*chapter seven*

# National Affection: Céline Dion

I argued earlier that Expo 67 exemplifies the 'construction' pole of performance's representational labours; its *productive* national labours are credited with building a Québécois national imaginary and styling it as male, modern, urban, and sexy. At the other end of the production-reproduction spectrum, pop diva Céline Dion (b. 1968) emblematizes the arts' *reproductive* labours. As such, Expo 67 and Céline Dion comprise the limit-cases of my analysis of the performing arts' mimetic labours vis-à-vis the nation. Dion is generally deemed to naively yet opportunistically mirror trends in national, musical, commercial, and biological spheres. Neither a composer nor an instrumental musician, she interprets and performs other people's songs. She is a vocal chameleon whose song stylings cover the spectrum of contemporary popular music genres: from Mariah Carey–like power anthems ('Power of Love'), to Meatloaf's Broadway-rock theatrics ('It's All Coming Back to Me'), to the Back Street Boys' upbeat harmonics ('That's the Way It Is'), to Barbra Streisand's adult contemporary easy-listening ('Tell Him'), to Euro-pop's synthesizer-heavy romanticism ('Je danse dans ma tête'), to *chanson*'s close word-music pairings ('S'il suffisait d'aimer'). Moreover, she specializes in pop, the genre of music that has laboured longest under the labels of 'inauthentic' and 'derivative,' due to its hyper-commercialization, its lack of political edge, and its capacity to fabricate stars regardless of their musical ability.[1]

Dion's public image is equally pliable, a perfect screen upon which any national fantasy might be projected. In a book that charts her changing aspects of *québécité* from her first recorded notes in 1981 through the mid-1990s, sociologist Frédéric Demers describes her national representational labours: 'In her modest origins, through her numerous



reminders of her Quebec-ness, Céline Dion has stayed loyal to the land, to family, to a more traditional definition of identity. She also actively participates in the redefinition of Québécois identity by personifying the archetype of the modern Self – capable, entrepreneurial, profitable, hardworking, productive' (1999, 15). On the one hand, her public image resonates with that of a *mère de famille à la québécoise* with its strong emphasis on family values and intergenerational cultural continuities. In guarding her Québécois accent even while on tour in France, referring to her poor but happy childhood in a small town with thirteen brothers and sisters, and expressing her current baby mania in which her young son, René-Charles (b. 2001), is the point of all reference, Dion's story reprises the narrative contours of a traditional notion of *canayeneté* rooted in *la survivance*'s cultural and biological reproductions.

At the same time, however, her public image is informed by other national discourses. For instance, David Young uncovers a tendency in the English-language Canadian press to frame her 1991–92 cross-country tour as a symbol of Canadian national unity, or as a potential national unifier (Young 2001). (Her tour followed the collapse of the Meech Lake Accord, an effort to enfold Quebec into the Canadian constitution, which had been patriated from the United Kingdom in 1982 without Quebec's signature. This helped pave the way to the 1995 Quebec referendum on sovereignty.) Since then, because the bulk of her work now happens in English, Dion is often characterized as a 'vendue' to anglophone/U.S. interests. In many ways, she is a model United States immigrant who is willingly assimilated, joyously participating in the American Dream, and spreading its consumerist gospel of hope and happiness through her ever-expanding repertoire of branded products. With her living example of overcoming adversity through the power of love and an indefatigable positive attitude, she was a favourite Oprah Winfrey guest in the late 1990s. At once a corporate icon and a small town girl who values traditional gender roles – she took a two-year hiatus from her career starting in 2000 to care for her husband, René Angélil (b. 1942), who was recovering from cancer treatment, and to have a baby – Dion is a VH-1 'diva' with a pronounced Québécois accent.

Her image likewise intersects persuasively with a revivified notion of Quebecness called 'américanité.' *Américanité* is a conscious sense of continental attachment and identification rooted in a francophone identity that is 'sufficiently strong to be open to the continent (to economic free trade), without succumbing to the values of the United States' (Lesemann 2000, 43). Referencing shared historical and cultural formations

of North and South American non-indigenous peoples, derived from their transplantation to the New World, *américanité* contributes to the articulations of Québécois identity in the contemporary context of continental economic integration – and its history as *canadienne-française* and, earlier still as of New France. The definition of Québécois, associated explicitly with the territory of Quebec since the Quiet Revolution, is extended in its reimagining as 'American' and in its affiliation with performers like Céline Dion. Quebec once again extends its geographical reach into international commercial and cultural networks and enlarges its ideological parameters to include being pluralist, modern, and open to the world (Ministère de la Culture et des Communications, 1996).[2] In this respect, Dion, like the Quebec Pavilion hostesses and Tremblay's sisters-in-law, serves as a useful and internationally visible national allegory for Quebec in Fredric Jameson's sense of the term: '*the story of the private individual destiny is always an allegory of the embattled situation of the public third-world culture and society*' (Jameson 1986, 69; emphasis in original). Unlike Carbone 14 pieces that cleave to the partial and its particular resistance to that kind of abstraction, Dion is peculiarly *un*resistant to the national service of representational labour. The story of her humble beginnings and subsequent ascent to global pop domination recapitulates Quebec's narrative of national maturation and international expansion. Her refashioned 'American' identity, product of the New World and its unique affordances for self-fashioning, is consonant with Quebec's refashioned self-image. And her service is not limited to a Quebec nation; rather, she loans herself / her image out to any number of discourses – national, international, corporate, etc.

That Dion participates in a range of national imaginaries – French-Canadian, cultural nationalist, and global, to name but a few – is without doubt an advance in how female figures function in and for national discourses since 1967, the year before Dion's birth. No longer, it seems, does the woman-as-nation metaphor signify only negatively as *revanchist*, marginal, and colonized, as in the modernizing national discourses of the Quiet Revolutionaries and the anticolonial national discourses of *Parti pris*. At the same time, however, that the mimetic figure by which Dion generally enters national discourses as outlined above – namely, metaphor – remains unchanged invites us to examine the whys and wherefores of its persistence across a half-century of Quebec's history. The repetition of woman-as-metaphor-for-nation (or national allegory) across the performing arts points not only to that figure's continuing, however lamentable, power. Its insistent recurrence also draws attention



to two related phenomena. First, it flags the perpetual need for nation groundwork, the nation's vulnerability to erosion, and its constant nee of symbolic labour's backfilling. Second, the woman-as-nation met phor's durability signals a continued misrecognition of the intertwin gender-nation and performance-nation figural relations that are at t centre of this study; interpretations of these relations (especially whe images of women are concerned) are stalled in a realist mode that d ploys metaphor as its primary figure.

In many respects, Dion-the-reproducer is a perfect object for icon analysis. She reproduces with facility the panoply of national discours that have circulated through Québécois sociopolitical landscape sinc the Quiet Revolution. And yet, her availability to any number of natio al, corporate, or musical meanings troubles the fairly neat lines of infl ence on which metaphorical readings rely. More troubling, perhaps, the fact that despite being a reproducer par excellence, what emerg out of her is never really hers; she is a vehicle, not a tenor. Instead, D on's polysemy and plasticity make her a kind of reproductive machin a conduit for musical styles, national narratives, and goods (includin compact discs, calendars, photographs of babies, perfumes, T-shirts, tot bags, and shot glasses available online and, formerly, in her eponymou store at Caesars Palace in Las Vegas) that are not of her own creatio She is her own brand. Even Céline Dion works for 'Céline Dion,' or, should say, 'Celine Dion,' no accent.[3] To account for this, communica tions scholar Line Grenier calls her 'the Dion phenomenon,' a designa tion that includes the person, the voice, the icon, and the brand (2001a 37). But, like any machine, 'the Dion phenomenon' is someone else' (re)production. Dion – the person and the product – is reputedly he husband and manager's 'creation'; all business and artistic decisions ar widely attributed to René Angélil, making her a stereotypical 'diva,' 'a product produced by men as a vessel for men's voices' (Leonardi an Pope 1996, 12). He has guided her career since its inception when sh was twelve, and has overseen its global expansion as well as her physica and linguistic transformations. (At Angélil's urging, Dion took a yea off at seventeen to learn English and re-emerged with a more grown-up look, straightened and capped teeth, and a sexier wardrobe.) Consisten with Susan J. Leonardi and Rebecca A. Pope's wide-ranging analysis of representations of 'divas' as gender-disordered, Dion's attempts at biological reproduction required medical intervention in the form of in-vitro fertilization. To press the point, even in the space of 'nature,' Dion is again vessel or point of passage for someone else's creation.

