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Humour as a tool for critiquing Anglocentrism in the French Comedy *L'Anglomanie ou le dîner à l'angloise* by Joseph Quesnel

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Abstract

This article examines the humour elements employed by the playwright Joseph Quesnel in the comedy *L'anglomanie ou le dîner à l'angloise*. The humour element refers to the object of jokes or the aspects that provoke laughter. Quesnel was a French-Canadian poet and playwright of the eighteenth century. He relocated to Quebec in 1779. He was one of the forerunners who expressed his disagreement with the anglicisation of the French spirit in Quebec in his play *L'anglomanie ou le dîner à l'angloise*. This play is a short Comedy written in a single act and in verse. Quesnel wrote it in the year 1803. This play satirises the Anglomania and the bourgeoisie attitude. Did Quesnel use humour to express his criticism of Anglomania? What techniques did he employ to construct humour in the text? These are the two main objectives of this study. We have applied general humour theories to identify the comical elements in the language, and then we have created "the portrait" as described by the theorist Sainte-Beuve. This study aims to identify the areas in which the dramatist critiqued the socio-political situation of Quebec in relation to the British colonisation and its impact during the eighteenth century. The recently passed bill in Quebec declared that the official language is French. Non-French-speaking residents in Quebec oppose this bill. Quebec has witnessed numerous protests since the Quebec National Assembly passed the bill. The issues concerning the French and English traditions, and by extension, other aspects of these two languages and their respective cultures, as this play portrays, still prevail in a nuanced manner in Quebec, warranting their contemporary relevance.

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Introduction

From the outset, the British conquest of Quebec from the French in the mid-eighteenth century raised questions of identity among Franco-Canadians. This quest for identity is evident in the thoughts and works of many Franco-Canadians, including Joseph Quesnel. He was a poet and playwright from Saint-Malo, France. He was also a slave trader during the reign of Louis XV. In the late 1770s, he moved to New France, specifically to the province of Quebec. The British who colonised Quebec permitted the French to exercise various rights that they had enjoyed previously under the French regime. At this period, numerous French people had a frequent tendency to imitate the English in various aspects, which our chosen playwright satirises in his Comedy *L'Anglomanie ou le dîner à l'angloise*.¹ Many were the cases at this time of the century; and similar to the playwright Quesnel, his peers repeatedly launched mocking attacks on Anglomania.

Quesnel wrote this Comedy at the beginning of the nineteenth century. However, he was not able to stage it. Quesnel constructed a few characters of this Comedy inspired by influential real-life persons who lived in the same place as Quesnel. He criticised them in this play. This criticism could be a reason for Quesnel not to stage the drama. We can identify a few characters from this play who are also present in his earlier works, such as François, the poet. Quesnel is also a poet. He wrote this play in verse. We can interpret François's character as Quesnel himself, who expressed his own views through both the story of this play and the character of François.

Bill 101, recently passed in Quebec, declares that French is the only official language



of Quebec. This fact has caused many outcries from non-French speakers. In Quebec, the French language holds significant socio-political importance. A large section of people is defending the French language. However, a small group of people wants the English language to gain significance in predominantly French-speaking Quebec.

The poem *Speak White* by Michèle Lalonde is against British imperialism in the French-speaking region. Moreover, at the National Assembly of Quebec, the former Prime Minister of France, Gabriel Attal, stated that certain people believe the French will disappear from the map of North America. However, he added that the French language will survive. Furthermore, in Quebec, the former Prime Minister of Canada, Justin Trudeau, replied in French to a question asked in English. It shows the political significance of the French language in Quebec. The Anglophones are a minority in the province of Quebec. On another occasion, the Quebec poet Gaston Miron expressed his love for the French language and his Quebecois identity in an interview with Lise Gauvin. He supports the political status of the French language.

Famous Canadian writer Mordecai Richler criticised the French language dominance and the restriction of the English language in Quebec. Former Canadian Prime Minister Pierre Elliott Trudeau advocated for bilingualism in Quebec, promoting the coexistence of the French and English languages. Hence, this dichotomy exists through the French and English languages in Quebec. The existing tension between the English and French languages adds value to the play for contemporary readers by facilitating their better understanding of this current situation from a retrospective perspective.



