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A Case for Acadian—

The Politics of Style

The *Lettres* (1895-1898) of Marichette are graphic evidence of the effects of language contact with the socially and economically dominant English on her Franco-Acadian dialect. I explore her penchant for code-switching and attempt to relate this aspect of the writer's style to her political commentary. Two categories of code-switching can be identified: the first occurs notably with structures having perlocutionary force, and is characteristic of the prose style she adopts; the second is motivated by the desire to represent or suggest the speech of another. The socio-linguistic commentary implied by the use of English is further developed by Marichette's manipulation of the quality of the spoken English she represents. Its juxtaposition with academic French and the formal style of other contributors to the weekly newspaper *L'Évangéline*, in which they first appeared, at the end of the nineteenth century, further heightens the visual shock value of the letters.

Introduction

As the nineteenth century drew to a close, the Franco-Acadian population of New Brunswick and Nova Scotia was experiencing a cultural and political re-awakening. After more than a century of isolation, this largely anal-phabetic society was beginning to assert its right to a place in Canadian history and its right to a role in the determination of its own future. With the benefits of improved communications and educational opportunities, the Acadian Conventions of the 1880s saw the emergence of a new elite and the coalescence of a nationalistic platform with flag, national anthem and a national society at a time when Canada itself was in a state of upheaval.

The local French-language press, notably the two rival newspapers *Le Moniteur acadien* of Shediac, New Brunswick, and *L'Évangéline* of Weymouth, Nova Scotia, played a critical role in this cultural awareness while serving as a forum for the debate of both national and regional issues.¹ Their names evoke their status as cultural watchdogs and nationalist symbols. Both were simultaneously a means of communicating ideas and opinions, and a linguistic role model for the newly literate and largely rural population they served.

L'Évangéline, like its conservative rival, favored the rhetorical style of academic *fin-de-siècle* French for even the most mundane of subjects. A weekly publication, it featured articles on political topics of the day alongside the detailed reporting of local events and advertisements for liniments and Sunday hats. Among contributions from readers, it published the letters of one *Marichette*. Unlike other contributors to the newspaper, however, Marichette composed her letters in the language of Acadia, a language that had remained unwritten for a century and a half, a writing reinvented by this witty and unconventional spokesperson for the common folk to serve as a kind of anti-model for a society that has always stubbornly main-

tained its individuality. Juxtaposed with the standard French of her contemporaries, the effect of Marichette's prose is startling and the reaction of the newspaper's readers predictable. Although some praised her, the more status-conscious readers castigated her, seeing her no doubt as a traitor to the cause of cultural and political rehabilitation. Collected and published in a critical edition by P. Gérin and P. M. Gérin,² her letters bear an uncanny resemblance to the monologues of her modern fictional compatriot La Sagouine.³

Marichette arrived on the scene in February 1895, announcing that she was "tired of waiting for the passage of the law for the 'suffrage' of women to give them the right to vote" (52).⁴ The following two months saw the publication of three more letters from this truculent and outspoken feminist as each letter provoked in the next issue an equally lively response from the readership. A further twelve letters followed—two of them signed ostensibly by Marichette's husband and another by a certain Marc—with the gap between them lengthening until in February 1898 the correspondence ceased as abruptly as it had begun.

Composed in a chatty, conversational style, the letters explore a variety of subjects. Marichette addresses contemporary issues of national importance, such as the vote for women, the Northwest Rebellion and the fate of Louis Riel,⁵ controversial topics in which she shows interest as a woman herself or as a disadvantaged francophone Canadian. Of equal importance in the letters are events of local or personal interest: everyday goings-on in Marichette's household, or her state of health—her good-natured henpecking of her husband, her need for a set of false teeth, a graphically detailed description of a stomach disorder—all of which she juxtaposes with her opinions on the state of the nation or the status of women. Whatever the subject, her observations and opinions are delivered with rollicking good humor, unfailingly wicked

irreverence and a devastatingly dry wit in striking contrast to the tone of journalistic articles such as the detailed report in a nearby column in very formal French of the latest session of the Provincial Legislative Assembly.

She paints portraits and thumbnail sketches of characters as colorful as herself, of fellow Acadians—including her husband “le vieux Pite”—her sisters, as well as assorted neighbors and villagers. The reader meets Marichette’s grown daughters who, like so many others of their community, have left to live and work in the “States.” And there are the electoral candidates who come canvassing votes—mostly “Tories,”⁶ to whom Marichette is visibly unsympathetic—and who, like other targets of Marichette’s pen, speak only English, or who massacre French when they attempt to use it as part of their canvassing effort. The language of each is graphically represented in the letters, from the Franco-Acadian dialect of Marichette herself and her fellow Acadians to the academic French of certain “orators” (in a religious or a political context), as well as the fractured French and English used in exchanges between members of the two linguistic groups and occasionally among themselves.