Micone's conscious simulations of an ethnic model of *québécité* undermined metaphor's truth model; by producing Deleuze's 'wholly external likenesses,' Micone's simulations posited an illegitimate or false relation to the original, thereby demonstrating the deconstructive value of a simulated relation to the nation which might allow for a visible re-origination as Québécois for those whose origins are not found in Quebec. 'The Dion phenomenon' takes this move one step further. In the terms of simulation theory, Céline Dion personifies the simulacrum, a star who is 'commodified and transformed into [her] own image' (Jameson 1984, 61). Céline Dion seems to be a copy of an unreal real; she reproduces the unreal real of 'the Dion phenomenon' – the forged (in its doubled sense of to make and to fake) persona and the brand – to which I will now simply refer as 'Céline' or 'the phenomenon.' This renders Dion what Umberto Eco calls 'hyperreal' – the reproduction of an image or fantasy (1983, 6), estranged from the positions of referent and original. With 'the phenomenon' the copy takes the original's place. Surrogate is origin; surface trumps depth. That she lived and worked in the faux-natural environment of Las Vegas from March 2003 to December 2007 performing in her '"one of a kind" theatrical musical spectacular,' is the icing on the proverbial cake ('Céline Dion'). To many people's minds, Dion's public image of cultivated genuineness or manufactured authenticity make the union of Dion and Vegas *un mariage rêvé* (a match made in heaven) (Hurley 2009a).

In this chapter, I return to the pole of reproduction to draw out an alternative point of entry into thinking the national of performance. However, this time the reproductions have taken the place of originals and, as such, our previous methods of analysis and evaluation no longer have sufficient explanatory power. Reference's indications and metaphor's truth criterion are foiled by Dion's 'fake' national surrogations. With 'the Dion phenomenon' as hyper-real – a simulation of something that never really existed, a copy of a copy without an original – we must instead develop the potentials of the surface over depth for a revised national performance historiography. This will require attention to the real effects of the really made up, especially its impacts on the sensate body in the form of affect. We began this work in the last chapter on Carbone 14, where I highlighted the bodily effects and sensations image-theatre stimulates. In the unassimilable idiosyncracy of the body of sensation, the untranslatability of sensate experience, I located a renovated national mimesis that would preserve distinction within the collective (of audience, of nation). Each part maintained its integrity while still being part of the group. In the case before us now of a hyper-real pop music diva-brand, a turn to 'Céline''s preferred medium – music – may assist us in scratching the surface once again.



Music clogs the dominant representational contract between performance and nation in which performance re-presents nation. Nietzsche tells us in *The Birth of Tragedy* that music is non-representational, *non-mimetic* (Nietzsche 2000).[4] What kind of national mimesis then might music perform? How might it labour in service of a national project? Music's apparent resistance to representational labour – the fact that it cannot stand in for Quebec – challenges most baldly the referential basis (and depth-model) of common understandings of *québécité* in the performing arts. While I do not agree with Nietzsche that music is non-mimetic, I do believe that semiotic readings of music fall well short of explaining its national mimesis. This shortcoming combined with music's resistance to depth-models of interpretation suggests another perspective for reading *québécité*: the figure of 'affection.'

But first a note on vocabulary. By 'affect' I intend modes of 'mattering' dispositions. Affects are ways of paying attention to the world, relational modes by which subject and object are put into contact, a means of letting the world impress itself upon you and of putting yourself in the world. Deleuzian communications scholar Brian Massumi, whose *Parables for the Virtual* theorizes the political potentials of thinking affect, defines affect as 'intensity,' where intensity is one side of a doubled response to image reception, the other side of which is 'qualification.' Aligned with sensation and feeling, affect captures the 'strength and duration of the image's effect,' the intensity of response to the impact of an image (2002, 24). Affect – an immediate, skin-level registration of relation that in the last chapter we called 'the body of sensation' after David Graver's work – gives us an immediate sense for what matters to us, for what moves or, indeed affects us. But the basis of that being moved lies not, in this first instance of intensity, in a fully cognitive understanding or interpretation of what the image is 'saying,' nor is it an identificatory or empathetic response (which would require recognition, for instance). Rather, affect makes itself known through autonomic reactions like sexual arousal or sweating. (The autonomic nervous system helps bodies adapt to changes in their environment; active at all times, it regulates automatic, compensatory reactions – like blood vessels expanding [say, into a blush] or the adrenal medulla excreting greater amounts of adrenaline ([to sharpen our concentration]) – without our control and generally without us noticing.) Indeed, of the difference between affect and interpretation Mas-

sumi writes, 'the primacy of the affective [over 'qualification'] is marked by a gap between *content* and *effect*: it would appear that the strength or duration on an image's effect is not logically connected to the content in any straightforward way' (24). It is in the processing of the image's content or 'qualification,' its 'indexing to conventional meanings in an intersubjective context,' that emotion arises. Affect, then, precedes not only interpretation or 'qualification,' but also emotion, where emotion is understood as an expression of or name for (hence, a conventionalization) of affective experience. Thus, for instance, on catching Dion holding a long, high note on a televised variety show while flipping channels, one's skin may crawl or raise goosebumps, and this before one thinks, 'I love Céline Dion' or 'I hate Céline Dion.'[5] The signs of 'affection' are unruly; they happen to you in spite of yourself.

Affect becomes interesting in considerations of how hyper-real celebrities like Dion and how music produce and/or reproduce the nation for two reasons: one, because affect, like music, exceeds semiosis; and two, because affect presumes a different kind of relation than any of the figures seen thus far. In her recent book *Touching Feeling*, Eve Kosofsky Sedgwick turns to affect-theory to clarify dispositions to the world that are not (solely or primarily) semiotically organized. Critical literature on the affects in cognitive science, psychology, and philosophy often appraises them for their indications of value, determinations of salience, and motivations towards future action. Affects are linked to cognition as barometers for reflective judgment and as contributors to attitudes and beliefs which, in turn, inflect action; they are indicative.[6] In this way, affects' dispositions to the world are routed through reference. Pity and fear for Oedipus's predicament, for instance, may indicate an evaluation of his situation as tragic. Joy at hearing a Céline Dion power-ballad may point to how one rates a particular kind of melodic line or vocal range. One of the central merits of this work on affect is that it has convincingly enmeshed body in mind against an Enlightenment aesthetic tradition that rendered them distinct and rigidly hierarchically related. Nevertheless, as Charles Altieri argues, this reinsertion of affective response into cognitive process by suturing affects to meaning may still be at affects' expense, subordinating affect once again to cognition inasmuch as its value is determined by its 'reasonable' labours (2004).

Contra these approaches that tie affect's value to its cognitive outcomes – and consonant with though not identical to Massumi's approach[7] – both Sedgwick and Altieri highlight affects' autotelic functions, their self-satisfactions and reinforcements, that are not reducible to their



instrumentality to a rational process. Sedgwick cites mid-century U.S. psychologist Silvan Tomkins, whose three-volume work *Affect Imagery Consciousness* Sedgwick uses to build her sense of affect: 'Affect is self-validating with or without any further referent'; and 'Affect arousal and reward are identical in the case of positive affects; what activates positive affects "satisfies"' (2003, 100 and 19). So, potentially in addition to joy's indications of value or discernment, 'joy' is simply self-fulfilling; we seek joy because that experience is joyful.

In other words, affect means more than one can discern from its signs; one can feel joy or despair for no apparent reason, for instance. Affect is also unpredictable – it attaches itself to unlikely things and moves in unanticipated directions; it can move you to love the wrong person, for example, or feel part of a national collectivity that excludes you by definition (if you are an illegal immigrant, for instance). In short, affects are ways of interfacing with the world that are not necessarily semiotically organized and whose outcomes are not predetermined. For this reason, Massumi calls affect 'incipience, incipient action and expression' (2002, 30); it affords any number of potential results. From this perspective, affect is a supplement to meaning that also undoes meaning.

Capitalizing on affect's excess to meaning, its primacy over qualification, I suggest in what follows that the category of 'affection' provides performance scholars with an alternate point of departure for perceiving the national. 'Affection' can be built up and incorporated (which I mean literally: made corporeal, taken into the body) through emotional labours, such as those of the Expo hostesses, where the manipulation of mood and emotion weave shared emotional repertoires (e.g., visitors are guided to feel at ease in the Quebec Pavilion or proud of Quebec's accomplishments). You'll see below 'Céline''s own hosting role. But 'affection' also names the impress this particular image makes in Quebec and the contributions of that impress to articulating in and through Québécois a shared sensibility, or sensitization to the range of 'Céline''s effects.

