

Called to Unity: Language Perfection, Propagation, and Practice in France, from Louis XIII to the Third Republic

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langue • identité • patrie • devoir
• français • nation • volontaire •
communication • parler • patois •
Paris • révolution • partage • roi
• participation • accepter • dire •
pouvoir • régions • standardiser •
ordre • éclairer • contrôle • choix
• pouvoir • liberté • éducation •
frontière • polyglotte • imposer •
évolution • influence • nécessité •
décision • loi • parole • lettres •
mot • politique • peuple • langue

*“La langue invite à se
réunir; elle n’y force pas.”
~ Ernest Renan*

**Called to Unity:
Language Perfection, Propagation, and Practice in France,
from Louis XIII to the Third Republic**

**By
Sarah Lauren Carmody**

**Advanced Independent Research Project
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INTRODUCTION

De moy, lecteur, ne fay pas jugement,
Par le milieu, fin, ou commencement.
Je t'apprendray (si tu as patience)
Du bon François et faux la difference.
Mais en parlant d'un tas de mots nouveaux,
Il m'a falu parler de ces cerveaux,
Ausquels en tout la nouveauté est belle,
Tant qu'ils nous font une France nouvelle.¹
Henri Estienne, 1578

Sixteenth-century author and grammarian Henri Estienne addressed the above words to readers of his linguistic commentary, *Deux dialogues du nouveau langage françois italianisé* (*Two Dialogues of the New, Italianized French Language*).² The complex study of language history, according to Estienne, requires patience and an open mind. The historian (or linguist) undertaking such studies merely serves as a medium, tracing and conveying to readers the path which language has forged through history. Estienne could not envision, in 1578, the development of his native French over the next three hundred years, but he recognized in the language a great power, already at work, to create “a new France.” The ensuing centuries would confirm Estienne’s linguistic predictions, as language developments gradually transformed the French country and its people. This investigation will explore why and to what extent the French identity has historically relied on the French language, as well as how this dependence shaped France from 1600 to 1900.

¹ “Do not judge me, reader, / At the middle, end, or beginning. / I will teach you (if you have patience) / The difference between genuine and false French. / But in discussing many new words, / It was necessary for me to mention those minds / for whom this novelty of new words is so attractive / that they make a new France for us.” Quote taken from Henri Estienne, *Deux dialogues du nouveau langage françois italianisé* (Paris: Alphonse Lemerre, 1885), in *Gallica: la bibliothèque numérique*, [<http://gallica.bnf.fr>], notice number FRBNF37234796, 31.

² In this work, Estienne sharply criticized the tradition of *italianisme* (adopting elements of the Italian language into French speech) in vogue at the Paris court in the sixteenth century. Defending French, he parodied the Italianized speech through mock dialogues.

What is language? Few definitions of the term can adequately capture language's power and influence over nations and peoples. In France, definitions are a science, an art, and an institution of sorts. Enter a *librairie* in search of “a dictionary,” and clerks will most likely meet the inquiry with a confused reaction. One requests a dictionary **by name**—*le Larousse*, *le Robert*, or simply *le Dictionnaire* (of the Académie française)—and discerning customers always have a preference when it comes to their language.

Renowned French dictionaries, past and present, have attempted to define “language.” Jean Nicot, who published the first monolingual French dictionary, *Thrésor de la langue françoise*, in 1606, identified language (*langue*) simply as “le parler & langage particulier de chaque pays (the particular speech & language of each country).”³ But much more than geography connects the French nation and people to their idiom. Paul Cohen, who wrote a comprehensive history of early modern French, calls French, “a political idiom” and “a form of civic glue.”⁴ A strong legacy binds the French to their language, demonstrating the idiom's instrumental role in France's cultural, social, and political development.

A variety of approaches exist for examining the history of French, though most historians agree on at least one basic notion: the linguistic situation in early modern France differed drastically from the current environment. Mere centuries ago, France could not claim a national language. Aristocrats, political authorities, and intellectuals in the capital spoke and wrote Parisian French, but their idiom lacked codification and standardization; that process would require centuries. Any modern map provides “multiples repères chronologiques (multiple chronological reference points)” in France's linguistic history; names of cities and towns

³ Jean Nicot, *Thrésor de la langue françoise tante ancienne que moderne* (Paris: Editions A. et J. Picard et C^{ie}, 1960), 367.

⁴ Paul Cohen, “Courtly French, learned Latin, and peasant patois: The making of a national language in early modern France,” PhD dissertation (Princeton University, 2001), 1-2.

throughout the country reflect the non-Francophone or *patois* idioms spoken there in the recent past. A traditional interpretation attributes the codification and spread of French, between 1600 and 1900, to political influence: “the French state, as part of a campaign to strengthen its own authority and disseminate a common national identity, gradually and systematically imposed French.”⁵ More modern views, however, look at other factors. For French linguistic historian Jacques Chaurand, French evolved simultaneously on three levels: the “temporal,” “geographic,” and “social” continuums.⁶ Paul Cohen likewise proposes “integrating analyses of the cultural, the social, and the political” into a historical study of French.⁷

This investigation will follow a more modern, multi-faceted approach to linguistic history. I plan to give ample attention to the multitude of political influences on French, without neglecting other social, regional, and intellectual factors affecting the language. Portions of my study follow a distinct chronology (tracing, for example, the development of organizations like the Académie française); other parts focus on themes and trends (such as education and social issues). This twofold structure will permit both clarity and efficiency as I trace the French language through three centuries.

Inevitably, linguistic discussions will feature in my analyses. Language, with its complex structures and codes, can evolve in the minutest details as well as in broad trends. As Jacques Chaurand states, “Une langue se transmet (A language is transmitted).”⁸ The changes that accompany that transmission necessitate explanation. When specific linguistic or phonetic concepts warrant discussion, I will explain them as clearly and carefully as possible. A number of my relevant sources are written in French, an invaluable advantage given the linguistic focus

⁵ Cohen, 4.

⁶ Jacques Chaurand, *Nouvelle histoire de la langue française* (Paris : Editions de Seuil), 1999.

⁷ Cohen, 474.

⁸ Chaurand, 9.

of my study. Wherever possible—and especially where the French carries with it powerful linguistic connotations—I have preserved the original quotes and provided my own translations (unless otherwise noted). Through this approach, I aim to provide both an accurate and accessible historical portrait of language in France.

Parcours historique: The origins of French

As this study focuses on French’s development between 1600 and 1900, it necessitates a basic understanding of the language’s earlier history. The oldest surviving example of written French, the *Serments de Strasbourg*, dates back to 842. The document contains a “proto-French” quite different from the modern version of the language and much closer to its Latin roots.⁹ “The French standard language has its origins in a spoken koiné which developed in Paris during a spectacular surge of demographic growth in the twelfth and thirteenth centuries.”¹⁰ In these early stages, French hardly represented a national vernacular; Latin reigned as the predominant language in politics, the court, scholastic pursuits, and the arts. In fact, “an inventory of the Sorbonne library’s holdings compiled in 1289 lists only four works in French out of about 1,000 total manuscripts.”¹¹

French began to compete seriously with Latin only during the reign of King François I (1515-1547), when “Middle French” developed into “Renaissance French.”¹² François, remembered for his intellectual and artistic enthusiasm, commissioned French translations of Latin texts. Simultaneously, François supported the development of a distinctly French literary tradition.¹³ Authors of the period chose which language suited their work, often writing

⁹ Chaurand, 29.

¹⁰ R. Anthony Lodge, *A Sociolinguistic History of Parisian French* (Cambridge, England: Cambridge University Press, 2004), 79.

¹¹ Cohen, 150.

¹² R. Anthony Lodge, *French: From Dialect to Standard* (London: Routledge, 1993), 10.

¹³ Cohen, 266.

prolifically in several tongues. An even greater assortment of spoken languages (those lacking an established written tradition) existed; these varied by region and social group. While the nobles and intellectuals in the capital employed a language quite similar to written French, their lower-class Parisian neighbors spoke drastically different dialects. Beyond Paris, regional speech (or *patois*) changed from town to town. Early modern France thus represented an “intensely polyglot society,” in which a hierarchy of tongues existed. In this multilingual environment, speaking multiple idioms meant cultural normalcy. The ability to alternate between languages (code-switching) and the diversity of vernaculars composed the French identity.¹⁴

In early modern, polyglot France, the closest competition among written languages occurred between the developing French language and the widely-used Latin. Some linguistic historians favor a theory of *diglossia*, in which these two tongues fought fiercely for dominance.¹⁵ The Latinate (Latin-speaking world) mostly consisted of scholars and authors, but the majority of the French population gained regular exposure to Latin in Church.¹⁶ State institutions, like the *Parlement de Paris*, published primarily in Latin. This changed in 1539, when François I issued the ordinance of *Villers-Cotterêts*. The document redefined a number of French legal practices, and one of its articles established French as the official language of the law and the courts.¹⁷

Many historians identify this document as a landmark triumph of French over Latin, though debate has arisen over the actual impact of *Villers-Cotterêts*. Cohen champions the assertion that the ordinance represented “something of a dead letter,” since a number of local

¹⁴ Cohen, 14, 52, 391.

¹⁵ Liselotte Biedermann-Pasques, *Les grands courants orthographiques au XVII^e siècle et la formation de l'orthographe moderne* (Tübingen: Max Niemeyer Verlag, 1992), 28.

¹⁶ Cohen, 55.

¹⁷ *Ibid*, 143, 149, 652.

courts and institutions outside of Paris already used French as of 1539.¹⁸ Cohen's theory raises the question of who, if not political leaders, possessed the power to widen French use on a national scale. Perhaps "kings did not elevate vernaculars, orators, lawyers, and poets did."¹⁹ The literary elite, in particular, advocated the use of French in the early modern period.

The literary defense of French stemmed, in part, from the same Humanist tradition that inspired efforts of translation under François I.²⁰ In 1512, Jean Lemaire de Belge wrote a poem specifically dedicated to *diglossia* and the cooperation between French and Latin, entitled *La Concorde des deux langages (The Agreement of the Two Languages)*.²¹ Authors soon drifted away from the cooperative theory, favoring the French strongly over Latin. In 1549, Joachim du Bellay published *La déffence et illustration de la langue françoise (The Defense and Illustration of the French Language)*, arguing that French accommodated a lexicon and literary eloquence comparable to or better than those of Latin.²² The literary elite thus established a French tradition, with decisions like *Villers-Cotterêts* echoing this new trend.

After Villers-Cotterêts: Continuing the story of French

It is in the wake of *Villers-Cotterêts*, amidst the growing French literary tradition, that my investigation begins. The evolution of French from 1600 to 1900, like its early origins, reflects a variety of linguistic influences and developments. Indeed, Anthony Lodge notes that more than thirty percent of French lexical items entered usage during this period.²³ The seventeenth and eighteenth centuries represented an era dedicated to the perfection of written French, which

¹⁸ Cohen, 701. See also Fernand Braudel, *L'identité de la France: Espace et Histoire* (Paris: Arthaud-Flammarion, 1986), 82. According to Braudel, Arles became the first city to write its *procès verbaux* (court records) in French, beginning in 1503.

¹⁹ Cohen, 668.

²⁰ *Ibid*, 104.

²¹ *Ibid*, 507.

²² Joachim du Bellay, *La déffence et illustration de la langue françoise*, edited by Jean Charles Monferran (Geneva: Librairie Droz, 2001), 157-163 *passim*.

²³ Lodge, *French: From Dialect to Standard*, 10.

evolved from its “Renaissance” (non-standardized, stylistic) form into its “Classical” (codified) form.²⁴ Cardinal Richelieu and the *académiciens* vied for control over standard French during the formative years of the Académie française. The first four official *Dictionnaires* (1694, 1718, 1740, 1762) preserved French in successive stages of evolution, perfection, and purification. These and other Académie publications bore witness to the ongoing struggle for linguistic authority, for the goal of codifying French brought with it implications for standardizing and controlling France through language.

However, diverse dialects competed with the new, standard French, both in Paris and beyond. These included forms of French spoken by specific social groups, such as the *poissard* of Parisian market vendors or the *jargon* of the criminal underworld. Outside of Paris, myriad *patois* dialects represented the standard speech of regions and towns. These maintained varying degrees of intelligibility to Parisian French, growing more distinct with distance from France’s center. The extreme periphery spoke entirely different languages, including *breton*, *basque*, *flamand*, and *alsacien*. The Church and the developing education system reflected France’s linguistic variation, in the adaptation of sermons and lessons, in policies catering to language, and in early (unsuccessful) attempts to spread standard French.

The Revolution of 1789 brought drastic linguistic change with its political, social, and cultural upheaval. With literary leaders like the Académie temporarily neutralized, political authorities assumed full control and influence over language. The Abbé Grégoire, a prominent figure in several Revolutionary governments, used his authority to further a vision of linguistic standardization. He collaborated with Bertrand Barère in an attempt to eliminate the *patois*. Though their initiative ultimately failed, the two leaders set an important precedent for language in the new, republican nation. Indeed, the Revolution marked the transition from “Classical” to

²⁴ Lodge, *French: From Dialect to Standard*, 10.

“Modern French.”²⁵ It simultaneously forged a strong link between language and identity, replacing feudal, monarchical ties with linguistic bonds.

The connection between language and identity grew in importance during the 1800s, as French gradually developed into a national, unified idiom. Rapid social and technological change made speaking, reading, and writing French a necessity, and education legislators worked throughout the century to make the language accessible to all citizens. The Académie faded from prominence, overcome by newer, more progressive literary authorities. Victor Hugo infused French Romanticism with linguistic and political ideals. The working class gained a literary voice and class consciousness through the press, prose, and poetry. An entire tradition of French linguistics and language manuals entered publication. Practicality and mobility overruled regional sympathies; *patois* faded from use and French became the national standard, the *langue du peuple*.

The borderland regions of Alsace and Lorraine present an interesting test case in relation to the nationalization of French. Linguistic individuality defines these regions, which resisted the nineteenth century movement of *francisation*. Border disputes dominated the history of Alsace-Lorraine, but both regions were part of France during the Revolution and through most of the 1800s. The loss of the Franco-Prussian War (1871) led to their annexation into the German empire, and linguistic struggles immediately ensued. French dominated neither region prior to annexation (though it later surfaced as a form of resistance). Residents resisted with equal fervor the advances of standard German, instead clinging to their lower dialect. Alsace-Lorraine maintained loyalty to France regardless of its linguistic identity; its nationality did not depend upon language. The regions have instead used their local languages as a basis for solidarity, reflecting the turbulence of their histories.

²⁵ Lodge, *French: From Dialect to Standard*, 10.

Whether we consider the foundations of the Académie française, the investigations of Grégoire, or the case of Alsace-Lorraine, language never loses historical importance in France. From 1600 to 1900, France gradually evolved from a kingdom of many tongues to a linguistically-unified nation. Grammatical, lexical, and phonetic standardization of French, a fascination throughout this period, facilitated the language's climb in status. Social, political, and cultural factors lent practicality to the language and fueled its nationalization. Only in borderland Alsace-Lorraine, where annexation and dueling heritages made French less practical, did linguistic unity ultimately develop around a local idiom. By tracing three centuries of linguistic evolution, this investigation will reveal language as a central, constant, and principal element of identity in France.

Authority, Purity and Influence: L'Académie française

Ce qui nous console, SIRE, c'est que sur un pareil sujet les autres
Langues n'auroient aucun avantage sur la nostre.²⁶

Académie française, 1694

Thus wrote the Académie française when dedicating its first *Dictionnaire* to Louis XIV. The “subject” mentioned by the *académiciens* (members of the Académie française) was the inability of any language—French, Latin, Greek, etc.—to express the “depth and impenetrable secret” of their monarch’s accomplishments.²⁷ In other words, neither the ascendant French language nor the obsolete languages of antiquity possessed terms capable of honoring His Majesty. The gesture of a royal dedication, in itself, was not unusual. The three subsequent editions of the *Dictionnaire* published under the Old Regime (1718, 1740, 1762) each contained a similar letter to the King. In these Dedications, the *académiciens* honored the source of their linguistic authority and acknowledged the political forces that shared in it. Similar examples of scholarly and political influences abound in French linguistic history. This investigation begins by examining the development of the Académie française from 1634 to 1762. Literary and political elites established a shared sphere of linguistic influence in France during this period, working through the Académie to shape and perfect the French language.

L'Académie française: its foundation and its mission

As discussed in the Introduction, France represented a dynamic environment for language in the sixteenth and seventeenth centuries. It was, as historians Simone Benhamou, Eugénia

²⁶ “What consoles us, SIRE, is that on a similar subject other languages would have no advantage over our own.” Quote taken from “Dédicace de la première édition,” from *Dictionnaire de l'Académie française*, first ed., in *Les Préfaces du Dictionnaire de l'Académie française 1694-1992*, ed. Bernard Quemada and Jean Pruvost (Paris: Honoré Champion, 1997), 23. (In subsequent notes, this work will be referred to as *Les Préfaces*.)

²⁷ Ibid.

Roucher, and Jean Bouffin articulate, “[une] situation linguistique et socio-culturelle ... fort évolutive (an intensely evolving linguistic and socio-cultural situation).”²⁸ The French language began, in this period, to gain precedence in a formerly Latinate and polyglot society. In 1539 François I had issued *Villers-Cotterêts*, an ordinance that proclaimed French the official legal language. That same year saw the publication of scholar Robert Estienne’s French/Latin bilingual dictionary. The first known monolingual French dictionary followed less than a century later (1606), with Jean Nicot’s *Thrésor de la langue française*.²⁹ Preliminary attempts to define and codify written French meant that literary and political figures alike saw the need for a linguistic authority. The Académie française developed from this need.

The concept of an *Academy* as a scholastic and linguistic authority was by no means new in 1635. A modern *académicien* and historian, the Duc de Castries, traces the Académie’s origins to ancient Greece, where “Plato met with his disciples in the superb gardens of *Academos* in Athens.”³⁰ In France, the literary academic tradition began with Antoine de Baïf, a member of the *Pléiade*³¹ who founded the first “Académie française” circa 1570. The society met regularly, over about fifteen years, to exchange literary ideas, but disappeared in the 1580s after the death of its influential members (including its founder). Baïf’s “Académie française” predated the official Académie and their legacies remain separate. (The records of Baïf’s group are not even housed in France.)³² Yet, Baïf’s “Académie” convened under the “royal favor”³³ of Charles IX. Baïf, his cohorts, and the supportive monarch unknowingly set a precedent for the official, modern Académie whose foundation would follow about fifty years later.

²⁸ Simone Benhamou, Eugénia Roucher and Jean Bouffin, “Première Edition: Introduction,” in *Les Prefaces*, 20.

²⁹ *Ibid*, 10.

³⁰ Duc de Castries, *La vieille dame du Quai Conti: une histoire de l’Académie française* (Paris: Librairie Académique Perrin, 1978), 117.

³¹ The *Pléiade* is the name given to a group of prominent French Renaissance poets of the sixteenth century, which also includes Joachim du Bellay and Pierre de Ronsard.

³² Castries, 118-120.

³³ *Ibid*, 118.

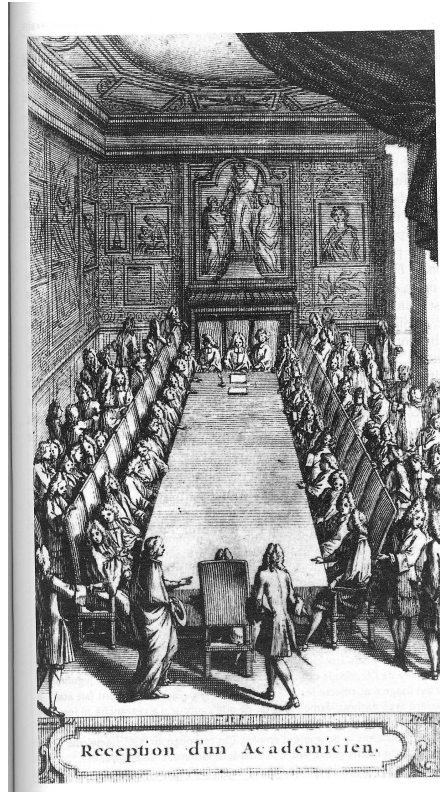


Fig. 1. “Reception of an *académicien*,” as illustrated here, took place at a public session of the Académie, before the King and the entire body. Image reproduced from Chaurand, *Nouvelle histoire de la langue française*, (Paris: Editions de Seuil, 1999) 245.

The heritage of the official Académie française dates back to 1625, when a group of literary academics began meeting at the home of poet Valentin Conrart; there, they exchanged ideas, discussed their writings, and consulted one another about French grammar (which remained largely non-codified). Cardinal Richelieu, chief minister to Louis XIII, heard of the group’s advanced linguistic and literary discussions. He obtained an *Acte Royal* to make the group official in 1634. In early 1635, the group chose a name and the *Lettres patentes pour l’établissement de l’Académie française* (*Patent Letters for the Establishment of the Académie française*) made them official. The publication also named Richelieu as the Académie’s first official *Protecteur*. The political patronage and protectorate of the Académie continued after

Richelieu's death;³⁴ Chancellor Pierre Séguier assumed the role in 1642 and Louis XIV himself requested it in 1672. The King's request reflected his tradition of cultural involvement, particularly as the "Roi-Soleil dans le domaine des lettres (Sun King in the domaine of literature)."³⁵ The position has since rested with the French head of state; ensuring constant political interest in the body's initiatives.³⁶ The Académie française first earned its reputation as the so-called "literary arm of the monarchy" as a result of the royal *protectorat*.³⁷

While political momentum helped to establish the Académie, its original members mainly represented the literary elite. In addition to Conrart, who became the group's first *Secrétaire perpétuel*, other founding members included poets Jean Chapelain, Jacques de Serisay, and Philippe Habert, poet and playwright Jean Ogier de Gombault, and cleric Germain Habert.³⁸ Authors and grammarians of the period received most of the remaining *fauteuils* (seats).³⁹ The group of literary authorities at its core helped the Académie to develop its goals and organization. According to historian Jacques Chaurand, the Académie's mission involved three elements: "réglement de l'élocution (regulation of elocution)," "ordre (order)," and, the "obligation de pureté (obligation of purity)."⁴⁰ These three pursuits posed many challenges, primarily because French, in its developmental, non-codified state, still competed with other

³⁴ The notion of patronage had flourished during the Renaissance, and continued into the early modern period. Political leaders and the nobility provided authors, artists, etc. the means to continue their craft and received their loyalty in return. The Académie received royal patronage, the highest form. This would later ensure its monopoly on dictionaries and manuals, but also placed the body firmly under monarchical control. For an explanation of patronage, see Jonathan Dewald, "Social groups and cultural practices," in *Renaissance and Reformation France*, ed. Mack P. Holt (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2002), 56-57.

³⁵ Benhamou, Roucher and Bouffin, "Première Edition: Introduction," in *Les Prefaces*, 15.

³⁶ *Ibid*, 9-10.

³⁷ David Michael Eick, "Defining the Old Regime: Dictionary Wars in Pre-Revolutionary France," PhD dissertation (University of Iowa, 2004), 20.

³⁸ Benhamou, Roucher and Bouffin, "Première Edition: Introduction," in *Les Prefaces*, 9-10.

³⁹ Forty *fauteuils* compose the Académie, though only thirty-five were full when the body became official. List of original academicians taken from Louis-Bernard Robitaille, *Le Salon des Immortels: Une Académie très française* (Paris: Denoël, 2002), 324-325.

⁴⁰ Jean-Pierre Seguin, "La Langue française aux XVII^e et XVIII^e siècles," in Jacques Chaurand, *Nouvelle histoire de la langue française* (Paris: Editions de Seuil, 1999), 233.

languages for dominance in France.⁴¹ The Académie therefore drafted its bylaws with the publication of an official *Dictionnaire* and similar grammatical manuals as its primary goal.⁴² This literary undertaking, though simply stated, would consume the better part of a century and become emblematic of the Académie and its linguistic authority.

One final factor affected the Académie's linguistic mission of perfection and purification: the dominance of French, particularly during the eighteenth century, as the European common language of politics and intellectual pursuits. Current *académicien* Marc Fumaroli aptly refers to the 1700s as the “siècle où les Français sont partout chez eux (century when the French were at home everywhere),” and the “siècle qui converse et qui correspond en français, même lorsqu'on n'est pas francophile (century when one conversed and corresponded in French, even if one was not a Francophile).”⁴³ Political and intellectual discourse in the major cities of London, Rome, Berlin, Dresden, Vienna, Saint Petersburg, and Warsaw (and dialogue between these centers) depended upon French.⁴⁴ French-language newspapers and journals maintained readership in Holland, Germany, and England.⁴⁵ The rest of France (as chapter two will demonstrate) had yet to adopt the language of Paris, but learned and landed Europeans spoke and wrote it fluently.

French linguistic authorities and political figures alike believed that with this dominion came a responsibility to perfect and preserve Europe's common idiom, maintaining its superiority. Antoine Rivarol enforced this conviction in his *Discours sur l'universalité de la langue française* (*Discourse on the Universality of the French Language*), published in 1784. He famously declared:

CE QUI N'EST PAS CLAIR N'EST PAS FRANÇAIS; ce qui n'est pas clair est encore

⁴¹ Eugénia Roucher, “Deuxième Edition: Introduction,” in *Les Prefaces*, 113.

⁴² Benhamou, Roucher and Bouffin, “Première Edition: Introduction,” in *Les Prefaces*, 9-10.

⁴³ Marc Fumaroli, *Quand l'Europe parlait français* (Paris: Editions de Fallois, 2001), 9, 17.

⁴⁴ *Ibid*, 9.

⁴⁵ *Ibid*, 16.

anglais, italien, grec, ou latin.

THAT WHICH IS NOT CLEAR IS NOT FRENCH; that which is not clear is still English, Italian, Greek, or Latin.⁴⁶

Rivarol therefore advocated “fidelité au genie [du français] (fidelity to the genius of French),” and “ordre régulier dans notre langue (regular order in our language).”⁴⁷ His views reflected the same literary and political interests involved in founding the Académie, a group which developed and flourished during the *siècle du français* (century of French).

Literary and political authorities: cooperation and conflict

Academics and politicians combined their efforts to establish the Académie française; the resulting relationship reflected varying levels of collaboration and discord. Both factions claimed an inherent right to direct France’s linguistic development. The literary elite drew its legitimacy from the power of their words and reputations. Literature, according to the *académiciens*, defined language. In 1738 the Abbé d’Olivet, the member responsible for reorganizing French spelling in the third edition of the *Dictionnaire*, wrote of literature’s power to transmit language. He located the search for linguistic authority solely in France’s “patrimoine littéraire” (literary heritage).⁴⁸ Literary authorities, by nature of this connection, became linguistic leaders as well.

Indeed, the authors, philosophers, and grammarians who composed the Académie represented a sort of living literature and language. Unlike many classic and contemporary dictionaries, the first *Dictionnaire* excluded quotations of famous authors to illustrate terms. In the *Préface*, the Académie defended its decision, writing, “on ne peut jamais s’assurer qu’une langue vivante soit parvenue à sa dernière perfection (We can never assure ourselves that a living

⁴⁶ Antoine Rivarol, *Discourse sur l’universalité de la langue française* (Paris:Larousse, 1936), 49.

⁴⁷ Ibid, 51.

⁴⁸ Roucher, “Deuxième Edition: Introduction,” in *Les Préfaces*, 113.

language has attained its final perfection).”⁴⁹ Rather than quote a source, the *académiciens* embodied the source of linguistic authority. Their presence made citations obsolete, and they existed to combat “l’ignorance & la corruption” of French, making only necessary modifications to the language and maintaining important elements unchanged.⁵⁰ Paul Cohen illustrates this idea with an interesting metaphor: “Learned elites saw themselves knee-deep in the linguistic mud, tilling fields which they hoped would bear as their fruit the perfected French idiom.”⁵¹ As the embodiment of the written word (or as linguistic gardeners), the *académiciens* represented French in its most perfect, still-evolving form.

As a result of their close links to the language, learned elites saw cultivating the French vernacular as a personal duty. According to the *Privilège du Roy* of the first *Dictionnaire*, the Académie existed “pour avoir soin de polir & de perfectionner la langue française (to take care to polish and perfect the French language).”⁵² This duty entailed a heavy responsibility, which the *académiciens* clarified and defended in the preface of the first *Dictionnaire*:

Il s’estoit glissé une fausse opinion parmy le peuple dans les premiers temps de l’Académie, qu’elle se donnoit l’autorité de faire de nouveaux mots, & d’en rejeter d’autres à sa fantaisie. La publication du Dictionnaire fait voir clairement que l’Académie n’a jamais eu cette intention.

During the early time of the Académie, a false opinion had spread among the people that the Académie gave itself the authority to make new words and to reject others on a whim. The publication of the *Dictionnaire* makes it apparent that this was never the Académie’s intention.⁵³

The *académiciens* aimed to codify French, but not to arbitrarily reshape and change the idiom.

They highlighted the thorough considerations surrounding their linguistic decisions. In 1712, the

⁴⁹ “Le Préface de la première édition,” from *Dictionnaire de l’Académie française*, in *Les Prefaces*, 28-29.

⁵⁰ “Préface de la deuxième édition,” from *Dictionnaire de l’Académie française*, in *Les Prefaces*, 133-134.

⁵¹ Paul Cohen, “Courtly French, learned Latin, and peasant patois: The making of a national language in early modern France,” PhD dissertation (Princeton University, 2001), 464.

⁵² “Privilège du Roy de la première édition,” from *Dictionnaire de l’Académie française*, in *Les Prefaces*, 53.

⁵³ “Préface de la première édition,” from *Dictionnaire de l’Académie française*, in *Les Prefaces*, 32.

body established a journal, *Observations des Académiciens*, for the careful discussion of current linguistic issues and possible changes.⁵⁴ Charged with representing and serving the language, Académie members personified the literary forces behind linguistic authority.

As the Académie developed a strong linguistic authority, the political protectorate aided its progress. *Académiciens* benefited from a variety of political support and privileges. When Richelieu made the Académie official, members received the right of *committimus*, a privilege usually reserved for *princes du sang* (members of the royal family),⁵⁵ exempting them from all judicial charges and legal entanglements.⁵⁶ Accustomed to their political protection, the *académiciens* suffered a period of anxiety after *Protecteur* Richelieu died in 1642.⁵⁷ They need not have worried, however, as subsequent *protecteurs* allocated additional benefits to members. Under Séguier, the formerly “homeless” Académie convened in the Chancellor’s personal *hôtel*; Louis XIV later established its permanent headquarters at the Louvre.⁵⁸

In fact, the first *Roi Protecteur* established multiple perquisites for *académiciens*. He compensated members, based on the amount of work they performed, with *jetons d’argent*. The equivalent of one half *Louis d’or* or 1,500 French *livres*, this sum easily surpassed the sporadic and rarely uniform *pensions* awarded under Cardinal Richelieu.⁵⁹ Louis XIV’s eagerness to support his Académie was reflected in a remark he made to Jean-Baptiste Colbert, his minister of finance, at his first audience with the *académiciens*: “Vous me direz ce qu’il faut que je fasse pour ces messieurs (You shall tell me what I must do for these gentlemen).”⁶⁰ Louis saw no gesture or cost as too great when it furthered the perfection of France’s language.

⁵⁴ Eugénia Roucher, “Deuxième Edition: Introduction,” in *Les Prefaces*, 117.

⁵⁵ *Committimus* represented the equivalent of diplomatic and legal immunity in France, traditionally reserved for ruling monarchs and those in their bloodlines.

⁵⁶ Castries, 134.

⁵⁷ *Ibid*, 142.

⁵⁸ *Ibid*, 141, 153.

⁵⁹ *Ibid*, 134, 154-155

⁶⁰ Quoted in Castries, 153.

Royal favor, however, came with heightened political influence over the Académie. The prestige of membership in the Académie included the “obligation of residence in Paris,” under the watchful regard of the monarchy.⁶¹ Implementation of *jetons* also meant that the *jetonniers* (those who received compensation) signed a register when entering and leaving Académie headquarters, earning each *livre* with their work. The *Roi Protecteur* placed a clock in the Louvre room to further regulate the *jetonniers*. With the first *Dictionnaire* still far from completion, Louis XIV pushed his Académie to work faster in the 1670s and 80s. He created the *jetons* to compensate and pressure the Académie, but simultaneously created competition among the *académiciens*.⁶²

The *académiciens* acknowledged and accepted political support, to a certain extent. For instance, royal privilege allowed the Académie exclusive publishing rights of French dictionaries (see figure 2).⁶³ This monopoly caused César-Pierre Richelet’s dictionary, published in Geneva in 1680, to be banned from France. (However, it still enjoyed a secret readership.)⁶⁴ Scandal erupted in 1683 when Académie member Antoine Furetière attempted to publish his own dictionary, *Dictionnaire universel des mots et des choses, contenant généralement tous les mots françois tant vieux que moderne (Universal Dictionary of Words and Things, Containing in General All Old and Modern French Words)*.

The *Affaire Furetière* began when *académicien* and royal censor François Charpentier gave Furetière initial permission to publish in 1684. Having glanced at the work, Charpentier erringly concluded that Furetière had limited its contents to scientific and technical terms (though the dictionary’s title suggested otherwise). It soon became clear that Furetière’s work

⁶¹ Castries, 134.

⁶² Castries 154-155; Benhamou, Roucher and Bouffin, “Première Edition: Introduction,” in *Les Prefaces*, 15-17.

⁶³ Benhamou, Roucher and Bouffin, “Première Edition: Introduction,” in *Les Prefaces*, 15.

⁶⁴ *Ibid*, 17.

addressed all French terms, scientific or otherwise. As the independent, authoritative work of an *académicien* appearing before the official *Dictionnaire*, Furetière’s manuscript promised to ridicule the Académie.

Charpentier endeavored to revoke the privilege he had granted, first claiming that Furetière had intentionally deceived him regarding the manuscripts content. When this failed, Charpentier accused his fellow *académicien* of forging his signature and of clouding his judgment with large amounts of alcohol; both charges proved unsuccessful. Finally, the Académie claimed plagiarism, halted printing, and banned the *Dictionnaire universel* in 1685. Furetière responded with the satirical *Couches de l’Académie*⁶⁵ in 1687. A publisher outside of France released Furetière’s dictionary in 1690, after his death, and the *Affaire Furetière* gained lasting prominence as an Académie scandal.⁶⁶ It demonstrated how fiercely the Académie guarded its publishing monopoly in France, and clung to the royal privilege that ensured it. (See figure two.)

LE
DICTIONNAIRE
 DE
L’ACADÉMIE
 FRANÇOISE,
 DEDIE AU ROY.
 TOME PREMIER.
 A—L



A PARIS,
 Chez la Veuve de JEAN BAPTISTE COIGNARD, Imprimeur ordinaire du Roy,
 & de l’Académie Française, rue S. Jacques, à la Bible d’Or;
 ET
 Chez JEAN BAPTISTE COIGNARD, Imprimeur & Libraire ordinaire
 du Roy, & de l’Académie Française, rue S. Jacques, près S. Severin, au Livre d’Or.
 M. DC. LXXXIV.
 AVEC PRIVILEGE DE SA MAJESTE’.

Fig. 2. The first dictionary entered publication in 1692. Its title page clearly demonstrated the royal privilege afforded to the Académie (bottom), as well as the royal dedication. Image reproduced from *Les Préfaces du Dictionnaire de l’Académie française 1694-1992*, ed. Bernard Quemada and Jean Pruvost (Paris: Honoré Champion, 1997), 7.

⁶⁵ I have chosen not to translate the title of Furetière’s satirical poem. The term *couche* literally refers to the process of carrying and delivering a child, but has no exact English equivalent. In using the term, Furetière could evoke the idea of the *Dictionnaire* as a *fausse couche* (miscarriage) of the Académie. *Couche* also represented a very materialistic description of childbirth, making it quite a vulgar word for fruit of the Académie’s labors.

⁶⁶ Benhamou, Roucher and Bouffin, “Première Edition: Introduction,” in *Les Préfaces*, 18-19; Eick, 44-45.

The Académie embraced other opportunities to honor its political supporters. Recall, from the opening of this chapter, the first *Dictionnaire* Dedication honoring Louis XIV and his efforts on behalf of the language. In fact, the *Dédicace* of the first edition went through several drafts. Though they varied in authorship and in style, each eloquently honored the Crown and continued political support driving the Académie. Charpentier wrote, “C’est votre ouvrage autant que la notre...un fidèle portrait de l’état glorieux où est enfin parvenue la langue Française (It is your work as much as ours... a faithful portrait of the glorious state which the French language has finally attained).”⁶⁷ François-Séraphin Régnier-Desmarais attributed to Louis XIV “le Beau Siècle de la France (the beautiful century of France),”⁶⁸ while author Charles Perrault⁶⁹ listed a number of complimentary titles for the *Roi Protecteur*, such as “Vainqueur des Nations (Vanquisher of Nations),” “Vengeur des Rois (Avenger of Kings),” “Defenseur des autels (Defender of altars).”⁷⁰ The *projets de dédicaces*, in their variety, make clear to what extent the Académie considered itself indebted to its King. Having accepted support and privileges for decades, the *académiciens* used their *Dictionnaire* to honor the political protectorate.

Literary and political authorities shaped the Académie from its foundation. Political influences, in particular, gradually increased in intensity through the seventeenth and eighteenth centuries. Historians agree: Richelieu recognized and capitalized on the political utility of the Académie from the beginning. As the Duc de Castries eloquently states, “une académie pourrait être un instrument commode pour que le pouvoir assurât la direction des idées (an academy

⁶⁷ “Projet de dédicace de Charpentier,” in *Les Prefaces*, 34.

⁶⁸ “Projet de dédicace de Régnier-Desmarais,” in *Les Prefaces*, 33.

⁶⁹ Perrault, an *académicien* from 1671 to 1703, received literary acclaim as the author of several fairy tales, including *Le petit chaperon rouge* (*Little Red Riding Hood*) and *Cendrillon* (*Cinderella*).

⁷⁰ “Projet de dédicace de Perrault,” in *Les Prefaces*, 32.

could be a convenient instrument in order for power to assure the direction of ideas).”⁷¹ Chaurand calls Richelieu’s protectorate “l’histoire d’une confiscation (a story of confiscation),” claiming that the cardinal had clear designs of exploiting the Académie’s influence when he offered support.⁷² Linguistic historian Anthony Lodge suggests that a purist literary tradition motivated Richelieu’s linguistic plans.⁷³ The Cardinal may have been the first figure to exploit a political opportunity in the French language, but his idea was not new. Early modern judge, legal scholar, and political theorist Jean Bodin wrote, “C’est une vraie marque de Souverainete de contraindre les subjects à changer de langue (It is a true mark of royal sovereignty to compel the subjects to change languages).”⁷⁴ Richelieu and Louis XIV put these words into practice, enforcing sovereignty through language; their successors would build on this example.

Other political figures besides the *Protecteur* exercised linguistic influence. Though the Académie’s founding members hailed primarily from literary professions, membership during the seventeenth and eighteenth centuries reflected a continuous, growing political presence among their number. By the publication of the first *Dictionnaire*, the trend revealed itself:

La plus part de ceux qui sont de l’Académie ont d’ailleurs, ou dans la Robe ou dans l’Eglise, ou à la Cour des emplois & des obligations dont ils ne peuvent pas se dispenser.

The majority of Academy members have, either on the Bench, in the Church, or in the Royal Court, outside employment and obligations from which they cannot separate themselves.⁷⁵

The growth of political (and non-literary) membership continued. Whereas authors like Vaugelas and Régnier Desmarais had championed the Académie’s early linguistic efforts from their

⁷¹ Castries, 123.

⁷² Seguin, 232.

⁷³ R. Anthony Lodge, *A sociolinguistic history of Parisian French* (Cambridge, England: Cambridge University Press, 2004), 151.

⁷⁴ Quoted in Cohen, 653.

⁷⁵ “Préface de la première édition,” from *Dictionnaire de l’Académie française*, in *Les Prefaces*, 67.

strictly literary perspectives, it was a Jesuit priest and scholar, d'Olivet, who took up their legacy and reorganized French spelling in the 1720s.⁷⁶ Records of members who entered the Académie between 1718 and 1740 include “two marshals, four dukes, one count, three marquises, four cardinals, and numerous bishops and archbishops.”⁷⁷ Political presence, as it grew, became inseparable from the Académie’s lasting identity.

