**The example of the 4th chapter**

In my monograph’s fourth chapter, I analyze two Québécois novels published in 2002. Both scrutinize Québécois institutional issues by drawing on Bernhard’s work, and both are highly refined forms of imitative writing using cross-cultural parody or pastiche. The first novel, Nicole Filion’s *Noces villageoises*, is an extremely penetrating satire of the Québécois judicial system inspired by Bernhard’s novel *Correction* (*Korrektur*). Here, Filion’s referencing of Bernhard’s novel comes in the form of aparody, with Bernard’s *Correction* as the main target that sets the stage for a full-scale satire of the judicial world. *Ça va aller*, by Catherine Mavrikakis, in which Thomas Bernhard’s figure and German-speaking cultures occupy a key place, is the second novel, and I will examine it in more depth in this talk, as the references to Bernhard himself and his work in it directly shed light on how the *institution* of Quebec literature — the publishing houses, literary education, the prizes and grants used to recognize literature, including those awarded by the province of Quebec —operates as a system. Here, it should be noted that Quebec literature is indeed highly institutionalized; in fact, according to critics like Gilles Marcotte, this even represents its most original feature. More specifically, Mavrikakis’ novel presents three types of pastiche of Bernhard: The first is a pastiche of the Austrian *Anti-Heimatliteratur* genre*,* that is, a form of anti-patriotic literature. This leads to the second type, a pastiche of topic, treating the question of the relationships between artists and the state; and finally, the third type is a pastiche of style. Filion’s and Mavrikakis’ novels transform or imitate texts of the German-language literary canon by detecting the sociocultural issues within them. These two authors then suggest the prevalence of these same issues within the Québécoise culture of reception in their own fiction.

In my work on the novels by Filion and Mavrikakis, I devised the concept of “hypertextualité interculturelle” (intercultural hypertextuality). This concept, which shapes the fourth chapter of my book, represents one of the four major ways in which Québécois writers have appropriated the German works I present in the book. In concrete methodological terms, in reviewing the most common theories of parody and pastiche that have appeared in the French-speaking world these past 30 years, I have sought to determine their merits and weaknesses for analyzing the corpus of cross-cultural texts similar to those I study, which are marked by an *affiliative* process. First, I explain why I have ruled out the majority of these theories; and, before entering into the actual textual analysis, I explain why I have selected one theory of parody and one theory of pastiche that, for me, is the most suitable for approaching the *affiliative* tendency of contemporary Francophone literatures.

Drawing on my fourth chapter, I would now like to give a few insights into my analysis of Mavrikakis’ novel to help clarify what I consider the important issues. Mavrikakis’s novel can be read as an immense critical, even aggressive reflection on Quebec literature and culture. This reflection takes one of Quebec Literature’s most famous novels, *L’avalée des avalés* as its point of departure, along with its author Réjean Ducharme (re-named Robert Laflamme in the novel). Mavrikakis’ narrator Sappho-Didon Apostasias condemns the withdrawal into passivity and the sweetly sentimental world of childhood. Both states, or places, are associated not only with Ducharme’s work and his numerous epigones, but also, more broadly, with Quebec society. In this novel, there is also an obvious goal to reveal the machinery and inner workings of the Québécois literary system. Mavrikakis does this by juxtaposing it with other cultural environments; and this is where German-language literatures come into play.