Céline Dion is a particularly affecting hyperreal image and hence a signal locus for affective response in Quebec: 99.3 per cent of Québécois know who she is and most have a strong reaction to her (Grescoe 2001, 140). Those reactions are generally codified as love and hate; a mark of affect in her reception is that 'Céline' (most frequently and colloquially 'notre Céline,' already a sign of her intimate impress on Québécois) is dismissed with an enthusiasm effectively equal to that with which she is loved and hated. For the strong and strongly opposed receptions of 'the phenomenon,' witness, for instance, the crowd waiting outside Notre

Dame Basilica at her 1994 wedding on the one hand, and, on the other, the *de rigueur* drag acts that mercilessly lacerate her public image as perfect daughter, wife, and mother. I conducted a small online poll from 8 October 2005 to 8 January 2006 in which I asked Québécois to answer questions about their emotional responses to Céline Dion.[8] Here too, the pool is fairly clearly divided into those who really admire or even love her and those who cannot abide her or her music. Of the 151 responses, only seventeen said they were 'indifferent' to Dion; the rest picked a side, some with more nuance than others.

Again, it is not simply that people identify with her ('she has a family just like I do'), or recognize in her performances significations of *québécité* (she rolls her *r*s and loves Florida like any good Québécois) – although that is also true for some. Rather, she summons intensities like few others in the territory (possibly excepting the Canadiens hockey team). This affective investment – which, according to many respondents, happens in spite of or against their will – takes place quite regardless of whether people read her as signifying Québécois. This bears out again that there is no conformity between effect (or 'intensity') and content (or 'qualification'). Indeed, many commentators understand her as 'American,' particularly since she opened the 1996 Atlanta Olympic Games with a performance of 'The Power of the Dream' and her participation in September 11, 2001 fundraising endeavours, including the television special *America: A Tribute to Heroes* and the Sony album on which she reprised her performance of 'God Bless America.' In this expenditure of energy, people are drawn together by the intensity of their responses to common performances. By 'drawn together' I do not mean that they resemble each other or agree or become united somehow in a utopian public space. Affective alliances such as those afforded by Dion's impacts on people's environments (sonic, intimate, public, etc.) are striated by difference: difference that might be grasped socioculturally (i.e., differences in race, sex, gender, and class coordinates); cognitively (i.e., differences of opinion and interpretation); and affectively (differences in the particular affect summoned, like love, hate, shame, joy). Rather, I intend that in their disposition towards Dion, Québécois locate themselves within a geography whose coordinates correspond with varied responses to Céline Dion, who is the geography's *point de repère* or landmark. Popular culture scholar Lawrence Grossberg calls this kind of virtually produced, really experienced geography a 'mattering map,' 'which direct[s] our investments in and into the world.' He continues, 'These maps tell us where and how we can become absorbed – not into the self but into the



world – as potential locations for our self-identifications, and with what intensities. This "absorption" or investment constructs the places and events which are, or can become, significant to us. They are the places at which we can construct our own identity as something to be invested in, as something that matters' (1992a, 57).

Both positive and negative intensities require investment. In *The Cultural Politics of Emotion*, Sara Ahmed ties investment to affect, writing, 'investment [in the object, in this case in Dion] involves the time and labour that is "spent" on something, which allows that thing to acquire an affective quality.' In other words, the object itself is devoid of inherent affective quality. Rather, the object is rendered affecting by virtue of the generation of what Ahmed calls an 'affective economy' around it. In a definition that highlights her analysis's debts to both psychoanalytic and Marxist criticism, Ahmed offers 'a theory of emotions as economy, *as involving relationships of difference and displacement without positive value.* That is, emotions work as a form of capital: affect does not reside positively in the sign or commodity, but is produced as an effect of its circulation' (2004, 57; emphasis in original). Mattering maps, then, might be sketched by the circulation of particularly affecting commodities.

Collectors, of course, emblematize this investment in their acquisitions of all things 'Céline,' linking emotional investment to financial expenditure. 'For a collector,' wrote Walter Benjamin, 'ownership is the most intimate relationship that one can have to objects' (1968, 67). A recent authorized biography, *Céline Dion: Pour Toujours* performs this collecting labour for you; interleaving the biographical narrative are reproduction scrapbook items: the draft score of 'Ce n'était qu'un rêve,' her first recorded song penned by her mother; a personal letter from Barbra Streisand; the ultrasound photo of her son, René-Charles (Glatzer 2005). The relationship enabled by the confluence of ownership (financial expenditure) and experiences of intimacy (emotional investment) is crucial when considering the affective economies of pop music, given not only its domination by economic interests but also its machinery for commodity circulation. There is a seemingly endless supply of 'Céline' paraphernalia, both as a result of the brand's constant innovations (new perfumes, the most recent photos) and through a kind of 'Disney-vault' operation in which previously unreleased effects are made available to consumers. The cache's constant renewal incites recurrent investment.

Collectors are likewise emblematic of fandom's generation of alternate spaces of identity in the form of listening communities. In their circulation of collectors' objects – by trading bootleg concert tapes or show

posters – and in the ways they join together people, products, places, and activities – by attending concerts, lurking in 'Céline'-devoted cyberspace, purchasing records – fans forge connective webs that complement, and sometimes supplant official networks structured by corporate distribution. (Almost all Dion-related sites have a section or board devoted to trade in ephemera. John Connell and Chris Gibson would call the resultant webs 'cartographies of music' [2003].) For instance, the Montreal record store Francophonies boasts 'La Célinothèque,' a permanent, rotating display of 'Céline' paraphernalia from a collection of over 10,000 items amassed by two fans (one in Montreal, the other in Paris) and with the contributions of about fifteen others. While Francophonies sells print and musical materials related to Dion, it also offers itself for free to the public as a kind of museum, a place to learn more about her career (Fig. 7.1). 'The Dion phenomenon' holds the focus, then, of what Will Straw calls in another musical context 'a sociologically complex "scene," whose participants built effective links between a wide range of institutions and activities' (2005, 189).[9] In this respect, the love-response to Dion uncovers pop music's generation of affective alliances with and through its performers; put differently, love-respondents' mattering maps conjoin at key nodes. Importantly, the affective economy 'Céline' anchors emphasizes 'economy' – as in the circulation and exchange of material goods – as much as it emphasizes 'affect.' In a very real sense, one 'buys into' a Céline Dion–centred affective alliance.

If these official and subcultural circulations of 'Céline' commodities heighten the affective power of 'the phenomenon,' Dion's performances up the ante again. She expressly and insistently solicits affective expenditure like few other performers. The musical structure of her songs, their lyrical content, her performance of them, and her image combine such that they demand engagement of some kind. These elements provide qualifications to the affective experience of 'the phenomenon' in performance; they construct narrative frameworks for the intensity her music and persona elicit. True to affect's power for overriding will, it is difficult to *not* have a disposition vis-à-vis Dion; it happens in spite of yourself. As Doris Sommer writes about similarly affecting engagements in a different context, affective engagement with the performance – getting caught up in a melody, affected by a rhythm, absorbed in a voice, for instance – 'is already to become a partisan' (1994, 191).

In its catchy rhythmic and melodic qualities, pop music is a particularly powerful partisan-producing medium. Music has what feminist musicologist Susan McClary calls 'an uncanny ability to make us experience

7.1 The Célinothèque at Francophonies on St Denis Blvd in Montreal.
Photo: Laura Fisher.

*our* bodies in accordance with *its* gestures and rhythms' (McClary 2002, 23). For instance, the power ballad – the genre with which Dion is probably most strongly associated – evokes consistent, predictable patterns of tension and relaxation in its AABA structure. It adheres to the dominant or 'tonic' key in the A sections, departs from the tonic in the B section (often called the 'bridge'), and usually returns to the tonic at the end. (The tonic note forms the basis for the key. So a song in the key of C major has C as its tonic note.) Departure from the tonic is marked by a key change (usually a step up and sometimes a shift from major to minor); by fuller sound (often through the addition of accompanying instruments, denser orchestration, and/or full-throated singing of the

kind that seems to revel in the sound itself); and by increased volume and sustained notes. One need only recall Dion's mega-hit, 'My Heart Will Go On,' the theme-song from the movie *Titanic* (1999) for a clear example of how these technical manipulations conspire to generate affect. Approximately two-thirds of the way through the song, following a thundering musical introduction, her voice lifts off in the bridge to pronounce, 'We'll stay forever this way. And I know that my heart will go on.'

