

Devenir Autre : Languages of Marco Micone's "culture immigrée"

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Dans le théâtre de Marco Micone, dramaturge italo-québécois, la langue cherche à rendre compte du statut de l'immigrant au sein de la société québécoise et à reconceptualiser les paradigmes nationaux qui l'excluent. Parce que ce dramaturge occupe une position externe à la culture québécoise « pure laine » tout en ayant une affinité avec un grand nombre de ses investissements littéraires et politiques, sa trilogie dramatique exprime une position linguistique autre, externe au binaire franco/anglo normalisé au Québec. Dans chacune des pièces de Micone, les ruptures causées par l'immigration et l'étrangeté linguistique sont thématiques en tant que silence et dépossession culturelle. Le dramaturge produit un vernaculaire français innovateur et hybride, infléchi par l'italien et l'anglais, un mode d'expression des plus adaptés à la culture immigrante polyglotte de Montréal. Cette langue de contact est à l'avant-garde de la présence du sujet italo-québécois sur la scène québécoise. De plus, elle agit sur la langue française pour y inscrire les différences linguistiques et culturelles qui se trouvent en ses marges.

"L'immigré est tiraillé entre l'impossibilité de rester tel qu'il était et la difficulté de devenir autre." (*Le Figuier enchanté* 87-88)

- 1 Marco Micone chooses his words carefully. In the above quotation, for instance, he employs the expression "être tiraillé entre" to describe the paradoxical position of the immigrant, torn between the impossibility of staying who s/he has been and the difficulty of becoming other. The verb "tirailleur" means "tirer peu à la fois et souvent, avec une arme à feu" ("Tirailleur," *Petit Larousse en couleurs*). Its associations with both force (the shooting of a gun) and dispersal (scattershot bullets) encapsulate the particular history of Montreal's Italian immigrant community — from which position Micone writes — and trace the general contours of the immigrant condition, which his 1980s dramatic trilogy and subsequent cultural interventions contest.
- 2 In Micone's dramatic work, close attention to words is also a strategy for surviving immigration's compelled scattering. It is a commonplace to say that words are powerful not merely for their instrumental value, but also for their representational value. Words reflect reality, allow for its description. Words also construct reality, enable its conception. In Quebec, this commonplace is a way of life; the lengthy and charged history of "the language question" is informed as much by different worldviews as different words, and demonstrates an acute awareness of the rhetorical and actual force of words. As historian Jocelyn Létourneau writes, "la langue [française] reste au Québec une question et un enjeu sensible parce que, au-delà de ses propriétés véhiculaires, elle permet aussi de dire, de rappeler et de se remémorer une identité particulière" (87-88). I argue here that by using words carefully and in unexpected ways, Micone writes a language that describes the immigrant's place between impossibility and difficulty. More importantly, his work reconceptualizes the national paradigms that force the immigrant into that paradoxical position.
- 3 Micone launched his literary career with a triptych of plays concerning the Italian immigrant condition in Quebec: *Gens du silence* (1982), *Addolorata* (1983; 1996), and *Déjà l'agonie* (1986). He has since published a poem ("speak what," 1989); a collection of autobiographical récits (*Le*

Figuier enchanté 1992); French translations of Pirandello's *Sei personaggi in cerca d'autore* (1992), Goldoni's *La Locandiera* (1993), *La Serva amorosa* (1997), *Le donne di buon umore* (2000), and *La vedova scaltra* (2002), Shakespeare's *The Taming of the Shrew* (1995), and Gozzi's *Angellino beverde* (1998);¹ and a series of critical essays on the place of immigrants in the Quebec collectivity. He is also a leading public intellectual, a spokesperson on immigrant issues in Quebec, and a professor of Italian at Vanier College in Montreal.

- 4 *Gens du silence*, *Addolorata*, and *Déjà l'agonie* — on which this article focuses — attempt to give voice to an incipient neo-Quebécois (new-Quebécois) and allophone-Quebécois (other-speaking Québécois) identity by creating a new, hybrid language. At the same time, in their cultural and literary references and borrowings, the plays are positioned as neither completely new nor radically other to the post-Quiet Revolution, Québécois dramatic tradition and its linguistic heritage. Referencing the major themes, formal attributes, and political goals of the cultural nationalist *nouveau théâtre québécois* of the 1960s and 1970s, the trilogy both inserts itself into that movement and resignifies it for an allied yet distinct constituency. In so doing, Micone creates an imaginary linguistic space alongside the franco / anglo binary within which immigrants who speak neither French nor English might achieve a fuller range of expression and articulate themselves as Québécois.