Though the Académie accepted political influence to a certain extent, conflicts frequently arose as a consequence of sharing linguistic authority. These arguments often manifested themselves through the Académie’s famed *Dictionnaire*. For example, the labored process of writing the first edition (1635-1694) created tensions between *académiciens* and their political supporters. Richelieu and Vaugelas argued over the compensation (or *pensions*) of *académiciens* drafting the dictionary. When he felt the process too prolonged, Richelieu purportedly quipped, “Eh bien! Sir, vous n’oubliez pas du moins dans le Dictionnaire le mot de pension (Well! *Monsieur*, you will at least not forget the word *pension* in the *Dictionnaire*).” Vaugelas replied, “Non, Monseigneur, et moins encore celui de *reconnaissance* (No, my lord, nor the word *gratitude*).”⁷⁸ Though subtly-stated, this exchange nevertheless revealed a tension between the *académiciens* and their political *Protecteur*.

The strained relationship continued under the royal protectorate. Louis XIV particularly pressed the body to finish its fundamental project. In becoming *Protecteur*, he “directly intervened in the completion of the dictionary.”⁷⁹ Under Louis XIV’s supervision, the Académie felt the pressure to conclude and perfect their work. Even when they had completed the *Dictionnaire*, the *académiciens* put each element of their *Préface* (such as the Dedication)

⁷⁶ Susan Baddeley and Liselotte Biedermann-Pasques, “Troisième Edition: Introduction,” in *Les Préfaces*, 147.

⁷⁷ *Ibid*, 146.

⁷⁸ Quoted in Eick, 29.

⁷⁹ Benhamou, Roucher, and Bouffin, “Première Edition: Introduction,” in *Les Préfaces*, 15.

through several drafts. A peculiar poem, *Vers sur les Deux Prefaces du Dictionnaire de l'Académie Française* (*Verses on the Two Prefaces of the Académie française's Dictionary*) suggests that members held some bitterness toward their *Roi Protecteur*:

Nous avons plus d'une Preface
Pour contenter Sa Majesté,
L'une est de feu, l'autre & de glace,
C'est pour l'Hiver, c'est pour l'Eté.

We have more than one Preface
To please His Majesty,
One is made of fire, the other of ice,
One is for Winter, the other is for Summer.⁸⁰

Penning these verses, the anonymous *académicien* identified a clear purpose for the multiple drafts of the *Préface*: “pleasing” the Académie’s royal and political supporters, namely Louis XIV. They viewed this task as particularly difficult. Though it gives a humorous light to the *académiciens’* labor, the poem suggests that contention arose as a result of political interference in the Académie.

The opening pages of the second *Dictionnaire* (published in 1718) addressed royal influence over the Académie in a different manner. A certain disillusionment with the monarchy characterized the years leading up to Louis XIV’s death (1715), and it continued during the weak regency period. The Académie may have allowed Louis XIV to coerce the publication of its first *Dictionnaire*, but it responded in the second by hinting at the *Roi Protecteur’s* duty to serve, not shape, the language: “[les hommes] ne nous laisseront pas oublier la protection particulière que vous devez aux Lettres (Men will not let us forget the particular protection that you owe to language)”⁸¹ The Académie adds, “[Vos ennemis] sçavent qu’un roi de France est le Monarque

⁸⁰ From *Recueil de Pièces curieuses et nouvelles*, 1694, quoted in *Les Préfaces*, 64.

⁸¹ “Epistre au Roy de la deuxième édition,” from *Dictionnaire de l’Académie française*, in *Les Préfaces*, 125. (Emphasis mine in quote and translation.)

du monde le plus puissant *quand il a le Coeur de ses Sujets* (Your enemies know that a King of France is the most powerful Monarch in the world *when he has the heart of his subjects*).”⁸² In these discrete but clear statements, the Académie defined both the power of language and of the French people in relation to its King.

One of the most memorable and emblematic conflicts between the literary and political elite occurred long before the publication of the first *Dictionnaire*. The scandalous *Querelle du Cid* (Quarrel of the Cid) forced the Académie to defend and define its linguistic authority during the late 1630s, the earliest years of its existence. The affair began when “a young provincial of thirty years,” Pierre Corneille, gained enormous popular success in Paris with his new play, *Le Cid*.⁸³ After its debut in 1636, the piece quickly gained notoriety for certain polemic elements, some of which contradicted contemporary standards of the *Théâtre français* and others which were politically controversial.⁸⁴ According to historian Jonathan Dewald, Corneille “brought a new seriousness to dramatic poetry” and his success proved that “French language culture had become both a big business and an aspect of the nation’s political life.”⁸⁵

Richelieu’s received Corneille’s play with a reaction rather less receptive than that of the French public. The Cardinal took exception to the play’s positive portrayal of then-enemy Spain (Richelieu strongly opposed the Spanish Habsburgs throughout his tenure as Chief Minister).⁸⁶

Of Richelieu’s reaction to *Le Cid*, Pierre Robitaille writes,

Serait-ce que Pierre Corneille a l’audace de mettre en scène et de glorifier des héros espagnols, alors même que la France a engagé une lutte à mort avec Espagne pour la conquête de l’hégémonie européenne?

⁸² Ibid. (Emphasis mine in quote and translation.)

⁸³ Robitaille, 163.

⁸⁴ Dewald, 55.

⁸⁵ Ibid.

⁸⁶ Richelieu had led campaigns to remove Spanish influence from northern Italy in the 1620s. In 1636, France allied itself with Protestant forces in the Thirty Years’ War (opposing Spain). When Catalan fought for its independence from Spain a few years later (1641), France aided the cause and eventually gained the Basque-speaking region of Rousillon.

Could it be that Pierre Corneille had the audacity to put on stage and glorify Spanish heroes, at the very moment when France and Spain were engaged in a fight to the death for the conquest of European hegemony?⁸⁷

The Cardinal quickly attempted to obtain a denunciation of the play's literary merits. He effectively forced author Georges de Scudéry to publish a pamphlet (sent directly to the Académie) called *Observations sur le Cid*. Scudéry's criticism came without subtlety: "Il est de certains Pièces, comme de certains animaux qui sont en la Nature, qui de loin semblent des Etoiles, & qui de près ne sont que des vermisieux (It is true of certain Plays, as it is of certain animals in Nature, that from a distance they appear to be Stars, and from nearby they are naught but worms)."⁸⁸ Citing the exaggerated criticism in *Observations*, Richelieu called for an authoritative, literary commentary on *Le Cid* from his newly-created Académie.⁸⁹

The Académie resisted its *Protecteur*, citing bylaws which prohibited the evaluation of a literary work without the request of the author. Richelieu simply ordered the body to contact Corneille and ask permission.⁹⁰ Neither the *académiciens* nor Corneille could withstand such political pressure. Corneille responded in a letter,

Messieurs de l'Académie peuvent faire ce qu'il leur plaira; puisque vous m'écrivez que Mgr serait bien aise d'en voir leur jugement et que cela doit divertir son Éminence, je n'ai rien à dire.

Messieurs of the Académie can do as they wish; as you have written to me that Monseigneur would be most relieved to see their judgment, and that it would entertain his Eminence, I have nothing more to say.⁹¹

Forced thus by its founding *Protecteur*, the Académie wrote and released *Les sentimens*

⁸⁷ Robitaille, 164.

⁸⁸ Georges de Scudéry, *Observations sur le Cid* (published by author, 1637) in *Gallica: la bibliothèque numérique* [<http://gallica.bnf.fr>], notice number FRBNF37300548, 1.

⁸⁹ Robitaille, 164-165.

⁹⁰ Ibid.

⁹¹ Quoted in Robitaille, 165.

de l'Académie Française sur la tragi-comédie du Cid (*Sentiments of the Académie Française on the Tragi-comedy of The Cid*) in June 1637.⁹² Under an obligation to uphold the conventions of classical theater, the Académie criticized those elements of Corneille's play that broke traditional rules. For instance, the play represented a hybrid of traditional genres, as a *tragi-comédie*, and its plot was therefore invalid.⁹³ Corneille disregarded the *trois unites* (three unities) of classic theater, misrepresenting the ideas of time, place, and action in his work.⁹⁴ Finally, the play flouted the rules of *bienséance*, or the positive representation of moral values on stage.⁹⁵ Though forced to obey the Cardinal and condemn the literary value of *Le Cid*, the Académie nevertheless managed to weave elements of protest into its commentary. In its concluding remarks, the Académie praised "l'eslevation et la delicatesse de plusieurs de ses pensées [dans la pièce] et cet agrément inexplicable qui se mesle dans tous ces defaux (the elevation and the delicacy of several ideas in the play and that inexplicable appeal which weaves itself into each fault)."⁹⁶ Furthermore, the Académie used its *Sentimens* to criticize Scudéry's *Observations*.⁹⁷ The *académiciens* noted, citing his comments, an ignorance of the subtleties of language and redefined his ideas of concepts such as "le Nœud de l'intrigue (the core of the plot)."⁹⁸ The *académiciens* thus used their first major publication to establish and reaffirm their linguistic authority. Richelieu and political forces might coerce the Académie, as it had in *La Querelle de Cid*, but could not impose linguistic decisions without its consent.

Le Dictionnaire: An authoritative text

The *Dictionnaire* or, as Chaurand calls it, "la grande affaire du siècle, ou des deux

⁹² Robtaille, 165.

⁹³ Académie française, *Sentimens de l'Académie sur le tragi-comédie du Cid*, ed. by Georges Collas (Geneva: Slatkine, 1968, 16-19.

⁹⁴ Ibid, 32-35.

⁹⁵ Ibid, 41.

⁹⁶ Ibid, 79.

⁹⁷ Benhamou, Roucher, and Bouffin, "Première Edition: Introduction," in *Les Préfaces*, 12-13.

⁹⁸ Académie française, *Sentimens de l'Académie sur le tragi-comédie du Cid*, 13.

siècles, en matière de langage (the grand affair of the century, or of two centuries, in matters of language),”⁹⁹ has, since its first publication, held an unmatched position of linguistic authority in France. “On disait... ‘le Dictionnaire,’ comme s’il n’en existait qu’un (One said ‘the Dictionary,’ as if only one existed).”¹⁰⁰ Its authors the *académiciens*, like the work itself, have earned legendary distinction through their popular title as *Immortels* (Immortals). Fated to become the definitive linguistic reference in French (indeed, to gain a worldwide reputation), the *Dictionnaire* has been published in nine editions since 1694. It has thus been the identifying work of the Académie and its members, ever since the newly-founded group made its publication their primary mission.

With prestigious authorship and political endorsement, each *Dictionnaire* represented a complete and official codification of French until the printing of the next edition. As Roucher writes, “Le Dictionnaire demeure un témoin précieux des états succesifs de notre langue (The *Dictionnaire* remains a precious witness of the successive states of our language).”¹⁰¹ Previous versions of the work may be linguistically obsolete, but their implications, especially in this investigation, cannot be overlooked. “Produced at the request and with the support of the State,” “filtered following the aesthetic and cultural canons of contemporary cultured society,” the *Dictionnaire* traced French history through its lexicon.¹⁰² The first four editions (1694, 1718, 1740, 1762) provide perfect historical snapshots not only of the developing French language, but also of the political, social, and intellectual situation of the period. The *académiciens* preserved French history each time they codified the language.

Trends arise from a close, comparative examination of the first four editions of the

⁹⁹ Geneviève Clerico, “Le Français au XVI^e siècle,” in Chaurand, 193.

¹⁰⁰ Ibid.

¹⁰¹ Roucher, “Deuxième Edition: Introduction,” in *Les Préfaces*, 121.

¹⁰² See Chaurand, I, II.

Dictionnaire. The first and second versions, for example, might be described in terms of action and reaction. As previously mentioned, the Académie labored for nearly sixty years to draft its original *Dictionnaire*. Though the *académiciens* had not envisioned a publication date from the beginning, their mission predated “tout projet similaire (all similar projects)” and “aurait dû représenter le premier Dictionnaire monolingue du français (should have represented the first monolingual¹⁰³ French dictionary).”¹⁰⁴ The *Dictionnaire* failed in this respect, being eclipsed by the works (banned and published abroad) of Richelet and Furetière.¹⁰⁵

How did the first edition evolve into such a mammoth and lengthy venture? Problems Chaurand identifies as a “difficult gestation” and “methodic hesitations” lengthened the project.¹⁰⁶ Small scandals, such as the rival dictionaries, halted progress, as did the deaths of several influential figures. The Académie replaced two *Protecteurs* (Richelieu died in 1642 and Séguier in 1672) while drafting its *Dictionnaire*. Claude Favre de Vaugelas, the member charged with drafting since 1637, died in 1650 with the project far from completion.¹⁰⁷ François-Eudes de Mézerey, who took up the work after Vaugelas, had only finished the draft through the letter “S” when he died in 1683.¹⁰⁸ The generations-long task evoked these sardonic verses from *académicien* François de Boisrobert:

Depuis dix ans dessus l’F on travaille	For ten years we have worked on F
Et le destin m’auront fort obligé	And fate would much oblige me
S’il m’avait dit: Tu vivras jusqu’au G.	If it told me: You will live until G. ¹⁰⁹

Boisrobert’s words proved ironically prophetic. Though he survived the completion of a few

¹⁰³ The *Dictionnaire* would be the *first monolingual French Dictionary* insofar as it presented the literary French of the seventeenth century. Nicot’s *Trésor de la langue française*, 1606, though history considers it monolingual, contained a number of Latin and Greek references within its definitions and reflects an older French than the dictionaries published later in the century.

¹⁰⁴ See Chaurand, III.

¹⁰⁵ Ibid.

¹⁰⁶ Ibid.

¹⁰⁷ Benhamou, Roucher, and Bouffin, “Première Edition: Introduction,” in *Les Préfaces*, 14.

¹⁰⁸ Ibid.

¹⁰⁹ Quoted in Eick, 40.

more letters, the *académicien* died in 1662, missing the *Dictionnaire*'s final publication by several decades. Indeed, none of the founding members would see the published product of their toils, as the last died in 1679.¹¹⁰

Debates over content and organization halted progress as well. The *académiciens* fought over whether to include literary citations and popular sentences as examples, ruling against both but reevaluating the decision with each draft. They also decided, despite controversy, to use “traditional spelling.”¹¹¹ When Louis XIV took over the protectorate, Colbert became directly involved in the draft process. He instigated several debates over specific words in the *Dictionnaire* and their political connotations, since “l’Eloquence contribuë beaucoup à la gloire d’une Nation (Eloquence contributes greatly to the glory of a Nation).”¹¹² His input on the word, *amy* (friend) created such contention that the *académiciens* deemed it worthy of discussion in their Preface.¹¹³ Thus the interrupted and labored process continued, until political pressures finally pushed the *Dictionnaire* to completion in 1694.¹¹⁴

The Académie made apologetic remarks in the opening pages of its work, explaining the delay and defending the long-awaited product:

L’Académie auroit souhaité de pouvoir satisfaire plustost l’impatience que le Public a tesmoignée de voir ce Dictionnaire achevé; Mais on comprendra aisément qu’il n’a pas esté en son pouvoir de faire une plus grande diligence, si on fait reflexion sur les divers accidens tant publics que particuliers qui ont traversé les premieres années de son établissement, & sur la maniere don’t elle a esté obligée de travailler.

The Académie would have wished it to be within its power to satisfy the Public’s impatience to see this *Dictionnaire* completed earlier; but, if one reflects upon the diverse accidents, both public and private, which impeded the first years of its

¹¹⁰ Castries, 142.

¹¹¹ Benhamou, Roucher, and Bouffin, “Première Edition: Introduction,” in *Les Préfaces*, 15; see also Chaurand, IV. The most common example of traditional spelling is the use of “oi” where modern French would use the spelling “ai,” such as in the imperfect tense (*j’étois* instead of *j’étais*, etc) and in the word *français*, which remained *françois*.

¹¹² “Préface de la Première Edition,” in *Les Préfaces*, 39.

¹¹³ Ibid.

¹¹⁴ Benhamou, Roucher, and Bouffin, “Première Edition: Introduction,” in *Les Préfaces*, 17.

establishment as well as upon the manner in which the Académie was obliged to work, one will easily understand that it was not within the Académie's power to make greater haste.¹¹⁵

This statement bore witness to the myriad complications and prolonged process of the first *Dictionnaire*. The *académiciens* continued it with a detailed description of the many events which placed the Académie in “[un] état douteux (a questionable state),”¹¹⁶ as it endeavored to complete the first edition. The final, printed work came as the culmination of a century of linguistic evolution, political pressure, and linguistic debates; its pages contain the contributions of numerous literary and political figures.

In contrast to the lengthy, belabored process of the first edition, the second *Dictionnaire* appeared a mere twenty-four years later, in July of 1718, and primarily constituted a reactive work. The *académiciens* edited their work largely because several critical reviews and parodies appeared following the first edition's publication:

- *L'Apotheose du Dictionnaire de l'Académie et son expulsion de la region céleste (The Apotheosis of the Dictionnaire of the Académie and its Expulsion From the Heavenly Realm)*
- *Le Dictionnaire des Halles ou extrait du Dictionnaire de l'Académie françoise (The Dictionnaire of the Market or Extract of the Dictionnaire of the Académie française)*
- *L'enterrement du Dictionnaire de l'Académie (The Burial of the Dictionnaire of the Académie)*

These pointed denunciations of the *Dictionnaire*'s form, content, and importance stung the Académie, which set quickly to work on a new version.¹¹⁷ It would serve as a response to the critics' remarks and reinforce the *Dictionnaire*'s linguistic prowess.

Adding to the urgency to publish were several competing dictionaries. “Une intense

¹¹⁵ “Préface de la Première Edition,” in *Les Préfaces*, 37.

¹¹⁶ Ibid.

¹¹⁷ Roucher, “Deuxième Edition: Introduction,” in *Les Préfaces*, 107-108.

activité lexicographique” filled the early years of the eighteenth century.¹¹⁸ Furetière’s dictionary entered its second edition in 1694, and third in 1701 and 1702. The Jesuits published their *Dictionnaire de Trevoux* in 1704 and Richelet’s thirteenth edition appeared in 1712.¹¹⁹ Under extreme linguistic pressure, the Académie answered with a dictionary that far eclipsed its previous effort in terms of modernizing the language. It reflected massive additions of technical terms.¹²⁰ The letter “I” alone received eighty-two new words; some examples included the legal term *incessible* (non-transferable) and the financial term *imputation* (charge). The expansion of terms included in the *Dictionnaire* allowed the Académie to compete with the works of the Jesuits and Furetère.

Though a full-scale reorganization of spelling would await the third edition, the second *Dictionnaire* addressed some of the more glaring criticisms of its orthography. For example, it changed *fillol* and *filloles* to *filleul* and *filleule* (*godson, goddaughter*), reflecting the modern pronunciation of the terms. A specific criticism of this orthographical error had appeared in *L’Apotheose du Dictionnaire de l’Académie et son expulsion de la region céleste*.¹²¹ In the words of then-*académicien* François Fénelon, the second *Dictionnaire* took into account that “une langue vivante...est sujette à de continuel changements (a living language is subject to continuous change),” and thus began addressing the development and modernization of French.¹²² Precedent and amendment, action and reaction, more traditional and more modern, the first and second *Dictionnaires* paired neatly together; their contents detailed the prolific linguistic, political, and intellectual debates that produced the two volumes.

The third and fourth *Dictionnaires* appeared well into the intellectually- and literarily-

¹¹⁸ Ibid, 111.

¹¹⁹ Roucher, “Deuxième Edition: Introduction,” in *Les Préfaces*, 111.

¹²⁰ Ibid, 117.

¹²¹ Ibid, 108.

¹²² Quoted in *Les Préfaces*, 118.

productive eighteenth century; they therefore embodied the Enlightenment ideals of French *Lumières* and *Philosophes*. As the Académie explained in the third edition's *Préface*:

Au milieu des progrès de la Poësie, de l'Eloquence et de tous les Beaux-Arts, l'esprit philosophique naissoit; il entroit à l'Académie Française caché, tantôt sous le nom d'un Orateur ou d'un Poëte, tantôt sous celui d'un Grammarien et d'un homme de Goût.

In the midst of the progress of Poetry, Eloquence and of all the *Beaux-Arts*, the philosophical spirit was born; it entered into the Académie Française hidden, here under the name of an Orateur or a Poet, there under that of a Grammarian and a man of Taste.¹²³

By their own admission, the *académiciens* adapted their dictionary project according to Enlightenment influences of the eighteenth century.

The third and fourth editions also had reactive roots, appearing during a prolific period for dictionaries. Between 1740 and 1762, numerous specialized lexicological works entered publication in France, including an early thesaurus (*Synonymes françois*, 1744) and an etymological dictionary (*Dictionnaire étymologique de la langue française*, 1756). Multilingual dictionaries, comparing any combination of tongues, including French, German, Russian, Latin, Italian, Spanish, Greek, and Hebrew, had become popular. To improve French's position in the linguistic hierarchy, Académie efforts to purify and protect the language therefore escalated.¹²⁴ Linguistic purification became a particular focus in the last two pre-Revolutionary *Dictionnaires*.

The third edition, published in 1740, maintained most organizational aspects of the previous editions, but revolutionized spelling to include modern trends.¹²⁵ The Jesuit *académicien* l'Abbé d'Olivet led this effort. He persuaded the *Académie* to modernize orthography with the elimination of unpronounced letters (*obmettre* became *omettre*, *ajouter*

¹²³ Quoted in Baddeley and Biedermann-Pasques, "Troisième Edition: Introduction," in *Les Préfaces*, 146.

¹²⁴ Michel Dessaint, "Quatrième Edition: Introduction," in *Les Préfaces*, 179-180; Seguin, 250; Baddeley and Biedermann-Pasques, "Troisième Edition: Introduction," in *Les Préfaces*, 146.

¹²⁵ *Ibid.*

became *ajouter*).¹²⁶ D'Olivet further addressed consistency between printed and pronounced French by incorporating the characters “è” and “ê” into the *Dictionnaire* for the first time. The words like *progrés* (progress) and *estre* (to be) became *progrès* and *être*; their new orthography no longer contradicted their pronunciation.¹²⁷ The addition of “è” and “ê” affected so many words that it caused delays when the third edition reached its printing stage; the publisher needed to cast additional characters before he could print a single page.¹²⁸ Explanations of d'Olivet's rational and systematic spelling changes appeared in the *Préface* and corresponded with intellectual and literary trends of the century.

In the fourth edition, published in 1762, modernity's effects on the *Dictionnaire* were clearer still, as it became “[l'édition] des philosophes ([the edition] of the *philosophes*).”¹²⁹ The Académie added several words to accommodate the countless scientific, political, and artistic advancements of the Enlightenment, explaining the decision clearly:¹³⁰

Auroit-il été raisonnable de refuser place dans notre Dictionnaire à des mots qui sont aujourd'hui d'un usage presque général ?

Would it have been reasonable to deny those words, which are almost general in today's usage, a place in our *Dictionnaire*?¹³¹

Such additions expanded each volume of the work by nearly one hundred pages in comparison to the third *Dictionnaire*. The lexical growth reflected the concurrent encyclopedic tradition as well. Denis Diderot and Jean le Rond d'Alembert organized the publication of the famous

¹²⁶ Académie française, “Préface de la Troisième Edition,” from *Le Dictionnaire de l'Académie française*, in *Les Préfaces*, 169.

¹²⁷ Prior to this change, the Académie had not recognized a printed letter that corresponded exactly to the vowel [ɛ], using the character “é” for both the open and closed vowel sounds [e, ɛ]. The character “è” began appearing in print about thirty years earlier, but d'Olivet finalized its acceptance by the Académie. See Baddeley and Biedermann-Pasques, “Troisième Edition: Introduction,” in *Les Préfaces*, 160.

¹²⁸ Baddeley and Biedermann-Pasques, “Troisième Edition: Introduction,” in *Les Préfaces*, 152.

¹²⁹ Michel Dessaint, “Quatrième Edition: Introduction,” in *Les Préfaces*, 183.

¹³⁰ *Ibid.*, 315-320.

¹³¹ Académie française, “Préface de la Quatrième Edition,” from *Le Dictionnaire de l'Académie française*, in *Les Préfaces*, 196.

Encyclopédie between 1751 and 1772, with several contemporary thinkers contributing to their project.¹³² As its full title, *Encyclopédie ou Dictionnaire raisonné des sciences, des arts et des métiers* (*Encyclopedia or Reasoned Dictionary of Sciences, Arts, and Trades*) illustrates, the work served multiple functions. Much more than a dictionary, it did not simply define and explain concepts; it also provided commentary and criticism on a number of contemporary social, intellectual, and political questions. (This last feature earned the work a reputation for controversy.) The *Encyclopédie*'s creators envisioned a complete, authoritative reference applicable to all domains, modeled upon the English-language project of Ephraim Chambers, entitled *Cyclopaedia* and published in 1728.¹³³

The fourth *Dictionnaire* appeared amid this flurry of literary and philosophical progress in 1762, complementing the *Encyclopédie* by preserving linguistic advancements of the *Age des Lumières*. Several *Encyclopédie* contributors also occupied *Académie fauteuils*, among them Voltaire (François-Marie Arouet), Charles Pinot Duclos, Buffon (Georges-Louis Leclerc), d'Alembert, and Pierre Maupertuis.¹³⁴ Their influences particularly augmented the terminology included in the fourth *Dictionnaire*. The lexicon provided for certain trades became quite extensive, as seen through the example of *menuiserie* (joinery, carpentry). Sixteen new terms for tools of *menuiserie* appeared in the 1762 edition, bringing the total of such words to forty-eight. The *Encyclopédie*, in comparison, contained between fifty and sixty *menuiserie* terms for tools.¹³⁵ As this example demonstrates, the Académie took inspiration from its *philosophe* membership; it concurrently endeavored to match the lexical scope of the *Encyclopédie*. Both influences shaped the 1762 edition.

¹³² The *Encyclopédie* boasted contributions from, among others, Voltaire and Montesquieu in the domain of literature, Buffon and d'Alembert in the sciences, and Rousseau in music.

¹³³ For an example, see my discussion in chapter two of d'Alembert's *Encyclopédie* article, "Collège."

¹³⁴ Michel Dessaint, "Quatrième Edition: Introduction," in *Les Préfaces*, 183.

¹³⁵ *Ibid*, 187.

The elements revised in each successive *Dictionnaire* meant that, when the fourth entered publication, it resembled the 1694 original only in certain aspects. For example, it still capitalized words like *Roi* (King), *Majesté* (Majesty), and *Duc* (Duke), printed remnants of the last years of the Old Regime.¹³⁶ Likewise, the four editions all excluded words that offended *la pudeur* (modesty) from their pages. These unchanging aspects aside, the four pre-Revolutionary *Dictionnaires*, through their changes, trace the *parcours historique* (historical journey) of the Académie, the French language, and France itself in the seventeenth and eighteenth centuries. One example from the second edition epitomizes the *Dictionnaire*'s capacity to preserve successive stages of France's cultural and social evolution. A definition of one sense of the term *impression* (imprint) read,

On dit dans le style familier et par mepris *Un Gentilhomme, un Noble de nouvelle Impression*, pour luy reprocher la nouveauté de sa Noblesse.

In familiar style one says with contempt *A Gentleman, a Noble of new Imprint*, to reproach the newness of their Nobility.¹³⁷

This sense of *impression* evolved between the publication of the first and second editions. During these years, a controversial trend affected the social hierarchy. Louis XIV increasingly conferred nobility based on financial contributions, allowing members of the rising bourgeois class to literally purchase titles.¹³⁸ The pejorative idea of *nouvelle impression* emerged to criticize this trend, and the *Dictionnaire* reflected this lexical consequence of societal change.

The four pre-Revolutionary *Dictionnaires* preserve French history both in drastic changes and in their minutest details. Reflecting on the utility of the *Dictionnaire*, Fénélon wrote, "Un jour on sentira la commodité d'avoir un Dictionnaire...Le prix de cet Ouvrage ne peut manquer de croître, à mesure qu'il vieillera (One day we will feel the convenience of having a Dictionary.

¹³⁶ Hugh Gaston Hall, *Richelieu's Desmarests and the Century of Louis XIV* (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1990), 11.

¹³⁷ Quoted in Roucher, "Deuxième Edition: Introduction," in *Les Préfaces*, 119, emphasis of the *Dictionnaire*.

¹³⁸ *Ibid.*

The value of this Work can only grow as it ages).”¹³⁹ The *Dictionnaire* has certainly proven its worth in this study, tracing French’s development alongside the political, intellectual, and literary trends of two centuries.

L’Académie et le langage parlé: Protecting spoken French

While the *Dictionnaire* provides extensive evidence of the Académie’s influence over written language, we cannot overlook an essential element of linguistic authority that is slightly more difficult to research: its control over spoken Parisian French. In theory, the *Dictionnaires* applied equally to the written and spoken vernacular; protecting the “patrimoine linguistique (linguistic heritage)” was essential to France’s linguistic pride.¹⁴⁰ Since “l’Eloquence contribuë beaucoup à la gloire d’une Nation (Eloquence contributes greatly to the glory of a Nation),”¹⁴¹ writing and speaking properly held equal import. Of course, the Académie only concerned itself with the standard, Parisian, cultivated French—that is, the language of politics and the aristocracy. (The next chapter will deal with the language of lower classes and non-Parisian French in greater detail.) Nevertheless, the Académie’s efforts to protect the French language, “tant qu’on la parle dans le monde (such as we speak it in the world),”¹⁴² occupied a large part of its linguistic mission and reflected several heated debates between social, political, and literary elites.

In publishing its *Dictionnaire*, the Académie always endeavored to address the most modern form of French. The work represented “un tableau synchronique de la langue (a synchronic picture of the language).”¹⁴³ In other words, it reflected the spoken language in its most current, modern form. For this reason, the *académiciens* refused to quote famous authors,

¹³⁹ Quoted in *Les Préfaces*, 121.

¹⁴⁰ See Chaurand, II.

¹⁴¹ “Préface de la Première Edition,” in *Dictionnaire de l’Académie française*, in *Les Préfaces*, 39.

¹⁴² “Préface de la Troisième Edition,” in *Dictionnaire de l’Académie française*, in *Les Préfaces*, 166.

¹⁴³ Baddeley and Biedermann-Pasques, “Troisième Edition: Introduction,” in *Les Préfaces*, 149.

however authoritative, since their language reflected an older version of French.¹⁴⁴ The literary elite recognized the impact of the Académie's work on public speech. D'Alembert called it "the best dictionary of our language," while author Ernest Renan noted that "the public accepts it like a code of the language."¹⁴⁵ The Académie therefore applied its protective efforts to the slightest details. It tried to exclude all regionally specific words:

On a rejeffé...les terms & les façons de parler qui n'ont cours que parmi la Populace...en quelques Provinces, & que par cette raison, on doit regarder, comme n'estant point proprement de la langue.

We have rejected terms and manners of speaking current only among the Populace of certain Provinces, which for this reason cannot strictly be considered as part of the language.¹⁴⁶

It also took care to delineate the meanings of terms with particularly important political connotations, such as *gloire* (glory), whose misuse might have dangerous results.¹⁴⁷ The *Dictionnaire* protected French by answering any conceivable linguistic question.

The concept of spoken French (and the need to protect it) concerned many early modern literary and linguistic authorities, to the extent that a term existed to refer to spoken grammar: *l'usage*.¹⁴⁸ *Usage* referred to the spoken vernacular and its differences and/or similarities with written French; which aspects were correct, which were inappropriate, etc. For the Académie, rules of *usage* generally followed linguistic conservatism: spoken language resembled the written as closely as possible.¹⁴⁹ Vaugelas, who drafted much of the first *Dictionnaire*, also dedicated an entire treatise to conservatism in *usage*. He writes,

¹⁴⁴ Ibid.

¹⁴⁵ Both quoted in *Les Préfaces*, VI.

¹⁴⁶ "Préface de la Première Edition," in *Dictionnaire de l'Académie française*, in *Les Préfaces*, 69.

¹⁴⁷ "Epistre au Roi de la deuxième édition," in *Dictionnaire de l'Académie française*, in *Les Préfaces*, 124.

¹⁴⁸ The term *usage* still exists in French, but it is important to note that it existed and had the same connotations for the nascent Académie as it does today. The concept of a spoken grammar, and its difference from written grammar, was already being addressed by early modern linguistic authorities with enthusiasm.

¹⁴⁹ Liselotte Biedermann-Pasques, 158.

Voicy donc comme on definit le bon Usage...c'est la façon de parler de la plus saine partie de la cour, conformément a la façon d'escire de la plus saine partie des Autheurs du temps.

Here therefore is how one defines good *usage*...it is the speaking practice of the most wholesome part of the court, it conforms to the writing practice of the most wholesome contemporary authors.¹⁵⁰

For this reason, words offending *pudeur* (modesty) earned no mention in the *Dictionnaire*.¹⁵¹ By the spelling revolution of d'Olivet, *usage* earned a slightly more liberal interpretation as “the motor of linguistic change,”¹⁵² but conservative leanings still characterized the Académie’s interpretation of spoken French.

The *académiciens* claimed, “On ne doit point en matière de la langue prévenir le Public; mais il convient de le suivre, en se soumettant...à l’usage généralement établi (We need not forewarn the public in matters of language; but it is advisable to follow the public, submitting to generally established *usage*).”¹⁵³ They asserted that “*Usage*,” or speech in practice, “is stronger than reason,” or the prescriptive rules of language.¹⁵⁴ According to the Académie, *usage* strictly referred to the French spoken in the royal court. However, the languages of *la cour* and *la ville* (the court and the city) often contradicted one another. The Académie gradually gave more support to the French of *la ville*, as spoken by the early Parisian bourgeoisie, over the strictly aristocratic *usage* of the royal courts.¹⁵⁵

Usage particularly involved questions of pronunciation and phonetics held one of the

¹⁵⁰ Quoted in Lodge, *A Sociolinguistic History of Parisian French*, 153.

¹⁵¹ Baddeley and Biedermann-Pasques, “Troisième Edition: Introduction,” in *Les Préfaces*, 150

¹⁵² Ibid, 154.

¹⁵³ “Préface de la Quatrième Edition,” in *Dictionnaire de l’Académie française*, in *Les Préfaces*, 202.

¹⁵⁴ “Préface de la Troisième Edition,” in *Dictionnaire de l’Académie française*, in *Les Préfaces*, 169.

¹⁵⁵ Baddeley and Biedermann-Pasques, “Troisième Edition: Introduction,” in *Les Préfaces*, 149; Roucher, “Deuxième Edition: Introduction,” in *Les Préfaces*, 113; Benhamou, Roucher, and Bouffin, “Première Edition: Introduction,” in *Les Préfaces*, 13.

most contested roles in linguistic questions.¹⁵⁶ One notable debate occurred over *ouisme*, or the “question of whether words like *chose* should be pronounced [o] or [u].”¹⁵⁷ According to phonetic rules, the former sound applied; however, it became fashionable among court members to use the latter form. The debate reached such heated levels that most elites actively took sides, being identified as either *ouyistes* or *non-ouyistes*.¹⁵⁸ Henri Estienne expressed the opinion of literary elites on the matter in a poignant poem from his *Deux dialogues du nouveau langage françois italianizé*:

Sit ant vous aimez le son doux,
N'estes vous pas bien de grands fous,
De dire *chouse* au lieu de *chose*?
De dire *j'ouse* au lieu de *j'ose*?

If you like sweet sounds so much,
Are you not grand fools,
To say *chouse* instead of *chose*?
To say *j'ouse* instead of *j'ose*?¹⁵⁹

The Académie's judgment on the issue appeared in the third and fourth *Dictionnaires*, where it distinguished clearly between the vowel sounds [o] and [u] and supported the *non-ouyste*, phonetically correct interpretation.¹⁶⁰ In so doing, the *académiciens* moved with finality toward the language of the *ville* and away from court speech.

Beyond the Capital: Academic traditions in the provinces

During the seventeenth and eighteenth centuries, the Académie weathered countless debates between political and literary authorities while dedicating itself to the long, complex

¹⁵⁶ Baddeley and Biedermann-Pasques, “Troisième Edition: Introduction,” in *Les Préfaces*, 157-158.

¹⁵⁷ Lodge, *A Sociolinguistic History of Parisian French*, 156.

¹⁵⁸ *Ibid.*

¹⁵⁹ Henri Estienne, *Deux dialogues du nouveau langage françois italianizé* (Paris: Alphonse Lemerre, 1885), in *Gallica: la bibliothèque numérique*, [<http://gallica.bnf.fr>], notice number FRBNF37234796, 15. In this translation, I have preserved the words *chose* (thing) and *j'ose* (I dare) to illustrate the differences in pronunciation. The pronunciations of the vowels in question, [o] or [u], are quite similar to the corresponding English vowel sounds.

¹⁶⁰ Michel Dessaint, “Quatrième Edition: Introduction,” in *Les Préfaces*, 185.

process of producing four official *Dictionnaires* (each of which advanced, amended, and perfected the French language). As the epicenter for development and use of standard, written French, Paris served as the ultimate headquarters for the Académie. Similar institutions nevertheless existed outside of the capital, appearing as “un immediate echo (an immediate echo)” of the Parisian model.¹⁶¹ Their presence, relationship to the Parisian Académie, and effect upon its mission necessitate explanation.

Six major provincial *académies* appeared in the second half of the seventeenth century, in Arles, Avignon, Soissons, Nîmes, Angers, and Toulouse; each claimed as its model the Académie française.¹⁶² As such, their missions reflected “un ralliement aux usages de la capitale (a rallying to the usages of the capital)” and “engagements de participer à la diffusion du français (engagements to participate in the diffusion of French).”¹⁶³ Two problems impeded these goals. The first involved coexisting cooperatively with the Parisian Académie without undermining its monopoly in literary and linguistic matters. Each *académie* (if it desired official status) needed to await recognition from Paris in the form of an approved *lettre patente* (patent letter). Once recognized, the groups paid a yearly sum to the Parisian Académie to show their support.¹⁶⁴ Official provincial *académies* repeatedly expressed their deference to the original Académie and its cause. The *lettre patente* from Arles (approved in 1669)¹⁶⁵ delineated its plan for linguistic perfection:

...travailler à la pureté de la langue française dans une province maritime où le mélange des nations apporte la corruption et le changement de langage.

...to work for the purity of the French language in a maritime province where the

¹⁶¹ Daniel Roche, *Le siècle des lumières en province: Académies et académiciens provinciaux, 1680-1789* (Paris: Mouton éditeur, 1978), 16, 18.

¹⁶² Ibid, 19.

¹⁶³ Ibid, 20.

¹⁶⁴ Ibid, 23.

¹⁶⁵ Ibid, 19.

mix of nationalities brings corruption and change to language.¹⁶⁶

Letters from Toulouse, Nîmes, Soissons, Villefranche, Caen, and Marseille made similar vows to protect French.¹⁶⁷ Académies understood the importance and great honor of official status. The *académie* from Angers (approved 1685)¹⁶⁸ proudly declared itself, “une franche copie de l’académie parisienne (a clear copy of the Parisian *académie*) and embraced its royal protection.¹⁶⁹ Only official *académies* enjoyed this privilege, whereas provincial groups who resisted subordination waited long years for the approval of their *lettres patentes*.¹⁷⁰

Language composed the second major problem for the *académies de province*, whose locations outside the capital meant that most of their members learned Parisian French as a second language. To earn their *patente*, provincial *académies* pledged to perfect French, but their linguistic roots impeded this mission. As Vento de Pennes, a member of the *académie* of Marseille, reflected in 1726,

Nos citoyens les mieux élevés ne parlaient que le provençal parmi eux...plusieurs de nos anciens confrères m’ont avoués qu’ils pensaient provençal en composant et qu’ils étaient ensuite obligés de traduire.