Lest we assign this affection exclusively to her English-language songs, where it is indeed prominent, let me encourage a close listening to her 2003 French-language album, *1 fille + 4 types* on which the slots often assigned to songs with the greatest 'hit' potential (at the beginning, middle and end) are occupied by songs with a clear AABA structure. (Not insignificantly, pop albums are often organized according to this standard form where the middle songs – usually numbers six to eight – stand out from the rest, forming a kind of B section of their own. A hang-over from the vinyl era, these numbers used to close an album's A-side and open the B-side.) Or, for an early-career example, note the dramatic departure from the tonic in 'Le blues du businessman,' written in 1978 by Quebec's most illustrious pop songwriter Luc Plamondon and recorded on *Dion chante Plamondon* in 1991. The return to the tonic at the end of a pop-song imparts a sense of completion or appropriate ending. This strict and ultimately containing structure allows for a dynamic sonic build through the B section, which then settles back to A. Within this centrifugal musical structure organized around a keynote, affective intensity can be as strong as it is fleeting. They aren't called 'power ballads' for nothing. Their power lies at once in the force of the vocal instrument used to sing them and in their generation of response. (Not inconsequentially, the affective power of sound swells is also tapped in national anthems and other 'stirring' musical styles like marches and theme songs.[10])

This heightened visceral response to musical structure, while ephemeral in any given instance, can be more long-lasting in its effects. In *Having a Good Cry: Effeminate Feelings and Pop Culture Forms*, Robyn Warhol argues that 'certain genres invoke ... physical responses in predictable, formulaic patterns.' Warhol contends that narratives mark readers' bodies with their sensational effects that, in their repetition, provide what she calls, after Raymond Williams, a 'structure of feeling in the daily lives of their devotees.' Patterns of tension and relaxation across her œuvre; repeated listening to her songs by her fans; singing and/or playing along to them by amateurs – each of these repetitions, structural and practical, 're-engrave the genre's affective patterns on [listeners'] bodies while re-



experiencing its conventional narrative moves' (2003, 7–8). Shared affective repertoires result from this musical conditioning, activating that out-of-body experience of responding to a song you don't know or don't like according to its musical cues – so the *Titanic* theme-song gives you goosebumps despite your mental preparedness for its manipulations.

Repertoires of feeling are further consolidated in musical practice. Pop music remains what Roland Barthes calls '*musica practica*,' music that moves amateurs to want to play it – think sing-alongs, garage bands, karaoke nights, and auditions for *Canadian Idol* or Quebec's pop-idol star-search equivalent, *Star Académie*. Quebec has a significant, family-based amateur musical tradition of which the Dion family is emblematic. Dion's parents, Adhémar and Thérèse Dion each played an instrument, as do many of her brothers and sisters, some of whom formed bands of their own and/or have gone on to independent musical careers. In her autobiography, Dion fondly recalls Sunday nights spent singing at home and credits her early and frequent exposure to music by her family as the foundation of her career (Dion 2000). Line Grenier has described the collective import of *Jeunesse d'aujourd'hui*, a hugely popular *American Bandstand*–like television show broadcast on Saturday afternoons from 1962 until 1972, and along with which many a Québécois teenager danced in her living-room (2001b). And since 2003, TVA, broadcaster of *Jeunesse d'aujourd'hui*, has taken back Sunday night for its *Star Académie*, a televised amateur night that highlights the contestants' regional origins. It has been lauded as a return to a Québécois tradition of family musical entertainment and, in a similar vein, called 'un grand party de famille' (a big family party) enjoyed by the vast majority of Quebec households (quoted in de Billy 2004; Desaulniers 2004; Baribeau 2003). At another party, the 2006 version of 'Mascara: La nuit des drags,' the open-air drag show held the night before Montreal's Divers/Cité pride parade, Montreal's preeminent drag queen, 'Mado,' orchestrated a living tribute to Céline Dion: twelve drag queens portrayed Dion at a different stage in her career (Schwartzwald, personal communication). As practised music – sung with, danced to, performed on instruments, imitated – pop songs' affects are incorporated manually into the viscera of articulate fingers, vocal folds, lung capacity, and comportment (Barthes 1977).

And in instances where listeners do not actively participate in the making of music, pop's dominant storing technology will involve them at a level just as intimate as that of *musica practica*. Take the example of the mp3, a digital file for recorded sound. The crux of mp3 technology is its capacity for compressing the information of digital recordings into

ever smaller files. Mp3 encoders perform this reduction by discarding sounds from the original recording that they anticipate the ear will not pick up on anyway. Although the human ear 'cannot keep up with sound as it actually happens,' people still 'get a sense of the detailed rise and fall of sounds'; we effectively fill in missing sound data, organizing what makes it through the inner ear's filter into meaningful patterns. Based on this psychoacoustic model of human hearing, mp3s mimic the sound-shaping activities of the ear to filter out sounds whose frequency exceeds hearing capacity, for instance, and sounds that are too close together in time to be distinguished. Jonathan Sterne, to whose work the above description is indebted, comes to a remarkable conclusion about the relationship of sound, technology, and the body produced by mp3s. 'The mp3 *plays* its listener,' he says (2006, 834–5; emphasis mine). Here is a body's remarkable adaptation to its (sonic) environment! Mp3s capitalize on our necessarily incomplete hearing; they offer less and less sound information (in the name of more compact storage) and rely more and more on the listeners' bodies to reconstruct the sound into music. In other words, our bodies are as much an mp3 player as is an iPod. The mp3 as recording format conditions listeners' sensory responses not over time, as musical practice and repeated exposure to a certain musical structure might, but rather even before the sound is 'delivered' to the listener. In this context, the virtues of an AABA musical structure – not to mention a recognizable 'sound' such as 'Céline's' – are even more apparent than they might have been before. Because AABA is a familiar sound pattern, it is easily filled in by listeners' ears. A near-perfect structure for fast, easy, and widespread distribution and recirculation in mp3 format, the peculiarly affecting musical commodity accrues additional affect in its promiscuous circulation.

Where the circulation-friendly AABA structure of so many of her songs induce and incorporate affect, the lyrics of Dion's songs conspire to convey and encourage emotions, those named or conventionalized qualifications of affective sensibility. Lyrics provide an organizational strategy for emotions raised by the musical properties of structure, tone, rhythm, and the like (Levinson 1997). So if the tone of 'Ziggy, un garçon pas comme les autres' elicits a feeling of wistfulness in its final trailing notes, its lyrics organize that feeling into a narrative of unrequited love. The theme of love dominates Dion's recording history from early expressions of familial affection and teenage crushes written by Eddie Marnay (e.g., 'D'Amour ou d'amitié' [Love or friendship, 1982] and the *C'est pour toi* album [1985]) to more urgent single-girl desires post-*Unison* ('J'ai besoin d'un chum' [I need a boyfriend, 1991], 'Le Ballet' [1995]), to her recent paeans to the satisfactions of committed and/or parental love ('Pour que tu m'aimes encore' [1995], 'Je lui dirais' [2003]). 'Love' or 'Amour' figures in 53 of 285 song-titles recorded by Dion between 1981 and 1999; its priority in the title establishes the song's lyrical preoccupation and helps organize its reception.[11]



Lyrical choices also focus song address. On *1 Fille + 4 Types*, all songs but two address a 'tu,' the familiar form of 'you.' This shorthand intimacy can be very seductive as it allows, even encourages, the listener to project herself into the position of the one-sung-to. This individual address reinforces pop music's implied habits of private, individual listening. These habits of listening are embedded in the arrangement of musical sounds behind and around the pop singer's voice, for instance, an arrangement that places the voice front and centre, building the effect of her direct address to the listener (Frith 1996, 188).

The sound technologies by which pop music is now generally delivered and consumed also reinforce the habits of private listening upon which the 'tu' address capitalizes. In the pre-recording past, musical consumption required the listener's physical proximity to musical production (e.g., to hear the guitar, one would have to sit close to it) and often her physical displacement to a genre-specific performance space (e.g., opera could only be enjoyed at the opera) (Stockfelt 1993, 159). John Corbett insists that the contemporary mode of musical exchange is *recording* and he critiques digital recording technology, in particular the compact disc format, for dividing musical production from contexts of performance, for constructing music 'as autonomous sound – production free from the body of the performer; reproduction free from its own noise' (Corbett 1990, 84; 91). Corbett's assessment is especially acute in the case of Dion since she has abandoned touring in order to become a pilgrimage site; from March 2003 to December 2007 she performed *A New Day* ... in a purpose-built theatre at Caesars Palace in Las Vegas. (She toured again to promote her *Taking Chances* album in 2008 and then withdrew from performance in 2009–10 to try to have a second child.) As such, most listeners' contact with her music is via a recorded form that effaces the labours, technologies, and networks required for its making and delivery. The distinct and distant social world of 'the phenomenon' thus obscured, fantasies of her unmediated connection to her listeners – 'she's singing just for me/right to me' – are enabled.

