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Textual Stratification and Functions of Orality in Theatre

Mathilde Dargnat

Celui qui crée l'image ne saurait entrer dans l'image créée par lui-même.
(Bakhtine in Belleau 1986: 221)
Whoever creates the picture cannot come into it.

Tout est possible au théâtre.
(Tremblay 1998: 65)
Anything is possible in theater.

1. Introduction

In this chapter, I study how a spoken variety of French is used in a corpus of five plays of the Quebecois writer Michel Tremblay: *Les Belles-Sœurs* (1968), *Bonjour, Là, Bonjour* (1974), *L'Impromptu d'Outremont* (1980), *Le Vrai Monde?* (1987) and *Encore une Fois, si Vous Permettez* (1998) (from now on, *BS, BL, IO, LVM, EF*). I exploit two main observations. First, social and literary ideas about language work as filters on the represented linguistic usage, here the Quebec Vernacular French (QVF from now on). The real linguistic data are taken from two Montreal French language corpora: *Sankoff-Cedergren* and *Montréal 84*¹. Second, a writer who uses fictional spoken language in his texts, can nonetheless also transcribe a more standard linguistic usage. In addition, he can differentiate linguistically between several character types, according to social or metaliterary criteria. Characters can indeed be perceived through their linguistic usage and/or according to their position in the textual structure, that is, their status in the fictional hierarchy.

The chapter is divided into two main parts. In section 2, I first recall some relevant aspects of the history of French in Quebec and of Michel Tremblay's situation in the Quebecois literature. Next, I show that, before analyzing the role of linguistic peculiarities (i.e. marks of spoken speech) in the texts, one has to take into account the complex process of categorization involved in the representation of a linguistic variety, namely the QVF. Understanding this categorization is crucial in order to pinpoint the relevant phenomena in the texts. Section 3 contains the details of the corpus-based statistical analysis and its stylistic interpretation in the five plays, in terms of textual (enunciative²) stratification and plot structure.

2. Literary categorization and representation of vernaculars

Circumscribing a linguistic variety is a complex process of categorization. It cannot consist in grasping or shedding light on, a ready-made object present in the real world. I put special emphasis on the social criteria that define the characters-speakers, on the importance of the language image and on the “*décalage des registres*” [register discrepancy] (Anis 1981: 20) at work whenever spoken phenomena are transposed into writing. Before considering the corpus-based analysis, it is useful to recall some relevant aspects of the history of French in Quebec and of Michel Tremblay’s situation in the Quebecois literature.

2.1. Michel Tremblay and the Quebec linguistic dilemma

Michel Tremblay is one of the most famous contemporary Quebecois writers. He has in particular published many plays, novels, narratives, and some translations of other play writers (see in particular Boulanger 2001, David and Lavoie 1993, Piccione 1999). His work is also translated into several languages. At the beginning of his career, and especially when his first play *Les Belles-Sœurs* was staged in 1968, he was associated with a kind of linguistic and socio-political war. Indeed, from the end of the fifties to the end of the sixties, the Quebec underwent a genuine revolution, the *Révolution Tranquille* [The Quiet Revolution], which concerned political, cultural and ideological domains simultaneously, like in other countries during the same period (e.g. Mai 68 in France). Interestingly, in Quebec the debate about Quebecois identity focused on the language question. This question is of course linked to the political situation of the Province, from its first colonial status at the end of sixteenth century to its subsequent alternating situations as a French or a British colony during the following centuries. For space reasons, and also because it is not the central subject of the chapter, I do not deal here with this long period (for a survey, see Plourde 2000). Nevertheless, it is important to remark that French Canadian people had a complex identity very soon in their history: on one side, they have to ‘defend’ themselves against their English Canadian neighbors, and on the other side, they had to ‘defend’ their specific identity against France, the ‘Mère-Patrie’ who abandoned them to the British Crown during the nineteenth century. In addition to its many symbolic consequences, using French language also appeared as a kind of dilemma. It was felt necessary not to be ‘assimilated’ by the Canadian English, but it proved also problematic, because Canadian French and European French had diverged on several points during centuries.

When Michel Tremblay began to write, the tension created by this dilemma was strong. Although a number of writers did not consider it acceptable to use English, he was also reluctant to stick to 'standard' (i.e. normative) French, unlike many of his predecessors, and preferred to express the Quebecois linguistic identity through the use of QVF. The shock created by *BS* was caused by the fact that Michel Tremblay did not hesitate to incorporate into the language of his characters various anglicisms and swearwords ('sacres') that were part of the Quebecois vernacular, dubbed 'Joual' and held in disrepute at the time. He thereby paved the way for using the vernacular as an esthetic resource in its own right. (Concerning the 'Joual', see in particular Daoust 1983, Dargnat 2002, 2006, Gauvin 2000: 124-126, Gervais 2000, Larose 2003: 155-203, Laurendeau 2004).

2.2. A corpus-based construction of the linguistic referent

Following Françoise Gadet, one can assume that:

Une définition sociologique [du français populaire] se fait par un faisceau de traits variables: profession, niveau d'études, habitat, revenus... [Les] locuteurs du français populaire seront définis comme les individus caractérisables comme: profession ouvrière ou assimilée, niveau d'étude réduit, habitat urbain, salaire peu élevé, niveau de responsabilité dominé. (Gadet 1997: 24-25)

[One can work out a sociological definition of the French vernacular using a bundle of variable features: profession, academic level, housing, income ... Speakers of the French vernacular are also defined as persons who are characterized as: working class or equivalent, low academic level, urban housing, low salary, socially dominated.]