Tirailleur

- 5 Micone's personal trajectory of forced dispersal stands in for that of many Italian immigrants to mid-century Montreal. In 1958, at thirteen years old, Micone and his mother immigrated to Montreal from the Molise region of southern Italy to join his father, who had left Italy seven years earlier. Compelled by poverty and unemployment to leave an Italy recovering from its recent fascist past, Micone's father joined the growing Italian diaspora that scattered millions of largely rural people from the country's south and central regions across the urban industrial centres of Europe and the Americas.² In "Quelques notes sur l'immigration (inédit)," Micone concretizes the connection "tirailleur" supposes between shooting and being torn: "Émigrer n'est pas un acte posé en toute liberté. Quand ce ne sont pas les fusils qui chassent les ouvriers mécontents c'est la misère" (6).
- 6 The first tear is ontological;"torn between the impossibility of remaining as they were and the difficulty of becoming other," immigrant identity oscillates between being Italian and being Québécois (Micone, *Le Figuier* 87-88). It is in this foundational rupture and subsequent suspension that the particularities of Italian migration connect with the generalized experiences of other immigrant communities. The immigrant's liminal position is reflected in the terms often used to describe her/him: "neo-Québécois" and "allophone." "Neo-Québécois" are neither fully Québécois (hence the qualifier "neo") nor fully not-Québécois (their new-ness is hyphenated with "Québec"). The prefix "neo" indicates the immigrant's recent arrival in Quebec. However, recency is rather expansive in this terminology as "neo-Québécois" is often used for adults, like Micone, who arrived as children and for second- and third-generation immigrants. Louise Vigeant in "Les dessous des préfixes . . .," asks, "Au fait, à partir de quelle génération les immigrants cessent-ils d'être 'néo-québécois'?" (39). Moreover, as many scholars and demographers attest, "neo-Québécois" are not new to Quebec. Approximately 350 non-French immigrants accompanied the approximately 9,000 French who settled the St. Lawrence River Valley before 1760 (Charbonneau and Robert, qtd.in Micone,"De l'assimilation"56). Patterns of immigration have shifted over the two intervening centuries, from predominantly French migrants through the early twentieth century, to allophone Italian and southern European migrants from the 1950s through the 1970s, to largely francophone Middle-Eastern, southeast Asian, and Caribbean migrants in the 1980s and 1990s (Lacroix,"Réalités").³

- 7 In the Quebec in which Micone landed, immigration's ontological tear was compounded by a sociological tear; immigrants were suspended not only between Italian (or Greek, or Portuguese, etc.) and Quebecois identities, but also between two distinct formations of being Quebecois drawn along ethnolinguistic lines: French and English. Each language "révèle l'appartenance à une culture, à une société, détermine une place dans la hiérarchie économique et sociale" (Lacroix, "Représentation" 202). The primary belonging revealed by language was religious. For most, French indicated Catholic affiliation and English indicated Protestant affiliation, a division reflected in Quebec's bifurcated public school system, for instance, with its discrete Catholic and Protestant school boards from 1875 until 1998.⁴ As a result, the project of becoming Quebecois involved an initial set of decisions around language acquisition that determined which version of Quebecois one would become. The "allophone" category into which Micone and his generation of "other-speaking" immigrants largely fell is an omnibus category encased within the franco-anglo (and a presumed Catholic-Protestant) binary that provides the key terms of reference for Quebecois identity. The "allophone" designation, first used in the 1972 Gendron Report on the language question, situates immigrants whose native language is neither French nor English as simply "other": "Le terme 'allophone' procure aux immigrants et à leurs descendants [. . .] une qualification caractéristique dénuée de tout contenu et référence autre que l'opposition entre anglais et français" (Molinaro 116).⁵

Trilogia

- 8 Micone's dramatic trilogy argues that the primary and most devastating effect of immigration's suspensions between national cultures is silence. With the public reading and publication of *Gens du silence* in 1982, Micone became the first Quebecois playwright to dramatize the immigrant condition in Montreal.⁶ Acclaimed Le Théâtre de la Manufacture productions of *Addolorata* and *Déjà l'agonie* established Micone's trilogy as an important phase in Quebecois dramaturgy. The latter play was short-listed for the Governor General's Award and won the Journal de Montréal's Grand Prix. These domestic dramas centre on multigenerational families comprised of first-, second-, and third-generation immigrants. The writing style of *Gens du silence* and of the first version of *Addolorata* is broadly realistic and punctured by Brechtian distancing effects, including narrator figures, direct audience address, and an emphasis on presenting issues. Indeed, they are fundamentally dramas of interpretation in which the dramatic tension arises from the clash of worldviews and the words that convey them. As one of Micone's most perceptive and earliest critics, Sherry Simon, writes, "[T]he talking matches in Micone's plays are jousts, conflicting versions of reality which confront one another in mutual incomprehension" ("Speaking" 61). Through a series of debates between the central characters, Micone's domestic dramas introduce the reader to the general features of the immigrant condition as they manifest themselves in the particular context of the plays' Italian families. For instance, *Gens du silence* opens with a chorus connecting the particular story of Antonio's emigration from Italy to the larger story of mid-century Italian emigration.
- 9 Although the doubly-marginalized status of female immigrants is emphasized in each play, *Addolorata* takes it up as a central concern and driving force of the dramatic action. *Addolorata* and her husband, Giovanni/Johnny, are presented in two different time periods: the first just before their wedding; the second, ten years later, just as she leaves him. In several scenes, *Addolorata* (29 years old) and Lolita (*Addolorata* at 19) share the stage, sketching a continuous history of unhappiness and oppression at the hands of first her father and then her husband.⁷ In the end, *Addolorata* leaves her marriage to pursue an independent life as Giovanni cries plaintively, "J'peux pas rester tout seul. Che faccia solo? Tu peux pas partir. Tu peux pas. *Non posso vivere solo*" (*Addolorata* 101).