Did Quesnel employ humour to express his criticism of Anglomania? What techniques did he employ to construct humour in the text? These are the two main objectives of the research. In this article, we examine the entire play through discourse analysis, drawing upon the concept of 'portrait' by Sainte-Beuve. (Gengembre 4)

The stage for this play is a small cabinet located in Mr Primenbourg's house. Mr Primenbourg is a bourgeois. He and his family members have invited the Governor and Milady for dinner at their house. The legendary French playwright Molière inspired Quesnel, who watched theatre productions in France; in turn, he sought to replicate them in Quebec. He chose the most popular French genre, L'opéra-comédie, for his play. Quesnel followed the three classical unities of theatre in this play. Unity of action: the story takes place within a single event. In this play, it is an English-style dinner party. Unity of time: the story happens in real time. In this dramatic text, the story unfolds within a single day in a continuous sequence. Unity of place: the scenes share a single decor. In this Comedy, all the scenes happen at Mr Primenbourg's house. The language used in this play is French, except for the title of an English song, *God Save the King*. Quesnel has employed various humour elements. He employed puns related to homonyms with the character 'Colonel Beauchamp'. We can also find character comedy with the character Pennkrève and satire with the character Vielmont, among other aspects.

Summary of the play

We precede the theoretical framework with a summary of the play to facilitate a better global understanding. Mr Primenbourg has the desire to make his family members accept the



new colonised civilisation, except his daughter, who already inclines towards the English civilisation. He is a French bourgeois. The family of Primenbourg awaits the arrival of the Governor and Milady the next day. The family has requested that Colonel Beauchamp, Primenbourg's son-in-law, invite the Governor and Milady to dinner at Primenbourg's house. Colonel Beauchamp, however, did not invite them, as he thought that in Primenbourg's family, no one was capable of hosting dinner in an English manner.

Nevertheless, he manages to hoodwink the rest of the family members into thinking that he had invited them. Madame Primenbourg's mother, the Dowager, and Vielmont, the relative of Mr Primenbourg, criticise British imperialism in Quebec. In the play, he and Mr Primenbourg try to find someone who will serve at the table. Primenbourg and Beauchamp select the Doctor, Pennkrève, to do the honours of the table. The hypocrite, Beauchamp, could no longer deceive the family members when a letter arrived at Primenbourg's house with a message stating that the Governor and Milady would not be attending dinner since the family was not present. With the message circulated in the family, the pretence of Beauchamp comes to an end, revealing his real intentions. Colonel mocks the French accent of Doctor Pennkrève, whom he and Primenbourg have chosen to serve at the table. Nevertheless, the Governor did not mention English fashion in the letter. Thus, Mr Primenbourg decides to remain with the French-style dinner and tells his son-in-law to invite the Governor this time.

Theoretical framework

With this summary of the play, we proceed to the theoretical segment of our study.



The French literary critic, Charles Augustin Sainte-Beuve, states that we can analyse a writer's work in relation to his biography. He further states that a writer's literary work serves as a connecting bridge between the writer and their life, encompassing their upbringing, social environment, association with literary movements, and political context, among other factors. Thus, we cannot analyse a literary work, excluding the above elements, in this Beuve's portrait concept. This approach is pivotal to our study.

We examine this Comedy, incorporating discourse analysis. In this study, we aim to situate the dramatist's work within the context of the 'portrait' through discourse analysis, concentrating on the notion of humour and using a multidisciplinary approach that incorporates physiology and psychology.

The Comedy in question examines the contemporary concerns of Quebec society related to the French and English polarity in retrospect. This historical synchronic study requires not only the dramatic text but also the other available pieces of literature related to the dramatist in order to understand the portrait of the dramatist before examining his work. Consequently, we draw upon Beuve's portrait and discourse analysis for the dissection and the in-depth study of this dramatic text.