With this initial categorization as a starting-point, I have selected about twenty interviews from the *Sankoff-Cedergren* and *Montreal 84* corpora. The informants are speakers who correspond to the mentioned sociolinguistic profile for the French vernacular in the Quebec society between the sixties and the eighties. These data constitute a reference corpus for the characters' way of speaking in the plays of Michel Tremblay. Critics are in the habit of saying that most of his characters borrow the French Montreal lower class³ way of speaking. Comparing a corpus of spontaneous speech with a corpus of fictive speech is admittedly very useful for a fine-grained comparison, but it is nonetheless insufficient for explaining the vernacular effect in literature. On reading it appears indeed (i) that the written language is quite softened and non-systematic according to the real spoken usage it is supposed to represent, and (ii) it is not easy to discriminate in practice which feature pertains specifically to the QVF. In fact, we have to take into account heterogeneous phenomena, including metaplasmic anglicisms⁴ (i.e. *les bécosses* [<back house toilet], *bracker* [<to brake], *enfirouâper*⁵), although they are not particularly lower class, swearwords (called *sacres* in Quebec) (i.e. *tabarnome* [<tabernacle], *hostie*, *câlisse*

[<calice], *maudit*), phonographic phenomena (i.e. *chus* [<je suis], *farmer* [<fermer], *ousque* [<où est-ce que/où ce que], *entéka* [<en tout cas/dans tous les cas]), and possibly others. The created literary effect is a kind of *Gestalt*, which is not only based on phonetic, syntactic and/or lexical peculiarities but also on cognitive processes which favor or impose a non-standard language interpretation.

2.3. Categorization process effects of linguistic variation

Vernacular effects are discussed in studies of the image of language, which can be defined as “*le rapport du sujet à la langue, la sienne et celle de la communauté qui l’intègre comme sujet parlant-sujet social ou dans laquelle il desire être intégré, par laquelle il désire être identifié par et dans sa parole*”. [The connection between the speaker and the language which is used by himself and by the community he belongs to or wants to belong to with regard to his way of speaking.] (Houdebine 2002: 10). This connection “*est énonçable en termes d’images, participant des représentations sociales et subjectives*.” [can be expressed in terms of images, which contribute to social and subjective representations] (*ibid.*). Concerning Quebec French, many studies which refer to that epilinguistic awareness (on this point, see Laurendeau 2004, Beniamino and Gauvin 2006: 172-174). I highlight three main ideas: axiology about language, (con)fusion between everyday language and lower class language, and register discrepancy perception between spoken and written usages.

— Axiology about language

What is presented or seen as different from standard and normative written usage tends to be characterized as clumsy, incorrect or unsightly. This is even truer for the QVF, which is marginalized in three ways, since it is a spoken, regional and vernacular variety. Such an interweaving of different types of linguistic variation, diamesic, diatopic and diastratic (see Koch and Oesterreicher 2001, Gadet 2003), contrasting with the ideal and ideological image of the linguistic normality⁶, seems to trigger ambiguities that give more possibilities to those writers who want to give a realistic image of the real language.

— The colloquial-vernacular confusion

One of these ambiguities is the difficulty to draw a clear distinction between the colloquial language, which is a register associated with an informal situation of communication, and the vernacular language, which is defined with reference to the social and cultural (low) level of the speaker. In fact, most of the descriptions of the latter show that it is rather a “*notion fourre-tout*” [catch-all label] (see Bourdieu 1983: 99) under which people depreciate whatever they perceive as non-standard. Then, “*tout ce qui est familier est susceptible d’être taxé de*

populaire si le locuteur s'y prête." [Anything seen as colloquial can also be dubbed vernacular if the speaker fits the label]. (Gadet 1997: 27)

— Stylistic discrepancy

The linguistic reality represented by the writer is quite difficult to outline with precision, since it is seen as a complex of socially depreciated variations. In addition, the writer, who is not in general working at cloning that reality, but at simulating, makes choices that lead him to depart from some phenomena (i.e. diphthongs, affricates, etc.) and to combine spoken variation marking with the requirements of the written medium, which is the one he uses as a writer.

In the context of this choice, the writer's "*transcodage*" [transcoding] (Gauvin 1993: 334 and Gauvin 2000: 130) consists in taking into account the register discrepancy perception between spoken and written language usages. Thus, the upper more formal spoken level is partially "*une projection de l'écrit sur l'oral*" [a projection from written to spoken usages]. (Anis 1981: 20)

Le français écrit naturel correspond à la partie la plus neutre du registre soutenu de l'oral et à son registre normalisé. Le français écrit familier correspond au registre naturel de l'oral. Quant aux formes issues du dernier registre du français parlé, le registre familier, elles sont proscrites de l'écrit, sauf au titre des effets spéciaux du texte littéraire, où elles fonctionnent pratiquement comme un substitut du français populaire. (Ibid.)

[The natural written French corresponds to the more neutral zone of the spoken language formal register and to its normalized register. The casual written French corresponds to the natural register of spoken language. As to the forms of the lowest register of spoken French, i.e. the casual register, they are not allowed in written speech, except for special effects in literature, where, in practice, they replace the vernacular French.]

Elements that bring about QVF effects, whether by their nature or by their frequency, do not necessarily match the real linguistic usage. In order to reach the wished literary effect, the writer has to resort to linguistic features that are in fact only considered as colloquial or common in spoken usage. (For this idea, see also Thomas 1979, Zay 1990, Blanche-Benveniste 1991, Petitjean and Privat 2007).

3. Linguistic marking of textual structure

I focus here on the categorization process of Michel Tremblay's characters' linguistic profiles, in terms of their degree of QVF 'flavor', and the stylistic function of the differences revealed by statistical tests. Initially, the analysis aimed at showing the evolution of the linguistic variation distribution between characters in each of the five plays taken separately. This evolution is not exposed here (for details, see Dargnat 2006, section 7.2).

3.1. A statistical and corpus-based analysis of characters' linguistic profiles

- *Digitalization, XML tagging and exploitation with the Weblex software*

The excerpts from *Sankoff-Cedergren* and *Montreal 84* corpora and the five plays have been digitalized and encoded with XML tags, following the TEI principles⁷, in order to be integrated in the data base of the online software *Weblex* (Heiden 2009). In the database, the former corpus has been labeled 'frcapop' and the latter 'tremblay'. One can query⁸ each corpus independently or one can compare the results of the same request for the two corpora, previewing the results in a single shell. So, it was very useful to compare the two corpora (real vs. fictional spoken speech), and to point out and count, for example, anglicisms, swearwords, etc.

Here, I concentrate on the distribution of the spoken speech marks in the five plays. The chosen tags allows one to query linguistic forms at different levels of the texts. For instance, one can search a form or a linguistic properties in the whole corpus (through the five plays), in one play, for one character, etc. It also allows to put apart the text of the stage directions and the speech of the characters. Even if the software has many functionalities, for my analysis, I essentially used the function vocabulary, to list up each different linguistic form, and the concordance function to know the frequency, the coordinates (in which plays, at which page, by which character-speaker, etc.) and if necessary the context of one linguistic form in particular. The statistical tests were carried out separately, with the *R* software on the bases of the results obtained by *Weblex* analysis⁹.