With 'Céline,' however, it is not enough that the structure and lyrics of her music combine with their technologies of recording and distribution

to produce affective responses in her listeners. Concert and video performances feature elaborate indications of her own strong emotion, of how fully she embodies the musical message. Sometimes the message is 'playful,' like when she plays air-guitar with a wide-eyed look to 'J'irai où tu iras.' In the power ballads, she punctuates the emotional high points of her songs (generally in the B sections) with her iconic chest thumping, hand clasped over her heart, closed eyes, and head thrown back as if in ecstasy, so completely transported is she. Every performance sign is fully, redundantly interpreted as profoundly moving. For example, during her 1996 concert tour, Dion plays back-up singer to her audience's croonings of 'Because You Loved Me'; the audience sings melody while Dion embellishes with vocal flourishes over top. Symbolically turning the microphone over to the audience to sing hit songs from the performer's repertoire is a concert staple. However, the act of 'singing along' with the audience establishes 'Céline' as the singer of the audiences' songs, as a vehicle for a shared emotional life captured by a song. The lyrical content of 'Because You Loved Me' reprises pop stars' frequent attributions of their success to their fans' fandom, rendering it a particularly apt choice for the fan sing-along. The song's persona sings to her lover, 'You gave me faith 'coz you believed / I'm everything I am / Because you loved me.' And, finally, it reinforces Dion's personal love-story/success-story with Angélil, who is often cast as a Svengali figure controlling her every move. She's everything she is because he loved her.

All these (redundant) displays of emotion and insistent invitations to feeling provoke intense emotional responses – of love and of hatred. Because of the popularity, longevity, and widespread diffusion of 'the phenomenon', it is difficult in Quebec to escape being a participant, however unwilling, in the affective repertoires her music engenders – regardless of one's taste culture. Indeed, we might understand her sound as the keynote, or tonic, if you will, of Québécois pop. Although any number of things draw one's attention to Dion's singing – her three-octave range, the crispness of her articulation – the ubiquity of her sound renders it background. Her sound permeates Quebec: she gives frequent television interviews, often (somewhat surreally) punctuated by song snippets thematically-related to the topic at hand, and makes frequent guest appearances on music-related shows like *Star Académie* and *L'école des fans*, another TVA show in which four- to seven-year-old children pay homage to a singer by interpreting her or his songs in her or his presence. In part due to Canadian content and French language broadcast regulations, Dion's music gets even more radio play in Quebec than in the other



parts of North America.[12] *Chanson*, an expansive vocal music tradition in Quebec in which Céline's albums (French and English) participate, dominates the 'Middle of the Road' format that fully half of Quebec's FM radio stations share (Grenier 1993, 139) and to which 80 per cent of Québécois listen frequently (Pronovost 1989).[13] That her songs might also often be qualified as 'ballads' – 'a slow-beat and simple structure (verse and chorus) music having an overall romantic or sentimental tone – identifiable in both instrumentation and lyrics' – again increases the likelihood of her radio play, not only on MOR format radio stations, but also as a transformat music on soft-rock, rock, or even dance music radio stations (Grenier 1990, 224).

Céline Dion's inescapability, her musical groundwork, is a particularly sore point for anti-fans and is often what drives their refusal to be hailed by the phenomenon's address. Again, this refusal is as much a coordinate on a mattering map as is being positively disposed to her address. Over and over in the poll I conducted, those who said 'Céline' provoked in them feelings of disgust, rage, or hatred attributed their response in part to their forced proximity to her repertoire of music and emotions. Many report having to listen to her music in the family car or home. In these accounts, the 'Céline'-lovers who subject 'Céline'-haters to her music or products are inevitably female and a generation older than the respondents; respondents refer to them as 'my mother,' 'my mother-in-law,' or 'my aunt.' In fact, 2005 demographic data on members of Dion's official fan-club, 'TeamCeline' provided by Dion and Angélil's production company, Feeling Productions Inc. (!!!!), reinforce this impression. Women comprise 66 per cent of the total membership; of this, 30 per cent of the female members are between forty-five and fifty-five. (Another 17 per cent are over fifty-five, and 25 per cent are between thirty-five and forty-four.)[14] Although one should in part attribute the preponderance of middle-aged fan-club members to their potentially greater disposable income (it costs US$25/year to become a member), this data also correlates with that gathered by commercial radio stations to which one can listen without cost (after the cost of a radio, of course).

It is not just middle-aged women who perpetrate 'Céline' on Québécois anti-fans, however; it is also managers of public spaces and the Quebec media. Anti-fans are repeatedly subjected to her hit songs by their incorporation into the musical wallpaper of shopping centres, offices, indoor skating rinks, and other public spaces. Dion enjoys fulsome media coverage in Quebec, to say the least. In July and August 2006, the airwaves were inundated with tributes to Dion's twenty-five-year career on

every Québécois television station. Any appearance she makes in Quebec merits an above-the-fold mention, obliging a certain attention, presuming a shared and apparently insatiable interest, and underscoring her contribution to circulation numbers and revenues. She is ubiquitous.

The hate-response, while still a part of 'Céline'-generated affective alliances, points more revealingly to the emotional labour the phenomenon performs for others. In this instance, the phenomenon functions as a kind of repository for negative emotion, often a high level of annoyance or irritation, although there is a significant population who 'hate' her. This more violent response registers in the number of hate-sites devoted to 'Céline' and the amount of screed one can find about her in the yellow press and from a Google search, as well as in my survey.[15] People hate her, or more gently, are irritated by her because she is ugly, *kétaine* (kitschy), or vulgar; for singing with a nasal or otherwise grating tone; for being overexposed and too commercial. That said, the dominant reason and unifying thread of the negative affect for which she is the nucleus lies in her presumed 'fakeness' or lack of 'authenticity,' returning us to the phenomenon's lack of origin, her perfect copy nature. For instance, her via-satellite appearance at 2005's Live 8 concert (intended to put pressure on the G8 countries to end African poverty) was loudly booed. Journalists and web-respondents explain the reaction as a comment on her perceived insincerity; Andre Mayer, the CBC's blogger for the Live 8 event writes, 'Celine Dion's taped address from Las Vegas is met with boos from the hard-rock audience in Barrie. Her assurance that she wishes she could be at Live 8 is met with a collective eye-roll' (2005). (Shane Birley corroborates this response on his blog [2005].) Her emotional appearance on 'Larry King Live' in which she denounced the United States government's slow response to Hurricane Katrina's 2005 devastation of the Gulf Coast was likewise met with scepticism.[16] It is as though her promiscuous affiliations with products, national narratives, and musical styles, along with her forceful (or even 'forced') performances of emotion support her lucrative circulations at the same time that they undermine them.

The negative affect often locates its target clearly and specifically in Dion the person. At one extreme, I received three rather disturbing responses to my survey – one in French and two in English – which detailed the respondents' (possibly tongue-in-cheek?) desires to beat, rape, and kill her. (Similarly violent responses are posted in response to antiGUY's 'Top 5 list of uses for Céline Dion CDs' [1999].) A more benign, though still negative, implication with her physical being is revealed in criticisms



of her appearance, on the order of this poll response from a young man from Saint-Hyacinthe, Quebec: 'Desfois [sic] le *look* est à discuter ... comme ses cheveux très court et blond :S' (Sometimes the look is questionable ... like her very short, blond hair :S). (The emoticon that closes the comments indicates 'I don't know what to say' or 'That's disgusting.') More often than not, the emotion's object surpasses Dion to target something she is made to stand in for, for example, her annoying fans, those with bad taste, sell-outs, or an outmoded vision of Quebec. A.A. Gill's notoriously cutting *Vanity Fair* article about Las Vegas unflatteringly positions Dion's *A New Day* ... show at the epicentre of Las Vegas's 'great bulimic consuming engine.' The author depicts her as having 'gone Vegas'; 'Dion has succumbed to the Vegas makeover.' However, she is deemed slightly less 'astonishingly and monumentally tasteless' than Vegas visitors, who are the unredeemed object of the author's unbridled scorn (Gill 2003, 206).

Her celebrity is a factor here in this double-barrelled targeting, for she is never just *one*: she is both *la petite fille de Charlemagne* and 'the Dion phenomenon.' This is a paradox of celebrity – that she must be both a stranger and an intimate to the public at one and the same time. On the one hand, Dion's celebrity insulates her from even the most virulent expressions of dislike; among her many employees are a class of workers who protect her physically (e.g., bodyguards) and psychologically (e.g., manager, press representatives), by intervening in potentially abusive situations. (Like many celebrities, Dion insists she does not read her press; Angélil says he reads everything.) On the other, her high level of protection may also expose her to more frequent and more highly charged personal verbal assault. In other words, she is 'safe' to hate vocally and openly because the hatred does not risk deleterious consequences for Dion herself. Her perceived invincibility sets her up for attack at the same time that it foils the attack, creating a circulation of emotion around 'the phenomenon' which in turn generates more affect. Because the emotion (of hatred, say) never hits its target, it just keeps circulating, boomeranging back towards the sender, increasing the affect's velocity and, as Ahmed would have it, its 'stickiness.' As a repository for emotion, as someone easily targeted for emotional displays on the part of both fans and anti-fans, 'Céline' manages emotions; she performs emotional labour. 'Our Céline' is our hostess.