Our best-raised citizens only spoke *provençal* amongst themselves...many of our former members admitted to me that they thought in *provençal* and were then obliged to translate.¹⁷¹

Penne used the past tense, showing that he perceived the problem of *patois*-speaking *académiciens* as more or less finished in 1726. Elsewhere, language differences created tensions between the Parisian Académie and its regional subordinates throughout the seventeenth and eighteenth centuries. For example, the Marquis de la Grille, of Arles, referred to his

¹⁶⁶ Roche, 146.

¹⁶⁷ Ibid.

¹⁶⁸ Ibid, 19.

¹⁶⁹ Ibid, 21.

¹⁷⁰ Ibid, 23.

¹⁷¹ Quoted in Roche, 147.

contemporaries in the capital as “M.M. les gros savants (Monsieurs the know-it-alls).” The Parisian *académiciens* subsequently named Grille’s institution a “colonie des académiciens de campagne (colony of country *académiciens*).”¹⁷² Such insults formed an extreme example, but France’s linguistic diversity posed an obvious obstacle for the provincial *académies*, as they attempted to reconcile the written, standard language of the capital with their local, spoken idioms.

Despite linguistic tensions between Paris and the provinces, the academic tradition prospered in the eighteenth century. Numerous *académies* earned their *patentes* and, by 1760, “les foyers académiques rayonnent donc dans la presque-totalité des provinces (academic centers therefore radiated in the near-totality of the provinces).”¹⁷³ Their existence reflected not only the growing importance of the Académie française and its literary and linguistic mission, but also the influences of the Enlightenment *Lumières* and *Philosophes*, whose *Encyclopédie* proclaimed,

Le nombre de ces académies augmente de jour en jour... On ne peut au moins disconvenir qu’ils ne contribuent en parti à répandre et à conserver le goût des Lettres et de l’étude.

The number of these académies augmente day by day... We must at least admit that they contribute in part to the spread and conservation of taste for Literature and study.¹⁷⁴

The advent and spread of the *académies provinciaux* linked, in the seventeenth and eighteenth centuries, two seemingly separate linguistic entities of France: the capital and regions beyond. During these two centuries, Paris served as the battleground for a number of linguistic issues. Parisian French, the standard written language, interested literary authorities as they codified and perfected the idiom. Political authorities sought influence over the language as well, seeing language as a vehicle for control. These groups, struggling and collaborating at

¹⁷² Ibid, 22.

¹⁷³ Roche, 32,

¹⁷⁴ Quoted in Roche, 31.

turns, engendered four distinct, official Académie *Dictionnaires*. Their efforts shaped modern French. However, the same factors that created tension between provincial *académies* and the Académie française also impeded the newly-standardized written language from reaching beyond the capital. Outside of Paris (and even within the city's lower social groups) the *langue du peuple* (people's language) created a situation of intense linguistic diversity.

La langue du peuple

Voyageant, il y a quelques années, dans la limagne d’Auvergne, je ne peux jamais me faire entendre aux paysans que je rencontrais le long de ma route. Je leur parlois françois; je leur parlois mon patois; je voulais leur parler latin: mais tout était inutile. Enfin lassé de leur parler, sans pouvoir me faire entendre, ils me parlèrent à leur tour un langage auquel je n’entendais aussi rien.¹⁷⁵

Abbé Antoine Albert, 1783

The Abbé Albert thus recalls his linguistic exchanges (or lack thereof) during a voyage through Auvergne. The Rhone River and about two hundred kilometers separate the region from his native village in the Southern Alps, yet Albert found no tongue in common with locals as he traversed the Limagne Basin.¹⁷⁶ Though Albert recounts this experience scant years before the outbreak of the French Revolution, his would have been a common tale of travelers in non-Parisian France throughout the seventeenth and eighteenth centuries. The flurry of linguistic activity, standardization, and evolution remained firmly rooted in Paris and found itself primarily in the speech and writing of the elite classes. The *langue du peuple*, or commoners’ tongue, varied as a result of numerous social and regional divisions.

This investigation began by tracing the Académie française from its inception (1635) through the publication of its fourth *Dictionnaire* (1762), highlighting a continuous struggle for authority over standard, Parisian French. It turns now toward the myriad language varieties spoken throughout France during the same period. Linguistic historian Anthony Lodge refers to

¹⁷⁵ “Traveling some years ago in the Limagne Basin of Auvergne, *I was never able to make myself understood to the peasants I met on the road. I spoke to them in French, I spoke to them in my native patois, I even spoke to them in Latin, but all to no avail. When at last I was tired of talking to them without their understanding a word, they in their turn spoke to me in a language of which I could make no more sense.*” Quoted in Fernand Braudel, *L’Identité de la France: Espace et Histoire* (Paris: Arthaud-Flammarion, 1986), 81. Italicized portion translated by S. Reynolds, quoted in Peter McPhee, *A Social History of France, 1789-1914*, 2nd ed. (New York: Palgrave Macmillan, 2004), 9. Quoted in Fernand Braudel, *L’Identité de la France: Espace et Histoire* (Paris: Arthaud-Flammarion, 1986), 81.

¹⁷⁶ Peter McPhee, *A Social History of France, 1789-1914* (New York: Palgrave Macmillan, 2004), 9.

standard French as the “hinterland dialect of Paris” (HDP), to avoid “marginalizing if not excluding the non-standard speech of the bulk of the city’s inhabitants” and other dialects throughout the country.¹⁷⁷ These included, among others, the *argot* attributed to criminals and vagrants, the *poissard* of Parisian market vendors, the *patois* of regional locales, which differed in varying degrees from Parisian French, and the periphery *patois* or *langues* completely unintelligible to the standard (see figure 3). Lodge’s use of “HDP” in place of “French” reflects impartiality as well as a dislike for the historical interpretation of any dialect as “pure” or “impure.”¹⁷⁸ But it behooves historians to understand the original terminology in use during the 1600s and 1700s, as it elucidates the social and regional tensions this hierarchy of languages provoked. To comprehend these tensions, we must examine the different types of dialects, as well as how and to what extent they differed from the standard. Further study also reveals how mounting pressure to standardize the *français du peuple* permeated the country’s institutions, like the developing French education system.

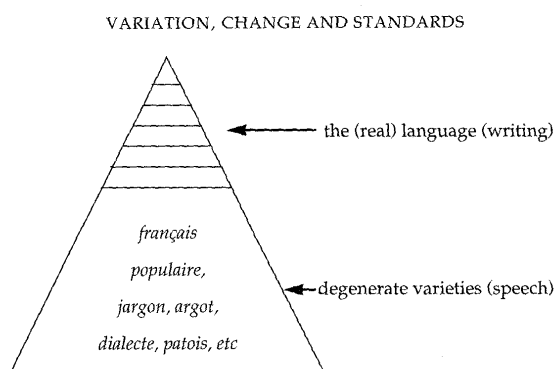


Fig. 3. Lodge’s illustration of the distinction between written French and the variety of lower forms of spoken speech. Image reproduced from Lodge, *French: From dialect to Standard*, (London: Routledge, 1993) 7.

¹⁷⁷ R. Anthony Lodge, *A Sociolinguistic History of Parisian French* (Cambridge, England: Cambridge University Press, 2004), 57, 5.

¹⁷⁸ *Ibid*, 151.

Social hierarchy and language

According to linguistic historians, social stratification of the French language can be traced to the Renaissance, when “classical notions of ‘culture’ and ‘civilisation’” arose and subsequently engendered the qualifiers of “high culture” and “low culture.”¹⁷⁹ These significations applied to language as well, designating the standard idiom as a “high” (H) variety and deviating forms as “low” (L) dialects. In Paris and major French cities during and after the Renaissance, L dialects marked the periphery, a place for common vendors and workers. Toward the city center, among elite classes and bigger businesses, the “king’s French,” or H language, prevailed.¹⁸⁰ (This situation recalls the star shape often used to describe the organization of France and its cities.) However, few impenetrable barriers existed between these dialects or sociolects.¹⁸¹ Bilingualism (or trilingualism, etc.) characterized people across social classes in Renaissance and early modern France; travelers like the Abbé Albert circulated easily, for the most part, using the idioms in their repertoire.¹⁸² By the late seventeenth and early eighteenth centuries, Paris itself hosted numerous sociolects, from the H varieties of the *ville* and the *cour*, to the speech of the new bourgeoisie, to the L idioms of commoners.¹⁸³ While elites often used language as a vehicle for distinction and separation, the literary figures employed dialects as a form of social and political commentary.¹⁸⁴

A study of seventeenth and eighteenth century French sociolects can logically start with the highest forms and work downward. Chapter one describes the upper-most divisions of

¹⁷⁹ Ibid, 115.

¹⁸⁰ George Huppert, *Public Schools in Renaissance France* (Urbana, IL: University of Illinois Press, 1984), 2.

¹⁸¹ *Sociolect* is a linguistic term assigned to the written or spoken language of a particular social group, and can be used interchangeably with *dialect* in this context.

¹⁸² Paul Cohen, “Courtly French, learned Latin, and peasant patois: The making of a national language in early modern France,” PhD dissertation (Princeton University, 2001), 392; Fernand Braudel, *L’Identité de la France: Espace et Histoire* (Paris: Arthaud-Flammarion, 1986), 81.

¹⁸³ Lodge, *A Sociolinguistic History of Parisian French* 161, 174.

¹⁸⁴ Ibid, 174.

French, occurring with debates like *ouïsme* between social, political, and literary elites of Paris. When the royal court moved from the Louvre to Versailles (1682), and as *salons* emerged in Paris proper, the languages of the *cour* (“landed aristocracy”) and *ville* (“merchant and administrative class” and new bourgeoisie) became more distinct.¹⁸⁵ Varieties and formulae of high French even existed solely for spoken exchange, such as the *langue de parade* of official proceedings and the *langue de préciosité* (precious language) used in aristocratic conversation.¹⁸⁶

Literary elites, particularly the iconic playwrights Molière and Marivaux, used the stratification of high French as an avenue for social commentary. Both men enjoyed long-term success at prestigious Parisian theaters, Marivaux at the government-established and -regulated *Théâtre français* and *Théâtre italien*, and Molière at their seventeenth century predecessor, *Le Petit-Bourbon*. In a prestigious, public venue, these playwrights’ comedies carefully portrayed the linguistic differences between their audience, the aristocracy, and the lower classes.

Molière (Jean-Baptiste Poquelin), famous for his use of farce and satire, first earned repute with *Les Précieuses Ridicules* (*The Affected Young Ladies*)¹⁸⁷ in 1659. The piece follows the petty exploits of two young French females, criticizing their failed attempts at imitating the *préciosité* of aristocratic language and manners.¹⁸⁸ The theme of language became a constant in Molière’s plays. He ridiculed the incapability of the lower classes and “affected” bourgeoisie to imitate aristocratic speech or, as a character in his *Les Femmes savantes* (*The Learned Women*,

¹⁸⁵ Lodge, 161, 154.

¹⁸⁶ Ibid, 154.

¹⁸⁷ Translators have disagreed over the proper English title of this work, and other versions include *The Precious Young Ladies*, *The Precious Provincials*, *The Affected Damsels*. I have chosen to refer to *The Affected Young Ladies*, since this is the most common example I have found and expresses most clearly my purpose in referencing the work.

¹⁸⁸ See Molière, *Les Précieuses Ridicules*, in *Œuvres Complètes*, v. 1, ed. Robert Joanny (Paris: Bordas, 1989) in *Gallica: la bibliothèque numérique* [<http://gallica.bnf.fr>], notice number FRBNF37304397, Scène I.

presented in 1672) finely put it, “parler Vaugelas (to speak Vaugelas).”¹⁸⁹ In his theatrical ballet masterpiece of 1670, *Le Bourgeois gentilhomme* (*The Bourgeois Gentleman*), Molière depicts the exploits of a rich man (with no aristocratic titles) who unsuccessfully attempts to make himself a noble gentleman through miming their speech and manners. In one humorous scene, this Monsieur Jourdain meets with his *Maître de philosophie* (philosophy teacher) to receive a simple lesson in *orthographe* (spelling) and in the proper pronunciation of several vowels and consonants.¹⁹⁰ Astounded by the philosopher’s expertise, Jourdain requests help with drafting a love letter. The following exchange occurs:

M. JOURDAIN / ...Je voudrais donc lui mettre dans un billet: *Belle marquise, vos beaux yeux me font mourir d’amour*; mais je voudrais que cela fût mis d’une manière galante, que cela fût tourné gentiment.

MAÎTRE DE PHILOSOPHIE / Mettre que les feux de ses yeux réduisent votre cœur en cendres ; que vous souffrez nuit et jour pour elle les violences d’un...

M. JOURDAIN / Non, non, non, je ne veux point tout cela ; je ne veux que ce que je vous ai dit...je ne veux que ces seules paroles-là, mais tournées à la mode, bien arrangées comme il faut.

M. JOURDAIN / ...I would like to send her this in a letter: *Beautiful marquise, your beautiful eyes make me die of love*; but I would like it to be put in a courtly/flirtatious manner, that it be gentlemanly-phrased.

MAÎTRE DE PHILOSOPHIE / Write that the fires of her eyes reduce your heart to ashes; that you suffer night and day for her the violence of a...

M. JOURDAIN / No, no, no, I do not want any of that; I only want what I said to you...I want only those words, but phrased according to style, arranged well and as is necessary.¹⁹¹

Jourdain rearranges his sentence several times, but fails to craft a better, more *galante*

¹⁸⁹ Molière, *Les Femmes savantes*, in *Œuvres Complètes*, v. 2, ed. Robert Joanny (Paris: Bordas, 1993) in *Gallica: la bibliothèque numérique* [<http://gallica.bnf.fr>], notice number FRBNF37304398, Acte I, Scène VII.

¹⁹⁰ Molière, *Le Bourgeois gentilhomme*, ed. Gilles Laizeau and Pierre Frémy (Paris: Hachette, 1976), 57-60.

¹⁹¹ *Ibid*, 60, emphasis his. I have included courtly and flirtatiously in my translation of *galante* here, as the word can suggest either (and often both) meanings.

declaration with the words he has chosen.¹⁹² The art of aristocratic speech escapes the bourgeois man; he cannot mimic it simply by reordering the components of a sentence. In this and other exchanges, Molière captured the disparity between the *langue du peuple* and that of *préciosité*.

Literary representations of this language gap extended into the eighteenth century and the comedies of Pierre de Marivaux, whose linguistic renditions of courtly speech engendered their own terminology: *le Marivaudage*. One of his most famous works, *Le jeu de l'amour et du hazard* (*The Game of Love and Chance*), presented before the *Théâtre français* in 1730,¹⁹³ follows the courtship of two young aristocrats, Silvia and Dorante. They exchange identities with their servants, each hoping to observe the other undetected.¹⁹⁴ However, his characters find themselves incapable of portraying their social opposites. Upon meeting one another in disguise, Silvia and Dorante find difficulty with *tutoiement* (using the informal *tu* when conversing), although informal address would have been customary between servants.¹⁹⁵ Even with his use of *tu*, Dorante peppers his overtures toward Silvia with the abstract, elevated *langue de préciosité*.

Désespère une passion dangereuse, sauve-moi des effets que j'en crains; tu ne me hais, ni ne m'aimes, ne ne m'aimeras; accable mon coeur de cette certitude-là !
J'agis de bonne foi, donne-moi du secours contre moi-même; il m'est nécessaire; je te le demande à genoux.

Drive this dangerous passion to despair, save me the effects I fear will come of it; you do not hate me, nor love me, nor will you ever love me; overwhelm my heart with the certainty of this! I act in good faith, give me assistance to counteract myself; I need that; I fall upon my knees to beg you.¹⁹⁶

The lofty language of Dorante contrasts sharply with that of his servant, Arlequin, who portrays his master for most of the play. Arlequin speaks with the concrete, direct, materialistic *français*

¹⁹² Ibid, 61.

¹⁹³ Pierre de Marivaux, *Le Jeu de l'amour et du hazard* (Paris: Pocket Classiques, 1994), 17.

¹⁹⁴ The thematic of exchanging social roles, particularly between a master and servant, appears throughout Marivaux's works.

¹⁹⁵ Marivaux, I.vi, p.33 in this edition.

¹⁹⁶ Marivaux, II.ix, p. 66 in this edition.

populaire (popular French). It causes him, upon first entering Silvia's house, to refer to the young aristocrat as his "femme (wife)" and her father as his "beau-père (father-in-law)."¹⁹⁷ His use of these familiar titles, before any marriage occurred, would have been inexcusable and quite vulgar to the aristocracy. Marivaux uses these tiny linguistic distinctions to offset popular and elevated versions of standard French, highlighting the inability of either social class to effectively portray another's language.

Marivaux's and Molière's portrayals are exaggerated to a certain extent. All aristocrats did not speak in vain, abstract terms. Popular French, as we will see shortly, often differed much further from the standard than the speech of Arlequin. But these playwrights and their linguistic caricatures still provide us with evidence of higher Parisian sociolects, the value attached to them, and their variation from lower class speech.

As the high varieties of Parisian French separated, developed, and invited criticism, lower forms of the language evolved, provoking similar attentions. Lower sociolects began flourishing, according to Lodge, in seventeenth-century Paris. The large-scale arrival of provincial *paysans* effectively doubled the city's population between 1600 and 1650.¹⁹⁸ Lodge refers to these migrants as "rustics" and "urban peasants." Their provincial speech, blended with that of the existing Parisian lower class, exemplified urban slang.¹⁹⁹ Parisian slang, like the *verlan* idiom, still exists today; names for the early modern varieties of the Parisian sociolect included *le badaut*, *le badaudois*, *le parigot*, and *le poissard*. The latter term, which referred literally to the language spoken by fishwives, became the most popular.²⁰⁰ As the urban peasants increasingly employed *poissard*, the sociolect earned an influence beyond the Parisian markets.

¹⁹⁷ Ibid, I.viii, p. 41 in this edition.

¹⁹⁸ Lodge, *A Sociolinguistic History of Parisian French*, 107.

¹⁹⁹ Ibid, 154-155.

²⁰⁰ Ibid, 152, 154, 162.

Linguistic historians cannot access authentic *poissard* by wandering the markets of seventeenth and eighteenth century Paris, but some evidence of the language exists in literary works of the period.²⁰¹ We have, for example, a series of political satire pamphlets that appeared from 1648 to 1652, during the Fronde movement (uprisings against Cardinal Mazarin and his supporters). Some of the pamphlets, called *Mazarinades*, employed *poissard* to “protest against general establishment values” with “a rejection of the high-status linguistic norms being promulgated at precisely this time by Vaugelas and his followers.”²⁰² The *Mazarinades* marked the emergence of a popular literary authority, opposing both the political and literary figures of the Académie through the *langue du peuple*. *La Gazette des Halles touchant les affaires du temps* (The Market Gazette Touching on Current Affairs), dated 1649, quips in *poissard*:

...je pense
 L'on monsté à son Eminence
 Comme sa hautez nous deplais,
 L'en on dit deux mots au palais
 Parguié j'en sommes deveuglée

...I think
 To show his Eminence
 How his haughtiness displeases us,
 To speak a few words of it at the hall of justice
 For by God I am no longer blind to it...²⁰³

Mazarin endeavored to suppress pamphlets containing such writings; at one point, he even banned *bouquinists* (booksellers) from the Pont-Neuf bridge in Paris after learning they had been peddling the *Mazarinades*. His efforts made little difference, as the pamphlets maintained secret

²⁰¹ Ibid, 118, 154.

²⁰² Ibid, 154-155.

²⁰³ *La Gazette des Halles touchant les affaires du temps*, reproduced in Lodge, *A Sociolinguistic History of Parisian French*, 259. The term *palais* can be translated as both “palace” and “hall of justice.” The author’s intentions here remain slightly ambiguous (Louis XIV still resided in his Parisian palace in 1649), but I have chosen the latter translation which seems more appropriate based on the subsequent reference to “blindness.”

readership and circulation.²⁰⁴ The use of *poissard* allowed the *Mazarinades* a more authentic, popular linguistic voice to oppose authorities and earned the pamphlets support among speakers of the Parisian sociolect.

In the mid-1700s, *poissard* writings resurfaced in their own literary tradition, providing more evidentiary representations of the language. Authors Jean-Jacques Vadé, T.G. Taconet, and A.C. Cailleau wrote prolifically, as prose and poetry portraying common Parisians and their daily lives (including their speech) became popular.²⁰⁵ As Vadé wrote in the preface to one such work,

Il est peu de gens qui n'ayent entendu les femmes des Halles débiter ce qu'elles dissent avec ce ton original qui leur est propre, ou tout au moins se sont-ils trouvés avec des personnes qui imitent ce langage, il est donc nécessaire pour l'agrément de la lecture de ces Bouquets, de tâcher de prendre l'inflexion de voix poissarde...

There are few people who have not heard the women of the markets come out with their own original speech and tone, or at the very least who have not found themselves among people who imitate this language, it is therefore necessary for the pleasure of reading these Bouquets, to attempt the inflection of the *poissard* voice...²⁰⁶

In addition to replicating the voice and manner of *poissard* speakers, Vadé portrayed their oppression at the hands of the elite classes. In *Lettres de la Grenouillère*, one character describes her mistreatment by an aristocrat: “C’est fort mal à elle d’avoir dit ça, si je n’avons pas des richesses, j’ons un savoir faire. Qu’alle ne fasse pas tant la Bourgeoisie. (It is quite bad of her to have said that; though I have no riches I have know-how. Would that she did not make herself

²⁰⁴ Robert Isherwood, *Farce and Fantasy: Popular Entertainment in Eighteenth-century Paris* (Oxford, England: Oxford University Press, 1986), 5.

²⁰⁵ Lodge, *A Sociolinguistic History of Parisian French*, 163,

²⁰⁶ Jean-Jacques Vadé, *Lettres de la Grenouillère, suivies de Quatre bouquets poissards* (Paris: [s.n.], 1885) in *Gallica: la bibliothèque numérique* [<http://gallica.bnf.fr>], notice number FRBNF31516327, 97-98.

so bourgeois.)”²⁰⁷ The *poissard* writings, though light in their manner and style, communicate the rising importance of social concerns in Paris, as well as recognition of lower class troubles by members of the more learned community.



Fig. 4. *Poissard* author Jean-Jacques Vadé is depicted here, visiting the *halles* (markets) to study the speech of vendors, or, translated literally, “learning a saucy lesson.” Image reproduced from Chaurand, *Nouvelle histoire de la langue française* (Paris : Editions de Seuil, 1999), 297.

The commoners’ *poissard* certainly served sociopolitical purposes in the hands of seventeenth and eighteenth century authors, but it is important to note that Parisian slang, though viewed pejoratively by elites, was a language in its own right. Printed remnants left by Vadé, the Mazarinades, and other sources offer a number of rules for the sociolect. For example, *poissard* speakers used plural forms of verbs when speaking in the first person (*je sommes* for I am, *j’ons* for I have, etc.).²⁰⁸ They also omitted the mute “e,” or [ə], sound from words. *Venez vous les aurez pour rien* (Come, you will have them for free) thus became “V’nez vous l’zarez pour rien.”²⁰⁹ In Parisian theater of the street or faire (*théâtre de la foire*), spectators easily recognized

²⁰⁷ Vadé, *Lettres de la Grenouillère*, as quoted in Lodge, *A Sociolinguistic History of Parisian French*, 163.

²⁰⁸ R. Anthony Lodge, *French: From Dialect to Standard* (London: Routledge, 1993), 258.

²⁰⁹ Vadé, *Lettres de la Grenouillère*, in *Gallica*, 100.

the *poissard*-speaking stock character, Gilles, for his tendency to omit the [ə] and replace it with [t] or [z] sounds.²¹⁰ Far from arbitrary, *poissard* followed a set of distinct rules. Though not standard French, this French dialect defined a social group and the *poissard* writings portrayed its speakers' relationship to the upper classes and authority figures of Paris.

Though *poissard* reigned as the primary language of the Parisian urban peasant, other sociolects existed in the city and beyond during the seventeenth and eighteenth centuries. *Argot* and *jargon*, now used as blanket terms to describe French slang and specific lexicons, then referred to the particular speech of certain social groups, such as criminals and vagrants.²¹¹ According to Albert Dauzat, the word *argot* “comes from an ancient Provençal term *argaut*, meaning article of clothing.” This gradually evolved to mean the “langage des malfaiteurs (language of criminals).”²¹² “Thought to have originated in the Paris underworld,” *argot* quickly earned the suspicion and reprisals of political authorities as it spread throughout Paris and the French countryside.²¹³ In 1741, Ollivier Chereau published a comprehensive dictionary of *argot*. In addition to deciphering the thieves' language, the volume lists a number of *Articles des Etats-Généraux* for regulating the sociolect. The first states,

I.I Qu'aucun Argotier ne soit si hardi de découvrir ni de celer le secret des affaires de la Monarchie qu'à ceux qui ont été reçus & passez du serment.

I.I That no speaker of *argot* be bold enough to discover nor to hide the secret affairs of the Monarchy but for those who have read and sworn an oath.²¹⁴

Chereau's work suggests the extent to which political authorities feared *argot*, a sociolect much less intelligible to speakers of standard French than *poissard*. The latter inspired satires and

²¹⁰ Isherwood, 30.

²¹¹ Albert Dauzat, *Les Argots: Caractères, Evolution, Influence* (Paris: Delgrave, 1929), 1.

²¹² Ibid, 12-13.

²¹³ Lodge, *French: From Dialect to Standard*, 5.

²¹⁴ Ollivier Chereau, *Le jargon ou langage de l'argot réformé, comme il est à présent en usage parmi les bons pauvres* (Troyes: J. Oudot, 1741) in *Gallica: la bibliothèque numérique* [<http://gallica.bnf.fr>], notice number FRBNF37250572, 1.

commentaries against authority figures, but *argot* earned swift, harsh reactions from the suspicious government. The sociolects of seventeenth and eighteenth century France, though not featured in the *Dictionnaire*, certainly gained recognition and responses in the linguistic community of the period.

Regional distinctions: les patois

While sociolects like *poissard* and *argot* influenced Paris and the immediate periphery during the 1600s and 1700s, residents of the provinces and regions beyond the capital spoke a vast variety of other dialects. These, like their sociolect counterparts, earned a stigma as well: “Regional languages and local dialects occupied a lower place in this hierarchy of languages. Unregulated, ungrammatical, unlearned and frequently unwritten, local tongues were often portrayed as incomplete languages.”²¹⁵ The very terminology of these dialects, called *patois*, indicates their lesser place. The word *patois* came from *patte*, or paw, “signifying an earthy, unsophisticated variable speech part way between animal grunts and true human speech.”²¹⁶ Despite the stigma attached to these languages, and the near-total lack of written examples of *patois*, necessity required most provincial elites to speak both standard French and the local dialect; most French people practiced regular code-switching²¹⁷ between dialects in the seventeenth and eighteenth centuries.²¹⁸

However, before studying the true impact of *patois*, we must understand the types of these dialects and their characteristics. According to Dauzat, “Patois are the result of the geographical segmentation of a language, which, left to its own devices, has given way to a

²¹⁵ Cohen, 125.

²¹⁶ David Bell, *The Cult of the Nation in France: Inventing Nationalism, 1680-1800* (Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 2001), 172.

²¹⁷ Code-switching is a linguistic term used to denote the practice of altering one’s dialect due to any number of factors. Since “code” can refer to any number of linguistic systems (entire languages, particular lexicons, situational patterns of speech, etc.), code-switching can represent a slight or drastic transition. It is therefore the most appropriate term for discussing seventeenth and eighteenth century dialects and sociolects.

²¹⁸ Lodge, *French: From Dialect to Standard*, 142; Cohen, 154.

multiplicity of divergences...’’²¹⁹ Most *patois* therefore had their origins in French at some point. However, four key regions of France (les pays Basques to the south, Bretagne to the west, Flandre in the north, and Alsace and Lorraine in the east) featured dialects derived from other sources. (See figure 5 for a detailed dialect map.) *Patois*, in reference to these areas, merely meant local speech, for it bore no connection to the standard.²²⁰ Alsace, the pays Basques, and Lorraine became French territory in 1648, 1659, and 1766 respectively, adding to Bretagne and the Nord as non-Francophone periphery regions.²²¹ With foreign dialects compounding the problem of existing *patois*, the issue of language barriers permeated daily life. It was not unlike the situation that Joachim du Bellay described in 1549, wherein “diversité et confusion se peut à bon droict appeller la Tour de Babel (diversity and confusion can with good reason call themselves a Tower of Babel).’’²²²

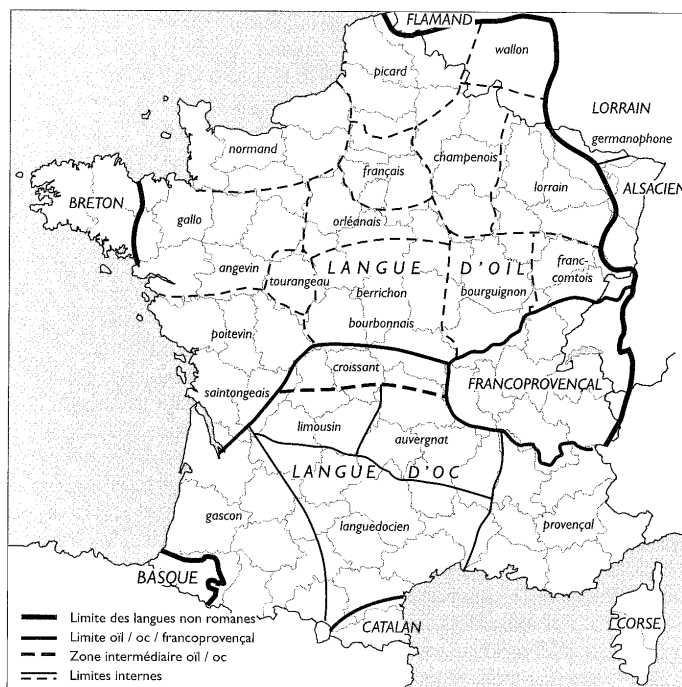


Fig. 5. This map depicts the scattered, overlapping regional dialects of France, with thick, solid lines marking major borders of intelligibility and lighter or dashed lines marking intermediate distinctions between dialects. Image reproduced from Jacques Chaurand, *Nouvelle histoire de la langue française*, (Paris: Editions de Seuil, 1999) 37.

²¹⁹ Albert Dauzat, *Les Patois: Evolution, Classification, Etude* (Paris: Delgrave, 1946), 1.

²²⁰ Dauzat, 1.

²²¹ McPhee, 8.

²²² Joachim du Bellay, *La deffence et l'illustration de la langue françoise*, ed. Jean-Charles Monferran (Geneva: Librairie Droz, 2001), 74.

The regional *patois* composing this Tower of Babel, which were practical idioms, had their basis in speech. For example, the dialect of the Midi gained the following description: “La seule langue connue est celle d’oc, langue qui se parle et s’écoute mais ne s’écrit pas. (The only known language is Oc [Occitan], a language heard and spoken but not written.)”²²³ Residents of a given region thus spoke and understood one another, but travel between regions involved complications. As Cohen articulates, “On market days and during regional commercial fairs, large towns reverberated with the sound of foreign tongues, as merchants from distant regions hawked their wares.”²²⁴ Translation thrived as an occupation; the monarchy hired interpreters called *truchements* to serve in courts, but the lack of written *patois* inhibited their efforts.²²⁵

Though *truchements* endeavored to facilitate communication, debates existed (and still exist) over the mutual intelligibility of *patois*. Language barriers often reflected personal or political, rather than linguistic, differences.²²⁶ The Old Regime officially viewed only the four periphery regions (Alsace, Bretagne, Flandre, and the pays Basques) as linguistically problematic.²²⁷ However, regional pride intensified communication problems. While local peasants, gentry, and officials celebrated their own *patois*, they vehemently distrusted those of neighboring regions.²²⁸ For example, the Pyrenées community of Val d’Arem refused entry to a Jesuit missionary in 1642 on the sole basis of his foreign *patois*.²²⁹ Breton authorities arrested several people in 1699 for witchcraft. The investigation yielded documents with “les mots particuliers d’un jargon, ou langue inconnue, meslée de beaucoup de latin, pour servir

²²³ Roger Chartier, *L’Education en France du XVIe au XVIIIe siècle* (Paris: Société d’édition d’enseignement, 1976), 107.

²²⁴ Cohen, 300.

²²⁵ Ibid, 299, 348.

²²⁶ Bell, 179.

²²⁷ Bell, 178; Cohen, 746.

²²⁸ Cohen, 278, 281, 570, 642-643.

²²⁹ Cohen, 281-282.

apparament à ce cérémonial (particular words of a jargon or unknown language, mixed with much Latin, apparently to serve in this ceremony).”²³⁰ *Patois* thus inspired both pride and suspicion in regional France, feeding the linguistically charged environment of the country in the 1600s and 1700s.

The education question

The variety of spoken dialects and sociolects in place, and the contentions they engendered, affected those institutions which relied heavily on language. In particular, the developing French network of public schools became a battleground for countless linguistic debates. Today, “School children endure that peculiarly French pedagogical hazing ritual, the *dictée*, designed to drill home the complexities of French spelling, syntax, and grammar,”²³¹ making perfection of the national idiom a primary focus. During the seventeenth and eighteenth centuries, language learning took place with less structure, no standardization, and little concentration on French itself. In fact, from the Renaissance roots of public education, French schools equated literacy with the ability to read and write Latin.²³² The *Collège de France*,²³³ established in 1530, used French for teaching purposes. Despite this precedent and the edict of *Villers-Cotterets* in 1549, Latin remained the undisputed priority language in most French schools until the mid-1600s.²³⁴ The “multiple and tenacious *patois* used throughout the

²³⁰ Quoted in Cohen, 290.

²³¹ Cohen, 1.

²³² George Huppert, *Public Schools in Renaissance France* (Urbana, IL: University of Illinois Press, 1984), 76; Lodge, *French: From Dialect to Standard*, 129.

²³³ François I established the *Collège de France* (first called the *Collège Royal*) as an alternative to the Université de Paris (also known as the Sorbonne). The independent institution originally offered disciplines not available at the Sorbonne, such as Greek, Hebrew, and Mathematics. The definition of the term *collège* later evolved to refer to institutions which educated students from approximately age eleven until they were prepared to attend universities. Modern French *collèges* are similar to American middle schools. The *Collège Royal* or *Collège de France* was founded for higher education.

²³⁴ Lodge, *French: From Dialect to Standard*, 127; Chartier, 128.

kingdom”²³⁵ particularly in the non-Francophone periphery regions, compounded language-based education problems.²³⁶ The question of instruction in the national language thus engendered a multitude of tensions and conflict.

Language inspired such contentions due to its inherent effect upon the general goals of the educational system. George Huppert asserts that, since the sixteenth century, French schools aimed to “catechiser, moraliser, et surtout soumettre aux lois de la cité [leurs étudiants] (train their students in catechism, morals, and above all to subject them to municipal laws).”²³⁷

Naturally, the instructional language made this knowledge available only to select students.²³⁸

Some early modern authorities deemed exclusivity as appropriate; Richelieu noted,

Comme la connaissance des lettres est tout à fait nécessaire à une république, il est certain qu’elles ne doivent pas être indifféremment enseignées à tout le monde.

As the knowledge of letters is absolutely necessary to a republic, it is certain that they must not be taught indifferently to everyone.²³⁹

The notion of popular education evolved into a major, continuous debate over the next century.

Though Richelieu clearly opposed the idea, he soon met opposition in the form of eighteenth-century education theorists and intellectuals; they supported a system of national instruction, particularly in language.

The *Lumières* of the 1700s spearheaded the education debate, advocating widespread instruction as beneficial to France. Charles-Louis de Secondat, better known as Montesquieu, communicated this Enlightenment ideal in his famous 1748 political tract, *De l’esprit des lois* (The Spirit of the Laws). In his preface, Montesquieu wrote,

²³⁵ Louis Trenard, “L’enseignement de la langue nationale: une réforme pédagogique, 1750-1790,” in *The Making of Frenchmen: Current Directions in the History of Education in France, 1679-1979*, ed. Donald N. Baker and Patrick J. Harrigan (Ontario, Canada: Historical Reflections Press, 1980), 95.

²³⁶ Huppert, 107.

²³⁷ Ibid, 48.

²³⁸ Huppert, 202.

²³⁹ Cardinal Richelieu, *Testament politique*, Quoted in Huppert, 37.

Il n'est pas indifférent que le peuple soit éclairé. Les préjugés des magistrats ont commence par être les préjugés de la nation. Dans un temps d'ignorance, on n'a aucun doute, même lorsqu'on fait les plus grands maux; dans un temps de lumière, on tremble encore lorsqu'on fait les plus grands biens... C'est en cherchant à instruire les hommes, que l'on peut pratiquer cette vertu générale qui comprend l'amour de tous.

It is not unimportant that the people be enlightened. The prejudices of magistrates began as the prejudices of the nation. In a time of ignorance, we have no doubt, even in doing the greatest wrong; in a time of enlightenment, we continue to tremble even in doing the greatest good... It is in trying to educate men that we can apply general virtue, including love of all.²⁴⁰

Whereas Richelieu favored the control offered by widespread ignorance, Montesquieu and his contemporaries envisioned the improvement of the French people through knowledge. For Enlightenment thinkers, education gave individuals the tools to live well and cooperatively; the benefits of widespread instruction outweighed the downfalls of ignorance.

As this Enlightenment approach to popular education developed, a number of authoritative works on educational began appearing; these included discussions of language instruction. Charles Rollin published his famous *Traité des Etudes (Treatise of Studies)* from 1726 to 1731. In the tract he argues, "Il est nécessaire d'employer tous les jours pendant le cours des classes un certain temps à l'étude de notre langue (It is necessary to employ a certain amount of time in the study of our language during the daily course of classes)."²⁴¹ Rollin even gives particular attention to the complications of teaching French in *patois*-speaking regions:

Il est même nécessaire que le maître étudie avec attention les différents défauts de langage ou de prononciation qui sont particuliers à chaque province, et quelquefois même aux villes qui se piquent le plus de politesse, pour se faire éviter aux enfants, ou pour les en corriger.

It is even necessary that the instructor study carefully the different errors of language or pronunciation unique to each province, and sometimes even to those

²⁴⁰ Montesquieu, *De l'esprit des lois*, in *Œuvres de M. de Montesquieu*, v. 1 (London: Nourse, 1767), in *Gallica: la bibliothèque numérique* [<http://gallica.bnf.fr>], notice number FRBNF32462232, lx-lxij.

²⁴¹ Charles Rollin, *Traité des Etudes*, in *Œuvres Complètes de Rollin*, new ed, v. 1 (Paris: Firmin Didot, 1821-1825), in *Gallica: la bibliothèque numérique* [<http://gallica.bnf.fr>], notice number FRBNF31239136, 169.

towns that pride themselves most on their sophistication, to make the children avoid these and to correct them.²⁴²

Other eighteenth century theorists who echoed Rollin's anti-*patois* sentiments included Rolland d'Erceville and Louis-Réné de Carradeuc de la Chalotais, the head judge (*procureur général*) of the Breton courts (*parlements*).²⁴³ By the eve of the Revolution, educational theory strongly advocated an elimination of *patois* in French schools. Meanwhile, works also appeared opposing the use of Latin in French *collèges*. Claude Helvétius, the “son of the queen's head doctor” and a wealthy tax collector, wrote on this during the 1750s. He released *De l'Esprit (Of Spirit)* in 1753, and his *De l'Homme (Of Man)* entered publication posthumously in 1773.²⁴⁴ The latter included a pointed criticism of Latin instruction: Quoi de plus absurde que de perdre huit ou dix ans à l'étude d'une langue morte qu'on oublie immédiatement après la sortie des Classes... (What could be more absurd than losing eight or ten years to the study of a dead language that we forget immediately after leaving class)?²⁴⁵ Helvétius's condemnation of Latin instruction lost effectiveness, however, due to the scandal that his controversial political and religious views in *De l'Homme* provoked.

Successors of Helvétius advanced the anti-Latin arguments. For example, the Abbé Coyer strongly opposed Latin instruction in his *Plan d'éducation publique (Plan for Public Education)*, published in 1770. He wrote:

Qu'apprend on en sixième? du latin [*sic*]. En cinquième? du latin. En quatrième? du latin. En troisième? du latin. En seconde? du latin. Nulle connaissance de la Nature, des Arts, des Sciences utiles. Point de choses, mais des mots; & encore quels mots? Pas même la langue nationale; rien de ce qui convient le plus à l'homme.