- 10 While structurally similar to *Addolorata*, *Déjà l'agonie* is the least didactic and most personal in style of the three plays. It too employs the story of a married (and then divorced) couple to stand in for the difficulties of intercultural understanding and affiliation and transpires in two time periods. The Montreal 1972 narrative tells the story of Luigi, a second-generation Italian immigrant, his Quebecois wife, Danielle, and their shared political activism and divided cultural understandings. In the Italy 1987 narrative, Luigi visits his natal Italian village with his teenage son. There, his memories of a vibrant community are confronted with the village's present reality as a ghost-town. Luigi and Danielle's son, Nino — symbol of the future and of the potential for intercultural reconciliation — advocates renewing family ties by returning together to Montreal: "il faut qu'on rentre tous ensemble" (*Trilogia* 224).
- 11 The theme of being silenced by immigration's ontological ruptures and sociological suspensions runs through each play of the trilogy and is most clearly expressed in *Gens du silence*. This play's "voiceless people" are a family whose history of migration mimics Micone's own. The parents speak in Italian regional dialect at home, learn popular French dialect from their working-class co-workers, and speak only enough English to communicate with their Anglophone bosses. Greeted by two distinct cultures d'accueil, each with its own haphazard and incomplete methods for integrating newcomers to Quebec society, Antonio and Anna send their son, Mario, to English school in the hope that he will ascend to the position of their Anglophone bosses; their daughter, Nancy, is sent to French school because "[l]'avenir, c'est pas important pour les femmes" (*Trilogia* 58). The results of these choices are twofold: familial disintegration and sociocultural disorientation. The family members are caught between languages, in what Lise Gauvin evocatively calls a "no man's langue" (*Langagement* 196); on the road to acculturation, they find themselves culturally dispossessed (Simon, "Écrire" 462). Mario, in particular, suffers from an inability to fully express himself in any language and instead mixes colloquial English and popular French with profanity to communicate.

Christ! Ils [ses parents] comprenaient jamais rien! Alors mon père m'a acheté l'Encyclopædia Britannica en quarante volumes pour m'aider à faire mes devoirs. J'avais sept ans. "L'école anglaise, c'est pour ton avenir, Mario", me disait mon père. Fuck the future, man! I wanna live now. NOW, okay? (*Trilogia* 58)

Throughout *Gens du silence*, Mario uses English for effect: his English-language sentences are littered with "fuck" and "Christ." English also indicates affect: English-language sentences are frequently punctuated by exclamation points. He further associates English with the excitement of his Trans-Am and the freedom its speed and mobility connote: "RICKY: *Fuck! What a beauty! Where are we going, Mario?* MARIO: *Anywhere, Christ! As long as we get out of here*" (*Trilogia* 61).

- 12 In contrast, Nancy, the daughter who teaches at an English school, uses French exclusively in the play. She is presented as at once more integrated into Quebecois society and more cognizant of her immigrant status. She recognizes that despite what might appear at first glance as a surfeit of languages from which to choose, her community remains voiceless because it does not have a language that adequately speaks to and of its torn experience. Masters of no language, their desire to have a voice — whether in the confines of *Chiuso* (the Italian neighbourhood) or in majority, francophone, Quebecois society — is severely compromised. At the play's climax, she describes the situation to her friend, Gino, and encapsulates the trilogy's central problematic:

J'enseigne, moi, Gino, à des adolescents qui portent tous un nom italien et dont la seule culture est celle du silence. Silence sur les origines paysannes de leurs parents et les causes de leur émigration. Silence sur le pays dans lequel ils vivent. Silence sur les raisons de ce silence. (*Trilogia* 68)

- 13 To break through this silence, immigrants need an alternate mode of expression to reflect their paradoxical condition and to create conditions within which it might operate more positively. Nancy concludes,

Il faut remplacer la culture du silence par la culture immigrée pour que le paysan en nous se redresse, pour que l'immigrant en nous se souvienne et pour que le Québécois en nous commence à vivre. Écris, mais pour que tout le monde te comprenne. C'est seulement si tu écris en français que nous aurons une chance d'être compris et respectés pour ce que nous sommes. (*Trilogia* 68-69)

Here, Nancy crystallizes Micone's notion of "la culture immigrée," the lynchpin of his oeuvre and his advocacy. He writes, "La culture immigrée en est une culture de transition qui, à défaut de pouvoir survivre comme telle, pourra, dans un situation d'échange interculturel véritable, féconder la culture québécoise et ainsi s'y perpétuer" (Micone, "La culture immigrée comme dépassement" 4). Translated variously as "immigrant culture" and "emigrated culture," *la culture immigrée* operates at a number of different levels. It is at once a descriptor of the immigrant's paradoxical condition, a critical framework within which to analyse it, an intermediary figure in stagnant language debates between French and English, and a hybrid model of national culture. As in Nancy's monologue above, Micone's *trilogia* discusses the need for a mode of immigrant expression, indexed to the specificities of immigrant experience in Montreal. More importantly, the *trilogia* offers an example of *la culture immigrée's* expressive mode in its hybridized French vernacular, one which is forged out of the forced encounter of Italian with French and English words and worlds in the urban matrix of Montreal.

