Ask Baudelaire. He will tell you this until he's dead. / And in alexandrines! This is even more pitiful" (DUCHARME, 1969, p.192).<sup>36</sup>

In *L'Avalée des avalés* the *bastard* denies mimicking the model of the former French metropolis and the dominant Anglophone, responsible for his hyphenation as French-Canadian. He also refuses the immobility of statues and reinvents himself with no regard to the system so that he can find his self-engenderment:

Recreating the self, rebuilding the self in the world is necessary. We are born as statues are born: something created us and there's nothing else to do but to live the way we were made. It's easy. I am a statue that works to modify itself and sculpts itself into something else. Pride requires us to be what we want to be. What really counts is being responsible for our actions, is living against a nature that was imposed on us, condemning us to live. Like the black giant, the guardian of evil spirits, we need to whip ourselves so that we don't fall asleep. I'll even rip my eyelids out to keep them open if necessary. I'll set foot on the soil I choose. With little pride, I'll reinvent myself (DUCHARME, 1966, pp.42-43).<sup>37</sup>

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<sup>34</sup> DERRIDA, J. Edmond Jabès and the Question of the Book. In: DERRIDA, J. *Writing and Difference*. Translated by Alan Bass. London; New York: Routledge, 2001. pp.77-96.

<sup>35</sup> In original: "Alors? Mes métaphores? On les déteste? On n'a qu'à s'en aller."

<sup>36</sup> In original: "Demande à Baudelaire. Il te racontera ça à mort. / Et en alexandrins! Ça fait bien plus pitié."

<sup>37</sup> In original: "Il faut se recréer, se remettre au monde. On naît comme naissent les statues. On vient au monde statue: quelque chose nous a faits et on n'a plus qu'à vivre comme on est fait. C'est facile. Je suis une statue qui travaille à se changer, qui se sculpte elle-même en quelque chose d'autre. Quand on s'est fait soi-même, on sait qui on est. L'orgueil exige qu'on soit ce qu'on veut être. [...] Ce qui compte c'est se savoir responsable de chaque acte qu'on pose, c'est vivre contre ce qu'une nature trouvée en nous nous condamnait à vivre. Il faut, à l'exemple du géant noir gardien des génies malfaisants, se faire fouetter pour ne pas s'endormir. S'il le faut, pour garder mes paupières ouvertes, j'arracherai mes paupières. Je choisirai le sol de chacun de mes pas. À partir du peu d'orgueil que j'ai, je me réinventerai."

## 2 The Art of Plagiarism and the Intertextual Battle

In an anthological essay of Quebec criticism on text relations, Marcotte writes about the *art of plagiarism*. According to him, “[...] plagiarism is a form of extreme differentiation, a *battle* fought with the weapons stolen from the enemy. This is why, in a minority and threatened culture like Quebec’s, there is no need to impose it with the same force as in the United States or Brazil” (1990, p.127).<sup>38</sup>

*Stolen weapons* and *minority culture* are the two noun phrases that stand out as indexes to understand the concept. The semantic load of steal in the word *plagiarism* suggests a reading perspective that is complemented with the *battle* metaphor. Quebec’s *battle*, which is a cultural act, is fought by a minority culture and threatened to be erased of its cultural and linguistic uniqueness by the squashing Anglophone majority of North America. And this justifies the stealing of the enemy’s weapons. This *cultural battle* alludes to the representations of Quebec identities in which there is an evident tension between the fragmentation of the symbolic systems, of ideological processes and the retrieval of tradition, the recovery of cultural memory and of collective discourse in its whole complexity. Marcotte’s metaphor of *plagiarism* as a *cultural battle* justifies not only the *stealing* of the enemy’s weapons by the bastard, which is necessary for the minority culture to defend itself, but also the author’s autonomy to transgress, which is what defines literary discourse, and to appropriate, which is what identifies parody as a discourse of violence: “Does Ducharme’s novel appropriate the text of the other and make it his, or is his novel submitted to it, receiving it as invasion, under the risk of losing this authorial autonomy, which is so dear to Lautréamont and Bérénice Einberg?” (MARCOTTE, 2000, pp.83-84).<sup>39</sup> As he points to the violence of parodic discourse (the weapon stolen from the enemy), he cites Bérénice Einberg and Lautréamont as having a bastard identity. Bérénice is a character of *L’Avalée des avalés*, the novel where we find Ducharme’s narrative double, and Lautréamont<sup>40</sup> is the writer alluded to by Genette in