- *Linguistic variables for the +/- QVF linguistic profiles*

Given the phenomena presented in the last section, one can select (some) linguistic features that contribute to the literary QVF effect (for a synthesis, see Dargnat 2006: section 1.4 and Part 2, 2008b). Twelve variables have been studied, according to their linguistic nature, their observability in the five texts and the possibility to count them automatically.

— Phono-graphical interface: I systematically picked in the text occurrences of (i) *pis*, (ii) *ben*, (iii) *toé* and *moé*, (iv) graphical marking of the opening from [ɛ] to [a]/[ɑ] before [R] (e.g. *farmer*, *narveuse*), and (v) words or phrases with an apostrophe before a consonant (e.g. *p'tit*, *à voulait*).

— On the micro and macro-syntactical level, the extraction has concerned: (vi) prepositions *à* and *dans* when they combine with a bare noun, i.e. without determiner (e.g. *à matin*, *dans cuisine*), (vii) the discourse particle *ça fait que / fait que*, (viii) the interrogative/exclamative particle *-tu* (e.g. *ça se peut-tu?*) and finally (ix) negations without *ne* (e.g. *je veux pus rien savoir*, *y vient pas*).

— At the lexical level, I counted (x) anglicisms, which have various degrees of integration into French (e.g. *des pinottes* [peanuts], *avoir du fun* [to have fun], *un braidage* [a braid], *une toune* [a tune], *toffer* [to tough]), (xi) quebecisms (e.g. *garrocher* [to throw], *un siau* [a bucket], *magané* [battered]) and (xii) ‘sacres’ (swearwords (ab)using the liturgical lexicon, often with modified orthographies: *câlisse* [from *calice*, chalice], *hostie/ostie* [from *hostie*, host], *Mosusse* [from Moïse, *Moses*], etc.).

These twelve variables were considered literary QVF marks. Taking into account their absence or presence and their frequency in each character’s discourse for each play, it was possible to group the characters into coherent clusters, according to their relative degree of QVF way of speaking. The analysis was carried out in two steps: first, in the corpus, I counted up the occurrences for each combination of variable/character/play; second, I did some statistical tests to determine whether observed whether observed numerical differences were significant or not.

- *Statistical testing of the +/- QVF profile of the characters*

The main hypothesis under test is the following: Is the proportion of QVF versus non-QVF marks between characters significant in each play? For instance, in *IO*, does Lorraine use significantly more (or less) QVF marks than the other characters (Fernande, Lucille and Yvette)?

Since the goal was to compare characters pair wise and to assess a significance to this comparison, the best candidates were inferential tests for comparing proportions. The Welch and Fisher tests were selected in view of their robustness (Welch¹⁰) and exactness (Fisher). They were expected to give nearly identical results, in almost¹¹ all cases. The scores for the twelve variables were summed because some of them were null or under five (see Rietveld & van Hout 2005: 125, Manning & Schütze 2002: 50-54, Oakes 1998: 10-16). For instance, for two characters, A and B, the tests were applied to small matrices of the form: [total number of expressions for A, number of QVF expressions for A, total number of expressions for B, number of QVF expressions for B]. The net result was a $n \times n$ matrix, n being the number of characters in a given play, where each cell (i,j) contained a 1 whenever the difference was significant. For each play, two main scalar positions (+QVF vs. -QVF) appeared, plus a less salient intermediate position. For space reasons, I won’t show the complete procedure, but only summarize important points and give the results of the two statistical tests (which mutually agree) for two representative plays, *IO* and *EF*, which are sufficient to illustrate the method (see also Dargnat 2008a).

ANALYSIS OF L'IMROMPTU D'OUTREMONT --- threshold 5%

Welch and Fisher tests results

	[,1]	[,2]	[,3]	[,4]	[,5]
[1,]		Fernande	Lorraine	Lucille	Yvette
[2,]	Fernande		1	1	1
[3,]	Lorraine	1		1	1
[4,]	Lucille	1	1		
[5,]	Yvette	1	1		

Frequencies for each character in *IO* (grand total for the twelve variables / speech size for each character).

Fernande: 0.01090093 (speech size = 6238 words)

Lorraine: 0.04473928 (speech size = 3241 words)

Lucille: 0.02382926 (speech size = 4826 words)

Yvette: 0.01764095 (speech size = 2891 words)

In *IO*, one can distinguish three character groups: Fernande, who corresponds to the -QVF profile, Lorraine who occupies the symmetric +QVF position, and, in the middle, Yvette and Lucille, who are associated with an intermediate linguistic profile.

ANALYSIS OF ENCORE UNE FOIS SI VOUS PERMETTEZ --- threshold 5%

Welch and Fisher tests results

	[,1]	[,2]	[,3]	[,4]	[,5]
[1,]		Nana	Le Narrateur	N1	N2
[2,]	Nana		1	1	
[3,]	Le Narrateur	1		1	1
[4,]	N1	1	1		1
[5,]	N2		1	1	

Frequencies for each character in *EF* (grand total for the twelve variables / speech size for each character).

Nana: 0.1026456 (speech size = 11642 words)

Le Narrateur: 0.08095029 (speech size = 4546 words)

N1: 0.0009191176 (speech size = 1088 words)

N2: 0.1061307 (speech size = 3458 words)

The structure of *EF* is more complex. In fact, there are only two explicit characters: Le Narrateur and Nana. N1 and N2 in the table refer to two sub-characters for Le Narrateur, depending on his addressee(s) in the text (the spectators/readers for N1 and Nana for N2). Although we have only two characters in the text, statistically, there are three different linguistic profiles: first, Nana and N2, who correspond to the +QVF profile, second, N1, who corresponds to the -QVF, and third, Le Narrateur as a whole with a hybrid (intermediate) profile.

The results confirm the first reading intuitions but they also have a heuristic import, because they reveal more fine-grained differences, which can be exploited from a stylistic perspective. Indeed, the statistical analysis step is not itself a stylistic analysis, but only a preliminary study. How do these differences help building a literary interpretation? I will answer essentially from the textual structure point of view, by resorting to ‘actantial semiotics’ (sémiotique actantielle) (Greimas 1972 and Groupe d’Entrevernes 1979) and enunciative/narrative stratification, which concerns the way in which an agent takes the floor or shapes the narration, in a specific situation of communication (see endnote #2).

