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Death Comes for Language Diversity:
Multilingualism and Idealism in Nineteenth-Century French, Quebec, and Russian Literature

By
Erin Selene Dunbar

A dissertation submitted in partial satisfaction of the
requirements for the degree of
Doctor of Philosophy
in
French
in the
Graduate Division
of the
University of California, Berkeley

Committee in charge:
Professor M. Lucey, Chair
Professor W.M. Burton
Professor L. Golburt
Professor R. Kern

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By
Erin Selene Dunbar

Abstract

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By

Erin Selene Dunbar

Doctor of Philosophy in French

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Professor M. Lucey, Chair

This dissertation analyzes nineteenth-century novels by George Sand, Patrice Lacombe, Antoine Gérin-Lajoie, Nikolai Karamzin, and Alexander Pushkin to investigate how literary representations of multilingualism register and expose increasingly rigid nationalist demands for linguistic unity. It focuses on Sand's *Mauprat* (1837) and *Jeanne* (1844), Karamzin's *Письма русского путешественника* (*Letters of a Russian Traveler*, 1791–92), Pushkin's *Евгений Онегин* (*Eugene Onegin*, 1833), and two *romans du terroir* – Patrice Lacombe's *La terre paternelle* (1846) and Antoine Gérin-Lajoie's *Jean Rivard, le défricheur* (1862). Though Russia, France, and Quebec differ profoundly in their political and cultural histories, each grappled with the symbolic power of the French language during moments of national redefinition. As France pursued linguistic unification in the wake of the 1789 revolution, Russia developed a national literary language amidst increasing resentment towards French literature and language, and French-speaking Canadians in Quebec faced growing pressure and assimilation under British colonial rule. Read together, these contexts reveal how similar linguistic pressures shaped the formation of supposedly singular national identities across different cultural settings.

Many of the texts examined here belong to what I term the sentimental-idealist social novel, a genre that offers idealized visions of the linguistic, national, and moral communities it seeks to define. Over the course of the century, nationalism became increasingly tied to ideals of linguistic homogeneity. Informed by the work of Pierre Bourdieu, Benedict Anderson, and Mikhail Bakhtin, this dissertation focuses on how sentimental and idealist literature engages multilingualism through metatextual strategies in the narrative voice. Each chapter centers on a specific language pair and traces recurring narratorial strategies for framing linguistic diversity, including decisions about glossing, typographical marking, and the allocation or denial of direct speech.

Across these case studies, multilingualism is repeatedly staged only to be contained, translated, or neutralized. Linguistic diversity is rendered legible in ways that ultimately only reinforce dominant language ideologies of monolingualism. Together, these chapters demonstrate the limits of sentimental and idealist literary forms to protect or preserve linguistic diversity in the face of increasingly standardized national languages.

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Chapter 1

Introduction

This dissertation considers the novels of George Sand, Patrice Lacombe, Antoine Gérin-Lajoie, Nikolai Karamzin, and Alexander Pushkin in exploring how literary depictions of multilingualism register and expose increasingly stringent nationalist standards of linguistic unity over the course of the nineteenth century.

Russia, France, and Quebec are distinct from one another in more ways than one, but each shared a preoccupation with the French language amid critical moments of political and cultural change. “French” meant different things to the populations of each of these locations. In France at the dawn of the nineteenth century, Standard French was not spoken by a majority of the population. As Eric Hobsbawm wrote in *Nations and Nationalism since 1780: programme, myth, and reality* (1990), in 1789 approximately 50% of the population spoke no Standard French, and only 12 to 13% spoke it “fairly.” In the upheavals following the Revolution, language quickly emerged as the primary tool of political unity and administrative consolidation. In this context, “unification” came to mean linguistic unification, exemplified by Abbé Grégoire’s 1794 polemic *Rapport sur la Nécessité et les Moyens d’anéantir les Patois et d’universaliser l’Usage de la Langue française*.

Ainsi, avec trente patois différents, nous sommes encore, pour le langage, à la tour de Babel, tandis que pour la liberté nous formons l’avant-garde des nations. Quoiqu’il y ait possibilité de diminuer le nombre des idiomes reçus en Europe, l’état politique du globe bannit l’espérance de ramener les peuples à une langue commune. Mais au moins on peut uniformer le langage d’une grande nation, de manière que tous les citoyens qui la composent, puissent sans obstacles communiquer leurs pensées. (5)

The report framed linguistic diversity as a barrier to be overcome. Unification required adherence to legal, political, and educational institutions that operated in just one language – Standard French.

In Canada, following the Seven Years War (1756-1763), control of Quebec passed from France to England, and resentment grew against assimilationist policies targeting the religious and linguistic practices of the French-speaking, Catholic population. Literature emerged as a vehicle of unity, a place where both the French language and the particular culture of French Canada could be rendered visible. Sentiments of abandonment by France combined with anger towards the politically and economically advantaged English-speaking population to form a potent strain of independent thought. Over time, this constellation of attitudes contributed to the emergence of the distinctly Quebec historical fact - or, more accurately, founding legend - of *la survivance*. Persistence in the face of political, economic, and cultural pressure became the dominant national narrative, reinforced by literary representations of local customs, values, and language.

In Russia, the emergence of a national literary language unfolded under conditions of political repression and censorship, and in close proximity to the cultural dominance of French. Unlike in France, where linguistic unification followed revolution, or in Quebec, where it emerged as a defensive response to colonial pressure, Russian literary culture developed in a context where French was already firmly established as the language of elite expression. The use of Russian as a

literary language is a relatively recent historical phenomenon, usually dated to the mid to late 1700s.¹ It is therefore no accident that French played an outsized role in elite culture, particularly given that the uppermost echelons of society were often more at ease in French than in Russian. Yet as Russian developed its own literary authority, this linguistic hierarchy became increasingly unstable. Resentment toward “foreign” French influence grew, and the aristocratic embrace of French shifted from a taken-for-granted social reality to a damning indictment of decadence and alienation from national customs.

A genre particular to this period, which I call the sentimental-idealist social novel, presents an idealized and counterfactual portrait of the very communities – linguistic, national, and, sometimes, religious – it seeks to define. Not all of the texts in this dissertation could be classified straightforwardly as novels – Nikolai Karamzin’s *Письма русского путешественника* (*Letters of a Russian Traveler*, 1791-92) is closer to a fictionalized travelogue, and Pushkin’s *Евгений Онегин* (*Eugene Onegin*, 1833) is, of course, a narrative poem. Nevertheless, the sentimental mode functions as a key structuring principle even in these generic outliers. The sentimental novel foregrounds emotional expression, seeking both to depict and elicit shared sentiments among characters and readers. While sentimentalism is often defined through its emphasis on feeling, its formal structure is equally important. For the purposes of this study the most useful formulation comes from Gitta Hammarberg, who describes the sentimental mode as one in which the narrator’s utterance is so strongly foregrounded that the speech of “others” within the text is ultimately subsumed (*From the Idyll to the Novel*, 1991).² This formal dominance is closely tied to the affective aims of sentimentalism: by smoothing out differences in voice, the genre produces an illusion of shared emotional experience, even as it limits the range of linguistic and expressive diversity available to its characters. A universalizing tendency to make characters speak the same is a mainstay of the genre – and in the context of a study interested in diversity of expression, a key pressure point for analysis. This narratorial dominance therefore has significant implications for the representation of linguistic difference, particularly in texts that purport to give voice to socially or linguistically marginal figures.

The sentimental novel was both popular and ubiquitous at the end of the eighteenth century and the beginning of the nineteenth. Foreign sentimental texts dominated the Russian literary marketplace, as Hilde Hoogenboom has shown,³ while in France, as Margaret Cohen argues in *The Sentimental Education of the Novel* (1999), realism largely emerged in counterpoint to the highly successful, feminine-coded sentimental novel (6). In Quebec, the sentimental mode proved particularly useful as a didactic and nation-building form, shaping morally engaged novels that promoted desirable traits such as patriotism and religious faith. Sentimentalism fell out of favor over the course of the nineteenth century, and labeling a work “sentimental” became – and in some respects remains – a

¹ See, for example, Gary Marker’s 2014 book *Publishing, Printing, and the Origins of Intellectual Life in Russia, 1700-1800* which presents a fascinating study of the extreme changes in Russia’s literary marketplace and reading public from Peter the Great on.