Language and Style in Marichette’s Letters

Marichette’s letters reflect a preoccupation with linguistic questions and the importance of language to one’s cultural identity as witnessed by the frequency of her observations concerning attitudes toward language.⁷ She includes contradictory comments regarding her own linguistic skills:

“I don’t have much education and I can’t write in as good a style as Prof Lanos of Halifax. . .” (55); “At this time I am reading and learning to spell better. . .” (57); “. . . even in France they thought I spoke well, . . .” (82); “and if my French wasn’t good, you wouldn’t publish it in *L’Évangéline* for everyone to read” (95).

She derides the language skills of others:

“. . . that's the only part I understood, the rest of his story is too bad French to understand [sic]" (62); “. . . and English I believe St Patrick couldn't write in his book it was so bad" (74).

And she pens a spirited defense of "*note belle langue*" (117). She complains about the teaching of English in the schools to the detriment of French, condemns the preference for English manifested by the young, including her own daughters' convictions of the advantages of English in spite of their apparent lack of advancement in the "States."

Both in thought and in style, Marichette's letters thus reflect the linguistic status quo of the Acadian community of the end of the nineteenth century. She represents all the significant linguistic features of her dialect,⁸ including the epidemic borrowing of lexical items from the socially dominant English language with which the French dialect coexisted—and still does—and to which Franco-Acadians were frequently obliged to resort in order to function outside the confines of their own homes and immediate community. This aspect of her own language use—the representation of the contact between languages in the Franco-Acadian dialect—is a striking characteristic of Marichette's writing.

Borrowings are appropriated with their English identity intact (e.g., *fiddle stick* 116), or they are partially or totally assimilated to French spelling and morphological conventions (e.g., *buckouite*—"buckwheat" [64]; *le cheval à Pite Doucet avait bité*—"Pite Doucet's horse had beaten . . ." [63], with French verb morphology), or rather, in these letters, to Marichette's own ortho- and morphographic conventions and inconsistencies! Her attempts at phonetic spelling to represent dialect features, archaic or colloquial as well as borrowed, are wildly erratic but entirely consistent with the image she projects of an uneducated correspondent.⁹

At the same time, her writing reflects the speech habits of an imperfectly bilingual community. Language mixing is evident in the occasional use of both French and equivalent English lexical items (*bull* and *toreau* [sic] [65]; *dé broach*, *dé rings*, *dé bagues*. . . 73), as well as in the use of structural calques, with lexical items from the two languages (*le plus smart homme de Chéticamp* [81]; *you damné chien* [54], in which English word order is used). Speech performance is also marked by frequent code-switching in mid-sentence, e.g.,

. . . *même à un sorcier let alone a good scholar*. . .
 (“. . . even for a sorcerer, let alone a good scholar. . .” 107).

Adverbials are often in English:

All at once la roof enfonce,. . . (87)
Le Prince, avec sa suite, monte, in a hell of a hurry (92)
 . . . *les dents se cassent all to pieces*. . . (96)
une dose de blue pills,. . . *chil le ghérira in one snap*. (81)
 . . . *chi vienne pour voir for himself*. (82)

English is used also for the constantly recurring interjections, tags, discourse articulators and judgmental phrases:

. . . , *and I dont know what*. (77); . . . , *well I guess so*. (87); . . . , *you bet*. (115); *I bet que*. . . (64); *Never mind, j’suis trop belle anyhow*. . . (97)

Although certain French forms do occur (*Vous savez*,. . . [52]; *T’chelle piché*,. . . —“What a pity,. . .” 74), they are rare. English is also preferred for the frequent oaths and unflattering epithets to the almost total exclusion of French swear words: by *jove*, *dême*, *comme le hell*, *ghé hose* (“Jesus”), *pour gâde sèque* (“For God’s sake”), alongside the occasional *Mon j’heu* (and other spellings, for “Mon Dieu”—“My God”) and *sakerjé* (“sacré-dieu”—“Holy God”). Marichette’s habit of swearing in English rather than in French may have been an attenuating device motivated by the desire to use socially-unacceptable

language with relative impunity. As Gérin drily observes, “Did [the Acadians] hope Saint Peter did not understand [English]?”¹⁰ Nevertheless, she did not escape criticism for her earthy language and her putdowns. Gérin continues:

*even disguised, even anglicized, the oaths of Marichette offended many, particularly a certain conservative “elite” attached to the Moniteur acadien*¹¹

(in which the criticisms appeared); and even Marichette herself refers to the unfavorable reactions her language provoked (“He accuses me of speaking badly and of ridiculing our compatriots. . . [and of] swearing” 82).