²⁴² Rollin, 170.

²⁴³ J. Morange and J.-F. Chassaing, *Le mouvement de réforme de l'enseignement en France, 1760-1798* (Paris: Fayard, 1988), 44.

²⁴⁴ Trenard, 96.

²⁴⁵ Claude-Adrian Helvétius, *De l'Homme*, v. 1 (Paris: Fayard, 1989), 554.

What do we learn in six grade? Latin. In seventh? Latin. In eighth? Latin. In ninth? Latin. In tenth? Latin. No knowledge of nature, the arts, useful sciences. Nothing but words; and again which words? Not even the national language [French]; nothing of that which is most useful to man.²⁴⁶

Coyer's words highlight a growing dislike for Latin instruction, but perhaps the most influential opinions against the language came from the *Lumières*. Their widely-read and well-respected *Encyclopédie* contained a relevant article by philosopher Jean le Rond d'Alembert. Entitled *collège*, the article offered a critical evaluation of the education offered in Jesuit schools (called *collèges*)²⁴⁷ of the period. Their curriculum focused heavily on Latin, an approach that d'Alembert deemed unnecessary and inadequate:

Un jeune homme après avoir passé dans un *collège* dix années, qu'on doit mettre au nombre des plus précieuses de sa vie, en sort, lorsqu'il a le mieux employé son tems, avec la connoissance très - imparfaite d'une langue morte... Concluons de ces réflexions, que les compositions Latines sont sujettes à de grands inconvéniens, & qu'on feroit beaucoup mieux d'y substituer des compositions Françoises; c'est ce qu'on commence à faire dans l'université de Paris: on y tient cependant encore au Latin par préférence, mais enfin on commence à y enseigner le François.

A young man, after having spent ten years in a *collège*, years which must be numbered among the most precious in his life, leaves, if he has best employed his time, with a quite-imperfect knowledge of a dead language... Let us conclude from these reflections that Latin compositions are subject to great inconvenience, and that it would do much better to substitute French compositions; that is what has begun to happen at the university of Paris: there, they hold to Latin as the preference, but finally begin to teach French.²⁴⁸

The ideas of Enlightenment thinkers (like Montesquieu and d'Alembert) and educational authorities (like Rollin) propelled educational theory firmly toward a system of national

²⁴⁶ Gabriel François Coyer, *Plan d'éducation publique* (Paris: Veuve Duchesne, 1770), in *Gallica: la bibliothèque numérique* [<http://gallica.bnf.fr>], notice number FRBNF34698445, 189.

²⁴⁷ Here the word *collège* is used in a different sense than in *Collège de France*. The *collèges jésuites* educated students for approximately six to ten years, through their early teen years to late adolescence, or until they were prepared to attend universities.

²⁴⁸ D'Alembert, "Collège," in *Encyclopédie ou Dictionnaire raisonné des sciences, des arts et des métiers*, v. 3 (Paris: Briasson, 1753), in *Gallica: la bibliothèque numérique* [<http://gallica.bnf.fr>], notice number FRBNF37235434, 635, 636.

education, featuring instruction in French. However, the first official government edict planning a “tentative d’instaurer” (an attempt at installing) national language education would not come until 1763, and a true initiative would await the Revolutionary years.²⁴⁹

Practices, then, differed somewhat from the educational theories outlined by men like Rollin and Helvétius. In fact, most schools in *patois*-speaking regions carried out instruction in the local idiom. Students of the seventeenth and eighteenth century regional *collège* rarely learned French, particularly in the completely non-Francophone periphery.²⁵⁰ A *mémoire* from the Rennes University Law School in Bretagne reads, “Un étudiant, sortant du collège après huit ans, n’est pas en état de lire un livre français (A student, leaving *collège* after eight years, is not in a state to read one French book).”²⁵¹ The emergence of several “French-Languedocien, French-Provençal, and French-Breton dictionaries” in the 1600s and 1700s did little to alleviate this problem, instead giving strength to the *patois* by standardizing them.²⁵² French schools seemed neither adherent to contemporary educational theories, nor capable of putting them into practice.

With public education barely organized and inconsistent throughout France, the Catholic Church retained instructional responsibilities for much of the seventeenth and eighteenth centuries. Indeed, “children learned their ABC’s” in order to learn “Christian prayers and the most elementary truths of faith”²⁵³ and many saw the “langue de l’Eglise (language of the Church)” as “pédagogiquement parfaite (pedagogically perfect).”²⁵⁴ But even priests failed to penetrate the barriers of *patois*. As Joachim Trotté de la Chrétandie noted in 1708, “Il faudrait

²⁴⁹ Dominique Julia, “Les professeurs, l’église et l’état après l’expulsion des Jésuites, 1762-1789,” in *The Making of Frenchmen*, 459.

²⁵⁰ Huppert, 7, 107, 108.

²⁵¹ Quoted in Trenard, 109.

²⁵² Bell, 219, 189.

²⁵³ Chartier, 8.

²⁵⁴ *Ibid*, 126.

presque autant de catechisms différents qu'il y a de paroisses et d'écoles (It would require nearly as many different catechisms as there are parishes and schools).”²⁵⁵ Religious educators nevertheless acquiesced to the *patois*, and their efforts strengthened regional dialects and inhibited the instruction of French.

One significant example is that of the Jesuit missions and schools of Bretagne. In the late sixteenth century, the Jesuit priest Julien Maunoir established several missions in the region and concurrently established a Breton tradition of religious education. Today Maunoir’s ministry remains a legend among the religious Bretons; and residents of the period referred to him fondly as the *Tad Mad* (Good Father). He required all *curés* (local priests) and missionaries to speak Breton, and wrote his catechism *Kenteliou Christen* (*Christian Lessons*) in the language before translating it into French.²⁵⁶ Maunoir’s system remained in place for nearly two centuries in Bretagne, even after the expulsion of the Jesuits in 1763.²⁵⁷ The *Tad Mad*’s efforts, combined with the religious fervor of Bretagne, allowed *patois* to flourish as the language of religious education.

Church leaders continued to use *patois* to forge a connection with parishioners through most of the eighteenth century; their efforts continued into the early years of the French Revolution. One priest in Plouenor-Trez, who preached consistently in Breton, even translated the Constitution of 1791 into the dialect. Demonstrating that such trends were not unique to the western region, priests in Flandre translated the *Déclaration des droits de l’Homme*, and a wealth of political documents exist in Occitan as well.²⁵⁸ These Revolutionary translation efforts marked, however, the final influences of Church officials in linguistic matters. The Civil

²⁵⁵ Quoted in Braudel, 81.

²⁵⁶ Chartier, 7; Bell, 188; Martin Harney, S.J., *Good Father in Brittany: The Life of Blessed Julien Maunoir* (Boston, MA: Daughters of St. Paul, 1964), 251.

²⁵⁷ Trenard, 95.

²⁵⁸ Bell 184-186.

Constitution of the Clergy and dechristianization during the Reign of Terror would have lasting effects in France. Nevertheless, the Church left its mark upon education and regional dialects.

As the tradition of *poissard* publications, the widespread use of *patois*, and the contradictions between theory and practice of French-language education indicate, the seventeenth and eighteenth century *langue du peuple* hardly represented a single, cohesive idiom. This term actually represents multiple languages, stratified along the lines of social and regional differences, each of which contributed to the linguistic tensions of the period. *La langue du peuple* represented, in many respects, the polar opposite of Parisian French. As linguistic authorities struggled to standardize the latter, forces from all social strata and locales fed the separation and contradictions that composed the former. With the Revolution soon to upend France, the volatile linguistics of the provinces and their more standardized Parisian counterparts were sure to clash.

3

The Revolution: Instability and Linguistic Change

Citoyens, les tyrans coalisés ont dit: . . . Servons-nous des peuples mal instruits qui parlent un idiome différent de celui de l'instruction publique.

Le comité a entendu ce complot de l'ignorance et du despotisme.

Je viens appeler aujourd'hui votre attention sur la plus belle langue de l'Europe, celle qui la première a consacré franchement les droits de l'homme et du citoyen, celle qui est chargée de transmettre au monde les plus sublimes pensées de la liberté et les plus grandes spéculations de la politique.²⁵⁹

Bertrand Barère de Vieuzac, 1794

Bertrand Barère penned these words to open his *Rapport du Comité de salut publique sur les idiomes* (Report of the Committee of Public Safety on Idioms), which he presented during the National Convention's session of 8 *pluviôse* (January 27).²⁶⁰ A member of the Comité, he penned this report one year after the execution of Louis XVI, under the Convention's infamous Reign of Terror. His statement highlighted the primary linguistic mission of the Convention (eliminating *patois* and strengthening French as the national idiom). It simultaneously demonstrated, through a prose infused with new, Revolutionary vocabulary and ideas, the multifaceted effects of the French Revolution on the development of the nation's language. But the

²⁵⁹ Citizens, the tyrants have been united in saying: [...] "Let us exploit the ill-educated peoples who speak a different idiom than that of public education. / The committee [Committee of Public Safety] has recognized this plot of ignorance and despotism. / Today I call your attention to the most beautiful language of Europe, that which was the first to clearly establish the rights of man and citizens, and which is charged with transmitting the most sublime thoughts of liberty and the greatest political theories to the world. Quote taken from Bertrand Barère de Vieuzac, *Rapport du Comité de salut publique sur les idiomes*, reproduced in Michel de Certeau, Dominique Julia, and Jaques Revel, *Une Politique de la Langue, La Revolution française et les patois: l'enquête de Grégoire* (Paris: Gallimard, 1975), 321.

²⁶⁰ Ibid.

notions evoked by Barère only begin to characterize the depth and complexity of linguistic matters in France during the Revolutionary years.

Due to the array of linguistic factors in play leading up to the upheaval of 1789—competing authorities, tensions between proper Parisian French and the various sociolects and *patois*—the French Revolution represents both an intriguing and daunting period to study language. As Jacques Chaurand writes, “Il n’est pas facile de faire le point sur la langue et la Révolution, parce que cette période aiguë révèle le caractère ambigu de [la] langue française (It is not easy to take stock of language and the Revolution, because this tense period reveals the ambiguous character of the French language).”²⁶¹ The mission of Revolutionary political figures, like Barère and the Lorraine priest Abbé Grégoire, would involve eliminating *patois*, standardizing French, and ending this ambiguity.

They had chosen an immense task, since the initial confusion of the Revolution had allowed regional dialects to flourish. The years 1789 though 1791 proved “efflorescent” for *patois* publications, particularly translations of Revolutionary documents.²⁶² Barère, Grégoire, and the “radicalization of the regime of 1793” consequently undertook an initiative to purge France of linguistic diversity.²⁶³ Indeed, their efforts marked a major triumph of political authorities over language; the victory, however, was not total. Notions of identity became inextricably linked to language during the Revolution, ideas which would preserve many *patois* even as they established the dominance of standard French. At the same time, the Revolution engendered a collection of neologisms and terminology linked to its principles; French became the idiom of Republicanism. In light of all these factors, examining language during the French

²⁶¹ Jean-Pierre Seguin, “La Langue française aux XVII^e et XVIII^e siècles,” in Jacques Chaurand, *Nouvelle histoire de la langue française* (Paris: Editions de Seuil, 1999), 263.

²⁶² *Ibid.*, 173.

²⁶³ Paul Cohen, “Courtly French, learned Latin, and peasant patois: The making of a national language in early modern France,” PhD dissertation (Princeton University, 2001), 140.

Revolution involves two daunting tasks. We must discern how language-building related to nation-building in France—were these phenomena synonymous? Furthermore, we must examine not only the impact of the Revolution upon language, but also the extent to which language carried the Revolution.

The Abbé Grégoire and his mission

This study of language in the Revolution begins by tracing the efforts of a great linguistic investigator of the period, the Abbé Henri-Baptiste Grégoire (1750-1831). Called the “symbole du curé patriote (symbol of the patriot priest),” Grégoire participated actively in the Revolution. Particularly instrumental during the National Convention (1792-1795) as a member of the Comité de l’instruction publique (Committee of Public Education), he championed government efforts to eliminate *patois* and institute French firmly as the national vernacular.²⁶⁴

A Roman Catholic priest, Grégoire first gained national repute for defending Jewish rights, particularly in rural areas lacking religious tolerance. Born and raised in Lorraine, where he spent his early years in the priesthood, Grégoire spoke and preached in a local dialect.²⁶⁵ Despite his linguistic heritage, Grégoire advocated the standardization of French and elimination of *patois*. He purportedly took inspiration from the contemporary writings of Johann Friedrich Oberlin, a pastor in neighboring Alsace who also worked for the spread of French.²⁶⁶ By 1789, when Grégoire spoke before the *Société royale des Sciences et des Arts de Metz* (The Royal Society of Sciences and Arts of Metz), he had firm linguistic views:

La France a dans son sein peut-être huit millions de sujets dont les uns peuvent à peine balbutier quelques mots estropiés ou quelques phrases disloquées de notre idiome; les autres l’ignorent complètement. On sait qu’en Basse Bretagne, et par delà de la Loire, en beaucoup de lieux, le Clergé est encore obligé de prêcher en

²⁶⁴ Certeau, Julia, and Revel, 23, 24.

²⁶⁵ David A. Bell, *The Cult of the Nation in France: Inventing Nationalism 1680-1800* (Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 2001), 191, 203.

²⁶⁶ Bell, 192-193.

patois local, sous peine de n’être pas compris s’il parlait français. Les gouvernements ignorent ou ne sentent pas assez combien l’anéantissement des patois importe à l’expansion des lumières, à la connaissance épurée de la religion, à l’exécution facile des lois, au bonheur national et à la tranquillité politique.

France, for its part, might contain eight million subjects of whom some can barely stammer some words or dislocated phrases in our idioms and all the others are completely ignorant of it. We know that in Lower Brittany, and along the Loire, and in many places, the Clergy is still obliged to preach in local *patois*, for fear of not being understood if it speaks French. Governments are unaware of or do not adequately sense how much the annihilation of *patois* will effect the expansion of the Enlightenment, a purified knowledge of religion, easy execution of laws, national happiness and political tranquility.²⁶⁷

Later that year, Grégoire became involved in the Revolution as a member of the Estates General. His subsequent involvement in the Convention would give the Abbé the necessary means to undertake his linguistic and political mission.

Even before Grégoire’s election to the Convention in 1792, he had begun pursuing his linguistic initiatives as a member of the National Assembly. He articulated the problem as follows, “Nous n’avons plus de provinces, et nous avons encore environ trente patois qui en rappellent leurs noms (We have no more provinces, and yet we have approximately thirty *patois* which recall their names).”²⁶⁸ The political reorganization of France (January 4, 1790) specifically aimed to replace regional loyalties with devotion to the central government, but only fifteen of the eighty-three new departments spoke French (see figures six and seven).²⁶⁹ In response to these staggering figures, the Abbé formulated “une Série de questions relatives au patois et aux mœurs des gens de la campagne (A series of Questions Relative to *Patois* and to the Mores of People of the Countryside),” and began circulating the document on August 13, 1790.²⁷⁰

²⁶⁷ Quoted in Certeau, Julia, and Revel, 25.

²⁶⁸ Ibid, 333.

²⁶⁹ Ibid.

²⁷⁰ Certeau, Julia, and Revel, 13.

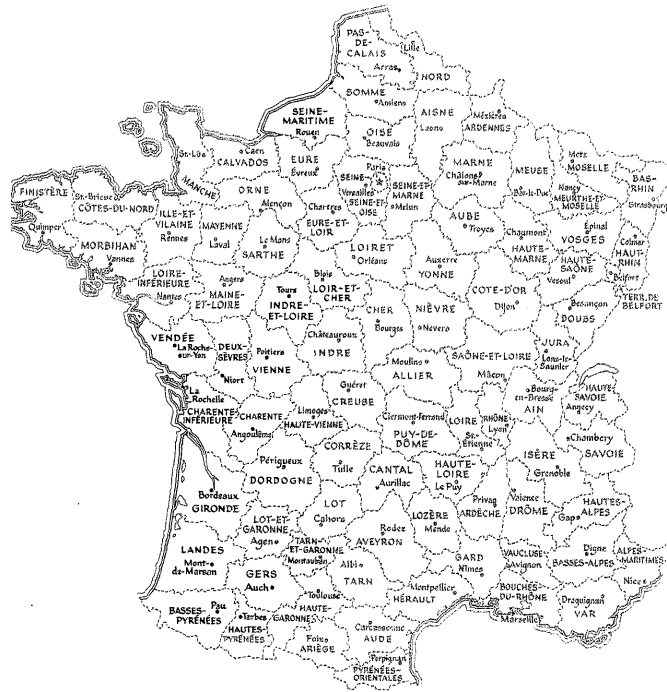


Fig. 6. The departments of modern France, with the location of their capitals noted.



Fig. 7. The names and location of regions of France under the Old Regime. Both images reproduced from Eugen Weber, *Peasants into*

Frenchmen: The Modernization of Rural France, 1870-1914 (Stanford, CA: Stanford University Press, 1976), ix, x.

As the title of his questionnaire indicated, Grégoire's mission involved a careful investigation of *patois*, with the eventual goal of their *anéantissement* (annihilation). He thus constructed questions that examined the languages themselves, as well as their impact on patriotism, religion, education, and morals.²⁷¹ He hypothesized that the spread of standard French would advance Revolutionary goals in each of these areas.²⁷² Grégoire's forty-three questions thus included the following:

1. – L'usage de la langue française est-il universel dans votre contrée? Y parle-t-on un ou plusieurs patois?...
9. – A-t-il beaucoup de mots pour exprimer les nuances des idées et les objets intellectuels?...
10. – A-t-il beaucoup de termes contraires à la pudeur?...
20. – Prêche-t-on jadis en patois? Cet usage a-t-il cessé?...
29. – Quelle serait l'importance religieuse et politique de détruire entièrement ce patois?...
30. – Quels en seraient les moyens?

1. – Is usage of the French language universal in your area? Is one or more *patois* spoken there?...
9. – Does the *patois* have many words to express the nuances of intellectual objects and ideas?...
10. – Does it have many terms contrary to modesty?...
20. – Did preaching ever occur in *patois*? Has this practice stopped?...
29. – What would be the religious and political importance of destroying this *patois* entirely?...
30. – What means could be used?²⁷³

Grégoire needed to pinpoint “quelle fatalité (which unfortunate coincidence)”²⁷⁴ kept French from being spoken throughout the nation and rectify this error. His questions addressed this goal, as well as the growing vein of French thought that connected language to individual identity and practices.

²⁷¹ Certeau, Julia, and Revel, 13-17.

²⁷² Ibid, 178; Bell, 195.

²⁷³ Grégoire's complete questionnaire is reproduced in Certeau, Julia, and Revel, 13-16. For the complete list of questions and their translations, please see the appendix.

²⁷⁴ Quoted in Certeau, Julia, and Revel, 232.

Grégoire's correspondents and their findings

“Je vous envoie plusieurs exemplaires pour vous et vos amis (I am sending you several copies for you and your friends),” wrote Grégoire to Jérémie Jacques Oberlin of Strasbourg, an acquaintance whose strategic location in Alsatian-speaking France could yield helpful answers to the questionnaire.²⁷⁵ Grégoire amassed most of his linguistic information through similar methods of circulation. He sent the survey to *Sociétés des Amis de la Constitution* (Societies of Friends of the Constitution), a network of five hundred Jacobin clubs spread throughout France.²⁷⁶ These clubs contributed the most support to the Abbé's initiative, establishing a system of correspondence. Author Pierre Choderlos de Laclos²⁷⁷ assisted by establishing the *Sociétés'* newspaper, *Journal des Sociétés des Amis de la Constitution*, in October of 1790. The publication immediately facilitated distribution of Grégoire's survey. Another newspaper, Girondin Jacques-Pierre Brissot's *Le Patriote français* (The French Patriot), with a circulation of approximately ten thousand copies, published the questionnaire in August of 1790.²⁷⁸ Through these channels, Grégoire achieved a widespread distribution of the survey, though his methods clearly restricted the intended audience and correspondents to supporters of the National Assembly's political initiatives.

The Abbé soon began receiving responses to his questionnaire. The thirty-two answers arrived between August 17, 1790 and January 12, 1792. Seventeen came, in quite prompt response, between November of 1790 and February of the following year.²⁷⁹ Grégoire's political

²⁷⁵ Certeau, Julia, and Revel, 26.

²⁷⁶ Ibid, 39.

²⁷⁷ Laclos is best known for having penned *Les Liaisons Dangereuses* (*Dangerous Liaisons*) in 1782. The work poignantly criticizes the sexual immoralities and vain excesses favored by the aristocracy under the Old Regime.

²⁷⁸ Certeau, Julia, and Revel, 27-28, 39.

²⁷⁹ Ibid, 26.

and professional influences also affected the responses. Nineteen can be attributed to clergy-members, while fourteen came through the network of *Sociétés*. However, others boast authorship by wealthy farmers, anonymous correspondents, and even one woman.²⁸⁰

Geographically, most responses emanated from regions where Grégoire maintained connections, such as the east, and where *patois* remained firmly in usage, such as the south.²⁸¹ A portion of his responses originated from individuals, while others represented the effort of group investigations (such as the *Sociétés*).²⁸²

While the identity of most correspondents suggests strong loyalties to Grégoire and his political agenda, a wide, often conflicting array of opinions and content characterized the responses themselves. Some merely confirmed the existing problems, like this letter from Landes: “On a souvent de la peine à se comprendre de paroisse à paroisse (We often have difficulty understanding one another from one parish to the next).”²⁸³ An abbé from Bergues similarly states that, “L’enseignement tant en ville qu’en campagne se fait en flamand (Teaching is done in Flemish, be it in cities or in the countryside).”²⁸⁴ On the other hand, Grégoire received responses denying any problem with *patois*, like the one from Saint-Calais (in Sarthe) asserting, “La langue française est la seule qu’on y parle (The French language is the only one spoken here).”²⁸⁵ These contradictions likely result from the region of origin of individual correspondents.

Other inconsistencies reveal deeper issues. Responders who cited a strong *patois* presence offered contradicting suggestions. Some saw “aucun inconvénient à détruire le *patois*

²⁸⁰ See Certeau, Julia, and Revel, 32, for a demographic summary of Grégoire’s correspondents.

²⁸¹ Ibid, 30.

²⁸² Ibid, 31, 49-50.

²⁸³ Quoted in Fernand Braudel, *L’identité de la France: Espace et Histoire* (Paris: Arthaud-Flammarion, 1986), 79.

²⁸⁴ Abbé Andriès, “Bergues,” in Certeau, Julia, and Revel, 261.

²⁸⁵ Mousseron-Mellève, “Saint-Calais,” in Certeau, Julia, and Revel, 267.

(No inconvenience in destroying *patois*),”²⁸⁶ whereas a judge from Lyon claimed, “Je ne crois pas qu’il soit important pour la religion, ni pour la politique de détruire le patois dans les villages (I do not believe that it is important for religion nor for politics to destroy *patois* in the villages).”²⁸⁷ The responses reflected the individuality of their authors and the range of linguistic opinions scattered through France. For Grégoire, the sheer variety of answers supported his conviction: diversity of languages impeded political progress and national unity.

The Convention’s response

Grégoire and the Convention, using the questionnaire’s results, formulated a strategy to purge France of its non-Francophone vernaculars. Barère’s report of 8 *pluviôse* (January 27) 1794 from the Comité de salut publique marked the government’s first official announcement of this plan. After hearing the report, the Convention immediately passed legislation regarding the elimination of *patois* and the spread of French. The new articles required that an “*instituteur de la langue française* (French language instructor)” be placed in each non-Francophone town.²⁸⁸ They further pinpointed the regions of Bretagne, Flandre, Alsace, Lorraine, the Pyrenées, the Alps, and Corsica as particularly needing intervention.²⁸⁹ As for the duties of these state-remunerated teachers,

Les instituteurs seront tenus d’enseigner tous les jours la langue française et la Déclaration des Droits de l’Homme à tous les jeunes citoyens des deux sexes que les pères, mères et tuteurs seront tenues d’envoyer dans les écoles publiques; les jours de décade, ils donneront lecture au peuple et traduiront vocalement les lois de la République en préférant celles relatives à l’agriculture et aux droits des citoyens.

The instructors shall be obligated to teach the French language and the Declaration of the Rights of Man daily to all young citizens of both sexes, whose fathers, mothers, and guardians shall be obligated to send them to the public

²⁸⁶ Pierre Bernadau, *Observations sur les questions patriotiques*, reproduced in Certeau, Julia, and Revel 201.

²⁸⁷ Morel, “Lyon,” in Certeau, Julia, and Revel, 243.

²⁸⁸ Quoted in Certeau, Julia, and Revel, 329.

²⁸⁹ Certeau, Julia, and Revel, 329-330

schools; every week, the instructors will read and translate the laws of the Republic orally for the people, giving particular attention to laws relating to agriculture and the rights of citizens.²⁹⁰

The articles of 8 *pluviôse* represent a decisive move toward nationalizing French, yet they include moderation. Translation, as the previous decades and early Revolutionary years had demonstrated, often impeded the spread of French. However, the Convention allowed only for oral translation in its legislation. Pairing this with new, obligatory schooling in French, political authorities hoped to expedite the triumph of French over *patois*.

Later that year, Grégoire produced his own document, entitled *Rapport sur la nécessité et les moyens d'anéantir les patois et d'universaliser l'usage de la langue française* (*Report on the Necessity and the Means for Annihilating the Patois and Universalizing the Usage of the French Language*). He presented the lengthy report from the Comité de l'instruction publique on 16 *prairial* (June 4).²⁹¹ In his discourse, he commended the articles of 8 *pluviôse*, but predicted their ultimate inadequacy:

Cette mesure, très-salutaire, mais qui ne s'étend pas à tous ceux où l'on parle patois, doit être secondée par le zèle des citoyens. La voix douce de la persuasion peut accélérer l'époque où ces idiomes féodaux auront disparu.

This measure, which is beneficial but which does not apply to all those areas where people speak *patois*, must be assisted by the zeal of citizens. The gentle voice of persuasion could hasten us toward an epoch where these feudal idioms will have disappeared.²⁹²

Citing the variety of responses to his questionnaire, Grégoire asserted a need for standardizing French in all regions, regardless of location or any resemblance between current *patois* and the standard. The Convention responded to these concerns with further legislation. It assigned Grégoire and the Comité de l'instruction publique the duty of developing “les moyens

²⁹⁰ Quoted in Certeau, Julia, and Revel, 330.

²⁹¹ Certeau, Julia, and Revel, 331.

²⁹² Henri-Baptiste Grégoire, *Rapport sur la nécessité et les moyens d'anéantir les patois et d'universaliser l'usage de la langue française*, reproduced in Certeau, Julia, and Revel, 335.

d'exécution pour une nouvelle grammaire et un vocabulaire nouveau de la langue française (means for executing a new grammar and vocabulary of the French language).²⁹³ By regulating French teachers and preparing their instruction materials, the Convention hoped to spread standard French more easily and efficiently through the departments.

These two reports and their resulting legislation received further support on 2 *thermidor* (July 20), 1794, in the form of a decree "interdisant l'emploi d'aucun idiome autre que la langue française dans quelque acte que ce soit, même sous seing privé (prohibiting the use of any idiom other than the French language in any legal act, even in private contracts and documents)."²⁹⁴ With its passage, the Convention completed a plausible framework for the elimination of *patois* and the nationalization of French. However, Grégoire, Barère, and their supporters would never bring these plans to completion. One week after the decree of 2 *thermidor*, the coup of 9 *thermidor* ended the Reign of Terror with the execution of several key members of the Convention, including Maximilien Robespierre of the Comité de salut publique. In less than a week, power changed hands and the policies of the Thermidorian Convention replaced those of its predecessor.

Though both Barère and Grégoire escaped execution, the coup abruptly crushed their linguistic strategies. With their radical leaders gone from power, the network of Jacobin clubs lost critical support. On 16 *fructidor* (September 2), 1794, the Thermidorian Convention repealed the decree of 2 *thermidor*; pending new reports and more feasible plans for implementation which never came. The remaining linguistic legislations gradually faded from practice.²⁹⁵ By contrast, Grégoire's linguistic views remained constant; he even attracted criticism as a radical in later years when he attempted to translate the Catholic liturgy from Latin

²⁹³ Quoted in Certeau, Julia, and Revel, 351.

²⁹⁴ Certeau, Julia, and Revel, 13.

²⁹⁵ Ibid.

into French. But the coup weakened his political influence. In the long term, the fall of the Jacobins allowed *patois* to regain strength in several regions. A report on public education in 1864 found several schools still teaching in *patois*.²⁹⁶ Instability, often used to characterize the French Revolution, thus applies equally to Revolutionary linguistic measures. The French language oscillated, from a priority to a minor concern, during successive regimes; its development fluctuated accordingly

Although Barère and Grégoire lost the necessary support for total success, their efforts to eliminate *patois* yielded some results from 1789 to 1794. For example, publications in Occitan, the southern *patois* with the strongest tradition of written literature before 1789, decreased markedly. While over seventy Occitan volumes entered print between 1790 and 1791, publications per annum decreased to 13 in 1793, and to 10 in 1794.²⁹⁷ The Great Terror obviously contributed to the reduction, along with Grégoire's investigation and the Convention's legislations. Grégoire's historical contribution to the spread of French might be considered secondary, however, to his investigative contributions. His *enquête*—the questionnaire, the responses, and the resulting reports—provides us with a plethora of information on Revolutionary notions of *patois*, as well as language in general.

Identity from language: a Revolutionary concept

Historians Michel de Certeau, Dominique Julia, and Jacques Revel write, of Grégoire's questionnaire, that it “distingue deux champs d'analyse: l'un regarde la langue...; l'autre, complémentaire, a pour objet l'instruction et son envers, les préjugés (distinguished two fields of analysis: one regarded the language...; the other, complementary, has as its object education and

²⁹⁶ Certeau, Julia, and Revel, 297-298.

²⁹⁷ Bell, 184.

its antithesis, prejudices).²⁹⁸ In other words, Grégoire based his questions on linguistic concerns, educational theories, and existing “prejudices” about provincial languages and attitudes. These “prejudices” actually reflected a common set of perceived notions about language and its effect upon beliefs, mannerisms, and character. Language, according to Grégoire and his contemporaries, directly influenced patriotic leanings, sense of local and regional heritage, and even personal conduct. In the various documents of the *enquête*, we therefore find evidence of a developing Revolutionary notion that connected language with identity.

Grégoire’s motivation for the *enquête* came largely from his belief that “nous sommes encore, pour le langage, à la tour de Babel, tandis que, pour la liberté, nous formons l’avant-garde des nations (we are still, in language, a tower of Babel, whereas, for liberty, we are among the avant-garde of nations).”²⁹⁹ He therefore sought to solidify French unity and nationhood by solidifying language. The Abbé and his allies saw regional sympathies as the primary opposition to patriotism and political progress. Regional language differences also threatened to undermine France’s national borders, particularly in regions like Alsace, where French citizens spoke the language of foreign neighbors. Barère expressed his views on Alsace as follows:

Dans les départements du Haut et du Bas Rhin, qui a donc appelé, de concert avec les traîtres, le Prussien et l’Autrichien sur nos frontières envahies? l’habitant [*sic*] des campagnes qui parle la même langue que nos ennemis, et qui se croit ainsi bien plus leur frère et leur concitoyen que le frère et le concitoyen des Français qui lui parlent une autre langue et ont d’autres habitudes.

In the departments of Haut and Bas Rhin, who has called the Prussian and the Austrian into collusion with traitors along our invaded borders? It is the inhabitant of this countryside who speaks the same language as our enemies, and who believes himself to be more their brother and fellow citizen than the brother

²⁹⁸ Certeau, Julia, and Revel, 18.

²⁹⁹ Grégoire, *Rapport*, in Certeau, Julia, and Revel, 334.

and fellow citizen of the French, who address him in a different language and have different habits.³⁰⁰

Border regions like Alsace, according to Barère, posed threats of national security easily rectified through the elimination of regional idioms and identities.

Before the efforts of Grégoire, the Revolutionary government had taken steps to eliminate regional identities through the process of centralization. In January of 1790, eighty-three departments replaced the provinces, geopolitically reorganizing France. “A pre-emptive victory of the new state,” which “undercut larger provincial and ethnic unities,” the departments received new titles based not upon the old provinces, but upon “rivers, mountains, and other natural features.”³⁰¹ Centralization meant redrafting the French map with Paris, and the government, as its strong center, a nucleus pulling loyalty inward from the periphery.

Departmental reorganization also represented part of a larger effort of standardization during the Revolution, one which replaced regional laws with a national code, introduced metric units as the legal standard of measurement, and instituted the *franc* (based in units of ten) as the national currency.³⁰²

Despite these organizational measures, Grégoire recognized the remaining impediment of language. He pinpointed the problem by citing the “thirty *patois* which recall [the names of the provinces].”³⁰³ In fact, he felt that these languages emphasized and maintained the Old Regime feudal ties between people and the land:

La féodalité, qui vint encore morceler ce beau pays, y conserva soigneusement cette disparité d’idiomes comme un moyen de reconnaître, de ressaisir les serfs fugitifs et de river leurs chaînes. Actuellement encore, l’étendue territoriale où

³⁰⁰ Barère, in Certeau, Julia and Revel, 324. See chapter five for a complete discussion of the borderland regions of Alsace and Lorraine, whose loyalty to France and linguistic identity would be called into question in the nineteenth century after the Prussian annexation (1871).

³⁰¹ Peter McPhee, *A Social History of France, 1789-1914* (New York: Palgrave Macmillan, 2004), 38.

³⁰² *Ibid.*, 38-40.

³⁰³ Grégoire, *Rapport*, in Certeau, Julia, and Revel 333.

certain patois sont usités, est déterminée par les limites de l'ancienne domination féodale.

The feudal system, which still managed to divide this beautiful country, carefully preserved a diversity of idioms, as a means of recognizing and recapturing the fugitive serfs and reforging their chains. Today, the territorial extent of certain *patois* is still marked by the limits of former feudal domination.³⁰⁴

Eliminating these idioms and replacing them with one, unified language would encourage centralization and patriotism, forever purging France of all remnants of the Old Regime.

As linguistic centralization became linked with patriotism, use of *patois* conversely denoted political subversion and anti-patriotic sentiments. Grégoire's questionnaire asked: "Trouve-t-on chez eux du patriotisme, ou seulement les affectations qu'inspire l'intérêt personnel (Can one find patriotism among [*patois* speakers], or only the affectations inspired by personal interest)?"³⁰⁵ Barère famously pronounced his views on the subject on 8 *pluviôse*, saying,

Le fédéralisme et la superstition parlent bas-breton; l'émigration et la haine de la République parlent allemande; la contre-révolution parle l'italien, et le fanatisme parle le basque, puisque les lois n'y sont pas entendues. Cassons ces instruments de dommage et d'erreur.

Federalism and superstition speak lower Breton; emigration and hatred of the Republic speak German; counter-revolution speaks Italian, and fanaticism speaks Basque, because laws are not understood in these places. Let us destroy these instruments of damage and error.³⁰⁶

According to both men, the individuality of *patois* led to individualized interests; these often opposed the French government. A nationally-shared idiom would unify France behind common, patriotic objectives. But *patois* restricted citizens' access to patriotism and encouraged political ignorance.

Just as Revolutionary thought linked political beliefs to language, it also connected language with intellectual capacities and personal conduct. Education and morality thus figured

³⁰⁴ Grégoire, *Rapport*, in Certeau, Julia, and Revel, 333.

³⁰⁵ Taken from Grégoire's questionnaire, reproduced in Certeau, Julia, and Revel, 16. See also: appendix.

³⁰⁶ Barère, in Certeau, Julia, and Revel, 326.

heavily in Grégoire's *enquête*. Public schooling became the ideal vehicle for the *francisation* (literally "Frenchification") of people across the regions and departments. *Francisation* through obligatory public education, as Barère and the Comité de salut publique planned, would be both fast and efficient.³⁰⁷ Support for organized public education in French came from outside the political sphere as well. The grammarian and future *académicien* Urbain Domergue published his proposal for a *Cours de langue française* (*Course in the French Language*) in *l'Adresse aux communes et aux sociétés populaires de la République* (*Address to the Communes and Popular Societies of the Republic*) in December of 1793. He wrote, "L'étude de la langue nationale est devenue un besoin pour tous les citoyens (Studying the national language has become necessary for all citizens)."³⁰⁸ Thus the linguistic authorities of Paris supported widespread education in standard French; it was a criterion for citizenship.

But political authorities saw language not only as the goal of public education, but also as the conduit for a patriotic education. As M. Casaux wrote in *Reflexion sur le genre d'instruction publique qui conviendrait à nos campagnes méridionales* (*Reflection on Which Genre of Public Education Would be Suitable for Our Meridional Countryside*), "Le grand but de cette institution universelle est de créer des hommes et des citoyens à la patrie (The greatest goal of this universal institution [education] is to create men and citizens of the homeland)."³⁰⁹ The production and shaping of citizens became the political goal of schooling, attainable only through the national idiom. As the official language of the Republic, French alone could propagate the qualities of citizenship. The diplomat Charles-Maurice de Talleyrand, who had helped to draft the

³⁰⁷ Jean-Pierre Seguin, "La Langue française aux XVIIe et XVIIIe siècles," in Jacques Chaurand, *Nouvelle histoire de la langue française* (Paris: Editions de Seuil, 1999), 265; David A. Bell, *The Cult of the Nation in France: Inventing Nationalism 1680-1800* (Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 2001), 175..

³⁰⁸ Quoted in Lillian Tasker, "Cinquième Edition: Introduction," in *Les Préfaces*, 247

³⁰⁹ Casaux, *Reflexions sur le genre d'instruction publique qui conviendrait à nos campagnes méridionales*, reproduced in Certeau, Julia, and Revel, 286.

Déclaration des droits de l'homme and the Constitution of 1791, expressed the importance of language to French citizens in 1791:

Les Ecoles primaires vont mettre fin à cette étrange inégalité: la langue de la Constitution et des lois y sera enseignée à tous: et cette foule de dialectes corrompus...sera contrainte de disparaître.

Primary schools shall put an end to this strange inequality: The language of the Constitution and the laws will be taught to all, and this mass of corrupted dialects...will be forced to disappear.³¹⁰

According to Talleyrand,³¹¹ languages lent themselves to the instruction of certain subjects.

Liberty, equality, fraternity, and the other Revolutionary political ideals belonged to French; the vulnerable *patois* left citizens open to corruption and tyranny. Only widespread education in the national language could ensure the continuation of the Republic.

Grégoire, along with his correspondents and contemporaries, supported political education through French. They likewise connected the national idiom to an appropriate moral education, believing that *patois* and non-Francophone idioms propagated poor conduct and manners. At least thirteen of Grégoire's forty-three questions applied to moral conduct, moral education, moral language, and their relationship to *patois*.³¹² He even inquired, "Quelle est l'influence respective du patois sur les moeurs, et de celles-ci sur votre dialecte (What is the respective influence of *patois* on mores, and of mores upon your dialect)?"³¹³ The Abbé clearly acknowledged a direct, reciprocal relationship between language and conduct.

The responses he received would verify Grégoire's suspicions. From Jean-Jacques Oberlin, he learned that "il s'est glissé dans ce patois par la succession des temps beaucoup de

³¹⁰ Quoted in Tasker, "Cinquième Edition: Introduction," in *Les Préfaces*, 244.

³¹¹ Though he supported public education and language standardization during the Revolution, Talleyrand later gained a reputation for political versatility and corruption, serving under Napoléon, the Restoration, and the July Monarchy.

³¹² Certeau, Julia, and Revel, 13-16. The thirteen relevant questions, numbers 10, 11, 12, 20, 26, 27, 29, 33, 38, 39, 40, 41, and 43, can be viewed in the appendix.