The theories which serve in this process are:

1. Disappointment theory; 2. Superiority theory; 3. Relief theory; 4. Incongruity theory; and 5. Conflict-mixture theory. These theories include, but are not limited to, Henri Bergson's maxim, word comedy, character comedy, the act of imitation, and impicature, as part of our discourse analysis of humour.



Analysis section :

Now, for the discourse analysis of humour, the five aforementioned theories of humour apply.

1. Disappointment theory

When an expectation turns into a disappointment in trivial matters, this disappointment often evokes laughter to counter the feeling, and this is where a joke captures the punchline that falls under this broad category. The more unprecedented the punchline is, the more laughter the teller² will produce. However, we still laugh at a familiar joke that disappoints us when an expected event fails to materialise. This phenomenon occurs because we still have at least a slight disappointment in reliving the joke. Kant observes that “Laughter is an affection arising from the sudden transformation of a strained expectation into nothing”. (Kant 223)

The use of a term from the domain “X” in a statement intended for a person who belongs to the same domain “X” outside of its own usage results in such an experience. Let us illustrate this with the following dialogue.

M.PRIMENBOURG. Oui, À propos, docteur, laissons la médecine, Je veux vous consulter.

LE DOCTEUR. Sur quoi ?

M.PRIMENBOURG. Sur la cuisine.

Le gouverneur ici demain est invité ;



*Dites-nous ce qu'il faut pour faire un bon pâté.*³ (Quesnel 20)

Here, Mr Primenbourg uses the word *consulter* (consult) when conversing with the Doctor. In the medical field, the term 'consult' refers to getting a medical opinion from a doctor regarding an illness. However, Mr Primenbourg's usage of the term 'consult' is a semantic extension of the signified, which is generally not the common usage. He wants Dr Pennkrève's opinion regarding cooking instead of illness. He wants to find a recipe for making a good pâté from the Doctor. In this context, the theory of deception comes into play. The audience expects Mr Primenbourg to ask the doctor something about an illness when he employs the term 'consult'. However, the audience expresses disappointment when they learn that the term "consult" is used in a sense that extends beyond the field of medicine. Moreover, for this situation to be comedic, it should not deal with a serious matter, as put forth by William Hazlitt: "We weep at what thwarts or exceeds our desires in serious matters; we laugh at what only disappoints our expectations in trifles" (Eastman 164).

Mr Primenbourg represents the generation of Quesnel that falls between the two categories: the older generation, who never accepted English culture, and the younger generation, who have already embraced the coloniser's culture. The milieu in which Quesnel lived and its impact on him reflect through characters like Mr Primenbourg, Vielmont, the Dowager, and Lucette.

Furthermore, in the dialogue given below, Primenbourg accuses the French poet François. This accusation stems from Primenbourg having read one of the former's literary works, in which the poet distorted the facts about Primenbourg. When the bourgeois, Mr



Primenbourg, inquired about the reason, François justifies that fiction is allowed for a poet.

M.PRIMENBOURG. Vous avez dans vos vers trahi la vérité...

J'en suis très mécontent, s'il faut que je le dise.

M.FRANÇOIS. La fiction toujours au poète est permise...

*Mieux que vous sur ce point je sais ce qu'il en est.*⁴ (Quesnel 26)

In this case, the humour element frames the template “Faulty premise” put forth by Walter Nash. Fiction is a work of imagination intended to entertain or inform, but lies are manipulative and intended to deceive someone, and hence, one cannot completely attribute lies to fiction. Therefore, the inference that fiction is always allowed for a poet is invalid. This idea of fiction and the poet might have arisen from Quesnel’s minor disputes with the church. He has talked about his disagreement on the ban of Comedies against the church authority, in the *Gazette de Montréal*⁵, under the pseudonym of *Un Acteur* :

J'aurois commencé par poser pour principe que la Comédie en elle-même n'a

*rien de contraire au Christianisme.*⁶ (*Gazette de Montréal*, 4)

The staging of comedies that compromised moral standards dissatisfied the church authorities. Hence, Quesnel, through the character of the poet, François, could have indirectly suggested that no one, not even the church authorities, can curtail the freedom of the artist. Hence, Quesnel could be the surrogate author in this case through the poet.