² Margaret Cohen has a remarkably similar formulation in *The Sentimental Education of the Novel* (1999): “Sentimental protagonists are in addition united by their way of speaking....this diction is characterized by a restrained, neoclassical vocabulary, the repetition of simple syntactic patterns, sentences composed of numerous fragments, and the most economical reportage possible of events, which contrasts with the expansive sentimental approach to interiority” (52).

³ From her article “Sentimental Novels and Pushkin: European Literary Markets and Russian Readers”: “Indeed, Russian readers were up-to-date in a European literary market integrated by French, English, and German popular sentimental novels: The sentimental subgenre was a transnational literary form during the century of sentimentality’s prestige [1750-1850], and sentimental novels were the most translated of all literary fiction.” (554)

term of critical dismissal. One of the texts in this dissertation, Pushkin's *Евгений Онегин* explicitly parodies the tropes of sentimentalism that had dominated earlier decades. As a literary form, the sentimental-idealist social novel registers growing tension and insecurity around language use – tensions that increasingly conflicted with emerging ideals of national linguistic unity. Precisely because sentimentalism promises identification, moral legibility, and emotional immediacy, its strategies of narration and mediation prove especially revealing when confronted with the problem of multilingualism.

This dissertation homes in on a particular aspect of sentimental and sentimental-adjacent works: the presence of multilingualism and its authorial framing. As the nineteenth century progressed, nationalism required increasing insularity, and was inextricably bound up with the ideal of linguistic unity. As Pierre Bourdieu writes in *Language and Symbolic Power* (1991):

Thus, only when the making of the 'nation', an entirely abstract group based on law, creates new usages and functions does it become indispensable to forge a standard language, impersonal and anonymous like the official uses it has to serve. (48)

An international perspective clarifies these emerging conceptions of nationalism. Though nineteenth-century French, Russian, and Quebec literatures are distinct from one another, they all engage with questions of language and symbolic power in the context of nation-building. Crucially for the purposes of this study, the symbolic power attached to a particular language – Standard French – operates as a central reference point across these locales, though its status and function vary significantly. In France, Standard French held increasing sway as not just a prestige language, but as the acceptable language of public and political life. In Quebec, literature was a battleground which hoped to make French the victor against English. And in Russia, French had long been a prestige language amongst the upper classes, but as the nineteenth century progressed, it began to decline in influence and reputation. These differing configurations of prestige are not merely contextual but shape literary form itself. The relative status of French in each setting helps determine how multilingualism is represented and contained: as a force to be suppressed, protected, or ironized. At the same time, sentimentalism, a genre whose democratizing potential was also associated with femininity and the transcendence of social and linguistic difference through shared emotional identification,⁴ became increasingly untenable as conceptions of national identity narrowed.

This dissertation draws on scholarship that understands language as a form of symbolic power shaped by institutional authority. Pierre Bourdieu's work on linguistic legitimacy provides a central framework, particularly his insight that the social value of an utterance depends on the prestige of its speaker and the institutions that authorize speech.⁵ In this sense, the nation emerges as one of the

⁴ By having all characters speak in similar ways and experience comparable emotional intensity, the sentimental novel imagines a universal capacity for feeling in a time when social divisions were otherwise taken for granted. This universalization of sentiment carries a democratizing potential: if all individuals are equally capable of moral feeling, then distinctions of class, education, or status are, at least imaginatively, leveled. Cohen again offers a useful formulation of the tensions such novels produced in French society: "In opposing individual freedom to collective welfare, the sentimental novel addresses a fundamental tension fissuring French liberal political thought from its Enlightenment genesis" (42).

⁵ See, as on page 19 of his collected essays, his observation that, "What is praised as good quality Bearnais when issued from the mouth of the mayor would have been accorded a quite different (and no doubt much lower) value had it been uttered by a peasant who spoke mere fragments of French."

most powerful arbiters of linguistic value in the nineteenth century. Benedict Anderson's *Imagined Communities* (1983) further informs this project's understanding of literature as a site where the definition of national belonging is creatively stabilized. Anderson's account of the novel's role in producing a "new fixity of language" (43) is especially salient here, as this study is concerned with how such fixity comes to constrain representations of linguistic diversity.

Work in linguistic anthropology and sociolinguistics also informs my approach, particularly Michael Silverstein's formulation of language ideology,⁶ which foregrounds speakers' awareness of the social meanings embedded in linguistic variation. This perspective enables attention to the metatextual framing of multilingualism – translation, glossing, narratorial mediation – as sites where language difference is evaluated rather than merely represented. Finally, Mikhail Bakhtin's theorization of heteroglossia provides an important point of departure. Indeed, my project can in some sense be seen as interrogating the precise point he makes in "Epic and Novel: Toward a Methodology for the Study of the Novel:"

The novel senses itself on the border between the completed, dominant literary language and the extraliterary languages that know heteroglossia; the novel serves to further the centralizing tendencies of a new literary language in the process of taking shape. (37)

While Bakhtin emphasizes the novel's capacity to register linguistic plurality, the texts in my corpus occupy a more ambivalent position: Situated at the threshold between heteroglossia and standardization, they repeatedly stage multilingualism even as they participate in its containment. In this respect, my readings temper Bakhtin's emphasis on plurality by foregrounding the novel's participation in processes of linguistic consolidation.

"French," as any introductory linguistics seminar will emphasize, is not a monolith but a particular historical product, one variation that emerged from a group of many others. A history of France, long synonymous with a history of French, is therefore informative about the prestige afforded to its language. France has had a unique capacity to produce cultural and linguistic institutions that are self-reflexive, actively commenting upon and guarding linguistic use and purity. It also inspired countries such as Russia to establish comparable institutions of their own,⁷ exporting not only the prestige of its cultural output but also the conditions under which that prestige was produced. This project emerged from an interest in the role the French language played in transnational literatures, particularly in moments of political and cultural redefinition. It took shape gradually, as questions about linguistic diversity in nineteenth-century France entered into dialogue with parallel concerns in Russia and Quebec. I was particularly struck by the seeming paradox of a single language – Standard French – functioning as a cultural symbol of belonging in cultural situations that were not in France, and by the ways literature engaged with this tension. France was not the only setting in which French operated as a contested or symbolically charged language; Russia and Quebec offered sites where French was simultaneously a marker of prestige, alienation, and/or resistance.

⁶ In particular, see his 1979 article "Language Structure and Linguistic Ideology" (pp. 193-248) from *The Elements: A Parasession on Linguistic Units and Levels*, April 20-21, 1979.

⁷ Isabel de Madriaga's *Russia in the Age of Catherine the Great* (1981) discusses the Russian Academy of Letters, which Catherine founded in 1783 directly inspired by the Académie Française. Like the Académie, they also issued a dictionary of the Russian language, beginning their own process of codification (though it was criticized because it adopted etymological instead of alphabetical word order). (535)

This project is structured around a few self-imposed limitations. I chose not to engage with colonial contexts in Asia and North Africa not because language imposition is unimportant, but because it raises questions of power and coercion that exceed the scope of this study. Rather than attempting to trace linguistic change empirically, this dissertation examines how literature registers, reflects upon, and ultimately confines linguistic diversity at moments when national linguistic norms are still in the process of being formed.