Contact Languages

- 14 *La culture immigrée* is expressed in Micone's plays through a French vernacular inflected by Italianisms and anglicisms at the levels of vocabulary, syntax, and accent. This literary contact language has been characterized as "somewhat artificially popular, sometimes stylized" and as "a compromise language which reflects the reality of the community without the negative aspects of dialects" (Simon, "Speaking" 60; Pivato 12). Micone describes his search for an appropriate language for his characters in a 1985 interview as follows:

The quest for a level of language my characters would speak was a long and arduous one. The Quebecois of Italian origin don't have a French language of their own yet. They can't speak French like francophone Quebecois since the first generation still speaks very imperfect French, and the second generation is very anglicized. I didn't want to make them creatures of folklore or expose them to ridicule either, just by showing up their language deficiencies. What I finally did was to opt for a popular level of language but not joul. [. . .] I also wanted there to be an English and Italian presence in the dialogues in order to give a better idea of what the characters live through in their daily lives. I would define the French spoken by my characters as a French vernacular that is still in flux. (qtd. in Caccia, "Marco Micone" 191)

Capitalizing on the rhetorical power of words, Micone's fluctuating French vernacular is both referential and constructive. Its mixture of "simplified standard French with bits of patois, English words and Italian expressions" refers to the polyglossic world in which Italian immigrants of the late twentieth century live in Montreal (Pivato 12). More importantly, however, Micone's literary contact language produces a dramatic subject position largely unrepresented on Montreal's stages: the Italo-Quebecois.⁸

- 15 The strategy of developing alternate literary *langages* to consolidate new Quebecois subject positions is not unique to Micone. Indeed, this particular survival tactic of the immigrant condition finds a corollary in Quebecois cultural nationalist linguistic strategies of the 1960s. The clearest and most influential expression of this philosophy, derived from the writings of Jean-Paul

Sartre, Albert Memmi, Aimé Césaire, Jacques Berque, and Frantz Fanon, among others, was propounded in the journal *Parti pris* (1963-68). Founded by writers and activists, *Parti pris* espoused some of the most rigorous leftist arguments in favour of a secular, socialist, and sovereign Quebec. Its editorials consistently linked Quebec's independence with Quebecois self-realization—with Quebecois' understanding of their condition as colonized. In "Dire ce que je suis," *partipriste* poet Paul Chamberland correlates the cultural program of realist expression in local vernacular to the political one of demystification. He writes, "il n'y a pas de littérature signifiante qu'enracinée dans une réalité, une vie commune— et l'écrivain, le poète ne s'y enracine qu'en se fondant tout d'abord sur le quotidien langage" (*Le Québec en textes* 383).

- 16 A similar program was evident in *le nouveau théâtre québécois*. This dramatic movement of the late 1960s and 1970s also strove to match linguistic expression to the French-Canadian condition of that moment. Theatre critics Michel Bélair and Jean-Claude Germain (also a playwright) found in Michel Tremblay's 1968 *succès du scandale*, *Les Belles-soeurs*, the origins of this new theatre which was Quebecois "par sa forme, par son langage et par les problèmes qu'il aborde" (Bélair 11; see also Germain "Les Belles-soeurs"). By virtue of its indigeneity, *le nouveau théâtre québécois* would be "une des données les plus essentielles de l'affirmation de notre identité" (Ibid). Its adherents envisioned the emergence of a new, decolonized Quebecois subjectivity as a result, in part, of the theatre's language politics. Caught between two languages of colonialism—continental French on the one hand and English on the other—cultural nationalist writers of this period often sought to differentiate being Quebecois from being French (or English-Canadian) via a distinctly local speech. Sherry Simon writes that during this period of decolonisation, la littérature québécoise s'est écrite très largement en confrontation ou en dialogue avec l'anglais [. . .]; L'expression interlinguistique de cette période de 'décolonisation' prend la forme d'une confrontation triangulaire entre le franco-français (norme impériale), le français québécois (langue de l'authenticité vernaculaire) et l'anglais (agent de pollution linguistique). ("Introduction" 29).

For critics like Bélair and Germain, the confrontation between franco-French and English resolved itself in the valorization of Montreal's working-class variant of Quebecois French—*joual*; it would become the literary language of Quebecois cultural authenticity and national legitimacy.⁹ Although Tremblay was not the first dramatist to utilize *joual*, he was the first dramatist to write all of a play's dialogue in *joual* and has been credited with regularizing its literary features (Brisset; Hébert).¹⁰

- 17 The critical work on *joual* is substantial, extending from the *Parti pris* era to today. It has been analyzed as a national language, a symbol of cultural alienation, a sign of contamination, a *renversement* of linguistic codes, a literary style, and a dramatic effect (see Portelance; Gauvin, "Le théâtre de la langue;" Robert; Brisset). For the purposes of this discussion, however, the significance of *joual* is twofold: first, the consonance of its genesis, features, and utility with those of Micone's fluctuating French vernacular; and, second, what its creation indicates about the practical disjoint among language, identity, and national territory. Both *joual* and Micone's literary speech are sociolects—language systems developed through lived contact with other more dominant languages. For instance, Anna, a first-generation immigrant and the mother of Nancy and Mario in *Gens du silence*, describes herself as working "dans les guenilles" at a sweatshop (*Trilogia* 72). While this turn of phrase evocatively communicates both her poverty (she is dressed in rags) and the industry in which she is employed (the "rag trade"), it does so without the benefit of the correct idiomatic expression ("en guenilles"). The turned idiom marks her French vernacular as formed in a society in which the full signification of such an expression requires multilingualism. Significantly, her poverty is communicated in the French meaning of the expression; her exploitative conditions of employment evoked in its English connotations. These associations of French with economic, cultural, and linguistic impoverishment and of English with unethical employment practices repeat those circulated during the cultural nationalist period

that informed the language politics of *le nouveau théâtre québécois*. Jean-Claude Germain's characterization of *joual* as a language that "bears in its flesh the scars of life and history" provides an equally apt description of Micone's torn vernacular ("Théâtre québécois" 18). In drawing attention to those scars of encounter, each vernacular embodies its history and imagines the expression of a new Quebecois subject position formed in that encounter.

