Utilisation de sociolectes de la classe ouvrière comme langage littéraire, unifiant et protestataire dans Sainte Carmen de la Main de Michel Tremblay, On the Job de David Fennario et Scarpone de Vittorio Rossi

The Usage of Working-Class Sociolects as Literary, Cohesive and Protestative Language in Michel Tremblay’s Sainte Carmen de la Main, David Fennario’s On the Job and Vittorio Rossi’s Scarpone

Par

François Roy
Bachelier ès arts, B.A. (Rédaction Professionnelle Anglaise)
Université de Sherbrooke

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By François Roy

Ce mémoire a été évalué par un jury composé des personnes suivantes :

Gregory Reid, Directeur de recherche
Département des lettres et communications, Faculté des lettres et sciences humaines

Pamela Grant
Département des lettres et communications, Faculté des lettres et sciences humaines

David Leahy
Département des lettres et communications, Faculté des lettres et sciences humaines
Abstract

This thesis analyses the use of sociolects in Michel Tremblay's *Sainte Carmen de la Main*, David Fennario's *On the Job* and Vittorio Rossi's *Scarpone*. The term sociolect identifies the language variation of a specific social group. The social groups then sub-divide into various other categories which use sociolect sub-genres. The authors use the sociolects of the working class and the sociolect sub-genres of members of this social class who share similar occupations to create the hyperlanguage of their characters. In using such language variations, the authors show the aesthetic qualities of the working-class sociolect, and show the cohesive and protestative properties of a language variation that differs from the culturally established norms.

Key words: sociolect, social dialect, hyperlanguage, linguistics
Résumé

Ce texte analyse les sociolectes utilisés par Michel Tremblay dans Sainte Carmen de la Main, David Fennario dans On the Job et Vittorio Rossi dans Scarpone. Le terme sociolecte est une variété de langage propre à un groupe social spécifique. Ces groupes sociaux sont ensuite divisés en diverses autres catégories qui utilisent des sous-groupes de sociolectes. Les auteurs ci-haut mentionnés utilisent les sociolectes de la classe ouvrière et les sous-groupes de sociolectes de gens qui ont des quarts de métiers similaires pour créer l’hyperlangue de leurs personnages. En utilisant ces langages, ces auteurs montrent les qualités esthétiques des sociolectes de la classe ouvrière, ainsi que l’aspect unifiant et protestataire de ces variétés linguistiques qui diffèrent des normes culturelles établies.

Mots-clés : sociolecte, dialecte social, hyperlangue, linguistique
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Introduction

This thesis will analyse the use of sociolects in Michel Tremblay’s *Sainte Carmen de la Main*, David Fennario’s *On the Job* and Vittorio Rossi’s *Scarpone*. According to Annick Chapdelaine and Gillian Lane-Mercier “le terme sociolecte désigne en sociolinguistique tout langage propre à un (sous-) groupe social déterminé” (7). The selected characters in each play use the same vocabulary and sentence structures; their language is influenced by belonging to similar social groups: sharing similar occupations, incomes, education levels and environments. In addition to their sharing a similar language structure, their language also reflects their views, experiences and social situations.

I will focus on the language variations of these groups of characters: all of the characters of *Sainte Carmen de la Main*, the warehouse workers in *On the Job* and the salesmen in *Scarpone*. Every character of *Sainte Carmen de la Main* uses a sociolect and sociolect sub-genre; their sociolect is *joual* and their sociolect sub-genre is the red-light district language of the Main. The warehouse workers in *On the Job* use the sociolect of working-class Pointe Saint-Charles in addition to the work-related terminology of the dress warehouse. The salesmen in *Scarpone* speak the sociolect of working-class Montrealers of Italian descent; they use the sociolect sub-genre of salesmen and the work-related terminology of the shoe store. The languages of these three groups are based on working-class language variations.

All three plays are set in Montreal, a multi-lingual and multi-cultural setting. In using this setting, the linguistic and economic power struggles are more apparent than they would have been in a smaller and more homogeneous community. *On the Job* and *Sainte Carmen de la Main* reflect some of the language struggles between English and
French of the 1970s in Quebec, and Scarpone reflects the linguistic experience of the third largest ethnic group in Montreal, Italians. But, even though these linguistic groups face different experiences because of their languages, they belong to the same social group—the working class.

Tremblay, Fennario and Rossi chose to represent the working classes and use their sociolects and sociolect sub-genres to show their social cohesion through language. This language also shows the aesthetic qualities of the working-class spoken language. In using the language variations or sociolects of the working class, the authors protest against the established cultural power and give a voice to the working class—showing the working-class experience in local variations of language that are suited to portray this experience.

**Sociolects as the Basis of Theatrical Hyperlangues**

It is very difficult to completely differentiate between sociolects, idiolects, dialects and vernacular forms of language because these variations of language are interlinked, and linguists use different terminology to discuss similar language variations. However, if we define a sociolect as the language variation used by members of a specific social group, it is safe to say that the authors base the language of the selected plays on the sociolects of the working-class groups they portray. Dominique Maingueneau, in *Le Contexte Littéraire. Énonciation, Écrivain, Société*, explains the terms Hypolangue and Hyperlangue in relation to drama: "L’hypolangue permet à l’acteur de jouer dans la langue du personnage. L’hyperlangue dit que l’acteur doit jouer dans une langue ‘théâtralisée’" (113). Maingueneau’s notions are derived from the concepts of hypotext and hypertext: hypotext would be the language used by speakers of a specific social group and hypertext is this language adapted to texts, such as dialogues in plays.
The authors base the hyperlanguages of their characters on the spoken sociolects of the social groups they portray. The sociolects are the base for the dialogues, but they have to be adapted since real conversations seldom proceed logically. Because they are based on spoken language, these texts lack the grammatical rigidity of prose. The texts, even with their grammatical shortcomings, have strong oral impacts. Spoken language, according to Walter J. Ong and James Deese, promotes unity between the listener and the speaker. The spoken word creates an immediate impact; sound is the basis of spoken as well as written language. Spoken language, according to John McWhorter, evolves more rapidly than written language because it is spontaneous and can change and adapt more rapidly; borrowed expressions or structures become part of the language more rapidly. An example of the evolution of spoken language that is now considered sub-standard in English because of the imposed model of written language is the lack of auxiliary use in questions or complex verb tenses, where the characters simply duplicate what they would have heard and not what they would have learned in school; otherwise known as examples of "grammatical word erosion" (McWhorter 16). The main characters in On the Job often make mistakes of grammatical word erosion such as "How many we got there?" (OtJ 20), "you been working...?" (OtJ 26) instead of How many have we got there? and Have you been working?

Tremblay, Fennario and Rossi use the sociolects or hypolanguages of specific social groups to produce the hypertexts, or hyperlanguages, of their characters; basing the dialogues of their plays on the sociolects of the French and English lower- and middle-working classes of Quebec they then adapt these sociolects to be presented to audiences that are not necessarily part of these specific groups.
Social Group

The plays, even though they focus on the working class, show other social classes through minor characters: the middle class, which does not own or control the means of production but has a certain amount of control over the work force, and the ruling class, which owns and controls the means of production. The focus group in each play portrays a layer of the working class. They are all part of the proletariat in the sense that they do not own or control the means of production. Their income does not determine their social class, but it does have an impact on their socioeconomic status. The term social class will be reserved for the types of distinction described by Karl Marx (those who own the means of production as opposed to those who sell their time and skill for a wage), while the term socioeconomic status will apply to differences in income and occupational prestige. It is not the focus of this thesis to analyse the different theories on social classes. I have chosen to use three social classes: working class, middle class and ruling class or upper class. I have divided the working class into three sub-groups: lumpens, lower working class and middle working class.

The characters in Tremblay’s Sainte Carmen de la Main speak the sociolect sub-genre of marginals, or lumpens (prostitutes, transvestites, strip-club singers, pimps...), of the East End of Montreal, and they congregate specifically on the corner of Saint-Laurent and Sainte-Catherine. These characters, as most members of the lower working classes, have a low level of education and, for the most part, have no formal job or job training. The term lumpen1, from lumpenproletariat, is used here to categorise the characters as drifting in and out of the traditionally determined social classes. The action takes place in

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1 A German term used by Karl Marx to identify a group of dispossessed, often displaced people who have been cut off from the socioeconomic classes with which they would ordinarily be identified. (Stockhammer, Karl Marx Dictionary)
*Le Rodéo*, a bar where one can see strippers, western singers, or both; the characters evolve in a sub-cultural setting, and their language usage reflects this setting. The term *lumpen* defines the characters of *Sainte Carmen de la Main*. But, for linguistic purposes, these characters will be considered working class for this thesis because they do not own the means of production and because, even though they operate outside the proletariat, they come from a working-class background and have received the same education as members of the working class of that time. Marx’s term *proletariat* defines the working people of *On the Job* and *Scarpone*—the working class, trading their time and labour for a wage.

In *On the Job*, Fennario’s main characters (Jacky, Mike, Billy and Gary) portray low-educated unskilled workers; they are lower working class. The sociolect they use is that of the English-speaking working class of Pointe Saint-Charles: a social language variation that is typical of people with the education, income, recreations, attitudes and habits of this working-class district. The play takes place in a warehouse on Christmas Eve day, and the action revolves around workers who want the afternoon off and end up having to strike to try and get it. The play presents different social classes but focuses on the working-class situation. Prior to the educational reform of the 1960s, the educational background of Quebec’s English- and French-speaking lower working classes was similar: because of industrialization, it was far more important for them to work than to get a higher education. The members of the working class portrayed by the working-class characters of *On the Job* and *Sainte Carmen de la Main* would have, for the most part, been educated prior to the Quiet Revolution, hence before the standardization of the educational system in Quebec.
Rossi’s characters in *Scarpone* use the sociolect of English-speaking Italian immigrants with a high-school level of education and living in Montreal. The action takes place in a shoe store, Scarpone, where most of the staff comes from a similar background and environment. The sociolect and sociolect sub-genre of the salesmen reflect the milieu of Anglo-Italian Montreal salesmen. The salesmen in *Scarpone* are middle working-class, and they are skilled in their sales techniques and language. Because of their higher income or income possibilities, they have a higher socioeconomic status than the workers in *On the Job*.

In each play, the sociolect reflects the identity of a specific social group—a group of people who have a similar education level, or have been subjected to similar influences. The sociolects used in each selected play identify the characters as belonging to a specific social group—the working class. Their sociolect sub-genre and their work-related terminology (or jargon), however, show that they share the same type of occupation.

This thesis will demonstrate how language reflects socioeconomic status, background, and the level of education of the working-class characters by analysing their speech. The sentence structures, vocabulary and pronunciations used by the characters are typical of people who share a dialect and accent (Quebec French, Irish and Italian), and these features of their sociolect show the strengths and weaknesses of spoken rather than written language. The speech of selected characters in *On the Job* and *Sainte Carmen de la Main* reflect a low level of education; they would have been educated in an outdated school system that was inadequate to meet the linguistic standards of the twentieth century. The linguistic education that these characters would have received in school was outdated because the linguistic education in Quebec had not evolved with the standard or continental languages.
The French of prestige in Quebec before the 1970s would have been Continental (or Parisian) French and not Quebec French. Only those who attended the Collèges Classiques had the opportunity to learn the ‘proper’ French vocabulary, pronunciation and structure. Most members of the working class, who did not attend higher-education establishments, used a language variation that was archaic and influenced by English. Not all working-class Quebecers spoke joual, but most spoke a strongly anglicized, grammatically archaic variation of French.

There is a difference between Quebec French and joual. Joual carried a negative connotation—the connotation that the people who spoke it were uneducated. Georges Landreau’s book was used to teach the ‘proper’ or ‘standard’ French pronunciation in Collèges Classiques up to the 1960s. Claude-Henri Grignon and André Laurendeau “had referred to [joual] to denote not only a corrupt speech but the deprived culture that went with it” (Toye 586). Jean-Paul Desbiens “drew widespread attention to the use of joual, particularly in the lower-class districts of Montreal, in his Les insolences du Frère Untel, in which he regarded it as a disease like malnutrition” (Toye 586). Desbiens attacked the quality of the public education system in Quebec and denounced the poor quality of the spoken and written French of younger generations. The linguistic elite of that era presumed that Quebec French should imitate Continental (or Parisian) French in order to remain pure. Their point was valid for the elite who had access to higher education, but did not apply to the uneducated population.

Since the early days of Canada, or Nouvelle France, Continental French had undergone different linguistic influences than had Canadian (or now Quebec) French. In France, the Académie française and grammarians had debated which pronunciations should be the norm, the language of the court or the language of the bourgeoisie. By the
middle of the XVIIIth century the language of the Paris bourgeoisie was becoming the
accepted standard. These changes had started to take place in Paris in the 1750s. Certain
pronunciations in Parisian French changed: *breume* changed for *brume*, *pleumer* for
*plumer*, *père* changed for *père*, *frère* for *frère*, *Sarge* changed for *Serge*, and *bergère* for
*bergère*. But given Quebec’s isolation from such changes, many of the archaic spellings
and pronunciations are found in the French spoken by the characters in *Sainte Carmen de
la Main* more than 200 years later. For, while Parisian French pronunciation evolved and
the new forms of pronunciation came to be considered the standard in France, Quebec
French pronunciation continued to reflect the archaic standard.

A significant reason for this is that starting in 1791, many clerics, who had been
educated in the old French system, immigrated to Canada. These men were educated and
looked upon by French Canadians as linguistic models of the French elite:

L’un des groupes les plus importants que la Révolution [Française] ait
envoyés sur les bords du Saint-Laurent est celui des ecclésiastiques … Ce qui doit
être pris en compte en effet, c’est le rôle de ces ecclésiastiques français dans le
développement culturel du Canada français … Des prêtres instruits, parlant le
français de la fin de l’Ancien Régime, vécurent en contact immédiat et permanent
avec toutes les populations. (Gendron 72)

For many French-speakers in Canada, Canadian (now Quebec) French was then
reinforced in its archaic usage. This archaic linguistic education of the population went on
until the Quiet Revolution, before which only individuals with a higher level of education
learned ‘Standard French’ or Continental French. Jean-Denis Gendron points out that the
Quiet Revolution, with standardised education, made it possible for the whole population
of Quebec to learn and adopt a better quality of French.
The low level of education among the working class was a major factor in the repetition of archaic pronunciations and vocabulary. Other characteristics of the French they used included faulty sentence structures and liaisons fautes. This form of French also used many borrowings from English. These Anglicisms in Quebec working-class language were the result of English Canadian and American economic and cultural influences. It was far more practical for members of the lower working class to gravitate towards English, which was the language of economic power, than to improve their French to imitate Continental French, which was remote from and less practical in their everyday work experience. If a language has more sociopolitical importance, even if it is spoken by a minority, it will become the main language (Leclerc 36).

_Sainte Carmen de la Main_ reflects the language of working-class French-speaking Quebecers, whereas _On the Job_ and _Scarpone_ reflect the local sociolects of working-class English-speaking Montrealeans of Irish and Italian descent respectively. _On the Job_, along with _Sainte Carmen de la Main_, was written and set before Bill 101, when the socio-political and economic power in Quebec was English. Gallicisms and lexical borrowings therefore occur less frequently in _On the Job_ than Anglicisms and lexical borrowings occur in _Sainte Carmen de la Main_. The language of the English-speaking working class was influenced by French because of close proximity, which resulted in English in Quebec evolving differently than English elsewhere in Canada. An even more distinctive dialect has emerged since the period depicted in _On the Job_, and contemporary Quebec English is increasingly marked by the influence of French. The language of the workers of _On the Job_ shows characteristics of what Pamela Grant-Russell now qualifies as Quebec English and Charles Boberg now refers to as Montreal English.
The workers of On the Job use incomplete sentence structures and archaic contractions. Most of the sentence structures and contractions of the workers are informal. Canadian Standard English should have been used in Quebec but the language of the English-speaking working class was influenced by French because of close proximity; it therefore evolved differently than its Canadian counterparts. The distinctiveness of Quebec English is explained by its different socio-cultural evolution and “although English may, to a certain degree, be protected from regionalism by its predominance in mass media, daily life in any of the English communities in Quebec reveals the use of a fairly unique lexicon marked by the influence of French” (Grant-Russell, “Influence of French” 474).

The use of lower- or middle-working-class language has a lesser impact in English Quebec than the use of its equivalent in French-speaking Quebec; “les anglophones ne se sentent pas menacé dans leur identité linguistique, ils ne sentent donc pas le besoin de la donner en spectacle pour en affirmer l’existence” (Ladouceur 6). Furthermore, because of the territorial proximity of Canada and the United States and the circulation of products, services and media, Canadian English, with the possible exception of Newfoundland and the Maritimes, is fairly uniform. Quebec French, being geographically separated from other French-speaking territories, is a linguistic island in a predominantly English-speaking land.

Fennario and Rossi faced some negative criticism for the sociolects they used in their plays, but they did not have the impact on English-speaking Quebecers that Tremblay’s use of joual had in French-speaking Quebec. There is a political aspect linked to language in Quebec, but, apart from joual and other sociolects being used by some authors as languages of protest, it is not the focus of this thesis.
I have found only a few studies of the language used in English plays as opposed to the large number of studies of language in French plays in Quebec simply because French-speaking Quebec critics put more importance on the question of language in Quebec. This observation is consistent with Ladouceur’s argument that English Canadians do not feel they have to defend their language as French Canadians do because English is the language of the majority in North America. Or as Pamela Grant shows in “An Investigation of Lexical Borrowings from French in English Quebec,” French-speaking Quebecers have a greater tendency to defend their language than their English-speaking counterparts simply because French is a minority language in Canada: “Modernization of Quebec society in the 1960s led to the rise of the Québécois nationalist movement based largely on the protection and promotion of French within Quebec as a means to ensure the survival of the French-speaking community” (429). An analogous desire to protect their language is not, however, shared by most Quebec English speakers: “This nonchalance reflects the relatively casual attitude of English-speaking Canadians towards their language in general” (431). Accordingly, the sociolects used in On the Job and Scarpone are part of the language used by English-speaking Quebecers, including immigrants who were educated in English, even if Quebec English evolved in a predominantly French-speaking province.

Definition and Features of Sociolects

The spoken language represented in the selected plays does not have the rigidity of written language. Critics have often regarded the language of the working-class characters in plays as corrupt or sub-standard when in fact the spoken language of the working class shows “real aesthetic qualities” (Rushton 367) and with “its simplicity and directness of
expression, [it is] emotionally virile, pithy, and powerful, with a metaphoric range of considerable force and appropriateness” (Rushton 367).

Basil Bernstein, in his later studies, has warned researchers against any premature devaluation of working-class language. The language of the working-class characters in the plays shows the strengths of spoken language in that it is a language that is immediate, leads to action, and possesses poetic rhythm and sound effects. Spoken language also includes the listener more than written language does; it creates an immediate connection between the speaker and the listener, whether characters or audience.

The selected characters in each play use the potential of spoken language. The chorus in Tremblay’s play transforms everyday language into a language that shows rhythm, rhyme, sound effects, and evokes images and emotions. The workers in On the Job can deliver a joke, and use rhymes for slogans. They also use their sociolect in songs that depict their physical and social environment. The sociolect sub-genre of the salesmen in Scarpone is seen through their use of sales techniques like tag questions and rhetoric to lead the conversation and elicit positive responses, but their sociolect also reflects the rhythm of their Italian heritage.

The distinction in social class and socioeconomic status becomes important when a language variation is used to convey cultural or artistic elements if this variation differs from the language of the ruling class. Members of the working class and members of the ruling class do not receive the same education and do not have the same background; they therefore use a different variety of language to convey different experiences. Working-class languages and experiences do not convey the ideals of the economically, socially or politically dominant classes. And the views of the working class, as shown in the plays, antagonize the ideals of the ruling class.
A sociolect is a social dialect spoken by a particular social group; these groups range from the lower-working to the upper classes. Etymologically, *sociolect* derives from the morphemes “socio-” (social) and “-lect” (language variety). Although all social classes have their own sociolects, any sociolect that varies from that of the ruling classes is regarded as sub-standard by the latter. However, social power evolves and changes hands with time and this influences what is considered standard language at any given time. Certain professions are traditionally identified with a certain socioeconomic status; some professions have more prestige than others simply because of the education needed to occupy these positions, the status of the occupations, or the revenue they can generate. Traditionally, medicine, law and engineering were professions that were considered prestigious because of their vital roles in the development of a society, and the education that was required to attain such positions. These professionals usually came from the ruling class and occupied prominent positions in their society; their experience and language reflected that of the ruling class.

However, from a strictly linguistic point of view, any trade or profession – law, accounting, medicine, construction, real-estate, or factory work – possesses its own specialised semantic field and vocabulary. This specific vocabulary is called *jargon* (technical terms used in the context of an occupation) or work-related terminology; it includes informal vocabulary developed and used between members of an occupation or field of interest, because it is shorter and more economical than the standard language equivalent.

Henriette Schatz has a traditional perception of the socio-cultural bonds of language. She differentiates between sociolects and dialects; yet while making the
distinction she links them as integral parts of language, hence clarifying the common confusion between these two terms:

A dialect, set against a standard language, is primarily geographical, while a sociolect is also defined on a geographical, but primarily on a social (vertical) dimension. A sociolect may be a variety of a particular standard language, but it may also be vertically defined as a variety within a regional dialect. In both cases, the social dimension is expressed by an evaluation of the variety’s relative prestige, which is representative of the prestige of the sociolect’s users. The distinction between dialect and sociolect thus hinges on the social prestige evaluation, by hearers as well as by speakers, to which a sociolect is subjected, set against the prestige evaluation of the standard language. (240)

Language variations are subject to certain prestige evaluations; the sentence structures, some vocabulary and, in some cases, pronunciation can identify an individual as belonging to a specific social group.

Main-stream, or bourgeois-dominated, culture has a negatively biased view of lower- and middle-working-class sociolects and “an important factor in the spread of the notion of verbal deprivation has undoubtedly been Bernstein's own theory that the under-achievement of working-class children stems partly from their limitation to a restricted code of speech” (Rushton 367). There is a difference between the language of lower-working and middle classes, but the disadvantages of lower-working-class speech are apparent when the users have to communicate with higher social classes about subjects that are outside their fields. For example, a skilled worker would possibly use high levels of standard language when describing a piece of machinery but would use a sub-standard level of language when discussing abstract concepts. The language of the working classes
is qualified as sub-standard by the upper classes mainly because lower- and middle-working-class speakers do not express themselves well in what the upper-working class and upper class consider important subjects, for "the restricted code has in many cases been filtered through a strong bias against all forms of working-class behaviour, so that middle-class language is seen as superior in every respect" (Labov quoted in Rushton 367).

The groups that use the sociolects studied in this thesis use language variations that are not the language of socio-political and economic power to express their experience. They express their experiences in their own sociolects, and in doing so protest against the language of socio-political and economic power. The use of sociolects is not necessarily an expression of protest, but authors can use them as such.