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<sup>38</sup>In original: “[...] le plagiat est une forme extrême de différenciation, une *guérilla* faite avec des armes volées à l’ennemi, et c’est pourquoi il a, dans une culture minoritaire et menacée comme la québécoise, une nécessité qui ne s’impose pas avec la même vigueur, par exemple, aux États-Unis ou au Brésil.”

<sup>39</sup> In original: “Le roman ducharmien s’empare-t-il du texte de l’autre pour le faire sien, ou se soumet-il à lui, le reçoit-il comme une invasion, au risque de perdre cette autonomie d’auteur si chère à Lautréamont et à Bérénice Einberg?”

<sup>40</sup> According to Gaston Bachelard (1979, pp.7-8), Lautréamont is a pseudonym of Isidore-Lucien Ducasse: “We know nothing about the intimate life of Isidore-Lucien Ducasse, who continues to hide

*Palimpsests* (1997).<sup>41</sup> As hyphenated writers (Ducharme is French-Canadian and Lautréamont is French-Latin American), they are allowed – or they are metaphorically authorized – to *devour* and *plagiarize* as they carry out their intertextual operations: “[...] creation itself, originality, is imitated, copied” (MARCOTTE, 2000, p.92).<sup>42</sup>

According to Andrès (1999), in the case of coercion by institutional tradition, we need to reverse it, through parodic play, *cultural battle*, inscribing, as Bouchard suggests, the birth of Americanness in Québécois literature: “Finally, after fifty years, literary discourse describes a plot in the core of which we can read a realignment of references” (2000, p.3).<sup>43</sup> And Marcotte calls out attention to the manipulation of the traditional lexicon in the play of resignification between signifier and signified in Ducharme’s oeuvre. Nardout-Lafarge (2001), in her turn, indicates the intertextual play with the countless hypotexts that surface in Ducharme’s hypertexts, which approach the literary text as the privileged place in which cultural constructions circulate. In these constructions we identify the representation of constitutive *ethoi* of Americanness. In this sense, Marcotte (1989) acknowledges Ducharme as the discoverer of the American novel<sup>44</sup> in his *La fille de Christophe Colomb*: “At last, this is our American novel and its very discoverer” (p.93).<sup>45</sup> In the novel, Christopher Columbus’ daughter is born from the zoophilia between the discoverer and a *leghorn* chicken:

Colombe Colomb, the daughter of Christopher Columbus, my dear, /  
Is gracious and pretty as a bird. / Born from the renowned egg of her  
famous father. / She almost became one of those beings the wind

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under the pseudonym of Lautréamont. We know nothing about her personality [...]. Only through her oeuvre can we judge what her soul was.” In original: “On ne sait rien sur la vie intime d’Isidore Ducasse qui reste bien cachée sous le pseudonyme de Lautréamont. On ne sait rien de son caractère. [...] C’est à travers l’oeuvre seulement qu’on peut juger ce que fut son âme.”

<sup>41</sup> For reference, see footnote 10.

<sup>42</sup> In original: “[...] l’invention même, l’originalité, sont imitées, copiées.”

<sup>43</sup> In original: “Enfin, depuis un demi-siècle, le discours littéraire a décrit une trame au sein de laquelle on peut lire un réalignement de références.”

<sup>44</sup> The reference to *American* is made according to the sense that the Quebecois intellectual Gérard Bouchard and Gilles Marcotte, among others, give to the word. When they were asked about the semantic identity of the word, which is overdetermined by the cultural representation of the United States, they suggested the introduction of a policy of cultural intervention so that the cultural otherness of the three Americas in the semantic value of the word can be included. It is thus an identity resignification in the light of the processes of apprehending Americanness, based on which the use of *United States* as an adjective is preferred over the adjective *American*, when reference is made specifically to issues related to the US.