Marichette’s letters are, in short, documentary evidence both of the state of a dialect at a specific point in time and of language usage in a specific socio-cultural context. And the systematic code-switching from French to English for items expressing the feelings of the writer intended to influence the feelings of the reader for judgmental phrases is indicative of the pervasive influence of English as the vernacular. These are in effect formulaic language. Visually (taken in the textual context of the newspaper) and culturally (taken in the historical context), the letters represent a writing style that can best be described as revolutionary.

If Marichette had been the uneducated and disadvantaged female she pretends to be, this brief correspondence would be no more than a linguistic oddity, an aberration in the Franco-Acadian quest for reintegration into the francophone world community. However, her very writing style reveals indices of her true identity¹² and the true nature of her correspondence: it is a serialized soliloquy like the monologues of La Sagouine. Her spellings may be quasi-phonetic and unsystematic to the point of being frivolous, but certain orthographic forms suggest a sophisticated knowledge of orthoepic convention (the use of the circumflex to represent vowel quality, the use of digraphs—*gh*, *ch*, to represent stops and

palatals: *le j'hâble* “le diable”—“the devil”; *Ghe josse pônnet* “Jehosophat”; *cheurrieux* “curieux”), as does her own comment on spelling alternatives for variant pronunciations of *sapin*—“fir”:

dans les branches de sapagne ou saponne, comme vous voudrez—“in the branches of. . . or. . ., as you prefer” (107).

Her disguising of swear words is often quite elegant:

je lance une gadelle—“I let go a God-all” (96).

Other unconventional spellings (*checqu'temps* “quelque temps”—“some time”; *vaillangne* “vaillant”—“valiant”) recall the innovations of Rabelais and his contemporaries, and are an indication of a scholarly formation as is the occasional use of academic style in a context to which it is entirely appropriate (the reporting of the speech of a visiting dignitary, for example “the prince of Malakoff, the biggest orator of our century” (92). Her professed knowledge of English (“since he didn't understand French,. . . I told him in English” [96]; “since I didn't understand English. . .” 113), as well as her practice, varies to suit her epistolary purpose.

The levels of English and of French occurring in the letters range from idiomatic usage through grammatically incorrect sentences and phrases to pidginized utterances:¹³

you no drink. . . (88)

Pas peur Pite, moi pas faire mal toi (87).

Code-switching may involve one or other of the pidgins as well as idiomatic English and French (or Franco-Acadian):

enragé, furieux, and cross as the devil,. . . (91)

Let me in, moi chec chose dire toi (87).

Finally, the use of phonetic spellings to represent the galled mispronunciation of English by her daughters,

I taut qu'y avait. . .—"I thought. . ." (110)

What is dat, maw—" . . . that. . ." (110),

alongside the numerous spelling assimilations and conventional English orthography suggest a mastery of English rather than linguistic incompetence. Marichette's use of English as the actual language of communication is a deliberate stylistic device as is the role played by the picturesque orthography and the presence of English lexical items in French sentences in the conveying of a dialectal flavor.

Bilingualism in the Letters, Bilingualism in Action

The modern reader will be struck immediately by the originality of Marichette's writing style, just as the contemporary reader would have been, juxtaposed as it was to the conservative writing style of other contributors to the newspaper. Her unorthodox spellings alone are a guarantee of that as are the attempts at fractured French and English. Further reading, however, will reveal a more subtle form of creativity in the skillful exploitation of linguistic indices in the rendering of voices and in the manipulation of interlingual competence and performance to portray the dynamics of verbal communication in a bilingual society. Marichette writes to the editor of *L'Évangéline* to express her opinions on contemporary debates, but she adopts a style typical of an oral culture and therefore entirely consistent with the milieu she portrays, a style that is often episodic in argumentation, anecdotal and focused on concrete examples, introducing specific personalities and putting words in their mouths as well as her own.¹⁴ Through direct discourse, indirect discourse and free indirect discourse, she represents the speech of others, and therefore, thanks to the nature of her interests and concerns, the inevitable collision of French and English in everyday transactions in her milieu.

figure 1.1

L'Évangéline, 04 Jun 96 (p 3 col 3-4) (87-88)—an account of a visit by a candidate canvassing support in the upcoming election, his conversation with le vieux Pite (Marichette's husband):

Une nuit s'tiver il a venu un canvesseur de Digby frapper à la porte vers le mitant de la nuit. Ping, pang! Whos' there? *Me*, fut la réponse. Le vieux Pite huche tout haut et dit, whos' *me*, you bougre de fou? Pas peur Pite, moi pas faire mal toi. *Let me in*, moi chec chose dire toi.—Dépêches-toi, Pite. Mets tes chulottes et désagne.—Ton femme Marichette couchée? Yes, ma vieille, h'is sick.