Dion's gender is likewise a factor, for emotional labour is more often expected of women than men. As Arlie Hochschild's investigation of female flight attendants' conditions of work has demonstrated, there are

fairly clearly defined and gendered expectations about who can or must, according to their role, 'absorb an expression of displeasure' and who, in turn, may put a stop to it. She writes of the flight attendants, 'females' supposed "higher tolerance for abuse" amounted to a combination of higher exposure to it and less ammunition – in the currency of respect – to use against it' (2003, 178–9). This is not to say that Dion's social position is the same as a flight attendant's; clearly, as I indicated above, Dion's fortune buffers her from abuse. Nonetheless, 'the phenomenon' is singled out as a nucleus for negative affect in a way that male Québécois pop stars are not.[17]

And how might the affective repertoires 'the Dion phenomenon' generates get taken up as *national* labour?

The powers of assembly of 'the phenomenon' across difference in emotion (love and hate), in a way that remains open to practically anyone who comes into contact with her music, products, image, and so on, has occupied my focus to this point. 'Céline' functions as a binding mechanism around which fans and anti-fans coalesce in a shared affective alliance, one in which Céline Dion is 'ours' – ours because we buy in, and ours because we have a relationship to her, even if it is compelled or steeped in cool irony: hence the familiar use of the first name, Céline. This task of connecting her emotional geographies to Québécois imaginaries is complicated by the fact that Dion's international success depends in part on her non-referential mode, on her significations' lack of moorings in specific contexts or locations outside of the brand universe of 'the phenomenon.' Whereas Expo 67 hostesses were enjoined to make the Quebec Pavilion feel more homey and natural to its visitors by providing pertinent information about the area and by presenting themselves as typically Québécois, 'the Dion phenomenon' does not perform the same constructionist, pedagogical function vis-à-vis Quebec. Unlike the hostesses, she does not produce 'national sentiment,' that emotional endowment of *québécité*. Furthermore, since declaring her federalist leanings in 1992 – to a media-storm of criticism – Dion has maintained an entirely apolitical public position vis-à-vis Québécois sovereignty specifically. Robert Schwartzwald suggested to me in October 2006 that her criticism of the United States government's response to Hurricane Katrina provoked the interest it did because it had a clear focus and was, as such, a radical departure from her norm. It seems to have functioned as a kind of B-section to her apolitical 'A' persona, reinforcing her usual, innocuous, liberal humanitarianism precisely in its momentary departure from it. Normally, she attaches herself to causes that have no object



to critique. For instance, as National Celebrity Patron of the Cystic Fibrosis Foundation since her niece's death from the disease in 1993, Dion need not point fingers at human perpetrators of the disease, for there is none. (Quebec choreographer Dave St-Pierre's 2009 piece, 'Over my Dead Body,' caustically takes her to task for using Cystic Fibrosis and the strong emotions around loss and early death as another kind of fuel for her career.) Likewise, her 2002–7 'godparent' role for Montreal's Ste Justine Children's Hospital fundraising efforts, and her $1 million contribution to 2004's Asian Tsunami relief do not require a position against anything more specific than childhood illness and devastating natural catastrophes.

In addition, music complicates the issues of reference in a way that the other performing arts *National Performance* engages do not. In theatre, dance, or at an international exposition, one may struggle to fully interpret the multitude of signs presented in décor, language, movement, architecture, etc. With music – and I'm thinking here of the dominant contemporary experience of music, that is, listening to recorded music, not music-in-performance – not only are there fewer signs, but those signs are 'semantically underdetermined,' according to musicologist Lawrence Kramer: 'Music per se is not only nonsemantic, but "unsemanticizable"; even the simplest interpretations of it rapidly exceed anything that might be conceivably encoded in its stylistic and structural gestures ... Because it is semantically underdetermined music renders the inevitable gap between meaning and the object of meaning much more palpable than texts or even images do' (2003, 130; 126). Perhaps Dion's tendency to overinterpret and to channel those meanings back into a brand stems from this musical reality. Certainly, her 1996 sing-along to 'Because You Loved Me' described above collapses reference into so many aspects of 'the phenomenon.' Or perhaps this musical reality renders any interpretation overwrought, even those less redundant than Dion's.

The economy of musical interpretation, like that of affect, is thus one of surplus, of excess; as in the case of the mp3's circulations, musical interpretation's semantic promiscuity promotes affective agglutinations which may then be applied to or get stuck on other nodes on one's mattering map. At the same time that the 'Because You Loved Me' sing-along collapses reference, its themes, structures, and performance modes afford an extensive range of uptakes, functioning again like the virtual incipience of affect. Importantly, these multiple affordances facilitate a wider circulation of her products. Thus, anyone who has experienced 'love' might fill in the lyrics' narrative gaps with her own story.

Anyone familiar with the conceit of concert sing-alongs will recognize the moment as a non-spontaneous summons to participation and group feeling. Anyone whose ear picks out musical structure will be able to predict this high-point of the song in performance. These multiple points of entry into Dion's performance of 'Because You Loved Me' indicate that musical meaning is neither inherent in musical structure nor wholly derived from lyrical or performance-based exegesis. Rather, any sense gleaned from those sources is nestled within a series of relations whose conceptualization is offered by music's internal and external geographies. Musicologist Richard Middleton translates musical pattern into conceptual relationships: 'Musical patterns are saying: as this note is to that note, as tonic is to dominant, as ascent is to descent, as accent is to weak beat (and so on), so X is to Y' (1990, 223,). In her study of people's uses of music in their everyday lives, Tia DeNora reminds, however, that these analogies are concretized not in musical production but rather in musical reception: 'it is music's *recipients* who make these connections manifest, who come to fill in the predicates, X and Y.' Those coordinates reach outside of musical structure, to articulate relationships 'between works, and perhaps between these and non-musical structures' (2000, 45). In the example of 'Because You Loved Me,' relationships are forged with the genre of the love-song and with past associations and contexts of use, as well as with musical practices of melody (the audience singing the lead) and embellishment (Dion singing back-up). The intra- and extra-musical relations activated by 'the phenomenon' particularize the affective bond to *québécité* by providing some of its fixed coordinates; they act as qualifications to intensity.

One of these coordinates can be located in the poetic *chanson* tradition, a lyric-oriented, solo performer, singer-songwriter genre in which Quebec's aural culture is steeped. It acquired nationalist associations in the 1960s when *chansonniers* (singer-songwriters) like Gilles Vigneault and Félix Leclerc set their *poésie du pays* to music inflected by folk idioms. While contemporary *chanson* is largely denuded of the explicit political commentary that characterized its heyday, it is still bound up with assertions of *québécité* in its lineage, and *le fait français* in its French-language expression. Grenier explains, 'The intervention of different consecrating agents, among them media and literary institutions, contributed to the promotion of "la chanson" conceived in this context as the only authentically Québécois genre (in comparison with other, U.S.-inspired genres) and, it follows, as the carrier of the only music that might proclaim itself culturally significant and representative of the



Quebecois people' (1997, 37). In addition to performing some songs that conform with the features of '*chanson*,' Céline also participates in the *chanson* tradition courtesy of the term's semiotic expansion since the 1990s, by which '*chanson*' is attributed 'to all popular music created or produced in Quebec, and this independent of distinctions in genre or style' (1997, 37–8). Having begun her career as an artist produced in Quebec by Québécois, and because of her continued popularity, Dion's songs still count as 'Québécois' both in popular consciousness and for the Quebec music industry.[18] She also draws on the genre's contextual significance through acts of ventriloquism. On her French-language albums, she frequently works with a single songwriter who writes the album's material in her voice.[19] Worthy of note, here, is that Dion is channelling a songwriter who channels her to write the songs in her voice. In effect, there are no ventriloquists here, only dummies, pointing out again that 'the phenomenon' lacks an origin. Naomi Levine has drawn my attention to the fact that 'Céline"s lack of origin, that she is not an original, could also align her more closely with drag queens' performances of her. 'Céline' is as much an impersonator as her impersonators. (Her English-language song selections show no particular loyalty to specific songwriters but rather to producers, who craft her 'sound' into other recognizable patterns.)