As already noted, references to Bernhard directly shed light on the function of Quebec’s literary apparatus; furthermore, *Ça va aller* makes an explicit appeal—not once but twice—for a writer like Bernhard to arise in Quebec. Comparisons that can be drawn between *Ça va aller* and Bernhard’s works relate in particular to the Austrian writer’s so-called “Artists’ trilogy,” novels published in the 1980s in German, known in their English translation as *The Loser, Woodcutters*, and *Old Masters.* In Mavrikakis’ novel, the most obvious anti-patriotic writing inspired by Bernhard appear during Sappho-Didon Apostasias’ stay in Paris. The narrator, an interpreter by profession, who studied German and German civilization in college, is working in the City of Lights, not interpreting, but dubbing pornographic films in German. The narrator is invited by a Québécois friend of hers to a reception at the General Delegation of Quebec in Paris to celebrate the launch of Robert Laflamme’s most recent book. There, Sappho-Didon rails against the “small” Québécois literary milieu, where, in her eyes, national chauvinism and self-congratulation, essentially celebrating what is perceived as “authentically from Quebec,” prevail (*ÇVA*, p. 80).During her tirade, Sappho-Didon lingers especially on the idea of « institutional art,” proclaiming that “she does not want to spend the evening with academic and artist toadies of the Parti Québécois, precisely, and here I translate the novel’s words, to “become the intellectuals, the artists, the official writers of the beautiful country to build, according to the beautiful culture that resembles us.” *(ÇVA,* pp. 80-81*)).* In a scene at the Delegation of Quebec in Paris, the novelist’s views on the « official artist » are easily comparable to Bernard’s opinions about institutional artists found in his novels *The Loser*, and *Old Masters,* in particular. Indeed, Bernhard has suggested that Austriaproduces *only* institutional artists and intellectuals, except for those writers, musicians, and other intellectuals who dared to go into exile. The most celebrated artist figures in Bernhard’s work are constantly presented as exiled, misanthropic, and/or even having committed suicide. Mavrikakis also refers to such characters —and here I quote, translating her observations from the novel:

That the writers of Quebec, that our literary fathers commit suicide, hide or go live elsewhere, like Anne Hébert—this serves us right. That the Parti Québécois, in its referendum campaign, relies on the least subversive writers, the least inspired, the most boring ones—this is just as it should be. This is what belongs to us.

Mavrikakis, like Bernhard, takes pleasure in referencing artists not because of the intrinsic artistic value of their works, but because of the extent of their involvement in the artistic world and the institutions that define it. Just like Bernhard, she presents something like an institutional theory of art, based on a typology of artists. Both Mavrikakis and Berhard expose the power of networks acting in the name of the state, Mavrikakis determined to show that the fate of Québécois artists who are exiled, committed suicide, or are hidden is a result of the excessive institutionalization of artistic practices in Quebec, which, like in Austria, leave little room for anyone other than “official” artists.

*Ça va aller* denounces the hypocrisy of many contemporary Quebecois artists, culminating in a call for a resolutely anti-institutional, aggressive, anti-social, even violent agenda. Again, I quote from the novel:

The future of Quebec will be turbulent or not and I will show them, me, what pride is like. The Delegation of Quebec in Paris will not save Quebec; they are a bunch of suckers. It is those who will invent detonating manifestos, incendiary book and films who will make all this beautiful pride, all this rotten establishment of good taste fly into pieces. He who will save Quebec is an arsonist, a terrorist.

This excerpt is actually part of a much longer denunciation of Quebec in which the narrator explains that Quebec has hurt her so much that “he” makes her sick. Those of you who have a good reading knowledge of French will notice in the excerpt that I deliberately left in French, that the language Mavrikakis uses is informal, even crude. This passage is a prime example of how Mavrikakis borrows from Bernhard’s stylistic choices. In her novel, she adopts the Austrian writer’s style of repetition, which can be called “reformulating,” as well as forms of repetition that represent a refusal to reformulate. The passage quoted includes one example of the last type; as you can see, the term “Quebec” that I italicized is never replaced by a pronoun; on the contrary, there is a nominal redenomination in successive sentences, or even within the same sentence. This technique is used with the word « Quebec » in the book, with the effect of presenting Quebec as a tarnished, diminished and detested reality. This is identical to Bernhard’s use of the word “Austria,” (and others) in his texts.