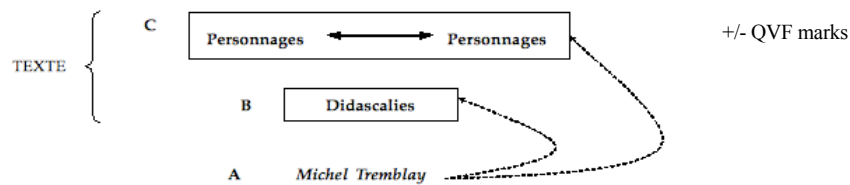
3.2. Textual stratification

Before comparing the results mentioned above and textual organization, it is useful to prepare the ground for defining textuality as stratified discourse, at the enunciative, narrative and fictional levels. This definition is well known and well studied, in particular, but not only, for drama texts. For example, one can find in literary theory works the idea of the “*double énonciation théâtrale*” [the duality of drama enunciation] (Ubersfeld 1996), which includes a “*discours rapporteur*” [reporting discourse] and a “*discours rapporté*” [reported discourse]. Another close idea is the “*double dialogie*” [double dialogal structure] (Petitjean 1999), with a distinction between an internal and an external level of linguistic exchange. In the latter case, the interaction between actors is also taken into account. Other critics use still different terms, like “*feuilleté énonciatif*” [layered enunciation] (Molinié 1998, Stolz 1999), “*diffraction des émetteurs et des récepteurs*” [producer and receptor diffraction] (Biet and Triau 2006), or “*piles narratives*” [narrative stacks] (Ryan 2004). These conceptions of textuality often lead to a simplified schematization, which offers the advantage of making the narrative and enunciative level hierarchy more visible, but does not take into account or represent the cognitive aspects of the interpretation process from the reception point of view (reading or attending a play). In this paper, I limit myself to dividing the text into several levels, which correspond to different enunciative and narrative mechanisms, not unlike what is proposed by Georges Molinié, Claire Stolz or Marie-Laure Ryan. The goal is to locate the level(s) where the +/-QVF linguistic marking is operative. The schematization of the five plays, following the stratification model above, leads one to keep two types of textual distribution of QVF marks: three level structures and four level structures.

—The three-level structures (A, B and C)

They concern three plays of the reference corpus: *BS*, *BL* and *IO*. The schema is classic: the writer (level A) is seen as the origin of the text, which is composed of stage directions (level B) and interactions between characters (level C). The

only difference between the plays is at the level of the interaction between characters. In *BS*, dialogues are very realistic and characters are on a par; in contrast, in *BL*, Serge is a pivotal character in different conversations, since he participates in five parallel dialogues, with different interlocutors, in different places and at different moments during the day. In fact, the explicit textual structure, divided into subparts labeled *duo*, *trio*, *quatuor*, *quintet*, etc., as well as the stage directions make the reading quite easy, even if some lines coming from different discourse universes are sometimes intertwined.



Légende
 A : l'écrivain
 ↔ relation locuteur/allocataire
 - - - - - est perçu comme l'origine de

Textual stratification of *BS* and *IO*

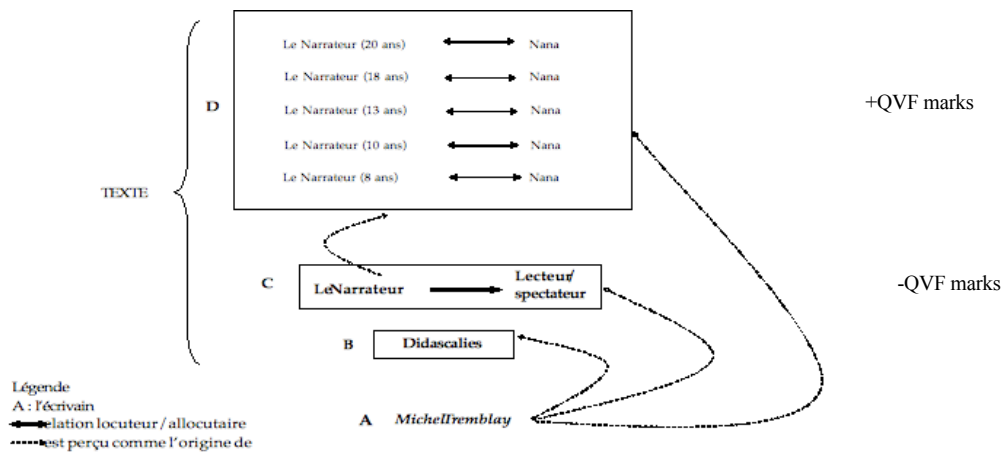
Translation of the legend

Personnages → Characters
Didascalies → Stage directions
L'écrivain → Writer
Relation locuteur/allocataire → Speaker/addressee relationship
Est perçu comme l'origine de → Can be viewed as the source of

—The four-level structure (A, B, C and D)

It concerns *LVM* and *EF*. In both cases, there is an additional enunciative level, which is sustained by one character, Claude for *LVM* and Le Narrateur for *EF*. Readers perceive a kind of embedding inside the represented play. In *LVM*, the situation is explicit: there is a level (C) where Claude, Madeleine 1, Alex 1 and Mariette 1 engage in dialogue and another level (D), that of the play written by the character Claude, who is a writer. The embedded play is about the familial reality of Claude: that is why the reader meets again Madeleine 2, Alex 2 and Mariette 2. This imperfect transfer leads to theatre within the theatre and, in the terms of André Gide, to a partial “*mise en abyme*”, with relatively clear limits (characters 1 and two are played by different actors). In *EF*, the limits are much more fuzzy, the perception of the additional level (D) is only inferred from the different linguistic profiles. The problematic pivotal character, called Le Narrateur (this label being itself problematic), is played by a single actor. At the

beginning, he appears as a kind of reciter, who announces what will happen on stage: the representation of memories concerning himself at different ages (from childhood to twenty) and his mother, Nana, the second explicit character. These slices of life, focused on the maternal figure, follow one another like little scenes presented and sometimes commented by the Narrateur. The difficulty is neither the retrospective aspect, nor the reciter function, but the multiple play of a single textual entity, Le Narrateur. His ontological status is in fact more complex. He is furthermore supposed to represent the writer Michel Tremblay on stage, and he is acted out by André Brassard, the real director of the play.