*Joual* can be looked at as a dialect because of its geographical limitations but *joual* is also a sociolect because it is used by people of a specific social class in a specific area. There is a prestige evaluation attached to *joual*, a sub-standard variation of Quebec French, not because it is spoken in Montreal but because it is spoken by the lower working class of Montreal. In Quebec, many authors of the late sixties and seventies used the working-class sociolect as the language of their characters. Michel Tremblay was one of the first authors to make use of *joual* as the main language in his plays. In *The Oxford Companion to Canadian Literature*, Jack Warwick points out that:

Literary *joual* came into prominence in Quebec in 1964 and was of major interest for about ten years. Before 1964 the word *joual* had been used pejoratively: its existence as a dialect pronunciation of *cheval* is well attested in rural Quebec, Normandy, and other parts of France. (586)
Although *joual* is sometimes described as the national language of Quebec, the *joual* of Michel Tremblay's plays is based on the sociolect of members of the lower working class of East End Montreal in the late sixties and early seventies. As Warwick refers to it in *The Oxford Companion to Canadian Literature*: “We can distinguish certain common features of *joual* in literature ...: Anglicisms and barely assimilated English words; obscenities and picturesque blasphemies; and non-standard syntax and orthography that often imply an erosion of basic grammar” (586). *Joual* has had a significant impact on Tremblay's plays, and it has become what Annie Brisset calls his “sociolecte fonctionnel” (Brisset 296). This use of a sociolect in some Quebec plays has replaced Continental French, which did not and does not reflect the Quebec context: “Le français de France est impropre pour traduire l'expérience locale” (Brisset 270). The use of *joual* in plays also gave Quebec playwrights a chance to break free from the French model. Before 1968, *joual* was used with moderation in Quebec literature, and after it was used as a larger-than-life representation of popular Quebec French. Traditional theatre language and street language are very different and the dialogues must be believable to the audience; a worker does not speak in a literary language.

*Joual* was seen as the language of Quebec by outsiders, when their general experience of it was in fact as the hyperlanguage used by Quebec playwrights in the sixties and seventies to reflect Quebec's working-class experience in a local language. Brisset looked at *joual* as a functional sociolect in the sense that Tremblay used it to make his characters closer in their use of language to the actors and the audience: “Le sociolecte choisi par Tremblay est fonctionnel. Il conditionne le renouveau de l’esthétique théâtrale en modifiant les normes qui reproduisent l’effet de réel. La reproduction naturaliste de la langue instaure une spécularité qui doit ébranler les consciences” (296). David and
Lavoie define joual, in *Le Monde de Michel Tremblay*, as “un idiome populaire typiquement montréalais qui fait s’entrechoquer sacres, jurons et expressions vulgaires, dans un français fortement anglicisé” (147). Because of Tremblay’s success and the strong pull towards a language and culture that were more metropolitan than regional, joual, the sociolect of the French-speaking, lower-working-class people in the East End of Montreal of the sixties and seventies became the emblem playwrights and other writers used to protest and break free from the cultural norms dominated by Continental French.

Like joual, the sociolect of Pointe Saint-Charles reflects the language of the lower spheres of the working class. The language of the main characters of *On the Job* also lacks the structural rigidity and completeness of written language: incomplete sentence structures, missing auxiliaries, contractions that are a mix of North American pronunciation and archaic structures, improper use of third person singular conjugation, and double negative sentences.

The sociolect of Rossi’s characters is close to standard even though they use occasional Romance Language syntax. The English of the English-speaking Montrealers of Italian descent in Rossi’s play has retained certain ethnic variations because the members of this group are raised in Italian, go to school in English (a second language) and function and live in a French-speaking province. The phenomenon of “linguistic assimilation of non-British immigrant groups” (Boberg, “Ethnic Patterns” 539) leads to the development of distinct ethnic varieties, or “ethnolects” (539) which are a “key part of the evolution of urban speech communities in most of North America” (Boberg, “Ethnic Patterns” 539). These ethnolects are different from the second-language English of the original immigrants, and can be qualified as “native varieties of English [which] are spoken by the immigrants’ North American-born children and grandchildren, who have
been exposed to English from an early age, even if they first learned an immigrant language at home” (Boberg, “Ethnic Patterns” 539). Ethnolects “often preserve unique features that distinguish them from the speech of the wider community, some of which can clearly be traced to the non-native varieties that preceded them” (Boberg, “Ethnic Patterns” 539). The ethnic background of the salesmen in Scarpone has a more visible impact than does that of the workers of On the Job because the Irish immigration to Canada occurred earlier than the Italian immigration, hence giving more time to the Irish immigrants to absorb the linguistic culture of the host country. The Anglicization process had started before immigration for many of the Irish, and the Irish immigrants helped shape the early forms of Canadian English since they were among the first English groups to immigrate to Canada in large numbers.

Boberg also observes that the persistence of ethnolects is stronger in Montreal than in other North American cities. This phenomenon supports the findings that Montreal English has evolved differently than Canadian English because it is a minority language in Quebec. The English role models that immigrants have in Montreal are weaker than in the rest of North America simply because, as Grant-Russell indicates, English is no longer the language of economic and political power in Quebec. This shift in power affects the plays differently: Sainte Carmen de la Main and On the Job were written during the earlier phases of the shift, while Scarpone was written after the shift. In Sainte Carmen de la Main, the characters speak French but borrow several terms from English. In On the Job, all the characters, even the French-speaking characters, use English with some French, and in Scarpone, characters, like Dino, are shown functioning in English and French.
The characters of *Scarpone*, since they were educated after the standardization of education in Quebec, would have received a higher education, but their language would still show traces of ethnolects, which stem from “a transitional stage between the non-native English of immigrants and full integration into the English-speaking community” (Boberg, “Ethnic Patterns” 539). These immigrants portrayed by the characters, since their parents would have arrived in Quebec and would have been educated prior to Bill 101, would have attended English rather than French schools—making English their second and French their third language. The characters are therefore shown as having the ability to function using several registers and several languages. The characters of *Scarpone* can and do use several registers ranging from formal to colloquial or slang.

The characters in each play use sociolect sub-genres in addition to their sociolects. They are part of work-related discourse communities. The characters in *Sainte Carmen de la Main* speak *joual* and use the sociolect sub-genre of the Main. In addition to the syntax, vocabulary and pronunciation they share with the French-speaking working class of East End Montreal, they use pseudonyms and sub-cultural terms to present their experience. These sub-cultural terms will be analysed as work-related terminology or jargon. The workers in *On the Job* add work-related terminology to their sociolect. The salesmen in *Scarpone* use the sociolect sub-genre of salesmen in their speech when they want to make a sale, and also added work-related terminology to their sociolect. The work-related terminology is integrated in the sociolect even if it is not class related. The use of this specialized vocabulary permits communication between different social groups and members of different socioeconomic status in the same work environment.

The obscene language used by the characters—English and French swear words, chauvinistic vocabulary, metonyms and dysphemisms, and in some cases their names and
nick names—is part of their sociolect but also serves to reflect their views and protest against their situation.

**Usage and Effects of Sociolects as the Hyperlanguages of Plays**

Sociolects or social dialects, according to William Labov, are formed when there is social stratification; for example, when people from various social classes in rural areas move into the cities where they have to integrate a new hierarchy, or when people live in a caste system: “Rural and regional dialects transform into class dialects in the cities … The low-prestige working-class dialects come from the decline of local dialects and the vertical social stratification” (Labov 299-300). Sociolect acquisition tends to affect accent, pronunciation, vocabulary, but “grammatical variables mark social stratification more sharply” (Chambers, “Sociolinguistic Theory” 51) like the use of improper conjugations, double negatives and tense shifts in complex sentences that are common among lower- and middle-working-class speakers. These grammatical differences between sociolects are usually accompanied by phonetic and phonological differences. There is a link, as established by Bernard Spolsky, between sociolinguistic and socioeconomic stratification. In cities, variations in speech provide clear evidence of socioeconomic status: “each social level (as determined on the basis of income, occupation, and education) has a similar gradation of style or degree of formality, and there are also marked differences between social levels’’ (39). Sometimes, people identify themselves and each other socially even more subtly and sensitively because of their language, which is generally an obvious socio-economic marker, than because of other socioeconomic markers such as income.

Social groups, according to Basil Bernstein, exert a strong pressure or regulation on the individual when it comes to language, and there is solidarity in language use.
Specific groups use a specific variety of language to communicate their views of certain situations:

People who identify themselves as members of a social group (family, neighbourhood, professional or ethnic affiliation, and nation) acquire common ways of viewing the world through their interactions with other members of the same group. These views are reinforced through institutions like the family, the school, the workplace, the church, the government, and other sites of socialization throughout their lives. Common attitudes, beliefs, and values are reflected in the way members of the group use language—for example, what they choose to say or not to say and how they say it. (Kramsch 6)

As we will see in the thesis, the characters in the selected plays share common beliefs that they convey through their use of language. I will use Claire Kramsch's notions of speech communities (people who share a linguistic code), discourse communities (common ways in which members of a social group use language) and discourse accent (the topic people choose to talk about, the style with which they interact and the way they present information) in order to examine the language use and language content of the focus groups in each play.

The listener and the speaker are of equal importance in communication; the language needs to be understood and relatable to achieve successful communication: “Understanding across languages does not depend on structural equivalences but on common conceptual systems, born from the larger context of our experience” (Kramsch 13). Language is a means of cohesion for the group while it excludes members of other groups. The sociolect of a specific group can be understood by a non-member, but the language simply relates more to insiders than it does to outsiders: “the way a given
language encodes experience semantically makes aspects of that experience not exclusively accessible, but just more salient for users of that language” (Kramsch 13).

Anne Dean observes with the characters David Mamet’s plays: “For these individuals, language has become a weapon with which to attack a threatening world, a way of sustaining confidence and building security” (Dean 222). The same can be said about the focus groups in each play: Tremblay’s main character struggles to use her own words—words that much of her audience also uses. Fennario’s workers ridicule anyone who uses a different sociolect. Rossi’s salesmen use their sociolect sub-genre to lead and control the conversations. Their sociolects and sociolect sub-genres tie them together—this language provides security for the individual against the other groups.

The hyperlanguages of the characters were created from spoken languages and moulded to achieve the impact the authors wanted to create. The authors make conscious use of faulty sentence structures and sub-standard vocabulary to make points. They show the importance of representing the working-class experiences and languages in popular culture to an audience that may not necessarily belong to the working class and that may have a different socioeconomic status than the characters of the plays. The authors show the experience of the proletariat to the capitalist or ruling class, in addition to the proletariat itself.

Sociolects can be used as languages of protest when they reflect the situation of oppression of the lower classes by antagonising the ruling class. Max M. Louwerse extends the definition of sociolect (a social dialect spoken by a particular social group) to fit groups of authors: “Sociolects ... are group-dependent similarities in language use. They imply that texts by a group of authors, for instance in terms of gender or time period, share more similarities within the group than between groups” (Louwerse 207).
Texts from authors who come from similar cultural backgrounds would be similar and the best illustrations would be artistic texts: “What is so special about aesthetic texts is that the author will try to deviate from currently accepted codes” (Louwerse 208) and “by deviating from the norm texts become aesthetic. This way the deviation gradually becomes the norm of a group and by deviating from the established norm new aesthetic texts will deviate” (Louwerse 208). Authors usually use a sociolect that is considered sub-standard to make a social or political point, or make their texts different from the pre-established norms.

In addition to the authors’ use of sociolects as protestative language, the obscene language of the characters expresses the frustration of the working class at not controlling their situation. Gregory Reid examines the ‘bilingual’ working-class language of Fennario: “The language register of Fennario’s plays (including Balconville) also raised censorious brows, largely because of the frequency of the typical forms of English Canadian and American swearing (that is, references to sex and body parts and functions)” (Reid, “Mapping Jouissance” 295). Reid follows by saying that “Fennario has often commented that swearing is a necessary representation of working-class bitterness and outrage. He has also wryly observed that ‘where [he comes] from, ‘fuck’ is punctuation.’” (Reid, “Mapping Jouissance” 295).

There are very few swear words in Sainte Carmen de la Main; most of the obscene terms (metonyms and dysphemisms) that are used describe people. The linguistic act of protest comes from the main character, who will not use a language and content she sees as fake and foreign, even if the established power in the play wants her to use that language and content. The workers of On the Job make extensive use of swear words to voice their disapproval and their faulty grammar gives more impact to their statements.
Two of the salesmen in *Scarpone* use swear words and use chauvinistic language. Pat Donnelly, a critic for *the Gazette*, critiques the excessive male-identified language and the Italian content of Rossi’s plays.

Steven Godfrey, on the other hand, finds the dialogues of *Scarpone* believable and says “Rossi shows his skill at strong, rapid-fire dialogue, as the two hustlers expose their weaknesses through an exchange of homespun philosophy, business tips and sexist putdowns” (Godfrey A21). Rossi's dialogue is “strong and revealing enough that the character remains believable” (Godfrey A21).

**Hypothesis**

In the selected plays, sociolects are at the core of the dialogues. The playwrights use sociolects in their plays to create the social portrait of the characters, reflect the local setting, and valorise local lower- and middle-working-class languages as literary discourse. There is a particular connection between the qualities of each sociolect and the aesthetic qualities of the plays.

The study of the sociolects used by the authors reflects the experience of Quebec’s English- and French-speaking lower and middle working classes: “À l’encontre des préjugés: la langue populaire est aussi savoureuse que la langue littéraire, elle est l’illustration vivante du parler de chacune des classes sociales” (Larose 4). All three selected plays reflect the experience of a specific social group in a specific setting.

This thesis will demonstrate that the hyperlanguages being used in each play are derived from sociolects. This thesis will also show how the vocabulary, pronunciation, expressions, syntax and composition derived from these sociolects create the aesthetic features, the style, rhythm and poetry of each play’s dialogue. I will then show how the specific sociolect in each play reinforces the link between language and social identity,
creates unity among the characters, connects to the local experience, allows the lower social classes to be represented, expresses frustration, and creates confidence and a sense of security for its users. Each selected play protests against the established cultural norms. The sociolect in each selected play supports this protest because it is a sub-standard variety of language used to portray experiences that do not convey the ideals of the ruling class.
Chapter 1  Michel Tremblay  *Sainte Carmen de la Main*

Michel Tremblay concludes the cycle of *Les Belles-sœurs* with *Sainte Carmen de la Main* in 1976, and *Damnée Manon, Sacrée Sandra* in 1977. *À toi pour toujours, ta Marie-Lou* in 1971, serves as a prologue to *Sainte Carmen de la Main*, where Carmen, the main character, breaks free from the oppression Quebec women of that time were enduring: she later becomes the first of Tremblay's "major female characters to achieve freedom from the triple tradition of moral discipline and bondage: family, the martyr complex and sexual taboos" (Usmiani 110), and "she is able to make her particular dream come true; in the process she achieves the full status of tragic heroine, saint and martyr" (Usmiani 109). Carmen personifies Quebec's quest for identity through language; she strives to reach her audience with her own voice and her own words, words that also reflect much of the experience of her audience, who are the population of the Main (the chorus). *Damnée Manon, Sacrée Sandra* serves as an epilogue to *Sainte Carmen de la Main* where Carmen dies in vain to defend her dream of freedom for the people.

Tremblay uses the tragic tradition to emphasise the futility of fighting against an oppressive and overwhelming system. Carmen wants to wake her audience from their slumber, and doing so, she goes against the established power that wishes to keep the status quo. Carmen is fighting the universal and age-old fight of the individual going against the oppressive system that was set up and run by, and that therefore favours members of upper classes. She therefore sets herself up as a tragic heroine whose fate is inexorably death.

*Carmen*, in *Sainte Carmen de la Main* and *À toi pour toujours, ta Marie-Lou*, follows the "pattern of existentialist ethics as developed by Sartre: from awareness to freedom, from freedom to responsibility, from responsibility to action" (Usmiani 111). In
Sainte Carmen de la Main, Carmen discovers, during her pilgrimage to Nashville, that she can and should sing using her own voice and her own words. She becomes aware that she had been lying to her audience when she was singing about Western topics in English:

>y a jamais personne qui leur a parlé d'eux même! Moé-même je l'avais pas compris! Ça fait des années que je leur parle des plaines du Colorado, pis de la lune au-dessus du Tennessee, pis de mes chagrins d’amour dans la nuit du Montana, pis des valeureux cow-boys du Texas montés sur leurs chevaux blancs, pis de mes exploits au lasso … Ben j’les trompais Maurice! Parce que c’est pas ça qu’y veulent entendre! (65)

These topics and that language did not reflect the experience of her audience. After she sees the effect her words had on her audience, she feels a responsibility towards awakening them and showing them that they have a certain power. Carmen then tells Maurice:

>as-tu entendu c’que ça leur fait quand ma voix leur parle directement à eux autres dans leurs mots … Avant le monde répêtaient mes chansons comme des perroquets sans même penser à c’que ça pouvait vouloir dire, astheure quand y vont chanter en cœur avec moé c’est leur vie à eux autres qu’y vont chanter! (65)

Carmen’s struggle to use her own voice and her own words to sing to her audience parallels Tremblay’s struggle to write to his audience in a local language—joual, the sociolect of East End Montreal, and, in the case of Sainte Carmen de la Main, the sociolect sub-genre of the Main as well. Since his beginnings as a writer, Tremblay went

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2 Maurice is the local representation of the established power or ruling class of the micro-hierarchy of the Main, as well as Carmen’s lover and manager. He controls the population of the Main with fear.
against the established cultural powers in Quebec who preferred Continental French and international content to local language and content. Tremblay explains his choice of language in an interview with James Quig in 1976 saying:

that’s the way the working-class people of Montreal talked and they had always been overlooked. And that was sinful. A whole class of people had never been properly acknowledged by the theatre ... Because the upper classes were ashamed that people still lived and talked like that. Ashamed that we had allowed ourselves to be colonized to that degree. Ashamed that we had colonized ourselves even further. Many used to talk like that themselves. Or they had parents who did. They were ashamed and they wanted to forget. (n.pag.)

Before analysing the sociolect it is necessary to analyse the social group represented in the play and how the hyperlanguage of the play reflects the sociolect of this social group. The sociolect itself has many effects and many different facets. The sociolect of the Main is an extension of joulal. The characters share some linguistic traits with the working class—their specific sociolect is limited to their vocabulary, a vocabulary that binds them to their environment, where Tremblay transforms a “sub-standard” language variation such as joulal and the sociolect sub-genre of the Main into dramatic poetry.

Social Group

The characters of Sainte Carmen de la Main are lumpens or marginals. They operate in the lower spheres of the working class, tend to drift in and out of the work force, have no formal job training, and function outside the work force or standard society. The characters of Sainte Carmen de la Main are prostitutes, transvestites, pimps, ‘strip bar’ singers, addicts and murderers. These characters might have a day-time job but
they practice occupations outside the regular proletariat when on the Main. According to Tremblay's portrait of the Main, it seems to be the only escape route for those who do not fit the Church-set stereotypes: housewife, working and family man—the characters of rue Fabre. The Main is where individuals can operate outside socially accepted roles.

The characters who choose the Main are looked down upon by the characters on rue Fabre. Carmen chose a "liberated, joyous lifestyle [that] stands in direct antithesis to the traditional self-pitying martyr complex typical of so many females in French-Canadian literature" (Usmiani 112). Carmen personifies the woman who broke free from the Quebec cultural bondage of the time. Carmen's sister, Manon (from À toi pour toujours, ta Marie-Lou and Damnée Manon, Sacrée Sandra), on the other hand, "continues the same life of quiet desperation she led when her parents were still living; for Manon, nothing had changed ... Nevertheless, from the heights of her moral eminence, Manon [in À toi pour toujours, ta Marie-Lou] condemns her sister's lifestyle, the undignified look of her cowgirl outfit, the connotation of whore attached to her job" (Usmiani 112). As mentioned earlier, Carmen and the other characters who choose or end up on the Main are judged by those who live or remained on rue Fabre. Even though the characters on the Main are looked down upon, there they can be or become who and what they want to be. Tremblay makes a cultural judgment on the Church and the elitists and their influence on cultural and individual freedom in Quebec, saying that Carmen having achieved a measure of freedom, [ ]develops a sense of responsibility that is totally lacking in her morally upright, existentially uptight sister Manon. Carmen's tolerance and understanding give ironic emphasis to the self-centeredness of her pious sister. While Manon feeds upon memories of her unhappy past and cultivates her feelings of hatred for her father, Carmen shows
great compassion for the man, and tries to understand the enormous difficulties he must have gone through ... Here she already shows some of the traits that make her into the "Sainte" Carmen of the next play: understanding her fellow men, tolerance for their weaknesses. (Usmiani 113)

This choice of language for the heroine sets her up as the heroine of the people and not the heroine of the elite or the Church. In using the language of the people, Carmen is shown as being closer to the human condition of these people.

The play is set at the Rodeo, a strip joint/western bar, but even though the action of the play is set in a place where the characters from rue Fabre would expect foul language, there are very few swear words in Sainte Carmen de la Main, a lot fewer than in À toi pour toujours, ta Marie-Lou, which portrays the French-speaking working class of East End Montreal of the late sixties—the characters of rue Fabre.

The pronunciation and sentence structures used by the characters of Sainte Carmen de la Main are common to working-class French-speaking Quebecers. Part of the vocabulary of the characters differentiates the sociolect sub-genre of the Main from the joual of East End Montreal, and this vocabulary also portrays their physical, occupational and social environment. The working-class population of East End Montreal added lexical borrowings to their typical working-class syntax and pronunciations. Carmen and Sandra were raised on rue Fabre, part of a working-class district. The characters of any of Tremblay’s other plays could have used the same expressions since the plays take place in East End Montreal. Although the characters of rue Fabre and the Main use some of the same linguistic variations, they do not have the same socioeconomic status. The characters living on rue Fabre are part of the proletariat; they work and sell their job skills for a wage. In Tremblay’s plays, life on rue Fabre is limited to housewives, working and
family men who live on a tight budget. The women hide behind their religion and the men drink, but in both cases they try to forget their frustrations. The only escape Tremblay shows to this quiet desperation is the Main. The Main is presented as a place where the characters can escape the preconceived social roles of the proletariat. Carmen and Sandra fled to the Main, hence escaping the lifestyle they did not want—working in a shop or being a housewife. This freedom does have a price; the characters on the Main operate outside the established social classes and therefore have no place in them.

The Main, even if it is a haven for the marginals, has its own micro-hierarchy—it recreates social classes on a smaller scale. Maurice rules the Main; he makes certain that he remains in power by dictating what goes on and eliminating those who do not contribute to his success. Maurice also determines what language needs to be used on stage; he tells Carmen that her “talent est dans tes yodels, pis moé, ton boss, tout c’que te demande c’est d’être la meilleure du genre ... T’auras pas la chance de faire d’autre chose, ma p’tite fille, demain tu reviens à ton ancient repertoire ou ben donc tu chantes pas” (70).

Carmen is the people’s heroine; she is fighting to sing in a language that is closer to the language of the audience. Carmen and Maurice are the only characters who have some self-confidence. All the other characters (Gloria, Sandra, Rose Beef, Bec-de-Lievre and Tooth Pick) are the population of the Main. Their speech lacks the confidence of Maurice’s and Carmen’s but they all use the same structures and pronunciations.