- 18 At the same time that both scarred vernaculars allow for differential subject positions to emerge—Quebecois from French-Canadian, Italo-Quebecois from Quebecois—they also dissociate language from identity from national territory. The common linking of language to identity and territory assumes a nineteenth-century national model in which the nation has a language that is both its product and its natural mode of expression. Identity, national territory, and language are deemed coextensive with each other: for instance, the French of France speak French; the English of England speak English; the Italians of Italy speak Italian. Because the Quebecois of Quebec speak French, the neat identity / national territory / language homology does not hold.¹¹ In the search for a culturally authentic language to express an incipient Quebecois identity, that language had to be created. *Joual's* literary creation—through plays, dictionaries, and acts of translation—highlights the considerable pressure under which the coextension of language / identity / territory was already operating in Quebec (see Bergeron; Lalonde; Brisset). Evidence of what Lise Gauvin calls a "*surconscience linguistique*," the creation and valorization of *joual* was an attempt to re-root French in the territory of Quebec (*Langagement* 7-14). Ultimately the desired coincidence of language, identity, and territory was achieved by an act of state: *la Charte de la langue française* (Bill 101) of 1977. The Charter "vise à faire en sorte que le français soit la langue du travail et de la promotion sociale dans les entreprises, et la langue normalement utilisée entre les locuteurs de diverses langues maternelles" (Dansereau 68-69). *La Charte* made French the official language of Quebec, in effect codifying the nation / language distinction while simultaneously suturing the French language to the Quebec nation and its attendant Quebecois identity.
- 19 Micone's plays highlight the dissociation of language, identity, and national territory already evident in the development of a self-consciously Quebecois dramatic literature.¹² Because of a history of forced displacement, an easy coincidence of nation, language, and identity is not available to the immigrant. (To reprise the nationalist scansion above, the Italo-Quebecois of Quebec speak French and Italian and English). Indeed, the melancholic tone of Micone's dramatic *oeuvre* underscores the losses attendant on this dissociation; all of his characters suffer from the peculiar alienation immigration imposes to greater and lesser degrees. He describes this alienation in his memoir as follows: "Aussi longtemps que les mots de mon enfance évoqueront un monde que les mots d'ici ne pourront saisir, je resterai un immigré" (*Le Figuier* 9). In recalling Quebec's now-canonical, national, dramatic heritage of the *nouveau théâtre québécois*, Micone's plays reconfigure it and highlight its margins. In the *nouveau théâtre québécois's* quest to give voice to a decolonized Quebecois identity, in its desire to win the cultural, political, and linguistic struggle between French and English, it could not account for struggles happening on the margins of the franco / anglo binary. Writing from one of those margins, Micone confirms the impossibility of a native tongue in Quebec, for immigrants and *Québécois de vieil établissement* alike.
- 20 Nancy's exhortation near the end of *Gens du silence*—"C'est seulement si tu écris en français que nous aurons une chance d'être compris et respectés pour ce que nous sommes" (*Trilogia* 68-69)—displays the impossibility of a native language adequate to immigrant experience. In order to be understood and respected "for who [they] are," allophones must express themselves not in their "other" languages but, rather, in French. While French can never fully express the wound of immigration and the worlds they left behind, neither can immigrants' languages of origin adequately communicate their experience in the Quebec context. Instead, French as vehicular language offers immigrants a passport to the Quebecois public sphere, a means of breaking their

imposed silence and of expressing their differential "Quebecois-ness." In the allophone immigrant's journey to "becoming Quebecois," both the immigrant and the very category of Quebecois "become other."

- 21 Despite lacking an apt language of expression, Micone's "voiceless people" talk volubly, conjuring their new subject position into existence through speech. They talk so much and at such great length, in fact, that Simon has pointed out that Micone's characters have an "abundance of language, the tendency to speechifying, [and the] need to articulate explicitly all the various frustrations which language represents for them" ("Language of Difference"123). For instance, Luigi in *Déjà l'agonie* delivers a two and one-half page monologue on what it is to be Quebecois (*Trilogia* 176-78); the revised 1996 version of *Addolorata* opens with the title character talking to an unseen psychologist for three and one-half pages (*Trilogia* 85-88). In this talking too much, Micone borrows again from the Quebecois dramatic tradition which has an important history of "holding forth" in monologue form. The monologue—spoken, written, or sung—was the choice means of expression for generations of self-consciously Quebecois writers. Citing the anti-colonial poetic tradition of Gaston Miron and the Hexagone school, the comic monologues of Yvon Deschamps, and the songs of the *chansonniers* as examples of *le monologue québécois*, Laurent Mailhot foregrounds the politico-cultural history of the monologue (Mailhot). Drama translator Linda Gaboriau argues that this "love of holding forth" is "an indirect way of communicating the importance that Québécois playwrights give to the 'prise de parole en français' in North America today" (87). Reprising decolonization rhetoric *au féminin*, Quebecois feminist theatre of the 1970s deployed the monologue as a means of self-exploration and socio-political critique (Forsyth; see also Guilbeault *et. al.*; Boucher).
- 22 In Luigi's extended monologue about the constitutive elements of Quebec identity, Micone recalls this strategy and its goals. However, in its sarcastic tone and excessive length, Luigi's monologue is as pessimistic about the likelihood of self-discovery as it is about the possibility or desirability of becoming "*un vrai Québécois*."