Textual stratification of EF

Translation of the legend

Lecteur/spectateur → Reader/spectator

Didascalies → Stage directions

L'écrivain → Writer

relation locuteur/allocutaire → Speaker/addressee relationship

est perçu comme l'origine de → Can be viewed as the source of

3.3 Stylistic values of linguistic marking

I examined whether the observed QVF marking in the five texts plays a particular role in to textual organization, as it was described above. Clearly, QVF marks are present only in the discourse of the characters. There are no traces of vernacular spoken language in stage directions. This division process is quite standard. A more interesting point is the possibility of a correspondence

between linguistic differences and characters' different actantial functions. The underlying issue at this stage is to determine whether the groupings resulting from the two statistical tests, in terms of linguistic profiles, are in correlation with differences and discrepancies, in the narrative structures of the plays¹². On the whole, three cases can be distinguished. First, those where linguistic profile differences between characters refer to social differences, a correspondence which a simple reading is enough to reveal. Second, those that are not immediately apparent, but for which statistical tests invite us to seek an explanation. Third, the cases for which profile differences refer rather to distinct levels in the textual structure.

— The vernacular/upper class distribution

BS and *IO* are typical cases from this point of view. The two observed sides are associated with identifiable social profiles and linguistic imaginaries: the +QVF characters are seen as vernacular speaking and lower class (the Lauzon in-group in *BS*, and Lorraine in *IO*), whereas the –QVF characters are either seen as snobbish or really upper class (Lisette de Courval and –to a lesser extent– Gabrielle Jodoin in *BS*, Fernande in *IO*). Here, the spoken variety written marks are used for linguistic and social realism, their standard function in literature.

LISETTE DE COURVAL – C'est vous, madame Ouimet, qui disiez tout à l'heure qu'on n'est pas venues ici pour se quereller?

ROSE OUIMET – Vous, là, mêlez-vous de ce qui vous regarde! D'abord, j'ai pas dit quereller, j'ai dit chicaner! [...]

GERMAINE LAUZON – [...] Commence pas la chicane à soir!

ROSE OUIMET – Vous voyez, on dit chicane, dans la famille! (*BS*: 18)

LISETTE DE COURVAL – On se croirait dans une basse-cour! [...] Puis l'Europe! Le monde sont bien élevés par là! Sont bien plus polis qu'ici! On en rencontre pas des Germaine Lauzon, par là! Y'a juste du grand monde! A Paris, tout le monde perle bien, c'est du vrai français partout... C'est pas comme icitte! (*BS*: 37)

LORRAINE – Parlez-moi-z-en pas... (*Elle dépose la boîte par terre, puis à Fernande*.) Mon Dieu, t'étais là, toi! Faut-tu que je change d'accent! (*IO*: 57)

LORRAINE – Chus tannée de la [about Fernande] voir frémir pis trembler chaque fois que j'dis quequ'chose qui est pas vérifiable dans le dictionnaire! [...] Quand j'vois les sourcils y froncer, pis la bouche y durcir, pis le nez y pincer, pis le menton y trembler, pis la sueur y perler au front, j'ai envie de me sacrer à ses pieds en y demandant pardon de l'avoir offensée, elle la vierge de la langue française! [...] C'est pas des farces, des fois, quand j'sors d'ici, j'fais attention comment j'parle! Pis les enfants me disent: "Tiens, la fille d'Outremont qui remonte à surface!" [...] Pis tu parles tellement bien, pis tu prononces tellement bien toutes les syllabes que quand tu vas en France y doivent te prendre pour une Polonaise qui fait sa maîtrise en langues latines à l'université de Varsovie!

FERNANDE, *petit sourire* – C'est mieux que de passer pour Belge! [...] Moi, je considère qu'on n'est pas obligé de parler joual pour se faire comprendre, mais pour certaines personnes complexées, j'suppose que c'est mieux que rien!

LORRAINE – J'aime mieux être bruyante et en santé que discrète et constipée! [...]

FERNANDE, *à Lorraine* – Continue à parler de constipation, Lorraine, c'est tout à fait à ta hauteur... Moi je vais viser plus haut.

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LORRAINE – Si viser plus haut pour toi signifie continuer à parler une langue écrite en te censurant au fur et à mesure, tu peux continuer à viser plus haut... de toute manière tu vas finir par manquer d'air! L'air est rare sur les hauts sommets, ma sœur!

FERNANDE – Peut-être, mais on est moins de monde! (*IO*: 67-70)

FERNANDE – Le cri a remplacé la délicatesse dans ce pays! Vous n'êtes pas fatiguées d'entendre crier au théâtre, au cinéma, à la télévision? [...] N'est-il plus possible aujourd'hui, ici, maintenant, de dire les choses sans les hurler? [...] Rien n'est assez vil [...] pour attirer le spectateur dans une salle [...] (*IO*: 97)

— Differences revealed by statistical tests

Reading *BL* and *LVM* does not suggest the existence of a linguistic gap between characters. One could have believed that characters presented or presenting themselves as socially valued are opposed to socially depreciated ones, as in *BS* and *IO*. For example, one could have expected the figures of the writer (Serge in *BL* and Claude in *LVM*) to have a very clear –QVF linguistic profile compared to other characters. In fact, the segmentation does not work that way. A plausible hypothesis is that, for both plays, the division is social but in another sense: characters are grouped according to sex and generation. In *BL*, the two centers are Gabriel (+QVF) and her sister Albertine (-QVF). Both are social stereotypes from the first part of the 20th century Quebec: on the one hand, a worn-down barfly, and on the other hand, a kind of housewife and foster mother figure.

[Serge just came back from Greece. Albertine and Gabriel are asking him about his stay there. Gabriel is talking about his drinking partners.]