At the beginning of this project, my working definition of “language” was deliberately elastic. I sought instances of linguistic diversity across a wide spectrum: the presence of multiple languages within a text, but also argot and slang, social registers, code-switching, scenes of education and linguistic instruction, and references to translation. The result was a varied and multilayered collection of linguistic difference that, while intellectually interesting, were only tenuously linked. Gradually, I narrowed my focus to specific pairs of languages in my texts, a shift that sometimes required additional attention to questions of social register and education. In Sand’s work, this meant exploring the dynamic between Berrichon and Standard French, while attending closely to the fact that what Sand chose *not* to represent was often as significant as what she did include. For Pushkin and Karamzin, French and Russian formed the central linguistic pair. French evolves from a standard to strive for in Karamzin to a neutralized, though omnipresent stylistic flourish in Pushkin. In the novels of Lacombe and Gérin-Lajoie, the dynamic unfolded between French – which was sometimes marked by local variation and lexicon specific to Canadian French – and English. As my readings became increasingly attuned to any instance of linguistic variation, it also became evident that, despite their thematic engagement with multilingualism, many of these texts avoided sustained or precise renderings of linguistic difference. My corpus is not naturalistic, realist, or sociological.

This project does not trace empirical language change through literature, nor does it argue that sentimental-idealist texts accurately reconstruct historical speaking communities. It is not a linguistic dissertation but a literary one. Rather than quantifying the presence of multiple languages, I am interested in how literary engagements with multilingual speakers intersected with dominant contemporary discourses of national belonging and exclusion. To investigate these portrayals, several methodological priorities emerged. When languages appeared in the texts that differed from the primary language of narration – Berrichon or other “patois” in Sand, French in Karamzin and Pushkin, and English in the Quebec novels – I paid close attention to how this difference was mediated for the reader. Narratorial intervention frequently structured a readerly response to linguistic variation; reflections on language use often revealed prevailing attitudes toward legitimacy, education, and belonging. Metatextual treatment therefore became central to my close readings. Whether foreign languages were italicized or not, and glossed or not; whether explanation occurred within the body of the text or in footnotes; and which characters were permitted to speak directly rather than undergoing narrative “translation” all contributed to a carefully managed representation of multilingualism.

These initial analyses of narratorial framing and metatextual treatment gradually crystallized into a set of recurring patterns. In particular, decisions to gloss foreign language, to translate within the body of the text, or to “translate” without providing any original language for the reader often formed the hinge upon which my close readings turned. Such editorial choices encode assumptions about readerly capacity, interest, and patience. A clear dichotomy emerges between characters who are permitted to speak directly to the reader in their own language and those whose speech is heavily mediated, or even flattened, by narratorial intervention. Class, gender, and institutional legitimacy

repeatedly inform who is granted direct linguistic address, clearly bearing out the insights on symbolic power made by Bourdieu and Silverstein. The careful regulation of access to language across my corpus reveals a persistent, if often unarticulated, anxiety about the limits of multilingual acceptability. A “choice” to translate or to allow direct speech thus becomes a choice between representation and omission. In many cases, these decisions reinforce a dominant language ideology that isolates linguistic difference only to partially or completely eliminate it from view. These texts are striking in that they gesture toward linguistic diversity – even occasionally staging it – while simultaneously using a repertoire of techniques to neutralize the perceived threat of multilingualism.

My original ambition was to demonstrate that literature in this period directly influenced which languages were spoken and how language communities were formed. As my reading progressed, that thesis evolved. Taking into account the ways languages are treated in these texts, I came to see this project as less about linguistic transformation and more about how even the most sentimental forms of literature, theoretically attuned to human expression more than any other writerly mode, flatten, blur, distort, and at times erase diversity of speech. Many of these novels do imagine alternative social arrangements – this, in part, is the work of their idealism. Yet while multilingualism often figures prominently in these texts, it is never itself the source of the ideal. Instead, the nations evoked in these texts are consistently imagined as moving toward unilingualism.

The chapters progress from the metropole, the French novels of George Sand, and then move outward geographically. Three national contexts – France, Quebec, and Russia – are sufficient to demonstrate a broader transnational pattern. Beginning with France anchors the discussion in Standard French from the outset. The dissertation thus moves from an examination of Standard French as a tool of imposed unity in the French context, to a look at its status as a targeted form of cultural heritage in Quebec, and finally to a consideration of its role as a source of literary inspiration and an increasingly contested prestige language in Russia. Across in this sequence, the French language shifts in meaning from chapter to chapter. Throughout these texts, authors repeatedly engage with charged categories such as linguistic purity, national belonging, and the fraught questions of inspiration and originality that accompany cultural production. Multilingualism serves as a lens through which these tensions become legible.

The first chapter positions George Sand in relation to her realist and naturalist contemporaries. While writers such as Émile Zola are more readily associated with linguistic diversity because of their sociological commitments and attention to “worker speech,” Sand, though not a realist, nonetheless offers sustained and complex reflections on multilingualism in her fiction. This chapter focuses on two early works, *Mauprat* (1837) and *Jeanne* (1844), both of which predate her later *romans champêtres*. Although Sand continued to engage questions of language, education, and class over the course of her career, these early texts contain some of her most concentrated explorations of multilingual representation. Guided by the question of whether Sand’s multilingualism offers an alternative to nationalist pressures toward Standard French, this chapter advances a largely pessimistic reading of her engagement with linguistic diversity. Representation, I argue, is unevenly distributed: languages may be present, or more often invoked without explicit representation, but Sand’s texts repeatedly deploy narrative strategies that divert identification away from speakers who fall outside the linguistic norm.

My second chapter turns to two early examples of the first distinctly Canadian literary genre of the *romans du terroir*. Patrice Lacombe’s *La terre paternelle* (1846) and Antoine Gérin-Lajoie’s *Jean Rivard, le défricheur* (1862) These agricultural-idealist works are speckled with language variety, including

Canadian-specific lexicon and occasional borrowings from indigenous languages as well as English. Yet the primary linguistic struggle staged in these texts is an internal one. Each constructs an idealized community that does not, and cannot, exist within the realities of colonial Canada. Independent, self-reliant, French-speaking men-of-the-Earth emerge as the guarantors of Quebec's survival, charged with preserving family, territory, and nation through labor and moral discipline. While these novels skillfully fashion an urban, alienated English-speaker as a cultural antagonist, close analysis of the language politics in these texts reveals a deeper fantasy of Francophone dominance. Linguistic diversity is only partially acknowledged, framed as an obstacle to be overcome. The ideal that remains is that of a unified, thoroughly Francophone Quebec.

My final chapter examines Nikolai Karamzin's *Письма русского путешественника* (*Letters of a Russian Traveler*, 1791-92) alongside Alexander Pushkin's *Евгений Онегин* (*Eugene Onegin*, 1833). When placed side by side, these two texts illuminate a profound shift in the role of French within Russian letters over the course of four decades. For Karamzin, writing at the dawn of the Golden Age of Russian literature, Russian remained an unwieldy literary medium, one that required refinement in order to rival the traditions of England, Germany, and France. His encounters with foreign languages (particularly French, but also German and English) served both as a scaffold for his emerging nationalism and as a manifesto for the future of Russian literary language. Pushkin, in many respects, realized the literary ambitions Karamzin articulated. *Евгений Онегин* is playful, formally agile, and distinctly "Russian," yet it incorporates a significant number of French loanwords. The treatment of these linguistic intrusions marks a decisive shift in how French functions within Russian literature. This chapter argues that multilingualism becomes a structuring device for the production of national literary identity, an apparent paradox that is partially resolved when the multilingual impulse is ultimately absorbed and refracted by texts seeking to assert cultural autonomy in a transnational literary field.

Taken together, the texts making up this corpus exemplify a dual movement between the consolidation of collective identity and the inevitability of contact with difference. Though these novels gesture toward the near possibility of forms of belonging not yet fully determined by citizenship or national affiliation, they remain attuned to the direction of historical change. The following chapters demonstrate how nineteenth-century literature repeatedly stages multilingualism only to contain, translate, or neutralize it, revealing the limits of sentimental and idealist modes in the face of increasingly rigid national linguistic norms. In this sense, sentimental literature promotes unity through the exclusion of other languages; yet such unity is inherently unstable, as it depends upon the very differences it seeks to suppress. In tracing these dynamics, this dissertation also raises broader questions about the relationship between literary priorities and the political imaginary. If sentimental literature promises identification across difference, these texts suggest that such identification is nonetheless bounded by prevailing norms of linguistic legitimacy. Multilingualism thus exposes not only the fragility of national cohesion but also the limits of literature's capacity to imagine community otherwise.