<sup>45</sup> In original: “Le voici donc, enfin, notre roman américain, et voici le découvreur lui-même.”

blows; [...] In Manne and Fautre, there was a rumor / That the *leghorn* chicken was her mommy (DUCHARME, 1969, p.17).<sup>46</sup>

Colombe's body, which is created from violent experiences, outrages, cannibalization and recycling, is constituted as a possible aesthetic representation of the cyborg metafigure. The representation of Colombe's body approached as a metafigure and identified in the figure of the *bastard* as a cyborg phenomenon is legitimized by the addition of the representation of the cyborg's bastard nature. The substitution of Colombe's organs for the organs of men, animals and *trash* materials configures the monstrousness and degradation of the body of Christopher Columbus' daughter:

In the hospital, they examine your blood./ It is pretty, it is strong, it is healthy, it is red./ They need to donate your blood to something more useful in a timely manner. / They inject your blood in a vampire, worse than a tick, called Red Cross. / [...] Khaki eyes and lemon yellow legs were implanted in her. / Her lungs were replaced by pneumatics. / [...] She is as black as lignite. She used to be blond. / She has the voice of a mermaid. Now she stutters all the time./ [...] They implanted such big teeth in her mouth / That she cannot open it. / A divine makeup artist touches up her face / Little by little, she becomes herself again (DUCHARME, 1969, pp.99-101).<sup>47</sup>

The human organ implantation in beings that represent the social scum and the blood transfusion in the veins of *a vampire, worse than a tick, called Red Cross*, suggest, through the bodily metaphors, the capitalist vampirization of colonial and postcolonial Americas. These processes of destruction through Colombe's cannibalization and body modification as well as the implantation of unrecyclable trash materials during recycling procedures indicate a radical rupture with founding utopias and Edenic myths. If we take Colombe's body as a metaphor for the Americas, the text discloses the failure of American utopias founded on the reedition of Edenic ideals, (un)territorialized paradisiacal places – according to the concept of New Canaan, and

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<sup>46</sup>In original: “Colombe Colomb, fille de Christophe Colomb, ma chère, / Est gracile et belle comme un petit oiseau. / D’ailleurs, née de l’oeuf célèbre de son notoire père, / Elle a failli devenir un de ces êtres que peut porter l’air; [...] À Manne et à Fautre, le bruit a couru / Que la poule leghorn était sa maman.”

<sup>47</sup> In original: “À l’hôpital, ils regardent son sang. / Il est beau, il est fort, il est sain, il est rouge. / Il faut donner son sang à plus utile que soi à son temps. / Ils l’injectent à un vampire pire que tique appelé Croix-Rouge. / [...] Ils lui ont posé des yeux kaki et des jambes jaune citron. / [...] Ils remplacent ses poumons par des pneumatiques. / [...] Elle est noire comme jais. Avant, elle était blonde. / Elle avait une voix de sirène. Elle ne fait que bégayer. / [...] Ils lui ont planté des dents si grandes / Qu’elle ne peut pas ouvrir la bouche. / Un visagiste céleste fait des retouches. / Peu à peu, elle redevient elle-même.

the (everlasting) Promised Land. In addition, through the extremely grotesque representation of Columbus' daughter, it exposes the monstrous results of Western projects of civilization, based on exploitation, violence, and dehumanization by capital.

It is self-engenderment, uncommitted to founding myths, to unicity, that brings the cyborg close to the *bastard* of Americas. The cyborg, which, through *assemblage* (bricolage), is recomposed of several pieces, has, in its composition, the inscription of social categories and cultural identities that aim to regulate a new symbolic power. In this body, which is built and rebuilt, there is an ongoing exchange of meanings that demands that an analysis of a diffuse self and a plurality of subjects that coexist socially and culturally be favored. During the construction of the monstrous body of Columbus' daughter, Ducharme metaphorically associates the mutations in Colombe's body and its imprinted marks, which are not always visible, with the *body* of postcolonial Americas. Colombe Colomb's body is, therefore, a metaphor for the reading of inscriptions in a historiography that deconstructs neocolonial paradigms. As the proposition to create a critical material through a dialogical interamerican perspective is taken into account, the body is understood as a symbolic and aesthetic representation of disorder, a place of aesthetic reference loaded with identity resignification in the postcolonial context of the Americas.