Sociolect

The lumpenproletariat on the Main and the proletariat (working class) of East End Montreal use the same language variation—joual. Working-class French-speaking Quebecers who were raised and educated before the Quiet Revolution learned archaic
French vocabulary, syntax and pronunciations. The vocabulary, syntax and pronunciations of the characters of *Sainte Carmen de la Main* are a hyperlanguage of the vocabulary, syntax and pronunciations of the Quebec working class of that time. The sociolect that will be analysed is the hyperlanguage based on the real sociolect sub-genre of the Main and the sociolect of East End Montreal. Annie Brisset refers to Tremblay’s hyperlanguage as a “sociolecte fonctionnel” (296). The sociolect of the Main is a sub-genre of the *joual* of East End Montreal; the difference is seen in the vocabulary that the characters use. The characters of the Main use the same pronunciations, sentence structures and some of the same vocabulary as their rue Fabre counterparts but it is their entertainment, business and ‘red-light’ vocabulary, as well as the names and nicknames they use, that make the specificity of their sociolect.

Jean-Denis Gendron, basing part of his research on Quebec French on Thurot’s observations on the evolution of French, describes some archaic French pronunciations used by members of Quebec’s French-speaking lower working classes. Some vowel shifts like an *a* becoming an *e*, for example *parsonne* instead of *personne*, did not occur in working-class French in Quebec until after the standardization of education. All the characters of *Sainte Carmen de la Main*, at some time, use the archaic *ar* pronunciation: Bec-de-Lièvre, Carmen and Tooth Pick use “marde” (25) instead of *merde*, Bec-de-Lièvre, Gloria, and the choruses use “parsonne” (26) instead of *personne*, Maurice and Carmen use “farme” (32-66) instead of *ferme*. All the characters use *a* and *y* instead of *elle* and *il* as personal pronouns in the third person singular: “Y’est-tu … c’est ce qu’a m’a dit … a devrait” (27). The *e*-i permutation is present in the language of the characters; Carmen and the choruses say “menute” (15) instead of *minute*, Maurice says “bebittes” (33) instead of *bibittes*, and Carmen and Bec-de-Lièvre say “d’habetude” (47) instead of
d’habitude. The proper pronunciation for toutseul is with an ou not an u, but Maurice, Bec-de-Lièvre, and the choruses use “tu-seul” (31-36-83). Carmen, Rose Beef and Tooth Pick use “tu-suite” (16-75-86) instead of tout-de-suite. The ui diphthong is sometimes simply pronounced as i or u (Thurot I, 415). All the characters use pis for puis and sus for suis: Carmen (23), Maurice (31), Gloria (37), Sandra (14), Rose Beef (16), choruses (17), Bec-de-Lièvre (24), and Tooth Pick (84) all use pis instead of puis, and Sandra (16), Carmen (33), and Tooth Pick (85) use sus instead of suis. The last vowel permutation is an a that became an o (or au) (Thurot I, 426-430). The most common word that the characters mispronounce is the verb aurait; they pronounce it arait. The choruses say “On arait dit que c’tait la première fois” (15), Carmen says “t’arais pas peur, Maurice?” (30), Gloria tells Carmen “T’arais dû voir ça” (37), Bec-de-Lièvre says “j’vas rester icitte au cas où a l’arait de besoin de moé” to Sandra and Rose Beef, who reply “T’arais pas dû la laisser sortir” (81), and Tooth Pick says “J’arais voulu m’arracher les oreilles” (85).

In Continental French, changes also occurred in other vowel sounds: for example we became wa. All the characters of Sainte-Carmen de la Main use moé and toé instead of moi and toi: Sandra and Rose Beef say “c’est moé” (21). Carmen says that she translated the songs herself using “moé-même” (22) as a reflexive pronoun. Maurice discusses Tooth Pick saying “J’ai pas peur de lui tant que j’le garde avec moé” (31) and Gloria talks to Carmen using “T’es r’venue, toé?” (36) or “oiéseau” (39) instead of oiseau. The last consonants are also emphasized with words like “frette” (16), “nuitte” (16), “deboute” (17-24), “icitte” (22-23-24-33-43), “toute” (71), “faite” (43-62-84), “drette” (51), and “boutte” (30).

The characters of Sainte Carmen de la Main make frequent use of liaisons fautives and not even in the original third person singular. More often than not, they introduce the t
in the first person singular: Sandra and Roê Beêf say “chus t’obligeé” (14) instead of *je suis oblige*, where the *s* should be the liaison. Carmen uses “chus t’au” (31), “chus t’une” (34) instead of *je suis au* and *je suis une*. There are other examples of this phenomenon throughout the play like “chus t’un” (36), “chus t’icitte” (71), “chus t’allé” (84) and “t’es-t-en train” (51). This misuse can simply be that of a population that attempts to hypercorrect a syntax whose origins they do not know, as Yves-Charles Morin points out about misused liaisons: “leur fréquence d’utilisation dépend de la classe sociale (elle est plus grande dans les milieux défavorisés)” (10).

Peter Trudgill states that there are grammatical differences between sociolects, or what he refers to as social-class dialects, and mentions that they would be accompanied by phonetic and phonological differences (34). As seen earlier, the pronunciation of the characters would differ from the socially accepted standard. The same is true for the sentence structures they use. The sentences of the characters sometimes lack essential structural elements; they do not use complete negative or question forms: “Est pas plus fine … Es-tu belle?” (26). The negative sentence does not have a subject: *Est* stands for the subject and verb, it also comes from the *a-e* permutation and the dropping of the final consonant. A variation of *est* for subject/verb *elle n’est* would be *a l’est* for *elle est*, and the *ne* of the negative is dropped. The same happens in the question form; the verb and subject should be in the third person singular rather than the second person. The standard form for a question should be *Est-elle belle?* not the deformed archaic version the characters are using.

The characters of rue Fabre and the Main use similar structures, pronunciations and even some vocabulary because they live in similar economic situations; they use or misuse expressions that come from archaic French: “tanné” (69), “piaffais” (22),
“astheur” (22-39), “braille” (23-39-69), “chassis” (28-38), “pognés” (33-63), “poser” (38), “effouerrer” (41-58-61), “retontir” (42), “ousque” (62-72), “piocher” (65), “gigote” (65), “ouan” (67). The characters of both streets might live similar situations like poverty, alcoholism and violence, as seen in Tremblay’s other plays, but some of the vocabulary in Sainte Carmen de la Main reflects the specificity of their experience. This specific vocabulary forms the sociolect sub-genre of the characters of the Main: the language of prostitutes, transvestites, ‘strip-bar’ singers, pimps and murderers. And since the action takes place in a bar where the main character is a singer, some of the characters also use several entertainment terms taken from English and adapted to French.

back” (40), “full” (46), “stage” (65) and “gorgeous” (67). The use of these terms reflects the strong American cultural influence.

Maurice could be called Carmen’s manager, and since the cultural influence of the United States is very present in Quebec entertainment, he uses the terms of the business, that is, lexical borrowings related to his work. Business and show business were generally done in English and the use of English terminology also shows Maurice’s status. The language of Maurice reflects his low opinion of women and men. The vocabulary that he uses is that of a pimp in a red light district and his use of sex terms and body parts like “piece of ass” (69), “plotte” (69), and “totons” (68) to describe women reflects the sociolect sub-genre of the Main.

The pseudonyms of the characters are also part of their sociolect. The pseudonyms they chose or that were imposed on them reflect their personality or appearance. The pseudonyms of the secondary characters like Sandra, Rose Beef, and those they describe, like Lola, Mimi, Gerda, Babalu, Miss Clairol, Katari Dutch, Bélinda, Roméo, Greta-la-Vieille, Greta-la-Jeune, Bambi, Hosanna, Betty Bird, Purple, Marie-Thérèse d’Autriche, Paula-de-Joliette and La duchesse de Langeais (28) are stage names, *noms de jeunes filles* for some; they rhyme and give a certain exotic sense to the characters, but they also describe the characters—Bec-de-Lièvre, for example, probably has a facial deformity as indicated by her ‘name.’

The names of the characters show their place in the Main’s micro-hierarchy. Maurice and Carmen use and are called by their real names; nobody on the Main (except for Gloria) would call Maurice by a pseudonym because he rules the Main. Maurice reminds the readers or the audience of Maurice Duplessis, who kept Quebec under his control during *les années noires* (Quebec’s dark Ages) preceding the Quiet Revolution.
Carmen, who is just below Maurice in this micro-hierarchy, also uses her real name. The name Carmen is a “medieval Spanish form of Carmel influenced by the Latin word carmen “song.” Carmel is also from the title of the Virgin Mary Our Lady of Carmel. Karmel (meaning "garden" in Hebrew) is a mountain in Israel mentioned in the Old Testament” (http://www.behindthename.com). So Carmen’s name in Sainte Carmen de la Main has a connotation of saint and song. The name Carmen was later associated with “female promiscuity” (Hutcheon 161) carrying the connotation of a sexy and beautiful woman who is also “defiant and liberated” (Hutcheon 164). Tremblay’s Carmen follows the operatic Carmen character in the sense that she is from the lower spheres of society, her independence has limits and her defiance leads to her death.

The secondary characters like Sandra chose their names to fit their personalities: Sandra’s real name is Michel (Damnée Manon, Sacré Sandra)—a character that represents Michel Tremblay. Bec-de-Lièvre and Tooth Pick were given their pseudonyms because of their physical appearance. They are at the lowest ranks of the group, and also have or had to accomplish the lowest tasks: Tooth Pick murders at Maurice’s command and Bec-de-Lièvre was watching the ladies’ room. Bec-de-Lièvre rose from her tasks in the ladies’ room to being Carmen’s dresser; her role changed but her name remains.

Maurice controls the Main, and as long as the status quo remains, the social caste of the Main will not change. Maurice uses the pseudonyms of the characters as a constant reminder of the characters’ most embarrassing features. In doing so, he undermines their confidence and keeps them in a state of constant self-disrespect, fear and low self-esteem. This is one of the ways he maintains the power structure and oppression on the Main. Maurice confesses to having La duchesse de Langeais killed; he confesses using Tooth Pick as his henchman. This is also where there is the physical description of Tooth Pick to
match his 'name'. Carmen says “Mais y’est haut comme deux pommes et quart pis gros
comme un piquet de clôture!” (33). Then, she follows with her anecdote about Tooth Pick
waiting for her in her dressing room with his pants down: “y’a une ben p’tite queue ...
j’pense pas qu’y soye capable de faire des miracles avec c’qu’y’a entre les deux jambes.
J’sais pas si c’est de là que ça vient, mais y le porte ben, son nom!” (34). Maurice’s use
of the pseudonyms causes all the other characters to call each other by these same
pseudonyms. In other words he oppresses them and they oppress themselves by using
these pseudonyms.

Carmen even calls the secondary characters by their pseudonyms but the message
in her song tells them that they are more than the roles they play on the Main. Bec-de-
Lièvre personifies Carmen’s message of hope. She used to be an attendant in the ladies’
room and now she takes care of Carmen’s dressing room, clothes and wigs. Bec-de-Lièvre
thought she deserved to be an attendant in the ladies’ room, now she sees that she can do
better tasks, be better, and have a better role.

Usage and Effects of Sociolect within the Play

Maurice also uses the pseudonyms of the secondary characters but, as mentioned
earlier, he despises those who surround him and he lists the pseudonyms of those who
stood in his way when he reminds Carmen of his power over the Main: “Dum-Dum ... le
gros Brise-Bois ... Willy Ouelette qui achalait tellement le monde avec sa ruine-babines
... Pis Cobra, la femme-serpent qui avait étranglé un de ses clients avec sa maudite
bebitte?” (32). After each of these pseudonyms, Maurice deliberately uses offensive
expressions to describe or refer to other characters; he describes Brisebois as gros, says
that Willy Ouelette achalait the clients and that Cobra’s snake was a maudite bebitte.
Maurice uses a language that shows that he despises his origins, his surroundings, his staff and his clientele: "J’la connais par coeur, la Main, c’est ma mère! C’est elle qui m’a élevé! C’est elle qui m’a donné mes premiers coups de bâtons sur les doigts, mes premiers coups de pied dans le cul pis mes premières maladies!” (68). Maurice tells Carmen that he knows the Main and that La Main does not need to be talked to: “La Main a besoin qu’on y pogne le cul, c’est toute!” (70). Maurice presents the Main as if it were a woman, and what he is saying is that it is only good for sex. He talks about the Main as a pimp would talk about his prostitutes. He describes Carmen’s fans, his clients, as depraved drunks and addicts who do not know what they are saying half the time: “C’est toute une gang de sans-dessein, pis de sans-coeur, pis de soûlons, pis de dopés qui savent pas la moitié du temps c’qu’y font ni c’qu’y dissent pis qui se câlissent au fond des chansons que tu peux leur chanter!” (69). The terms sans-dessein, sans-coeur, soûlons and dopés have very negative connotations; they portray the psychological aspects of the characters of Sainte Carmen de la Main—or at least Maurice’s vision of these characters.

Tremblay uses metonyms and dysphemisms to add emotional power to the language of his characters. Maurice’s words carry a negative connotation when he tells Carmen that she is only a piece of ass and that she should stick to yodeling and showing her legs:

Tu le sais c’que j’dis toujours aux filles qui commencent? « You’re a piece of ass, here, baby, don’t you forget that! » Ben toé aussi, Carmen, t’es une « piece of ass» au fond! ... tu reste rien qu’une plotte pareil, Carmen ... Comprends donc une fois pour toutes que t’es-t-icitte pour faire de l’entertainment, pas plus! ... Ton rôle consiste à te déguiser en cow-girl à tous les soirs en montrant tes jambes le
plus possible, à grimper sur le stage pis faire baver les hommes en te faisant aller... (69)

Maurice speaks to Carmen and makes her feel like an object. As he does when he speaks about all the characters, he deliberately uses offensive expressions: the term *plotte*, a metonym and dysphemism to talk about a woman, has the effect of diminishing the woman to her sexual organs. Even his expression *grimper sur le stage* means that she will have work hard to get up. Maurice could have used *monter sur le stage*, which would have had a connotation of elevation. He adds “Toé tu vas crever de faim icitte pendant que la fille d’à côté qui va avoir eu la prudence de juste montrer ses gros totons ou de chanter « prendre un p’tit coup c’est agréable » va faire fortune!” (68). The term *totons* is a vulgar term to describe breasts, diminishing a woman’s body part to the status of a toy. These metonyms and dysphemisms are examples of a sociolect being used as an instrument of oppression.

The characters are all part of the same speech and discourse community. They all share the same linguistic code in that they use the same vocabulary, Anglicisms, archaic pronunciations, archaic liaisons, and faulty negative and interrogative sentence structures. The characters all discuss the same topics (poverty, oppression, self-esteem, fear). The play starts with Sandra, Rose Beef and the choruses, who describe their after-hour activities and announce Carmen’s long-awaited return. Sandra says “J’mé sus lamentée toute la nuit” (16), meaning that she complained all night. Sandra uses the *sus* instead of *suis* as we have seen earlier. She also uses the term *lamentée*, which is an archaic term for *plaindre*, and she also uses it in the feminine form—she speaks about herself in the feminine but she is a he. She introduces the fact that they work nights. Sandra and Rose Beef then follow with “mes suyers me faisaient mal ... y faisait frette” (16) showing their
discomfort while waiting for clients. They use the deformed pronunciation *suyer* for *soulier*, the personal pronoun *y* for *il* and the term *frette* for *froid*.

Rose Beef introduces their profession with “Y’avait pas de clients” (16) and Sandra follows with “Les chiens sont passés plus souvent” (16). These sentences show the impotence of the characters; they have to work but there are no clients. Sandra’s allusion to *chiens* is really about the police, hence indicating their activity is illegal.

Gloria shows another facet of the Main, not as a work environment but as a living environment. She gives a description of her home using vocabulary that is typical of industrialized Quebec and this poor district of Montreal, and shows the decay and poverty of the Main. Her description of “Vivre dans le port, au dessus d’un garage” (38) is not exactly the image of the little house in the suburbs; it shows the living conditions of the poor in an industrialized city. Gloria adds smell to the description of the Main as she compares it to a “stand à patates frites!” (38) saying that Carmen and Maurice must smell like “graillon” (38) and that “Toute sent le suif, sur la Main, depuis quequ’s’années” (38). Gloria describes the Main as having been grand at some point but having lost its prestige and become cheap, decadent and boring: “Avant, quand j’ouvrais le châssis du salon j’voyais un corset de néons pis j’entendais des gars soûls chanter « La cumparsita »” (38). Of course, this is the vision of a fallen star who is alcoholic; for her, success is neon lights and drunk people singing songs they don’t know. She ends with “Aujourd’hui, par le châssis de mes bécosses j’vois le fleuve, des fois…” (38). In these passages, Gloria shows the desolation of the environment of the population of the Main. The image she shows is one of poverty and decay. The surroundings reflect the social conditions of the people who live there: ‘have-beens’ who have fallen to the status of trash.
Low self-esteem is part of the characters' experience; it is a topic they are all familiar with. Bec-de-Lièvre speaks like a shy young woman who has low self-esteem, no education and probably a facial deformity, as her name indicates. She says that she feels inferior: “Quand à s’approche de toé… t’as l’impression d’être rien (26). C’est pas moé qui serait capable de faire des affaires de même!” (43). She speaks for herself but all the other characters speak of similar feelings of fear and low self-esteem. Carmen has stage fright before singing her own songs; she is afraid that Tooth Pick and Gloria team up to ridicule her: “Mon Dieu! Tooth Pick est là! Y’est assis à’table à côté de Gloria! … J’y vas pas! J’ai peur de lui! Chus pas capable de monter sur le stage! Chus pas capable! D’un coup… y rit de moé… avec Gloria… D’un coup… sont arrangés ensemble! Y faut pas que je tremble de même!” (50). Bec-de-Lièvre, Sandra, Rose Beef and the choruses sing of their common fears and low self-esteem in the opening of Act II: “Tout le monde m’a toujours dit que j’étais laide! Que j’étais vulgaire! Que je savais pas parler! Que j’étais sale!” (58). Fear and low self-esteem are not the only things that serve as social cohesion, but they are part of the characters’ experience.

The language the characters use reflects different facets of their surroundings and social situation. What really creates unity among the characters (apart from the three antagonists) is Carmen’s song. This song is never heard, and that effect will be analysed later in the chapter. The fact that her song creates group unity is shown in the characters’ reaction to this song. The characters all recite the same comments in turn and then describe the effect the song had on the population of the Main. The other element that can be seen as a sign of unity or group cohesion is when the characters speak to one another; they all use the same pronunciations, vocabulary and sentence structures. And that shows
the reader that they all belong to the same social group and come from the same social class.

The micro-hierarchy in *Sainte Carmen de la Main* exerts pressure on all strata within the social group: individuals are not free to use any variation of language they want; they have to use a language variation (structure, pronunciation, vocabulary and content) that is accepted and understood by the other members of the social group. Basil Bernstein, in *Class, Codes and Control*, says that the group exerts a strong pressure or regulation on the individual when it comes to language. The language needs to relate to the experiences of other members of the same social group. People can understand a language that does not reflect their experience in their own words, but they simply do not identify with the speaker and his or her speech.

Gloria, along with Carmen and Maurice, has had a certain amount of success. This time, like the prosperous years of the *Main*, is long gone. Gloria remembers better days with regret and views Carmen’s success with jealousy. Gloria lacks the dignity to give Carmen recognition for her accomplishment. Gloria sang for herself and her own glory during her reign as the queen of the Main but now all she can do is give herself airs of prestige even if she is dressed in rags and can’t afford to buy her own cigarettes. Gloria’s behaviour creates the opposite of the unifying action of Carmen’s songs. Gloria passes by but is said to keep everything her ‘music’ can bring to her audience for herself: “Gloria-du-Port transporte la carnaval de Rio dans sa démarche pis ses gestes. Mais un coup qu’est passée, j’sens comme un trou... comme si Gloria voulait garder pour elle tu-seule sa musique envoûtante. Quand Gloria me regarde chus t’un feu d’artifice. Mais quand Gloria regarde ailleur... chus pus rien” (36).
One of the foundations of communication is that it functions at least two ways; the speaker has to be intelligible to the listeners. Carmen strives towards achieving communication with the listeners while Gloria does not care that her audience does not understand what she is singing. Gloria uses the sociolect of the Main when she speaks to Carmen but she does not use it or the local language when she sings. Carmen uses the sociolect of the Main and its language when she speaks to the other characters and, from what is said, she uses the local sociolect and language in her songs. This is why Carmen’s songs had such a great impact on the characters and why they prefer Carmen to Gloria.

The language the characters use in their dialogues reflects their shared experience. The hierarchy of the Main, however, does not allow the local experience to be expressed in a local language on stage, as if to say that the language of the local population is not meant to convey artistic elements or entertainment. The language struggles in Sainte Carmen de la Main parallel the language struggles of French in Quebec. Gloria represents the past and isolation of the culture in Quebec; she sings in a foreign language from a foreign land—excluding and ignoring local experience and language. This foreign language can be compared to the Continental French that the elitists consider to be the proper cultural vehicle. Carmen’s old songs were in American English, which is closer to the Quebec experience but still foreign. Carmen’s old songs represent the American influence on Quebec culture. Carmen’s audience feels closer to the latter because of the proximity of the American language and experience. Carmen’s new songs are in a language that reflects both the audience and their experience. By using a popular variety of language, Carmen empowers the population to see that their language can also be used to express their experience outside their everyday conversations—their language can also promote their culture and themselves.
The choruses portray the Main's population's reaction to Carmen's show: they add that Greta-la-Vieille no longer sings imitating Carmen's voice but uses her "voix rauque de vieille alcoolique" (77). This line shows the effect of hope in even the most decayed environment: Greta-la-Vieille is old, alcoholic and has probably been on the Main for a long time, but still she was imitating Carmen until she was confident enough to use her own voice—even if her voice was probably not that pleasant to hear. Carmen's message of hope extends to more than the Main. Like Tremblay's message, it would extend to the population of Quebec.

This empowerment would destabilize the established power. Maurice wants to keep the status quo and tries to discourage Carmen from using her new songs. Maurice, even though he hates Western music, wants Carmen to go back to her old songs because he sees that this entertainment sells and is not a threat to his control. The audience can simply repeat the lyrics like parrots while they drink beer. Carmen's new songs awaken the audience; they feel empowered by these songs and Maurice is afraid of losing control over his court. Maurice then takes extreme measures to ensure his control over the population—he has Carmen killed and replaces her with Gloria. The population of the Main have a choice of Portuguese or American English for culture or entertainment—their own language and experience is not an option. Those, like Carmen or Tremblay, who dare to use popular language and content, are considered a threat to the established power.

Louwerse observes that authors often use a language that is considered sub-standard, in this case *joual*, as the hyperlanguage of their texts. Tremblay was one of the first Quebec authors to make such an extensive use of a sub-standard language variation in a literary text. But, even though it was fashionable to use *joual* at that time, Tremblay's use of this sociolect as the hyperlanguage of his characters is not exaggerated. The
language simply completes the setting; the characters speak as they are expected to in this setting. Tremblay explains his choice to use *joual* in these terms: “Le joual, chez moi, vient d’une réaction contre le théâtre de compromis, à la Dubé, ni tout à fait français ni tout à fait joual, entre les deux; contre le cinéma québécois qu’on faisait à ce moment-là” (Rowan n.pag.). Again, Brisset’s use of the term ‘sociolecte fonctionnel’ is the best definition of Tremblay’s use of *joual* in his play. As seen in the section on sociolect, the language that the characters use is very close to the language used by the members of the social class they portray. Tremblay says that “il est contre ‘le joual pour le joual’, qui demeure, selon lui, un simple moyen d’expression … Michel Tremblay n’échafaude pas de théories sur la langue, sentant d’instinct que pour décrire le monde qui lui est familier, il n’y a pas d’autre moyen que le joual” (Rowan n.pag.). Tremblay, like Carmen in *Sainte Carmen de la Main*, was the voice of change—a local voice that spoke to the population.