J'me lève et vas mette mon oreille sur le trou du stove et j'ai tout entendu ce qui disions.—Pite, toi vote pour moi? *Me ask Marichette*.—Oh fiddlestick with Marichette. Ton femme pas pour moi. J'attend Pite qui y demande: You parlez français. Yes Pite, speak to me in French.—All right. Tu est le candidat qui va runner pour Chéticamp? Chis'qui ta fais sortir? As-tu demandé aux Acajins de Clare? All right. On se damne bien de ta politique. C'est l'homme qui nous faut. You good man? You not hang Frenchman when you go to Ottawa? You travailler pour les métis? You accept no reward money pour faire pendre Riel? You no drink when you get. . . somewhere be dême. . . Well, sakerjé, me vote for you, if Marichette let me. You be hang with Marichette. Marichette pas pour moi, and you know it. P't'être biengne. Dépêches toi, v'la Marichette qui descend, et tu vas l'attraper. Well good night Pite. Et le j'able le portait par en bas. C'est tout-ce que j'ai à vous dire sur la politique, asteure.

The politicians and occasionally the tradesmen whom she describes are Englishmen invading a francophone society.

While the narrating voice of Marichette is a fascinating object of study in itself, the manipulation of linguistic and stylistic variations in representing the voices of other characters is yet more evidence of her own literary virtuosity. The writer utilizes code-switching to represent the speech and the voice of other characters with the use of English becoming an identifying feature. The *type* of language use is also manipulated to represent attempts by characters to adapt their own speech habits to a specific situation. The uneven degree of success of these attempts

is marked by the style or quality of expression affected by the writer, in other words by the use of pidgin or of code-switching, or by the use of idiomatic French/Franco-Acadian or English.

The various levels of language use are best illustrated in a single passage¹⁵ in which code-switching, rather than being a mark of a change in speaker or voice, is a prominent feature of the reported speech itself, i.e., the dialogue that Marichette reproduces is itself bilingual. Marichette is the narrator and she listens in, “her ear against the stovepipe hole. . .,” to a conversation between her husband, “le vieux Pite,” and a Canvasser—a candidate for political office who fears Marichette, her political opinions and her capacity to control her husband. The passage opens in indirect style in Franco-Acadian: “One night this winter there came a. . .” It then quickly switches to first-person narration: “I get up and go to put my ear. . .” The passage then consists of a series of exchanges between Pite and the Canvasser that are reported in a dizzying mixture of French, English and two kinds of pidgin with numerous examples of code-switching. The code-switching is usually between French and English (Pite):

whos'me, you bougre de fou?
Yes, ma vieille, h'is sick. [sic],

or between one of these with a pidgin of the other (both Pite and the unnamed Canvasser):

You accept no reward money pour faire pendre Riel?
Let me in, moi chec chose dire toi.
Marichette pas pour moi, and you know it.

(The occasional switching between unmarked French and Franco-Acadian in the speech of Pite as in the case of Marichette herself is difficult to judge. It may be a matter of stylistic inconsistency on the part of the writer herself or her erratic representation of the dialect.)

Pite is represented as speaking English and pidgin English in addition to his native Franco-Acadian. He indulges in code-switching between English and French with Franco-Acadian and pidgin English included in the switching on one occasion. All of these possibilities occur within dialogue directed at the same person.

The Canvasser, on the other hand, does not speak French (idiomatic or Franco-Acadian) but only pidgin French:

Pite, toi vote pour moi?

in addition to his native English:

Yes Pite, speak to me in French

or a mixture of the two (code-switching):

Pas peur Pite, moi pas faire mal toi. Let me in, moi chec chose dire toi.

and, on one occasion:

You be hang with Marichette. Marichette pas pour moi, and you know it.

pidgin English mixed in with the code-switching!

At one point Pite's code-switching appears to be the insertion of French segments into English sentences rather than the reverse, as one would expect, in a dialogue that he had actually started in Franco-Acadian in response to a request from the candidate that he speak to him in French. He nevertheless lapses into English and pidgin English.

Marichette is witness to the efforts of Pite to speak English and of the Canvasser to speak French. While Pite, the Acadian, comes out the best, neither one is particularly successful! The overall effect of the total charabia of each trying to speak the language of the other is hilarious, and the linguistic antics underscore the irony of the writer's tone. By relating a late-night unannounced visit by the Canvasser, she is commenting upon political opportunism

and hypocrisy. Although the Canvasser appears conciliatory in his linguistic behavior, he avoids answering Pite's request for reassurance that he will not support the hanging of Riel, or indulge in French-bashing once in Ottawa. (The strategy appears to have worked since Pite promises his support anyway.) The ironic tone is underscored by Marichette's conclusion, an abrupt change from narrative to a closing remark directed at the reader of the letter and expressing her opinion by not expressing it. ("That's all I've got to say to you about politics for now," when she in fact has not said anything.)