Chapter 2

La bonne dame de Nohant: Literary idealism, multilingualism, and the idealist-sentimental novel

2.1 Introduction

“Si je fais parler l’homme des champs comme il parle, il faut une traduction en regard pour le lecteur civilisé, et si je le fais parler comme nous parlons, j’en fais un être impossible, auquel il faut supposer un ordre d’idées qu’il n’a pas.” – François le Champi, 23

Gustave Flaubert (1821-1880), self-tortured stylist extraordinaire of the nineteenth century, was an unlikely admirer of George Sand (1804-1876). It would be difficult to pick two authors further opposed on literary questions (and attitudes towards editing). Nevertheless, the two shared a warm admiration and a lengthy correspondence that attests to their sincere attachment.⁸ Flaubert’s distaste for the overwrought sentimentality of the novels of his age (a critique often extended to Sand’s works) is well-known and well-documented.⁹ However, perhaps directly inspired by the “bonté” of her heart,¹⁰ Flaubert penned one of his only experiments in the sentimental mode with Sand in mind. *Un cœur simple* was published in 1877 but written before Sand’s death in 1876. As Flaubert wrote to her on May 29th, 1876,

Vous verrez par mon *Histoire d’un cœur simple* où vous reconnaîtrez votre influence immédiate, que je ne suis pas si entêté que vous le croyez. Je crois que la tendance morale, ou plutôt le dessous humain de cette petite œuvre vous sera agréable!

Un cœur simple is a tender text which centers on the placid, hard-working Félicité, servant to Madame Aubain. The novella follows her through pain, disappointment, and happiness, eventually recounting her death. The narrator remarks that for this simple woman, the courtyard is full of mourners when her death finally comes.

Sand’s influence on Flaubert here is apparent. Though *Un cœur simple* lacks some of the melodramatic acrobatics of Sand’s work (no incest, long-lost children returning, or unending feuds here), the story focuses on a sweet, simple, moral woman. Félicité is uneducated and evidently lower class; yet she is given a respectful literary treatment by Flaubert. Stylistically, *Un cœur simple* could never be mistaken for a work of Sand’s. The objectivity and rationalism for which Flaubert is so deservedly famous would never be the dominant tone in Sand’s *œuvre*. But here, there is a restraint all the more

⁸ Their friendship began late in Sand’s life and career. Following the lukewarm reception of *Salammbô* (1862), Flaubert sent Sand a copy, prompting her to publish a glowing review in the January 27th edition of *La Presse*. His affectionate thank-you letter was the beginning of a fruitful, 14-year correspondence between the two.

⁹ And the sense he had of the distinction of his own literary output was assured. As he wrote to Sand on February 2nd, 1869, “Ce qui m’indigne tous les jours, c’est de voir mettre sur le même rang un chef d’œuvre et une turpitude. Rien n’est plus bête ni plus immoral.” This letter is cited from the electronic edition of the *Correspondance de Flaubert*, Centre Flaubert (Université de Rouen), available at: <http://flaubert.univ-rouen.fr/correspondance/>.

¹⁰ Flaubert wrote in a letter the 31st of January 1863, “La bonté de votre cœur m’a attendri et votre sympathie m’a rendu fier. Je vous aime bien franchement.”

remarkable in the context of the present study: Félicité, with two exceptions,¹¹ never speaks in this story. Flaubert is well-documented in his dislike of dialogue. He considered it difficult, nearly impossible, to do well. In a letter to Louise Colet on the 30th of September 1853, he writes,

Quelle difficulté que le dialogue, quand on veut surtout que le dialogue ait du caractère!
Peindre par le dialogue et qu'il n'en soit pas moins vif, précis et toujours distingué en restant
même banal, cela est monstrueux, et je ne sache personne qui l'ait fait dans un livre.

The effect of the sparsity of dialogue in *Un cœur simple* is moving; we only “hear” Félicité at her moment of deepest grief. Her exclamations, her utterances to no-one, come from such a place of deep mourning that they break even the stylistic control Flaubert has over his story. Truth, observation, reality: those are the pillars of Flaubert’s aesthetic creed. Dialogue threatens to topple those pillars.¹² It is a bit odd to think that access to direct speech ruins the reality effect. Contrast these citations with the epigraph to this introduction, where Sand wants to “faire parler l’homme des champs.” This citation collapses the *way* the peasant speaks into assumptions about the content of his ideas. Perhaps this is the exact confusion Flaubert wished to avoid by dodging the question of representative dialogue. Though Sand is sometimes dismissed, sometimes lauded, as a sentimentalist, there is a key formal element in her work that Flaubert intentionally silences: Sand gives voice, and language, to those she represents. In Sand, there are parts of the world – encompassing the multiplicity and multilingualism of the France of her era – which are still able to speak in her novels. For Flaubert, those parts are muted. Despite Flaubert’s rational objectivity, the effect of his style is the presentation and enforcement of a standard language – the standard of the narratorial voice. Where Flaubert enforces a singular, standardized narration, Sand uses linguistic plurality as a formal condition of her idealist fiction. *Un cœur simple* thus offers a limit test of nineteenth-century sentimentality: moral tenderness without linguistic plurality, compassion without voice.

Flaubert, though a realist himself, is unique in this resistance to linguistic representation amongst his realist contemporaries. Contrast his work, for example, with that of Émile Zola (1840-1902) or Honoré de Balzac (1799-1850). When one thinks of nineteenth-century French realism, one expects granular linguistic detail, particularly in regards to the representation of *argot*. As Enlightenment universalism was contested by the rise of Romantic particularism, the belief in a shared human identity and moral progress also leached away. However, the rational tools developed during that period found their way into political and cultural domains. Literature also benefited from the Enlightenment-era scientific lens upon human nature – but without the subordination of individual difference to shared characteristics. Zola is perhaps the exemplary realist in this regard, turning a careful ear towards the particularities of Paris’s working classes. In his introduction to *L’Assommoir* (1877), Zola responds to criticism of the novel in the press:

On s’est fâché contre les mots. Mon crime est d’avoir eu la langue du peuple. Ah! La forme, là est le grand crime! Des dictionnaires de cette langue existent pourtant, des lettrés l’étudient

¹¹ Upon receiving the letter containing news of her nephew’s death, Félicité, unable to contain her grief, says “— Pauvre petit gars! pauvre petit gars!” As people leave after she shares the news, she remarks (in the same scene) “Ça ne leur fait rien, à eux!”

¹² As he wrote to Ernest Feydeau in December of 1858, “Un dialogue, dans un livre, ne représente pas plus la vérité vraie (absolue) que tout le reste; il faut choisir et y mettre des plans successifs, des gradations, et des demi-teintes, comme dans une description.”

et jouissent de sa verdure, de l'imprévu et de la force de ses images. Elle est un régal pour les grammairiens fureteurs. (6)

Zola's reputation was eventually forged and solidified precisely thanks to his sociological bent towards language. He took careful note of how the lower classes of Paris spoke, studying, anthropologically, the linguistic evolutions of their French. It is a sign, now, of his rigor, of his realism, and of his commitment to truth.

Balzac, similarly, played with language and multilingualism, particularly in *Les Paysans* (1855). A politically conservative royalist, his portrayal of the peasantry – in similar granular detail to Zola – acts as a magnifying glass upon a class distinctly at odds with his values. *Les Paysans* was left unfinished when Balzac died. His distinct and quasi-anthropological descriptive style abounds. In this work, Balzac places his close and attentive writerly eye on the “problem” of France's post-revolution peasant class, which, he claims, having lost the supervision and structure previously afforded by the aristocracy and the church, has devolved into a conniving, immoral group motivated only by short-term (and short-sighted) self-interest. The peasants in the novel are capable of code switching, of speaking both Standard French and Bourguignon – but this is not a strength, morally speaking. Language, for Balzac, emerges as a tool by which scheming and nefarious characters are able to enact their plans. Linguistic variation as such has value in the narrative for what it can cover up, morally speaking.