Jacques Cardinal says about the unity of the language of the choruses:

> ce récitatif à plusieurs voix nous montre la misère individuelle et collective (sociale), il interrompt provisoirement la dissonance de ces paroles blessées en les faisant se raconter à l’unisson, donnant ainsi à rêver l’avènement d’un sens en commun par où le monde est monde; en cela, le jeu du chœur sublime le joual, voix de la douleur et de l’impuissance sociopolitique. (23)

The choruses and their language voice the pain and misery of the characters but show the hope that Carmen brings. Sandra, Rose Beef and the choruses describe the sun-rise on the morning of Carmen’s return and then, at the beginning of Act II, they are joined by Bec-de-Lièvre and they present Carmen’s words as words of deliverance:

> Tous: Tout le monde a toujours eu honte de moé! Mais Carmen m’a dit que j’étais belle pis que j’pourrais sortir de la taverne! (*Silence.*) Sortir de la taverne!
Chœur I: Réveille-toé, qu’a l’a dit!

Chœur II: Lève-toé, qu’a l’a dit!

Sandra, Rose Beef, Bec-de-Lievre: Reste pas effouerrée de même!

Tous: Reste pas assis! Reste pas assis! J’vas t’aider! (Silence.) Carmen m’a offert de m’aider. Ah! J’oublierai jamais sa derniere chanson! (61)

The characters use the term taverne because it is central to their lives on the Main. They also use pronunciations and vocabulary that are common to all the characters: Réveille-toé, Lève-toé, effouerrée and J’vas t’aider! The proper pronunciations and vocabulary for these would be réveille-toi, lève-toi, étendue and je vais t’aider!. Aside from the common sub-standard pronunciations and vocabulary, these lines convey a message of hope. These lines tell the audience that even if they are currently in a seemingly hopeless situation, they can get up and do something about it, and they will receive help. One of the messages of Sainte Carmen de la Main is that the people can get up and use their local language, and prove that it can be a vehicle to convey artistic and cultural values.

Tremblay “sublimes” the use of joual and the sociolect sub-genre of the Main in Sainte Carmen de la Main. The language of the characters’ experience is transformed from everyday language to dramatic poetry. By using the chorus and its poetic effects, Tremblay transforms a popular language into a literary language. Sainte Carmen de la Main was written to resemble an opéra parlé and presented to imitate a Greek Tragedy (Usmiani 114), two of the most highly regarded forms of theatre: “although the settings, characters and language contrast sharply with the purity of the traditional form, Tremblay achieves remarkable poetic effects with his joual chorus...” (Usmiani 115). The transformation of a popular language into dramatic poetry is a ‘tour de force’ because
Tremblay shows that language variations that had been denigrated have rhythm, rhyme and imagery. The choruses voice these poetic devices in their descriptions of activities and characters; they elevate everyday activities through everyday language to the level of poetry. The use of pseudonyms here, in opposition to Maurice’s oppressive and demeaning use of them, presents an aesthetic value.

The choruses rhyme pseudonyms and activities. These rhymes help create the poetic aspect of the language of the play: “Greta-la-Vieille traverse la Catherine du plus vite qu’à peut pis rentre dans le Quinze cents... Greta-la-Jeune, elle, souffle sur son Cutex, ses doigts écartillés comme des pattes d’araignée... Betty Bird a fermé se soue à cochons. Marie-Thérère d’Autriche se griche”(28). There is rhythm and rhyme in “ses doigts écartillés comme des pattes d’araignée” and “Marie-Thérère d’Autriche se griche.” He uses rhyme but also shows a local imagery to the characters’ activities: “la Catherine” and the “Quinze cent” are typical names in Quebec popular culture of the sixties and seventies. The expression *soue à cochon* is suggestive of the decadence of the Main. As Usmani points out:

> The three essential elements in the poetry of the choral passages in *Sainte Carmen de la Main* are: traditional poetic devices (imagery, rhythm, sound effect); a structure that is based on a system of counterpoint and/or repetition; and the tone, which is largely determined by a contrast between ordinary language and the events described, with their extraordinarily poetic and universal significance. (115)

Act II begins with the reactions of Bec-de-Lièvre, Sandra, Rose Beef and the choruses; they all say how Carmen’s song talked about their own experiences in turn and then all at once. The song is not heard: as in Greek Tragedies, the action occurs off stage because it is so great that it cannot be acted to its fullest potential—it is an ideal, but the
characters react to it and they all repeat the same comments on what Carmen said about them in her song:

Carmen a parlé de moé! Carmen a dit des affaires dans ses chansons qui venaient de ma vie, à moé! A l’a conté mon histoire … pis a l’a dit que c’était pas laid! A l’a même dit que c’était beau! Carmen a chanté que mon histoire était belle pis que moé … j’étais une chanson d’amour endormie dans une taverne! Pis Carmen a chanté que je pourrais ben me réveiller, un jour! Pis que si je me réveillerais, la taverne pourrait ben entendre parler de moé! Carmen a dit qu’au fond j’étais forte! (57)

The imagery is conveyed on the stage but also in the language of the characters, especially the choruses; “each of the two acts of Sainte Carmen de la Main is governed by a central image: the sun in act I, symbol of the glory of Carmen; and thunder and lightning in act 2, foreshadowing her ultimate destruction” (Usmiani 115). An example of imagery is found in “Le soleil, c’est Carmen! C’est Carmen qui s’est levée à matin sur la Catherine! C’est Carmen qui a réchauffé la Main tout l’après-midi! C’est Carmen qui est au-dessus de moé pis qui me regarde!” (20). Carmen symbolises the light, the end of darkness—the dawn of a new day. But Carmen’s short-lived success in breaking free shows Maurice’s resistance to change but also society’s ruling class’s resistance to loosen their hold of power.

From Les Belles-soeurs to Sainte Carmen de la Main, the critics remained divided: some, the more elitist, were strictly against Tremblay’s use of popular language and content. Others, the more radical, were more inclined to see this use of language and content as a more realistic reflection of popular experience. The comments of the critics on both sides were the same for the language of Les Belles-soeurs and Sainte Carmen de
la Main: some critics were shocked while others appreciated Tremblay’s use of a language that was local. Martine Corrivault, P. Gagnon, Guy Barrette, Renée Rowan, Fernand Doré, and Denise Mayan approved of Tremblay’s use of joual in Les Belles-soeurs. Claude Jasmin had points for and against while Pierre O’Neill, Georges-Henri D’Auteuil and Lise Monette qualified Les Belles-soeurs’ language as sub-standard. The same arguments were repeated in the critiques of Sainte Carmen de la Main, where Jean O’Neil and Michel Talbot were critical of Tremblay’s use of such language and content to portray Quebec culture. Others, like Nicole Zand, André Fortier, Jean-Claude Trait, Adrien Gruslin, Martial Dassylva, Sabbath Lawrence and Louise Cousineau supported Tremblay’s choice.

Renate Usmiani says that it is “hard to understand why the critics failed to appreciate [Sainte Carmen de la Main]” (127). Talbot sees Sainte Carmen de la Main as good for “discussions intellectualo-politico-dramatiques” (n.pag.) but not really entertaining. O’Neil says:

Enfin, bref, en peu de mots, la culture québécoise s’épelle avec un grand Q…

‘Carmen, c’est Michel Tremblay et la Main, c’est nous autres!’

Vue dans cette optique, ‘Sainte Carmen de la Main’ est une longue apologie du théâtre de l’auteur. Un théâtre qui a eu beaucoup de succès dans le peuple et qui continuerait d’être ‘snobbé’ par la critique, un théâtre où les Québécois se seraient reconnus et acceptés; un théâtre qui aurait permis aux plus humbles de s’exprimer par la voix d’un auteur à eux… (n.pag.)

O’Neil continues by saying that he does not see how Tremblay’s portrait of popular culture was accurate since the population could not relate to these marginal characters.
André Fortier defends Tremblay’s use of *joual* as the hyperlanguage of his characters because, he says, it reflects local experience. He draws a parallel with Carmen, who “va désormais chanter leurs vrais malheurs à ses auditeurs marginaux et opprimés : travestis, lesbiennes, prostituées et voyous du quartier” (n.pag.). He also says “Le sens du théâtre de Michel Tremblay a toujours été celui d’une incitation à une libération psychologique et morale, prometteuse d’une ‘ascension’ social du moins imaginaire ou apparente” (n.pag.).

Tremblay uses *joual* in what was considered the highest form of theatre, showing the importance of the language of the people. In doing so, Tremblay takes on the role of Carmen and tells the people that they are beautiful and strong and that one day the world might hear about them. Tremblay’s theatre has always been one of protest; his theatre is “aimed at forcing a response: recognition, questioning, desire to change—in short, a raising of consciousness” (Usmiani 3).

Tremblay says, in Nicole Zand’s article, “C’est vrai qu’au Québec, il y a des gens qui ont parlé des ouvriers, des petites gens, mais dans une langue aseptisée ou transformée, trop belle; c’était des gens qui marchaient sur leur propre ventre… Je pense que ma génération est la première à ne pas avoir écrit pour Paris” (n.pag.). In writing for the people of Quebec, Tremblay takes a stand that says the language of the people is apt to convey popular culture. Tremblay writes in his own words about local experience, and hopes his words will have the impact on the population of Quebec that Carmen’s song had on the population of the Main.

Tremblay transforms *joual* into a language that is used to convey culture and art in drama. Using these sentence structures, pronunciations, and vocabulary and making it into a literary language, Tremblay creates a theatre that is closer to the Quebec cultural
experience. Tremblay goes against the established cultural ‘norms’ and portrays a local experience in its language. His writing is an act of rebellion against the cultural oppression of the ruling class on the working class. The sociolect of the characters, who portray lumpenproletariats, shocked the audiences of the time and that was one of Tremblay’s main goals. As he said “Le théâtre que j’ecris présentement en est un de ‘claque sur la gueule’, qui vise à provoquer une prise de conscience chez le spectateur” (Doré 60).

**Conclusion**

The characters of *Sainte Carmen de la Main* are oppressed in their choice of representation; they can neither choose the language and culture that is presented to them nor the language that describes and represents them. The only cultural options are foreign content expressed in foreign languages: Gloria’s Brazilian songs or Carmen’s Western songs. Carmen and Gloria both come from the same social class; they speak the same language variation. They both communicate using *joual* when with other members of their group, but Gloria sings in a language and about a content she feels is superior. Gloria’s songs are projections or fiction, as were Carmen’s Western songs. The difference is that Carmen, once she discovers that she was projecting a false image to her audience, decides that a more realistic representation of her and her audience’s shared experience and language would be more meaningful. Gloria “incarne les paroles vides et empruntées” (Cardinal 26) and she uses the sociolect but inflected with borrowed English entertainment and Portuguese words to show her superiority. Her speech reflects her fallen state while her songs project an image of success, which is the image she wants
others to see; she portrays herself as Xavier Cugat³, Maurice as a “Chihuahua” (SCM 37) and Carmen as a “kid” (SCM 37).

Carmen, even though she is wearing a cow-girl costume, wants to show her real identity. After her pilgrimage to Nashville, in the U.S.A., she feels confident enough to go up against the established power and use her own voice and her own words. Carmen has discovered her identity and decides to liberate her audience, as well as herself, from the oppression of Maurice by elevating their everyday language to the level of a cultural vehicle. Tremblay presents the idea of liberation in the play, but, like Carmen’s songs, the solution is never heard. At the end of the play, the popular language never reaches the status of literary language; it remains an ideal. Tremblay shows that from 1968 to 1976 nothing had changed for the working class’s cultural representation, and through Carmen, he personified Quebec’s quest for identity through language. He strived to reach his audience with his own words, words that also reflected his audience’s experience. Tremblay used joual as an artistic means or device to suggest that it was better at reflecting most people’s experience and past with its archaic vocabulary, structures and pronunciations. A sub-standard language variation was more apt for the representation of popular culture than standard French.

Tremblay broke the norms with his use of a sub-standard variation of language. And doing so, the population of Quebec saw that if that lower language variation could reflect their culture, so could their everyday language. The seed was planted and Quebec French now occupies a dominant place on the Quebec cultural scene. Quebecers can now use their own words to express their experience and culture.

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³ A trained violinist, arranger, cartoonist and businessman, he was a key personality in the spread of Latin music in US popular music.
Chapter 2  David Fennario  

*On the Job*

Fennario, like Tremblay, was part of the working-class theatre trend of the mid-seventies. Thomson Gale mentions on *Contemporary Authors Online*, that “all of Fennario's work is closely related to his life, his community, and culture.” Fennario states that “as a writer and as an artist, I am writing about what I come from, that reality” (Gale n.pag). Fennario is often a character in his plays; in *On the Job* he is portrayed by Gary, and in *Nothing to Lose* he is Jerry. This method shows the audience an inner perspective of the setting and action of the play. Fennario is a working-class socialist who, with the success of his career as a writer, “has become absorbed with that most egocentric, unproletarian of themes, the struggle of the artist to hang onto his true self and resist selling out” (Goldie 63). His plays show the situation of members of the lower-working class in a system that is not made to accommodate them. The lower working class is part of a society in which it is not typically represented in the art. In society, the language of the upper classes is usually used to convey culture, hence minimizing the working-class experience and language—relegating working-class experience and language to the rank of the sub-standard.

Fennario is a Marxist; his writing celebrates the working class. He writes in a working-class language about the working-class experience; he created a hyperlanguage based on the sociolect of Pointe Saint-Charles, a working-class district of Montreal. The warehouse workers of *On the Job* use the same sentence structures and vocabulary as the rest of the working-class population of Pointe Saint-Charles but it is their warehouse vocabulary or work-related terminology that differentiates their sociolect sub-genre from the sociolect of Pointe Saint-Charles. This hyperlanguage is based on spoken language; hence, it lacks the structural rigidity of written language. Fennario used the sociolect of
Pointe Saint-Charles to create the dramatic poetry of his characters; "language as it is actually spoken is rarely as carefully planned out as it is in the artificial medium of writing" (McWhorter 10). The dialogues are better structured than simple conversations because conversations seldom proceed logically: the dialogues convey the identity, oppression, desperation and rebellion of the characters while showing the poetry of their spoken language. Fennario uses the "strength of spoken language" (McWhorter 89). He writes in a language meant to be heard, not read. From a structural point of view, the sentences of the characters are often incomplete and the vocabulary is simple and repetitive. But the language has rhythm and rhyme. The short sentences of the characters carry more impact than the longer, more complex sentences of prose which are better understood and "more easily processed" (McWhorter 89) when read than heard.

Social Group

The play takes place on Christmas Eve day in 1970 in a dress warehouse in Montreal. The workers are used to having the afternoon off on that day and now, because of a last-minute order from Eaton's, they have to work. This situation is imposed by the middle management (Shaw) and enforced by the foreman (Rene). The owner (Jerome) would give the workers the afternoon off but, as explained by the foreman, his decision is detached from the business situation; the owner has no idea what work has to be done at the lower levels to obtain the results he desires. The workers, after having spoken of their hopeless situation, decide to go on strike in protest of their situation.

Jacky, Mike, Billy and Gary are the focus group. They are from Pointe Saint-Charles. They are English speakers of Irish descent in a French-speaking province, and they work in an English-run factory. Since they are adults in 1970, they would have been educated before the educational reform of the 1960s. These are the characters that speak a
sociolect, a language variety distinct from that spoken by the other four characters (Rene, Shaw, the Union Boss and Jerome) in the play. This sociolect is determined by their social class. They are all employees of a dress manufacturer, working on the shipping warehouse floor. They are working class, manual labourers, and a distinct group using a language inflected with French.

Jacky is the rebel; he is a legend among his co-workers. Jacky does not submit to authority easily. His dream is to leave all this behind and escape on his bike to live the free life. Mike is his sidekick and provides comic relief throughout the play. Billy, like Pointe Saint-Charles itself, has seen better days and is simply waiting for retirement. Billy is the voice of submission. Gary has some experience outside the warehouse; he is the one who says that the situation is the same everywhere, and he is also the one who stands up and shows some leadership against their oppressors. Gary represents Fennario; he preaches the self-emancipation of the working class, and as will be analysed later, he suggests taking a stand instead of running from their oppressor. Gary chooses to use the sociolect of the other workers to make the point that they, even with the lack of support and understanding from the upper classes, can force changes to take place. Gary is the most articulate worker; he makes a more extensive use of language in his protestative speeches. He, like Fennario, wants to stay at the heart of the problem and fight for the working class, and doing so, he “presents his home, Point Saint Charles, as the exemplum of the evil results of the capitalist system” (Goldie 63).

Rene is the foreman; he is in charge of the shipping room; he is the other main characters’ immediate boss. Rene, as opposed to Jacky, Billy, Gary and Mike, is French speaking. He is in fact the only French-speaking character; he has to function in the workplace hierarchy in a second language. Rene also belongs to the working class but he
is slightly higher up in the company hierarchy than the workers. Rene uses the same sentence structures and vocabulary as the workers, but he uses more French vocabulary and expressions than they do.

The other characters are Shaw, the Union Boss and Jerome. Shaw is Rene’s boss. Shaw is middle- or upper-working class; he does not own the means of production but has a high enough socioeconomic status to take part in some of the company’s decision process. Shaw has a higher education level than the workers and Rene; he uses the same work-related terminology as the other characters but the sentence structures and vocabulary he uses are more formal than those of Rene and the workers. The Union Boss is supposedly there to help the workers, but it is apparent that he only cares about the Union itself and their contract with Jerome’s company, not about the workers. He uses work-related terminology but, like Shaw, he uses formal vocabulary and sentence structures. Jerome is the owner of the company. He is upper class. Jerome, like Shaw and the Union Boss, uses the same work-related terminology as the workers and Rene, but the sentence structures and vocabulary he uses are more formal and closer to those of Shaw and the Union Boss.

The workers portray the working-class inhabitants of Pointe Saint-Charles, and their sociolect has an Anglo-Irish heritage inflected with French. The ancestors of this local population, as stated on the Heritage Montreal web site, came as labour force to build the Lachine Canal and the Victoria Bridge in the mid-nineteenth century:

The construction of the Grand Trunk Railway and of Victoria Bridge, inaugurated in 1860, stimulated economic and population growth and a real estate boom...

Skilled labourers from England and Scotland, primarily Protestants, worked in construction, drove locomotives, and settled in the south end of Pointe-Saint-
Charles. French Canadians and Irish Catholics lived further north and formed a pool of uneducated local workers. (http://memorablemontreal.com)

Irish immigration to Canada had started before the Irish Famine of 1847. As Mark McGowan puts it, “Although it had unleashed a virtual flood of immigrants in a very short period of time, the Famine has become an endpoint of a much longer migratory movement from Ireland to British North America, rather than the focus of Irish migration” (2). The Irish immigrants who came to Canada before or during the Famine were not the “poorest Irish [who] died where they had lived” (McGowan 3) or “those of minuscule means [who] fled to English or Scottish cities” (McGowan 4), but rather “those of modest income” (McGowan 4). Those immigrants “were actually above the Irish average in commercial acumen and in social and technological adaptability” (Wilson D.A. 6-7).

William Hamilton observes that the Anglicisation of Ireland had already started and was about complete when these immigrants left Ireland:

The dissolution of the monasteries in 1537 deprived Ireland of virtually all forms of education. Since the bardic schools tended to promote an anti-English spirit, they had been largely eliminated. Tradition thrives under persecution and much of their work in preserving the Celtic tradition was transferred to ‘courts of poetry’ and the ‘hedge’ schools. The latter gave instruction in the vernacular and, as English authorities regarded them as illegal, they were to be found in such secretive locations as behind hedges. (Wilson 31)

Therefore, “most Irish migrants had already learned English before they left home. Although Gaelic remained the first language of many, by the end of the Napoleonic Wars the Irish could generally speak English, even if only as a second language” (Wilson D.A. 4). “The Irish experience in 19th century Canada was very different from that of 20th
century ethnic minorities. In contrast to many recent immigrant groups, the Irish spoke English, were familiar with British political, social and cultural traditions, and formed a substantial proportion of the population” (Wilson D.A. 19): “The first Dominion of Canada census of 1871 showed that 24.3 per cent of all Canadians were of Irish ethnicity, in comparison to the English with 20.3 per cent and the Scottish with 15.8 per cent. English-speaking Canada had a significant Irish accent” (Wilson D.A. 11).

The Irish, Scottish and British who had migrated to Canada previous to the Famine had established the foundation of an educational system. As William Hamilton points out, “By contrast with England and Scotland, Ireland provided few direct educational links, yet it is sometimes forgotten that at the time of the Confederation Irish Canadians comprised the second largest racial group in the country after the French Canadians” (Wilson 32).

In Quebec, however, there was also a strong French-speaking, Roman-Catholic majority. Even though this situation complicated the question of education, the Irish immigrants, whether Catholic or Protestant, were able to function in English in English-controlled Quebec. A portion of the Irish immigrants stayed in Pointe Saint-Charles during the Industrial Revolution:

In 1881, the population reached 10,000 residents and its growth peaked at more than 30,000 between 1900 and 1950. This population also stood out as a result of its multi-ethnic make-up. In addition to the English, Irish, Scots, and French-Canadians, Pointe-Saint-Charles also welcomed contingents of Polish and Ukrainian immigrants looking for better living conditions at the start of the 20th century. The vast majority of these people, who came from the countryside, had
little education and essentially provided unskilled labour, which satisfied the needs of local industry. (http://www.shpsc.org)

Most of these working-class immigrants were competing for work. The two main groups to fuel the industrial revolution before these new arrivals were the Irish and the French Canadians. The needs of industrialization and urbanisation overpowered the need or want for education. Charles Phillips explains that laws had to be passed in the 1870s and 1880s to prevent children from working as adults (in factories, mines, saw mills...). Children were expected to work as young as possible, making education less of a priority.

By the 1970s, the work opportunities that had existed in industrial districts such as Pointe Saint-Charles during the industrial revolution were no longer present. Starting in the 1950s, the changes that took place in the transportation networks combined with the closing of the Lachine Canal resulted in a reduction in employment that in turn led “to a drop in population, which declined to 24,000 in 1960, and then stabilized at about 13,000 in 2000” (http://www.shpsc.org).