³¹³ From Grégoire's questionnaire, reproduced in Certeau, Julia, and Revel, 15. See also: appendix.

corruptions; effets de l'ignorance et de la paresse (Over time several corruptions have slipped into this *patois*, the effects of ignorance and laziness).³¹⁴ Responders also confirmed the presence of more copious and explicit *jurons* (swear words) in *patois* than in standard French; these supposedly encouraged foul speech.³¹⁵ Regional dialects led to simplicity and savagery, making their speakers “hardis et impétueux (bold and impetuous).”³¹⁶ Curing the provincials of their misconduct would be as simple, Grégoire hoped, as ridding their speech of the corruptible *patois*. Language and decency being thus connected, standard French represented the better moral idiom.

If Grégoire wanted to succeed in spreading ethics to the countryside, the purveyors of moral education—local priests—needed to adopt French as their language of preaching and instruction as soon as possible. From the earliest years of the Revolution, the central government recognized the clergy’s widespread presence and attempted to harness its influence. Grégoire had ardently supported the passage of the Civil Constitution of the Clergy in 1790, which placed Catholic priests within the employ and control of the state, requiring them to take an oath or relinquish their ministry.³¹⁷ With his *enquête*, the Abbé hoped to use local priests to further the spread of French and, with it, morality.

His correspondents gave equal attention to priestly influence. The Abbé Fonviehle in particular spent five pages of his response discussing “les moyens permettant de rendre le clergé patriote (means for rendering the clergy patriotic),” namely, the French language.³¹⁸ Of course, the argument connecting poor morals with *patois* received less support in areas like Bretagne, a

³¹⁴ Jean-Jacques Oberlin, *Essai sur le patois lorrain des environs du comté du Ban de la Roche, fief royal d’Alsace, Strasbourg*, reproduced in Certeau, Julia, and Revel, 283.

³¹⁵ Certeau, Julia, and Revel, 129-130.

³¹⁶ Quoted in Certeau, Julia, and Revel, 121.

³¹⁷ McPhee, 42-45.

³¹⁸ Certeau, Julia, Revel, 35.

region with a long-standing tradition of written catechism in Breton. Priests in this fiercely religious region preached and taught in *patois* through the Revolution.³¹⁹ But exceptions like Breton were few; the provincial priests answering Grégoire agreed that the moral education of parishioners would be better served by French.

Ironically, the same Revolutionary notion of language that assigned better patriotic and moral standards to French also made *patois* speakers cling ever firmly to their idioms and, consequently, their local heritages. In the spirit of this fierce regional pride, a member of the *Société des Amis de la Constitution* of Strasbourg wrote to Grégoire, “Ne vous flattez donc jamais d’être en Alsace la langue allemande (Therefore never flatter yourself that you may extinguish the German language in Alsace).”³²⁰ In his investigation, Grégoire asked correspondents to delineate the exact characteristics, capacities, and effects of the *patois*. He wanted to establish the detrimental influence of these languages, but unknowingly contributed to a phenomenon that Certeau, Julia, and Revel appropriately dub “the mythification of *patois*.”³²¹ By attempting to destroy local dialects, political authorities solidified them as a “national treasure,” to be guarded from the “vandalism of the State.”³²² The *enquête* transformed *patois* into a monument of sorts, crucial to local identities. A response from Perpignan in the Pyrenées (undated, but received by Grégoire before January of 1791), strongly defended regional idioms: “Pour le détruire, il faudrait détruire le soleil, la fraîcheur des nuits, . . . la qualité des eaux, l’homme tout entier (To destroy it [the *patois*] would be to destroy the sun, the fresh night air, the quality of the waters, the entire man).”³²³ Such a strong statement would likely have provoked repercussions, had it not originated from the *Société des amis de la Constitution* of

³¹⁹ Chartier, 7.

³²⁰ Quoted in Certeau, Julia, and Revel, 45.

³²¹ Certeau, Julia, Revel, 78.

³²² Ibid, 18.

³²³ “Réponse de la Société des Amis de la Constitution de Perpignan,” quoted in Certeau, Julia, and Revel, 182.

Perpignan. As the *Société*'s remarks demonstrate, local dialects survived partly as a result of the Revolutionary efforts to purge them. They became memorials of pre-revolutionary provinces and the provincial identity.

The assortment of linguistic documents that link language to personal, regional, and national identity reflect a Revolutionary tendency to connect these ideas. As Certeau, Julia, and Revel articulate, “Traiter de la langue, c’est traiter de l’homme (Dealing with language is dealing with man).”³²⁴ Perhaps this strong association came from, as Anthony Lodge suggests, the search for a new identity after the Old Regime. “The abolition of the monarchy in 1792,” made “the French language...the central criterion of ‘Frenchness,’...to which the whole population was now expected to subscribe.”³²⁵ Yet, the same notion reinforced provincial identities and rallied the regions behind their *patois*. Helped also by the political instability of the period, and despite the best efforts of Grégoire and the Convention, these dialects would survive the Revolution. Regardless of which idioms outlived (or emerged victorious from) the French Revolution, language, by the end of the 1790s, was inextricably linked to the notion of identity. French citizens developed and maintained a strong connection to whatever tongue(s) they spoke.

The Académie and la langue de la République

In the quote at the beginning of this chapter, Bertrand Barère carefully and clearly delineated the connections between language and identity, tyranny and *patois*, French and patriotism. He simultaneously infused his prose with the new, Republican vocabulary that permeated the French language after 1789. Indeed, an entire lexicon originated from the Revolution, championed through the writings and speeches of political authorities. Literary authorities in turn adapted this vocabulary into the pre-existing lexicon.

³²⁴ Certeau, Julia, and Revel, 52.

³²⁵ R. Anthony Lodge, *A Sociolinguistic History of Parisian French* (Cambridge, England: Cambridge University Press, 2004), 207.

Before the upheaval of 1789, the literary elite stayed in constant competition with political leaders as they vied for linguistic control. The Académie française, in particular, survived several conflicts with its monarchical sponsors. During the Revolution, the Académie lost its Old Regime supporters and political forces solidified their control over linguistics; it did not, however, fade from existence. By tracing the Revolutionary development of France's central linguistic organization, we discover the process that subordinated literary elites below political leaders. The Académie's Revolutionary dictionary also provided evidence of the new, Republican vocabulary. This *langue de la République* aided the dissemination of Revolutionary ideals throughout France.

The Académie, an established and famous component of the Old Regime, protected by the monarchy, faced an obvious threat with the outbreak of Revolution in 1789. Though it ultimately survived, the body underwent several changes. As the *académicien*, pamphleteer, and polemicist Abbé Morellet wrote, "Dès la fin de juin 1793 le vandalisme commençait ses ravages. On annonçait dès lors la suppression de tous les Corps littéraires (As of the end of June, 1793, vandalism began wreaking havoc. The suppression of all literary bodies was thus announced)."³²⁶ On August 8, 1793, heeding the suggestion of Grégoire, the Convention passed articles to disband the Académie and various other *savant* (learned) organizations. It placed them "sous la surveillance (under the surveillance)" of the government, and suspended their activities until further notice.³²⁷ In 1795, after the fall of the Convention, the Académie reconvened as part of the *Institut des Arts et des Sciences*.³²⁸ Under this system, the government exercised direct control over the Académie and its publications.

³²⁶ Quoted in Tasker, "Cinquième Edition: Introduction," in *Les Préfaces*, 219.

³²⁷ *Ibid.*, 219.

³²⁸ Tasker, "Cinquième Edition: Introduction," in *Les Préfaces*, 227.

The Revolution's effects upon the Académie and language become clearer through a study of the fifth *Dictionnaire*. Though the *académiciens* prepared it for publication in the early 1790s, the Convention confiscated the draft in 1793; further political interventions delayed printing until 1798. The volume itself contained several elements of Revolutionary influence. For the first time, a political figure from outside the Académie, Dominique-Joseph Garat, drafted the preface, exceptionally titled *Discours Préliminaire* (Preliminary Discourse). Garat redefined the Académie and the *Dictionnaire* using the ideals and vocabulary of the Revolution. He presented the body as an “espèce de démocratie (a type of democracy)”³²⁹ and the *académiciens* as the “représentants d’une Nation, chargé par elle de recueillir et des sanctionner... les mots (representatives of a Nation, charged with collecting and sanctioning words).”³³⁰ Garat thus identified the *académiciens* as representative legislators; the *Dictionnaire* became their legislation. In accordance with this new identity, the *académiciens* added a *Supplément de mots révolutionnaires* (*Supplement of Revolutionary Words*) before sending the volume to print.³³¹ Each of these factors reveals the complete subordination of the Académie to political authorities. It existed during the Revolution only to further the movement's political mission.

In offering its fifth edition of the *Dictionnaire*, the Académie française captured a crucial part of France's linguistic legacy. Preserved in the volume, and echoed in other contemporary lexicons and political discourse, historians can find the new *langue de la République* that both grew from and carried forward the French Revolution. In the *Supplément*, the *académiciens* defined approximately three hundred and thirty words over twelve pages. These included completely new terms, as well as old words which evoked different senses and ideas after the

³²⁹ Dominique-Joseph Garat, *Discours Préliminaire*, in *Les Préfaces*, 268.

³³⁰ *Ibid*, 279.

³³¹ Tasker, “Cinquième Edition: Introduction,” in *Les Préfaces*, 220-221.

Revolution.³³² The word *roi*, for example, lost its capital “R” and earned a new, pejorative definition. Urbain Domergue wrote, “Un roi est un usurpateur, un tyran, l’opresseur de la liberté publique (A king is a usurper, a tyrant, the oppressor of public liberty).”³³³

In fact, the Revolutionary mantra of *liberté, égalité, fraternité*, repeatedly found its way into the *Dictionnaire* of 1798. Académie members, “égaux comme Académiciens, ...égaux comme hommes (equal as *académiciens*, equal as men)”³³⁴ undertook a Revolutionary mission to “[parler la langue] avec justesse (speak the language justly/reasonably).”³³⁵ They made every effort to eliminate remaining vestiges of the Old Regime from the *Dictionnaire*’s pages:

Faisons un Dictionnaire républicain, avoué par la raison, par le goût, par la saine politique, où, chaque mot peignant une idée juste, l’œil du français ne soit pas blessé en lisant ces définitions académiques: le roi est le souverain: le citoyen est l’habitant d’une ville: marquis, baron, comte, duc, prince, sont termes de dignités.

Let us create an avowedly republican *Dictionnaire* with reason, taste, sound politics, where, each word portraying a just idea, the eye of the Frenchman will not be wounded by reading these academic definitions: the king is the sovereign, the citizen is the inhabitant of a city: marquis, baron, count, duke, and prince are terms of dignity.³³⁶

The fifth *Dictionnaire* thus preserved the new language of the French Revolution. We must distinguish that the volume did not, however, create this language. Other sources published Revolutionary lexicons as early as 1789 and 1790, and these contained similar assortments of terms before the Académie made them official.³³⁷ In view of these circumstances, language represents not a byproduct of the French Revolution, but a vehicle of the movement. Political figures made use of a growing Republican vocabulary to create Revolutionary discourse. They reshaped France from the resources that the French language provided.

³³² Tasker, “Cinquième Edition: Introduction,” in *Les Préfaces*, 250.

³³³ Quoted in Tasker, “Cinquième Edition: Introduction,” in *Les Préfaces*, 249.

³³⁴ Garat, *Discours Préliminaire*, in *Les Préfaces*, 268.

³³⁵ *Ibid*, 272.

³³⁶ Urbain Domergue, quoted in *Les Préfaces*, 249

³³⁷ For a list of these dictionaries, see Tasker, “Cinquième Edition: Introduction,” in *Les Préfaces*, 250.

Understanding a period defined by its instability and ambiguity, like the French Revolution, poses constant problems for historians. A study of language during the Revolution proves particularly complicated. Before the Revolution, competing authorities vied for linguistic control of standard French, while social and regional dialects struggled for position in the linguistic hierarchy. These issues merely intensified with Revolutionary upheaval. Each linguistic effect of the Revolution was, unsurprisingly, layered with ambiguity. Grégoire and Barère made seemingly mammoth advances toward standardizing French and eliminating *patois*, but their plans faded with the fall of the Convention. Revolutionary thought forged strong connections between language and identity, but the new patriotic unity of French speakers gained a rival, as regional bonds to *patois* strengthened. Political forces overtook the literary leaders of the Académie, subordinating its mission to their politics. French provided the language of the Revolution; the government merely instituted and enforced the Republican lexicon. Perhaps Chaurand best captures the linguistics of the Revolution: “Dans cette ‘tourmente,’ la langue française n’a pas changé de structure, mais elle n’est plus, en 1800, ce qu’elle était en 1789 (In this ‘torment,’ the French language did not change structures, but it was no longer, in 1800, what it was in 1789).”

The Revolution, despite its ambiguity, laid a framework for linguistic change. Without a King’s language, sociolects and dialects lost their pejorative status; but their preservation relied on positive, popular support and regional pride. Barère and Grégoire established an important precedent for nationalizing standard French, although it would await the social changes of the 1800s to take effect. Grégoire’s *enquête* and its responses revealed a developing link between idiom and identity, specifically language’s effects on patriotism and morality. Meanwhile, French evolved into the *langue de la République*. Existing words took on new value and

meaning during the turbulent period, defining France's new nationhood. With language increasingly connected to personal identity, and the French language to French nationhood, France entered the nineteenth century poised for the rapid linguistic developments to come.

The Nineteenth Century: Nationalizing French

En effet, le véhicule qui porte la vie et l'intelligence dans toutes les branches de l'instruction primaire ou secondaire, scientifique ou industrielle, c'est la pensée sous la forme de l'idiome national; du français pour nous, fils de la France...³³⁸

Charles Durazzo, 1838

Savoir sa langue et la bien parler devient une obligation impérieuse en France; aux riches pour consolider la prépondérance que leur donne leur position sociale; aux classes moyennes pour soutenir leurs droits et leur influence; aux artisans pour mériter la considération et répandre un certain lustre sur les professions industrielles; à tout le monde, parce que parler est une nécessité de tous les instants, et que bien parler peut devenir une habitude sans déplacer les sources de la puissance, sans confondre les conditions.³³⁹

G.N. Redler, 1836

According to Charles Durazzo and G.N. Redler, French is the language of nationhood, of intellectuals, of education, of all social classes and professions. Their statements appeared within years of one another in two different, yet equally redoubtable language publications: the Bescherelle brothers' grammar manual and the "very orthodox" *Journal of the French Language*.³⁴⁰ Though Durazzo and Redler wrote relatively early in the nineteenth century, they pinpointed the social, political, administrative, industrial, and intellectual ramifications that

³³⁸ "Indeed, the vehicle which carries life and intelligence in all branches of education, primary or secondary, scientific or industrial, is thought formed through the national idiom, French for us, sons of France ..." Charles Durazzo in Henri-Honoré and Louis-Nicolas Bescherelle, *La France grammaticale*, quoted in Jacques Philippe Saint-Gérard, "La langue française au XIX^e siècle, Scléroses, altérations, mutations: De l'abbé Grégoire aux tolérances de Georges Leygues (1790-1902)," in Jacques Chaurand, *Nouvelle histoire de la langue française* (Paris: Editions de Seuil, 1999), 398.

³³⁹ "Knowing one's language and speaking it well is becoming a pressing obligation in France; for the rich, to reinforce the domination given to them by social position; for the middle classes, to support their rights and their influence; for the artisans, to earn respect and spread a certain luster on industrial professions; for everyone, because speaking is a necessity at all times, and speaking well can become a habit without displacing sources of power or blending conditions." G.N. Redler, *Journal grammatical, littéraire et philosophique de la langue française et des langues en général*, quoted in Saint-Gérard, 413.

³⁴⁰ Saint-Gérard, 413.

would transform France throughout the 1800s. To realize these changes (and to survive them), France would need one, standard, national language.

In his study of nineteenth-century schooling, Stephen Harp points out that “the notion of a historically unified France was in part created by French historians in the nineteenth century.”³⁴¹ Harp’s statement rings true, at least regarding language; the previous chapters of this investigation have highlighted France’s struggles with linguistic diversity. Until the French Revolution, borders of the *royaume* (kingdom) and feudal ties bound subjects to France, whereas language divided them socially and regionally. The Revolution created French *citoyens* (citizens), and attempted to standardize their language, but this goal faded amidst instability and regime changes. Nineteenth-century historians who, as Harp suggests, depicted a linguistically-unified France drew influence from contemporary language developments.

Linguistic evolution, far from instantaneous, spanned the length of the 1800s, paralleling social and political transformations. In just over one hundred years, France lived under multiple political regimes, among them the Revolutionary governments, three republics, the empires of Napoléon I and III, the restored Bourbon monarchy, and a constitutional monarchy. Revolutions of note occurred in 1789, 1830, and 1848. Crisis created political division during the Paris Commune of 1871 and *l’Affaire Dreyfus* (the Dreyfus Affair) of the 1890s and early 1900s.³⁴²

The intense events of the period made it prolific in political discourse. Speeches, poetry, and even school manuals fused language with politics, meriting the century’s description as a “golden age of rhetoric.”³⁴³ Simultaneously, French became “une langue agissante au quotidien de la vie des citoyens (a language affecting the lives of citizens daily),” taking definitive

³⁴¹ Stephen L. Harp, *Learning to be Loyal: Primary Schooling as Nation Building in Alsace and Lorraine, 1850-1940* (Dekalb, IL: Northern Illinois University Press, 1998), 6.

³⁴² Saint-Gérard, 383.

³⁴³ Saint-Gérard, 379.

precedence over the declining *patois*.³⁴⁴ For the purposes of this investigation, the nineteenth century begins with Napoléon and concludes on the eve of World War I. The interim brought an estimated 3,700 new lexical items, a network of major roads and railroads covering the country, and government-controlled and -inspected public schools for every town.³⁴⁵ Intertwined with these nineteenth-century developments, we find the French language, instigating and driving change as it forged a permanent place in the French identity.

Napoléon I and the seeds of nationalism

Napoléon Bonaparte purportedly spoke of his contribution to France, telling the abbé Emmanuel Joseph Sieyès, “I have made the Great Nation.” The author of *Qu’est-ce que le tiers état? (What is the Third Estate?)* promptly replied, “You could not have done so had we not first made the Nation.”³⁴⁶ Napoléon I poses problems to historians attempting to locate the iconic figure in relation to the Revolution (Did he deviate from its ideals or maintain them?). However, as the exchange with Sieyès demonstrates, Napoléon I employed a different terminology for post-Revolutionary France than did the political figures of the 1790s. Several of Napoléon’s linguistic efforts distinguish him from his Revolutionary forbears, including his lexicon and the laws and policies he instituted.³⁴⁷ As First Consul and Emperor, he prepared France for a century of unification and nationalistic language developments to come.

Napoléon I’s native idiom forms one of the most interesting elements of his identity. From an aristocratic Corsican family, Napoléon grew up speaking a local dialect. He only began learning French at age nine, when he enrolled in a French school for noble children at Autun.³⁴⁸

³⁴⁴ Saint-Gérard, 380.

³⁴⁵ Ibid., 427.

³⁴⁶ Quoted in Stephen Englund, *Napoléon: A Political Life* (Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 2004), 199.

³⁴⁷ Martyn Lyons, “Regionalism and linguistic conformity in the French Revolution,” in *Reshaping France: Town, country, and region during the French Revolution*, ed. Alan Forrest and Peter Jones (Manchester, England: Manchester University Press, 1991), 185.

³⁴⁸ Englund, 18.

To make his son eligible for enrollment, Napoléon's father had changed the boy's name, from Napoleone di Buonaparte (Corsican) to Napoléon de Bonaparte, identifying him as a proper French aristocrat.³⁴⁹ Though Napoléon arrived in France with no knowledge of the language, he excelled both at Autun and later in the *Ecole militaire* (Military School).³⁵⁰ He spoke with an accent, but Napoléon mastered French eloquence in his studied, indecipherable speech. The Austrian diplomat Klemens von Metternich wrote,

Il ne causait pas, mais il parlait; moyennant l'abondance de ses idées et la facilité de son élocution, il savait adroitement s'emparer de la parole.

He did not chat, but he spoke; with his abundance of ideas and the ease of his elocution, he knew how to skillfully seize words.³⁵¹

Napoléon's personal linguistic assimilation forms an interesting context for his later use of French, as well as for his linguistic policies.

Following his schooling, Napoléon I established his military reputation through campaigns in Italy and Egypt, while closely monitoring Revolutionary politics.³⁵² Studies of his personal correspondence and writings during the 1790s reveal Napoléon's fidelity, at least initially, to the Revolutionary lexical terms of *citoyen*, *liberté*, and, most importantly, *République*.³⁵³ Examples of politicians using the latter word (in reference to France) exist through 1804 and 1805. Napoléon favored nationalist terminology, however, after becoming First Consul (1799). He coined the term *la Grande Nation* (the Great Nation) near the end of the Directory and consistently used "France" and "Nation" in lieu of "Republic."³⁵⁴ As the Republic gradually disappeared from Napoléon's discourse, it also faded from the general political

³⁴⁹ Englund., 15, 476 n. 13.

³⁵⁰ Ibid., 18.

³⁵¹ Klemens von Metternich, *Napoléon, portrait*, quoted in Alain Fillion, *Napoléon: Dictionnaire intime, Portraits et caractère de Napoléon* (Paris: Editions Historiques Teissèdre, 2004), 87.

³⁵² For a detailed discussion of Napoléon's military command in Italy and Germany, see Englund, 110-140.

³⁵³ Englund, 197.

³⁵⁴ Ibid, 241, 197-199.

vocabulary. The oath of public office changed accordingly in the early 1800s, asking judicial officials to claim themselves “faithful to the Constitution,” rather than “faithful to the one and indivisible Republic.”³⁵⁵ Napoléon cultivated nationalism in France with his lexicon, which revealed the future Emperor’s own political visions and ambitions.

Linguistic unity characterized Napoléon’s nationalist ideas as well. On December 28, 1799, he used his new lexicon in an address directed “To the [non-Francophone] inhabitants of the departments of the West.” The First Consul wrote, “Let those who want the *glory of France* separate themselves from the men who persist in wanting to mislead us.”³⁵⁶ Napoléon’s political neologisms thus reflected nationalist notions of unity with a strong linguistic subtext. He pinpointed Bretagne and its surrounding regions as threats to unity, attempting to rally them to his new Nation. However, Napoléon accepted linguistic variation when it posed no threat to his political and military agenda. Of Alsatian soldiers, he famously remarked, “Laissez-les parler leur jargon car ils sabrent en vrais Français (Let them speak their jargon, for they fight as true Frenchmen).”³⁵⁷ Regardless of his somewhat changeable approach to regional idioms, Napoléon’s own language advocated unity and established veins of nationalist discourse that would continue throughout the nineteenth century.

Though Napoléon I’s statements regarding linguistic standardization remained slightly ambiguous, language became a central notion of the nationalism that developed through the 1800s. “Diversity had not bothered earlier centuries,” offers Eugen Weber, and the myriad languages of France “seemed part of the nature of things, whether from place to place or between

³⁵⁵ Englund, 198.

³⁵⁶ Englund., 197-198, his translation and emphasis.

³⁵⁷ Alfred Wahl and Jean-Claude Richez, *La vie quotidienne en Alsace entre France et Allemagne, 1850-1950* (Paris: Hachette, 1993), 225.

one social group and another.”³⁵⁸ Once the monarchy disappeared, taking with it the limits of the King’s influence to denote the *royaume*, a strong national idiom became increasingly necessary to the definition of France.³⁵⁹ The Bescherelle brothers’ language manual exemplified this idea in 1836:

[La grammaire], c’est le développement du caractère national dans ses intérêts politiques..., analysé ou plutôt raconté par la nation elle-même, par les interprètes les plus éloquents de cette nation.

Grammar is the development of national character through its political interests, analyzed or rather recounted by the nation itself, by the most eloquent spokesmen of this nation.³⁶⁰

One of the original spokesmen for this national grammar, Napoléon helped establish French notions of nationalism. Through the nineteenth century, these notions developed in tandem with efforts to nationalize the French idiom.

Politics, literature, and language

The beginning of the nineteenth century inspired a new, nationalist vocabulary, which departed from the Republican language of the Revolution; it also allowed literary authorities to gradually reemerge and reestablish their influence over the French language. The Revolution marked, as this study has demonstrated, a period of complete political domination in linguistic matters. The *Terreur* exercised such strict language control that the slightest slander, a “Merde à la Nation (To Hell with the Nation)!” whispered in frustration, warranted a death sentence.³⁶¹ Once the relatively stable government of Napoléon I replaced the upheaval and confusion of Revolutionary regimes, language controls grew less stringent.

³⁵⁸ Eugen Weber, *Peasants into Frenchmen: The Modernization of Rural France, 1870-1914* (Stanford, CA: Stanford University Press, 1976), 9.

³⁵⁹ *Ibid*; Saint-Gérard, 382.

³⁶⁰ Quoted in R. Anthony Lodge, *A Sociolinguistic History of Parisian French* (Cambridge, England: Cambridge University Press, 2004), 208.

³⁶¹ Englund, 198.

Respected literary authorities, like the Académie française, which had lost their status with the fall of the monarchy, particularly benefited from this early nineteenth-century transition. The Convention disbanded the Académie in 1793 and renamed the body as part of the state-controlled Institut des Arts et des Sciences in 1795.³⁶² Napoléon restructured the Institut into three “classes,” making its “second class” responsible for drafting official dictionaries; he gave more power to the body as he progressed from First Consul to Emperor.³⁶³ The Académie regained its full status and royal protectorate in 1816, thanks to the Restoration of Louis XVIII.³⁶⁴ This gesture reestablished the shared linguistic influence of political and literary authorities, with the latter group beholden to the restored monarchy. However, the Revolution’s aftermath left the Académie altered. Its identity became forever-linked with royalist sentiments, as well as with notions of linguistic purity and elitism.

Many authors of the early nineteenth century originated from royalist roots during the Restoration. They evolved as governments changed; new political factions influenced their writing and, subsequently, the French language. Regardless of authors’ political ties, romanticism remained a constant, common theme in their work. Romantic royalists supported the restored monarchy, the classic rules of literature and language, and conservative linguistic views. In the 1820s, liberal romanticism emerged in opposition to the monarchy, overtaking its linguistically-conservative predecessor. Early-nineteenth century romantic authors included several renowned *académiciens*, such as François-René de Chateaubriand (remembered as a prominent of French romanticist, elected to the Académie in 1811), Alexandre Soumet (elected

³⁶² Tasker, “Cinquième Edition: Introduction,” in *Les Préfaces*, 219, 227.

³⁶³ Henri Vaulchier, “Sixième Edition: Introduction,” in *Les Préfaces*, 317-318.

³⁶⁴ Vaulchier, “Sixième Edition: Introduction,” in *Les Préfaces*, 317-318

1824), and Victor Hugo (elected 1841).³⁶⁵ This investigation will focus particularly on Hugo, as his conversion from royalist romanticism to liberal romanticism depended and focused on linguistic issues.

Hugo, born in 1802 in Besançon but raised in Paris, first entered the literary scene at age fifteen, when he received an honorable mention in the Académie française's *Concours poétique* (Poetry Competition).³⁶⁶ In 1819, he founded a short-lived literary review, entitled the *Conservateur littéraire* (*Literary Conservative*), with his brothers Abel and Eugène.³⁶⁷ The following year Hugo involved himself in a Parisian literary circle of several notable authors.³⁶⁸ "Heterogeneous in age, talent, and literary taste but possessing in common a transient sentimental affinity for the monarchy, religion, and the resolution to rejuvenate poetry in France," these men founded a literary journal, entitled *La Muse française* (*The French muse*).³⁶⁹ The paper remained in publication until 1824, outlasting the *Conservateur littéraire* and helping to establish Hugo as a respected nineteenth-century author.

A paper devoted primarily to the rejuvenation of poetry, *La Muse française* based its literary discussions firmly in the political climate of the period:

The young and observant man who enters the world immediately after a revolution seems to have come upon a theater of a vast conflagration... We march across the ruins.³⁷⁰

The authors chose romanticism as the vehicle for poetic renewal. They praised iconic romantic figures of the period, such as Chateaubriand and Lord Byron. As the romantic mission of *La Muse française* involved more liberal leanings and contributors, rifts formed; linguistic debates

³⁶⁵ Vaulchier, "Sixième Edition: Introduction," in *Les Préfaces*, 311; Alan B. Spitzer, *The French Generation of 1820* (Princeton, NJ: Princeton University Press, 1987), 5, 139-140.

³⁶⁶ Spitzer, 130.

³⁶⁷ Spitzer, 130-131. According to Spitzer, the *Conservateur littéraire* was named for Chateaubriand's famous political paper, the *Conservateur*.

³⁶⁸ Spitzer, 133-135, for a complete list of authors involved see 135 n. 22.

³⁶⁹ Ibid, 133.

³⁷⁰ Quoted in Spitzer, 136.

separated the authors. In 1824, the paper dedicated its entire June issue to Lord Byron, in memory of the English poet who had died the previous month. Concurrently, the Académie française sought to fill a vacated *fauteuil*, and its interest fell upon *Muse* founder Alexandre Soumet. However, the linguistically-conservative Académie objected to the *Muse française*'s "corruption of the French language" and "worship of foreign idols," namely Byron.³⁷¹ To appease the Académie and win the coveted seat, Soumet retired from the *Muse française*. The paper folded in his absence, publishing the Byron issue as its last.³⁷² Shortly after Soumet's election, his *Muse* colleague Alfred de Vigny wrote, "We have given up the *Muse* in exchange for his seat."³⁷³ Soumet soon revealed, however, that his allegiances belonged to the more conservative, purist linguistic views of the Académie.³⁷⁴ The end of *La Muse française* marked a definitive turning point for Hugo, who moved toward liberal romanticism and linguistic ideas.

Beginning in 1826, Hugo connected himself with critics from the liberal newspaper *Le Globe*, in particular its co-founder Paul-François Dubois. He praised Hugo's novel *Bug-Jargal*, for its denunciation of slavery in Saint-Domingue. Dubois visited Hugo, to praise him personally, after reading the latter's *Odes et Ballades*. Another *Globe* contributor, Charles-Augustin Saint-Beuve, praised the *Odes* in print.³⁷⁵ The liberal journalists had accepted Hugo into their circle, reinforcing his political conversion.

After the *Globe* endorsed Hugo, his romantic writings deepened in politically- and linguistically-liberal content. In the famous preface to *Cromwell*, written in 1827, the author drew strong connections between politics and language, advocating "equality and rights" for all

³⁷¹ Spitzer, 139.

³⁷² Ibid, 139-140.

³⁷³ Ibid, 140.

³⁷⁴ Ibid.

³⁷⁵ Ibid, 143.

words, new or old, French or foreign.³⁷⁶ He literally declared “guerre à la rhétorique (war against rhetoric).”³⁷⁷ Hugo’s linguistic battles coincided with (and helped to instigate) the July Revolution of 1830, when the author presented his controversial play *Hernani* at the *Comédie française* (*French Comedic Theater*). He wrote the *tragi-comédie* after King Charles X banned his *Marion de Lorme* from theaters in 1829. *Hernani* proved slightly less controversial than its predecessor, and Hugo escaped censorship by making a few corrections.³⁷⁸ The piece still provoked a scandal similar to that of Corneille’s *Le Cid*. It depicted the love triangle of a Spanish noblewoman, her brigand lover Hernani, and the nobleman Don Carlos, named Emperor during the play (and based upon Charles V of the Holy Roman Empire).³⁷⁹ Hugo’s introduction to the play declares, “La poésie [a] la même devise que la politique, TOLERANCE ET LIBERTÉ (Poetry has the same motto as politics, TOLERANCE AND LIBERTY),”³⁸⁰ and the play’s most memorable verse warns, “Rois! Regardez en bas (Kings, look beneath you)!”³⁸¹

France would remember the play’s controversial premier, on February 25, 1830, as *La bataille d’Hernani* (The Battle of Hernani).³⁸² Its polemical discourse foreshadowed the political revolution to come. Less than six months after *La bataille*, the *Trois Glorieuses* (Three Glorious Days) of the July Revolution ended Charles X’s reign. A constitutional monarchy entered power, with Louis-Phillipe d’Orléans at its head. Hugo remarked, “Il nous faut la chose république et le mot monarchie (We need the thing, republic, and the word monarchy),” again recognizing the strong linguistic implications of the political changeover.³⁸³ Though literarily

³⁷⁶ Quoted in Saint-Gérard, 379.

³⁷⁷ Ibid.

³⁷⁸ Jean-Denis Bredin, *Victor Hugo: La voix des libertés* (Paris: Editions Ségquier, 2002), 33-34.

³⁷⁹ John J. Janc, “Introduction,” in *Hernani*, critical edition ed. John J. Janc (Lanham: University Press of America, 2001), vii.

³⁸⁰ Victor Hugo, “Introduction,” in *Hernani*, critical edition, 4 (Hugo’s emphasis).

³⁸¹ Hugo, *Hernani*, Acte IV, scene ii, 32, p. 165 in this edition.

³⁸² Janc, vii.

³⁸³ Hugo, in the *Journal des idées et des opinions d’un Révolutionnaire de 1830*, quoted in Bredin, 33-34.

prolific throughout his life, the bulk of Hugo's fame and publications occurred after 1830—and after his most controversial political actions.

In 1841, with the scandal of *Hernani* nearly forgotten, the conservative Académie finally gave Hugo a seat. His linguistic activism by no means diminished. In fact, he recalled the scandals of his early prose and poetry in *Les Contemplations*, a collection of poems published in 1856. In “Réponse à un acte d'accusation (Response to an act of accusation),” Hugo delineates his linguistic views quite clearly:

J'ai foulé le bon goût de l'ancien vers françois,
Sous mes pieds, et, hideux, j'ai dit a l'ombre: “Sois!”
Et l'ombre fut...
Je suis le démagogue horrible et débordé,
Et le dévastateur du vieux A B C D;...
Et sur l'Académie, aïeule et douairière,
Cachant sous ses jupons les tropes effarés,
Et sur les bataillons d'alexandrins carrés,
Je fis souffler un vent révolutionnaire.
Je mis un bonnet rouge au vieux dictionnaire.

I tread upon the good taste of old French verse,
Under my feet, and hideous, I ordered: “Let there be shadow!”
And there was shadow...
I am the horrible and exuberant demagogue,
And the devastator of the old A B C D;...
And upon the Académie, grandmother and dowager,
Hiding frightened tropes beneath its petticoats,
And upon the square battalions of alexandrines,
I forced a breath of revolutionary wind.
I placed a red cap upon the old dictionary.³⁸⁴

Committed to his linguistic convictions, Victor Hugo exemplified the iconic poet-politicians of the nineteenth century, particularly those of the early 1800s who, “march[ing] upon the ruins” of the Revolution, crafted a royalist romanticism that developed into liberalism.³⁸⁵ In their fervent rebellions against linguistic and political authorities, they crafted a new, liberal

³⁸⁴ Victor Hugo, “Réponse à un acte d'accusation,” *Les Contemplations* (Paris: Bordas, 1985), in *Gallica: la bibliothèque numérique* [<http://gallica.bnf.fr>], notice number FRBNF37304375, poem I.vii.

³⁸⁵ Refer to the quote from Spitzer, 136 (See n. 32).

sphere of influence for French literature; they wrote to change the language of the French nation.

Language education: a century of reform

While influential political and literary authorities grappled over the identity of France's language, public schools inherited the massive task of nationalizing the idiom. Grégoire, Barère, and the Convention understood the necessity of a national language for post-Revolution France, but they failed to bring their plans to completion. They set a precedent, however, for the governments of the nineteenth century, and significant education reform would find its way into the new legislation of nearly every regime in the 1800s. Language policies and the quest for *francisation* influenced each of these laws, but the practical diffusion of the national language required the better part of the century.

Napoléon I enacted several pieces of major legislation during the early 1800s, including his famous *Code civil* or *Code Napoléon*, his sponsorship of the *Banque de France*, and the creation of *prefets* (prefects) to govern each department.³⁸⁶ Napoléon also endorsed initiatives to alter national schooling. His Concordat of 1801, in addition to reestablishing Catholicism in France and placing it under state control, legalized collaboration between the Church and State in education.³⁸⁷ (As a result of the Concordat, French clergy members received state salaries until the separation of Church and state in 1905.)³⁸⁸ Religious authorities could run local schools, but only as loyal servants of the Great Nation. Recall that, in the seventeenth and eighteenth centuries, the limited primary school network in France existed chiefly for religious education. *Curés* often doubled as teachers.³⁸⁹ Napoléon's Concordat set an important precedent for state control of religious institutions, particularly schools, which education lawmakers would build

³⁸⁶ Englund, 187-189.

³⁸⁷ Elizabeth Ann Louisa Vlossak, "The Nationalisation of Women in Alsace, 1871-1940," PhD dissertation (Peterhouse, University of Cambridge, 2003), 48-49.

³⁸⁸ Peter McPhee, *A Social History of France, 1789-1914* (New York: Palgrave Macmillan, 2004), 257.

³⁸⁹ George Huppert, *Public Schools in Renaissance France* (Urbana, IL: University of Illinois Press, 1984), 48.

upon throughout the century.

While the Concordat influenced the governance of France's few primary schools, most of Napoléon's school initiatives affected secondary education. Under the Consulat, Napoléon created forty-five *lycées* (state-funded high schools) and named their program of study the *baccalauréat*.³⁹⁰ His funding included provisions for several scholarships, intended both for the children of military leaders and for students who excelled in primary schools. (The scholarship system reflected the Consul's intent to build a new, merit-based French elite.) The *lycées* operated in most major French cities.³⁹¹ Napoléon also planned, in 1807, to create a lycée for young women at Ecoeu.³⁹² In 1808 he established *l'Université*, a regulatory body to oversee and control public education in the Empire.³⁹³ The *lycée*, the *baccalauréat* (or *bac*), and the *université* still exist, though not in their original form, in France today. Napoléon also made an enduring contribution to higher education: the establishment of several *grandes écoles* (great schools).³⁹⁴ Founded to cultivate military leaders and skilled engineers for his army, these schools (now expanded to include most domains of study) form a network of prestigious, competitive institutions throughout France.

Though Napoléon created legendary educational institutions, his language policies within early nineteenth century schools contributed little to the spread of French. The state-created curriculum of the *lycées*, established on May 15, 1803, remained rather weighted toward Latin instruction. Students learned the ancient language for all five years of schooling, but only

³⁹⁰ Englund, 190.

³⁹¹ R.R. Palmer, "Free Secondary Education in France before and after the Revolution," *History of Education Quarterly* 14, no. 4 (1974): 449

³⁹² Napoléon Bonaparte, "La lettre de Finkenstein écrite par Napoléon I^{er}," in Rebecca Rogers, *Les demoiselles de la légion d'honneur* (Paris: Plon, 1992), 332-333.

³⁹³ Englund, 309.

³⁹⁴ *Ibid*, 190.

studied “Belles-lettres françaises,” during their final two years at *lycée*.³⁹⁵ Napoléon made further curriculum additions to the *lycées* in 1805 and 1808, and many of his policies remained in place until the Third Republic.³⁹⁶ Though only forty-five *lycées* existed, their curriculum matched that of scattered primary schools throughout France. Agricole Perdiguier, a famous worker who wrote his memoirs in the mid-1800s, recalls his education as follows:

It was thought that only through Latin could we learn French. This rough and zigzag path appeared to our teachers, quite incorrectly no doubt, the most direct, kindest, and surest route.³⁹⁷

Napoléon I’s language policies contributed little to the spread of French during the Consulate or Empire, but his close involvement in education, detailed curriculum legislation, and merit-based policies for educational opportunities set important precedents for the nineteenth-century regimes to follow.

Ecoles primaires (primary schools) of the early 1800s, like the one described by Perdiguier, formed the focus of most education legislation following Napoléon and the Restoration monarchy. These schools numbered few and lacked organization in the early decades of the century. Until 1816, primary school teachers needed no credential to occupy an educational post. In fact, records from Rennes show that, in 1815, the Breton city employed seven ex-convicts as teachers (out of a total of fifteen instructors).³⁹⁸ Even without qualified teachers or an organized, national French curriculum, schools began working toward *francisation* during the Restoration. A list of school rules at Olonzac primary school (in the southern department of Hérault), dated 1819, read, “Patois is forbidden...it will be recommended to pupils

³⁹⁵ Saint-Gérand, 738.