Though George Sand is a familiar name to anyone working in French studies, she does not command the same level of popular recognition as Flaubert, Zola, or Balzac. Enormously prolific and successful in her time, her books fell out of fashion, and out of print, in the decades after her death. It wasn't until the 1970s that there was renewed scholarly interest in her work,¹³ when feminist scholars investigated doubling and hysteria in works like *Indiana* (1832) and *Lélia* (1833).¹⁴ A more sustained critical reassessment began in the 1990s, notably in the work of Naomi Schor (*George Sand and Idealism*, 1993) and Margaret Cohen (*The Sentimental Education of the Novel*, 1999). Both texts make the compelling case that this long-neglected author deserves a place amongst the luminaries of the first half of the nineteenth century. Schor and Cohen are invested in demonstrating how Sand differed from her realist and naturalist contemporaries like Balzac, Zola, and Flaubert. For Schor, Sand had a distinct writerly mode – idealist – which had a particular relationship to representation, readerly investment, and political possibility. Schor engages with the history of idealism more broadly in describing this genre, which she also associated with Hugo, Lamartine, and Dostoevsky (8), but primarily defines it in opposition to the realist novel. As the nineteenth century progressed, the idealist “mode” fell out of fashion with the broader public. As Schor explains, the idealist novel is primarily concerned with, “...the ability of an ideal to empower and mobilize the disenfranchised” (14). This is a fundamentally optimistic project – one which marries faith in social progress with faith in the power of individual choice.

Cohen attributes the disappearance of the idealist novel to a “hostile takeover” (6) of the literary marketplace by realist authors such as Balzac. While it might be tempting to believe such a charged description of historical publishing battles, a tempered explanation is more appropriate. Idealism and

¹³ Patricia Thomson's 1977 *George Sand and the Victorians* is more of a reception history of Sand's novels in England, but it nonetheless centers her work in a way which scholarship had not done for some time in the United States. Ellen Moers in her 1976 book *Literary Women* sought to highlight long neglected nineteenth-century women writers, including Sand.

¹⁴ See, for example, the work of Catherine Peebles (*The Psyche of Feminism: Sand, Colette, Sarraute*, 2004).

sentimentalism, like any mode or genre, fell out of favor as the concerns and tastes of the reading public continued to evolve. Cohen points out the general criticism that idealist novels lacked detail – a deliberate stylistic choice, the “light touch,” (148) which Sand manages to subvert. Cohen highlights something critical; despite the dismissal of the “unreality” of sentimental and idealist texts, Sand did not evade detail. Indeed, one particular source of ethnographic and sociological detail – her deep familiarity with the language and customs of her native Berry – is a key element of her *œuvre* as a whole. Sand, though not a realist, shares with Zola and Balzac a careful attention towards language. Though scholars have paid close attention to her use of Berrichon,¹⁵ there has been little work done connecting that stylistic aspect of her work with her larger political and literary aims.

Though Sand is a far more familiar figure to scholars and students of French literature today, it is difficult to argue that she commands the same level of prestige and interest as her masculine contemporaries. Some claim that this is due to the sheer volume of works Sand produced – Schor, for example, writes, “So unwieldy is the Sand corpus that even the most serious Sand scholars resort to approximation when attempting to give a sense of her production, speaking of ‘some’ eighty novels” (21). Of course, when placed next to the prolific pagination of authors like Balzac or Hugo, this claim doesn’t hold water. Nonetheless, criticism on Sand tends to focus on a particular period of her output for ease of analysis. For many years, as perhaps foreseen by Proust,¹⁶ it was her “country triptych” of *La mare au diable* (1846), *François le Champi* (1847), and *La Petite Fadette* (1849) which proved most captivating to critics. In light of the domination of the realist novel, this is not too surprising as these works include quite detailed, quasi-ethnographic descriptions of rituals and behaviors of the peasantry in Berri. At the end of *La mare au diable* (1846), for example, Sand describes traditional Berrichon weddings, with particular attention paid to rites which are uniquely associated with the region:

Nous ne parlerons pas de la rôtie que l’on porte au lit nuptial; c’est un assez sot usage qui fait souffrir la pudeur de la mariée et tend à détruire celle des jeunes filles qui y assistent. D’ailleurs je crois que c’est un usage de toutes les provinces, et qui n’a chez nous rien de particulier. (186)

Bookending these three texts are lengthy introductions in which Sand reflects on the nature of representation and truth, and, as expressed in the epigraph, struggles with the question of how to give voice to the inhabitants of her region who do not share her class, education, or concerns. She also bemoans the fixation on vice, evil, and death in the works of her contemporaries; for Sand, novels should be morally healthy for their readers.

Recent Sand scholarship by scholars like Bettina Lerner, Nancy Rogers, and Claire White¹⁷ has focused on Sand’s writerly strategies to enable relationships across class, education, and

¹⁵ This is an interest which extends far back in time up to the present, including Alexander H. Schutz’s 1927 book *The Peasant Vocabulary in the Works of George Sand*, Robert Gowin-Jones’s 1988 article “The Berrichon Peasant in George Sand’s Novels,” Daniel Bernard’s 2017 *Le patois berrichon: Tout comprendre*, and Simone Bernard-Griffiths’ *Essais sur l’imaginaire de George Sand* (Paris: Classiques Garnier, 2018). As I mentioned before, the pull and power of Sand-the-ethnographer has much to do with the value placed on realist and naturalistic depictions.

¹⁶ See, for example, Josephine Donovan’s 2010 *European Local-Color Literature: National Tales, Dorfgeschichten, Romans Champêtres*, Noëlle Dauphin’s 2006 *George Sand: terroir et histoire*, and Pascale Auraix-Jonchière’s 2006 *George Sand et la fabrique des contes*.

¹⁷ See Bettina Lerner’s 2018 *Inventing the Popular: Printing, Politics, and Poetics*, Nancy Rogers’ 1996 article “Sand’s Peasant Heroines: From Victim to Entrepreneur, From ‘Connaissance’ to ‘Idée,’ From ‘Jeanne’ to ‘Nanon,’” and Claire White’s

circumstance. For two characters who are separated by circumstances of birth, small adjustments in social elevation are necessary over the course of the novel to eliminate the barriers which prevented an early avowal of love. One can trace Sand's growing idealism across time, as reflected in the plots of her novels. Contrast, for example, the uncertain ending of *Le compagnon du tour de France* (1840) with that of *Nanon* (1872). In the former (notably, a pre-1848 revolution text), Pierre and Yseult are content to wait, presumably forever, for a never-to-arrive blessing from Yseult's aristocratic guardian. In the latter, Nanon the peasant manages to amass great wealth and education while her lover, Émilien, born of a cruel and aristocratic family, loses his last-standing family tie (and his arm, in a Brontë-esque twist highlighted by Schor¹⁸) before their marriage is deemed "acceptable" within the novelistic universe. Sand excels in adjusting, in large and small ways, the circumstances of her heroes and heroines in order to make their eventual romantic reconciliations more palatable. The vehicle for many of the social elevations is a combination of learning, literacy, and the mastery of certain social and linguistic codes. Pierre, for example, is introduced to Yseult not in person but through the medium of her private library; it is by touching and reading her books that he further develops his sense of erudition and education. Nanon is taught to read by Émilien, and her fluency in the rules of capitalism (a fluency which evades the aristocratic Émilien) enables the material circumstance of their eventual matrimony.