In this context Marcotte (1990) defines the plagiarizer as “a big consumer and transformer of other people's texts” (p.90).<sup>48</sup> By appropriating and recombining culture fragments, *plagiarism*, as a method, is appropriation, deviation, and combination. As the basis for its corpus, it uses intertextual operations, such as recycling, the ready-made,<sup>49</sup> bricolage, and automatic writing,<sup>50</sup> to create this relational discourse. In terms of the endless bricolage found in Ducharme's texts, there is a wide, fantastic and eclectic “imaginary library” (MAILHOT, 1990, p.3) by means of which writers' names, book titles, true or false quotations, allusions, echoes, reminiscences and inscriptions of previous literary works are often disorderly mentioned. When I interviewed Claire Richard, Ducharme's spouse and representative, she talked about his compulsion for reading:

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<sup>47</sup> In original: “[...] un grand consommateur et transformateur des textes d'autrui.”

<sup>49</sup> Artistic resignification of common objects. Metaphorical (re)presentaiton.

<sup>50</sup> Text writing through stream of consciousness. It was created by surrealists and/or dadaists, more specifically by André Breton and Tristan Tzara in 1919.

He reads everything, Réjean, reads everything! It's amazing to see everything you can find in his hands. He reads a lot, a lot. He reads all the time and everething! It's impossible to know what he is reading, because he is unstoppable. I think he reads avidly. When he wakes up, there are always two or three books scattered on the bed. When he used to ride a bicycle, he said he knew the way so well he could read and ride at the same time! (VIANNA NETO, 1998, p.232).<sup>51</sup>

This wandering by bicycle is fictionalized in *Le nez qui voque*. Mille Milles travels by bicycle, which is used as a metaphor for his fiction boat, with which he crosses miles and miles on this wild voyage: "I am irreverent. I love life. I want life and I have it. I take life in my arms at one go. [...]: 'The crazier we are, the better. I don't embark on anything. I am the boat and I embrace everything'" (DUCHARME, 1967, p.242).<sup>52</sup>

When Ducharme was awarded the Prix Gilles-Corbeil for his entire literary output by the Emile Nelligan Foundation in 1990, Laurent Mailhot (1990), in his speech, declared that "Ducharme rewrites everything he touches, everything he is touched by, but he started and he always starts with reading, I mean, with seeing, at a distance, the world that precedes and surrounds him. [...] To get rid of him, go head to head with him, substitute him."<sup>53</sup>

In *L'Avalée des avalés* Ducharme himself states: "Everything I ask a book to do is to give me energy and courage, to tell me there is more life than the one I can live, to remind me of the urgency to act" (DUCHARME, 1966, pp.107-108).<sup>54</sup> Claire Richard confirms that the only dialogue Ducharme maintains with the world is through writing and reveals how lonely he feels without literature: "Réjean will never say what he's done. He doesn't read newspapers or critiques. He will never try to know what people

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<sup>51</sup> In original: "Il lit tout, Réjean, il lit tout! C'est pas croyable tout ce qui peut lui tomber sur la main. Il lit beaucoup, beaucoup, beaucoup! Il lit tout le temps et tout! Impossible de savoir ce qu'il lit, parce qu'il lit sans arrêt, sans arrêt! Je pense qu'il lit énormément. Il y a toujours, au réveil, deux, trois livres qui traînent. Il voyageait en bicyclette et il disait qu'il connaissait tellement le trajet qu'il lisait en bicyclette!"

<sup>52</sup> In original: "Je suis un joyeux luron. J'aime la vie. Je veux la vie et j'ai la vie. Je prends d'un seul coup toute la vie dans mes bras [...]: 'Plus on est de fous, mieux c'est. Je ne m'embarque pas. C'est moi, la barque, et j'embarque tout'."

<sup>53</sup> In original: "Ducharme réécrit tout ce qu'il touche, tout ce qui le touche, mais il a commencé et commence toujours par lire, c'est-à-dire, par voir, à juste distance, le monde qui le précède et qui l'entoure. [...] Pour s'en débarrasser, se mesurer à lui, le remplacer."