³⁹⁶ *Ibid*, 414.

³⁹⁷ Agricole Perdiguier, “Agricole Perdiguier: *Memoirs of a Compagnon*,” in *The French Worker: Autobiographies from the Early Industrial Era*, ed. Mark Traugott (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1993), 120.

³⁹⁸ Weber, 304-305.

that they speak French at home.”³⁹⁹ A little over one decade later came the first landmark educational law of the nineteenth century; it would use the *écoles primaires* for the diffusion of French.

François Guizot, the *ministre de l’Instruction publique* (Minister of Public Education) under Louis-Philippe d’Orléans, completely transformed French education. He drafted and enforced the first major education legislation of the century, known popularly as the Guizot Law, on June 28, 1833.⁴⁰⁰ The ground-breaking law required every commune in France to establish a primary school, open to all children aged six through thirteen, and free for those who could not afford the fees. It created a precise curriculum for each grade of school, including French grammar, reading, writing, arithmetic, prayers and Christian doctrine, and French history. Additionally, the law required each department to establish an *école normale* (Teachers’ School)⁴⁰¹ and provided state funds to remunerate primary school teachers. To enforce these precepts, Guizot created an inspection system and network of supervisory boards, first called *universités* and later *académies*, to regulate the *écoles primaires*.⁴⁰² Guizot appointed departmental inspectors in 1835 and created inspectors for individual schools in 1837.⁴⁰³ He constructed a guide for universally-accessible, quality-controlled education, with a strong focus on linguistic standardization. Guizot’s law, and subsequent efforts to enforce it, represented the first major step toward nationalizing language education in France.

³⁹⁹ McPhee, 164.

⁴⁰⁰ Robert Gildea, “Education and the Classes Moyennes in the Nineteenth Century,” in *The Making of Frenchmen: Current Directions in the History of Education in France, 1679-1979*, ed. Donald M. Baker and Patrick J. Harrigan (Ontario, Canada: Historical Reflections Press, 1980), 283; Weber, 307.

⁴⁰¹ The *écoles normales primaires* existed for the express purpose of educating *instituteurs* for the French public education system. These establishments still exist today, called *Instituts Universitaires de Formation des Maîtres* (IUFM).

⁴⁰² Gildea, 283; Weber, 307; François Guizot, *Act for the organization of primary education, 28 June 1833*, in *Government and Society in France, 1814-1848*, ed. Irene Collins (London: Edward Arnold Publishers, 1970), 127-130; Harp, 34.

⁴⁰³ Harp, 34.

The effects of Guizot's law upon *francisation* became immediately apparent. In the years following its passage, *écoles primaires* appeared rapidly; France doubled its number of schools from 1833 to 1847.⁴⁰⁴ The influx of primary schools produced a need for educational materials, particularly French language manuals, which appeared in abundance in the decade following the Guizot Law's passage. The first notable publication came from Louis Hachette, who sold an incredible one million copies of his book, *l'Alphabet et premier livre de lecture* (*The Alphabet and First Reader*) to the government in 1833.⁴⁰⁵ Various other grammarians created similar exercise-based texts for use in primary schools. In 1840 alone, seven language manuals entered publication:

- Abria, *Grammaire française avec de nombreux exercices* (*French Grammar with Numerous Exercises*)
- Beudant, *Nouveaux éléments de grammaire française* (*New Elements of French Grammar*)
- Conty, *Exercices orthographiques syntactiques composés avec l'histoire de France* (*Compact Syntactical Spelling Exercises with the History of France*)
- Froment, *La Première Grammaire des écoles primaires et des maisons d'éducation ou Grammaire pratique* (*The First Grammar of Primary Schools and Educational Institutions or Practical Grammar*)
- Rostagny, *Grammaire et orthographe simplifiées, mises à la portée de toutes les intelligences* (*Simplified Grammar and Spelling, Made Accessible to all Levels of Intelligence*)
- Sardou, *Exercices sur les leçons du Petit cours de grammaire française* (*Exercises on the Lessons of the French Grammar Course*)
- Serreau, *Grammaire française progressive à l'usage des jeunes personnes* (*Progressive French Grammar for Young People*)⁴⁰⁶

Nineteenth century grammarians responded to (and profited from) the new demand for school books, specifically tailored for French language lessons.

Even with the flood of grammatical publications in French, the process of eliminating *patois* from regional primary schools advanced slowly. In his semi-autobiographical novel, *Le*

⁴⁰⁴ Harp, 307.

⁴⁰⁵ McPhee, 164.

⁴⁰⁶ Saint-Gérard, 469.

Petit chose, Alphonse Daudet recalls his experiences as a teacher in a provincial primary school during the mid-1800s. He writes,

Je trouvai là une cinquantaine de méchants drôles montagnards joufflus de douze à quatorze ans...Grossiers, insolents, orgueilleux, [ils parlaient] entre eux un rude patois cévenol auquel je n'entendais rien.

There I found about fifty chubby-cheeked, rascal mountain children of twelve to fourteen years of age. Crude, insolent, proud, they spoke amongst themselves a crude *patois* of Cévennes [the region] of which I understood nothing.⁴⁰⁷

Perdiguer's memoirs similarly offer that *patois*

was all we knew, all we dared utter, and our schoolmasters did not require anything more. When we read aloud, we could say "sapeau" for *chapeau* [hat], "ceval" for *cheval* [horse], and "zé" for *je* [I]. Our teachers did not correct us for such minor faults.⁴⁰⁸

The "minor" faults Perdiguer references, as well as the language spoken among Daudet's pupils, demonstrate how regional *patois* varied in levels of intelligibility from standard French. Both forms were unacceptable according to post-Guizot *francisation* standards.

Instituting the Guizot Law, primary schools established methods for eliminating *patois* from students' speech. The 1833 legislation prohibited violence as a form of punishment, but suggested reprimanding disobedient students via "symbols of shame."⁴⁰⁹ Teachers employed this technique, first used by Jesuits, to force French upon their *patois*-speaking pupils. When a student spoke in *patois*, he or she received some "token," symbolic of the transgression, and remained marked until a fellow pupil failed to speak in French.⁴¹⁰ "The token varied. It could be a cardboard ticket..., a wooden plank..., a bar or a stick..., a peg..., or a brick to be held out

⁴⁰⁷ Alphonse Daudet, *Le Petit chose*, new ed. (Paris: Bibliothèque Charpentier, 1924), 72.

⁴⁰⁸ Perdiguer, 120.

⁴⁰⁹ Guizot, 127-130.

⁴¹⁰ Weber, 312.

at arm's length."⁴¹¹ Records of this tactic, prescribed clearly in Guizot's law as an effective method, appeared in primary schools throughout France.⁴¹² The total elimination of *patois* would require decades, but the landmark legislation of 1833 provided suggestions for beginning the process.

The Guizot Law began the gradual and laborious process of *francisation* through primary schools. The next major education law would follow in the aftermath of the 1848 Revolution. During the 1840s, economic crises ravaged France and liberals rejected the July Monarchy's answer, "Enrichissez-vous (Get rich)."⁴¹³ Revolution erupted in February 1848 and engendered the Second Republic; Louis-Napoléon Bonaparte (Napoléon I's nephew) became its President in December 1848.⁴¹⁴ Education had figured into the pre-revolution political debates. Indeed, Pierre-Joseph Proudhon, economist, anarchist, and prolific political author of the 1840s⁴¹⁵ declared the "popular education question" to be "lamentable" and "without remedy."⁴¹⁶ The Second Republic addressed education, as a consequence, in its legislation.

Alfred Frédéric de Falloux, *ministre de l'Instruction publique* under President Louis-Napoléon, drafted a new education law in March of 1850. The Falloux Law made two key additions to Guizot's legislation. It separated public and private schools, but gave tremendous teaching and administrative responsibilities to ecclesiastical authorities. Under the law, clergy members needed no specific credentials to teach.⁴¹⁷ On the surface, this measure appeared to return power to religious authorities in schools. However, the second part of Falloux's law

⁴¹¹ Weber, 312.

⁴¹² Ibid.

⁴¹³ McPhee, 168-169

⁴¹⁴ Ibid, 168-169, 173.

⁴¹⁵ Proudhon's most famous work, *Qu'est-ce que la propriété? (What is Property?)* appeared in 1840, and proclaimed that "Property is theft." William H. Sewell, Jr., *Work and Revolution in France: The Language of Labor from the Old Regime to 1848* (Cambridge, England: Cambridge University Press, 1980), 219.

⁴¹⁶ Pierre-Joseph Proudhon, *Œuvres complètes*, new ed., ed. C. Bouglé and H. Moysset, v. III (Geneva: Slatkine, 1922), 336.

⁴¹⁷ Vlossak, 48-49; Harp, 7.

required all communes of more than eight hundred inhabitants to create separate boys' and girls' schools. *Ecoles primaires* increased in number and opened their doors to more school-age females than ever before.⁴¹⁸ Victor Duruy, *ministre de l'Instruction publique* during the Second Empire, expanded upon the Falloux Law in 1867. He required separate-gender schools in communes of five hundred or more citizens. Girls' schools, largely run by female religious orders, enabled the *francisation* not just of female citizens, but of future mothers.⁴¹⁹ Both Falloux and Duruy, by giving certain liberties to religious educators, allowed the French language to penetrate further into French daily life and identity; they helped it become the first language of young citizens.

Despite the influence of the Guizot, Falloux, and Duruy Laws on *francisation*, evidence suggests that much of rural France resisted linguistic standardization well into the late nineteenth century. In fact, following the Franco-Prussian War, the fall of the Second Empire, and the volatile period of the Paris Commune, officials of the Third Republic's *ministère de l'Instruction publique* commissioned an investigation into French literacy. Louis Maggiolo, the *recteur* of the Académie de Nancy who expressed particular interest in literacy and education studies, conducted the *enquête* between 1877 and 1879.⁴²⁰

Maggiolo's objective involved collecting statistical data on nation-wide literacy since the 1600s, as well as on the spread of public education since the Revolution of 1789; it was a mammoth task. He focused his investigation into four five-year periods (1686-1690, 1786-1790, 1816-1820, and 1872-1876).⁴²¹ Maggiolo chose spousal signatures on marriage contracts as his primary determinant for literacy, hoping to penetrate all regional and social divides. The

⁴¹⁸ Vlossak, 48-49; Harp, 7.

⁴¹⁹ Harp, 48-49.

⁴²⁰ McPhee, 163; Michel Fleury and Pierre Valmary, "Les progrès de l'instruction élémentaire de Louis XIV à Napoléon, d'après l'enquête de Louis Maggiolo (1877-1879)," *Population* 13 (1957): 71, 90

⁴²¹ Fleury and Valmary: 72, 73.

accuracy and validity of signatures, insofar as they signify literacy, has been extensively debated; historians criticize the inconsistency of Maggiolo's archival sources and statistical sampling. His data for the late 1800s, however, included most departments and communes, more detailed statistical records, and evidence from the growing public school system.⁴²² The later portions of the *enquête* thus shed light on the status of *francisation* in the early Third Republic.

Maggiolo's findings distinguished the nineteenth century as well ahead of its predecessors in literacy, but *francisation* remained far from complete. Only 72% of French people (78% of men and 66% of women) were literate between 1872 and 1876.⁴²³ Maggiolo drafted maps from his *enquête*, illustrating the geographical limits of literacy. The so-called Maggiolo Line stretched from Saint Malo to Lake Geneva,⁴²⁴ separating the overwhelmingly-francophone northern regions from the *patois*-speaking south (see figure 8).⁴²⁵ Decreased literacy decreased below the line, particularly in non-Francophone areas, suggested a link between the use of regional languages and the ability to read and write in French.⁴²⁶ Although Maggiolo judged that nineteenth century literacy far eclipsed that of previous centuries, his findings uncovered serious threats to complete *francisation*. Though modern historians have criticized his *enquête*, Maggiolo's research exacted immediate reactions from the Third Republic. Like Grégoire, he inspired government initiatives to spread French, and their success fueled the final steps toward *francisation*.

⁴²² Fleury and Valmary: 71-73, 77.

⁴²³ Ibid: 89.

⁴²⁴ Interestingly, Maggiolo's line includes the regions of Lorraine and Alsace as "literate," not distinguishing the language of literacy (in this case, German). These regions led France in literacy in the late 1800s, even though they spoke and wrote in a language other than the national vernacular. The peculiar case of Alsace and Lorraine will be discussed further in chapter five.

⁴²⁵ Fleury and Valmary: 83.

⁴²⁶ See François Furet and Jacques Ozouf, *Reading and Writing: Literacy in France from Calvin to Jules Ferry*, English translation (Cambridge, England: Cambridge University Press, 1982), 282-296 passim.

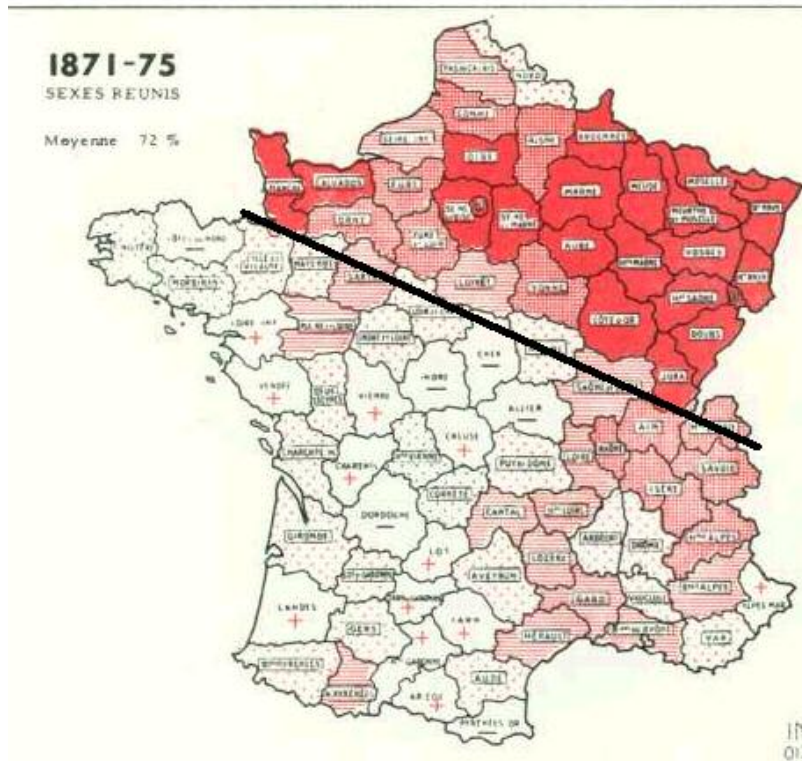


Fig. 8. Map representing Maggiolo’s data for men and women signing marriage contracts, 1871-1875. I have added the “Maggiolo Line” to indicate the disparity between northern and southern France. Dark red regions indicate 90-99% “literacy,” pink represents 70-89%, and lighter regions represent 30-69%, Images reproduced from Fleury and Valmary, “Les progrès de l’instruction élémentaire de Louis XIV à Napoléon, d’après l’enquête de Louis Maggiolo (1877-1879),” *Population* 13 (1957): 82.

Jules Ferry served as the Third Republic’s *ministre de l’Instruction publique* from February, 1879 to September, 1880, and again from January to July of 1881. In the interim, he presided over the *Conseil des ministres*. Throughout the 1880s, Ferry drafted and supported a series of landmark education laws (1880, 1881, 1882, 1883, 1885, and 1886). Though Maggiolo’s *enquête* concluded the same year that Ferry entered office, both names would be associated with the investigation and resulting legislation.⁴²⁷ The laws imposed compulsory, free enrollment for all children in public or private primary schools, required the creation of public

⁴²⁷ McPhee, 163; Weber, 308-309; Fleury and Valmary: 71-72.

primary schools in villages with twenty or more young children, and supported these schools with extensive government funding. Additionally, Ferry created a specific curriculum for primary schools and a better inspection system to enforce it. Finally, his laws established the precedent of absolute *laïcité* (secularity) in public schools, extended public secondary education to include young women, and created an *Ecole normale* for women instructors.⁴²⁸

The Ferry Laws set the final steps to *francisation* in motion. The government furnished schools with the means necessary to nationalize French, beginning with funding. In 1878, France's budget for public institutions set aside 53,640,714 F for education. By 1885, the figure had dramatically increased to 133,671,671 F.⁴²⁹ Evidence of *patois* strongholds dissipated tremendously during the late 1800s.⁴³⁰ Schools communicated that “French tends to replace the patois idiom” (in Hérault, 1875), “all the youths today know how to speak French” (in Cévennes, 1878), and “even the country people want their children to know how to read, write, and do sums” (in Tarn-et-Garonne, 1873).⁴³¹

The “country people” accepted and increasingly pursued literacy for the opportunities of social and political participation that the national language offered. Voting, for example, increased with the spread of French. Eugen Weber writes, “There is a direct relationship between literacy and electoral participation, just as there is between poverty, isolation, and literacy—or rather illiteracy,” and “villages with the poorest voter turnout also showed poor attendance at school and church.”⁴³² Similarly, the press grew more active and “its role of conducting social electricity to the whole of the nation” increased as literacy expanded popular

⁴²⁸ Weber, 308-309; Harp, 7-8.

⁴²⁹ Weber, 309.

⁴³⁰ Weber, 77.

⁴³¹ *Ibid.*, 311.

⁴³² Weber, 271, see also maps comparing literacy to electoral participation with the Maggiolo line, p. 272-273.

readership.⁴³³ With French people increasingly seeking opportunities through the national dialect, and Ferry's laws creating whole generations of literate youths (future parents), a century-long evolution of language-education reached its summit.

The innovators of French education law, Guizot, Falloux, and Ferry, shaped France's school system during the nineteenth century, from a loose, independent framework to an established, government-controlled network. Language education, particularly the nationalization and standardization of French, remained a constant goal. Education lawmakers, in addition to gaining political fame, earned honor as linguistic authorities. Indeed, Guizot and Falloux received *fauteuils* in the Académie in 1836 and 1856 respectively.⁴³⁴ French public education, which took its modern form during the 1800s, emerged as a propagator of the national language. It became the critical government instrument of *francisation*.

Social change and language

In addition to education change, France underwent numerous social transformations during the 1800s. The Industrial Revolution created unified working classes and inspired population redistribution. Technology brought new roads, railroads, and means of communication. Each aspect of social change affected, to some extent, the spread of national language and solidified its importance to national identity.

The French working class emerged for the first time, over the course of the nineteenth century, as a nationally-unified social contingent; this development depended heavily upon language. William Sewell investigates the phenomenon in great detail in his historical study of French corporate language. According to Sewell, corporations—*confréries* (brotherhoods), chivalric organizations, artisans, religious sects, certain groups of *fonctionnaires* (government

⁴³³ Weber, 467.

⁴³⁴ *Les Préfaces*, 500 n. 1.

employees)⁴³⁵—shared “common characteristics,” specifically idioms, from the time of the Old Regime, but their class-specific language evolved the most during the nineteenth century.⁴³⁶

The 1800s led to the growth of a particular form of corporate brotherhood: the *compagnonnage*. These organizations unified skilled laborers from particular professions (such as masonry); workers became *compagnons* by joining a local chapter. To learn and perfect their trade, the *compagnons* usually took part in a *tour de France*. They obtained temporary work through their *compagnonnage*'s headquarters, called *la mère* (the mother), in every city where they stopped. Rites and ceremony proved central to participation in the *compagnonnage*, and members swore specific oaths of conduct upon entry into the brotherhood and arrival in a new city.⁴³⁷ Through their lexicon, *compagnons* defined their common work ethic and standards of conduct. The word *compagnon*, “derived from the Latin *cum* and *panis*, [signified] ‘one who shares bread,’ ” reinforcing the philosophy of *partage* (sharing).⁴³⁸ *Compagnonnages* unified practitioners of skilled labor, protecting workers’ rights and providing opportunities. This was made possible, in large part, by a common, French vocabulary used to describe different elements of *compagnonnage*.

Compagnons joined brotherhoods on the basis of their trade, but the nineteenth century also created certain ties between all *ouvriers*, creating a “working-class consciousness.”⁴³⁹ Language formed the basis of this notion, and literacy in French made it successful. As the working class developed into a large, unified contingent, its members sought outlets for their political and social ideas. They garnered initial support among more certain members of the upper-class. Philippe Buchez, a Catholic socialist journalist whose paper, *l’Européen*, held

⁴³⁵ Sewell, 57.

⁴³⁶ Ibid, 16

⁴³⁷ Ibid, 37, 47-48.

⁴³⁸ Ibid, 37.

⁴³⁹ Sewell, 213.

popularity among workers, wrote in support of them in 1831:

We have conversed with these men in their aprons and heavy shoes, with their rude speech, their simple language, about things which would certainly have been unintelligible to many men of the salons. Better yet, we have received memoirs from several of them, written in bad French, to be sure, but filled with ideas that would make the fortune of an economist.⁴⁴⁰

Laborers also recognized, as literacy spread through France, a capability to publish and discuss their own ideas. In 1830 alone, “three newspapers written and edited exclusively by workers” entered circulation:

- *L’Artisan, journal de la classe ouvrière (The Artisan, Journal of the Working Class)*
- *Le Journal des ouvriers (The Workers’ Journal)*
- *Le Peuple, journal général des ouvriers, rédigé par eux-mêmes (The People, General Workers’ Journal, Written by Themselves).*⁴⁴¹

Each paper lasted little more than a year, but more publications followed. *L’Echo de la fabrique (The Echo of the Factory)* and *L’Echo des Travailleurs (The Echo of Workers)* emerged later in the 1830s.⁴⁴² The first issue of the *Artisan*, when explaining the need for laborers’ publications, cited a linguistic and ideological rift between workers and other social groups:

We have had journals for the use of workers; but they have spoken to us in a foreign language, because they were made by men who know nothing of our needs.⁴⁴³

The *ouvrier* newspapers of the 1830s marked the earliest emergence of a working-class consciousness, fueled by and made possible through language. Literacy in the national idiom provided workers with an opportunity for unity impossible during previous centuries.

Though they originated as a forum for cultivating class-specific ideology, workers’ publications soon evolved into a literary genre. Agricole Perdiguier became the leader and

⁴⁴⁰ Quoted in Sewell, 203.

⁴⁴¹ Sewell, 197.

⁴⁴² Ibid, 206-207.

⁴⁴³ Quoted in Sewell, 197.

founder of this movement in 1839, when he published *Le Livre du compagnonnage* (*The Book of Compagnonnage*) which attained immediate national success.⁴⁴⁴ He credited his inspiration to literacy and its benefits. Of his first experience with reading Voltaire, Perdiguier reflected, “I read prose, beautiful prose, even though, like the *bourgeois gentilhomme* and most of my fellow workers, I did not then know the word for it.”⁴⁴⁵ Once Perdiguier discovered the influential capabilities of literature, he capitalized on them; other workers shared his interest in literature and language.

Increasingly able to access literature and appreciate it, workers began producing it prolifically. They crafted their literature using working-class vocabulary and subject matter. Charles Poncy led the group of “worker-poets” that emerged in the late 1830s, with his collection entitled *La Chanson de chaque métier* (*The Song of Each Profession*).⁴⁴⁶ Poncy and his cohorts wrote in styles reminiscent of political poet Alphonse de Lamartine, and earned patronage from noted contemporary authors such as George Sand.⁴⁴⁷ Worker-poetry overflowed with lexical items specific to skilled professions. Poncy’s *Chanson du mécanicien* (*Mechanic’s Song*) read,

Armons nos bras de sonores marteaux,
Et, pour la gloire et le bonheur du monde,
Donnons la vie aux rebelles métaux.

Let us arm ourselves with sonorous hammers,
And, for the glory and the happiness of the world,
Let us give life to rebellious metals.⁴⁴⁸

⁴⁴⁴ Sewell, 220-221.

⁴⁴⁵ Perdiguier, 150. Here Perdiguier references a well-known incident from a play of Molière, in which the character of the *bourgeois gentilhomme* encounters new literary vocabulary, specifically the word “prose.” Though formerly unacquainted with the term, he can still speak in prose and understand it. See Traugott, 150 n. 33

⁴⁴⁶ Sewell, 236-237.

⁴⁴⁷ Ibid. George Sand, born Amandine Aurore Lucile Dupin and also known as the *baronne* Dudevant, published her literary works, critiques, and political writings under a male pseudonym.

⁴⁴⁸ Quoted in Sewell, 238. Sewell translates the poem within his text. My translation coincides with his, with the exception of the verbs “Armons” and “Donnons,” which he renders into English as “Arm ourselves” and “Give life.” I have chosen to translate these in the first-person imperative tense, which I believe captures the sense of the original French more fully.

Labor vocabulary permeated Poncey's work, yet he gave the seemingly-mundane elements of a *mécanicien's* profession an elevated mission. As Sewell articulates, "The mere existence of worker-poets, the coupling of the terms *poète* and *ouvrier*, was itself a novel and potent statement about labor."⁴⁴⁹ Tailoring an existing literary genre to their needs, worker-poets used language to inspire a working-class consciousness.

The consolidation of working-class mentalities, seen clearly in the system of *compagnonnage*, the labor newspapers, and the writings of the worker-poets, furnished *ouvriers* with the tools to improve their position during the 1800s. By the time of the 1848 Revolution, they had established and solidified a working-class vocabulary which permeated political discourse.⁴⁵⁰ (In fact, an Estates General of Labor operated under the short-lived Luxembourg Commission of 1848.) Thanks to the in the new class consciousness, *ouvriers* made greater strides as the century progressed. The government began tolerating trade unions in the late 1860s, and legalized them completely in 1884.⁴⁵¹ Language made the notion of class consciousness and progress possible. Workers, who clung to a common vocabulary, universally accessible through literacy and intrinsic to their professional identity, encouraged the nationalization of the language as they strove for class unity.

Beyond those changes affecting the working class, other developments encouraged the nationalization of French during the 1800s. Movement and circulation through the country, for example, became widespread. Whether for temporary work, permanent resettlement, or frequent travel, French people traversed their country increasingly out of necessity. Weber calls migration "an industry of the poor," wherein "leaving home was the price paid for survival."⁴⁵²

⁴⁴⁹ Sewell, 236.

⁴⁵⁰ Sewell, 163,187.

⁴⁵¹ Ibid, 163, 251.

⁴⁵² Weber, 278.

Indeed, an agricultural survey from 1852 indicated that 900,000 workers migrated during the harvest alone.⁴⁵³ Resettlement affected population distribution in even greater proportions. Industrialization brought French people to cities in droves between 1801 and 1851. The population of Paris increased by 92%, while those of Toulon, Brest, Nîmes, and Reims increased at rates of more than 100% (see table 1).⁴⁵⁴

Table 1. Population growth in French cities, 1801-1851

	Population in 1801	Population in 1851	Percent increase
Paris	547,736	1,053,262	92
Marseille	111,130	195,292	76
Lyons	109,500	177,190	62
Bordeaux	90,992	130,927	44
Rouen	87,000	101,265	16
Nantes	73,879	96,262	30
Toulouse	50,171	93,379	86
Lille	54,756	75,795	38
Strasbourg	49,056	75,565	54
Toulon	20,500	69,404	238
Brest	27,000	61,160	126
Metz	32,099	57,713	80
St.-Etienne	16,259	56,001	224
Nîmes	38,800	53,619	38
Amiens	40,289	52,149	29
Orléans	36,165	47,393	31
Angers	33,000	46,779	42
Montpellier	33,913	45,811	35
Reims	20,295	45,754	129
Caen	30,900	45,290	52
Nancy	29,740	45,129	52
Limoges	20,550	41,630	102
Besançon	30,000	41,295	38
Rennes	25,904	39,505	53
Avignon	19,889	35,890	80

Source: Based on Pouthas, *Population française*, p. 98.

Source: William H. Sewell, Jr., *Work and Revolution in France: The Language of labor from the Old Regime to 1848* (Cambridge, England: Cambridge University Press, 1980), 150.

The growing infrastructure of land routes and railroads made national travel faster and simpler for French citizens. As the century progressed, roads connected not only major cities, but also smaller villages and parts of the rural periphery; travel time drastically decreased as a result.⁴⁵⁵ In tandem with this development, French infiltrated many *patois* strongholds. Fernand

⁴⁵³ Ibid, 279.

⁴⁵⁴ Sewell, 150.

⁴⁵⁵ Braudel, 82.

Braudel writes that “French marched its way through the Breton peninsula, moving slowly but surely along the highways...,” even though this region maintained fewer roadways than the rest of the country.⁴⁵⁶ Railroad construction began during the 1820s; by the end of 1882, 26,327 kilometers of track covered France.⁴⁵⁷ Rail companies provided a massive source of work for the growing *classe ouvrière*, counting 86,300 employees in 1861 and 222,800 by 1881.⁴⁵⁸ As it allowed people to traverse the country, and earn their living by doing so, transportation simultaneously encouraged the spread of standard French.

As people circulated through France with increasing ease, so did their mail. Cross-country communication developed into a productive industry. Postal activity underwent the most drastic change, particularly after the government reduced stamp duty (1879). In 1881, French citizens sent 14.5 million francs worth of mail; in 1898, the figure increased to 789 million.⁴⁵⁹ Rapid communication methods developed as well. Napoléon I systematically installed *sémaphores* (optical telegraphs) throughout the departments in the early 1800s. Between 1851 and 1855, his nephew replaced the *sémaphores* with their electrical successors.⁴⁶⁰ The movement of people and messages throughout France impacted the spread of French, as it necessitated a standard spoken and written idiom. A common language proved integral to the success of communication technology, as well as to national mobility.

Though many French citizens left their home regions for migratory work; military conscription encompassed another non-voluntary force of mobility and linguistic change. The first, large-scale conscription occurred during the Revolution (1793 and 1798), and similar initiatives recurred throughout the reign of Napoléon I. He drafted his military by *tirage au sort*

⁴⁵⁶ Ibid, 82; Weber, 204.

⁴⁵⁷ Weber, 205.

⁴⁵⁸ Weber., 210.

⁴⁵⁹ Ibid, 219.

⁴⁶⁰ Ibid, 658.

(lottery), as did regimes to follow. Since draftees could legally pay others to replace them in the army until 1873, most soldiers came from less-privileged (and illiterate) backgrounds.⁴⁶¹ For these conscripts, the army provided an avenue to learn French; indeed, understanding the language proved a necessity for most soldiers.⁴⁶² A report from Rennes in 1880 read,

The young Bretons who don't know how to read, write, or speak French when they get to their units are promptly civilized [dégrossis],...lose the prejudices of their *pays*, abandon native suspicions and backward opinions; and when they return to the village, they are sufficiently Frenchified to Frenchify their friends by their influence.⁴⁶³

Whether or not the soldiers succeeded in “Frenchifying” their homeland upon returning, military initiatives certainly attempted to teach French to *patois*-speaking draftees. In 1818, a law provided promotional opportunities for literate soldiers and created “regimental schools” for French-language instruction.⁴⁶⁴ If the non-Francophone soldier mobilized during the nineteenth century returned home, he did so with at least an introductory knowledge of the national idiom.

With the sweeping social changes of the 1800s—working class mentalities, increased movement throughout the country, etc.—came numerous additions to the social lexicon. Linguistic historians estimate new lexical items at 3,700 for the century.⁴⁶⁵ Additions occurred in a number of areas. Political changes and crises, for example, engendered terms like *anarchie*, *code pénal*, *loi martiale* (martial law), *complot* (conspiracy), *émeute* (riot), *préfet* (prefect), *garde nationale*, *fonctionnaire* (state employee), *syndicat* (union), and *gréviste* (striker).⁴⁶⁶ Corporate language, in addition to the new words it inspired, also brought changed meanings to old terms. *Industrie* no longer signified “diligence or assiduousness,” but rather “a set of institutions and

⁴⁶¹ Weber, 292-293.

⁴⁶² Ibid, 298, 314.

⁴⁶³ Quoted in Weber, 299 (his translation and remark).

⁴⁶⁴ Weber, 298.

⁴⁶⁵ Saint-Gérard, 427.

⁴⁶⁶ Ibid, 444.

operations whose function is the production of goods.”⁴⁶⁷ *Société* maintained its traditional connotation (to be in someone’s *société* or company), but also acquired a modern sense (referring to people in general, or in a particular social context).⁴⁶⁸

Words linked to technology became, over the course of the 1800s, increasingly specialized. The new railroad vocabulary proved particularly detailed. The term *chemin de fer* emerged with the very first rail system, connecting Saint-Etienne and Andrézieux, in the 1820s. A variety of rail terms followed in due course: *aiguille* (lever), *convoi* (convoy), rail, *dérailer* (derail), *gare* and *débarcadère* (train station), *ligne* (line), *plate-forme*, tunnel and *tonnelle*, *voie ferrée* (railway), *voiture* and *wagon* (car). Several of the terms, obviously borrowed from English, created controversy (particularly the tunnel/*tonnelle* distinction).⁴⁶⁹ However, as figure nine illustrates, foreign technology words gained a foothold in the French lexicon during the nineteenth century. The new vocabulary of the 1800s reflected the rapid, drastic social changes sweeping the country. Since the new terms appeared almost exclusively in French, the identity of socially-reformed France relied heavily upon the national idiom.



TUNNEL DE LA NERTHE, PRÈS DE MARSEILLE. — Un tunnel est un passage pratiqué sous terre ou à travers une montagne, dans lequel s'engagent les trains de chemin de fer. Le plus

Fig. 9. This image, published in *Le Tour de la France par deux enfants*, (G. Bruno, 1884), depicts and defines the new railroad term, *tunnel*, demonstrating the acceptance of the borrowed word into French by the latter part of the 1800s. Image reproduced from Jacques Chaurand, *Nouvelle histoire de la langue française* (Paris: Editions de Seuil, 1999), 437.

⁴⁶⁷ Sewell, 143.

⁴⁶⁸ Ibid, 144, 188.

⁴⁶⁹ Saint-Gérard, 440.

Patois: revivals and final struggles

The 1800s brought numerous strides in *francisation*, but *patois* idioms remained in usage (however dwindling) throughout the country until the last decades of the century. In 1803, Coquebert de Montbret conducted a statistical survey of languages spoken in France. His survey yielded the following results:

27,926,000 locuteurs français [French speakers]
4,071,000 locuteurs italiens [Italian]
2,705,000 locuteurs allemands [German]
2,227,000 locuteurs flamands [Flemish]
967,000 locuteurs bretons [Breton]
108,000 locuteurs basques [Basque]⁴⁷⁰

Montbret only takes into account the completely non-French regional languages, proving their prevalence at the century's outset; his data give no notion of the varieties of French, with varying levels of intelligibility to the standard, which still existed throughout the country.⁴⁷¹

Evidence of French varieties, and the confusion they caused in the nineteenth century, certainly exists. *Le Moulin du Frau* (The Windmill of the Frau), a folkloric anthology, poked fun at provincials in Périgord who, ill-aware of politics and confused by the national idiom in the 1850s, believed that politician Alexandre Ledru-Rollin kept a mistress called *la Martine*. (Of course, they actually misunderstood the name of poet and politician Alphonse de Lamartine.)⁴⁷² Some areas of France, on the other hand, maintained their local idiom, blending it with the standard. People could comprehend Parisian French, but spoke *patois*.⁴⁷³ When Bernadette Soubirou claimed to witness the Virgin Mary's appearance at Lourdes in 1858, imperial inspectors interviewed the young girl. "She understood [their questions in French] well enough,

⁴⁷⁰ Saint-Gérand, 389.

⁴⁷¹ Fernan Braudel, *L'identité de la France: Espace et Histoire* (Paris: Arthaud-Flammarion, 1986), 81.

⁴⁷² Martyn Lyons, "Regionalism and Linguistic Conformity in the French Revolution," in *Reshaping France: Town, Country, and Region During the French Revolution*, ed. Alan Forrest and Peter Jones (Manchester, England: Manchester University Press, 1991), 184.

⁴⁷³ Weber, 79.

though she answered in *patois*.⁴⁷⁴ The national language infiltrated provincial France gradually and, despite initial confusion, weakened *patois* and made way for *francisation*.

As the nationalization of French progressed, *patois* resistance emerged, particularly in literary form. *Provençal* had maintained, throughout the seventeenth and eighteenth centuries, the strongest tradition of printed *patois* literature. In hopes of continuing that tradition and opposing domination by French, a group of *provençal* authors, including Frédéric Mistral and Alphonse Daudet, formed the *Félibrige* in 1854.⁴⁷⁵ Members of the *Félibrige* began writing prolifically in *provençal* during the 1850s, as a sort of political objection to *francisation* and to the rise of the Second Empire.⁴⁷⁶ These men saw themselves as the sole loyalists to non-Francophone language and regional identities:

Détrônée, mise nu pieds...
La langue d'oc fière pourtant, comme toujours,
S'en alla vivre chez les pâtres...

Dethroned, left barefooted...
The *langue d'oc*, still proud as always,
Goes to live among its shepherds...⁴⁷⁷

The “bons Provençaux (good men of Provence),” undertook to protect their idiom through literature that celebrated the language and *paysages* (countryside) of France’s southern region.⁴⁷⁸

Mistral composed the *Félibrige* masterpiece, *Miréio* (in French, *Mireille*) in 1859. The epic poem recounted the doomed love of its titular heroine in a series of songs, but augmented the plot line with descriptions of southern France and its language. Mistral called upon his fellow Provençaux, “Valent felibre (Brave men of the *Félibrige*)” to “weave...the tears of the

⁴⁷⁴ Ibid, 77.

⁴⁷⁵ McPhee, 234.

⁴⁷⁶ Weber, 80.

⁴⁷⁷ Quoted in *Histoire d'une amitié: Correspondance inédite entre Alphonse Daudet et Frédéric Mistral 1860-1897*, ed. Jacques-Henry Bomecque (Paris: Julliard, 1979), 45.

⁴⁷⁸ Ibid, 44.

people” into their poems.⁴⁷⁹ Unfortunately for Mistral and his colleagues, Francophone France accepted the literary merits of the poem, but regarded its *patois* as obsolete. One Monsieur de Pontmartin scathingly remarked, “What a pity that this masterpiece should be written in the language of our servants,” showing that views toward artistic representation of lower-class speech had changed drastically since the theatrical masterpieces of Molière and Marivaux.⁴⁸⁰

More and more, French people like Pontmartin recognized the practicality and usefulness of one, standardized, national tongue. Without it, grammarian Charles Durazzo wrote in 1838, “l’éducation languit comme dans une prison étroite, privée d’air et de mouvement (education languishes as if in a cramped prison, deprived of air and movement).”⁴⁸¹ People from all social and regional origins began favoring the national idiom over regional speech varieties. Perdiguier made the realization, as he traveled the country in his *tour de France*, that “the king of all *patois*” did not, in fact, exist.⁴⁸² Rather, local languages reinforced antipathetic regional sentiments and prejudices.⁴⁸³ French, on the other hand, provided social mobility. In Pierre Jakez-Hélias’s *Le Cheval d’Orgueil (The Horse of Pride)*, he recalls the advice of his grandfather, who lived during the late 1800s:

Avec le français on peut aller partout. Avec le Breton seulement on est attaché du court comme la vache à son pieu. Il faut toujours brouter autour de la longue. Et l’herbe du pré n’est jamais grasse.

With French we can go anywhere. With Breton only you are attached, like the cow to its post, by a short tether. You must always graze along its length. And the closest grass is never hearty.⁴⁸⁴

By the turn of the century, French people increasingly identified *patois*, in Bretagne and beyond,

⁴⁷⁹ Frédéric Mistral, *Mireille*, text and translation (Paris: Librairie Alphonse Lemerre, 1936), 208-209.

⁴⁸⁰ Quoted in Weber, 80.

⁴⁸¹ Quoted in Saint-Gérard, 398.

⁴⁸² Perdiguier, 139.

⁴⁸³ Ibid, 139.

⁴⁸⁴ Quoted in Lyons, 189.

with provincial, uncivilized, simplicity.⁴⁸⁵ French represented the idiom of opportunity.