Furthermore, in the following scene, when the Dowager says that the Milady is not coming for dinner at Primenbourg's house, the daughter of Primenbourg, Lucette, exclaims in disappointment. However, the Colonel, who already knew the outcome, also expresses his disappointment in order to maintain his deceit without giving any hint of suspicion to the other family members.

LA DOUAIRIÈRE. Milady ne vient pas

[...]

LUCETTE. Quel chagrin !

LE COLONEL. Quel revers !⁷ (Quesnel 47)

To understand the circumstances surrounding the Colonel's entry into Mr Primenbourg's family, we should examine the character history of Mr Primenbourg. The character of Mr Primenbourg, who reflects the bourgeois attitude of the time, arranges her daughter's wedding with a military officer. The bourgeoisie is wealthy, but the class in itself is not socially and politically influential. Hence, marriages ensure the amalgamation of wealth and power.

2. Superiority theory

The superiority or derision theory suggests that an individual laughs at a given situation where they feel superior to or overpower another individual. This theory requires two or more individuals to be present, including the individual who feels superior to the



others. The nobility of the humour does not come without degradation with this model of humour. The targets of the joke include race, gender, social status, dialects, and more.

Quesnel satirised the hegemony of the British in Quebec during his time. This play focuses on the target audience of French people who migrated to Quebec during the French overseas expansion and later lived under English rule in the province. This dramatic text subverts the notion of Anglomania. Let us consider the following lines of the Dowager.

LA DOUAIRIÈRE. Vous la ferez mourir, je crois, Dieu me pardonne,

Avec tout ce thé-là ! Du temps de nos Français

Qu'on se portait si bien – en buvait-on jamais ?

Jamais – que pour remède, ou bien pour la migraine;

Mais avec vos Anglais la mode est qu'on le prenne

Soir et matin, sans goût et sans nécessité ;⁸ (Quesnel 10)

At this point in the play, Quesnel remarks on the habit of drinking tea among the English as unnecessary through the character, the Dowager. She says that the French consume tea only as a remedy or for migraine, whereas the English consume it regularly both in the morning and evening.

Wordplay is one of the comic devices employed in this Comedy. For example, let us take the following dialogue between Mr and Mrs Primenbourg and Colonel.



M. PRIMENBOURG. Malheureux contretemps!

Nous voilà donc privés de l'honneur qu'on attend !

LE COLONEL. Il n'est que différé, consolez-vous, beau-père,

Je vous réponds de tout... mais taisons cette affaire.

MADAME PRIMENBOURG. Ils seront tous piqués.

LE COLONEL. On les dépiquera.

*S'il faut les inviter, on les invitera.*⁹ (Quesnel 49)

In this scene, Primenbourg expresses his disappointment over the cancellation of the dinner hosted for the Governor and the Milady. He says that both of them would take offence. Quesnel employs calembour with the help of the cognates *piquer* and *dépiquer*. In the dialogue given above, Mrs Primenbourg uses the polysemous word *piquer*, which can take both the meanings 'to anger' or 'to prick.' However, the Colonel identifies the verb with the meaning 'to prick' and replies with the verb *dépiquer*, which means 'to thresh'. Thus, the skilful wordplay of the Colonel, who is in a superior position in the given situation where the rest of the family tries to cope with the embarrassment caused by the cancellation of dinner, and its root cause, being the Colonel, evokes humour.

Shifting to another aspect, Quesnel constructs the antihero Beauchamp through character comedy. Colonel Beauchamp, Mr. Primenbourg's son-in-law, possesses the fatal flaw of vanity. Let us take, for example, the following line from Scene I



LE COLONEL. Oh ! vraiment je vous crois.

Voici ce que vous vaut un gendre tel que moi.

Depuis le jour heureux qu'épousant votre fille,

De l'éclat de mon nom j'ornai votre famille,¹⁰ (Quesnel 7)

In the lines above, the Colonel boasts that he is prestigious for Primenbourg's family since he was able to invite the Governor and Milady. The same is the case with the following line from scene XI:

LE COLONEL : D'une telle faveur je puis avoir la gloire.