The Canadian-content and French-language-content regulations for Québécois radio and television to which Dion owes her ubiquity on the airwaves also substantially inform local listening practices. Jody Berland argues that Canada's aural culture is based less on a coherent grammar of musical difference than on the different soundscapes that Canadian public, commercial, and community radio produce (1998). Dion can sound a lot like Mariah or Barbra because they share a musical grammar and similar vocal ranges. But the mix of a high-brow national radio (the Canadian Broadcasting Company [CBC] and Radio-Canada) with an advertising-heavy, popular commercial radio and the grainy-sounding, musically and ideologically varied community radio, is distinctly Canadian and Québécois, says Berland. It is a soundscape comprised of various music formats, programming sequences, relations to for-profit drivers, and audience addresses (e.g., from the familiar, local address of community radio to the more formal, universal address of Radio-Canada). Within it, 'rough' sound alternates with 'smooth,' and Canadian content (CanCon) with American content (AmCon). CanCon itself is internally variable; often figured as alternative (to AmCon), it is just as frequently global pop (e.g., Céline Dion, Shania Twain, Garou, and Bryan Adams)

produced out of financial circumstances and corporate structures in which CanCon must generally prove itself as saleable in external markets (the United States or France) in order to be played on Canadian radio. For instance, 'most records manufactured and sold within Canada (nearly 90%) are made from imported master tapes ... Thus a recording artist usually needs to succeed in the U.S. to be heard in Canada' (Berland 1998, 136). Moreover, Berland points out, government programs supporting Canadian music also tend to privilege commercially viable music and subsidize international music tours, but not domestic ones (137). In Quebec, *chanson* forms the sonic backdrop against which the strong interest in hip-hop, worldbeat, and technopop distinguishes itself. On Radio-Canada, the preferred *chanson* is that of either modern-day singer-songwriters like Pierre Lapointe and Ariane Moffat, or that of the French tradition (*à la* Georges Brassens and Édith Piaf, for instance). On community radio, *la chanson à texte* is more likely to be the politically engaged rap of Loco Locass or the *engagé* rock of Les Cowboys Fringants. On commercial radio, *chanson* is Dion-sung ballads. Like the 'A' sections of pop songs, *chanson* is the point of departure, a kind of musical groundwork against which other musical traditions and distribution networks might distinguish themselves. Québécois ears are thus tuned in accordance with these musical structures.

An ear schooled in Quebec popular radio distribution and performance networks might take up Dion's 'Mon homme' (2003) – a tribute to 'my man' – according to its relationship with *chanson* and/or according to other coordinates on its musical map – for instance, its use of musical materials and/or according to its lyrical content. The relationship of 'Mon homme' with *chanson* could be charted through its thematic similarity to the French torch song of the same name by Maurice Yvain (1920), performed by Fanny Brice in the 1921 Ziegfeld Follies and re-popularized by Barbra Streisand playing Fanny Brice in *Funny Girl* (1967). These thematic and melodic histories of use might lead the listener whose ear is attuned to Broadway, for instance, through a series of Dion-Streisand sound-associations founded in range, diction, clarity of musical expression, and a certain nasal quality. And these associations intensify when one considers Dion's self-orientalizing in some publicity stills and during her 2000 wedding vow renewal ceremony held at Caesars Palace. Listening for lyrical resonances differentiates the songs; unlike Fanny's tragic resignation to keep returning to her man on her knees despite his repeated infidelities, Dion's 'Mon Homme' conveys not only the persona's adoration of her man but also his worthiness. Unlike the French and American versions, Dion's *homme* enjoys a merited devotion by his adoring yet non-deluded partner.



The coordinates afforded by musical relations reach outside of musical structure as well to articulate ties 'between these and non-musical structures' (DeNora 2000, 45). Take, for example, the staging of 'I Wish' in her performances of *A New Day* ... When Dion sings this Stevie Wonder composition, the visibly non-white (African-American and Latino), male dancers in her troupe, distributed more widely across the visual field in previous numbers, come down- and centre-stage to surround her in a glancing blow at an unexplicated musical history. This choice may be explained by the lyrical focus of the song itself, the innocent if rough-and-tumble days of an African-American boy's youth. For a Québécois ear attuned not only to American popular song and social change, but also to its impact on Québécois self-perception, Dion's assumption of a 'black' persona in the song re-forges a Quiet Revolution–era identification of Québécois as North America's 'white niggers.' Her over-the-top usage of 'girlfriend' in interviews, particularly with Oprah Winfrey, performs similar representational labour. More importantly, these instances give form to an affective excess associated in the United States with people of African and Latino descent (Muñoz 2000) and in Canada with Québécois, due to their 'Latin blood' and 'excessive' demands.[20] This, of course, feeds again off of the notion that women are not only 'naturally' emotional (therefore natural emotional labourers) but also naturally emotionally 'excessive' and 'sensitive' (therefore perfect affect machines). Thus, an analogized history of marginality joins with an affective structure, and both are perpetuated in their circulation (Fig. 7.2).

Musical performance tests the limits of the 'aboutness' rationale of nationalization – that 'Céline's' performances are Québécois because they reference Quebec in their lyrical content, musical structure, or in her performance ticks. As we have seen, in a case like Céline Dion's, however, the explanatory grid of reference both largely ignores any identifiably Québécois signifieds apart from her biography, and ultimately short-circuits. She does not sing Quebec, as did the *chansonniers*. Her universe of reference is almost hermetic, as in the case of the 'Because You Loved Me' sing-along, where everything comes back to her, her story, her relationship to her fans. It is also fully capitalized. Ultimately, 'the phenomenon' comes to mean whatever one wants it to, which is to say that it comes to mean nothing. Lacking what Elin Diamond calls, after Irigaray, a 'true referent,' Dion's performances 'unmake' national mimesis, unravelling it from within (1997). All dissembling, 'the phenom-

7.2 Dion with dancers performing Stevie Wonder's 'I Wish' on the opening night of *A New Day*.
Photo: George Bodnar/Tomasz Rossa. Courtesy CDA Productions, Inc. Las Vegas.

enon' evacuates referential schemes tied to an origin or original. In cases like this, where reference or 'aboutness' is exhausted or indeterminate, affect may provide another way into reading performances as national or as nationalizing *alongside* the referential reading. Affect, in this case, provides the why of performance, the reason we must attend to it, even when we don't particularly want to; it endows the performance with sense and impact – with its mattering and, to that degree, its meaning.

So yes, 'Céline' represents different aspects of *québécité* in her accent, in her biography, in her very emotionality. A resonant figure for the analysis of national mimesis, 'the Dion phenomenon' stands at once



as metaphor, as simulation, and as affection. But the affective alliances she enables and the emotional labour she performs furnish the conditions of possibility for that referential reading. The alliances she affords may form the substrate of national performance, inasmuch as they help create the conditions of possibility for reading certain performances as 'ours' (or 'theirs'), and thus, as 'Québécois.' In other words, inspiring an affective territory through the arrangement of dispositions around her allows for the conversion of external cartographies to internal coordinates. Affect in this case answers what political philosopher Etienne Balibar isolates as the nation-form's most necessary and fundamental labour. He writes, 'The fundamental problem [of the nation] is to produce the people. More exactly, it is to make the people produce itself continually as national community' (Balibar 1991, 93). With this, Balibar indicates both the difficulty of securing this transformation of individual self into national other as well as that transformation's necessity for sustaining the nation as a viable social form.

Eve Kosofsky Sedgwick and Adam Frank contrast post-Foucauldian critical theory's 'digital' or binary structure (one is or is not; something is on or off) with a more congenial analog structure (of 'graduated and/or multiply differentiated representational models') that they discover in Silvan Tomkins's affect theory (Sedgwick and Frank 1995). Thinking affect along these (analog) lines allows for what Sedgwick calls the 'middle ranges of agency' that exist somewhere between on and off (or 'national' and 'not-national'), between one and infinity (2003, 13). By beginning somewhere different, with affect instead of semiotics, thinking affect opens the door to seeing how people may produce themselves as national, even in conditions that militate against it; how one may identify with the nation (its values, types, etc.) without identifying as national. Dion's emotional labours both lay the affective groundwork of the nation and re-key common understandings of arts-nation links by shifting the frame of reference from signification to 'affection' with its unpredictable and non-utilitarian effects. Thus, in addition to providing symbolic materials to Quebec in her references, then, 'Céline' also furnishes its connective tissue by performing emotional labour for the populace, and by eliciting affective response that one cannot deny, in spite of oneself.

its first appearance using a wind-machine in *Peau, chair et os* (Skin, flesh, and bone) (1991).

### 7 National Affection: Céline Dion

1 According to Lawrence Grossberg, pop music's 'authentic' counterpoint is rock and roll. He writes, '"Inauthentic rock" is "establishment culture," rock that is dominated by economic interest, rock that has lost its political edge, bubblegum music, etc. "Authentic rock" depends on its ability to articulate private but common desires, feelings and experiences into a shared public language. It demands that the performer have a real relationship to his or her audience – based on their common experiences defined in terms of youth and a postmodern sensibility rather than class, race, etc.—and to their music – which must somehow "express" and transcend that experience. It constructs or "expresses" a "community" predicated on images of urban mobility, delinquency and bohemian life' (1992b, 206–7).