The residents of Pointe Saint-Charles, from its beginning to the period portrayed in the play, were working class. The members of the social group that are portrayed by the workers of *On the Job* are uneducated and unskilled labourers who grew up in a decaying neighbourhood with scarce opportunities. The workers were educated before the educational reform of the Quiet Revolution in a school system that was insufficient to meet the needs of the population. Hugh Stevenson explains that:

between the end of World War II and the beginning of the Quiet Revolution late in 1959, Quebec’s complex educational system came face to face with twentieth-century requirements it was not designed to handle. The roots of the difficulty lay in the history of the preceding three centuries: Quebec’s educational ideologies
were split among French, English, Protestant, Roman Catholic, European and North American traditions. Attempts to educate were further hindered by divided responses to growing industrialism and urbanization. It was no mystery by 1950 why Quebec's education system was failing to meet the contemporary needs of its students. (Wilson 403)

In addition to the already inadequate Quebec school system, the play is set in a working-class district—the characters would have received a working-class education. According to Bernstein, who published some research at that time, the working-class education system has a lot of shortcomings; working-class students have a higher failure rate (56) and that phenomenon would be linked to "the education in lower working-class neighbourhood schools being unstable and inadequate" (251-252). Bernstein's observation is that there is a big turnover in these schools because the teachers would rather teach in middle-working-class districts and above. Bernstein also claims that the higher social classes feel that the "school system should compensate for the lack of education at home" (252). The workers' speech, like all spoken speech, can be seen as sub-standard when analysed from a written language perspective. But the workers are not writing they are speaking. They are using a common language that provides a very effective means of communication within the group.

The characters are all part of the same speech community and discourse community. They all share the same linguistic code in that they use the same vocabulary, Gallicisms, and archaic structures like auxiliary omission, faulty negative and interrogative sentence structures.
Sociolect

The vocabulary of the characters is influenced by their occupation, their English/French work environment, and the fact that they speak a minority language—English is a minority language in Quebec. The sentence structures used by the characters reflect their level of education. The fact that the main English-speaking characters are of Irish descent has an impact on the language of the play, but since the Irish in Montreal share similar linguistic traits with other English-speaking groups in Montreal, this ethnic difference has a lesser impact on their language as a sociolect than social class does—the workers' sociolect is determined by their social class. However, their Irish bardic heritage of oral tradition is present with their songs and stories.

Although the workers make an effective usage of their spoken vernacular, their language patterns need to be analysed for their vocabulary and grammatical qualities to establish the difference between the sociolect of the workers and the sociolects of the other groups presented in the play. The characters, apart from Rene, are part of the second largest language group in Montreal—English-speakers. The workers speak the sociolect of the English-speaking working class of Montreal of the 1970s. The sentence structures they use are incomplete; they also use archaic contractions, lexical borrowings and code switching. The characters' use of obscene language will be analysed later in the chapter.

The characters use ain't as a contracted form of am not or are not. This modern misuse was standard in early modern English:

*An't* (early ModE [aent]) for *am (are, is) not* is apparently of late seventeenth-century origin; the variant *ain't* occurs about a century later. With the eighteenth-century British English shifting of [ae] to [a] as in *ask, path, dance*, and the like,
and the loss of preconsonantal $r$, the pronunciation of this word shifted to [ant],
and aren't was thus a perfectly good spelling for it, suitable alike in aren't I? and
aren't you? This spelling has been grievously misinterpreted by those, including
most Americans, who pronounce $r$ before a consonant. (Pyles 219)

The characters' use of ain't instead of am not or are not could simply be a mix of archaic
linguistic education and North American pronunciation. Gary uses "we ain't working"
(48) instead of we aren't working and Jacky uses "we ain't gonna" (79-104) in the
negative.

A similar phenomenon occurred for the transformation of don't into doesn't in
seventeenth- and eighteenth-century English (Pyles 218). The use of don't in the third
person is an archaic use and it has endured in colloquial North American and Canadian
English because this change occurred later in the evolution of English. The characters use
don't instead of doesn't in expressions like "He don't care about bosses. He don't care
about nothing" (50) because that is the language they have learned from their ancestors
and peers. Part of the population of Pointe Saint-Charles, or at least the part portrayed by
the characters, is of Irish descent, and their language would have conserved grammatical
elements that were standard when the immigrants left their linguistic homeland and these
elements would not have evolved at the same pace as their British counterparts (Pyles
232).

The workers, since they belong to the same social class, tend to use similar
grammatical variables and syntax. Some characters in On the Job use double negatives,
which are a very common form in spoken language to give emphasis to a statement; Billy
says "didn't say nothing" (22). As seen earlier, the main characters in On the Job make
conjugation mistakes. Gary uses "we ain't working" (48), Jacky says "some guys been
bitching” (9), “we got the afternoon off?” (43) and “we ain’t gonna” (79-104), Mike says “I seen him” (25), Billy uses “times has changed” (44). In the previous examples, Gary and Jacky use ain’t in the negative instead of I'm not or are not, Mike and Jacky omit the auxiliary have in their perfect tenses, and Billy conjugates the auxiliary in the third-person singular instead of the plural.

The common words and contractions that the characters use, apart from fuck and shit, are: gonna, ya, shoulda, gotta, oughta, wanna, musta and used ta. Some of these misuses of auxiliary forms stem from the differences in British and North American English while others are simply archaic usage or due to the process of grammatical word erosion (McWhorter 16). The characters' particular mistakes in their use of contractions of modal auxiliaries and modal perfects are very common for speakers who simply repeat what they hear how they hear it without knowing the proper grammatical elements: “in informal speech, have in modal phrases is often pronounced like the word of ... to in ought to is pronounced like the word a” (Fuchs 242). The characters use contractions like “shoulda” (41), “musta” (36) and “gonna” (10) instead of should’ve, must’ve and going to. The use of should of, must of and goin’to for should have, must have and going to would have even denoted a slightly higher level of education than what the characters are using.

The spoken language suffers far more erosion than written language, hence the a ending rather than the ’ve. The lack of auxiliary use in questions or complex verb tenses shows that the characters simply duplicate what they have heard and not what they would have learned in school, again showing examples of “grammatical word erosion” (McWhorter 16) that are inherent to spoken language.

Peter Trudgill states that there are grammatical differences between sociolects, or what he refers to as social-class dialects, and mentions that they are accompanied by
phonetic and phonological differences (34). As opposed to the pronunciation of the
French-speaking characters of *Sainte Carmen de la Main*, the pronunciation of the
English-speaking characters of *On the Job*, when saying expressions like “wanna” (21),
“shoulda” (41) or “lemme” (23), would be considered informal or colloquial rather than
sub-standard. English might be a minority language in Quebec but it is a majority
language in Canada and the United States. French, as we have seen in the previous
chapter, is a minority language in North America. The French language in Quebec had
social restrictions that English did not have because of its minority status. The
contractions and expressions used by the workers in *On the Job* are less likely to be
categorized as sub-standard because English already has a strong recognition in Canada—
making its variations less sensitive to status evaluations.

Rene represents the French-speaking working class: he uses functional English
that he would have learned on the job. Rene shares some linguistic similarities with the
other characters; even though he is French speaking, he uses words, structures and
expressions like “don’t fuck around” (14-31-47), “where’s the 1411s?” (15), “gonna” (15-
47), “How many we got there?” (20), “you been working...?” (26), “you wanna” (45-79),
“shit” (46), “get the fuck outta here” (76), “you guys been drinking?” (78), “what you
doing?” (83) and “why you smiling?” (108). Rene’s sentence structures and vocabulary
would have been learned by close contact with English-speaking people, and in this case,
from English-speaking people who use sub-standard or incomplete sentence structures.
Rene makes the same structural mistakes and uses the same vocabulary as his co-workers;
he would have learned functional English without having the education necessary to
understand the inner workings of the language. Rene uses double negatives and the third-
person singular *don’t*: “don’t know nothing” (77) and “people don’t believe in nothing no
more” (108). He omits the auxiliaries in his questions: “you been working” (26), “what the hell you doing...?” (76), “you guys been drinking” (78), “why you smiling” (108).

Ronald Wardhaugh states that “language can be more determined by association than social class” (Wardhaugh 149). The characters’ vocabulary is determined by association—in this case the work-related terminology or jargon. In *On the Job*, the vocabulary of the dominant and working classes will be the same when referring to the workplace: “1411’s” (15-37), “1807’s” (38), “1050’s” (20-37) when referring to dress models, “stock room” (21), “shipping room” (44-86), “back” (15), “dock” (26) when referring to places in the workplace, and “salesmen”, “models”, “secretaries” (22), “rack” (15), “boxes” (26-40), “staples” (40), “stapler” (38), “stock” (38), “shipper” (38), “pad” (29), “invoices” (27), “orders” (39-56), “shipped” (39), “punch his card” (64), “rush orders” (86), “overtime” (87) and “short pay” (88) when discussing people, objects and concepts related to the workplace. The vocabulary used here is shared by different social classes and characters with different socioeconomic status in the same workplace; the bosses and the employees use work-related vocabulary or terminology. The managers and bosses of the company need to be understood by the workers because they cannot afford not to be productive due to a lack of communication. This work-related terminology is used by all the different social classes in the play. Every social group in the play has had to add this terminology to its sociolect.

In addition to including work-related terms in their language, the characters use lexical borrowings from French. The English language is composed of a large number of words from different origins, but French had a particularly significant influence on the evolution of Modern English: “In 1066, French speakers took over England for roughly the next 200 years and introduced no fewer than about 7500 words” (McWhorter 99). The
workers also use words that were not assimilated in English at that period but that infiltrated the language after the immigrants arrived in Canada and started working with French Canadians—these words are regarded as Gallicisms or lexical borrowings.

Mike uses code switching when he tells Jacky “Hey, Jacky. Touche pas. Hey, man” (12). Mike is English speaking (his real name is Michael, not Michel) but he still uses French expressions. Rene says “Moudez tête cawrey bloke, est-ti tabernack” (40). In this excerpt *moudez tête cawrey est-ti tabernack* is in French and *bloke* is in English. Rene’s language use shows a greater assimilation because his use of the borrowed element is within a sentence whereas the code-switching of Mike and the Union Boss are separate sentences. The Union Boss says, “But meanwhile ... C’est la vie, eh?” (88).

Jacky uses “morphosyntactically integrated borrowings” (Grant-Russell, “Influence of French” 480) when he says “mange lamarde” (20): the proper way of saying this expression would be *mange d’la marde* in French, but this French expression has been assimilated into English and adapted to the English syntax. The verb *mange* remains because the imperative structure in English and French are similar, but the French partitive article *de* has no equivalent in English when preceding non-count nouns. Consequently, this partitive article has been dropped. The *la marde* is combined into one word giving *lamarde*. This results from a liaison between the two words. Some other expressions are assimilated and adapted to English pronunciation: the *tabernack* is written almost correctly, the real religious term is written *tabernacle* but most French-speaking Quebecers, as analyzed by Gendron, would say *tabarnack* when swearing.

Mike makes an “innovative use of borrowings” (Grant-Russell, “Influence of French” 481) when he rhymes and repeats “Back, rack, pack. Tabernack” (16). Mike rhymes English and French words because they end with the same sound, but also
because they are part of the characters' sociolect. Shaw and Jerome do not use lexical borrowings like the other characters do.

Shaw, the Union Boss and Jerome do not use the same sentence structures as the workers in their speech. They use sentence structures that are closer to Canadian Standard English, hence reflecting their higher level of education. The element that makes the workers' language a sociolect is that members of other groups, like Shaw, who have the same Anglo-Irish heritage, the same French influence and work for the same company but would have evolved in a different social setting, will use different sentence structures than the warehouse workers would. Shaw's sentence structures are standard (formal or neutral) even when he uses work-related terminology: "Rene, would you please make it a point to know exactly what we have in stock...?" (38) and "I'm not the shipper. That's your job. Now, count out the 1050's and 1807's for me" (38). As opposed to the workers in the play, Shaw would have received a higher education, and hence a more standardized linguistic education. Jerome uses well-structured sentences: "So. They can wait, can't they?... And I don't care to discuss it. Does Eaton's tell you what to do, Richard? Don't we have our own schedule? ... So let Eaton's wait and give the boys the afternoon off, for God's sake" (73). Jerome uses a tag question to make Shaw agree with him. Jerome also uses rhetorical questions that he knows Shaw will have no choice but to answer in his favour. The Union Boss simply tells the workers that as long as they are "paid time and a half" (87) and that the company does not make them work "Saturdays" (87) "it seems that the company is within the law as far as [their] contract is concerned" (87), and "we are working on the difficult problem of the hours" (88)—all of these standard sentence structures.
There are several idiolects presented in the play, but those that form a sociolect are those spoken by the workers, who all belong to the same social group. Rene’s idiolect is close to that of the workers but he is slightly higher in the corporate hierarchy and he is French speaking. Shaw, the Union Boss and Jerome have their own idiolects but there is no evidence to classify them as belonging to the exact same social group. Suffice it to say that the language of Shaw, the Union Boss and Jerome is not the sociolect of the workers; their only linguistic similarities would be their work-related terminology and the fact that they all speak English.

**Usage and Effects of the Sociolect within the Play**

Fennario makes use of the oral quality of language to reach his audience. Although spoken language is an effective medium, the author needs to use short sentences, basic vocabulary and predictable content to ensure a maximum understanding by the audience. The short dialogues of the characters are the hyperlanguage used in the warehouse but they also serve in reaching the audience.

Spoken language, especially in a play, is a type of communication that needs to be presented differently than written language. Spoken sentences need to be shorter and simpler to be remembered by the listener. Written language is a “slow process—typically one-tenth of the speed of oral speech” (Ong 40) when delivered and processed. With written material, it is easy for a reader to reread passages that are more complicated. But because of the limitations of human memory, which prevent us from “being able to interrelate in syntax a very large number of propositions” (Deese 29) and the speed of spoken language, the speaker or author needs to use shorter sentences and simpler vocabulary to reach the audience.
A “smooth and predictable” (Deese 55) syntax is more easily remembered by listeners. Fennario makes his characters express themselves in a way that is easy for the audience to follow; their speech is simple and expressed in predictable syntax and vocabulary, and as Gregory Reid states, “as a measure of their authenticity the characters do and say exactly what we expect of them” (Reid, “Fennario Turned Rhapsodist” 68). Reid follows by saying that “audiences delight in the flatness of the dialogue, the old jokes [and] the swearing” (Reid, “Fennario Turned Rhapsodist” 68). Fennario created a community on stage by making his characters interact in rapid dialogues. Or as Walter J. Ong says “because of its constitution as sound, the spoken word proceeds from the human interior and manifests human beings to one another as conscious interiors, as persons, the spoken word forms human beings into close-knit groups” (Ong 73). This can create unity on stage but it also involves the audience as they “become a unity with themselves and with the speaker[s]” (Ong 73). Fennario’s characters, speaker and listener, operate by what Deese describes as the “same linguistic rules in producing and understanding speech” (Deese 55). The same extends to the audience because the play was written for them to watch, hear and understand. The audience and the characters do not necessarily share the same sociolect, but their “syntactic and semantic rules must be roughly the same, or else no act of communication can take place” (Deese 55).

In making the dialogue shorter and basing the hyperlanguage on a spoken sociolect, Fennario had to give his characters’ speech a certain rhythm. The characters are English speakers in front of an English-speaking audience; the audience is used to hearing the tones and emphasis of English and the tones and emphasis of second-language speakers of English. Furthermore, spoken language includes hesitations, false starts and pauses like, “Eh?... Gotta make a living, I guess” (OtJ 50) “I said, even ... Hey, Mike”
(OtJ 50) and “Hey. Uh, fuck” (OtJ 51), that “provide opportunities for the speaker to maintain an orderly flow of speech” (Deese 56) and “unless they are excessive or unusual in nature ... they do provide more time for the hearer to process what has gone before and perhaps to anticipate what is to come” (Deese 56).

There are certainly limitations in using spoken language as a medium to reach a large audience and get a message across, but there are strengths to using this medium over written language. Spoken language is more natural as opposed to the artifice of writing, “If language had existed for 24 hours, then written language would have existed since about 11:08 pm” (McWhorter 90). Spoken language is immediate and creates immediate impact with words and sounds. Like the words and music of a song, the speech of the characters has a certain rhythm while conveying the characters’ experiences, identities and struggles.

William B. Hamilton talks about Irish education in terms that explain the workers’ use of songs and stories in On the Job to remember their ‘neighbourhood’ heritage:

the Irish possess an educational heritage that predates Christianity. In Celtic Ireland, a system of bardic ‘schools’ had evolved. Through this medium wandering minstrels and poets preserved the legendary stories of Ireland’s past. This proud inheritance was destined to give purpose and meaning to the struggle for the maintenance of an Irish identity. (Wilson 30)

The stories and songs of the characters are part of their sociolect; it is a language that members of other social backgrounds would not use or identify with. Songs and stories are artful ways of using spoken language. The songs the workers sing have a certain rhythm and rhyme. The workers’ songs, stories and conversations often convey imagery
reflecting the workers' physical and social environment, and emotions like oppression, pride and identity.

In poetry, sounds are very important; furthermore, the hyperlanguage of the characters is based on spoken sociolect not written text. The use of shortened contractions reflects the phenomenon of “consonant erosion” and “principle of least effort” (McWhorter 16) present in spoken language; Fennario structured the dialogues of his characters but there is evidence of these linguistic theories in their pronunciation. The a sound at the end of words like shoulda and musta makes a stronger impact than the ’ve sound at the end of should’ve and must’ve, hence adding to the poetic effect and impact of the hyperlanguage.

Jacky makes French jokes implying the French-speaking Quebecer term for the English as ‘square heads’: “Listen, why does a bloke have to take four aspirins when he’s got a headache, eh? One for every corner of his head” (17). Oral artfulness is necessary in humour; a joke needs the impact of sounds, timing and intonation to be effective.

Fennario also presents a linguistic portrait of the French- and English-speaking members of this work environment. Kramsch observes that the French and the English have different ways of emphasising words or sounds: Jacky spells his words before saying them to show emphasis; he says “G.O.O.D. Good” (34) and “J.O.Y. Joy” (34). Mike says “L.O.V.E. Love” (37). Rene, who is French speaking, repeats words to add emphasis; he tells the boys “vite, vite. Wake up, wake up” (75). These might be idiolects but they show linguistic preference for certain methods of emphasis.

Sound repetitions and rhyme are also perceived and used differently; Mike rhymes and repeats “Back, rack, pack. Tabernack” (16). Mike rhymes English and French words because they end with the same sound, and as seen earlier French words can be used in
English for their aesthetic quality more than their meaning. Mike makes use of innovative borrowings to create rhymes. He is simply having fun with simple rhymes like children with a nursery rhyme where they “find enjoyment in the sounds of language ... chiming variations” (Frye 544), especially when these sounds imitate the rhythms they know as they “breathe, or walk, or clap [their] hands in time” (Frye 544). Fennario deliberately introduces the French word *tabernack* in what could be qualified as “innovative ways to achieve a desired effect” (Grant-Russell, “Influence of French” 481). In addition to the rhyme in *ack*, this line has a specific rhythm: three short syllable words and then one three-syllable word. It would sound something like *tah tah tah, tahtahtah*.

Mike uses consonance “I used ta have a skinny chick jumped like a rabbit” (37) where the “end-consonant sounds the same in words or syllables but vowels [are] different” (Frye 545). Mike makes a sign to imitate the strikes he saw on the TV news. His sign reads: “We’re so uptight,/ We can’t sleep nights./So we went on strike/ To get our rights” (93). Mike uses rhythm and rhyme to make his statement. In these four lines, he expresses their initial situation of oppression followed by their actions and the reasons for these actions.

Gary also rhymes to make statements. He thinks that going to the tavern for lunch “sounds like a stupendous idea” (69). Mike and Jacky think he is getting drunk because he used *stupendous*. Gary continues with the reiteration “I understand it, but I can’t stand it” (69). His remark seems to be an attempt at excusing his use of a word that is outside their sociolect. Furthermore, his rhymes give strength to his opinion since he sounds more articulate. He rallies the others for a strike with “no, we ain’t working and no, we ain’t moving” (81). Gary also rhymes to show the Union Boss that they do not need him with “drunk or sober, we got your number” (91) and “hit the road, toad” (92).
The characters’ conversations reflect their pride in the Point. The characters often refer to local places in their conversations; they talk about “Joe Beef’s on the waterfront” (19): in 1873, a strike broke out at the Lachine Canal and the strikers were supported during the work stoppage by an innkeeper from Vieux-Montréal called Joe-Beef. The characters also mention the “Pool Hall on Wellington Street” (24), and hint at the fashion difference between Ontario and Montreal: “Look at this shit. They must be unloading this stuff in Ontario, man. Nobody in Montreal is gonna wear it” (42). Even though the characters speak English as people in the other provinces in Canada do, they see a difference. Their identity is linked to Pointe Saint-Charles and not to the rest of Canada, as they say in one of their songs: “We don’t care for all the rest of Canada ... We’re from Pointe Saint Charles. Hey” (70). They end their song with hey and they regularly use eh, which are, according to Robert McCrum, Robert MacNeil and William Cran, among the original “Canadian idioms” (264). Then Jacky makes a reference to hockey with “He shoots... He shoots, he scores” (70), imitating a typical commentary of ‘Hockey Night in Canada.’

The characters, as in the previous song, refer to their environment in their songs; Mike and Jacky start a song with “Born in a garbage can in Saint Henri” (75), which is another lower-working-class district of Montreal, and they all sing together:

Oh, the English they live on Saint George’s Street.

The Welsh live in Saint David’s Lane.

The Jews are very fond of Craig Street.

And every nation owns The Main.

The Scotch they live on Argyle Avenue.

The French they live in Côte Saint Paul.
But the Irish you can’t beat for they own Saint Patrick’s Street.

Every nation has a street in Montreal. (36)

The characters seem proud to be of Irish descent; Gary is impressed by Billy’s ability to take a big guzzle from a liquor bottle and shows his admiration by saying “Wow! You are Irish, eh?” (52). They also recall the old Irish woman who didn’t like landlords: “Yeah. Well, we had this old Irish lady living upstairs from us in the Point when I was a kid. Mrs. Collins, a real nice old lady, and everybody on the block loved her and she loved everybody” (52).

The characters of On the Job sing songs together; these songs, which are part of their sociolect, unite them since they all know them. Like sailors on a boat, the rhythm of the songs made them work together as one. The songs they sing are about the Point and are very restricted to the people who come from there; like the chant de bord on a ship that is “une chanson composé sur le bateau, qui le plus souvent parle des condition de vie des matelots … presque un code secret des matelots, c’est leur monde” (Yvart 9). Jacques Yvart, in Florilège de la chanson de la mer, confirms this when he talks about reasons to sing at sea. The workers in On the Job are not necessarily working when they are singing but it is something they do in the workplace, or when they are with peers. There are many reasons to sing while working and Rene Victor, in Chansons de la montagne, de la plaine et de la mer, examines three used by the oppressed classes. Victor is focussing on the Haitian situation, but his observations could also be applied to the workers of On the Job: “la chanson constitue, entre autres choses, un sûr moyen d’évasion, un motif fugace et temporaire de redressement, en tout cas, une ressource inépuisable de protestation contre les injustices, les souffrances, les inéquités dont ils sont éternellement victimes” (Victor 13).
The songs in the play reflect the social and physical environment of the characters. Certain songs describe the physical environment of the characters: Gary’s “When I’m dead, bury me deep/ Down along Saint Antoine Street” (19), and Jacky and Mike’s “Gary Crockett” (75) song. Some of the characters’ songs are mixed with a local experience and a sense of belonging like the “old song about Montreal” (36). Other songs reflect the characters’ restricted social identities: “We don’t care for all the rest of Canada./ We’re from Pointe Saint Charles” (70). Another type of song the characters sing describes their social environment like the “Dirty boogie, bop bop” (36) and the modified Jingle Bell song on page 33. The characters use these songs to temporarily escape their situation, to remember better days, and, in a way, to protest against the fact that they have no choice but to stay there.