Vous pourriez finement tout bas leur faire croire

Que c'est par mon crédit qu'ils obtiennent cela.¹¹ (Quesnel 51)

Self-mockery relies on derision theory, which in turn is a primary component of the superiority theory. As the name suggests, self-mockery occurs when a speaker makes fun of themselves, thereby lowering their image and giving the listener a sense of dominance over the speaker for a brief period. This dominance and mockery element combined provokes laughter. Quesnel retired in the early 1790s from his primary business but continued to write poetry, drama, and other works. During his literary career, he also used the pseudonym "François", which Quesnel had named after one of his characters. Through the character François in this play, Quesnel mocks himself. We could say that the character François refers to the playwright himself. Quesnel did not have a large audience for his works. So, he



employs the self-mockery technique to grab their attention. Let us consider the following dialogue.

FRANÇOIS. « Grand Dieu pour Georges Trois »...connaissez-vous cela ?

LE COLONEL. Si je connais cela ! Cette chanson charmante,

Que, pour peu qu'on ait bu, dans tous les clubs on chante !

C'est le « God save the King » imité de l'Anglais¹² (Quesnel 25)

In accordance with Herbert Spencer's theory, when one encounters disappointment in expecting a specific outcome, it could lead to laughter. In the above dialogue, we shatter our high regard for the poet since he lacks the merit of originality. When the Colonel asked the poet to discuss his work, the poet put forth one of his poems, which was an imitation of the English song *God Save the King*.

In another instance, in the dialogue given below, Mr Primenbourg advises the Dowager that the tea, even for the feeblest of stomachs, will not cause any harm when a general offers it. The laughter stems from a disregard for scientific reasoning and an unquestioning belief in the consequences of regular tea consumption, solely for the sake of maintaining good relations with those in power. Consequently, Mr Primenbourg has developed the conviction that when the people of a higher rank offer the tea, it neutralises its harm. At this point, the dramatist satirises the mindset of people who are willing to forgo reasoning in order to maintain good relations with those in power, in the hope of gaining favour from them.



M.PRIMENBOURG. Apprenez que jamais le thé d'un général

Au plus faible estomac ne peut faire de mal¹³ (Quesnel 10)

We can also observe the rhyme in the play, which is a prose in verse. In a particular dialogue between Primenbourg and the Dowager, this rhyme creates a comic effect. They both engage in a conversation where the Dowager asks which fashion one should follow, to which Mr Primenbourg replies that they now have the fortune of adapting to the English fashion, and so they must honour it. Written in the French language, the verse employs an A-B rhyme scheme, with bonheur (good fortune) and honneur (honour) serving as the end rhymes of the first two lines. This rhyme stimulates a humorous response.

M.PRIMENBOURG. Hé bien, soit ; mais enfin, puisqu'on a le bonheur

Aujourd'hui d'être Anglais, on doit s'en faire honneur¹⁴ (Quesnel 13)

Turning to the next point, the excerpt below indicates the dejected life of a poet in Canada. The poet François wants to go and write poems in Kamchatka, a peninsula in Russia, since poetry is entirely unappreciated in Canada. This analogy provokes laughter due to the comparison of lively Canada with a remote peninsula in Russia, particularly in terms of the lack of readers. We laugh at this pathetic state of the poet in terms of readership because it aligns with our human psychology: when misfortune befalls us, it is a tragedy, but when it befalls others, it becomes a comedy. Nonetheless, we should take into account the following criteria that Mikhail Bakhtin observed for humour, as he says: "That which is important and essential cannot be comical [...] the essential truth about the world and man cannot be told



in the language of laughter”. (Bakhtin 67)

FRANÇOIS. Ma foi, la poésie

Est un talent qu'ici personne n'apprécie.

Je suis si dégoûté de tout le Canada.

*Que j'irais pour un rien rimer au Kamtchatka.*¹⁵ (Quesnel 24)

We, now, examine the following lines.