Un vrai Québécois? Dis-moi ce que je dois faire! Est-ce que j'ai l'air plus vrai quand je suis debout ou quand je suis assis? nu ou habillé? au soleil ou à l'ombre? quand je mange des pâtes ou quand je mange des cretons? quand j'écoute Vigneault ou Verdi? si je vote pour le PQ ou pour le NPD? Il faut que tu me le dises, mon amour. Je suis prêt à tout pour devenir un *vrai Québécois*. (*Trilogia* 176)

Luigi's monologue reveals that becoming "*un vrai Québécois*" is impossible for the immigrant. Moreover, it indicates that the monologue already acknowledges the impossibility of the category for any subject. In other words, Micone's writing reveals the monologue's work as not simply expressive of a pre-existing subject position but rather as constitutive of that subject position (which is still not fully solidified after the three pages of monologue). Not just a denunciation of being left out of a desired category (Quebecois) or an early articulation of visibility politics, his monologue tears at the category itself and reveals it as more construct than nature.

- 23 Nancy's exhortation to write in French and Luigi's "holding forth" each imply that allophones must articulate themselves through and alongside local, Quebecois traditions of self-expression in order to speak with authority in the Quebec context. However, their positions, articulated in French vernacular, also put pressure on French as a language system to accommodate linguistic and cultural differences within it. In other words, French is forced to speak with "other/allo" tongues. In his preface to Micone's *Trilogia*, Pierre L'Héroult offers the following description of this hybridizing phenomenon:

[L]es Italo-Québécois y voient [dans l'oeuvre de Micone] leur réalité nommée dans la langue de la majorité, en d'autres termes insérée dans l'espace québécois; les Québécois de vieil établissement,

eux, entendent leur langue exprimer quelque chose qu'elle n'a pas l'habitude d'exprimer. ("Préface" 15-16)

- 24 Literary critic Simon Harel elaborates a similar ideal, which envisions French as a language of exchange as well as a language of reference and identity in Quebec (*Le voleur*). Régine Robin *et al.* paraphrase this new "enunciative pact" as follows: it involves "la prolifération à l'intérieur du code commun français d'une pluralité de lieux d'énonciation. Plutôt que l'expression symbolique d'une seule identité culturelle, le français devient une 'langue d'échange', lieu de circulation d'une diversité d'univers de référence" (Robin, Noël, and LaRue 141). Within this new enunciative pact of a multiply-inflected, vehicular French to which Micone's dramatic *oeuvre* contributes substantively, the language of Quebec, its territory, and its national identity can no longer be conceived as singular.¹³ The kind of question about authentic identity that Luigi jokingly poses to Danielle in *Déjà l'agonie*—"Est-ce que je me rapproche plus du Québécois pure laine quand je parle italien avec un accent québécois ou lorsque je parle français avec un accent italien?" (*Trilogia* 176)—while still pressing in many regards, is nonetheless largely displaced by Micone's use of language. Micone offers instead a spectacle of language as traversed, manipulated, misunderstood, and clarified by a necessary, unequal, and not always desired contact.
- 25 It is important to note, however, that even the linguistic solutions to the immigrant's voiceless condition that Micone's plays offer are not definitive. As Micone says, his characters' French is "still in flux." Micone's literary language reflects *la culture immigrée's* changing aspects; indeed, Micone defines *la culture immigrée* as "un espace culturel très mobile, mouvant" (qtd. in Vaïs and Wickham 34). His fluctuating French vernacular captures *la culture immigrée's* history of rupture, movement, and encounter. More importantly, this hybrid language also challenges the idea of any national culture or cultural expression being fixed. For Micone's allophone characters, the linguistic binary of colonialism will not resolve into a single language of cultural authenticity, be that *joual* or an Italo-Quebecois vernacular. Rather, it is precisely this binary, French-English logic that leaves allophones unaccounted for and that binds them to non-identity. Stranded in the immigrant paradox of being neither what they were nor yet something else, allo-/neo-Quebecois triangulate the binary.¹⁴ The introduction of the neo-/allo-Quebecois' introduction as a third term or intermediary figure in Micone's work reconfigures as it extends Quebecois literary traditions. In their borrowings, Micone's linguistic and formal survival strategies grant allo-Quebecois a position from which to speak at the same time that they launch those same subjects on the path to "becoming other," which is to say, to "becoming Quebecois."

I would like to express my sincere gratitude to my UBC Research Assistant, Meagan Dallimore, for her meticulous fact-checking and preparation of the manuscript for publication. Thanks also to Greg Reid and the two anonymous *TRiC/RTaC* readers for their helpful comments. All translations are mine unless otherwise noted.