Other passages exemplify direct quotes of brief utterances in idiomatic English. They quite simply document the coexistence of the two language communities, and, of course, attest to Marichette's own command of English. They also document the use of English rather than French in any interaction between the two communities. They include samples of anglophones speaking to Acadians:

... pour nous dire: Keep clear, ladies, (113)
Mais il a crié all aboard (110)
Ah, be jabers, mum I beg yer pardon, I thought its
a shoe you wanted; next door mum. (96-97)

of Acadians speaking to anglophones:

... lui dit: your magnet is no good. (119)

of anglophones (Marichette calls them *bad Englishmen*) speaking about Acadians:

Here is a sample of our French Acadiens boys (103)

and, finally, of Acadians speaking to Acadians:

... et dit a sa soeur, lets go on board (110)
... en disant: Marichette, no money in that
for you. (116)
Come out Pite and let us have something to drink,
Marichette is gone out, quick (56)

The last three examples are especially revealing. In the first case, the sisters in question are Marichette's daughters and Marichette is illustrating the preference of the younger generation of Acadians for English, *even among themselves*. In the second case, the speaker is Marichette's husband and this utterance is perhaps to be interpreted as having perlocutionary rather than illocutionary force. It is thus a kind of formula, like the English tags Marichette herself uses, since surely he would not dare speak English to his wife, knowing as he does her opinions and her personality. In the last case, the speaker is "Billie," obviously one of Pite's drinking buddies. The use of English underscores the complicity of the two in activities Marichette deplores—drinking as well as the speaking of English—and is motivated, no doubt, by a desire for secrecy. This one follows in the same paragraph another example in which the identity of the speaker is ambiguous. A reader of *L'Évangéline*, he shares Marichette's political views, and voices his approval to her: "*good for Marichette, write some more.*" (56) With the choice of English for this intervention what is Marichette trying to show?

Clearly, in all these cases code-switching accompanies a change in voice, usually from narrator to character. It occurs both with offset direct quotations and direct quotations identified by the use of the verb "to say," as well as with *implied* direct discourse. In the latter case the change in voice is indicated only by the code-switching itself:

*et qu'aujourd'hui il allait voter pour Powill, and
dont you forget it* (79)

—a fragment of indirect discourse in French, and thus the voice of the narrator. However, the sentence is completed in English, the language of the character (The Voter), and the command is directed by him at *his* interlocutor and not by Marichette at the reader.

The same is true of: "*L'étranger arrive. Where is Mr. Pete!*" (54) in which Marichette the narrator reports an

event, and then the words of the stranger in question; once again, the only formal mark of the change in narrative voice is the change in code. And, since the language of communication is expressly identified by the writer, the very fact that English is used becomes part of the message that she is seeking to convey, i.e., that English is the language of transactions concerning electioneering.

Throughout the letters, the varied linguistic behavior of the writer and her characters is partially but not entirely dependent on the speaker/listener combination: Pite and the Canvasser in their dialogue use a variety of combinations both in their exchanges and in their individual contributions. The linguistic and stylistic virtuosity of Marichette in her representation of speaking style and language use thus encompasses variation in language use, and the adaptation, albeit erratic, of language use to the situation.

Writing in Stereo—Writing for Effect

The languages-in-contact/languages-in-conflict dilemma is thus both a topic and an artifice in these texts, since Marichette writes about the use of English as well as the mixing of English and French, and uses those very devices to get the point across. Situations described in the letters evolve from misunderstandings due to language-use conflict, a “dialogue of the deaf” between Anglophone and Francophone. In the two examples cited, Marichette herself is the misunderstood or misunderstanding Francophone. At the same time, Marichette the writer is in fact bilingual and the misunderstandings have been created for effect as a social comment.

Her linguistic performance is just that, a performance, in which she illustrates the cultural and linguistic status of Franco-Acadians, i.e., the reality of speaking a minority language, of coping with the invasive nature of a dominant code, of being forced to resort to that dominant code in

order to communicate or suffer the consequences, and the consequent preoccupation with language questions.

At the same time, her own language is in effect the antithesis of the recognition that the Acadian is striving for, and, in a way, the banner of the identity he is trying to shake off (that of the *nègre blanc*¹⁶). But, in reality, who is linguistically handicapped: the unlettered but apparently bilingual Acadian whose vote is being solicited or the unilingual canvasser? And who is in reality the disadvantaged? For, in situations in which language use is an issue, the speakers of English are generally not on Marichette's team and not, therefore, the winners or, at the very least, the enlightened. (The canvasser may think he has sufficiently ingratiated himself to Pite, but Marichette leaves no doubt as to her own role in the outcome.) Only once is English spoken by a sympathetic character ("*Good for Marichette, write some more*" [56]. Elsewhere, the speaker's relationship to Marichette is at best ambiguous or openly unsupportive (as is the case of the lovers of alcohol, for example):

"Come out Pite and let us have something to drink, Marichette is gone out, quick." Glou, glou, glou, "*dème that's good stuff*" save yourself quickly before Marichette gets back, because she'll wallop you with a broom handle" (56)

Thus, the speaking of English, *instead of French*—the real or implied inability or unwillingness to speak French—is, with few exceptions, associated with an unfavorable or unflattering portrayal of the character, someone who represents an issue that Marichette criticizes. Not even the writer's own daughters are spared their mother's scorn.