2 This cosmopolitan understanding of *québécité* may also be read in Dion's music videos. Her early videos feature her in a story, sometimes in fairy-tale-like fashion. Later videos focus almost exclusively on her, often in close-up, to the exclusion of visual story. Increasingly polished and decontextualized, more recent videos like 'If Walls Could Talk' depict the singer alone in a room that could be anywhere in the West.

3 The *accent aigu* over the *e* in 'Céline' was removed from English-language albums, starting with *Unison* in 1990. Of her eleven French-language albums, six retain the accent, three print her name entirely in capital letters and without the accent, one drops the accent but retains the usual orthography (*Celine: au coeur de stade*), and one uses only her last name in the title, thereby avoiding the issue (*Dion chante Plamondon*).

4 Thank you to Sara Warner for this reference and for our ongoing conversations on affect and performance.

5 This temporal lag between affect and qualification – 'the skin is faster than the word,' writes Massumi (2002, 25) – is so tiny (Massumi cites research putting it at about a half-second), it is barely if at all registered on the part of the sentient being adapting to its environment. For this reason, because affect is an event that that 'happens too quickly to have happened, actually,' it is *virtual.* In that virtual half-second lag, which has yet to qualify or determine a pathway of action and expression in relation to the environment (which might be external or internal to the body), Massumi finds the political potential of affect. Massumi's work represents one influential strand of 'the affective turn' in the humanities. For a more detailed parsing of 'affect' and its kin (notably 'emotion') in relation to theatre and performance, see Ridout (2007) and Hurley (2010).



6 See, for instance, the largely cognitive approaches in Hjört and Laver (1997); Nussbaum's philosophical treatise linking emotion to ethical judgment (2001); in political science, Marcus (2002), which argues for emotion's centrality to rational democratic processes; and Edelman (1996).

7 Massumi gets to affect through Deleuze's exegesis of Spinoza's monist philosophy; Sedgwick follows the work of psychologist Silvan Tomkins (and as a response to Lacan's influence on post-structuralist theory in the humanities); Altieri pursues his inquiry largely via philosophy.

8 A brief note on method: The seventeen-question survey (of which six were demographic questions) was conducted in both English and French; respondents could choose the language in which they wished to take the poll. I solicited Québécois respondents specifically and left it to the respondents to self-identify. In other words, I did not furnish the definition of Québécois. I distributed the invitation to participate in the survey on academic and cultural list-servs, on Dion-related websites and bulletin boards, and on posters hung at musical outlets around Montreal and university campuses. It was also posted on my personal and departmental web-pages. I received ninety French-language responses and sixty-one English-language responses, for a total of 151. I do not interpret the survey results as quantitatively significant. My intention in executing the survey was to gather some qualitative data with some representative or indicative value. It is in that spirit that I use the survey responses here.

9 Straw is writing here about Montreal's disco scene of the 1970s. For a fuller elaboration of what he intends by 'scene,' see Straw (2004). For the classic statement on fans' production of alternate listening communities, see Hebdige (1979).

10 In his article on Russia's new national anthem, J. Martin Daughtry relates and applies Malcolm Boyd's categorization of national anthems: 'Malcolm Boyd (2003, 44) singles out two compositions as providing the generic foundation for the majority of the world's anthems: '"God Save the King/Queen" (anthem-as-hymn model; "stately rhythmic tread and smooth melodic movement") and the "Marsellaise" (anthem-as-march model; a "rousing martial piece").'

11 This count is based on documentation by Beauregard (2002).

12 As of 1 July 1990, 'at least 65% of the vocal music played weekly by all Francophone AM and FM radio stations [in Canada], irrespective of format or market, must be French-language songs' by Canadian Radio-Television and Telecommunications Commission (CRTC) regulation (Grenier 1993, 119).

Anecdotal evidence gathered from Dion-related online chat rooms and bulletin boards also supports this contention; her U.S. fans complain that her new music isn't played as frequently there as it is north of the 49th parallel.

13 Thirty-four per cent make music-purchasing decisions based on what they have heard on the radio. Rap, hip-hop, and worldbeat are increasingly popular in Quebec, according to data analysed by Pronovost (2005, 46). It is these sounds, among others, that stand out against the tonic note of Quebec pop; they must also be read with it.

14 However, TeamCeline's male membership, while smaller in total, exceeds female membership in this same 35-to-over-55 age range; 74% of male members are in that category, whereas 72% of female members place themselves in that age range. Because of the way in which the data were presented to me, in a 19 September 2005 letter from Jacky Magee of Feeling Productions, I have no way of correlating these statistics with her Québécois or even Canadian membership. (Canadians comprise 11% of 'TeamCeline''s total membership.)

15 According to the survey responses, negative affect vis-à-vis Céline separates francophone from anglophone Québécois. Of the 90 French-language responses to the poll, not one used the noun 'haine,' nor the verb 'haïr,' although one indicated his 'repulsion.' Positive responses – ranging from 'respect' (7 responses) through 'admiration' (25), to 'fierté' (11), a tie of kinship ('affection relative,' 6), to finally 'amour' and 'passion' (12) – eclipse the responses with negative valence by a ratio of 3:1. The bulk of the negative responses can be qualified as a combination of irritation (e.g., 4 'énnervemment,' 2 'agacement') and shame (e.g., 4 'honte,' 1 'embarras,' 1 'dédain'). On the other hand, the majority of the 61 English-language responses are negative, ranging from feelings of embarrassment (2) to irritation (9) to nausea (10) to hatred expressed in fantasies of sexually violating and killing Dion (2).

16 See the Desjardins article (2005) and its 45 responses. Interestingly, the journalist's wrath is reserved largely for what he perceives as the leftist Québécois press's efforts at using her outburst as an opportunity to express anti-American sentiments (this is the 'indecency' of the title). However, a significant number of the responses focus their energies (positive or negative) on Dion herself, not her action's uptake in the media.

17 For instance, Roch Voisine, an Acadian-Québécois pop singer boasts a career path similar to, though not on the same scale as Dion's, without the same kind of backlash. He records in French and English, performs in Las Vegas, collaborates with David Foster, and has been made an Officer of the Order of Canada.



18 All of survey respondents save one said 'Céline' is *Québécoise*. The industry, too, counts her music as *chanson québécoise*, as evidenced in her almost yearly nominations for the annual awards of l'Association québécoise de l'industrie de disque, du spectacle et de la video (ADISQ). In 2006, for instance, she was nominated in two categories ('chanson populaire de l'année' and 'interprète feminine de l'année'). She did not win in either category.

19 French songwriter Eddy Marnay penned most, when not all, of the songs for the following albums: *La Voix du Bon Dieu* (1981); *Tellement j'ai d'amour ...* (1982); *Les Chemins de ma maison* (1983); *Mélanie* (1984); and *C'est pour toi* (1985). Marnay also contributed several songs to *Incognito* (1987), his last collaboration with Dion. Luc Plamondon wrote several songs for *Incognito* and all the songs on *Dion chante Plamondon* (1991). French singer-songwriter Jean-Jacques Goldman penned *D'Eux* (1995) and *S'il suffisait d'aimer* (1998). Goldman, Gildas Arzel, Erick Benzi, and Jacques Veneruso wrote the songs on *1 fille + 4 types* (2003); the songs on *D'Elles* (2007) were written by French and Québécois women writers and set to music by Goldman.

20 On Québécois' 'Latin blood,' see Handler (1988, esp. 37–9). It should be pointed out that if Quebec's demands are excessive, English Canada's response to them is equally so and generally comes in the form of angry, self-righteous questions like 'What do they want?!'

## 8 Conclusion: Feminist (Re)production

1 Josette Féral clarifies the use of the term 'théâtre institutionnel' in Quebec as follows (2007, 21): 'they are called such in Quebec because they are the oldest and the most financed by the State. These theatres do not yet have the historical weight of certain large, European, even older theatrical institutions. Moreover, national theatres in the European sense do not exist in Quebec.' Here, she builds upon Gilbert David's typology of Quebec's theatre venues; he adds that institutional theatres also benefit from the greatest critical legitimacy (1994).

2 Gauvreau (1925–1971), an automatiste playwright and poet, is best known for *La charge de l'orignal épormyable* (1956) and *Les oranges sont vertes* (1971).

3 In fact, in a subsequent Tremblay play featuring Carmen, *Saint Carmen de la Main* (1976), Carmen's family name is replaced by the name of the street, signifying her identification with the street and all it represents.

4 As influential as Bélair's interpretations of Tremblay's early work were, Lucie Robert (1993), among others, has contested his optimistic reading of Pierrette and Carmen's futurity.