This social cohesion is very much linked to their identity—an identity that has historically been linked with oppression; like their ancestors in Ireland being oppressed by the British, or their ancestors during the industrial revolution striking to get better working conditions, they are a group fighting against the system. Jacky, Mike, Billy and Gary, since they all belong to the same social class and live the same experiences, discuss the same topics: work conditions, hopelessness, the Point. These characters speak the same sociolect and they will alienate anyone who uses a different sociolect. This phenomenon binds the characters together but it also restrains the members by limiting their choice of vocabulary; they have to conform to the linguistic norm of their social group. In On the Job, conformity is not limited to language. The workers also have to act according to the group’s established rules; Jacky is upset that Gary did not want to shake Jerome’s (the owner) hand as the rest of the group did. Jacky says “I shook his hand. We all shook his hand. Something wrong with us?” (65). According to Jacky, the workers need to act as a
They want Billy to stay when they plan to have a sit in. Gary is upset when Billy
decides that he has had enough:

"Billy: I'm leaving... It's getting too crazy... I better go.

Gary: Aw, fuck! That's right. Give up... Ya always give up... You old fart" (99-100).

Any word that is not part of the characters' sociolect is singled out, then ridiculed or used
as a joke.

The workers in *On the Job* do use a few words that are not part of their regular
register like "stupendous" (69) and "contemplate" (74), and such words "metaphor,
metafive [and] metasix" (94) are used in their humorous act to explain their situation to
the media. But most of the time they use this extra-sociolect vocabulary to make a parody
of the sociolect of members from other social groups; they imitate Jerome when he speaks
of his Bermuda vacation (64), and they ridicule the sociolect of the Union Boss (88-92)
when they realise that he is telling them that they have no reason to complain.

Language needs to relate to the experience of other members of the same social
group. People can understand a language that does not reflect their experience in their
own words, but they are not likely to identify with the speaker and his or her speech.
Jerome, Shaw and the Union Boss are not part of the same social class or do not have the
same socioeconomic status as the main characters. Hence, they use a language that shows
the different focus of their experience. Jacky and Mike pick up on Jerome's comment
about snow. Jerome says "what's Christmas without a little snow, eh?" (62). For Jerome,
snow is a Christmas decoration. This comment does not fit with the workers' experience.
Mike thinks Jerome made a joke: "Ha, ha, ha. A little snow" (62). Jacky verbalises the
ridicule of Jerome’s comment by adding “Yeah. Covers up the ground” (62). The workers have no choice but to live with snow; they do not have the luxury of seeing snow simply as a decoration.

The Union Boss, who is supposedly on the workers’ side, uses work-related terms like “non-union labour” (88) and “grievance” (88) when he speaks with the employees. The focus of the Union Boss is clearly on the Union’s contract with the company, to know if there are illegal activities like hiring non-union labour, and not on the worker’s wellbeing. The characters say that they are overworked and the Union Boss simply tells them that as long as they are “paid time and a half” (87) and that the company does not make them work “Saturdays” (87) “it seems that the company is within the law as far as [their] contract is concerned” (87). The characters feel exploited but the Union Boss tells them that there is not much they can do for now, and to take the work opportunities when they present themselves: “we are working on the difficult problem of the hours ... when the work is there, it’s there. And when it’s not, it’s not” (88).

The workers start to understand that the Union Boss will not help them when he says that “in cases like this we ask the members to mail a list of grievances to the Union headquarters where the list is read, duly considered by a special committee and filed for further use by [the] committee of inspectors” (88). Gary immediately picks up on the avoidance, imitates the Union Boss’ words, and pretends to drop their list of grievances in the waste-paper basket: “Yeah, sure. Uh, your list, uh, will be read, uh, duly considered and, uh, filed for further use” (88). Gary realises that the lack of immediate measures means that their case will be forgotten and that they will have done all this for nothing. Jacky then picks up on the situation and interrupts the Union Boss at his use of the word *tentatively* (89): “Duh? I had one, but the wheels fell off” (89). Jacky is showing the
Union Boss that they see by his language that he is not with them. The warehouse workers stop the Union Boss’ speech to ask him clearly if they will be supported by their Union: “we’re not interested in hearing how well your business is doing. We just wanna know if you’ll stand by us?... We’re going on strike. You wanna join us?” (90). The difference in language between the bosses and the employees reflects their difference in focus and experience.

Rene follows Shaw’s orders and enforces them, and the workers end up doing all the work. Billy tries to explain to Gary that they get used to the work but Gary doesn’t know if he wants to “get used to [this]” (29), and he wonders how people “survive a lifetime of shit like this” (29). From the workers’ point of view, “there’s no escape. This whole country is just one big factory, one big jail ... There’s nowhere to go... Like they got it all set up. Either you’re a good nigger or ya die” (54). Gary is using this pessimistic view of their situation to try to show them that the answer is not in running away but in staying and standing up for things to change. The workers feel that they are expendable: if they walk out, they’re history. Jacky explains that if they refuse to do the work and just leave, the company will “just wave goodbye and bring in those goofs from the stock room to do [their] work. They got [them] screwed” (58). Rene confirms this when he tells the warehouse workers that all he has to do is tell Shaw that they want to strike, and “he’ll have another crew in [there] in five minutes” (83). Furthermore, even for Rene, there is no option. With this one incident (the workers deciding they want to strike), all his work in trying to make a career is jeopardised. He explains to Billy that he will probably be fired “not right away. Maybe a week, a month. Soon as they find a new guy. Younger guy” (106).
Rene verbalises the vain efforts to make it in a world where they are simple peons:
“Years I spent getting here ... Years and years of going to work, going home, feeding the
kids, going to sleep, going to work ... Yes, boss. No, boss. ... All that time just for this?”
(107). Rene sees the absurdity of all this effort when he says “It’s crazy when you think of
it. All the tricks and games we have to play just to make dresses for women to wear”
(107), “It’s bad the way we have to live when you don’t want to live this way... It’s
bullshit what I got to do just to work” (108). Rene finally sees that this incident was all for
the best: “in a way I feel better. It’s gone, no more bullshit” (108). Billy comforts him by
saying that maybe they’ll “find something better” (109) because they “can’t find anything
worse” (109).

Billy sees options for the others, and suggests to Gary that he should go back to
school, but the characters’ vision of education is biased; they see education as detached
from reality or simply as a means of learning more sophisticated methods of exploiting
the uneducated workers. Gary answers to Billy that B.A. stands for “Barely Able” (30)
and that instead of teaching “philosophy and literature, man, they oughta give courses on
how to fill out unemployment forms. Ten easy ways to get on welfare” (30). The workers
see the educated as the oppressors; they say that Rene will have problems getting Shaw to
quit as easily as he had Shaw’s predecessor quit because he (Shaw) went to business
school and learned psychology. Jacky’s explanation of psychology to Mike is that when
people like Shaw learn this “they keep ya smiling while they work ya to death” (41).

As mentioned earlier, the abundant industrial work opportunities of the second half
of the nineteenth century and of the first half of the twentieth century had ceased to exist.
During the time of the setting of the play, work opportunities had become limited along
with the workers’ options. Jacky is a ‘legend’ but still has to work to earn a living. Gary
say “So many guys I knew on the street are gone dead or crazy, man. There’s no escape” (54). Gary mocks Jacky’s idea of living the free life and leaving on his bike; he tells him “Toronto, Frisco, Vancouver, man. They’re all the same and there’s nowhere to go and nothing to do but go down dying right here, man” (60). The language of the characters shows hopelessness as they realise that they are stuck in this situation, yet this is the ignition to Gary’s thinking process that they have the power to do something.

The warehouse workers’ speech shows that they see themselves as the lowest rung of the corporate ladder. For example, when Jacky pretends to be a reporter, they are making fun of the absurdity of their situation; they speak of an uprising but their language is that of the vanquished:

Gary: And now you see us here in a familiar situation going up and down the snakes and ladders, losing again and bound to lose, but in the grand tradition of those captains on their sinking ships, we say, ‘Fuck you. We have only begun to lose…’ And tired of waiting for the mail and the promises and the heroes and the leaders, we’re gonna do it ourselves and lose... (95)

The characters decide to stay where they are and lose on their own terms. They decide that they will rebel against the system that oppresses them and that instead of walking out and giving their boss an excuse to fire them, they will stay and cause a problem that the ruling class will have to deal with. The workers decide to make a statement, and in doing so, show that the only option for them is to lose. And the warehouse workers agree with Gary’s statements on losing: they cheer as he says “we’re gonna do it ourselves and lose ... And lose and lose and lose and keep on losing ... Until overwhelmed by our defeats, we shall win” (95-96). The characters go on strike without the support of their union and without thinking about the repercussions. Fennario shows the situation of the lower
working class and their lack of tools and understanding to escape their hopeless situation. The only option the workers see until they decide to stand up is to fuel the industry with their labour.

Billy asks Rene if they had the afternoon off since it was Christmas Eve and the boys were tired. Rene answered that “two big orders came in on urgent request. They’re from Eaton’s so [they] can’t fuck around” (45). Billy says the boys “aren’t gonna like it” (45). Rene then explains that nobody “cares if they don’t like it” (45), he doesn’t like it but “Eaton’s tells Shaw. Shaw tells [him] and [they] do it. That’s all” (45), and that “Jerome don’t know nothing about what it takes to make him money and it’s money that keeps him happy and [them] with jobs” (77). Rene has to enforce the oppression; in order for him to keep his job, he has to make sure Jerome is happy and that Shaw can’t find fault with him. On the other hand, he has to live with the ones he oppresses first hand: for him, to be foreman is to “know the real taste of shit” (45).

Fennario uses reverse psychology when voicing the hopelessness of the characters. The characters complain that there is no escape and that they are prisoners of their situation when in fact they have the solution. The workers attempt to make a difference; they decide to “stick and stay” (OtJ 81) instead of running away. This rise of the working class is more in line with Fennario’s Marxist ideals than is the fatalist language of hopelessness usually expressed by the workers. Eventually, it is this verbalization of hopelessness that leads to the workers taking action.

The workers enjoy reminiscing about the old days and their old heroes in the Point. They admire Zeke ‘peanuts’ Boucher, a murderer and sociopath, because he lived the way he wanted to, and as Jacky points out “He just didn’t take any shit from anybody”
(25). Jacky was also considered to be some sort of a legend in his neighbourhood because he did not submit to authority easily:

Mike: Yeah, that Jacky’s alright. He don’t care about bosses. He don’t care about nothing. Ya know, he’s kind of a legend down in the Point too ... Yeah. Hey, first time I seen Jacky, man, he’s eight years old, dancing up top a telephone pole right there on Wellington Street and me and a gang of guys standing there looking at all this and thinking, shit, he’s crazy, and the cars stopped on the street and the cops chased him down, and well, it was beautiful, man. I was there and people still talk about it.

Gary: Yeah, I heard that story. (50)

These anecdotes are simply ways of escaping their immediate environment and making sure the legends are remembered— as well as being a legacy of a strong oral tradition. The characters are subjected to work conditions they do not control, and admire those who have the courage not to conform easily. The workers want to be remembered as heroes who stood up to their oppressors. Gary knows that if any one of them walks out the door, they’re “gone... Just another old man walking down the street” (81): staying and standing up is the only way they can be remembered.

Anne Dean observes that in David Mamet’s plays the characters’ “frustrations are dramatized through obscene language” (33). Fennario uses fuck to give a notorious prestige to the characters; the more notorious the characters, the more they use it. Jacky says fuck 26 times in the play. Gary uses fuck almost as often as Jacky. The other main characters all use fuck as well, but not as often. The workers and Rene also use variations of fuck, like fuck you or fuck off. This use of obscene language is Fennario’s way of showing the anger and powerlessness of the characters. Fennario uses swearing as a
necessary representation of working-class bitterness and outrage. This results in using *fuck* as an answer to everything and every situation—they cannot change the situation so they get angry at it. They answer to orders or comments with "no fucking way" (77) or "fuck you" (27). They do not only use this obscene language to protest against their oppressor but also among themselves. Gary tells Jacky to "fuck right off" (66), and Jacky calls Gary a "fuckin' goof" (66).

Rene swears in French but he also uses *fuck* in his expressions like "don't fuck around" (14-31-47). *Fuck* for Rene might simply be part of his language when he speaks to the "Boyce". As opposed to the English-speaking characters, he would use French swear words like "moudez Crist!" (100) when he is really angry. Rene usually uses obscene language when he is in a position of authority, but he finally confronts Shaw and tells him "Okay, I heard you alright!" (101) to show that he has had enough.

The warehouse workers protest against Rene because he is the enforcer of their oppression. Jacky challenges Rene's orders with "Got no tail last night, eh?" (14), meaning that Rene was in a foul mood because he did not have sex the previous night and not because they were not doing their job. Jacky further undermines Rene's authority with "Ja-wohl" (47) and a Nazi salute to pretend that Rene runs the warehouse like a concentration camp. Jacky is the first one who opposes Rene in the play. He responds to Rene's demeaning comment "move it, stupid" (27) with "hey, who are you talking to, man? I don't take this kind of shit" (27). He frequently answers Rene's comments with expressions like "mange lamarde" (20) and "don't yell" (43). Jacky also protests against the fact that they are working that afternoon with "no fucking way" (77).

Gary also confronts Rene. He does so softly at first: when Rene asks him to help Billy with the invoices, he answers with "fuck you" (27). Gary starts opposing Rene when
Rene tells him that he is fired and to “get the fuck outta” (76) there, Gary simply says “no” (76). Gary starts getting more aggressive when Shaw wants Rene to fire them and clean up the place in “five minutes” (101). Gary starts telling Rene that all the work he has done is for nothing: “Ya dumb fuckin’ Pepsi... All this work for nothing, eh, Rene?... Thought you knew where it’s at, but it’s gone ... Sell your soul for a car and a TV set ... now they don’t want you no more. Fini, finished, kaput. Off to the glue factory” (102-103). Gary is referring to Rene as being a stupid French Canadian who thought he had reached a certain security but now because of one incident he will be sent away like an old horse. Gary also shows that Rene had to turn his back on his own social group (working class) to try to get ahead, and that it finally does not get him what he wanted.

Gary protests against all forms of authority. It starts with Rene who enforces this authority: “Rene only sticks for himself. Number one. Can’t be a foreman and a nice guy” (67). Gary then transfers his hatred to Jerome when he explains why he did not want to shake his hand. He tries to focus his generalised hatred of authority saying, “sometimes I wish everything I hate in life had just one face” (67). Gary is unable to focus this hatred on just one person. He protests against every form of oppression. He starts with the concept of the “good nigger” (54) and moves on to the need for a “revolution” (55).

Gary is the voice of change. He encourages the others to “fight back” (58), to stand up to their oppressors and “let them worry for a change” (80). He says that the “smart thing to do” (80) is simply to sit there and say that they are not moving and they are not working. In doing so, Gary wants to force their oppressor to deal with them. He also foresees some resistance when he says “they get rough, we get tough” (86). Gary’s protest is further fuelled by the Union Boss’ unwillingness to support them. He then speaks of their options to continue doing what they have always done the way they have
always done it. After this realisation that they were meant to lose, Gary turns his anger
toward his colleagues when Billy gives up and leaves. He feels that they are also
responsible for their common oppression, and he tells them “aw, fuck! That’s right. Give
up... It’s me that’s trapped ‘cause you goofs always give up” (99-100).

Conclusion

The sociolect of Pointe Saint-Charles that serves as the basis of the hyperlanguage
of On the Job is sometimes structurally incomplete (missing structural elements like
auxiliaries) and ungrammatical, and the vocabulary is simple for written standards, but
highly effective and poetic for spoken standards. The sound of spoken language is as vital
to written language as the work force to the ruling class. As Walter J. Ong puts it, “But, in
all the wonderful worlds that writing opens, the spoken word still resides and lives.
Written texts all have to be related somehow, directly or indirectly, to the world of sound,
the natural habitat of language, to yield their meanings” (Ong 8). The hypotext Fennario
used to create his hypertext might have been regarded, as were the hypotexts used by
David Mamet, who “based his characters’ speech on the wasteland of middle class US
speech” (Dean 15), as informal or colloquial and the workers sentence structures as sub-
standard, but the fact is that this hyperlanguage creates an effective means of
communication amongst the characters.

By the same token, Fennario’s use of short sentences, simple vocabulary and
predictable syntax makes it easy for the audience to understand and remember. The
characters’ sociolect is shown through dialogues throughout most of the play, but Gary
makes use of discourse speech when he makes a short monologue on their situation and
the actions they are about to take. Fennario uses the strengths of the delivery of spoken
language, the impact of sound and words, thus using a “language [that] influences action” (Dean 16).

Gary is the only character who uses discourse language (monologues), as opposed to conversation language, to make statements. He says, “And now you see us here in a familiar situation going up and down the snakes and ladders, losing again and bound to lose, but in the grand tradition of those captains on their sinking ships, we say, ‘Fuck you. We’ve only begun to lose ...’” (95). This is the longest sentence in the play. It does, however, use repetition (the word lose) and familiar images like the captain on his sinking ship and the *snakes and ladders* board game. The romanticised image of the captain was used to incite the other workers into action. They want to be remembered and to be part of something grand, so they will stand up.

The protest begins as obscene language, then as complaint, then as discussion and finally results in a discourse. This language leads to action. The characters go on strike, and when the simple *stick and stay* method fails, the conflict becomes physical. Language fails to resolve the problem: Gary and Rene get into a fight, and Jacky hits Shaw. Like the sociolect of East End Montreal and the sociolect sub-genre of the Main in *Sainte-Carmen de la Main*, the sociolect of Pointe Saint-Charles is not the language of power but as Rene puts it, “depression is coming too, I think... And Québec now, they talk of revolution” (109)—and in Fennario’s play, the language of the characters suggests that change is coming.
Chapter 3  Vittorio Rossi  

Scarpone

The main characters in Scarpone portray Montrealers of Italian origin. Gregory Reid, in an online profile on Vittorio Rossi, identifies him as being “considered to be the first playwright of note to present a distinctly Italian-Canadian voice on the English-Canadian stage” (Reid, http://www.litencyc.com). Rossi was born and raised in Montreal, and like Tremblay and Fennario, he is writing about what he knows—in this case the Italian community and characters of Montreal, their interactions with the English- and French-speaking communities and, since he worked in the shoe department of the downtown Bay store for six years, the tricks of the shoe trade. Accordingly, Rossi sets the play in a Montreal women’s shoe store called Scarpone.

The main plot of the play revolves around the decisions of the upper management to promote a salesman to the position of manager and whether the store where the play takes place will remain open or be closed. There are several secondary plots that develop through the characters’ conversations and interactions: frictions between the salesmen and their female supervisor, the competition between two salesmen for the same promotion, the retiring manager’s impotence in the corporate decision-making process, the salesmen’s interactions with members of other ethnic groups, and finally two of the salesmen wanting to meet the same woman.

Rossi based the hyperlanguage of his characters on the sociolect of English-speaking Montrealers of Italian descent, and the sociolect sub-genre of Montreal shoe-store salesmen. The Montreal Italian salesmen’s sociolect reflects their ethnic and social affiliations, but some of the vocabulary that they use reflects their views of different ethnic, social or gender groups.
Social Group

As in the two plays analysed in the previous chapters, there is a micro-hierarchy in *Scarpone*. Bosco, who is not seen in the play, is the boss; he represents the upper management and he has the power. Rosanna is the supervisor; she follows orders and makes sure the salesmen also follow these orders. She treats the salesmen as inferiors. Rosanna also makes it clear that she “will not cover up” (47) for her staff’s incompetence; her allegiance is to the upper management not the sales staff. Stan is the manager; he is between Rosanna and the salesmen. He has to mediate between Rosanna and the staff. Stan’s allegiance is to the store. Stan backs Rosanna’s pep talk on sales as he says the final words at the meeting: “Let’s keep our focus on selling” (51). Stan also supports the salesmen when he explains to Rosanna that the changes are unnerving to the staff, and he supports Giancarlo’s suggestion for a new cashier. Dino and Giancarlo are two salesmen. Dino is currently the top salesman, and Giancarlo was top salesman before him. They are both in their twenties, share similar views on women, use similar sales techniques and expressions, and use the same protestative language to describe their situation. Dino and Giancarlo also applied for the same promotion to become manager. Vince is the rookie; he is the new part-time salesman, but he has been working for Scarpone shoes as a stock-boy for three years.

The other characters represent the three main ethnic groups in Montreal: Sylvie is a *Québécoise de souche*, Lisa is of Italian descent and Mrs. Crombie is English speaking. Sylvie is one of Dino’s customers. Dino remembers her name and uses his sales techniques and language, along with some French sentences, to sell her shoes for her wedding. She buys the shoes but returns them later that day, and in the process voices negative views of Italian salesmen. Lisa is Dino’s wife’s sister. Dino wants to introduce
her to Giancarlo and invents a plot to get them to meet. There is a mix-up and Lisa ends up meeting Vince, who had her on his “mind far too long” (13) and who was planning to invite her out for Stan’s retirement party. Lisa eventually meets Giancarlo but, even after Giancarlo tries to seduce her, she clearly prefers Vince. Mrs. Crombie is Stan’s oldest customer; she “is a twenty-year-old customer” (13). Mrs. Crombie wanted to be Stan’s last customer and she expected something more than “a shoe store friendship” (104). She tells Stan, “Shopping is sometimes a hobby with me... I go from store to store buying and hoping to finally connect with people I buy from... and so going home doesn’t become such a negative prospect” (106). She knew that Stan was retiring and that this was his last day—she figured it was her last chance.

The tone of oppression is felt at the very beginning of the play: Vince feels that the company is deliberately sending them lower grade merchandise: he says “they keep dumping on us” (11). Stan agrees with “They want us to compete with downtown—high fashion, and we’re selling last fall’s stock” (12). Stan, even though he is manager, also has to submit to the decisions that were taken without him being consulted: the company decided to cancel his order of softfooters, all repairs will now be centralised, and the services of the shoe repairman he hired are no longer required. Stan feels that it is time for him to leave; he is tired of all these changes. Stan personifies the life cycle of the store; he was there at the beginning, he did his job and now it’s time to move on. Stan’s retirement party also mirrors the store; 40 years of service for a company that forgets to organise the retirement party—like the name of the store (Scarpone was supposed to mean “The jewel of Shoes” (101) but it really means “Clodhopper... heavy boot, a big shoe” (101)), Stan’s career is a joke. Stan sums it up saying: “Yes... well... you put forty years into this company, you make a life here, and then it all comes down to a party” (13).
There are many changes coming, and when Stan says that “they find adjusting to all these sudden changes a little arduous” (48), it shows that many changes have already taken place. There is no stability in the work environment of the characters—everything moves fast and everything is changing, and none of the characters have any control over the decisions that will be imposed on them. Dino and Giancarlo use a quick urban rhythm in their speech because everything else around them moves at this pace. For them there is only now: Dino says “tomorrow does not exist” (40) and Giancarlo follows with “The sale is made now” (40). Stan, since he is retiring, will not have to continue living at this new pace, so for him “there is always tomorrow” (16).