On the other hand, while Marichette's own language appears paradoxically to mirror the very thing that she so scornfully condemns, the mixing of English and French by her compatriots, the constance of the paradox must lead one to conclude that the irony is intentional and, there-

fore, the very reason she does it. Her language use is, in fact, a parody of the situation she lives; and by demonstrating her linguistic prowess, she affirms her own linguistic and social superiority.

Today, one hundred years later, the Acadian has truly “come out of the woods.” Many of Marichette’s complaints have been resolved: the French education that she petitioned for is in place and women have the vote. But the crisis of identity continues and with it assimilation to the still-dominant anglophone culture, fuelled, as it was a century ago, by economic concerns.

Marichette’s exuberant representation of her dialect ensures the visual shock value of her letters. So does her penchant for colorful and socially unacceptable epithets. Juxtaposed as it was with the academic French and formal style of the newspaper in which they first appeared, the idiosyncratic style of her letters could not fail to make the reader sit up and take notice. A picture after all is worth a thousand words; a portrait of a society in conflict and of a language in peril is remembered long after a thousand dry, academic speeches and statistical analyses are forgotten. Her constant recourse to English words, phrases and exchanges, notwithstanding her tireless wit, is an eloquent reminder of the fragility of a minority language. That was no doubt the intent of her linguistic rebellion.

<p>u couronne- être certain de la Fren- ment agré- fait qu'un solennels."</p>	<p>jour que la senteur de poisson. On dit que Weymouth se purge des <i>grog shops</i>. L'ange destructeur a enfin semé la terreur parmi les grosses têtes du pont. Le vieux Pite a peur que les canvesseurs pour- ront pu bayer du <i>whisky</i> pour les faire voter.</p>	<p>Mlle Colectie Gaudet, M. Louis A Gaudet. la paroisse exécuta av messe du second ton, entendre ses plus douc A dix heures l'heureux barquait pour un voy Halifax, suivi des sou nombreux amis.</p>
<p>ada devrait 4,810 âmes ,189. e la Proteo- pays et af- émigration? réellement amélioré la scolaire, croit- aient lui par is ?</p>	<p>Une nuit d'hiver il a venu un can- vesseur de Digby frapper à la porte vers le mitant de la nuit. Ping, pang! Whos' there? <i>Me</i>, fut la réponse. Le vieux Pite, huche tout haut et dit, whos' <i>me</i>, you bougre de fou! Pas peur Pite, moi pas faire mal toi. <i>Let me in</i>, moi chec chose dire toi.—Dé- pêches-toi, Pito. Mets tes chulottes et désagne.—Ton femme Marichette couchée? Yes, ma vieille, h'i's sick.</p>	<p>Mardi soir, le Révd. Cormier, Son Honneur dry, M. O. M. Melans docteur Belliveau se Bouctouche pour Inté- bres de la C. M. B. A. Monument Lefebvre. sé la parole à l'assem- cursale et exposé leur le euré Méchaud, M. l pointe et M. le docteur abondé dans le plan et mais de s'occuper active vre.</p>
<p>ène très cu- distance de et le Wyom-</p>	<p>J'me lève et vas mette mon oreille sur le trou du <i>stove</i> et j'ai tout en- tendu ce qui disions.—Pite, toi vote pour moi! <i>Me ask</i> Marichette.—Oh fiddle stick with Marichette. Ton femme pas pour moi. J'attend Pite qui y demand: <i>You</i> parlez français. Yes Pite, speak to me in french.— All right. Tu est le candidat qui va runner pour Obéticamp? Chis'qu'il ta lais sortir? As-tu demandé aux Aca- jins de Clare? <i>All right</i>. On se damne bien de ta politique. C'est l'homme qui nous faut. <i>You good man!</i> You not hang Frenchman when you go to Ottawa? You tra- vailler pour les méti's? You accept no reward money pour faire pendre Riel? You no drink when you get... somewhere be dûne... Well, anker- jé, no vote for you, if Marichette let me. You be hang with Mari- chette. Marichette pas pour moi, and you know it. P'y être biengue. Depêches toi, v'la Marichette qui des- cend, et tu vas l'attrapper. Well good night Pite. Et le j'able le por- tail par en bas. C'est tout-ce que j'ai à vous dire sur la politique, as- teure.</p>	<p>Le 28 mai, les paroie Lonia, comté de Kent, en foule vers le temple où bientôt ils devaient moins d'une intéressat religieuses; c'était la b mariage d'un couple fort estimé d'un grand</p>
<p>alée que les été mouillés, rent comme chaux. Les blancs; les nte la ville blanc. D'a- l'averse n'a alité moins</p>	<p>Je vous aurions envoyé des nou- velles s't'iver si j'avais pas été mala- de au lit. Il a rien arrivé dans note village, rien que des nouveaux nés, et cela est neuf et jamais nouveau. C'est comme partout ailleurs on les fabri- que à la steam par loite. Il y en a aussi de morts et d'autres qui sont pas beaucoup mieux. Il y en a qui sont mariés, mais couse là, <i>I bet</i>, i sont vaillagne et smart. Ceux qui sont morts, j'avons pas h'ous-qui sont, j' l'ai avons pas vu sur l'Évan-</p>	<p>Monsieur Simon Po associé de la compagnie ron & Cie. de Shédiac, sieur Amand Poirier, d conduisait à l'autel l' charmantes personnes c ce, Mademoiselle Os institutrice et fille de lonie Richard, marié sieur Albert Poirier et le Eugénie Richard, ac- riée, servaient de tém La messe fut célébré rand Père Pelletier, ca roise.</p>
<p>frappé la l, mercredi de dernière. es de la vil- 0 personnes</p>	<p>Je vous aurions envoyé des nou- velles s't'iver si j'avais pas été mala- de au lit.</p>	<p>L'autel du temple ét la circonstance de ses nements.</p>
<p>été blessées, vement. Le s de tonner- ear torrent. ge tout en- de ruines. d'ébris: che- umains. La ne minute, opérer tous</p>	<p>Il a rien arrivé dans note village, rien que des nouveaux nés, et cela est neuf et jamais nouveau. C'est comme partout ailleurs on les fabri- que à la steam par loite. Il y en a aussi de morts et d'autres qui sont pas beaucoup mieux. Il y en a qui sont mariés, mais couse là, <i>I bet</i>, i sont vaillagne et smart. Ceux qui sont morts, j'avons pas h'ous-qui sont, j' l'ai avons pas vu sur l'Évan-</p>	<p>Le chœur paroissial avec beaucoup d'entrain anges. A l'offertoire la messe, les demoiselle des Sœurs de Charité me Poirier était autre chanté deux cantiques rai longtemps le souve A l'issue de la céré reux époux se rendire sieur Joseph Allaire, lent diner les attendait L'on remarquait gra</p>