Of course, remnants of *patois* survived the *francisation*. Terms firmly-rooted in regional languages remained in usage even as the remainder of a *patois* became obsolete. In Bretagne, vocabulary of monetary denominations followed this trend. Bretons used *diners*, *gwenneg*, *réaux*, and *lur* to describe currency well into the 1900s. (French people mirror this trend today, still discussing larger sums in *francs* despite the advent of the euro.)⁴⁸⁶ For the most part, however, French dominated regional languages throughout the country. Linguistic authorities recognized *francisation*'s success. Ferdinand Buisson published a dictionary, in the 1880s, which "included neither *patois*, nor *idiome*, nor *dialecte*."⁴⁸⁷ According to the Baron Dupin, *patois* maintained one value in the 1800s: its scientific merit.

Il y a des personnes qui voient avec chagrin l'altération progressive de nos patois locaux et leur tendance à se fonder dans la langue nationale. Je crois, comme elles, qu'une étude sage et une comparaison de ses dialectes pourrait offrir au grammairien, et plus encore peut-être à l'historien, une mine féconde, beaucoup trop négligée, jusqu'à ce jour; et s'ils venaient à disparaître tout-à-fait, avant qu'une main savante eût mis en œuvre les matériaux altérés, mais précieux, ... j'en partagerais le regret.

There are people who watch the progressive alteration of our local *patois*, and their tendency to melt into the national language, with chagrin. I believe, like them, that a wise study and comparison of these dialects could offer, to the grammarian and indeed to the historian, a fertile mine, much too much neglected until today; and if these languages come to disappear completely, before an educated hand can make use of the altered, yet precious materials, I will share in the regret.⁴⁸⁸

Aside from the efforts of the *Félibrige* and some scattered resistance, the nineteenth century represented a period of great, final decline for France's regional languages. The national idiom, in its *essor* (rapid expansion) overtook and dominated these idioms. Thereafter, they existed

⁴⁸⁵ Weber, 7; Saint-Gérard, 400.

⁴⁸⁶ Ibid, 33.

⁴⁸⁷ Ibid, 8.

⁴⁸⁸ Quoted in Saint-Gérard, 396.

only as local *patrimoine* (heritage), “part of a region’s folklore” that “did not threaten national unity.”⁴⁸⁹

Language as science

The nineteenth century engendered drastic political, social, and linguistic change for French people; by its conclusion, most of France spoke the standard language, which formed a central part of the French identity. Amidst these developments, a new, scientific method for studying and classifying language (an early form of the field of linguistics) emerged in France. Language scientists eclipsed Académie purists as the foremost authorities on French; their publications served as leading reference and pedagogical manuals.

The 1800s earned distinction as the “siècle des dictionnaires (century of dictionaries),” with a notably plural word replacing *le Dictionnaire* of the previous two hundred years.⁴⁹⁰ The Académie published its *Dictionnaire* in 1835 and 1878, but no longer held the monopolistic authority that it had enjoyed under the Old Regime.⁴⁹¹ With freedom to publish, countless non-*académiciens* attempted comprehensive French-language dictionaries, with widespread success. The renowned Bescherelle grammar (1838, 1845, 1846) first emerged, as did the comprehensive and respected dictionary of Pierre Larousse (1852, 1863) during the century. Other authoritative linguistic publications of the period included those of Jean-Charles Thiébault and Emile Littré (the Académie rejected the latter gentleman in 1863).⁴⁹² According to Bernard Quemada, at least 1,085 dictionaries entered publication between 1798 and 1863.⁴⁹³ In part attributable to the lexical changes of the period, these numerous publications highlight the increased scientific

⁴⁸⁹ David A. Bell, *The Cult of the Nation in France: Inventing Nationalism 1680-1800* (Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 2001), 177.

⁴⁹⁰ Saint-Gérard, 382.

⁴⁹¹ *Ibid.*, 409.

⁴⁹² *Ibid.*, 408-409, 502

⁴⁹³ *Ibid.*, 482.

focus on French, and the variety of new linguistic authorities.

The French language originated, like most linguistic systems, as a common tool for communication. It evolved into a complex science during the 1800s, as a contingent of specialists began analyzing attributes of the language. Bernard Jullien delineated the types of linguistic scientists in his *Cours supérieur de Grammaire (Advanced Grammar Course)* of 1849. *Rhétieurs* and *Dissertateurs* studied the substance of language and its uses, *Annotateurs* observed language in usage and made subsequent generalizations, *Etymologistes* traced word histories and origins, and *Dogmateurs* studied both theoretical and practical elements of grammar.⁴⁹⁴ From such scientific investigations, nineteenth century linguists produced theoretical explanations of French, such as the following description of gender from the Bescherelle manual:

Les êtres animés se divisent en deux grandes classes: les êtres mâles et les êtres femelles. Cette différence...s'appelle Sexe dans les êtres et Genre dans les noms destinés à en rappeler l'idée. Ainsi, de même qu'il y a deux sexes pour les êtres animés, il doit y avoir deux genres parmi les noms: le genre masculin et le genre féminin...La distinction des noms en deux genres...fut donc prise dans la nature; et on aurait tort de croire...qu'elle soit arbitraire et de pure fantaisie.

Animated beings divide themselves into two large classes: male beings and female beings. This difference...is called Sex in beings and Gender in nouns destined to recall the idea of these beings. Therefore, just as there are two sexes for animated beings, there must be two genders among nouns: the masculine gender and the feminine gender...The division of nouns into two genders was therefore taken from nature; and we would be wrong to believe that it is arbitrary or pure fantasy.⁴⁹⁵

This explicit analysis and defense of noun gender marked just one theory of nineteenth-century linguists. They also established phonetic rules, such as the *loi de position* (law of position) to

⁴⁹⁴ Saint-Gérard, 405-406.

⁴⁹⁵ Ibid, 406.

distinguish between median vowels⁴⁹⁶ and the oral acceptability of dropping “ne” from negation constructions (*je ne peux pas* becomes *je peux pas*, etc.), both of which remain principles of the language today.⁴⁹⁷

By the end of the nineteenth century, the science of French had advanced enough to require its own learned societies, or *sociétés savants*, to preserve not just the history of French, but also the history of French linguistics. Gaston Paris founded one such group, the *Société linguistique de Paris*, at a conference in 1888. Interestingly, the conference also marked the creation of the *Société des parlers de France* (*Society of languages of France*), a group dedicated to the history of *patois*. As part of their joint mission, these groups planned to draft an *Atlas linguistique de la France*, marking historical distinctions not only in regional idioms, but also in pronunciation and lexicon.⁴⁹⁸ At the end of the 1800s, studies devoted to the history of *patois* replaced those of Grégoire and Maggiolo, which had attempted to establish the contemporary situation of linguistic diversity. These dialects, historical entities, no longer threatened the standard Parisian idiom. French, by contrast, represented a complete, scientific system (instead of a developing language), open to analysis and explication. With its final transition to a national, dominant language complete, it could be studied.

“French for us, sons of France,” proclaimed Charles Durazzo in 1838, unknowingly capturing the linguistic developments of an entire century in this statement.⁴⁹⁹ The French language existed, in one form or another, since the ninth century;⁵⁰⁰ it became the idiom of a

⁴⁹⁶ Median vowels of French include the sound pairs of [e] and [ɛ], [o] and [ɔ], and [œ] and [ø]. The law of position states that, in accented syllables where a median vowel is used, the final sound of the syllable determines which vowel sound from each pair is appropriate.

⁴⁹⁷ R. Anthony Lodge, *A Sociolinguistic History of Parisian French* (Cambridge, England: Cambridge University Press, 2004), 218, 222; Saint-Gérard, 500.

⁴⁹⁸ Saint-Gérard, 396, 474, 477, 479.

⁴⁹⁹ Charles Durazzo in Henri-Honoré and Louis-Nicolas Bescherelle, *La France grammaticale*, quoted Saint-Gérard, 398.

⁵⁰⁰ Chaurand, 29.

unified France during the 1800s. The century of transformation began with the efforts of influential figures like Napoléon I and Victor Hugo. The education legislation of Guizot, Falloux, Duruy, and Ferry gradually spread French among the nation's schoolchildren. Concurrently, each social change that reshaped France incorporated the language deeper into the nation's identity. Despite some resistance and revival efforts, like the *Félibrige*, *patois* suffered marked decline throughout France. Practically, the geographical and social mobility offered by French made regional idioms obsolete.

The ascent of French, from an idiom among many to the national idiom of France, culminated in the 1800s. The process began with *Villers-Cotterets*, the founding of the Académie, and the perfection of written French. Alongside standard, Parisian French, countless dialects and sociolects created obstacles to linguistic unity. The Revolution of 1789 solidified a connection between identity and language, but Grégoire and Barère ultimately failed to establish one, state-imposed idiom. The nineteenth century bound the French identity, with finality, to its national language.

Les Provinces exceptionnelles: Language in Alsace and Lorraine

Alsace and Lorraine are unwilling to be made over to aliens...
France cannot agree to sign away Lorraine and Alsace... Europe
cannot permit or ratify such cession.⁵⁰¹

Léon Gambetta, 1871

Dis-moi: quel est ton pays,
Est-ce la France ou l'Allemagne ?
C'est un pays de plaine et de montagne,
Que les vieux Gaulois ont conquis
Deux mille ans avant Charlemagne...
Et que l'étranger nous a pris !
C'est la vieille terre française
De Kléber, de la Marseillaise !...⁵⁰²
La terre des soldats hardis,
A l'intrépide et froide audace,
Qui regardent toujours la mort en face !...
C'est la vieille et loyale Alsace !⁵⁰³

Erckmann-Chatrion, 1882

Cited above are two radically different statements. One is a political speech, given in Paris; the other is a poem, penned in the German Empire. The speaker of the first could call French his native language, whereas the authors of the second spoke a dialect of German. Both statements nevertheless addressed the same issue: the annexation of Alsace-Lorraine by Prussia. In July of 1870, Emperor Louis-Napoléon declared war against Prussia in an attempt to curb the

⁵⁰¹ Taken from a speech by Gambetta on February 17, 1871, quoted in *France, Alsace, Lorraine, The Inviolable Pledge* ([Paris]: Comité de l'effort de la France et de ses allies, [1918]), 1.

⁵⁰² Jean-Baptiste Kléber, respected Alsatian general who served in the French military during the French Revolution. He led the Egyptian campaign after Napoléon I returned to France. The French national anthem, *La Marseillaise*, was written in 1792 in Strasbourg, by Claude Joseph Rouget de Lisle, as a *War Chant for the Army of the Rhine*.

⁵⁰³ Tell me! What is your country, / Is it France or Germany? / It is a country of plains and mountains, / That the old Gauls conquered / Two thousand years before Charlemagne... / And that the foreigner has taken from us! / It is the old French land / that of Kléber, of the Marseillaise!... / The land of bold soldiers who, / with dauntless and cold audacity, / who constantly look death in the face!... / It is the old and loyal Alsace! Quote taken from Emile Erckmann and Alexandre Chatrion, *Le banni ; Dis-moi ! Quel est ton pays : Chant Alsacien* (Paris : J. Hetzel, 1882), in *Gallica: la bibliothèque numérique* [<http://gallica.bnf.fr>], notice number FRBNF30403250, 68.

increasingly powerful Chancellor Otto von Bismarck. By August, Prussians had invaded France's borderland territories. Siege crippled Strasbourg through August and September, bringing massive casualties and destruction as Prussian forces bombarded the city. An armistice established peace (and the defeat of France) in January of 1871, but left the fate of the borderlands in question.⁵⁰⁴

A new National Assembly, elected in February, would finalize the surrender of Alsace and Lorraine officially to Prussia.⁵⁰⁵ Léon Gambetta served in the Assembly, choosing to represent the Bas-Rhin after several departments had elected him. He gave a speech on February 17, fiercely resisting the decision to surrender Alsace and Lorraine.⁵⁰⁶ As Frenchmen, Gambetta and his fellow members argued on behalf of French citizens in the borderlands.

A decade later, under the combined penname of Erckmann-Chatrian, Lorraine-born authors Emile Erckmann and Alexandre Chatrian wrote their poem, *Dis-moi! Quel est ton pays* (*Tell Me! Which Country is Yours*), one of several texts dedicated to the crises of identity suffered by citizens of annexed Alsace-Lorraine. Though both men spoke a German dialect as their maternal idiom, they expressed loyalty by penning their poem in French and infusing it with elements of their shared French heritage: "Kléber," "la Marseillaise," etc. Like Gambetta, they considered themselves Frenchmen and fought to maintain their national identity.

As these two statements demonstrate, neither the citizens of Alsace nor those of the rest of France favored the annexation. Gambetta's sentiments received an echo in those of Victor Hugo, Louis Blanc, and other political figures in late February of 1871:

We hereby declare...that neither we, nor the National Assembly, nor the French

⁵⁰⁴ Bernard Vogler, *Histoire politique de l'Alsace: De la Révolution à nos jours, un panorama des passions alsaciennes* (Strasbourg: Editions de la Nuée Bleue, 1995), 171-173.

⁵⁰⁵ Ibid.

⁵⁰⁶ Ibid, 173; Stephen L. Harp, *Learning to be Loyal: Primary Schooling as Nation Building in Alsace, 1850-1940* (DeKalb: Northern Illinois University Press, 1998), 13.

Nation as a whole, have any right to make a single one of your constituents a subject of Prussia; and like you, *we consider beforehand as null and void any act of treaty, any vote or plebiscite, approving the cession of any portion of Alsace or Lorraine.*⁵⁰⁷

The Treaty of Frankfurt, which officially ended the Franco-Prussian War, nevertheless relinquished most of the Alsace and Lorraine to Prussia on May 10, 1871.⁵⁰⁸ German territories now included the Bas-Rhin, all of the Haut-Rhin except Belfort, and most of Moselle. Only the department of Meurthe, in Lorraine, escaped the annexation of most of its territory.⁵⁰⁹

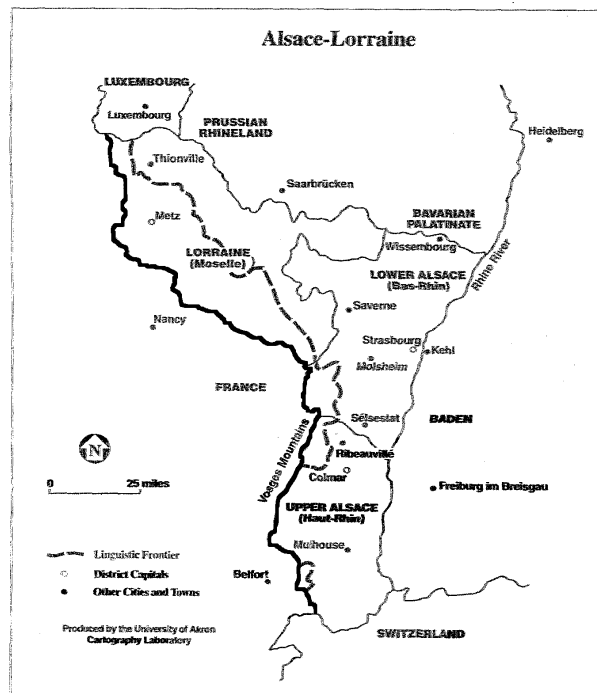


Fig. 10. This map represents the annexed territory of Alsace-Lorraine and its border (shown in bold) with France. The area to the east of the linguistic border (dashed line) spoke primarily Germanic dialects, while regions west of the border spoke French. Reproduced from Stephen L. Harp, *Learning to be Loyal: Primary Schooling as Nation Building in Alsace and Lorraine, 1850-1940* (DeKalb, IL: Northern Illinois University Press, 1998), 11. (I have bolded the border between France and annexed Alsace-Lorraine for clarity.)

⁵⁰⁷ Quoted in *France, Alsace, Lorraine, The Inviolable Pledge*, 4, emphasis included in original text.

⁵⁰⁸ Vogler, 173.

⁵⁰⁹ Harp, 11.

As figure ten demonstrates, annexation severed Alsace and Lorraine from France and made them into *Reichslands* (Imperial Territories). In addition to the political border, the map illustrates a second critical boundary: the linguistic line separating French from speakers of German or German dialects.

This investigation has focused on elements of the French identity which developed, historically, through language. The role of language in Alsace and Lorraine therefore requires attention, as these provinces form an exception, a test case, in terms of French linguistic unity.⁵¹⁰ Germanic dialects dominated these regions prior to 1871; the annexation would remove the territories from France just before the final diffusion of French took place (1870-1900). As a result, the *provinces exceptionnelles* remained largely non-Francophone well into the twentieth century, with dual linguistic and historical cultures grappling for control.⁵¹¹ Alsace and Lorraine represent, in comparison with the remainder of modern-day France, a linguistic anomaly. Neither region adopted the national language unconditionally, but both manifested their loyalty to France while using French, German, and regional dialects. Alsatians and Lorrainers resisted linguistic control, before the annexation, under the *Reichsland*, and long after their repatriation into France. They allowed language to connect them with France, but their strongest solidarity and unity formed around the local linguistic identity.

Regional history

Historical background provides a necessary context for understanding the linguistic identity of Alsace and Lorraine, regions whose origins coincide neatly with those of the French language. Both can be traced to the Frankish Empire. Louis the Pious, son of Emperor Charlemagne, died in 840 without naming an heir to his holdings. Three of his sons, Lothair,

⁵¹⁰ Bernadette Schnitzler, *La passion de l'antiquité: six siècles de recherches archéologiques en Alsace* (Strasbourg: Société Savante d'Alsace, 1998), 107.

⁵¹¹ Harp, 4.

Charles the Bald, and Louis the German, fought for control. The first French document, the *Serments de Strasbourg*, originated from their civil war. Charles and Louis met in Strasbourg in 842 to sign the *Serments*, finalizing their alliance against Lothair. (Charles signed the *Serments* in Old High German, while Louis signed them in proto-French.) Shortly afterward, the brothers divided Charlemagne's Empire into three parts. Charles received Aquitaine (most of France), Louis received Saxony (German territories), and Lothair received the Middle Francia (encompassing Alsace, Lorraine, and much of Italy). In fact, the term *Lorraine* (*Lothringen* in German) comes from his name. Lothair divided his holdings among his three sons, giving Lothair II the portion including Alsace and Lorraine (called Lotharingia). In 870, after the death of Lothair II, Louis the German and Charles the Bald divided Lotharingia among themselves.⁵¹² Since this historical precedent, the border territories of Alsace and Lorraine have provoked several disputes and changed hands repeatedly.

From the Middle Ages until the mid-1600s, Alsace and Lorraine existed as territories of the Holy Roman Empire.⁵¹³ France began asserting claims over the regions during the territorial expansion of Louis XIV, but absorption of the regions into France took place over a century. At the Treaty of Westphalia, which ended the Thirty Years' War in 1648, France received the first large portions of Alsace and Lorraine. The *Capitulations de Strasbourg* brought the last major Alsatian city under French control in 1681, and the Duchy of Lorraine became part of France in 1766.⁵¹⁴ The newly acquired territories spoke Germanic dialects, leading French officials to follow each acquisition with a number of linguistic legislations aimed at *francisation* (a term

⁵¹² Harp, 10.

⁵¹³ Harp, 20.

⁵¹⁴ Peter McPhee, *A Social History of France, 1789-1914* (New York: Palgrave Macmillan, 2004), 8; René Epp, *Histoire de l'Eglise Catholique en Alsace des origines à nos jours* (Strasbourg: Editions du Signe, 2003), 323, 326-327.

coined, in fact, for Alsace and Lorraine).⁵¹⁵ According to Jean-Baptiste Colbert, the government endeavored to “renouveler les coeurs de ces peuples (renew the hearts of these peoples)” and “les faire devenir bons français (make them become good Frenchmen).”⁵¹⁶ These efforts, however, proved short-lived. Once the government established political control in Alsace and Lorraine, it relaxed linguistic measures.⁵¹⁷

Under the Old Regime, a certain separation kept Alsace and Lorraine from complete integration into France. The territories existed, not as “administrative units” or “historic regions,” but as borderlands protecting the kingdom from invasion.⁵¹⁸ The Revolution of 1789 established the first strong ties between Alsace-Lorraine and the new French nation. Like the rest of non-Francophone France, Alsace and Lorraine underwent departmental divisions in 1790, received translations of 1789 legislations and documents, and formed part of the Convention’s target-region for linguistic assimilation.⁵¹⁹ After 1789, these regions became part of the French national soil, rather than the monarchy’s holdings.

Though not quick to adopt the French language, Alsace and Lorraine did show loyalty to the reorganized France, maintaining the border against foreign advances.⁵²⁰ During the Revolution, Alsatians even placed a sign, on the bridge that connected Kehl to Strasbourg (across the Rhine River border) which proclaimed, “Ici commence le pays de la liberté (Here begins the land of liberty).”⁵²¹ Alsace increased its loyalty to France after the ascent of Napoléon I, whose affinity for Alsatian soldiers earned him the popular nickname of “Napi” throughout the

⁵¹⁵ Epp, 323.

⁵¹⁶ Ibid.

⁵¹⁷ Joseph Byrnes, “The Relationship of Religious Practice to Linguistic Culture: Language, Religion, and Education in Alsace and the Rousillon, 1860-1890,” *Church History* 68, no. 3 (1999), 600.

⁵¹⁸ Harp, 10.

⁵¹⁹ Ibid, 4, 32.

⁵²⁰ Elizabeth Ann Louisa Vlossak, “The Nationalisation of Women in Alsace, 1871-1940,” PhD dissertation (Peterhouse, University of Cambridge, 2003), 12.

⁵²¹ Vogler, 45.

region.⁵²² By the beginning of the nineteenth century, Alsace and Lorraine had been assimilated administratively and patriotically into France, though both regions rejected linguistic changes. During the 1800s, these territories would face linguistic challenges under both French and German rule, but Alsace and Lorraine fought to maintain their regional linguistic identities independent of national loyalties.

1800-1871: A borderland in transition

Elizabeth Vlossak describes the importance of Alsace-Lorraine's frontier location as follows: "Borderlands...constitute ideal historical laboratories, since it is at these geographical, political, ethnic, economic and religious intersections that national identities and conflicts appear in acute form."⁵²³ These regions served simultaneously to link and divide two cultures, in this case French and German, without completely adhering to either. In the 1800s, as social change reshaped France and linguistic standardization gradually united the country, citizens sensed the power of the two eastern borderlands. In 1836, the French Baron Massias wrote,

Alsaciens sont les truchements naturels des deux peuples que sépare le Rhin: leur destination est d'en maintenir les rapports scientifiques, littéraires et de bon voisinage.

Alsations are the natural interpreters of the two peoples that the Rhine separates: their purpose is to maintain, between these peoples, a scientific, literary, and good-neighborly rapport.⁵²⁴

Similarly, the *Revue des Deux Mondes* (*Review of the Two Worlds*) mentioned, in 1852, the "genie profondément original (profoundly original genius)" of Alsace-Lorraine, where "partout éclatent...le contraste et l'antithèse: deux cultures, deux caractères et deux langues (contrast and

⁵²² Alfred Wahl and Jean-Claude Richez, *La vie quotidienne en Alsace entre France et Allemagne, 1850-1950* (Paris: Hachette, 1993), 225. Napoléon I famously said, "Laissez-les parler leur jargon car ils sabrent en vrais Français (Let them speak their jargon, for they fight as true Frenchmen)," which won him the adoration of the Alsations.

⁵²³ Vlossak, 23.

⁵²⁴ Quoted in Vogler, 124.

antithesis echo everywhere: two cultures, two characters and two languages).⁵²⁵

For citizens of Alsace-Lorraine, living in a borderland region provided unmatched opportunities, particularly with the social and technological advances of the 1800s. Emile Barrière, of Mulhouse in southern Alsace, used his memoirs to praise the international mobility available to Alsatians in the mid-1800s.

Que de fois avons-nous été en chemin de fer jusqu'à Saint-Loué (ville frontière avec la Suisse et le pays de Bade). Nous gagnions le Rhin que nous traversions sur ce pont volant qui vous étonnait et vous amusait tout ensemble; nous entrons dans la duché de Bade et, après avoir longé la rive droite du fleuve, nous allions déjeuner à Bâle: en une heure et demie, nous avons foulé le sol français, navigué sur le grand fleuve franco-allemand, traversé un coin de l'Allemagne et vu les premières campagnes de la Suisse.

Many times we took the train until Saint-Loué (border city with Switzerland and the lands of Baden). We reached the Rhine, which we crossed on the swinging bridge that surprises and amuses you all at once; we entered the Duchy of Baden and, after having traveled along the right bank of the river, we would go have lunch in Basel: in one and a half hours, we had tread upon French soil, navigated the great Franco-German river, traveled through a corner of Germany and seen the first portions of the Swiss countryside.⁵²⁶

Barrière enjoyed the advantages of his frontier location, as technology provided increased travel opportunities. According to his descriptions, French borderland dwellers crossed easily between countries and cultures in the nineteenth century.

The linguistic identity of Alsace-Lorraine facilitated travel for people like Barrière, since most residents of Alsace-Lorraine spoke a language common to (or at least intelligible throughout) frontier regions.⁵²⁷ Germanic dialects, these idioms bore no resemblance to standard French; nor, however, did they represent *Hochdeutsch* (High German), the standard, written German. The group of dialects loosely fit into two categories, *alsacien* for idioms spoken in Alsace and *lorrain* for those of Lorraine. Paul Appell, an Alsatian mathematician, wrote of his

⁵²⁵ Quoted in Wahl and Richez, 224.

⁵²⁶ Ibid, 215.

⁵²⁷ Harp, 15.

first language in his memoirs, *Souvenirs d'un Alsacien*:

Mes premiers mots avec [ma mere] furent dits dans le doux parler de Strasbourg, dans ce *bas-allemand* qui est la langue courante de l'Alsace et que parlaient même nos voisins d'outre-Rhin. Plus tard, seulement, j'appris qu'il existait un autre allemand, le *haut-allemand*, orgueilleux et dur, que nous détestions de tout cœur...

My first words with [my mother] were said in the soft speech of Strasbourg, in the *Low German* which is the common language of Alsace and which our neighbors across the Rhine also spoke. Only later did I learn that there existed another German, *High German*, proud and hard, which we detested with our entire hearts.⁵²⁸

Proud of his Germanic dialect, but careful to separate it from *Hochdeutsch* and its speakers, Appell characterized the first language experience of most Alsace-Lorraine residents. After acquiring the regional dialect, some borderland residents also learned French. Appell included himself among their number:

Avec [ma tante], je parlais surtout alsacien, mais avec mes deux frères et ma soeur, je parlais un français qui se mélangeait de mots alsaciens quand ceux-ci rendaient mieux notre idée.

With [my aunt], I spoke mostly Alsatian, but with my two brothers and my sister, I spoke a French, mixed with some Alsatian words when they better represented our meaning.⁵²⁹

Knowledge of French in nineteenth-century Alsace-Lorraine remained primarily among the upper-class, government officials, and bourgeoisie.⁵³⁰ As Appell demonstrates, bilingual frontier inhabitants lived easily in their linguistic environment. They acquired the dialect, used standard French if necessary, engaged comfortably in code-switching. Dual linguistic influences defined the nineteenth-century Alsace and Lorraine.

Most borderland citizens obtained scholastic knowledge of language during the 1800s.

⁵²⁸ Paul Appell, *Souvenirs d'un Alsacien, 1858-1922* (Paris: Payot, 1923), in *Gallica: la bibliothèque numérique* [<http://gallica.bnf.fr>], notice number FRBNF34146856, 12-13, emphasis his.

⁵²⁹ Appell, 14.

⁵³⁰ Harp, 50; Byrnes, 605.

Prior to the annexation, Alsace and Lorraine led France in terms of literacy. The regions, situated well above *la ligne Maggiolo*, contained the highest literacy numbers during the *enquête*.⁵³¹ However, as Migneret, prefect of the Bas-Rhin during the 1860s, articulated, the frontier represented “un pays où tout le monde sait lire, mais dans une langue étrangère (a land where everyone can read, but in a foreign language).”⁵³² Schools of Alsace and Lorraine taught students to read German or Germanic dialects, not standard French.⁵³³ Maggiolo’s reasons for including German literacy in his results (while excluding *breton*, *oc*, and *basque* from recognition) remain unknown, but he recognized the borderlands as exceptions.⁵³⁴ Perhaps regional sympathies influenced the Lorraine native. In any case, his *enquête* recognized the advanced level of schooling, particularly language schooling, in the borderlands. The borderlands served as forerunners in nineteenth-century education, though they did not use the national language of France.

Part of France for the better half of the 1800s, Alsace and Lorraine came under linguistic criticism during the efforts of *francisation*. Laurent Delcasso, named to the Strasbourg school inspection office in 1854, expressed his doubt as to the extent of French identity possible without linguistic assimilation:

I know that our Alsatians, all the while speaking German, have often given magnificent evidence of their patriotism... They are in all likelihood French, but I would like them to be French more completely. But that will not be the case until the day when they language of Bossuet and Racine will have become for them the language of favor, the language of intimate thoughts, of inspections, and of prayer.⁵³⁵

The Guizot and Falloux Laws thus impacted the Alsace-Lorraine school systems, influencing the

⁵³¹ Harp, 21.

⁵³² Quoted in Wahl and Richez, 296.

⁵³³ Byrnes, 605.

⁵³⁴ Harp, 23.

⁵³⁵ Quoted in Harp, 38.

creation of French-language curriculum. By the end of the Second Empire, evidence from both regions showed a significant increase in French speakers, although Germanic dialects still dominated.⁵³⁶

French views toward borderland dialects, prior to the annexation, became somewhat contemptuous and intolerant. Officials regarded the Germanic influence as particularly detrimental to French, especially when teachers exhibited as much ignorance as students to the national tongue. M. Welter, the inspector of Sarreguemines, wrote,

In my rounds I have seen [a young teacher] have [the students] say “le table” for “la table,” and “le pomme” for “la pom’me.” It is not rare to find teachers who in reading confuse [the sounds] “ou” and “u,” and who ask pupils to say “tou” for “tu,” etc.⁵³⁷

In the same vein, I. Dhauteville published a treatise in 1852 entitled, *Le français alsacien: fautes de prononciation et germanismes (Alsatian French: Faults of Pronunciation and Germanisms)*, highlighting the counterproductive effect of German dialects on *francisation*. Dhauteville believed that French and German, “deux anges qui devraient voler ensemble (two angels that should have flown together),” became tangled together to the point that “ils tombent à terre et sont obligés de marcher tant bien que mal en boitant (they fall to earth, obliged to walk as best as they can while limping).”⁵³⁸ Dhauteville continued to ridicule the Alsatian French speakers in a poem:

Eh bien, voyons comment vous parler [français]?
Vous disez *su*, *deux sus*, au lieu de *sous*;
Ponchour, Monsieur, comment fous portez-fous?

⁵³⁶ Harp, 46; Wahl and Richez, 11.

⁵³⁷ Quoted in Harp, 43. Welter is highlighting not only grammar mistakes, but also pronunciation errors among the new French speakers. He criticizes the teachers’ inability to correct syllable distinctions, as well as to separate the vowel sounds [u] and [y]. The latter distinction is particularly difficult for German speakers trying to say *tu* (pronounced [ty] in French), since the German equivalent *du* is pronounced [du]. The hybrid word “tou” emerges from confusing the two words and their vowel sounds.

⁵³⁸ I. Dhauteville, *Le français alsacien: fautes de prononciation et germanismes* (Strasbourg: Derivaux, 1852), in *Gallica: la bibliothèque numérique* [<http://gallica.bnf.fr>], notice number FRBNF37250656, 2.

Well, let us see how you speak [French]?
You say *su*, *deux sus*, instead of *sous*,
Hallo, goot sir, how are you?⁵³⁹

Alsations and Lorrainers who exhibited these faults of pronunciation would certainly have made themselves understood to French speakers. *Francisation* linguistic views merely demonstrate a certain animosity toward borderland languages prior to 1871.

The annexation proved ironically beneficial for the French relationship to its lost borderlands; patriotic connections replaced linguistic tensions and reinforced the regions' French identities. Alsations and Lorrainers expressed immediate aversion to the annexation, highlighted by a mass emigration that took place from 1871 to 1872. The Treaty of Frankfurt allowed residents to depart Alsace and Lorraine, after making an appropriate declaration, until October of 1872.⁵⁴⁰ Over 50,000 Alsations alone took advantage of the treaty's provision. About 100,000 followed suit during the ensuing decades of the *Reichsland*.⁵⁴¹ Teachers composed a particularly large part of this contingent; six hundred of Alsace-Lorraine's 4,000 teachers emigrated starting in 1871.⁵⁴² One teacher from Mulhouse claimed that he refused to "contribute to the Prussification of the French youth of Alsace."⁵⁴³

By leaving, residents essentially renounced their right to citizenship in Alsace and Lorraine—they would need visas to return after 1888.⁵⁴⁴ For the *émigrés*, sacrificing a home in the borderlands meant retaining a claim to French citizenship. A popular 1800s scholastic manual, *Le Tour de la France par deux enfants*, depicted one Lorraine family's decision. The

⁵³⁹ Dhauteville, 10. Here Dhauteville presents a caricature of pronunciation faults, citing the failure to distinguish between [u] and [y], as well as the confusion of consonants [b] with [p], and [v] with [f]. I have tried to reflect a similar caricature in my English translation, although the French contains the best rendition of German-influenced pronunciation faults

⁵⁴⁰ Harp, 50, 56.

⁵⁴¹ Vlossak, 13-14.

⁵⁴² Harp, 56.

⁵⁴³ Ibid, 55.

⁵⁴⁴ Wahl and Richez, 216.

two protagonists, brothers whose father dies while saving the money for emigration, vow to carry out his wishes.

Oh! s'écria le fils aîné avec élan, soyez tranquille, cher père, je vous promets que nous demeurons les enfants de la France; nous quitterons Phalsbourg pour aller là-bas; nous resterons Français, quelque peine qu'il faille pour cela.

“Oh!” cried the older son with spirit, “Do not worry, dear father, I promise you that we will remain children of France, we will leave Phalsbourg to go there; we will remain French, whatever pains we must take to do it.”⁵⁴⁵

Many *émigrés* departed Alsace-Lorraine after the annexation, striving to remain French by living within French borders. Those who stayed in the borderlands would find other means to express their loyalty to France. The dual linguistic influences in Alsace-Lorraine would become, in this new context of the *Reichsland*, particularly relevant.

Reichsland institutions

Following the annexation of Alsace-Lorraine, German authorities began an effort to infuse the new borderland territories with German culture, beginning with linguistic standardization. Similar to *francisation*, this effort made use of public institutions to impose language, attempting to make the public school and religious institutions propagators of German language and, with it, national loyalties. Standard German spread through parts of Alsace-Lorraine with some success, but ultimately failed to unseat regional or French identities in the borderlands.

Intervention in Alsace-Lorraine schools consisted primarily of taking control of the existing educational system, reshaping its linguistic and cultural curriculum to include German elements. As demonstrated by the high rate of literacy in the borderlands, the public school system in existence at the time of the annexation represented one of the most advanced in

⁵⁴⁵ G. Bruno, *Le tour de la France par deux enfants: devoir et patrie, livre de lecture courante* (Paris: Veuve E. Belin fils, 1884), in *Gallica: la bibliothèque numérique* [<http://gallica.bnf.fr>], notice number FRBNF34012973, 10.

France. Many landmark events for French education occurred, in fact, in Alsace. In the late eighteenth century, Louise Scheppler founded *salles d'asile* (early forms of kindergarten) in Alsace.⁵⁴⁶ The Bas-Rhin prefect Adrien de Lezay-Marnesia also founded France's first *école normale* in Strasbourg in 1810, which he called "indispensable pour faciliter la diffusion de la langue française, peu pratiquée et mal enseignée (indispensable for facilitating the spread of the French language, little-practiced and poorly-taught)."⁵⁴⁷ After Lezay-Marnesia's success, *écoles normales* appeared in Moselle (1821), Meuse (1823), and the Haut-Rhin (1832) as well.⁵⁴⁸ By the eve of the annexation, Alsace-Lorraine's school system reflected the advances of the nineteenth century.⁵⁴⁹ Six-hundred and fourteen primary schools operated in Alsace. Five hundred and thirteen of them used Alsatian as a language of instruction (forty-five of them used it exclusively).⁵⁵⁰ The extensive system of primary schools (using German dialects) in Alsace-Lorraine should have prepared the borderland for the *Reichsland* mission of linguistic assimilation.

During the nineteenth century, "primary schools were central in nation-building."⁵⁵¹ Prussian authorities in Alsace-Lorraine planned their educational program accordingly, attempting to spread German language and culture to borderland youth. The process began even before the annexation became official, since the summer invasion of 1870 gave Prussia control of much of the frontier territory. In December of 1870, Civil Commissar Friedrich von Kühlwetter assumed control of the education inspection system. He appointed new inspectors,

⁵⁴⁶ Harp, 29.

⁵⁴⁷ Paul Leuilliot, *L'Alsace au début du XIX^e siècle: Essais d'histoire politique, économique et religieuse, 1815-1830*. v. III (Paris: S.E.V.P.E.N., 1960), 298. See also: Harp, 28.

⁵⁴⁸ Harp, 29.

⁵⁴⁹ *Ibid*, 46.

⁵⁵⁰ Byrnes, 605.

⁵⁵¹ Harp, 4.

primarily Prussians, and doubled the number of inspectorial positions in Alsace-Lorraine.⁵⁵² By January of 1871, inspectors began circulating in the region and evaluating teachers who had not left during the emigration. If they wished to keep their positions, these teachers enrolled in special courses to learn “German pedagogical methods” and the language.⁵⁵³ In April, with the annexation official, Kühlwetter decreed that *Hochdeutsch* would serve as the instructional idiom throughout the *Reichsland*. He allowed only towns located on the border with France to retain some French-language classes.⁵⁵⁴

The new German-language measures, once decreed, proved difficult to institute. Particular challenges arose in certain areas of Lorraine where French had entered usage as a first language. Eduard von Möller, who became the *Oberpräsident* of the *Reichsland* in September of 1871, displayed a certain ambiguity in dealing with these Francophone towns. In November of 1871, Möller created a list of target communities where only younger generations spoke French. He declared German the new language of instruction in these school districts.⁵⁵⁵ The following year, he listed four hundred and twenty-eight Francophone communities in Lorraine, where he would allow French as the instructional language.⁵⁵⁶ Möller wrote, “Two languages do not belong in the elementary schools...French does not belong in German schools and German does not belong in French schools.”⁵⁵⁷ Möller’s approach toward Francophone towns in Lorraine, as demonstrated by the disparity between his remarks and his policies, remained inconsistent.

Möller’s successors followed similarly ambiguous approaches toward French in the Alsace-Lorraine schools. Bilingualism became an encouraged element of schooling in the

⁵⁵² Harp, 53.

⁵⁵³ Ibid, 54.

⁵⁵⁴ Ibid, 61.

⁵⁵⁵ Ibid, 62.

⁵⁵⁶ Ibid, 63.

⁵⁵⁷ Quoted in Harp, 62.

border towns during the 1880s, to the point where Alsace-Lorraine proposed a bilingual curriculum for the entire *Reichsland*. Edwin von Manteuffel, governor of the region since the late 1870s, denied the request but continued to tolerate French in certain schools.⁵⁵⁸ The *Reichsland* government only managed to completely replace French instructors and curriculum with their German counterparts in the late 1880s.⁵⁵⁹ Even then, not all authorities viewed French as a hindrance to the German curriculum.⁵⁶⁰ Max von Puttkamer, state secretary, recorded his ideas in 1889: “With regard to language instruction in the [lower grades], it is advisable to begin with French reading.”⁵⁶¹ Primary schools continued to reflect the unstable linguistic policies, with French curriculum returning to many Lorraine schools in 1892.⁵⁶² French even remained in use at the heavily-German University of Strasbourg until 1881.⁵⁶³ Without a single, consistent language policy for the *Reichsland*, authorities failed to institute German-language curriculum in all public schools.