Examples of these shifts abound in Sand's fiction: they reveal not only the masterly hand of an inveterate novelist, but also a sense of optimism in light of contemporary social and political institutions. A belief in both the power of personal change – that the self can be a project which can be successfully submitted to regimes of education and socialization that solve the problem of *mésalliance*¹⁹ – is wedded to an idealist political sensibility which sees social acceptance and personal conviction as sufficient to allow for alternate community formations. These two domains (idealism and sentiment with the social maneuverings of a Sand novel) are linked through a very specific formal device: multilingualism. Straddling the divide between universalism, impossible in a context characterized by diversity of language and class, and romantic individualism, functionally impossible in contemporary French society, Sand provides a middle ground between the shedding of difference and the maintenance of too-strict boundaries. That middle ground is achieved and maintained, often, through one particular mechanism: mastery of language, social codes, and education.

In a similar straddling move, Sand's treatment of language in her texts falls somewhere between Flaubert's complete flattening and Zola's precious attention. Though closer to Zola in that her works consistently acknowledge multilingualism and differences in register, Sand utilizes multiple techniques to represent, or gesture to, these various languages. Chief among them are metatextual commentary like footnotes, in-text glossing, italics, etc.; narratorial commentary evaluating language spoken by characters; and finally, the constant play between inclusion of other languages and suppression of those languages, often due to "behind the scenes" editing and translation.

2021 article "Back to Her Sheep: The Commune and Peasant Politics in George Sand's *Nanon*." In a similar sociological bent, Manon Mathias' 2016 article "L'esprit, le cœur, et le bras: Rethinking Art as Labour in George Sand" focuses minutely on how Sand is able to reconcile physical labor with aesthetic aims for many of her characters, in spite of class.

¹⁸ See page 154, *George Sand and Idealism*.

¹⁹ Though *Mauprat* is the exemplar of this format of personal rehabilitation, this is a theme which appears consistently in Sand's works. In *Horace* (1840), for example, Paul Arsène is prompted to study grammar more assiduously after realizing, "J'avais assez lu de livres pour avoir appris un peu la langue par routine; mais je ne savais pas les principes, et je n'osais pas trop le dire, de peur de manquer d'ouvrage. Je ne fis pourtant pas de fautes dans mes copies, et ce fut à force d'attention."

This chapter will focus on two texts by Sand – *Mauprat* (1837) and *Jeanne* (1844). These novels showcase Sand's engagement with multilingualism. Though both predate her *romans champêtres* as well as her period of great political disillusionment following the 1848 revolution, *Mauprat* illustrates Sand's concern with mastery of social codes through language, while *Jeanne* is unique in her *œuvre* for the sheer quantity of Berrichon language represented in the text. Her later *romans champêtres* had slightly different aims from these two texts. She hoped to bring the peasantry to the educated, literate urban audience which purchased her books. As Schor writes, "What is striking about her most enduringly popular (county)-triptych of 'romans champêtres' is that their intended audience is so explicitly the bourgeois Parisian audience she had turned away from with the socialist novels of the early forties" (114). The *romans champêtres* are often framed as being "mere translations;" rather than casting herself as an original author, Sand instead acts as intermediary, producing "translations from a minority language into the language of the dominant culture" (Schor 139). In *Mauprat* and *Jeanne*, by contrast, Sand's narrators are the acknowledged competent mediators of the multilingual and multi-register language which is presented to us. Sand's unique take on sentimentalism and idealism emerges through close examination of these two works. Sand's manipulation of language mirrors her idealism: it neither erases difference nor fetishizes it but instead imagines language as the medium through which social and affective rapprochement becomes thinkable.

2.2 *Mauprat* and the Social Signifiers of Gentility

The kind of competence that actual speakers possess is not a capacity to generate an unlimited sequence of grammatically well-formed sentences [Chomsky], but rather a capacity to produce expressions which are appropriate for particular situations. (Bourdieu, Language and Symbolic Power, 7)

Mauprat (1837) follows the exploits of Bernard Mauprat, the youngest boy in a family divided between two warring sides. Though the more genteel branch desires him as their heir, Bernard is instead condemned to grow up in the violent company of his grandfather and uncles at Roche Mauprat. There, he receives an education in anger and physical intimidation, but not social competence. Bernard first encounters an alternate model of sociability – and communication – when his uncles unwittingly abduct his Aunt Edmée. Bernard helps her escape, motivated by an overpowering love for her. When they are safely home, Edmée rebuffs her nephew's romantic advances and instead urges him to devote himself to study. His slow academic and social development trains him in attentiveness to the subtleties of linguistic register. Key to Bernard's progress are figures of linguistic alterity like Patience, a recluse whose wisdom proves morally beneficial, and Marcasse, a local mole-catcher whose friendship makes him one of the few who believe in Bernard's goodness. In a final plot twist, a Sandian specialty, Edmée is shot and Bernard is accused of the crime. After a trial proves his innocence, Edmée is forever changed, and becomes markedly softer towards him. They marry and manage their estate together.

Mauprat resolves its initial social imbalance through a series of subtle status shifts. It is also an idealist text. Here, there is no class barrier to a potential romance²⁰ as both Edmée and Bernard are born of the same aristocratic origins. However, Bernard's incapacity to act the part of his birthright requires assiduous study and self-advancement. Edmée is not left unchanged in the narrative, either. Sand modifies her personality (and physical appearance) to mirror Bernard's linguistic and social efforts. This story of redemption – in Bernard's words, of transforming from wolf to man ("pour se

²⁰ The familial link between Bernard and Edmée is discomforting, but one must place this sort of objection to the side if one is to read Sand.

transformer de loup en homme,” 33) – is an idealist project. Bernard and Edmée work to deserve each other: they also work to right the wrongs of *both* sides of their aristocratic families.

The narrator of *Mauprat* is none other than Bernard himself. Older, wiser, and winkingly ironic towards the mistakes of his youth, Bernard the elder repeatedly reflects on his own language as well as that of others. Indeed, language – both in the literal sense of what language is being spoken and in the sense of social code and register – consistently intervenes in Bernard’s ability to navigate society and the judicial state. His lack of mastery of the linguistic codes necessary to his aristocratic standing imperils the primary romance of the novel and his wider reputation.

In investigating the role of multilingualism in *Mauprat*, the analysis will be split in two. First, genuine multilingualism in the text is explored – the inclusion of other languages, the metatextual commentary this inclusion necessitates, and indications of translation that imply an expanded linguistic universe beyond the novel’s surface. Second, the focus moves more broadly to the mastery of social codes, inseparable from education and linguistic register. *Mauprat* thus reveals that Sand’s idealist promise of integration depends not on the free circulation of difference, but on its disciplined mediation through acquired linguistic competence.

Though very little explicit linguistic diversity appears in *Mauprat*, many pivotal characters – chief among them Patience and Marcasse – are mediated through translation for both the in-text interlocutor and the reader. Despite an entire interlude set in America, where Bernard fights in the American Revolution, no English appears in the novel. In fact, there is just one line in the novel rendered in a language that is not Standard French. This exclamation occurs early on and is uttered by Sylvain, a friend – or more accurately, a lackey – of the young and willful Bernard. Bernard, still living with his uncles, has killed Patience’s pet owl. After being rebuked (and beaten with a switch) by Patience for this crime,²¹ Bernard is riven by two contrary emotions: a desire for vengeance and shame for having wronged someone. Sylvain was present the fateful day of the owl’s death, but he left Bernard to his punishment. As a result, Bernard often takes out his resentment on his friend. Hunting where they shouldn’t be, Sylvain, the lookout, returns and says, “J’avisse eul meneu’ d’loupes anc eul preneu’ d’taupes” (63) as a warning that Marcasse the mole catcher is nearby. Sand’s linguistic strategy here provides an interesting contrast to the “translated” speeches of more prominent characters examined below. Unlike in *Jeanne*, narratorial voice plays no role in mediating this utterance. There is no reflection on linguistic origin, subjectivity, or language attitude contained in this short, partially translated line. The only narratorial reflection, tellingly, is about class. Despite being on the receiving end of poor treatment, Sylvain defends Bernard and is loyal to him. Reflecting on this friendship, Bernard says, “Ce sont les âmes douces et résignées du peuple qui entretiennent l’orgueil et la rudesse des grands” (63). Bernard’s mastery of social codes emerges here: he is aware that he and Sylvain occupy vastly different social domains, and the gratitude he evinces towards this lost friend (after all, the narration is many decades in the future) is evidence of his successful socialization.