figure 1.2

L'Évangéline with Marichette's letter on June 4, 1896

Pite and the Candidate: code-switching in a bilingual dialogue.

figure 2

Speaker	Code	Utterance
narrator	<i>Franco-Acadian</i>	Une nuit s'tiver il a venu un canvesseur de Digby frapper à la porte vers le mitant de la nuit. Ping, pang!
Pite	<i>English</i>	Whos' there?
canvasser	<i>English</i>	Me,
narrator	<i>French</i>	fut la réponse.
narrator	<i>French</i>	Le vieux Pite huche tout haut et dit,
Pite	<i>English/French</i>	whos'me, you bougre de fou?
canvasser	<i>pidgin French</i>	Pas peur Pite, moi pas faire mal toi.
	<i>English/pidgin Fr</i>	Let me in, moi chec chose dire toi.
Marichette	<i>Franco-Acadian</i>	Dépêches-toi, Pite. Mets tes chulottes et désagne.
canvasser	<i>pidgin French</i>	—Ton femme Marichette couchée?
Pite	<i>English/French</i>	Yes, ma vieille, h'is sick.
narrator	<i>Franco-Acadian</i>	J'me lève et vas mette mon oreille sur le trou du stove et j'ai tout entendu ce qui disions.
canvasser	<i>pidgin French</i>	—Pite, toi vote pour moi?
Pite	<i>pidgin English</i>	Me ask Marichette.
canvasser	<i>English pidgin French</i>	—Oh fiddlestick with Marichette. Ton femme pas pour moi.
narrator	<i>Franco-Acadian</i>	J'attend Pite qui y demande:
Pite	<i>English/French</i>	You parlez français.
canvasser	<i>English</i>	Yes Pite, speak to me in French.
Pite	<i>English Franco-Acadian</i>	—All right. Tu est le candidat qui va runner pour Chéticamp?
	<i>Franco-Acadian Franco-Acadian</i>	Chis'qui ta fais sortir? As-tu demandé aux Acajins de Clare?