These changes reflect the business tendency of the eighties and nineties: company mergers and the internal changes that occurred in many businesses. Business was no longer personal. Stan had hired his friend, Biaggio, to repair the shoes; it was more convenient: his “shop is around the corner. There are no delivery charges. He picks [the shoes] up himself” (82). The upper management had decided to let Biaggio go after having used his services for twenty years, and Stan was not consulted on the matter or notified of the decision. When Stan objects to this decision and to the manner in which it was carried out, Rosanna tells him that “this isn’t personal. This is a business decision” (82). The behaviour of Dino and Giancarlo also reflects this “business is not personal” mentality. Lisa was supposed to be Dino’s bribe for Giancarlo’s loyalty. Dino put in for the manager position, and he wants Giancarlo to be on his side. Dino tells Giancarlo, “You won’t owe me a thing” (27) for introducing him to Lisa, because once in a while people do things “for no personal gain. Except ... Loyalty” (27). Giancarlo also plays games behind Dino’s back; Giancarlo also put in for the manager position but did not say anything to Dino. All the other characters knew about Giancarlo going against Dino for
the promotion. Giancarlo put in for the promotion simply to show who he is and what he can do, and to see “where [he] stand[s] with this company” (57). Giancarlo is unsure of his chances of getting the promotion. He wants the company to think that he cares, and even if he “might be taking the job away from someone who really does care” (57), he wants to “still look good with the company” (57).

The fact that Rosanna is the supervisor exposes Dino’s and Giancarlo’s chauvinistic mentality; this mentality is shown through their language when they speak to or about Rosanna. Dino and Giancarlo constantly undermine Rosanna’s authority because she is a woman. They team up against her when she tells them she will not cover up for them. She eventually realises that they are mocking her when Dino quotes her the regulations: “According to company policy... new company policy, sales reports must be handed in by ten o’clock Saturday morning... It’s five to” (46). Giancarlo is upset with Rosanna because he feels she should be taking care of her employees; he says “She is my superior! She should be looking out for this store, and her staff! Not her fucking feet! And then she has the face to tell me I’m late with my commission report, when all she does all day is pamper herself!” (66). They undermine Rosanna’s authority and make it clear when they indoctrinate Vince, who has just been promoted to part-time sales clerk, into their vision of the workplace hierarchy. Vince is learning the ropes from Dino and Giancarlo. Giancarlo is upset because Vince plays into Rosanna’s show of authority at the weekly staff meeting. He tells Vince that he will have to keep his “mouth shut at meetings” (52) until he knows “what is happening... how to play the game” (52). Stan reminds the others that “Rosanna is the supervisor” (52) and that Vince has done nothing wrong. Dino is nicer to Vince while he shows him the inner workings of the store starting with “Vince, you got any problems, you come to me, alright” (53). Yet Dino continues to
undermine Rosanna’s authority by telling Vince that these meetings accomplish “absolutely nothing” (53) and that “the things she talks about” (53), they already know. Dino continues by saying that Rosanna needs these meetings to remind the sales staff “that there exists a higher authority” (54). He says she is a “figure head” (54) and that “she was taught in the theory” (54) but “when it comes down to work, she ... should not be telling men what to do” (55). Dino’s last sentence shows a major reason behind his resentment at having Rosanna as a supervisor: Rosanna is a woman, and Dino and Giancarlo are chauvinists. Dino also thinks that because Rosanna is “the only woman on [Bosco’s] staff” (144), her opinion must count. It is as though it is acceptable for Bosco to have men on his staff, but that there has to be a good reason to have a woman there.

Dino would question the collective wisdom of Bosco’s staff if they chose anyone other than an Italian man to run the store. He says “Customers like to know that the race that invented shoes is running their store” (24). Dino also belittles Lisa’s ex-boyfriend saying that, “he wasn’t even Italian ... At least Giancarlo’s Ital...” (73). Pat Donnelly, critic for the Gazette, focuses on the male identified language and the Italian content of the plays; her, as stated by Gregory Reid, “‘anti-dialogistic’ complaint is ‘not so much that Rossi uses Dino and Giancarlo as mouthpieces for a special Italian brand of male rage but that he loses control and allows their voices to prevail’” (qtd. in Reid, “Worlds within Worlds” 19). It seems that she found the dialogue to be too ‘macho’. Nigel Hunt agrees with the misogyny of some comments of Dino and Giancarlo, but he says that it produces an “interesting dynamic [that] comes from the interaction between these men and their female supervisor and an attractive woman [Lisa] who works across the street, producing a not-so-subtle study in competitive misogyny” (Hunt 34). Dino and Giancarlo are also
homophobic and refer to men they find look feminine as “fag[s]” (143): “You think they’re gonna hire a guy who’s almost a girl to tell us what to do?” (24).

The salesmen, especially Giancarlo, see Rosanna as belonging to a different group and having a different socioeconomic status partly because of her use of language. He comments that Rosanna sounds “so fucking English” (52) and that she gives herself “some elevated status” (53). Stan does not necessarily agree with Rosanna or the sales staff, but he wants to keep the focus on sales, which is their common reason for being there: “Let’s not one little meeting upset our day. Now I suggest we go out there and sell” (53). In doing so, Stan takes the focus off the interpersonal differences and back to their common purpose.

Dino and Giancarlo question Rosanna’s Italianness because she uses a slightly more formal level of language than the rest of the sales staff when she interacts with them, and also because she makes it clear that her loyalties lie with the upper management and not the salesmen. In other words, the salesmen see that Rosanna is using the language of economic power (Standard English) as opposed as their common sociolect (the language variation of English-speaking Montrealers of Italian descent) when she interacts with them. Rosanna does use a standard language structure to show her status and affiliation. Boberg says, “People basically self-construct themselves socially ... Just like what kind of car or house they buy or clothes they wear, how someone talks pegs their status. People change the way they speak as an indicator of social situation” (Boberg, “The English Language in Canada” n.pag.) or their desired social status.

The salesmen consider themselves to be Italian; Giancarlo says, “The customers here know we’re Italian” (42) and Dino adds, “we’re all Italian” (138) after saying that “because is very un-Italian” (138). The customers consider the staff to be Italians.
Mrs. Crombie refers to “those Italian boys” and Sylvie calls Dino and the others a “gang de ... spaghett” (127) because they work for Scarpone Shoes that was created by “old man Benedetto” (100).

Like pride in the Point and Irishness in *On the Job*, the cohesion of the social or ethnic group in *Scarpone* is demonstrated by the salesmen’s allusions to their Italianness or, as Bruno Ramirez calls it, *Italianatà*, and their association with other Italians. This solidarity does not stop the characters from interacting with other groups; as Jeremy Boissevain observes, “The Italian community in Montreal is not an isolated whole. It is composed of individuals who live in daily and often intimate contact with the society of which they form such an important part” (37). Rossi shows these inter-ethnic dealings via the two customers in the play. The salesmen are Italian but they interact with the French (Sylvie) and English (Mrs. Crombie) population of Montreal. The characters need to be able to function in three languages and, by the same token, with three different cultures.

Ethnic diversity is also reflected in the names of people and places. The characters have lunch at “Guido’s” (79). Dino has problems remembering a customer’s name: “Mrs. Leveille... Leveileille... something” (30). Lisa asks Vince if they are going to *La Violette*. Guido’s is an Italian restaurant. Mrs. Léveillé has a French last name. And *La Violette* is a French Restaurant across the street from Guido’s.

The characters’ language, apart from Mrs. Crombie’s, is based on the language of the middle working class of Montreal in the 1990s; members of the social group portrayed in the play (apart from Stan and Mrs. Crombie) are in their twenties, and therefore would have been educated in the post-Quiet Revolution public school system. The characters (apart from Sylvie and Mrs. Crombie) portray Italian immigrants or second-generation
immigrants in Montreal, and would have presumably attended English primary school and high school, and as explained by Rosenberg and Jedwab:

The choice of English language instruction among postwar migrants reflects ... the economic and social attraction of the English language in North America. As a consequence of residential segregation, the English Catholic schools became monoethnic schools with English being used as the language of instruction and Italian used by the students outside of class to communicate among themselves.

(279)

Dino, Giancarlo and Stan use Italian words in their speech either as expressions or to start a conversation with another Italian; when Stan calls Biaggio, he starts with *buon giorno* (75), and Dino and Giancarlo use expressions like *paesano* (94), *minchia* (30-46-109-116) and *braciòla* (131). The sentence structures and vocabulary used by the characters are close to Standard English since they are all middle working class and were (apart from Stan) educated after 1964 in what Rosenberg and Jedwab would qualify as a standardized school system. There are, however, a few syntactic differences between the spoken Quebec or Montreal English of ethnic groups of English descent (Irish, Scottish and British) and the spoken English of Montrealers of Italian descent. The salesmen’s spoken English shows signs of what Claudia Marcela Chapelton qualifies as “cross-linguistic influence” (Chapelton 54). Chapelton defines cross-linguistic influence “as the interplay between earlier and later acquired languages [which] includes such phenomena as transfer, interference, avoidance [and] borrowings” (Chapelton 54).

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4 *Good Day, or in French Bonjour*

5 *Peasant: person from the country*

6 *Minchia means penis, but it is used in slang to mean *fuck. An expression like Que minchia? would translate in *What the fuck? And Minchia! would translate into an exclamational *Fuck!*

7 *The Italian slang equivalent of Slut.*
Sociolect

The hyperlanguage of *Scarpone* is based on the sociolect of Montreal English speakers of Italian descent, and the sociolect sub-genre of shoe salesmen. Stan, Vince, Dino and Giancarlo use the sociolect and sociolect sub-genre that will be analysed in this chapter. Vince, Dino and Giancarlo are almost the same age. All four salesmen have a similar level of education, are from the same social class and share the same occupation. They, according to Claire Kramsch’s theories, are part of the same speech community and discourse community, and share the same discourse accent. Their sociolect sub-genre is a variation of the sociolect of Montreal Italian immigrants—a language that is influenced by the close proximity of English, French and Italian. The specificity of this sub-genre is in the uses of sales language and shoe-store vocabulary. Dino and Giancarlo are the only two characters who share all the same linguistic characteristics; they use the same sentence structures, vocabulary, work-related terms, sales language and techniques, and language of protest (obscene, chauvinist and racist language and opinions). Dino and Giancarlo share some linguistic traits with Vince because they are in the same age bracket and would have been educated in the same education system, but Vince has not been in sales long enough to have developed a sales language. Dino and Giancarlo share speech structure traits with Stan because they all use sales techniques, and share much the same vocabulary because they are of Italian descent and share the same occupation. Stan and Vince do not use obscene language to the same extent as Dino and Giancarlo, and they do not use the metonyms and dysphemisms that Dino and Giancarlo use. In *Scarpone*, as opposed to *On the Job*, the characters’ ethnic background has a big impact on their sociolect. Because of the minority status of English in Quebec, the English spoken by immigrants in Montreal has evolved differently than in other North American cities.
Italian immigrants have not had as much time to assimilate the language as the Irish immigrants have (the Anglicisation of Irish immigrants had begun earlier), and the first language of the Italian immigrants is in the Romance language family, which is somewhat different in structure from the English language.

Since the salesmen use language as a tool and because their language is standard when they speak with customers, the grammatical variables and syntax of the characters' sociolect, as theorized by Chambers and Crystal, is not a relevant indicator of social class in *Scarpone*. These linguistic variables simply show that the characters portray members of society who are at least middle working class. The salesmen use a formal or neutral language when they speak with customers and colloquial language or slang when talking among themselves. There are, as should be expected in spoken language, a few examples of auxiliary omission in questions and statements. Yet, the fact that the salesmen are of Italian descent and that English might be their second language has an impact on the sentence structures they use as well. Especially when communicating with other members of their ethnic group, they transfer from Italian to English with usages like rhetorical sentences, pronoun omission, and double negatives.

The auxiliary omissions in the following examples are typical of spoken English, and are not syntactic transfers, since the Italian language also uses the “two aspectual auxiliaries essere ‘be’ and avere ‘have’” (Burzio 53). Giancarlo says “I been here” (110) instead of I have been here, and “Maybe I seen” (120) instead of maybe I have seen. Dino says “When you gonna learn?” (23) instead of when are you going to learn? And of course he contracted the going to into gonna as most of the characters do in the play. Dino also omits the auxiliaries in these questions “How goes it?” (29), “How much you think...?” (31), “You ever sold before?” (39); he leaves out the do in how much do you
think...? and the have in have you ever sold before? These are the result, as seen earlier, of grammatical word erosion. As for the “How goes it?” (29) expression, it is simply a common expression, misused as it may be. Further research on the Italian language shows that this expression is the result of two cross-linguistic influences: syntax inversion and syntactic transfer. English word order is rigid and usually follows the SVO (subject-verb-object) word order. Italian word order is more flexible and the “SVO, VOS, and OSV orders are allowed in conversational speech” (Chapelton 55). “How goes it?” (29) does not follow the typical English information-question structure. This leads to the syntactic transfer which is, in this case, the influence of the native language on the use of the present continuous in English. Chapelton observes that “In Italian ... both the present tense and the equivalent of the present continuous can be used to express current activity” (Chapelton 57). The “How goes it?” (29) expression should be How is it going? in Standard English because it is used to talk about something that is happening at the moment, but it uses a simple present instead of a present continuous tense.

Giancarlo uses syntax inversions when he speaks. He tells the other salesmen “why at these meetings does she have to sound so fucking English?” (52). Giancarlo’s sentence does not follow the usual SVO structure or Wh-word ASVO?-question structure: why is the question word (Wh-word), at these meetings is an adverbial phrase, does is the first auxiliary, she is the subject, have to is the modal (or second) auxiliary, sound is the verb, and so fucking English is the verb complement. To use the English standard structure, Giancarlo would have had to say: Why does she have to sound so fucking English at these meetings? or At these meetings, why does she have to sound so fucking English?
The salesmen do make a few conjugation mistakes. Vince uses "If it don’t look" (78) instead of if it doesn’t look. Dino says "Bosco don’t fucking care" (119) instead of using the third-person singular doesn’t. Both Giancarlo and Dino misuse the subjunctive past in their conditional sentences; they say “If I was” (60) and “If I wasn’t” (23) instead of if I were and if I weren’t. Rosanna also makes a grammar mistake with the subjunctive past when she speaks; for instance, she says, “If the store was turning over a profit” (51) instead of if the store were turning over a profit. The subject/verb agreement logic of some Romance languages (French and Italian) is when the subject conjugates and precedes the verb, the verb will agree with the subject. In the case of the subjunctive past in English, the subject can be either singular or plural and the verb will invariably be in the plural form. And in the case of the previous examples, the subject is singular and the verb is conjugated in the singular, following Romance language rules not English rules. Many native speakers of English make the same mistakes and use the indicative instead of the subjunctive in such structures; this mistake is not necessarily related to a second language, but the logic behind the mistake can be explained in the uses of different languages.

In the same logic of Romance languages (French and Italian), the verb does not necessarily have to agree with the subject in cases of the existential there, where there is a dummy subject that refers to the notional subject which follows. The expressions there is and there are in English agree with the notional subject, which follows the verb. In French, il y a replaces both there is and there are: il y a with a singular noun and il y a with a plural noun. The Italian language also has a “failure of verbal agreement where verb precedes subject” (Maiden 259). So when Vince says’ “There’s quite a few” (70)
instead of there are quite a few, he is simply applying Italian grammatical logic to English.

Giancarlo conjugates the verb *capire* (to understand) when he sets some rules for Vince to follow and he wants to make sure that Vince understands: “Not until you know what’s happening... how to play the game, do you talk. Capisce?” (52). Giancarlo set the elements to be understood in place and before he asks his final one-word question. Giancarlo’s real question was to know if Vince had understood what he had to do and how he had to do it. Giancarlo put the question *Do you understand?* in one word—*Capisce*? In modern English, verbs have few inflectional endings, and most verb forms are only inflected for the third person singular. In Italian, however, as in most Romance languages, verb forms have many inflectional endings: the ending of the verb indicates what person the subject is. In addition to the endings being conjugated, they can also replace the subject: *capire* is the base form of the verb, the first person singular is *capisco* for “I understand, I am understanding ... capisce [meaning] he (she, it) understands ... you (polite sing.) understand, are understanding, do understand” (Ragusa 57).

There are a few double negatives in the play, but since the salesmen would have a higher education level than the workers in *On the Job*, this usage is more deliberate. Giancarlo says “I don’t need no college girl telling me what to do” (67). Double negatives are considered sub-standard in English, but they are grammatical in many languages and can even be seen as adding emphasis.

Rhetorical sentences and questions relate a certain effectiveness in speaking; this type of sentence shows the speaker’s confidence, it is intended to influence people, but it can also be seen as manipulative. Dino uses rhetorical questions with Sylvie when he wants to charm her to close the sale; he says “now there’s you. You come to buy a pair of
shoes. Does it matter if you buy? No” (84). This sentence is made to impress Sylvie, but it is not honest because it does matter to Dino if she buys. Dino also uses this type of sentence to show his self-confidence when he talks about the other known candidate for the promotion; he tells Giancarlo “And who is that? A nobody” (24). He also wants to show self-confidence when he speaks about his income, saying “Who invented mortgages? That I want to know. The idea behind mortgages is to make you suffer. But not me. Why? I have streaks” (32).

Giancarlo uses rhetorical questions to justify his lack of morality in applying for a job he does not care to get and taking it away from someone who might need it. He answers Stan’s question as to whether he cared for the company with “What’s the point? As long as they think I do” (57), and Stan’s question as to whether he could live with taking such actions with “What? Yes” (58). With this last comment, it is apparent that Giancarlo has not thought of all the implications of his decision and is trying to convince Stan that he has.

Stan uses rhetorical questions when he wants to influence Vince and convince him to take the part-time salesman job. Stan tells him “I’ve seen you work... what?... two years now...” (17). Stan also uses this type of question when he wants Vince to visit his country home: “What do you say? You can help me put up those shelves” (20). Vince could not have answered negatively.

Rosanna uses rhetorical questions to force a response. She offers Vince a promotion and then asks him: “Are you going to refuse my offer?” (15). Vince had no choice but to accept the promotion even if he did not feel ready. She uses this type of question to make a point at the meeting. She asks “Understood?” (48) and “Is that clear?”
but she was not expecting an answer, and if she were, the answer would have been affirmative.

The salesmen make use of certain sentence structures to suit their purpose. Dino and Giancarlo in *Scarpone* use similar sales techniques to the characters in David Mamet’s *Glengarry Glen Ross*; they build up a speech—a sales pitch—but they also use flattery and tag questions. Dino is using sales techniques when he speaks with Sylvie; he takes a detour in the conversation to take her focus off the fact that he wants to sell her something.

The salesmen in *Scarpone*, like real salesmen, use negative questions and tag questions to lead the answer. These types of questions are used to “check information you believe to be true” (Fuchs 92). A tag question following a statement “expresses an assumption. The tag means *Right?* or *Isn’t that true?*” (Fuchs 93). Tag questions are used in conversations to force the listener to answer and agree (Fuchs 93), which is exactly what Dino and Giancarlo are doing when they say, “Don’t you agree?” (84) or “Yes?” (123). They are manipulating and leading the conversation. The tag question is a sales technique to make the customer agree with the salesperson’s argument. In real life, this question would have been accompanied by the salesperson looking at the customer and nodding. When Dino wants to sell shoes to Sylvie, he uses flattery, includes her in the monologue, makes a connection, and ends with a tag question. Giancarlo uses the same technique when he finally meets Lisa and wants to get her to go out with him; he uses the same approach (speech build-up, inclusion of the listener and flattery), the same vocabulary and the same closing technique as Dino but he takes it a step further when he doesn’t let Lisa answer and tells her that he accepts her invitation, when in fact he invited her.
Dino and Giancarlo use the same expressions in their sales pitch. Dino and Giancarlo qualify human contacts or the contact of any man and woman as “beautiful in and of themselves” (122) or “beautiful in and of itself” (84). Dino tells Sylvie, “A man gets fixed to a certain way” (84) and Giancarlo tells Lisa, “A man gets his mind fixed” (121). Presumably, these shared expressions come from having received the same training and working in close proximity to one another. Dino uses a technique that Giancarlo does not use in the play however: he ends his sales pitch with “Listen to what I’m going to say” (62). Dino’s close is similar to Roma’s (a salesman) in *Glengarry Glen Ross*; Roma says, “Listen to what I’m going to tell you now” (Mamet 50-51).

The salesmen and Rosanna use work-related terminology or jargon; they constantly make reference to shoes and clients; they talk about “softfooters” (14), “pumps” (30), “sandals” (25), “purse” (99), “clodhopper” (101), “arch” (25), “heels” (25) and “proportional toes” (25)… Dino talks about Lisa saying that “… she was wearing those sandals with an easy slip-off string in the back” (25) and continues his description saying “It was the purest foot I’ve ever seen … It was in the tradition of Classic. You’re talking proportional toes, beautifully shaped arch” (25). The characters often refer to their quotas, sales reports, commission reports, company policy and company meetings.

The characters work in sales and, as mentioned earlier, come from the same ethnic background. Charles Boberg defines ethnolects as native varieties of English based on the ethnic group. His observations on the use of ethnolects by ethnic groups in Montreal applies because the characters use a certain amount of non-English vocabulary in addition to the Italian speech syntax, rhythm and stress patterns in English. It is impossible for us, as readers of the text form of the play, to know whether the characters’ pronunciation carries this ethnic signature, hence this aspect will not be analysed in this thesis. The
characters in *Scarpone*, as mentioned earlier, use some Italian words like “paesano” (94), “minchia” (30-46-109-116), “braciola” (131) and “buon giorno” (75) among themselves or with Italian associates like Biaggio. Many Italian children in Montreal still speak or at least hear Italian at home (Boberg, “Ethnic Patterns” 563, Boissevain 45, Rosenberg and Jedwab 279); Italian is a language that is familiar to them. The characters in *Scarpone* might or might not be fluent in Italian but they use words and expressions that are Italian. Nevertheless, Rossi’s hyperlanguage “in English, French and Italian has to meet the challenge of allowing a unilingual Anglophone audience to follow the action” (Reid, “Worlds within Worlds” 21). Stan uses Italian with Dino, “La gioia de vivere è vivere con gioia” (136); even though it is a fairly simple sentence to understand, Rossi makes Dino reply in English with “How can I have joy in my day?” to make sure the audience would understand the Italian sentence.

The salesmen use code switching in English, French and Italian. Dino uses English and French sentences when he speaks with Sylvie when she is returning the shoes she bought earlier that day: “here you go. Sorry for the Trouble... A la prochaine” (127). Giancarlo asks Vince “What are you, her chum?” (129). He uses the French meaning of *chum* for boyfriend. Giancarlo also says “This is life, peasano” (94) when he speaks to Vince—here, an Italian word is introduced in an English sentence. Stan switches from Italian to English when he says, “Hello, Biaggio. Buon giorno. Yes. Yes. My Wife’s fine” (75).