In the text, this statement is italicized; it is also preceded by the adverb “textuellement.” The phrase is neither glossed in the text nor fully translated in the footnotes. However, individual words “j’avisse” (“je vois”), “eul” (“le”), and “anc” (“avec”) – have footnote definitions provided below the text. The italicization marks it as being distinct from the surrounding sentences. Additionally,

²¹ Patience tells Bernard, “Tu es un menteur, un infâme, tu m’as arraché ma seule société, ma seule richesse, tu t’es réjoui dans le mal. Que Dieu te préserve de vivre si tu dois continuer ainsi” (57).

Bernard knows exactly what Sylvain said – the two thus share a language. In his reported dialogue, we get the Standard French we would expect of the present-day, reformed narrator. His truth attestation – that the utterance is reported “textuellement” – implies an attentiveness to linguistic difference that exceeds the demands of narrative clarity. The intrigue of this utterance lies in its uniqueness: its inclusion is not motivated by plot necessity but by Sand’s selective staging of linguistic difference. Sylvain is, ultimately, narratively marginal in a way that other characters of similar linguistic background are not – he does not reappear in the novel, nor is additional information provided about him.

In contrast to Sylvain, who is briefly glossed and then swiftly passed over, two key characters – the recluse Patience and the mole-catcher Marcasse – only speak via translation. The epigraph to this chapter becomes relevant here. Because the content of what these two men say is central to the narrative, the manner of their expression must be bypassed. This establishes Bernard as the multilingual link between characters of different classes and linguistic competencies. Bernard frequently uses a formula familiar from the rest of Sand’s *œuvre*: translation, while necessary, loses something of the grace and beauty of the initial utterance.²² He is uniquely positioned: fully understanding the language of Patience and Marcasse, he is able to seamlessly mediate in the novelistic universe. This gesture acknowledges linguistic difference without explicitly detailing that difference.²³ Take, for example, the following description that Bernard provides of Patience’s speech:

Ainsi raisonnait Patience; et croyez bien *qu’en traduisant sa parole dans notre langue méthodique je lui ôte toute sa grâce, toute sa verve et toute son énergie*. Mais qui pourrait redire l’expression textuelle de Patience? Son langage n’appartenait qu’à lui seul; c’était un composé du vocabulaire borné, mais vigoureux, des paysans, et des métaphores les plus hardies des poètes, dont il enhardissait encore le tour poétique. À cet idiome mélangé, son esprit synthétique donnait l’ordre et la logique. Une incroyable abondance naturelle suppléait à la concision de l’expression propre. Il fallait voir quelle lutte téméraire sa volonté et sa conviction livraient à l’impuissance de ses formules; tout autre qui lui n’eût pu s’en tirer avec honneur; et je vous assure que, pour qui songeait à quelque chose de plus sérieux qu’à rire de ses solécismes et de ses hardiesses, il y avait dans cet homme matière aux plus importantes observations sur le développement de l’esprit humain, et à la plus tendre admiration pour la beauté morale primitive. (120; emphasis added)

The pointed evocation of “our methodical language” implies a linguistic community to which the narrator and reader belong, but which excludes Patience. The aesthetic appreciation of Patience’s language coexists with an acknowledgment that it cannot be adequately rendered within the discourse of the novel. Patience’s unique linguistic position – using the vocabulary of the peasantry but speaking with a poetic turn – also explains the supposed failure of Bernard’s translation. Sand

²²This is, of course, an evident link with Pushkin’s “translation” of Tatiana’s letter to Eugene in *Eugene Onegin*. Ah, how beloved is the trope of the lost original!

²³ Even acknowledging that words were in another language without revealing their true provenance is common in Sand’s works. Consider the following passage from *Le meunier d’Angibault*, for example: “Il comprenait les améliorations qu’avec un peu d’argent comptant (le fruit défendu au paysan) on eût pu apporter à la machine rustique. Il eut bientôt appris *en patois les noms techniques* de chaque pièce et de chaque fonction” (emphasis added). Even in *Indiana* non-standard uses of language are kept hidden from the reader. When Noun, the creole maid, writes to Raymon, her poor mastery of French is only described rather than reported directly, and the consequence is the swift abatement of Raymon’s feelings for her as he turns his attention to her more literate mistress: “la pauvre fille à demi sauvage de l’île Bourbon ignorait même qu’il y eût des règles à la langue” (77).

tests how far social elevation can extend beyond rank: Patience is allowed to inhabit an extra-social register because he is, from the start, clearly an exception. The line between individual, subjective expression and the duties imposed by a larger, imagined language community is the tension of adhering to an idealized standard language. Such stakes are quite starkly present in this excerpt: what is the good of Patience's artful language when we as an audience can only receive his language through a mediator? Sand indicates aesthetic value in Patience's linguistic difference; there is a sense that his expression would not survive transcription into the "methodical" language of the text. The reader thus loses access to a language we *know* is beautiful: we cannot hope to acquire Patience's linguistic capacities. In the multilingual France of this era, that is a closing off of an entire expressive world.

The question that emerges is thus: does Sand's treatment of multilingual characters widen the path of exchange, or rather narrow it, by subsuming diversity of utterances to the narratorial voice? Sand's writing feels categorically distinct from the flattening language of Flaubert, for instance. Sand straddles changing times and shifting genre expectations: she signals the presence of diversity consistently and empathetically, while also carefully limiting direct access to it. The idealist project requires maintaining a middle ground – different languages can exist in the novelistic universe, but they can only appear to the reader if translated. If characters undertake the process of self-transformation, they must begin with enough differences for the reconciliation to seem unlikely and intriguing at the start. At the same time, Sand allows for enough human capacity for change so that her characters can reduce the depth of those differences. While Patience's actual speech is too alternative for a Parisian reading audience, encountering a figure *like* him and knowing he exists is still important.

Patience is not the only character subject to invisible acts of extra-textual translation. Marcasse, while never elevated to the same level of linguistic play and mastery as Patience, is nonetheless understood to inhabit yet another "third" position of linguistic ability. His dialogue comes to us mediated as well. At the trial for Edmée's shooting, which Bernard seems sure to lose, Marcasse is one of the only witnesses who could have testified to Bernard's innocence. However, at a pivotal moment in the text, his lack of mastery of Standard French quite literally imperils Bernard. Bernard bemoans, "Qui empêcherait mes ennemis de me nuire et de paralyser tous mes moyens? Qui combattrait pour moi, en un mot? Que pouvait Marcasse *dans son obscure condition et son langage énigmatique*?" (282; emphasis added). The stakes of non-mastery become painfully clear in the logic of this novelistic universe: despite Bernard's capacity to translate, his unique comprehension of the languages around him does not enable a wider diffusion of or interest in mutual comprehension. This is presented as a failure solely of Marcasse; at no level of the text is there an implication that the audience is at fault for their ignorance of Marcasse's language. The judicial state in which Bernard is caught reveals itself to be procedurally hostile towards multilingualism. Laws and power explicitly require adherence to standard language.