- English* All right.
- French* On se damne bien de ta politique.
- French* C'est l'homme qui nous faut.
- pidgin English* You good man?
- pidgin English* You not hang Frenchman when you go to Ottawa?
- English/French* You travailler pour les métis?
- pidgin Eng/French* You accept no reward money pour faire pendre Riel?
- pidgin Eng/French* You no drink when you get . . . somewhere be dème. . .
- pidgin English* Well, sakerjé, me vote for you, if Marichette let me.
- canvasser** *pidgin English* You be hang with Marichette.
- pidgin Fr/English* Marichette pas pour moi, and you know it.
- Pite** *Franco-Acadian* P't'être biengne.
- Franco-Acadian* Depêches toi, v'la Marichette qui descend, et tu vas l'attraper.
- canvasser** *English* Well good night Pite.
- narrator** *Franco-Acadian* Et le j'able le portait par en bas.
- Franco-Acadian* C'est tout-ce que j'ai à vous dire sur la politique, asteure.

Notes

¹ *Le Moniteur acadien* was published from 1867 until 1926, *L'Évangéline* from 1887 until 1982.

² Gérin, Pierre and Pierre M. Gérin. 1982. *Marichette: Lettres acadiennes, 1985-1898*. Edition commentée. Sherbrooke: Editions Naaman. This scholarly work by respected Acadianists, unfortunately no longer in print, presents the results of detailed research into the authorship of the letters, as well as discussion of the historical and social background, the political climate, a linguistic description and a glossary. Although I have consulted the originals (available on microfilm), I have used the Gérin edition as the basis for my analysis. References to the letters are hereafter identified by the date of publication in *L'Évangéline* (ex. 14 Feb 95), and/or by the page reference to Gérin.

³ Maillet, Antonine. 1973. *La Sagouine*. Montreal: Leméac.

⁴ All English quotations not in italics are my translation of the original. Quotations of the original (either English or a mixture of French and English) are in italics, with the relevant or significant item in bold characters.

⁵ Louis Riel, the Métis leader of the Northwest Rebellion of 1885, was captured after the defeat of the rebels by government forces. Though seen as a traitor in English Canada (he was found guilty of treason and executed), to his francophone compatriots he was a hero.

⁶ In Canadian politics, this colloquial label for members and supporters of the Conservative Party is often used by their political opponents as an unflattering epithet.

⁷ Both in content and in style, they anticipate by three quarters of a century the work of Québécois authors publishing in *joual*.

⁸ Those deriving on the one hand from its archaic or conservative morphology, syntax and lexicon (archaic in relation to metropolitan French, from which it had been isolated for a century and a half), as well as others resulting from the encoding, in Franco-Acadian, of features judged stylistically inappropriate in metropolitan French ("popular" or colloquial)—encoded thanks to the generations of cultural deprivation.

⁹ I have examined these aspects of Marichette's language in earlier studies in which I relate the variant spellings to the aesthetics of the evocation of dialect: Wrenn, P.M. 1987. Ortho- and Morpho-graphic Transcoding of Acadian "Franglais." *Visible Language* 21:1, 106-129. Wrenn, P.M. 1992. *Écriture Dialectale et Poésie Orale: Les Lettres de Marichette. Mélanges*

Léon: *Phonétique, Phonostylistique, Linguistique et Littérature. Hommages à Pierre Léon*. Toronto: Editions Mélodie-Toronto, 551-568.

¹⁰ Gérin and Gérin. *Marichette: Lettres acadiennes*, 173.

¹¹ Gérin and Gérin, 173.

¹² Gérin and Gérin (25-40) cite evidence in the content of the letters that belies her claim to humble origins, and questions her intentions; an exhaustive investigation, including personal interviews, leads them to conclude that Marichette, obviously a *nom de plume*, was an identity assumed by a certain Miss Emilie Leblanc, a well-educated schoolmistress, whose liaison with Valentin Landry, the editor of *L'Évangéline*, is suggested in documents surviving in regional archives. See also Gérin, Pierre and Pierre M. Gérin. 1977. Qui êtes-vous Marichette? Une Épistolière Acadienne à la Fin du XIXe Siècle. *Les Cahiers de la Société Historique Acadienne*, 8:4, 165-172.

¹³ These utterances are constructed using the lexical items of one of the two languages but with no attempt at morphological or syntactic structure. See Lehiste, Ilse. 1988. *Lectures on Language Contact*. Cambridge, Massachusetts: MIT Press, for a survey of recent research into pidgins (along with creoles). According to Lehiste, a pidgin “can arise—even in the space of a few hours—whenever an emergency situation calls for communication on a minimal level of comprehension.” (82)

¹⁴ See Ong, Walter. 1982. *Orality and Literacy: the Technologizing of the Word*. London and New York: Methuen.

¹⁵ *L'Évangéline*, Thursday 04 Jun 96, page 3, columns 3 and 4; pg 87-88, reproduced in *figures 1.1 and 1.2* in this study.

¹⁶ The *nègre blanc*, the French equivalent of “white nigger,” was applied to the situation of French-speaking Canadians by Pierre Vallières. 1969. *Nègres Blancs d'Amérique*. Montréal: Parti Pris. (Translated by Joan Pinkham. 1971. *White Niggers of America*. Toronto: McClelland and Stewart.)

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