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Notes

¹ Dates listed in the text are initial production or public reading dates. In the instances where the texts are published, their publication dates are printed in the list of works cited. *Gens du silence* was first produced as a reading at the Bibliothèque nationale in 1982 and was

given full productions at La Licorne and Le Théâtre de la Manufacture in 1984. The first version of *Addolorata* was produced at Le Théâtre de la Manufacture in 1983; its second version also played at the same theatre in 1996. *Déjà l'agonie* received its first production by Le Théâtre de la Manufacture in 1986, under the title *Bilico*. The first two have been translated into English by Maurizia Binda as *Voiceless People* and *Addolorata*; Jill MacDougall translated *Déjà l'agonie* as *Beyond the Ruins*. Le Théâtre du Nouveau Monde (TNM) has produced most of his translations: *Six personnages en quête d'auteur* in 1992; *La Locandiera* in 1993; *La Mégère de Padoue* in 1995; *La Serva amorosa* in 1997 and *L'oiseau vert* in 1998. *Les femmes de bonne humeur* was mounted at Quebec City's Théâtre du Trident in 2000 and his most recent Goldoni translation, *La Veuve rusée*, was produced by Théâtre du Rideau Vert in April 2002.

2 Interwar fascist governments were succeeded by a republican government in 1946. Between 1946 and 1976 almost 7.5 million Italians emigrated to Europe (approximately two-thirds of the total emigration number) and the Americas, predominantly the United States, Canada, and Argentina (approximately one quarter of the total number). More than 60% of the postwar emigrants were from the south of Italy where unemployment and poverty were significantly more prevalent than in the northern or central regions. Almost 70% of all Italian immigration to Canada happened between 1946 and 1976 (Painchaud and Poulin 21-23). See also Caccia, "Introduction," for a more narrative telling of this story.

3 Part of this shift in immigration stems from improving conditions in southern Europe (see Painchaud et Poulin), but more importantly from the Quebec government's increasing control over immigration to the territory and its interest in bolstering the francophone population through selective immigration. Political scientist Michael Keating writes, "By an arrangement with the federal government, [Quebec] is allowed to select a proportion of Canada's total immigration quota each year [. . .]. Selection of these immigrants is the responsibility of Quebec officials stationed in Canadian diplomatic missions, especially in French-speaking countries" (105).

4 With the Reorganization Act of 1875 the Council for Public Instruction was divided into Catholic and Protestant committees, which gave the final word within their discrete educational systems (Magnuson 44-46). In 1998, a modification to the Law on Public Instruction rearticulated Quebec's Catholic and Protestant school boards into French and English school boards ("Commission scolaire de Montréal"), making language, not religion, the criterion for differentiation in the public school system.

5 Micone's introduction to Montreal's linguistic fault-lines and their forceful significations occurred when he was turned away from the local French Catholic school where he wished to enrol. In the cultural logic of the period, if one was not francophone then one was, *de facto*, anglophone. In a recent reflection on the heterogeneity of Quebecois culture, Micone pointed out that as late as the 1980s no distinction was made between anglophones and allophone immigrants ("Le Québec" 21). Though neither French nor English, Micone, along with the generations of allophone schoolchildren before the passage of Bill 101 in 1977, was automatically shunted to the English side. (According to statistics cited by Ines Molinaro, in 1971 90% of allophone children attended English school [119].) He attended an English school for four years before adopting French as his vehicular language and studying Quebecois literature at Loyola College and then at McGill University, where he wrote his Masters thesis on the dramas of Marcel Dubé from the 1950s and 1960s. Micone has recounted the story of his education in countless interviews including those conducted by Massoutre, Caccia, Vaïs and Wickham, and Lévesque. His educational experiences in Quebec inform his critical reflections on integration policy in "Immigrant Culture," "La culture immigrée réduite au silence," and "De l'assimilation à la culture immigrée." He reprises his schoolboy experiences in *Le Figuier enchanté* and fictionalizes them in "Ces enfants d'ailleurs ...". His thesis inspired Micone to dramatize his concerns—about the linguistic bifurcation that informed Quebecois cultural politics, immigrant ghettoization, and the lack of a consistent method for integrating allophone immigrants into majority Quebecois society—in plays instead of in newspaper articles as he had done previously (Massoutre).

6 Jean-Michel Lacroix writes that Micone's trilogy "marque l'avènement de la parole immigrante sur la scène québécoise" ("Représentation" 195). *Gens du silence* has been positioned in the critical literature as the beginning of a vogue for the foreign and the exploration of migration (see Vaïs and Wickham; Micone and Lepage; Moss). It is important to note, however, that since the mid-1980s he has been joined by a host of "neo-Quebecois" playwrights who write in French, including Anne-Marie Alonzo, Pan Bouyoucas, Abla Farhoud, Alberto Kurapel, and Wajdi Mouawad.

7 In the second version of *Addolorata* (1996), Giovanni/Johnny is treated somewhat more sympathetically; his own desires for economic independence, his fraught friendship with Jimmy, and his history of abandonment are foregrounded. Of rewriting *Addolorata*, Micone says, Je trouvais que la première version était trop didactique. En 1983, j'avais la certitude que pour faire comprendre la situation des immigrants, je devais être explicite dans les dialogues et écrire des scènes comme le prologue de ma pièce, dans la veine du théâtre politisé et brechtien des années soixante-dix. Treize ans après, le théâtre a changé [...]. Dans ma pièce, j'ai enlevé ce qui me semblait trop lourd et j'ai ajouté principalement le personnage de Jimmy. (Massoutre)
Citations from *Addolorata* are taken from the original version, unless otherwise noted. Citations from *Gens du silence* and *Déjà l'agonie* are taken from the 1996 revision printed in *Trilogia*.