In *Ça va aller*, the narrator explicitly mentions Bernhard twice: first, at the beginning of the novel in a sequence where the narrator praies his rage against his country; and then again at the end of the book in a passage where the still-pregnant Sappho-Didon reflects on how she intends to raise the daughter :

I am not the receptacle of evolution, I am not 2000 years of civilization and programming for maternal gentleness. I am Sappho-Didon-Antigone-the-harsh. One can only think with punches, with stabs. One can only think against everything or far from everything. It is while brooding alone in his hole in Austria that Thomas Bernhard can allow himself to really think about this Austria, to see its abominations and pettiness. (…) It is not by groveling to all the stupid critics of Austria (…). To think, to exist, it is important to be able to speak ill of all (…). It is important to be able to crush one’s heart, to criticize one’s close relations, the friends who will always have extenuating circumstances, the lovers, the brothers, the sisters, and above all oneself. It is important to make the acquaintance of one’s own mediocrity and not to make a friend out of it.

In the French, the excerpt shifts its use of pronouns, from the “je,” to the “on” and then the impersonal “il”, which I have rendered in English by transitioning from “I” to “one” to “It.” This transition definitely places the narrator Sappho-Didon Apostasias in a tradition of invective, of which Bernhard is considered an exemplary representative. Abandoning the “je,” the “I” emphasizes the proximity between the narrator and Bernhard; far from appearing as a character who would come *after* Bernhard as a mere follower in a secondary position, Sappho-Didon is presented in a way that accentuates the proximity between these two radicals; thus, the idea of an association, of an *affiliation* rather than a *filiation.*

Furthermore, with critics having emphasized the autobiographical aspects of this novel, Sappho-Didon can be viewed as a fictional “double” of Mavrikakis. The fact that the excerpt here begins with a “Je”, an “I,” which is very strong on the enunciative level, also encouraged me to study it according to the concept of “signature d’auteur,” of the author’s signature, of which we earlier saw Gérard Leclerc’s definition as the “responsibility-property” of the author. In this sense, knowledge about Bernhard’s work is transmitted in a way that emphasizes the “responsibility/propriety” of the author vis-à-vis this transmitted knowledge. But Mavrikakis’s approach does not stop there: in contrast to other literary legacies she presents in the novel, Mavrikakis firmly perceives Bernhard as a memory to be preserved. In the lines following the last excerpt I quoted, Sappho-Didon contemplates the future education of her soon-to- be-born daughter. Sappho-Didon relates her wish to pass down to her the ideal of the systematic denigration associated with Bernhard’s work. Sappho-Didon insists that her daughter Savannah-Lou, who is, in fact, the product of a one-time sexual encounter with the famous Québécois writer Robert Laflamme, alias Réjean Ducharme, is destined to become the great outraged writer that Quebec so painfully lacks. In this way, this novel imagines Thomas Bernhard as the originator of Quebec’s literary future. This brings us back to the hypothesis posed at the beginning of my presentation—that in post-1990 literature in Québec, German-language cultures are referred to in a way that approaches the Québécois context of reception suggesting forms of proximity. This is all the more evident if we consider that, here, the literary heritage is linked to a certain family heritage of Sappho-Didon Apostasias. I would finally like to note that the vocabulary and tone used by Mavrikakis when discussing Bernhard are very informal and, in this sense, very different than the much more ceremonious language used by André Belleau when he refers to the German Romantics and his learning of the German language.

In concluding, we must ask: Why should we be interested, today, in studying the representations of German-language cultures in Quebec Literature? In my case, I first became interested in addressing an issue previously neglected by literary scholars in Quebec—the question of how foreign literatures are received. In answeringquestions that arose when reading contemporary literature, the Germanophile in me also found traces of German in texts by authors from various backgrounds, both university professors who write fiction and writers who are nearly unknown within academic and artistic circles, similar to that depicted by Mavrikakis in her novel. Most recently, I have turned to the works of a writer who immigrated to Québec, Hans-Jürgen Greif, who became a professor of German and French Literature at the Université Laval and is, in addition, a prolific writer of fiction. I also plan on researching writers of German origin whose works are associated with other Francophone Literatures of Canada, such as the very well know Franco-Ontarian novelist Marguerite Andersen. Alongside my work on the imaginary “Germanies” of Québec, I am broadly interested in texts that emphasize cross-cultural issues and encounters.