GABRIEL – J'leu's'ai payé une traite, pis j'leu's'ai toute conté c'que tu me disais dans tes lettres. Ah, c'tait pas la première fois, mais j'te dis que quand j'leu' paye la traite de même, y m'écotent! Y savent que c't'important, c'que j'dis! Même si c'est pas la première fois... Pis si y'en a qui veulent pas m'écouter, des fois, Bonnier leu' dit de s'farmer la yeule, pis y va éteindre la télévision. J'me sus levé deboutte, pis j'leu's'ai toute conté tes lettres de la Grèce! (*BL*: 26)

ALBERTINE – Ma tante [=herself], à l'arait ben aimé ça, faire des voyages. [...] T'as pas eu trop mal au cœur, sus l'avion, au moins? [...] Ça doit être long, sept heures de voyage, hein? (*BL*: 25-26)

In *LVM*, tests allow for grouping together Claude and the two Madeleine under the -QVF profile, and the two Alex and the two Mariette under the +QVF profile. In *LVM*, linguistic profile differences do not correspond to the enunciative embedding structure, as will be the case in *EF*. In *LVM*, the differences are mainly functional:

a. Within the same generation: Madeleine (1 and 2), housewife vs. Alex (1 and 2), her husband, an insurance seller, voluble, womaniser, with a taste for nightclubs; Claude, linotypist and writer vs. Mariette, his sister, gogo-dancer in nightclubs.

MARIELETTE I – [to Claude] [...] Dans une maison comme ici, c' [= the silence] est la chose la plus

importante, tu vois. C'est à cause de lui que les murs tiennent encore debout. Quand ton père est disparu depuis des jours pis que ta sœur est partie travailler, ça m'arrive de m'ennuyer, c'est sûr. J'me promène dans'maison, j'sais pas quoi faire de mon corps... La télévision est plate, la lecture m'a jamais vraiment beaucoup intéressée... J'ai passé l'âge où il fallait que je sorte tous les jours, même si c'était juste pour aller chercher une pinte de lait dont on n'avait même pas besoin... (LVM: 41)

ALEX I – [to Claude and Madeleine I] Jésus-Christ, que c'est ça, ces farces d'enterrement-là! Aïe, allez-vous changer d'air tu-suite, hein? J'ai pas faite tout ce chemin-là pour trouver des visages de carême! Le menton vous frotte s'u'l'tapis! J'vous l'ai toujours dit, quand j'rentre icitte, y faut que le party pogne! Ça sera toujours le temps de régler vos problèmes quand j'y serai pus! Irais-tu me chercher une p'tite bière, Madeleine? J'ai le gorgoton comme tu papier sablé... D'la frette, c'te fois, celle que j'avais dans mon bain était juste tiède pis ça me donne mal au cœur... (LVM: 54)

MARIETTE I – Tu t'es certainement pas sacré devant la télévision, l'autre soir, pour regarder ta sœur go-go girl faire ses débuts!

CLAUDE – Non, c'est vrai, mais ça veut pas dire que j'ai honte... Ça veut juste dire que ce genre d'émission-là m'intéresse pas... Pis j'la regarderai certainement pas juste parce que ma sœur fait une folle d'elle enfermée dans une cage à danser comme un singe dans une mini-jupe! [...]

MARIETTE I – Chus habituée depuis toujours à tes petits airs supérieurs... (LVM: 78-79)

b. Between generations: Alex (1 and 2), an extroverted seller, always well-clad vs. Claude, a writer and former beatnik, sensitive and withdrawn when in a familial context; Madeleine (1 and 2), a housewife who has preferred to keep silence about her husband's double life, vs. Mariette (1 and 2), a liberated and independent young woman.

ALEX I – Tu te promènes toujours avec ta petite serviette d'intellectuel pour aller travailler? Que c'est que tu mets, dedans? Ton lunch? (*Claude baisse les yeux.*) Ton lunch pis tes manuscrits... Quand est-ce qu'on va avoir droit à ça, la grande révélation? Hein? Dans la semaine des trois jeudis? En tout cas, si c'est de la poésie, garde-la pour toi... J'en ai assez d'entendre les maudits gratteux de guitare dans tou'es hôtels d'la province oùsque j'passe... Que c'est qu'y vous prend toutes de vous mettre à gratter de la guitare de même, donc, tout d'un coup? Une vraie maladie contagieuse! J'ai justement été en voir un, samedi soir, à Saint-Jérôme. Jésus-Christ... Même Félix Leclerc est moins plate que ça, j'pense...

CLAUDE – Fais-toi-s'en pas pour moi... C'que j'écris a rien à voir avec le grattage de guitare...

ALEX I – Ben tant mieux... ça me rassure... un peu! (*Il rit.*) J'pense que j'te connais assez, Claude, pour savoir d'avance que c'que t'écris m'excitera pas ben ben le poil des jambes... (LVM: 21-22)

[Mariette I's speech can be compared to the first quotation of Madeleine I above in a) (LVM: 41)]

ALEX I – Pis toé, comment ça va, ma belle pitoune?

MARIETTE I – A one! Fatiguée comme le yable parce que j'ai trop travaillé depuis quelqu'temps, mais une bonne fatigue, là, t'sais, qui frise la satisfaction...

ALEX I – Toujours la patte en l'air?

MARIETTE I – C'est tout c'que j'sais faire! Ça pis des choses qu'on dit pas à son père... [...]

ALEX I – Tu peux gagner ta vie juste à la télévision!

MARIETTE I – Ben non, mais j'peux slaquer, un peu, à cause de la télévision... C'est pas facile, t'sais, monter dans'cage tou'es maudits soirs pis se faire aller pendant des heures... C'est pas une sortie que je fais de temps en temps pour me détendre... J'fais ça pour gagner ma vie! Pis rarement à'même place! (LVM: 72-73 and 74-75)

— Ontological difference

This case concerns only the latest play of the corpus, *EF*. The +/-QVF polarity is not limited to supporting the distinction between stage directions and characters' discourses levels. In order to do statistical tests, I split the character Le Narrateur into two sub-characters, labeled N1 and N2. This distinction is not explicit in the text, unlike in *LVM*, where all characters but Claude were visually differentiated (by numbers in the text, by different actors on stage). In *EF*, my N1 is the part of Le Narrateur who speaks directly to the reader/spectator, and my N2 is the other part of Le Narrateur, who dialogues with the other character, Nana, his mother. In the former configuration, N1 uses normative and formal language, interspersed with literary turns and references. In his dialogue with his mother, N2, exactly like Nana does, uses a language with almost all the QVF marks that were described above.