8 In English-language Quebecois theatre, David Fennario pioneered this same subject position in the 1970s in plays like *Balconville*, *On the Job*, and *Nothing to Lose*. Vittorio Rossi extends this dramatic depiction of Anglophone Italo-Quebecois in plays such as *Little Blood Brother*, *The Chain*, and *Scarpone* (see Reid).

9 *Joual* combines Québécois with urban influences—most notably, English. (Quebecois is the dialect of French developed after French colonial rule over what was then "Lower Canada" ended. Severed from spoken continental French, Quebecois retains some of the stylistic characteristics of *ancien régime* French. It augmented French vocabulary with new words for natural phenomena encountered in the New World—flora, fauna, weather systems, and the like.) The population shift in the 1950s from the farm to the city is reflected in the shift from Quebecois to its urban variant, *joual*, which was formed in the linguistically and ethnically mixed urban neighbourhoods of Montreal during the mid-twentieth century. In that environment, its vocabulary expanded once again—this time with urban and workplace references (largely industrial) and with English and English-inflected words. As Lucie Robert explains, *joual's* "[l]exical references are mostly work-place and city-oriented" (118).

[10](#) *Les Belles-soeurs*'s didiskalia are in standard French. Predecessors like Gratien Gélinas and Marcel Dubé had both employed *joual* to indicate lower-class characters and introduce local colour. Tremblay, on the other hand, set his play in a working-class milieu populated by characters who speak only *joual*. Artists outside the theatre had also performed works in *joual*. *Partipriste* Jacques Renaud wrote the controversial novel *Le Cassé* in *joual* in 1964. Popular *chansonnier* Robert Charlebois was known for his mixture of rock music and *joual* in songs like "La Boulée"(1965) and "Ordinaire"(1970). Fellow *chansonnier* Gilles Vigneault's "character-song" "Jos Monferrand" had been banned from the radio for its shocking and vulgar language ("Gilles Vigneault").

[11](#) Nor does this coincidence hold in other formerly colonized and/or New World contexts, except in the case of indigenous persons who still use their languages. The dissociation of nation from language, territory, and identity is a definitional aspect of the postcolonial condition. See, for instance, Ashcroft *et al.* on the proliferation of "englishes" (as distinct from English) in Britain's former colonial holdings; see also Brathwaite on the development of a Caribbean literary nation-language.

[12](#) Micone further pries apart the presumed coincidence of language and national territory by introducing neologisms to the Quebec lexicon and through his translations of Italian dramatic classics. In *Le Figuier enchanté*, for instance, Micone substitutes the Italianism "névasse"(drawn from the Italian "nevaccia") for the common anglicism "sloche" (from "slush") (14). In his translation of Goldoni's *La Locandiera*, Micone rewrote the *apartés* in Italian with words that shared linguistic roots with words in French. In so doing, the predominantly francophone Théâtre du Nouveau Monde audience was able to understand much of the *apartés*' meaning at the same time that these asides were being spoken in an "other" tongue. He discusses these strategies at length in Lévesque.

[13](#) Harel suggests in a recent article that the enunciative pact characterized by flux and hybridity, which was new to Québécois cultural discourse in the 1980s when Micone's plays were being produced, has attained the status of critical reflex in the late 1990s and the early years of this third millennium. He argues for a renewed critical focus on attachment, ties, stasis, and location within the context of nomadism ("Une littérature"). One might argue that Micone's plays, in their explicit focus on problems of affiliation with Quebec society, fulfill this updated mandate as well. One brief example: in *Le Figuier enchanté*, Micone introduces the neologism "amigré." This combination of "ami" and "immigré" speaks in a word the possibility of affiliation in the context of nomadism.

[14](#) In this triangulating move, Micone's work joins with that of a community of Italo-Québécois writers and intellectuals of the 1980s and 1990s who articulated a politics and poetics of "transculturalism." In this de-ethnicized cultural poetics, Italo-Québécois are positioned as intermediary figures between franco- and anglo-Québécois poles, figures whose very appearance clarifies the terms on which language and identity debates take place. Poet Lamberto Tassinari, a key instigator of the transcultural movement, describes transculturalism as follows: "Transculture implies a vision of displacement, of nomadism, the possibility of setting up one's territory anywhere. That's the force we can set against the dictatorial force of territory"(qtd. in Caccia,"Lamberto"218). The transcultural project was most fully elaborated in the trilingual revue, *Vice Versa*,founded by Tassinari, Caccia, and Antonio D'Alfonso, published from 1983 to 1994. Of this effort, Alessandra Ferraro writes,

la naissance de 'Vice Versa' en 1983 est emblématique: le choix de publier une revue en trois langues (français, anglais, italien), tout en ayant le mérite de déplacer et dédramatiser la tension anglais-français qui a toujours parcouru la société québécoise, vise à introduire la communauté italienne en tant que partenaire actif dans la culture du Québec. (144)

For more on transculturalism, see also Caucci, Verdicchio.

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