Educational methods for teaching *Hochdeutsch* to French speakers lacked definition as well. Francophone area schools employing a German curriculum usually based it on translation, rarely an efficient method. Students learning through translation received exercises similar to this one:

Ich bin je suis,	[I am]
du bist tu es,	[you are]
er ist il est, sie ist elle est,	[he is, she is, it is]
wir sind nous sommes,	[we are]
ihr seid vous êtes,	[you are (plural)]
sie sind ils sont, elles sont	[they are] ⁵⁶⁴

⁵⁵⁸ Harp, 92.

⁵⁵⁹ Ibid, 91-93.

⁵⁶⁰ Ibid, 90

⁵⁶¹ Quoted in Harp, 95.

⁵⁶² Harp, 97.

⁵⁶³ Wahl and Richez., 297.

⁵⁶⁴ Quoted in Harp, 91. Interestingly, the exercise does not illustrate a translation of “you are” in formal address, which would be “vous êtes” in French but “Sie sind” in German (with the “S” capitalized).

The “German-language curriculum” reflected, more often than not, a process of switching between languages while learning. In fact, German textbooks used in the *Reichsland* often contained French words to aid Francophone children.⁵⁶⁵ The system hardly made swift, unconditional acquisition of *Hochdeutsch* a necessity for Alsace-Lorraine students.

Though the ambiguity of education law and curriculum impeded *Hochdeutsch* from becoming the universal language of instruction, the *Reichsland* government experienced a certain level of success with diffusing German culture in Alsace-Lorraine. Schools which used a German-language curriculum, as of 1872, spent more time teaching *Hochdeutsch* than most Prussian primary schools.⁵⁶⁶ Course content included a heavy focus on German historical and cultural traditions, such as learning music in *Hochdeutsch*.⁵⁶⁷ A curriculum statement released in 1881 read,

Religious and folk songs are the focus of music instruction in the one-room school. [They] give direct expression to the emotions, natural senses, and love of the fatherland. Spiritual music and folk songs...must be employed with all earnestness for...national education.⁵⁶⁸

Diffusion of German culture also occurred outside of the school. Compulsory military service, established in 1872, produced linguistic results similar to those of French conscription, forcing draftees to acquire the standard German idiom. German names (for streets, towns, etc.) replaced their French counterparts on signs. The Université de Strasbourg became, for example, Kaiser Wilhelm Universität. German holidays, such as the birthday celebration of the Kaiser, also appeared on the calendar.⁵⁶⁹ Whether from scholastic influence, administrative necessity, or practicality of daily life, most borderland residents became multilingual. They spoke their

⁵⁶⁵ Harp, 91.

⁵⁶⁶ Ibid, 89-90.

⁵⁶⁷ Ibid, 62.

⁵⁶⁸ Quoted in Harp, 113.

⁵⁶⁹ Vlossak, 13.

maternal Germanic dialect (*alsacien* or *lorrain*), French (if they had learned it before the annexation or lived in a Francophone community), and *Hochdeutsch* (the official language of the *Reichsland*).⁵⁷⁰

With the educational and administrative efforts to diffuse the German language, the daily life of Alsace-Lorraine's inhabitants gradually incorporated elements of the Germanic culture. Resistance to Germanization surfaced, particularly in schools. The cities of Mulhouse and Strasbourg both housed private schools, for the upper bourgeois classes, with exclusively French-language curricula.⁵⁷¹ Some parents refused to send children to the public schools, preferring to answer truancy charges rather than allow the youngsters to learn German.⁵⁷² When other options failed, parents led subversive efforts at home to counteract what children acquired in school. Robert Redslob, a turn of the century social scientist, remarked,

The mantle that the teacher wove at school, the mother undid in the evening by... courageous and patient work... The teacher taught the Germanic idiom to the child, the mother taught the gentle language of France. The teacher glorified Prussia, the mother recited the gospel of the Rights of Man. The teacher droned on about the Fredericks and the Wilhelms, the mother told the beautiful stories of Henri IV and Napoléon. At school, one roared *Deutschland über alles*; at home, in the room with closed blinds, one sang the *Marseillaise*.⁵⁷³

For these students and their families, learning German represented a truth of post-annexation life, but not an identity-changing factor. Regardless of the extent to which education spread the German language through Alsace-Lorraine, it still failed to produce loyal citizens of the German Empire.

Alongside education, religious institutions contributed to the linguistic tensions in Alsace-Lorraine. "Arguably the most important form of identification," religion remained

⁵⁷⁰ For an example of multilingualism, see the story of Suzanne Herrenschmidt in Vlossak, 58.

⁵⁷¹ Harp, 60.

⁵⁷² Ibid, 68-69.

⁵⁷³ Quoted in Vlossak, 36.

somewhat varied in the region.⁵⁷⁴ Prior to the annexation, the overwhelming majority of borderland residents (about 90% of Alsace and 75% of Lorraine) practiced Catholicism.⁵⁷⁵ However, the remainder of the regions' inhabitants also represented Protestant and Jewish *confessions*.⁵⁷⁶ In fact, a survey from 1866 showed more than 50% of France's Jewish population living in Alsace.⁵⁷⁷ Alsace-Lorraine residents also held stronger connections to their faiths relative to most of France, a disparity which increased with time. In 1905, when France separated Church and State; the annexed borderlands remained exempt from the measure. To this day, clergy members of Alsace receive a state salary, another exceptional aspect of the borderlands.⁵⁷⁸

Confession and religious allegiances, as historically central issues in Alsace-Lorraine, affected linguistic tensions in the region. In fact, historians have claimed that religion and language serve as the exemplary elements of Alsace-Lorraine, distinguishing it from the rest of France.⁵⁷⁹ Before the regions became part of the German Empire, authorities of *francisation* recognized the linguistic powers of borderland religious institutions. In 1863, a school inspector from Alsace wrote,

So that French may pass completely into popular usage, it is above all necessary that the language of prayer be in French. None of it is now, neither in Catholic nor Protestant worship.⁵⁸⁰

Clergy members held a somewhat different historical opinion, supporting the first language, or Germanic dialect, of parishioners as the ideal language of preaching and religious

⁵⁷⁴ Wahl and Richez, 11.

⁵⁷⁵ Harp, 12.

⁵⁷⁶ I have chosen to use the French *confession* (creed), as is common practice among Alsace-Lorraine historians, interchangeably with "religion" and "faith" as a descriptive term for religious belief and practice in the borderlands.

⁵⁷⁷ Wahl and Richez, 123, 126; Harp, 12.

⁵⁷⁸ Epp, 473.

⁵⁷⁹ Certeau, Julia, and Revel, 11; Wahl and Richez, 10.

⁵⁸⁰ Quoted in Byrnes, 609-610. "Language of prayer" most likely refers to informal prayer, instruction, or catechism here, since formal worship situations in the Catholic Church took place in Latin.

instruction.⁵⁸¹ Louis Cazeaux, the *curé* at Saint-Jean-de-Strasbourg, articulated this notion in his 1867 treatise, *Essai sur la conservation de la langue allemande en Alsace (Essay on the Conservation of the German Language in Alsace)*.⁵⁸² He claimed, “The religious education of Alsatian youth seems to require that, in our schools, a larger place be given to the study of the German language.”⁵⁸³ With the clergy so strongly in favor of preserving Germanic dialects for religious purposes, Alsace-Lorraine seemed prepared for the spread of *Hochdeutsch* under the *Reichsland*.

After annexation, however, the linguistic outlook of many religious authorities changed; their loyalties split among French, German, and regional dialects.⁵⁸⁴ This “preoccupation of the church with language culture was most visible in the schools.”⁵⁸⁵ Religious schools, for example, earned a reputation for fierce loyalty to French under the *Reichsland*. At Saint-Jean-de-Bassel, in the Alsatian town of Ribeauvillé, the sisters charged with instruction systematically refused to implement the German curriculum.⁵⁸⁶ The same held true for religious schools in larger cities, such as Strasbourg and Mulhouse.⁵⁸⁷ Alsace-Lorraine’s religious educators created a haven for French during the annexation.

On the other hand, some religious authorities supported German and Germanic dialects under the *Reichsland*. André Raess, bishop of Strasbourg from 1842 until 1889, earned a particular reputation for enforcing German as the language of the Church.⁵⁸⁸ He “worked to conciliate his diocese to German rule and to its language policy.”⁵⁸⁹ Alsatians resisted Raess’s

⁵⁸¹ Byrnes, 606.

⁵⁸² Ibid, 612 n. 42.

⁵⁸³ Quoted in Byrnes, 612.

⁵⁸⁴ Byrnes, 606.

⁵⁸⁵ Ibid, 603.

⁵⁸⁶ Vlossak, 64.

⁵⁸⁷ Ibid, 58.

⁵⁸⁸ Byrnes, 608-609.

⁵⁸⁹ Ibid, 609.

efforts. A posthumous biographical work, by Ernest Hauviller, reveals the region's animosity toward the late bishop. Hauviller entitled his 1937 publication, *Mgr. Raess, Evêque de Strasbourg: Un prélat germanisateur dans l'Alsace française (Msgr. Raess, Bishop of Strasbourg: A Germanizing Prelate in French Alsace)*.⁵⁹⁰

The anti-religious measures of the *Reichsland* government, often geared toward language imposition, compounded linguistic tensions in post-annexation Alsace-Lorraine. The German Empire, under Otto von Bismarck's urging, began a series of legislations known as *Kulturkampf* and directed against the Catholic Church. Efforts commenced in 1871, with the passage of the *Kanzelparagraph* (pulpit paragraph) by the *Reichstag*, which disbanded Prussia's Catholic Department of the Ministry of Culture.⁵⁹¹ In Alsace-Lorraine, *Kulturkampf* aimed to remove religious and French influence from the annexed territories, particularly use of the French language in clerical schools.⁵⁹² Bismarck expelled the Jesuits from Alsace-Lorraine in 1872; he banished all teaching orders (if they maintained headquarters in France) in 1873. The measure ended the careers of more than four hundred clerical educators. Pressured by the mass dismissal, the Bas-Rhin appealed to *Oberpräsident* Möller for more time; he refused, forcing some districts to use only one teacher for more than eighty students. The expulsion of religious educators not only created animosity between Alsace-Lorraine and *Reichsland* authorities, but also made the German-language educational efforts much less efficient.⁵⁹³ The *Kulturkampf*, while directed at spreading *Hochdeutsch* and limiting religious power, actually impeded both efforts. Religious institutions, though they contributed to heightening linguistic tensions, failed to impose German (or allow its imposition) in Alsace-Lorraine.

⁵⁹⁰ Byrnes, 609.

⁵⁹¹ Harp, 67-68.

⁵⁹² Ibid.

⁵⁹³ Vlossak, 49; Harp, 70.

Redefining national and regional identity

Though linguistic tensions dominated institutions in Alsace-Lorraine after the annexation, the borderlands relied on more than language to determine their nationality and identity. Under the *Reichsland* and despite its assimilation efforts, the regions demonstrated increasing loyalty to France. A local *patrimoine* (heritage) developed, relying heavily on Alsace-Lorraine's ties to France. Borderland residents found that, even if they spoke a German dialect as their first language, French could serve as a tie to France and a weapon against post-annexation political authorities. The *provinces exceptionnelles* maintained a relationship with France that transcended borders and language. At the same time, they developed an individualized identity, neither French nor German, based on the local language and history. Alsace-Lorraine relied on linguistic and cultural individualism, their own call to unity.

The annexation and its aftermath engendered a prolific tradition of Alsace-Lorraine *patrimoine*. Publications celebrating the regions' heritage emerged. Written in both French and German, these remained characteristically loyal to France in content. In 1877, G. Bruno released his *Le Tour de la France par deux enfants: devoir et patrie*. The *emigration* tale of two Lorraine youngsters, written in French, glorified nineteenth century French culture as well as the loyalty of Alsace-Lorraine's residents to France.⁵⁹⁴ The pair of Emile Erckmann and Alexandre Chatrian combined forces to publish a series of novels, plays, and poetic works aimed at inspiring Alsatian unity. These included *L'Ami Fritz (The Friend Fritz)*, *Le banni (The Banished One)*, and *Dis-moi! quel est ton pays? (Tell me! What is your country?)*.⁵⁹⁵ A number of French-language periodicals enjoyed success in Alsace-Lorraine after the annexation, particularly literary and cultural journals like the *Journal d'Alsace-Lorraine* and the *Revue alsacienne*

⁵⁹⁴ Eugen Weber, *Peasants into Frenchmen: The Modernization of Rural France, 1870-1914* (Stanford, CA: Stanford University Press, 1976), 335.

⁵⁹⁵ Vogler, 14; See also the quote from *Le banni; Dis-moi! quel est ton pays?* at the beginning of this chapter.

illustrée.⁵⁹⁶ Jean-Jacques Waltz, the artist known familiarly as Hansi (or “Uncle Hansi”) filled his famous illustrations with anti-annexation content (see figure eleven). He also published a book in 1913, entitled *Mon village, ceux qui n’oublent pas* (*My Village, Those Who Do Not Forget*).⁵⁹⁷ *Patrimoine* publications eventually led to entire institutions dedicated to preserving Alsace-Lorraine’s culture. Pierre Bucher, the doctor who created the *Revue alsacienne illustrée*, became the co-founder of the Musée alsacien (Alsatian Museum) in 1902.⁵⁹⁸ The establishment still operates in Strasbourg today (with its French title), famous for its authentic display of regional art, architecture, and cultural artifacts. Cultural institutions predating the annexation also reinforced their *Francophonie* under the *Reichsland*. The Société pour la Conservation des Monuments Historiques d’Alsace (SCMHA), in existence since 1855, defended the French part of its identity by refusing to publish its communications in German until 1885.⁵⁹⁹



Fig. 11. This illustration, from Hansi’s *Mon village*, depicts *The Germans in Alsace*. Alsatians (standing in the illustration) are separated clearly, in their dress, mannerisms, and apparent social position, from the German emigrants (seated). Reproduced from Elizabeth Ann Louise Vlossak, “The Nationalism of Women in Alsace, 1871-1940,” PhD dissertation (Peterhouse, University of Cambridge, 2003), 43.

⁵⁹⁶ Vogler, 209.

⁵⁹⁷ Ibid.

⁵⁹⁸ Vlossak., 15.

⁵⁹⁹ “Conservation des Monuments Historiques d’Alsace (Société pour la),” *Encyclopédie de l’Alsace*, volume 4 (Strasbourg: Editions Publitotal Strasbourg, 1983), 2046.

Alongside the French-language tradition of Alsace-Lorraine *patrimoine*, a second movement emerged. Called the *Jüngtes Elsass* (Alsatian Awakening), the movement produced publications written in the Germanic dialect or *Hochdeutsch*, whose content nevertheless pledged loyalty to France.⁶⁰⁰ Gustave Stoskopf, author of the influential play *D'r Herr Maire* (*The Gentleman Mayor*), figured prominently in this movement.⁶⁰¹ Ehrenfried Ströber, another contributor, penned the following poem:

Meine Leier ist deutsch, sie kingt von deutschen Gesängen;
Liebend den gallischen Hahn, treu ist französisch mein Schwert.

My lyre is German, it resonates with German songs;
As for my sword, it loves the French rooster, and is loyal to
France.⁶⁰²

As Ströber articulates, Alsace-Lorraine maintained a complex notion of national loyalties, which depended neither upon language nor cultural tendencies. Borderland residents chose to be French but kept the Germanic elements of their identities.

Though Alsace-Lorraine maintained a German cultural and linguistic identity, inhabitants turned to French under the *Reichsland*, as a form of resistance against Prussian authorities and a way of maintaining the connection to France. The *maire* of Strasbourg, Edouard Kratz, wrote the following claim on the occasion of Alsace's French bicentennial in 1848: "L'Alsace est aussi française que la Bretagne, la Flandre et le pays des Basques et elle veut la rester (Alsace is as French as Bretagne, Flanders, and the land of the Basques and it wants to remain so)."⁶⁰³ Kratz purposely chose French regions with bilingual historical traditions for his comparison. Such

⁶⁰⁰ Vlossak, 14.

⁶⁰¹ Ibid.

⁶⁰² Vogler, 95. Vogler provides a French translation alongside the German. My translation refers to this version, but I have conferred with German speakers to verify that this is an accurate rendition of the German.

⁶⁰³ Quoted in Vogler, 143.

sentiments increased in Alsace-Lorraine after the annexation, when a “significant minority” of Francophone people emerged in resistance to the German-speaking authorities.⁶⁰⁴ These people, who represented the upper-class, industry, the French army, the clergy, and *fonctionnaires*, isolated themselves from their Prussian counterparts. They often sent their children to French-speaking schools in Nancy, Mulhouse, Belfort, or even as far as Paris.⁶⁰⁵ They prolonged the tradition of French-speaking dissenters in Alsace-Lorraine. Their motto became, “Nous maintiendrons (We shall endure).”⁶⁰⁶

Animosity developed between the new German-speaking authorities and the Francophone resistance. Hermann Praß, a post-annexation school inspector, encountered students jeering, “Vive la France (Long-live France),” and “A bas la Prusse (Down with Prussia),” when he made his rounds.⁶⁰⁷ In his memoirs, Paul Appell recalled the arrest of his brother after the latter became implicated in an anti-Prussian resistance plot. Appell went to visit Charles at a prison in Leipzig. He wrote,

Je ne pourrai voir mon frère qu’en sa presence [celle du directeur], sous la condition de parler allemande.

I will not be able to see my brother except in the presence of the prison director, and under the condition that I speak German.⁶⁰⁸

Appell and Praß both bore witness to the linguistic animosity that developed after the annexation. Borderland residents used French as a weapon and *Reichsland* authorities treated the language with wary suspicion.

On the other side of Alsace-Lorraine’s western border, French sentiments grew in support of the loyal *provinces exceptionnelles*. “France went into mourning,” notes Elizabeth Vlossak,

⁶⁰⁴ Harp, 15.

⁶⁰⁵ Ibid; Wahl and Richez, 218; Vogler, 209; Vlossak, 14.

⁶⁰⁶ Quoted in Vogler, 209.

⁶⁰⁷ Quoted in Harp, 50.

⁶⁰⁸ Appell, 191.

placing a black veil on the Parisian monument to Strasbourg.⁶⁰⁹ Tourism publications, popular as a result of the new mobility nineteenth-century roads and railroads provided, treated the borderlands with regret and nostalgia. Paul Joanne wrote, in 1898,

Beaucoup de touristes ne veulent pas franchir la frontière d'Alsace-Lorraine, ni voyager dans les provinces annexées qui évoquent en eux des souvenirs trop pénibles... Il serait consolant, de voir que les Français ne se désintéressent pas de leur beau pays [Alsace-Lorraine].

Many tourists do not want to cross the border of Alsace-Lorraine, nor travel in the annexed provinces, for it evokes in them memories that are too painful. It would be consoling to see that the French do not forget about in this beautiful land [Alsace-Lorraine].⁶¹⁰

As France reminisced and mourned the loss of Alsace-Lorraine, the borderland's inhabitants celebrated their French heritage with equal fervor. For traditional French holidays, like Bastille Day (July 14), caravans traveled westward to Nancy or southward to Belfort to celebrate the feast day on French soil.⁶¹¹ Separation strengthened, in many ways, the relationship between Alsace-Lorraine and France. Though borderland residents used language to reinforce their connection to France, they simultaneously demonstrated that their nationality depended on loyal sentiments, rather than linguistic identity.

Alsace-Lorraine took many measures, during the *Reichsland*, to maintain a connection to France and reinforce its French identity. The regions simultaneously developed a local, individualized identity separate from both France and the German Empire.⁶¹² The new Alsace-Lorraine character contained influences of both cultures, but ascribed fully to neither. In 1900, "86.8 % of Alsace-Lorrainers considered some form of German to be their native language."⁶¹³ Food and costume of the region also reflected those of Alsace-Lorraine's eastern neighbors,

⁶⁰⁹ Vlossak, 15.

⁶¹⁰ Quoted in Wahl and Richez, 218.

⁶¹¹ Ibid, 217-218.

⁶¹² Vlossak, 21.

⁶¹³ Harp, 14.

rather than France. The borderlands nevertheless felt strong political ties to France, ties which the annexation prevented them from fulfilling.⁶¹⁴ Unable to keep their French citizenship, and unwilling to acquiesce to Prussian rule, Alsatians and Lorrainers crafted their local heritage. Alongside the loyal French motto of “Nous maintiendrons,” Appell recalled the proud, local maxim: “Français ne puis, Allemand ne daigne, Alsacien suis (French I cannot be, German I choose not to be, Alsatian I am).”⁶¹⁵ Alsatians made this iconic claim in French rather than the local dialect, completing the paradox of their linguistic identity. Even as Alsace-Lorraine redefined the concept of local pride and *patrimoine*, it represented a complex linguistic anomaly.

As the *Reichsland* period progressed, Alsace-Lorraine’s new, individualized identity evolved and gained strength. In 1911, the region gained a “quasi-home rule,” when Prussia allowed more legislative powers to the local governing body, the *Landesausschuss*, and approved the group’s new constitutional charter.⁶¹⁶ World War I represented “une épreuve plus douloureuse (a more painful trial)” for Alsace-Lorraine.⁶¹⁷ The 250,000 Alsatians serving in the German army fought dutifully, though without a “violent hostility,” against France.⁶¹⁸ Close to 20,000 Alsatian soldiers emigrated, in contrast, to join French forces.⁶¹⁹ After the 1918 liberation and repatriation of Alsace-Lorraine, the individualist sentiment increased. The immediate reinstatement of French—in public schools, administrative venues, courts, etc.—caused “malaise (unease)” for Germanic-dialect speakers in the borderlands.⁶²⁰ Indeed, Alsace-Lorraine turned weary of the question of nationhood. Certain residents, such as Phillippe Husser, the author of *Un instituteur Alsacien: Entre France et Allemagne (An Alsatian Teacher: Between*

⁶¹⁴ Ibid, 13.

⁶¹⁵ Appell, 120.

⁶¹⁶ Epp, 473; Vlossak, 12.

⁶¹⁷ Vogler, 211.

⁶¹⁸ Ibid, 212.

⁶¹⁹ Ibid.

⁶²⁰ Vlossak, 16.

France and Germany), changed official nationalities four times (1871, 1918, 1940, 1944).⁶²¹

The systematic transitions forced borderland inhabitants to redefine their criteria of identity, guarding it independent of language, citizenship, and outside influences.

The exceptional linguistic status of Alsace-Lorraine resounds through the history of the borderlands, particularly during the *Reichsland* period (1871-1914). While the Third Republic came to power in France and proceeded to finalize the spread of the national idiom, these once-French regions were isolated as *provinces exceptionnelles*. Their final repatriation into France would take over seventy years, during which the borderlands developed an individual identity separate from their nationality; here, Alsace-Lorraine residents guarded their regional language.

The French language, banished (somewhat effectively) from Alsace-Lorraine schools, yet used selectively by Alsatians and Lorrainers as a form of resistance, never became emblematic of French identity in the borderlands. *Hochdeutsch* similarly failed to overcome local Germanic dialects, despite its use in schools and public institutions under the *Reichsland*. Today, Strasbourg's *Christkindelsmärik* (Christmas Market) attracts visitors from all corners of France and Europe. Local restaurants serve *Flammekueche* (an Alsatian pizza) and *pâtisseries* (bakeries) specialize in *bredele* (gingerbread). Speakers of Alsatian populate these venues, but the region remains unfailingly loyal to France. After Alsace-Lorraine's repatriation, French gradually spread through the region, eclipsing German in the schools, in churches, and in popular usage. Still, historians must acknowledge that this linguistic change neither reinforced the French identity of the borderlands, nor erased local character. Perhaps the words of Erckmann-Chatrian's poem best expresses the unfailing individuality of the "lost and regained provinces:"

On changera plutôt le cœur de place,
Que de changer la vieille Alsace !

⁶²¹ Harp, 3.

You will sooner move the heart from its place,
Than change old Alsace!⁶²²

Maggiolo held Alsace-Lorraine as an exception when he published the results of his investigation, weighting literacy in German or Germanic dialects even though he disregarded similar abilities in speakers of *breton*, *flamand*, and *basque*. The education laws of the Third Republic effectively ended widespread use of these three dialects, while annexed Alsace remained an exception. Language became a definitive characteristic of nationhood throughout the 1800s, but neither French nor German proved strong enough to undermine the exceptional linguistic identity of Alsace-Lorraine. Today, repatriated Alsace-Lorraine maintains its exceptional character and identity, featuring language; the borderlands remain a case apart. Their local solidarity reflects an exception in France, but proves the overall influence of language on unity in the nineteenth century.

⁶²² Erckmann-Chatrion, 68.

CONCLUSION

La France a depuis longtemps une seule langue officielle, langue littéraire aussi, malgré quelques tentatives locales intéressantes, langue qui représente notre nationalité en face des nationalités étrangères, et qu'on appelle à bon droit "le français." Parlé aujourd'hui à peu près exclusivement par les gens cultivés dans toute l'étendue du territoire, parlé au moins concurremment avec le patois par la plupart des illettrés, le français est essentiellement le dialecte de Paris et d'Ile-de-France, imposé peu à peu à tout le royaume par une propagation lente et une assimilation presque toujours volontaire.⁶²³

Gaston Paris, 1888

Gaston Paris offered this statement in his closing remarks at the *Congrès des Sociétés savantes* (Congress of Learned Societies), which convened in Paris on May 26, 1888 and marked the foundation of the *Société des parlers de France* (Society of Languages of France). The new society concerned itself with studying the many *patois* and sociolects, as they increasingly represented historical artifacts and monuments to polyglot France. Gaston Paris took advantage of the occasion to reflect upon French and its ascent to the status of a national idiom. He characterizes this evolution (or "assimilation") as both "imposed" and "voluntary," an interesting juxtaposition to summarize the developments of three centuries of French linguistic history.

Gaston Paris's comment identifies the major forces at work in shaping France's linguistic identity from above and below. Political authorities embodied the process of imposition, beginning with François I, Cardinal Richelieu and Louis XIV and culminating with legislators

⁶²³ "For a long time, France has had a single official language, also the literary language, despite some interesting local attempts [at literary traditions], the language which represents our nationality in the face of foreign nationalities, and which we call 'French,' with good reason. Spoken nearly exclusively today by cultivated people throughout the territorial expanse [of France], spoken at least conjointly with the *patois* by most illiterate people, French is essentially the dialect of Paris and Ile-de-France, imposed little by little upon the entire kingdom by a slow propagation and an almost always voluntary assimilation." Quote taken from Jacques Philippe Saint-Gérard, "La langue française au XIX^e siècle, Scléroses, altérations, mutations: De l'abbé Grégoire aux tolérances de Georges Leygues (1790-1902)," in Jacques Chaurand, *Nouvelle histoire de la langue française* (Paris: Editions de Seuil, 1999), 478.

like Guizot and Ferry. The mission began as one of control, with the *protecteur* directing, overseeing, and exploiting the linguistic authority of the Académie française. During the French Revolution, control gave way to Grégoire's vision of patriotic standardization of the new Republic. In the 1800s, linguistic unity dominated the government's successful educational mission.

Influence upon language (from above) also originated from literary authorities, who at turns struggled against and collaborated with their political contemporaries. During the seventeenth and eighteenth centuries, these figures contributed to the codification and perfection of French, working primarily through the medium of the Académie française and its *Dictionnaire*. As the motto of the *Pléiade* reads, "Plus nous aurons de mots dans notre langue, plus elle sera parfaite (The more words we have in our language, the more perfect it will be)."⁶²⁴ French certainly achieved lexical growth from 1600 to 1900, acquiring over thirty percent of its current vocabulary during the period.⁶²⁵

But linguistic modernization also engendered contentions, as demonstrated by *La querelle du Cid*, the *ouyste* debate, and *La Bataille d'Hernani*. By the time Hugo presented his controversial play in 1830, a schism had formed between the royalist, traditional *académiciens* and politically progressive authors (Hugo included). Figures like the *poètes-ouvriers* and Agricole Perdiguier gave a linguistic voice to the newly literate lower and working classes. The Académie had lost its monopoly on dictionaries and language manuals, as well as on the literary and linguistic ideologies; it had created the French language from above, but acceptance originated from below.

⁶²⁴ Quoted in R. Anthony Lodge, *French: From Dialect to Standard* (London: Routledge, 1993), 136. The *Pléiade* is the name given to a group of prominent French Renaissance poets of the sixteenth century, which includes Joachim du Bellay and Antoine de Baïf.

⁶²⁵ *Ibid.*, 10.

Adoption of French ultimately succeeded only through the assent and will of the people. As nineteenth-century philosopher Ernest Renan articulated in *Qu'est-ce qu'une nation?* (*What is a Nation?*), “La langue invite à se réunir; elle n’y force pas (Language invites unity; it does not force it).”⁶²⁶ Linguistic standardization, following this theory, must be voluntary. In the seventeenth and eighteenth century, Parisian authorities perfected their French, but the remainder of the kingdom represented the antithesis of standardization. Each region and group spoke its own dialect or sociolect; many people spoke several languages and engaged in code-switching as the situation required. Local schools and churches catered to language differences by preaching and teaching in *patois*; local courts and government authorities employed *truchements* as official translators. French became the language of Paris, but the kingdom maintained a rich polyglot identity.

Political attempts to control France linguistically experienced little success until 1789, when the Revolution upended and reshaped France. With feudal ties to the monarchy abolished, the Abbé Grégoire and Bertrand Barère envisioned a new method of linking the French to their nation: language. These men established an important precedent for standardizing French. Although they failed to implement their plan, it would form the foundation of nineteenth century linguistic policies. More importantly, the records from Grégoire’s *enquête* presented definitive evidence of a perceived link between language and identity. People connected moral, religious, and patriotic beliefs and practices to their spoken idiom. For this reason, *patois* speakers of the Revolution clung to the stability and heritage of their local tongue, rejecting Grégoire’s vision.

The will of the people changed, however, during the 1800s. The century brought rapid, drastic changes to France and, ultimately, to its language. The national tongue offered, among

⁶²⁶ Ernest Renan, “Qu’est-ce qu’une nation?” in *Œuvres complètes de Ernest Renan*, v. I, ed. Henriette Psichari (Paris: Calmann-Lévy, 1947), 899.

other things, increasing social and geographical mobility, an opportunity to form class consciousness, and access to publications; it became a necessity and asset for French citizens. Institutions (schools, the Church, the military) propagated the national idiom until it became the first language taught in homes. The connection between identity and language developed into an unbreakable bond between French citizens and their new *langue maternelle* (mother language): “Du français pour nous, fils de la France (French for us, sons of France).”⁶²⁷ Unification of the French people occurred, in large part, through the linguistic standardization efforts of the nineteenth century; speaking French implied being French.

The critical exception occurred in unfailingly French Alsace-Lorraine, where citizens excluded language from their views of loyalty and nationality. The story of the *provinces exceptionnelles* illustrates a significant anomaly to French national unity and linguistic identity, presenting a people who infused their local heritage and culture with Germanic presence yet considered themselves fully French. Alsace-Lorraine residents refused the advances of both standard French and standard German, clinging instead to their local Germanic dialects. Turbulent and confused history bound Alsatians to each other and to their local language, while the rest of France unified behind French. Alsace-Lorraine thus found new ways to express its nationality and identity, independent of language. The region maintained its distinctive, borderland identity long after the end of the *Reichsland*, proving the importance of popular will in crafting linguistic identity.

The interrelated evolution of language and the French identity, from 1600 to 1900, made linguistic issues an integral part of nearly every political, social, and cultural change affecting the country. In most of France, national identity became inextricably linked to the language. Exceptional Alsace-Lorraine developed a linguistic identity which recalled its borderland

⁶²⁷ Charles Durazzo in Henri-Honoré and Louis-Nicolas Bescherelle, quoted in Saint-Gérard, 398.

heritage, but still recognized a link to France in the national idiom. Both cases recall the notion of Gaston Paris: adopting a language, shaping an identity, and linking these two entities represented a *voluntary* process in France. The government, authors, and nations could create a linguistic framework, but their success depended on popular assent. Between 1600 and 1900, authorities perfected French from above, but the people accepted French from below, shaping the French identity and creating, in effect, modern France.

APPENDIX

Grégoire's Questionnaire

In August, 1790, the Abbé Henri-Baptiste Grégoire began circulating his questionnaire, "une série de questions relatives au patois et aux moeurs des gens de la campagne (a series of questions relative to patois and to the mores of people of the countryside)." The document is reproduced in full below.

1. – L'usage de la langue française est-il universel dans votre contrée? Y parle-t-on un ou plusieurs patois?
2. – Ce patois a-t-il une origine ancienne et connue ?
3. – A-t-il beaucoup de termes radicaux, beaucoup de termes composés ?
4. – Y trouve-t-on des mots dérivés du celtique, du grec, du latin, et en général des langues anciennes et modernes ?
5. – A-t-il une affinité marquée avec le français, avec le dialecte des contrées voisines, avec celui de certains lieux éloignés, où des émigrants, des colons de votre contrée, sont allés anciennement s'établir ?
6. – En quoi s'éloigne-t-il le plus de l'idiome national ? n'est-ce pas spécialement pour les noms des plantes, des maladies, les termes des arts et métiers, des instruments aratoires, des diverses espèces de grains, du commerce et du droit coutumier ? On désirait avoir cette nomenclature.
7. – Y trouve-t-on fréquemment plusieurs mots pour désigner la même chose ?
8. – Pour quels genres de choses, d'occupations, de passions, ce patois est-il plus abondant.
9. – A-t-il beaucoup de mots pour exprimer les nuances des idées et les objets intellectuels?
10. – A-t-il beaucoup de termes contraires à la pudeur? Ce que l'on doit en inférer relativement à la pureté ou à la corruption des mœurs.
11. – A-t-il beaucoup de juréments et d'expressions particulières aux grands mouvements de colère ?
12. – Trouve-t-on dans ce patois des termes, des locutions très énergiques, et même qui manquent à l'idiome français ?
13. – Les finales sont-elles plus communément voyelles que consonnes ?
14. – Quel est le caractère de la prononciation. Est-elle gutturale, sifflante, douce, peu ou fortement accentuée ?
15. – L'écriture de ce patois a-t-elle des traits, des caractères autres que le français ?
16. – Ce patois varie-t-il beaucoup de village à village ?
17. – Le parle-t-on dans les villes ?
18. – Quelle est l'étendue territoriale où il est usité ?
19. – Les campagnards savent-ils également s'énoncer en français ?
20. – Prêche-t-on jadis en patois? Cet usage a-t-il cessé?
21. – A-t-on des grammaires et des dictionnaires de ce dialecte ?
22. – Trouve-t-on des inscriptions patoises dans les églises, les cimetières, les places publiques, etc. ?
23. – Avez-vous des ouvrages en patois, imprimés ou manuscrits, anciens ou modernes, comme droit coutumier, actes publics, chroniques, prières, sermons, livres ascétiques, cantiques, chansons, almanachs, poésie, traductions, etc. ?
24. – Quel est le mérite de ces divers ouvrages ?
25. – Serait-il possible de se les procurer facilement ?
26. – Avez-vous beaucoup de proverbes patois particuliers à votre dialecte et à votre contrée ?

27. – Quelle est l'influence respective du patois sur les mœurs, et de celles-ci sur votre dialecte ?
28. – Remarque-t-on qu'il se rapproche insensiblement de l'idiome français, que certains mots disparaissent, et depuis quand ?
29. – Quelle serait l'importance religieuse et politique de détruire entièrement ce patois?
30. – Quels en seraient les moyens?
31. – Dans les écoles de campagne, l'enseignement se fait-il en français ? les livres sont-ils uniformes ?
32. – Chaque village est-il pourvu de maîtres et de maîtresses d'école ?
33. – Outre l'art de lire, d'écrire, de chiffrer et le catéchisme, enseigne-t-on autre chose dans ces écoles ?
34. – Sont-elles assidûment surveillées par MM. Les Curés et Vicaires ?
35. – Ont-ils un assortiment de livres pour prêter à leurs paroissiens ?
36. – Les gens de la campagne ont-ils le goût de la lecture ?
37. – Quelles espèces de livres trouve-t-on plus communément chez eux ?
38. – Ont-ils beaucoup de préjugés, et dans quel genre ?
39. – Depuis une vingtaine d'années, sont-ils plus éclairés ? leurs mœurs sont-elles plus dépravées ? leurs principes religieux ne sont-ils pas affaiblis ?
40. – Quelles sont les causes et quels seraient les remèdes à ces maux ?
41. – Quels effets moraux produit chez eux la révolution actuelle ?
42. – Trouve-t-on chez eux du patriotisme, ou seulement les affections qu'inspire l'intérêt personnel ?
43. – Les ecclésiastiques et les ci-devant nobles ne sont-ils pas en butte aux injures grossières, aux outrages des paysans et au despotisme des maires et des municipalités ?

As printed in full in

Certeau, Michel de, Dominique Julia, and Jacques Revel. *Une politique de la langue: La Révolution française et les patois: L'enquête de Grégoire*. France: Editions Gallimard, 1975.

I have provided my English translation of the document below.

1. – Is usage of the French language universal in your area? Is one or more *patois* spoken there?
2. – Does this *patois* have a known, ancient origin?
3. – Does it have many radical terms, many compound terms?
4. – Can one find words derived from Celtic, Greek, Latin, and ancient and modern languages in general?
5. – Does it have a marked affinity with French, with the dialect of neighboring countries, with certain remote locations, where emigrants, settlers from your area, had settled in the past?
6. – In what respect does it distinguish itself from the national idiom? is it not especially different in the names of plants, illnesses, terms for arts and professions, plowing instruments, diverse types of grain, commerce, and common law? We would like to have these nomenclatures.
7. – Can one frequently find several words designating the same thing?
8. – For which types of objects, occupations, and passions is this *patois* most abundant?
9. – Does the *patois* have many words to express the nuances of intellectual objects and ideas?
10. – Does it have many terms contrary to modesty? What can be inferred concerning purity or corruption of morals?
11. – Does it have many swear words and particular expressions for extreme displays of anger?
12. – In this *patois*, can one find extremely strong terms and locutions, even ones which French lacks?
13. – Are the last sounds of words more often vowels than consonants?

14. – What is the character of pronunciation? Is it guttural, sibilant, soft, slightly or strongly accented?
15. – Does the written *patois* have any traits, characteristics, different from French?
16. – Does this *patois* vary greatly from one village to another?
17. – Is it spoken in cities?
18. – What is the territorial extent of its usage?
19. – Can the rurals/villagers also express themselves in French?
20. – Did preaching ever occur in *patois*? Has this practice stopped?
21. – Are there grammars and dictionaries of this dialect?
22. – Can one find *patois* inscriptions in churches, cemeteries, public places, etc.?
23. – Do you have works in *patois*, printed or manuscript, ancient or modern, such as common law, public legislation/acts, chronicles, prayers, sermons, ascetic books, hymns, songs, almanacs, poetry, translations, etc.?
24. – What is the merit of these respective works?
25. – Could they be easily procured?
26. – Do you have many *patois* proverbs specific to your dialect and area?
27. – What is the respective influence of *patois* on morals, and of morals upon your dialect?
28. – Has it been observed that the *patois* is slowly becoming similar to French, that some words are disappearing, and how long has this been taking place?
29. – What would be the religious and political importance of the complete destruction of this *patois*?
30. – What means could be used?
31. – In country schools, is the teaching done in French? Are the books uniform?
32. – Is each village provided with schoolmasters and mistresses?
33. – Besides the arts of reading and writing, arithmetic and catechism, are other things taught in these schools?
34. – Are these schools assiduously supervised by the Priests and Vicars?
35. – Do these gentlemen have an assortment of books to lend their parishioners?
36. – Do the people of the countryside have a liking for reading?
37. – What types of books are most often found in their possession?
38. – Do they have many prejudices, and of what type?
39. – In the past twenty years or so, have they become more enlightened? are their morals more depraved? have their religious principles not weakened?
40. – What are the causes of and the remedies for these evils?
41. – What moral effects has the revolution produced in them?
42. – Can one find patriotism among [them], or only the affectations inspired by personal interest?
43. – Are ecclesiastics and former nobles not exposed to gross abuses, to the insults of peasants and to the despotism of municipal mayors?

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