LE NARRATEUR [reciter=N1] – Ce soir, personne ne viendra crier: “Pour qui sont ces serpents qui sifflent sur vos têtes?” ni murmurer: “Va, Je ne te hais point” en se tordant les mains. Aucun fantôme ne viendra hanter la tour de garde d’un château du royaume du Danemark où, semble-t-il, il y a quelque chose de pourri. Vous ne verrez pas trois femmes encore jeunes s’emmurer à jamais dans une datcha en chuchotant le nom de Moscou la bien-aimée, l’espoir perdu. Aucune sœur n’attendra le retour de son frère pour venger la mort de leur père, aucun fils n’aura à venger l’insulte faite à son père, aucune mère ne tuera ses trois enfants pour se venger de leur père. Et aucun mari ne verra sa poupée de femme le quitter parce qu’elle le méprise. Personne ne se transformera en rhinocéros. Des bonnes ne planifieront pas l’assassinat de leur maîtresse après avoir dénoncé et fait incarcérer son amant. Aucun homme ne pleurera de rage au fond de son jardin en hurlant: “Ma cassette! Ma cassette!” Personne ne sortira d’une poubelle pour venir raconter une histoire absurde. [...] Ce que vous verrez, ce sera une femme toute simple, une simple femme qui viendra vous parler... j’allais dire de sa vie, mais celle des autres sera tout aussi importante: son mari, ses fils, la parenté, le voisinage. Vous la reconnaîtrez peut-être. Vous l’avez souvent croisée au théâtre, dans le public et sur la scène, vous l’avez fréquentée dans la vie, elle vient de vous. Elle est née à une époque précise de notre pays, elle évolue dans une ville qui nous ressemble, c’est vrai, mais, j’en suis convaincu, elle est multiple. Et universelle. [...] (*Il regarde en direction de la coulisse.*) Je l’entends justement qui vient. Elle va nous parler d’abondance parce que la parole, pour elle, a toujours été une arme efficace. (*Il sourit.*) Comme on dit dans les classiques: “La voici qui s’avance!”

Entre Nana. Elle est visiblement furieuse.

NANA - Envoie dans ta chambre! Pis tu-suite! Penses-tu que ça a du bon sens! À ton âge! À dix ans, on est supposé savoir ce qu’on fait! Non, c’est pas vrai, qu’est-ce que je dis là, à dix ans, on n’est pas supposé savoir ce qu’on fait. On a l’âge de raison, mais on n’a pas d’expérience. À dix ans, on est niaiseux, on est un enfant niaiseux pis on se conduit en enfant niaiseux! Mais y me semble que ça, t’aurais dû savoir que ça se faisait pas!

LE NARRATEUR [child=N2] - J’ai pas fait exiprès.

NANA - Comment ça, t’as pas fait exiprès! T’as pitché un morceau de glace en dessous d’une voiture en marche, viens pas me dire que t’as pas fait exiprès! Y est pas parti tu-seul c’tte motton de glace là!

LE NARRATEUR [child=N2] - Tout le monde le faisait! [...] C’est vrai que moi pis ma gang, on pitchait des morceaux de glace, bon... Mais on les pitchait pas en dessous des voitures qui passaient. On les pitchait en avant, avant que les voitures arrivent, pour voir comment les chauffeurs réagiraient, si y brakeraient complètement ou si y feraient juste ralentir... C’tait juste un jeu, moman... c’tait pas grave... La plupart du temps, les chauffeurs s’en rendaient même pas compte parce que les morceaux de glace étaient trop petits... A un moment donné, c’tait mon tour, j’ai pris un morceau un peu plus gros pour que le chauffeur de la voiture qui s’en venait le voye ben... pis Jean-Paul Jodoin m’a retenu

le bras. J'me sus débattu, j'ai fini par me libérer, le morceau de glace est parti trop tard, y'a passé en dessous des roues d'en arrière de la voiture... pis le gars a pensé qu'y'avait écrasé un enfant. (*EF*: 9-15)

The profile distinction marks the double enunciative position and ontological status of the character called Le Narrateur. His regular back-and-forth movement between two situations of communication (with the audience vs. the other character) may correspond to what Gérard Genette calls a “*métalepse narrative*”, that is “*toute intrusion du narrateur ou du narrataire extradiégétiques dans l'univers diégétique (ou des personnages diégétiques dans un univers métadiégétique, etc.) ou inversement.*” (1972: 243-244) [Any intrusion of the narrator or the receptor, located outside the narration, in the fictional world (or any intrusion of a character in a world outside his own discourse universe) or vice-versa.] The consequence is a “*transgression délibérée du seuil d'enchâssement*” (ibid.) [conscious transgression of the level of embedding]. Under this label, one can find all the cases where the narrator suddenly appears in his own narration without abandoning his narrative identity, and, conversely, the cases where a character directly speaks to the reader/audience. M.-L. Ryan refers to B. McHale studies (1987) and shows that metalepsis has not only a narrative but also an ontological dimension, in the sense that “*cela met en scène une action dont les participants appartiennent à deux domaines distincts*” [it stages an action with agents that belong to two independent worlds] (Ryan 2004: 205). These worlds can be defined as time-space slices. They are supposed to be mutually exclusive in a realistic situation, but here, in the case of an ontological metalepsis, they coexist and interpenetrate.

In *EF*, there are at least two breaches of the fictional contract. First, the character Le Narrateur breaks what is called the “fourth wall” in directly speaking to the reader/spectator. A more realistic version could be the presence of the real reader/spectator textual counterpart, but this is not what Michel Tremblay chose. Second, Le Narrateur is ambiguous because he acts at two different enunciative levels. He acts simultaneously as a kind of director of his own memories with his mother, and as a younger self (from eight to twenty years old) inside these staged life episodes.

It looks as if Le Narrateur was teleported from a time-space interval to another without losing his identity or integrity (during the play, he is always seen as scenic transposition of Michel Tremblay). This is probably the reason why the reader perceives the flash-back structure. It works as a kind of hypotyposis, that is, a quite vivid description of Le Narrateur's memories. Referring to time travel is interesting, because the latter is conditioned by the fact that different time-space regions are mutually exclusive and also by the fact that the travelling

agents retain their psychological properties (here Le Narrateur N1 and his interlocutor, the reader/spectator).