FRANÇOIS. Et mettre que dansant, hennissant, humant l'air,

*Votre cheval, sans fouet, partit comme un éclair.*¹⁶ (Quesnel 29)

When Mr Primenbourg confronts the poet for the instance of satirising him, the poet, without a second thought, immediately modifies his lines with a new end rhyme *air* in the words *air* and *éclair* while still retaining the sense of having achieved something without regretting that he had to modify his stance. Quesnel made fun of the hypocrisy of the poet François.

The background element is essential for understanding the humour in relation to the context. Take, for example, the following line.

*LE COLONEL. Ainsi me voilà seul, comme un Jean de Nivelle!*¹⁷ (Quesnel 50)

In this excerpt, the material fact is the historical information that the audience needs



to know in order to understand the humour. Jean de Nivelles was a French aristocrat whose name became synonymous with someone who disappears when needed. He cheated in the war with Louis XI. Here in the line, the Colonel thinks that Mr Primenbourg and the others see him as a traitor. The implicature of this pragmatic discourse is treachery.

3. Relief theory

The relief or release theory explains that nervous energy generated by emotional tension is discharged through various means, one of which is laughter. Laughter carries the built-up tension. Major contributors to this theory are Herbert Spencer and Sigmund Freud. Freud, in particular, extended the theory to include humour associated with the taboos.

In general, we laugh when a serious subject is treated lightly, provided that we are not affected. Take the following dialogue from Scene IX.

LUCETTE. J'en suis bien enchantée !

Milady donnera sans doute une assemblée,

Où, pour s'en réjouir, vous serez invité,

*Et moi-même avec vous.*¹⁸ (Quesnel 41)

In this dialogue, when the Colonel says that the French army met with a series of setbacks in the war, Lucette, a Frenchwoman and Primenbourg's daughter, does not bother to feel sad for her country, France; instead, she is pleased to attend a party that Milady will organise to celebrate the victory. The mindset of the younger generation of Quesnel during



his time is embodied in the character Lucette, who has already embraced the coloniser's culture. In this instance, Quesnel implicitly reveals his milieu.

4. Incongruity theory

This theory states that the audience identifies an incongruous element and, with slight modification of their interpretation, they will grasp the intended meaning, possibly accompanied by laughter. Herbert Spencer is a prominent figure associated with this theory. Above all, the humour component should obey Henri Bergson's maxim *Il n'y a pas de comique en dehors de ce qui est proprement humain*. (There is no comedy outside what is properly human) (Bergson 15)

Take, for example, the following dialogue from the play *L'Anglomanie ou le dîner à l'angloise*.

LE DOCTEUR. Sur quatre pleurécies

Que ch'affais à traiter, il n'en est mort que trois.

LE COLONEL, À M.PRIMENBOURG. Trois sur quatre ! vraiment c'est fort

*heureux, je crois.*¹⁹ (Quesnel 19)

In this dialogue from Scene IV, the Doctor boasts that he saves one patient out of four from dying. The Doctor believes that saving one patient is an admirable achievement, even if he was unable to save the other three from dying. The recovery rate, which is 1 in 4, is ridiculous to boast about. The Colonel mocked him. In this context, the futility of pride, a



human characteristic, elicits laughter in conformance with Bergson's maxim. John Hare, who studied with Joseph Quesnel, identifies the Doctor as Stubinguer.

Following this, Quesnel has also employed comic devices in the phonetics. Dr Pennkrève speaks French with a German accent, which provokes laughter. The letters that exhibit phonetic proximity, even though their articulation is different, are interchanged in the lines of the character of the Doctor. For instance, the consonant “v” is substituted with “f” and vice versa in words such as *serviteur*, *arriffée*, *excessivement*, *affec*, *fotre*, and *fous*. Similarly, “b” is replaced with “p” and vice versa in words like *pien*, *pon*, *Brimenpourg*, and *blaissir*. The consonant “j” becomes “ch” in “*ch*”, and “g” is replaced with “c” in *malcré*. Additionally, the vowel “e” is modified to “é” in the word *ché*. The French language becomes comically bizarre to hear when it is pronounced with the above modifications, i.e., with a German accent. This act of speaking French with a German accent is evident in the following line from Scene IV.