<sup>54</sup> In original: "Tout ce que je demande à un livre, c'est de m'inspirer ainsi de l'énergie et du courage, de me dire ainsi qu'il y a plus de vie que je peux en prendre, de me rappeler ainsi l'urgence d'agir."

say about him. He is a man who lives completely alone” (VIANNA NETO, 1998, p.232).<sup>55</sup> *Mille Milles*, Ducharme’s narrative voice, confirms this information in *Le nez qui voque*: “I’m writing right now. If I weren’t, I’d be doing nothing. [...]. Writing is the only thing I can do to distract my pain and I don’t like writing. My current state is difficult to describe. Everything is empty, shattered in me” (DUCHARME, 1967, p.71).<sup>56</sup>

In *Le nez qui voque*, Ducharme breaks with Francophone and Anglophone Manichaeic structure based on which French-Canadian collective imaginary was built. In this sense, he criticizes the inertia of Canadian identity construction, enrooted in Europe’s and United States’ canon from which moving extraterritorial otherness is excluded. This way, as he makes visible the movement of hybrid cultural otherness in this border, where several *ethoetnocultural* repertoires circulate, Ducharme denies, by using irony against the *québécois de souche*,<sup>57</sup> the unitary identity and denounces, with *Mille Milles*, the exclusion of diversity:

The name Canada indicates a domain that doesn’t exist because there are no Canadians. [...] What was I saying? What’s my point? There would be Canadians and they would be French Canadians because their parents started skin trade. [...] French Canadian (the name says it all) claim to enjoy a privilege the other Canadians (the name says it all) don’t. They have this privilege because they discovered Canada and were the first to plow the land and make the wheat bleed (nosebleed). When I, *Mille Milles*, was in my great-great-grandmother’s womb, I was the first inhabitants. Can we be in the womb of our great-great-grandfather? No, sir. We can only have been in the womb of our<sup>58</sup> great-great-grandmother, the womb of a woman (DUCHARME, pp.150-151).<sup>59</sup>

<sup>55</sup>In original: “Jamais Réjean parlera de ce qu’il a fait. Il ne lit aucun journal, aucune critique. Jamais il essaiera de savoir ce qu’on dit de lui. C’est un homme qui vit complètement seul.”

<sup>56</sup>In original: “En ce moment, j’écris. Mais, si je n’écrivais pas, je ne ferais rien. [...] Écrire est la seule chose que je puisse faire pour distraire mon mal et je n’aime pas écrire. Mon état est difficile à décrire. Tout en moi est vide, effondré.”

<sup>57</sup> *Québécois de souche* is the *pure Québécois*. His/her ancestors are the French who founded Quebec. Thus, s/he shares the same origin, the same past, which gives him/her the right to own the land through hereditary succession.

<sup>58</sup> Despite the use of a feminine noun, the possessive adjective used by Ducharme is masculine (*son*). This is recurrent in his oeuvre, that is, he inverts genders and patterns. Besides, he constantly breaks the rules of the French language with the intent to appropriate the language of the former metropolis in order to inscribe Quebec’s singularity in it. We can also find his *non sens* creation in a playful relation to philosophical discourse.

<sup>59</sup> In original: “Canada est un nom propre désignant un dominion qui n’existe pas, faute des Canadiens. [...] De quoi parlais-je? Où voulais-je en venir? Il y aurait des Canadiens français et ils seraient Canadiens français parce que leurs pères ont fait la traite des fourrures. [...] Les Canadiens français (le nom seul est

This is how Ducharme entertains himself: he enjoys the results yielded by verbal representations, away from a castrating ‘fatherhood’, in a differentiated readership. His refusal to identify himself as a writer (I do not want to be recognized as a writer) can only be justified by the *mise-en-abîme* in his several characters, who are compulsive readers and *outside* writers that fictionalize reality by denying its existence and declaring its illusion as the (equivocal) way out of the inevitable emptiness.