**Usage and Effects of the Sociolect within the Play**

The work-related terms are the linguistic elements that the salesmen and Rosanna share. These characters’ sentence structures and lexical borrowings differ slightly, but when they are talking among themselves, they all use the same terminology. The sociolect
that the salesmen use shows their situation and reflects their experience; however, it is the vocabulary of Dino and Giancarlo—their use of metonyms and dysphemisms—that gives an insight of these characters’ mentality.

As a sales staff, the salesmen need to work as a team, which means that they need to use the same language but also that they have to act as a team. The solidarity within the group is not limited to the language. The salesmen all discuss the same topics: sales, customers, products and management. In addition to their shared vocabulary and syntax, the salesmen in *Scarpone*, like the characters in *Glengarry Glen Ross*, use expressions that tie them together; they are accustomed to working together and can improvise and team up to make a more effective sales force.

Dino and Giancarlo are accustomed to working together; they use the same language with their customers and use the same codes amongst themselves. Dino and Giancarlo teach Vince their code to improvise to close a sale: they tell him to “make sure in the question [to] put a negative word” (41) so the other salesman has a cue and then, they can team up to create urgency among the customers. So when Dino and Giancarlo improvise to close a sale with Sylvie and she is indecisive, the two salesmen use the technique they taught Vince. Dino asks Giancarlo, “Do we *not* have any more size eights in the back?” (89). In his first sentence, Dino communicated to Giancarlo that he wanted to sell a size 8 shoe and Giancarlo knew what to tell his imaginary customer on the phone. Giancarlo immediately picks up on the distress call and replies with “Ah. Are you selling that?” (89). The two salesmen then improvise a scenario to force Sylvie to act quickly and buy the shoes. Sylvie is afraid that she will not be able to find the shoes somewhere else and Dino confirms this fear and enforces her wanting the shoe with “That’s right. And you do like the shoes” (89). Because Dino and Giancarlo use the same language and
vocabulary, they can create an illusion for Sylvie, who follows Giancarlo’s phone conversation and listens to Dino. Sylvie is caught in the sales game and believes more easily that, since Dino and Giancarlo did not have to consult each other before discussing that situation openly, this may well be the last pair of size eight in this model. Finally, Dino can ask her if it will “be cash or charge?” (90) to close his sale. Sylvie buys the shoes and she is glad to have acted so quickly.

Dino and Giancarlo use chauvinistic speech; they use metonyms and dysphemisms to describe women, such as “broad” (23), “cunt” (145) and “braciòla” (131). Their language also shows what role they think women should play; they see women as objects that are there to please men’s sexual desires and stay home and cook. Dino and Giancarlo pretend that they simply need to be males to have sex with a woman; they do not take the women’s opinion into account:

Giancarlo: You think I can meet her?

Dino: The question is; do you want to boff her?

Giancarlo: You think I can?

Dino: Last time you took a piss, was it there? (26)

Dino’s use of the term boff refers to the act of having sex and not to the intimacy of lovemaking. Dino also answers Giancarlo’s question about whether he had a chance at having sex with Lisa with “Last time you took a piss, was it there?” (26), meaning that Giancarlo had a penis, so he could have sex with Lisa. Lisa is Dino’s sister-in-law but he uses her as a bribe and he presents her to Giancarlo as a sex object: Dino tells Giancarlo “that girl can give you a future. A future of two or three months’ worth of boffing” (26).

Giancarlo refers to Rosanna as “silly Miss Supervisor” (65) and “college girl” (67) painting an image of her as a joke. He is obviously upset with Rosanna because she
questioned his commission report. Dino diffuses the situation and reduces Rosanna’s status of supervisor to the status of sex object with “Would you fuck her?” (67). Dino is implying that Giancarlo’s problem with Rosanna is that he doesn’t consider her desirable. Giancarlo answers with “Well you know me. I’d fuck anything that moves. But her I would not give the pleasure of being with me” (67). Giancarlo then continues devaluing Rosanna by saying “She doesn’t know men. She knows only what her mother will fix her up with” (67). Giancarlo is implying that the main role of a woman is to know how to please and be attractive to men.

Dino and Giancarlo would prefer working for a man than a woman; Dino tells Rosanna “You cunt! You fucking cunt! You know what you are? A virgin Italian cunt waiting for some Joe-dick-head to pump you. You are trying to do man’s work. Bullshit. You belong in a kitchen helping a man cook” (145), and Giancarlo says “What she is, a worthless piece of meat. She is an embarrassment to the Italian race!” (67).

The characters’ speech manoeuvres between the common, illogical organisation of regular conversations and the well-structured, well-thought-out elements of sales speeches. The characters conversations are filled with hesitations, false starts, and short questions and answers. These elements are part of spoken language because it is faster and more immediate than written language.

Rossi uses short question-and-answer conversations to show the cohesion between the characters, especially the salesmen. They share similar experiences; consequently, very little explanation is needed for them to understand each other. Dino and Giancarlo share this rapid dialogue when they come in to work and talk about a woman:

Giancarlo: Did you see that?

Dino: That is not human.
Giancarlo: No.

Dino: A creation.

Giancarlo: Yes. (22)

Here, they are commenting on a woman they have both just seen. It is obvious that the
speaker did not need to remind the listener of the subject. Vince and Stan, although they
are talking about a different subject, share a similar type of conversation:

Vince: Where do these go?

Stan: Is that new stock?

Vince: They're transfers.

Stan: Let me see that.

Vince: They keep dumping on us. (11)

Vince and Stan do not need to give lengthy explanations about the situation because it is
an immediate experience that both of them share.

Dino and Giancarlo use hesitations and short sentences to team up against Rosanna
at the meeting. They use ellipsis as a rhetorical feature of their sociolect. Dino sees that
Giancarlo is in trouble when Rosanna says that she will not cover up for them, and he
joins the conversation:

Giancarlo: And nobody's asking you to.

Dino: Just so you know...

Giancarlo: ... we admire what's going on.

Rosanna: What?

Giancarlo: The things you do.

Rosanna: I don't cover up.

Dino: And we admire that.
Rosanna: You do?

Dino: Yes.

Rosanna: Why?

Giancarlo: Because you’re on the ball. (48)

This type of simple sentences and hesitations gives them time to finish each other’s sentences and ideas, and team up against Rosanna. Rosanna also uses short questions and answers. She uses them because she knows what the salesmen are talking about when they refer to work but also to show that she will not waste time; she asks Giancarlo about his missing sales report with “Why?... Really?... What?” (46).

Hesitations can also be used to emphasize a point or give time to the speakers to compose themselves. Dino uses hesitations when he speaks to Stan and tries to find the right word: “What it is I... I... (pause) ... comfort... yeah... that’s what it is” (44). Dino also uses hesitations to emphasize his point when he says, “According to company policies, sales... new company policies” (46). He emphasizes the word new to show that he is up to date on regulations. Rosanna also uses hesitations to compose herself. She answers Dino’s point about the sales report with “Yes, well... the point is...” (46) because she was caught off guard and needed time to reply.

The hyperlanguage of the characters is based on spoken language and shows some grammatical mistakes that would not have happened in written language. Giancarlo uses “Me I have” (32). In Italian io ho does not require the io to indicate the first person singular subject as have requires the I in English. And while it also shows emphasis, this is a common transfer mistake that probably would not have happened if Giancarlo had been writing instead of speaking. The me is an object pronoun and should not be used, at
least in Standard English, as part of the subject. Giancarlo, either consciously or unconsciously, creates a repetition, hence creating emphasis.

Rossi, to the same extent as Fennario and Tremblay, uses hypolanguage to create dramatic poetry. His poetry has images and emotions but the hyperlanguage of his characters shows the rhythm and stress pattern of a sociolect that is influenced by Italian.

Dino introduces emotions in his speech by saying he makes it a point to remember those "people who move [him]" (84). Then he mixes the concepts of people and customers: "People, customers, what's the difference? And that is beautiful in and of itself" (84). Dino then singles Sylvie out to make her feel special with "now there's you. You come to buy a pair of shoes. Does it matter if you buy? No" (84). He singled Sylvie out of all his customers and now he is making a connection between them and says that the important thing is that they've "made contact" (84). Dino then solidifies the emotions he set in place in his speech by making his listener agree with a tag question: "Don't you agree?" (84). Dino charms Sylvie into buying the shoes: "If this were any other situation, I might ask you myself. But a man's heart must bleed at times" (85). Sylvie confirms the Italian romantic stereotype with "Oh, les Italiens!" (85).

Dino also uses rhyme when he speaks: "Stan the man" (29), which he follows with an inversion: "How goes it?" (29). This inversion, as we have seen in the section on sociolect, is typically Italian and in this case was used to give a certain rhythm to Dino's speech. Dino also uses other inversions to give rhythm to his statements: "This job I need" (33). In addition to giving a certain emphasis to his statement, this OSV structure marks this sentence as being influenced by his Italian upbringing.
Dino also uses exaggeration in his speech: “What can I tell you? You ask for fifteen minutes, you take a vacation” (88). Dino uses a rhetorical question to start his statement and follows with an exaggerated image of the situation.

Dino and Giancarlo also use imagery to show the absurdity of a situation. Dino uses “She comes about as natural a way to this job, as I do drawing pictures in caves. It shouldn’t happen. Never will” (54). He was referring to Rosanna doing something outside her element, and made an analogy to him being a caveman—saying that it was as natural for her “to be a leader of men” (54) as for him, a city dweller in the twentieth century, to revert to primitive occupations. Giancarlo also uses nature imagery to portray events that should not (according to him) happen: “I say we take a shit in the woods and pretend we are bears waking up from a very long sleep to find out that we have lost our minds. And we’ve become weak because we’ve been seduced by stupidity” (95). Giancarlo makes an analogy with the intelligence of bears who do not care about the politics of the workplace.

Rosanna treats the salesmen like children and it is reflected in her speech: “I had no idea that certain members of my staff should be treated at the third grade level... To remind us of these points, I have printed up a list ... When in doubt, just refer to the list. That’s simple enough” (48-49). This behaviour reinforces the salesmen’s need to protest since they feel that they are treated as inferiors.

Dino knows that his future is not important for the upper management and says: “I have the right to know what I’m going to be! Bosco don’t fucking care, he’d just as soon sell this store” (119). In using *Bosco don’t fucking care*, he uses faulty grammar and swear words as a result of his anger and frustration.

Stan voices his observation on business and the upper management to Dino: “Let me tell you something about this business. If people have the opportunity to see you
sweat, they’ll take it ... It gives them a sense of power. Hiring a new manager, closing
down a store... makes no difference. They can pull all that off with a simple signature”
(120). The salesmen are there to sell and make the store profitable. Rosanna’s only
reaction to this situation is that when the store is sold, some salesmen “will be transferred”
(146) and “some will be fired” (146). Rosanna uses proper grammar, which, in this case,
identifies her as not being part of the salesmen’s social group, and shows a complete
emotional detachment from the situation. Rosanna does use obscene language when she
is emotionally involved; she tells Dino “You and your fucking breed! You want to talk
about men? Let’s talk about Bosco. And his decisions” (145). Throughout the play, she
has shown her support for the upper management and not cared what happened to the
staff, but now, the decision affects her and she has an emotional response.

The characters of Scarpone have to face the reality that they have to obey the rules
of their workplace. They have to accept the fact that they do not have control over what is
happening with the store. The future of the four salesmen hangs on a decision based on
numbers. This oppression is one more experience the group shares and that binds them
together to face a common oppressor whether it be their employer or the customers. The
salesmen in Scarpone, like the characters in Tremblay’s and Fennario’s plays, “use
language as defense against their environment” (Dean 85).

Steven Godfrey mentions “The dense use of the f-word in the play produced so
many clucks of disapproval at one recent performance that the Centaur sounded like a
henhouse, and in truth Rossi overuses it to drive home the anger and arrogance of Dino
and Giancarlo” (Godfrey A21). Dino uses the word fuck 16 times and he also uses “shit”
(116-120) and “bullshit” (23-70). Giancarlo makes an equally frequent use of “fuck” (94),
“shit” (94) and “bullshit” (90). Rossi uses swear words to drive home the anger of the
salesmen; he dramatizes the characters’ frustrations through obscene language. In addition to being oppressed by the upper management, the characters in *Scarpone* have to deal with clients. Giancarlo says about Sylvie “what a fucking bitch!” (127) to himself and he shares his phone conversation with a customer with Dino saying “Customers? That’s what you call them? Why elevate them to this status? They are excrement” (64). Giancarlo does not always keep such commentary for the staff; he had apparently told “a customer to go fuck a cow” (49).

The salesmen feel like cattle because they have to wear name tags: Giancarlo says “Like these fucking badges she concocted. You go to any other boutique, no badges. Us, we are labelled like cattle going to slaughter” (52). They rebel in vain against their supervisor; neither they nor she has the power to change the decisions of the higher management. Rosanna’s “opinion doesn’t count” (144), Bosco’s “decision is final” (144). The only escape they have left is to speak of their oppression.

Dino explains that the purpose of their weekly meetings is to remind them “that there is a higher authority” (54) and that Rosanna is their supervisor and that they are “stuck with her” (52). Dino verbalises his chauvinistic view of Rosanna and his use of the word *stuck* has the negative connotation of being trapped.

The characters all voice their frustrations. Dino unleashes his anger on Rosanna when he finds out that not only did he not get the promotion but the store was closing. Giancarlo states that they—the salesmen—have “been seduced by stupidity” (95) if they actually think that Rosanna is on their side and taking their interest at heart. Stan has had enough and says “No” (147) to Rosanna and he continues with “get someone else to close the cash. Bosco can find himself another Stan to party with. I don’t need this... I don’t need this demeaning farewell. This lousy excuse for a party. This means nothing to
Scarpone shoes. It's just another day! This is my day! And if anyone wants to join me for a drink, I’ll be at Guido’s” (147). Stan makes it clear with this statement that his tolerance threshold has been reached.

Rosanna tries to reason with him by saying that “Fifty people are coming here” (147) and that Mr. Bosco will be there and he wants to see him. Stan tells her: “You tell him that if he wants to see me he can. And when he does he can kiss my ass” (148). Stan uses very little obscene language throughout the play, but his use of kiss my ass reflects his rebellion against the corporate hierarchy. Stan follows with “And by the way, Rosanna, this is not personal. It’s strictly business” (148). Stan had to accept business decisions that went against his principles and, in the end, throws it back at the person who enforced these decisions—Rosanna.

Vince voices his frustrations throughout the play, but he does so very moderately until Stan’s departure; he stands up to Rosanna and tells her “I can’t stay in this room right now. Can you just respect that? If you want to fire me, go ahead” (148). He ends his statement showing Rosanna that he is not afraid of the consequences of his actions, thus protesting against the events of the day.

**Conclusion**

In addition to reflecting their views of different ethnic, social or gender groups, the vocabulary of the salesmen allows Rossi to paint the portrait of stereotypical male chauvinism in Dino and Giancarlo. Pat Donnelly describes the hyperlanguage created by Rossi as “macho f-word dialogue” (qtd. in Reid, “Worlds within Worlds” 19), and she characterizes Rossi’s play as “disturbingly chauvinistic” (Reid, “Worlds within Worlds” 19). She focuses on the chauvinistic and macho language of Dino and Giancarlo but
"concedes that in Scarpone ‘Rossi clearly means to expose anti-woman attitudes’" (qtd. in Reid, “Worlds within Worlds” 19).

The spoken language of the characters, whether in conversations or prepared speech like sales pitches, is very effective. Rossi wrote the play so that the audience could easily follow the action of the play and see glimpses of the characters’ personalities through their language. For instance, Dino’s language hides insecurity; even though he projects an image of success, he needs the promotion to make his mortgage.

Giancarlo put in for the promotion simply to look good with the company. For all his angry speeches at Rosanna and the customers, he is the only one who stays and helps Rosanna close the store. The play ends with Vince, after he has witnessed all the deceptions, deciding that he is not part of this group and saying “I’m no salesman” (149). Vince is not a salesman; he does not use obscene language to protest against everyone and everything, and he refuses to lie and hide behind an image created by lies as Dino and Giancarlo have. Although Vince does not use the sales and obscene language that Dino and Giancarlo use, he uses the same sociolect as the other main characters, who are also English-speaking Montrealers of Italian descent.
Conclusion

The language of the characters of *Sainte Carmen de la Main*, *On the Job* and *Scarpone* is a hyperlanguage based on the sociolect spoken by members of the portrayed social groups. I have analysed the influences of language use on the setting of the play and showed how the level of education, environment, occupation and linguistic influences are reflected in the speech of the characters. I also looked at how sociolects add to the aesthetic qualities of each play, reflect the local experience, represent certain social determinants and conditions, let the poor be represented, and create unity among the characters, and finally, how each sociolect can be seen as a language of protest.

The characters of all three plays are immigrants or the off-spring of immigrants in some way; the characters of *Sainte Carmen de la Main* or their parents came from rural areas and moved into the established hierarchy of the city, the characters of *On the Job* are descendants of Irish immigrants, and the characters of *Scarpone* are of Italian heritage. They all would have had to adapt to the social stratification of a new place. According to Labov, this would be the first element to create a sociolect. The newcomers find their place in the established social stratum or end up at the bottom. Every culture or society has a certain social hierarchy, and Chambers states that members of the same social group tend to be closer: “people in the same social class share similar income, tastes, recreations, fashions and linguistic norms” (Chambers, “Sociolinguistic Theory” 68). Each group of characters portrays a social group with the same origins, the same level of education, living in the same physical environment, working in the same line of work, and having been subjected to similar linguistic influences.

The characters of *Sainte Carmen de la Main* use a hyperlanguage that reflects the physical environment portrayed in the setting of the play: a red light district where
poverty, addiction and oppression are very present. The characters' sociolect is filled with Anglicisms; they evolve in French in a French-speaking province in the middle of English-speaking North America—the characters' speech reflects the strong cultural influence of the US. They use the sociolect sub-genre of prostitutes, transvestites, pimps and strip-bar singers of the East end of Montreal in the 1970s.

The characters in *On the Job* would have probably been born in the same period as the characters in *Sainte Carmen de la Main*; both plays were produced in the mid-1970s. The characters in *On the Job* might have a better situation than those in *Sainte Carmen de la Main*; they are unskilled workers but at least they work in a more legal or socially acceptable line of work. The level of education of the characters in *On the Job* does not allow them to speak a standard level of English; their sentence structures and verb tenses are flawed, and their vocabulary is restricted to 'shop talk' and various swear words. They also imitate the sociolect of their peers and parents, and they also live in a linguistic island; they function in English in a predominantly French-speaking province. They use the sociolect of unskilled, English-speaking factory workers from Pointe Saint-Charles.

The characters of *Scarpone* are more educated, they have an occupation that requires them to speak more than the characters of the other two plays. They have at least a high-school level education. The sociolect of these characters is that of English-speaking Italian salesmen in Montreal. The salesmen use the same speech structures as the characters of *Glengarry Glenn Ross*; they use the same sales techniques. It is safe to say that they imitate the language of their peers. The vocabulary and syntax of the characters have an Italian influence. And, like the characters in *On the Job*, they function in English in a predominantly French-speaking province.
The three plays analysed in this thesis use sociolects that are meant to be heard and not read. And these working-class language variations are very effective in oral communication. Bernstein, “who has been the first to warn researchers against any premature disvaluation of working-class language” (Rushton 367), qualifies working-class language as a language that is “emotionally virile, pithy, and powerful, with a metaphorical range of considerable force and appropriateness” with “its very real aesthetic qualities, its simplicity and directness of expression” (Bernstein quoted in Rushton 367).

The sociolects in the plays are not necessarily that of the audience, but the audience is close enough to the portrayed social groups to have an idea, however preconceived, of the level of language the characters should use. The authors had to use a hyperlanguage close enough to the sociolect of the members of the social groups they wanted to portray, but they had to adapt them for the primarily middle- and upper-class audiences to understand and relate to. The audience and the characters do not share the same sociolect, but, as James Deese observes, their “syntactic and semantic rules must be roughly the same, or else no act of communication can take place” (Deese 55). Prostitutes and strip-bar singers are not expected to use the discourse of politicians, professors and public speakers, and unskilled factory workers are not expected to speak like English teachers and academics. This is also the reason why joual, and the local sociolects of working-class English-speaking Montrealers of Irish and Italian descent are used by the authors to reflect local experiences but still be understood by the audience.

In addition to the linguistic history linked to the sociolects used in the setting of each play, the characters often refer to their physical surroundings, to events that occurred in their neighbourhood, and, unknowingly, to their cultural upbringing. The characters of Sainte Carmen de la Main often refer to the poverty of the Main, certain events that
occurred, and their Catholic upbringing. The characters in *On the Job* often tell of characters and events of Pointe Saint-Charles. The characters of *Scarpone* refer to places and names that reflect Montreal’s multi-ethnic environment.

The sociolects and sociolect sub-genres in the plays represent certain social determinants and conditions. The language of the characters reflects their oppression; they are operating in a system where they have little or no control. The characters of the Main are stuck living a life-style they would rather not, but they have no way out; they are living with addiction and poverty, and are kept there by a power that does everything to keep them there and who feeds on their remaining there. The warehouse workers have to earn a living by working for someone who uses them to get the job done regardless of the situation. And the salespeople have to meet their quotas and answer to a company that promises them nothing but an uncertain future.

Using certain sociolects and sociolect sub-genres, the authors attempt to represent the poor. The characters are portraying the experiences of members of the *lumpenproletariat*, the lower-working and middle working classes, using their words to portray these groups’ experiences and their powerlessness to change their situation.

A sociolect can be used and seen as a protestative language. Tremblay used *joual*, which allowed him, and other Quebec playwrights of that time, to break free from the pre-established standards of European French and also differentiate Quebec culture from US culture. Carmen’s songs are an analogy of this situation; she starts out by singing foreign songs in a foreign language, then translating these foreign songs into her own language, to finally sing her own songs in her own language. The characters in *On the Job* decide to stay where they are and lose on their own terms; they will not change and will alienate and make fun of anything different. Through their conversations they realise that they
cannot run away from the problem—they have to face it. The characters of Scarpone
don’t mind their tongue when their situation displeases them; they use a proper form of
speech with clients but voice their opinions to each other and to their supervisor with
vocabulary that carries a more personal impact.

The dominant language had a significant influence and role to play on and in the
use of sociolects by the authors. As Jacques Leclerc points out “if a language has more
sociopolitical importance, even if it is spoken by a minority, it will become the main
language” (36), and “the dominant (main) language is linked to the socioeconomic
power” (155). The power struggles of the main characters reflect the linguistic struggles
of English and French in Quebec. Sainte Carmen de la Main and On the Job take place at
a pivotal point in the language struggle of Quebec—the late sixties and seventies: “a
change in power usually attracts a change in the dominant language” (Leclerc 36-155).

Tremblay, Fennario and Rossi use the sociolects of working-class groups to
portray their situations, but also to valorize the rhythms, rhymes, imagery, directness,
impact and immediacy of the working-class spoken languages. In using the sociolects of
the working class, the authors antagonize the established cultural power in the sense that
they give a voice to the lumpens and the working classes, hence dramatizing the working-
class experiences in local language variations that, even though they are not
grammatically as rigid and structured as the written language of the upper classes, are
suited for the portrayal of its richness.
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