LE DOCTEUR. En faisant ma tournée

Ch'apprends affec blaissir ici fotre arriffée ;

À monsieu Brimenpourg ch'en fais mon compliment,

*Et ch'en suis enchanté pien excessivement.*²⁰ (Quesnel 18)

5. Conflict-mixture theory

Simply stated, this theory involves combining happy and sad experiences, where the



feeling of happiness contrasts with the sadness to elicit laughter. In the lines given below, Vielmont satirises the English manners that dominate Quebec. The sad experience here is that, despite Vielmont wanting to live freely in his own French way, he is not entirely allowed to do so. The happy experience is that for a moment, he finds comfort in satirising the Anglomania by saying that instead of enjoying the silly fads of the day (the English dominance), the Dowager worries herself. This wry humour provokes laughter.

VIELMONT. Oh non ; ces plaintes-là ne m'intéressent pas.

Elle a cité pourtant je ne sais quel repas

Que l'on donne demain à la manière anglaise.

Une autre qu'elle eût ri de paraille fadaise,

Mais la maman est vieille et se fait des tourments

Au lieu de s'amuser des sottises du temps.²¹ (Quesnel 39)

We can classify the lines as follows :

Mais la maman est vieille²² – the signal (of the intention of humor)

et se fait des tourments²³ – the orientation (to the type of humor)

Que l'on donne demain à la manière anglaise²⁴ – the context (in which the humor operates)

Au lieu de s'amuser des sottises du temps²⁵ – Locus (the word or phrase that delivers the



humor)

Vielmont is the representation of older generation of Quesnel who didn't accept the colonizer's culture.

Conclusion :

Quesnel employed a wide variety of comical devices in the comedy *L'Anglomanie ou le dîner à l'anglaise*. The use of disappointment theory, superiority theory, relief theory, incongruity theory, and conflict-mixture theory ensures that Quesnel has sufficient techniques for constructing humour. This play possesses an implicitly provocative nature. Beyond its amusement factor, this play raises questions in the minds of the readers about whether to tolerate the oppressor's cultural imposition. This facet of subversion is underscored through the characterization of Vielmont and the Dowager.

The cultural subservience of Quebec society is exposed. The conflict scene construction, incorporating satirical elements, in which the Dowager delivers a monologue explaining the ill effects of regular tea consumption, is intended to confront cultural imperialism. In the same way, the selection of a French person to perform the table honours in the English fashion falls under the category of the derision theory. Quesnel ridicules the English table manners.

Quesnel's characterisation includes three generations of a family: the grandparent, father, and daughter. The characterisation hints at the different levels of resistance demonstrated by each Quebecois who belongs to these three generations, where the



grandparent plainly refuses to accept the oppressor's culture, the father is in a dilemma, and the daughter inclines towards the oppressor's culture. This chronology of three generations with declining attributes of patriotism itself forms auto-derision. Thus, Quesnel's criticism spans generations in terms of cultural resistance and the preservation of identity.

In the play in question, humour serves as a social critique, in addition to its entertainment value. Through the character François, Quesnel satirises the hypocrisy of a poet. Quesnel adopts humour to draw attention to various social issues of his time, abandoning weighty tonality. He addresses issues concerning patriotism and self-identity with levity, mocking the bourgeoisie.

Thus, by employing various elements of humour in his Comedy *L'Anglomanie ou le dîner à l'angloise*, Quesnel critiques the anglicisation of the French spirit in Quebec. This play is one of the earliest works that defends French culture in Quebec. This work remains significant, as we can still witness the tension between the French and the English in contemporary Quebec. Quesnel employs humour in this play to critique the upsurge of Anglomania during his time.

The 'portrait' of the playwright concerning the socio-political environment, the milieu, the childhood, etc., analysing through an interdisciplinary approach has primarily contributed to our understanding of this Comedy. Through these approaches and methods, we were able to identify how the playwright constructed the humour with comical devices. The playwright employs various comedic devices, including satire, self-mockery, derision, and calembours, in this Comedy.