In other words, the targeted time-space region, the entities (agents and objects) and the events in this “new” region contain traces of the original region they come from. Thus, Le Narrateur is able to announce and comment (for the reader/spectator) what happens when he dialogues with the other character, Nana, using the first person pronoun. He is at the same time Michel, Nana’s son, and the mature dramaturge, who presents his creation to the audience. Marks of orality work as spatiotemporal and fictional signs, coloring life episodes with memories and emotions between a mother and her son (in the manner of a colored filter on a movie camera).

The intrusions of Le Narrateur are in general easy to spot in the text: he speaks to the reader/spectator only when Nana is off-stage and he has different linguistic usages depending on situations, with the result that it is quite easy to know at which level he acts, and from which stance and to which addressee he speaks. Nevertheless, in some places in the text one can detect a hybrid ontological status. Characters straddle two discourse universes and their fictional identity becomes fuzzy. Here are two examples, among many others:

— In the part where Le Narrateur is supposedly thirteen, Nana is shown as refusing his son to blaspheme in her house. The former, hard-pressed, searching for circumlocutions, proposes *mautadit*, *sautadit* and in the end *soda* instead of *maudit*. But, a few lines later, while his mother is off-stage and one expects Le Narrateur (reciter) to come back, he hurls a vigorous “*Hé, calvaire!*”. This swearword does not belong to the formal register of this character when he is alone on stage, in front of the audience. So, his textual and fictional identity is blurred and ambiguous.

— At the end of the play, Nana becomes aware that she is on a theatre stage, with a theater decor designed for her final exit (the allegory of her death). Such a situation brings about a downward move in the textual enunciative hierarchy (from level D to level C). But, in the text, there is nothing that allows for locating her in the same time-space region as that of Le Narrateur-reciter and the spectator/reader. She never speaks directly to the reader/spectator and never changes her way of speaking.

4. Conclusion

What I proposed here is essentially a set of comments about a specific corpus of plays. However, the present study touches on the issues of literary categorization and textual representation of the linguistic variation and, in this respect, goes beyond the reference corpus. For instance, it pertains to the articulation between linguistic analysis and theory of literature, which is crucial for the translation of those texts that represent linguistic variation. Indeed, exploring the linguistic

forms and the organization of the literary discourse raises at the same time central issues in linguistic analysis (the problem of variation, the semantics of possible worlds) and in fiction theory (the reality effect (see Barthes 1982) and the status of fictional utterances and entities).

The statistical treatment allows one to extract intrinsic properties of the corpora and opens also a window on a more context sensitive stylistic analysis. At this point, two developments are on the way: conducting a more ambitious statistical analysis (organizing the linguistic variables through factorial analysis) and applying linguistic profiling to a much larger corpus (about eighty XML encoded French plays between the sixteenth and the nineteenth centuries).

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¹ The *Sankoff-Cedergren* corpus has been made by Gillian Sankoff and Henrietta Cedergren in 1971, the *Montreal 84* corpus has been made by Pierrette Thibault and Diane Vincent in 1984. They are available for consultation at the department of Anthropology of the University of Montreal.

² In French terminology, *énonciatif/ve* corresponds roughly to what is called viewpoint in the Anglo-Saxon tradition. The term covers in particular whatever is relevant to the entities that fix the referential and narrative coordinates, such as spatio-temporal location, epistemic and affective attitudes. Among many studies, see in particular Benveniste (1966), Booth (1983), Ducrot (1984), Genette (1983) and Rabatel (2009).

³ For lack of space, I do not go into detail on this point. However the problematic of *joual* is worth considering. It was a way to refer to the Quebec French vernacular from the end of the fifties to the seventies. It had (and still has) special political and aesthetical connotations. For further developments, see Dargnat 2006, vol. 1, section 1.3.2 and vol. 2 appendice 1B.

⁴ By metaplasmic anglicisms I mean all the linguistic borrowings that have been modified in their pronunciation and/or in their (ortho)graphy.

⁵ The word *enfirouâper* has different orthographies (*enfiferouâper*, *anfiferouâper*, *enfirwaper*, etc). Tremblay's orthography is the most frequent. Interpreting it as an anglicism is a current idea, which can be found in some dictionaries of Quebec French (e.g. Dulong 1989: 180 and Proteau 1991: 460-461). *enfirouâper* someone or *être enfirouâpé* by someone can, in particular, mean 'to make a fool of' or 'to be fooled', and is often presented as an anglicism, whose English source would be *to wrap in fur* or *in fur wrapped*. The proximity with the French expression *rouler quelqu'un dans la farine* or *se*

faire rouler dans la farine (lit. 'to wrap someone in flour' or 'to be wrapped in flour by someone'), which means 'to make a fool of' or 'to be fooled', contributes to the confusion. A recent study of Thibault (2008), based on many sources, show that the real etymon is dialectal French. His conclusions are very convincing. A similar problem of etymology can be raised about the word *baboune*, which is often seen as an anglicism (from *baboon*). The verb *babouner* or *faire la baboune* also exists in dialectal French. I thank Mr Thibault for his remarks. Nevertheless, I have decided to keep these two words under the anglicism label, because I was more concerned by the imaginary of linguistic variation, even if it is false, than by the real etymologic roots (when asked about these words, most people answer that they 'sound' English nowadays).

⁶ The idea of an ideological definition of the standard is presented for example in Milroy and Milroy 1985, Abécassis 2003 and Gadet 2003.

⁷ Text Encoding Initiative Consortium (P5): <http://www.tei-c.org/index.xml>

⁸ The software uses CQP syntax (Corpus Query Processor), developed at the University of Stuttgart in the IMS Corpus Workbench framework. For a detailed presentation, see Evert 2009.

⁹ *The R Project for Statistical Computing* (free software for statistics): <http://www.R-project.org>. It is planned to integrate the corpora into the open source *TXM* platform (<http://textometrie.ens-lyon.fr/>), that allows for CQP querying and statistical testing with *R*.

¹⁰ It turns out that the samples had unequal variances in a number of cases.

¹¹ In a few cases, the number of QVF marks was small, which can raise problems with the Welch test and is better handled by a Fisher *exact* test.

¹² The narrative structure was analysed not only in terms of hierarchical stacks but also of narrative path and actantial function distribution. For the present study, the theoretical background was essentially Greimas' (1972) semiotic approach and the text analysis method of Groupe d'Entrevignes (1979: 11-86), which is based on the former.