## Conclusion

Based on the dialogical partnership between Friedrich Nietzsche and Jacques Derrida regarding the methodology and metaphysics of the original text as a theoretical reference, this issue of authorial originality points to a possible intertextual reading. In *On the Genealogy of Morality*,<sup>60</sup> Nietzsche teaches that

The entire history of a “thing,” an organ, a practice can be a continuous sign-chain of ever new interpretations and arrangements, whose causes need not be connected even among themselves — on the contrary, in some cases only accidentally follow and replace one another (NIETZSCHE, 1998, p.51).<sup>61</sup>

Derrida (1991) adds to Nietzsche’s “sign-chain of ever new interpretations” his “infinite task of translation” (BENNINGTON; DERRIDA, 1993, p.198)<sup>62</sup> as a Babel stigma and consequent challenge of the transcendental sign to which literature aspires, that is, the perplexity of a creation that is independent of reason:

Shouting out his name, Babel, God demands a translation that only succeeds by producing confusion itself. Jealous of his name and his

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ainsi) prétendent jouir d’un privilège dont ne jouissent pas les autres Canadiens (le nom seul est ainsi). Ce privilège, c’est celui d’avoir découvert le Canada et de lui avoir donné les premiers coups de charrue, de lui avoir fait saigner du blé (saigner du nez) pour la première fois. Moi même, *Mille Milles*, quand j’étais dans le ventre de ma trisaïeule, j’étais les premiers habitants. Peut-on avoir été dans le ventre de son trisaïeul? Non, monsieur. On ne peut avoir été que dans le ventre de son trisaïeule, le ventre d’une femme.”

<sup>60</sup> NIETZSCHE, F. *On the Genealogy of Morality*. Translation and notes by Maudemarie Clark and Alan Swensen. Indianapolis, Indiana: Hackett Publishing Company, 1998.

<sup>61</sup> For reference, see footnote 60.

<sup>62</sup> BENNINGTON, G.; DERRIDA, J. *Jacques Derrida*. Translated by Geoffrey Bennington. Chicago: The University of Chicago Press, 1993.

idiom [...], God demands a respect for his singularity, for his name by instigating the confusion which alone makes necessary the translation it simultaneously renders impossible. This *coup de force*, God's signature bending us to our infinite task of translation, would be that to which literature in general aspires (BENNINGTON DERRIDA, 1993, pp.178-179).<sup>63</sup>

Derrida states that “[a]s absolute confusion is unthinkable, just as is absolute understanding, the text is by definition ‘situated’ in this milieu, and thus every text calls for translation which will never be finished” (BENNINGTON; DERRIDA, 1993, p.175).<sup>64</sup> Therefore, the stigmas of untranslatability and text unfinishedness, inasmuch as they are articulated in the intertextual practice, reveal a fictional reality that defines the role of literature based on the value of discursive identities that are circumscribed by the same impossibility of writing the origin. The representation of multiple discursive otherness are thus used for translating or deciphering the identity maze of the *hyphenated writer*. The narrative connects these discursive devices of the Americas by making evident this incompleteness or unfinishedness constituted of the narrative addition of the excluded margin of the *original* text. It is in this sense that Ducharme discloses a new discourse order whose vectors are plurality, fragmentation, unfinishedness, and heterogeneity, characterized by a set of textual operations. Babel condemned man to the impossibility of total communication, that is, to *uncommunication*, chaos, and dispersion. However, it also drove him to incessantly search for a return to a primordial monolinguisism through which he could retrieve the possibility of a lost unity and the return to transcendental meaning (the absolute origin of meaning), affiliation, and divine origin. Babel’s confusing translation caused man’s condemnation to a work of translation that is stigmatized by unfinishedness.<sup>65</sup>

To sum up, we would like to highlight that, as a result of this plurality of signs in dialogue, Ducharme’s narratives provide analysis with discourse fragments that remain

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<sup>63</sup> For reference, see footnote 62.

<sup>64</sup> For reference, see footnote 62.