Furthermore, the advancement in this study lies in conducting a diachronic analysis of how Quebec resisted English dominance, utilising humour as a tool across different time periods throughout Quebec's history.



Endnotes

¹ During Quesnel's time in Quebec, people wrote the French word *Anglaise* with an "o", changing it to *Angloise*, which means 'English manner'.

² The term *Tellee* is the listener or the targeted audience of the joke.

³ The Colonel digresses from the earlier topic and says that he wants to consult him. When the Doctor asked what he wanted to consult. Mr Primenbourg replies that he wants to consult on the medicine. He adds that yesterday they invited the Governor for an upcoming dinner here, and Mr Primenbourg asks for a recipe to make a good pâté.

⁴ Mr Primenbourg accuses François of having betrayed the truth in his verses, to which François replies that the poet is entitled to employ fiction. François also believes that he knows much better than he does on this matter how it works.

⁵ "Gazette de Montréal" was a French newspaper published since the eighteenth century in Quebec. Currently, its publication is in Canadian English.

⁶ Quesnel wrote, under the pseudonym "An Actor" in the Gazette of Montreal, that the Comedy in itself is nothing against Christianity.

⁷ The Dowager announced that Milady would not coming to the dinner. Lucette exclaimed in sorrow. The Colonel also expressed his disappointment with this setback.

⁸ The Dowager satirises the habit of drinking tea associated with the English tradition. She says that the English have tea in the morning and in the evening without a taste or a need. However, she says that the French take tea only when it is required for a headache or as a remedy.



⁹ Mr Primenbourg is lamenting the missed opportunity to host dinner for the Governor and Milady.

The Colonel tries to console him by saying that it is just the postponement of the dinner. Mr

Primenbourg replies that they will feel offended, to which the Colonel responds that we can un-offend them by inviting them.

¹⁰ The Colonel expresses with pride how Mr Primenbourg's family is deeply honoured by getting her daughter married to him, the Colonel (who elevated the social status of Mr Primenbourg's family).

¹¹ The Colonel wants Primenbourg to inform the guests discreetly that the Governor invited them, thanks to his social influence, since he is a Colonel.

¹² François, the poet, asks the Colonel whether he knows *Grand Dieu pour Georges Trois* song, which he has written. The Colonel recognizes the song with ease; it is sung in all the clubs and imitates the English patriotic song *God Save the King*.

¹³ Mr Primenbourg asserts to the Dowager that a tea from a general can never cause harm to even the weakest of stomachs.

¹⁴ Mr Primenbourg explains to his mother that today, since they have the privilege of being English, they should honour it.

¹⁵ François laments that no one in all of Canada appreciates the poetry that he would go and write poems in Kamchatka for the slightest reasons.

¹⁶ François changes the rhyme, and his new verse is “By dancing, neighing, sniffing the air, your horse, without whipping, shot off like lightning”.

¹⁷ Mr Primenbourg says that he is all alone now, like Jean de Nivelles. Jean de Nivelles serves as a byword for someone who disappears when needed.



¹⁸ Lucette is pleased to hear that the English army is on the winning side of the war. She hopes that Milady will host a victory party and that they will invite the Colonel so that she can accompany him to the party.

¹⁹ The Doctor boasts that of the four pleurisy cases that he has to treat, only three of them have died. The Colonel tells Mr. Primebourg that he believes a recovery ratio of three out of four is very effective.

²⁰ The Doctor says that during his rounds, he was pleased to learn about the Colonel's arrival here. He offered his compliments to Mr. Primebourg, and he says he is exceedingly delighted about it.

²¹ Vielmont is indifferent to the English-style meal that they are going to offer, unlike the Dowager, who treats it with seriousness. Vielmont brushes it off by saying that these are silly fads of the day.

²² But Mom is old.

²³ and worries herself.

²⁴ that we are going to give tomorrow in the English-style.

²⁵ instead of enjoying the silly fads of the day.



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