<sup>65</sup> Babel’s translation as confusion or as a gateway to paradise reiterates the ambiguity of meaning of the Greek *pharmakon* in Plato’s *Fredo*. *Pharmakon* means drug, which may be understood as medicine or poison. As it carries the semantic load of confusion, Babel determines chaos; however, as a gateway to paradise, it means a full search of meaning, origin, the center. In fact, what we have here is a word play with the adequacy of the word, which maintains the nostalgia of the primordial unity, when it is filled with the discourse of the *Pater*, of the Father (translated by the imposition of his name). In addition, as a blotted word, it translates the division and dispersion of meaning. The translation of Babel, then, is characterized by the decision of choosing one of the poles of meaning, neutralizing thus the polysemic play.

from the dispersion of the French cultural reference. He approaches the play with the literary patrimony inherited from the former metropolis and rewrites it in the mosaic of quotations that characterizes the textual construction of his novels. In this poetics of fragmentation, which is characteristic of his oeuvre, the signs of the identity marks of the French literary institution and its recycling, in the establishment of an anthology of the American novel in Quebec, emerge in Ducharme's hypertext as a condition for Quebec's literature to be legible. The search of a Canadian identity may involve the study not only of the daily dynamics of different non-migrant groups of outsiders and the several migrant groups, peoples and ethnicities, but also of the way they integrate and interfere in the social and cultural practices that are not committed to reproducing United States' models in a Canadian context. The assimilation by a large portion of Quebec's population of the sociocultural ethos, political and economic paradigms as well as values and practices that have built the United States is questioned, ironically criticized and caricatured in Ducharme's texts, which not only claim Canada for Canadians, but also denies the inhabitants of Canada a Canadian identity. According to him, Canada has to be reinvented.

The intertextual fabric of Ducharme's texts suggest multiple itineraries that offer a route of interpretation to analysts as they encounter the solutions found by the writer, which reveal a plurality of (textual) subjectivities in this complex intertextual web. Bérénice's language, the *bérénicien*, makes possible the reconstruction of writing as an instrument to define meanings and codes, which controls behavior modeling in a specific context. In *L'Avalée des avalés*, Bérénice Einberg questions these limits and defines the *blank sheet of paper* as the place for this type of questioning:

I don't know whom the universe belongs to, which master I have to obey. [...] I don't know at whom or what my weapons should aim. Should I piously contemplate my ignorance and lose my patience because of it? [...] No! I take stands wholeheartedly. I use all my power to establish certainties. This is what I do! [...] For example, I say that the earth (which the best astronomers have not yet understood) is an elephant's head that is adrift on a river of sea blue color... then, in my head, it's nothing beyond that (DUCHARM, 1996, p.206).<sup>66</sup>

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<sup>66</sup> In original: "Je ne sais pas à qui appartient l'univers, à quel maître je dois obéir. [...] Je ne sais pas contre quoi doivent s'adresser mes armes, contre qui. Dois-je contempler béatement mon ignorance, me laisser déborder par elle? [...] Non! Je prends, de toute mon âme, des positions. J'établis, de toutes mes forces, des certitudes. C'est ce que je fais! [...] Par exemple, j'affirme que la terre (que les

As Ducharme understands literature as the only possible reality, his narrative allows multiple possibilities of movement and textual metamorphosis by exaggerating the meaning of things until it is exhausted. His work is characterized by metamorphoses, and writing is the biggest one. In *La fille de Christophe Colomb*, Ducharme warns the writer to seek immortality, which is ironically represented in the allusion of the Nobel Prize:

Don't expect readers, critics and the Nobel Prize to regard you as a genius, an immortal. [...]. Go for it! Take advantage of the life of a genius and immortal while there's time. When you're dead, there's no more time to enjoy the life of a genius and immortal. (*Dedicated to the young man of letters*) (DUCHARME, 1969, p.7).<sup>67</sup>

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meilleurs astronomes n'ont pas encore comprise) est une tête d'éléphant roulant à la dérive dans un fleuve d'encre bleu azur... et alors, dans ma tête, elle n'est rien d'autre que ça.”

<sup>67</sup> In original: “N’attends pas après les lecteurs, les critiques et le Prix Nobel pour te prendre pour un génie, pour un immortel. [...] Vas-y! Profite, pendant qu’il en est encore temps, de la vie de génie et d’immortel. Quand on est mort, il n’est plus temps de jouir d’une vie de génie et d’immortel (*Dédicace au jeune homme de lettres*).”

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