The question of social capital as it relates to linguistic mastery is a more complicated consideration than literal and implied multilingualism – after all, learning a language is a clear acquisition of a demonstrable skill. It is much harder to know if one has succeeded in acquiring the accoutrements of a social stratum. Bernard must change his behavior and seek self-improvement both to ensure his successful class integration and to secure the affections of Edmée. Before undertaking his project of self-improvement, Bernard is in the unenviable position of failing to act the part of the aristocrat he was born to be. His unique position as both translator and mediator is a direct reflection of his evolution from outsider to insider. Multilingualism thus uneasily joins social register to prompt

questions about spoken languages and institutional legitimacy. Bourdieu provides a helpful insight into this phenomenon:

In fact, the use of language, the manner as much as the substance of discourse, depends on the social position of the speaker, which governs the access he can have to the language of the institution, that is, to the official, orthodox and legitimate speech. It is the access to the legitimate instruments of expression, and therefore the participation in the authority of the institution, which makes all the difference – irreducible to discourse as such – between the straightforward imposture of masqueraders who disguise a performative utterance as a descriptive or constative statement, and the authorized imposture of those who do the same thing with the authorization and the authority of an institution. (109)

As Bourdieu notes, access to legitimate language confers authority; Bernard's challenge is precisely to gain this linguistic and social legitimacy. Bernard is potentially such an authority. He is an aristocrat, a landowner, and the would-be adopted son of his rich, educated, and decidedly *Ancien Régime* great-uncle. Yet his disinterest in managing his estate, his ignorance of pecuniary matters, and his quick condemnation of his uncle's class prejudices cement his position as both thoroughly institutional and yet exceptional. His stubborn early refusal to master the social codes around him is a flaunting of his aristocratic destiny. As Bourdieu states, true power lies in the ability to play with expected linguistic utterance: if you have enough social capital, you can speak as you wish. But in specific circumstances – like the circumstances in which Bernard finds himself – you will disadvantage yourself if you do not know the register to inhabit. Sand uses *Mauprat* to question what successful class and ideological education might look like: what individual traits are required for this kind of social mastery? And if one lacks said traits, is it possible to acquire the capacity to accept such socialization? Key to answering both of these questions is the attainment of social facility.

Politeness and social graces are described as a language in and of themselves. Bernard, though more wolf than man, is able to completely transform his behavior. The potential mastery of social forms implies a hopeful vision of self-transformation – in a word, idealism. At the start of the novel, Bernard has difficulty in accepting social niceties, and an even harder time producing them himself. His struggle comes from the now classic Sandian problem of confusing the form for the content. Bernard's novelistic task is to master social graces while retaining his correct sense of their ethical emptiness. At the home of his great-uncle, he attempts to reply to his uncle's inquiries about his health and well-being: "J'essayais d'être poli et reconnaissant; mais les expressions dont je me servais ressemblaient si peu aux siennes que je me troublai et souffris de ma grossièreté sans pouvoir me rendre compte" (97). Bernard can sense that "correct" formulas exist somewhere in the linguistic register to which he has partial access: however, his inability to reciprocate is interpreted as a failure. This politeness transcends typical class boundaries: Bernard, though "well-born" and biologically related to the master of the house, is nonetheless socially bested even by the servants in the household:

Cette politesse que je trouvais dans tout le monde, depuis le maître de la maison jusqu'au dernier des serviteurs, me causait un malaise inouï, bien qu'elle me frappât d'admiration; car, n'eût-elle pas été inspirée par la bienveillance qu'on me portait, il m'eût été impossible de comprendre qu'elle pouvait être une chose bien distincte de la bonté. Elle ressemblait si peu à la faconde gasconne et railleuse de Mauprat, qu'elle était pour moi comme *une langue tout à fait nouvelle que je comprenais, mais que je ne pouvais parler*. (101; emphasis added)

Performance of these social rites is required for inclusion in polite society, even among servants. Bernard is able to recognize that the formulas used to address him are entirely devoid of any sense of genuine affection or moral goodness. His clarity about the ethical limitations of his interlocutors cuts right through the facility they have with social forms. Patience and Marcasse's shining, noble spirits are visible even through the layer of linguistic interpretation placed over their speech in the narration. Social niceties, which Bernard must master, are insufficient to cover moral lack.

Bernard's inability to master the social codes of his family not only makes his time in his adoptive father's house uncomfortable; it also actively threatens his romantic suit of his aunt Edmée. She is quite clear that she finds Bernard's social attitudes and emotional volatility undesirable. As she tells him, "Je ne vous appartiendrai jamais...si vous ne changez pas de langage, de manières, et de sentiments" (123). The areas for personal improvement – language, manners, and sentiments – imply both internal and external transformation. While language and manners refer to the more superficial social exchanges Bernard must master, changing his *sentiments* implies a mental and emotional restructuring. Edmée places all three on equal footing. Edmée's critique of Bernard's language, the first item on her list, is literal. There is an implication that Bernard's ability to understand and translate the words of Patience for the reader may have been due to having mastered *only* the peasant register up to this point: speaking (and narrating) like a well-born aristocrat came later. Edmée continues her admonitions in even stronger language:

Vous corriger de vos mauvaises habitudes, ouvrir l'oreille aux bons conseils, le cœur aux préceptes de la morale. Vous êtes un sauvage, Bernard, et soyez bien sûr que ce n'est ni votre gaucherie à faire un salut ni votre ignorance à tourner un compliment qui me choquent en vous. Au contraire, ce serait à mes yeux un charme très grand s'il y avait de grandes idées et de nobles sentiments sous cette rudesse. Mais vos sentiments et vos idées sont comme vos manières, et c'est là ce que je ne puis souffrir. Je sais que ce n'est pas votre faute, et, si je vous voyais décidé à vous corriger, je vous aimerais autant à cause de vos défauts qu'à cause de vos qualités. (125)

Desire for personal improvement emerges as the primary sign of growth; Edmée states that she would even be charmed by mistakes as evidence of Bernard's attempts at progress. Bernard's extreme resistance to education is a stubbornness he forces himself to overcome. That same obstinacy, however, also leads to rapid learning when he finally applies himself. After dedicating himself to studying, Edmée approvingly begins to guide him:

Edmée avait une sorte de direction occulte sur mes études; elle voulut que l'on ne m'enseignât pas le latin, assurant qu'il était trop tard pour consacrer plusieurs années à une science de luxe, et que l'important était de former mon cœur et ma raison avec des idées, au lieu d'orner mon esprit avec des mots (151).²⁴

²⁴ Edmée is not his only teacher by example, however. His American friend Arthur – who also becomes involved in freeing Bernard from jail during the disastrous trial – is also a source of moral and practical education. "Il me révéla une grande partie du monde physique; mais ce qu'il m'apprit de plus précieux fut de m'habituer à me connaître moi-même et à réfléchir sur mes impressions. Je parvins à gouverner mes mouvements jusqu'à un certain point. Je ne me corrigerai jamais de l'orgueil et de la violence. On ne change pas l'essence de son être, mais on dirige vers le bien ses facultés diverses ; on arrive presque à utiliser ses défauts; c'est au reste le grand secret et le grand problème de l'éducation" (182).

The contrast here between “*former*” and “*orner*” is startling. In the list of improvements Edmée had previously suggested, “manners” are exactly the type of ornament one might contrast with an inner transformation. But “manners” are, for Edmée, critical: it is not self-indulgent for Bernard to practice the art of conversation. In the specific domain of book learning, however, the external and the superficial are subsidiary to a moral and internal transformation.

Consider the question Bernard poses to his listeners/readers: “Y a-t-il en nous des penchants invincibles, et l’éducation peut-elle les modifier seulement ou les détruire?” (44). What we can and cannot change in ourselves is the guiding problematic of this novel. Bernard’s morality is, from the start, redeemable. He repeatedly emphasizes that he takes no pleasure in the pain and sadism inflicted on others by his uncles: he does not partake in their criminal behavior for as long as he can help it. He explains his lack of participation with a mixture of nurtured goodness from the influence of his mother and a natural, internal resistance to the enjoyment of brutality: “Quand je fus transplanté à la Roche-Mauprat, je ne pus éprouver pour le mal qui s’y faisait qu’une répulsion instinctive, assez faible peut-être, si la peur ne s’y fût mêlée” (44). Bernard’s torture at the hands of his uncle Jean renders him incapable of enjoying inflicting pain on others. Rather than being redeemed from total inhumanity, therefore, Bernard’s true, good nature is merely uncovered and refined by his education. The development of tools to communicate that goodness through appropriate language is the true object of his education. Bernard must uncover and “*orner*” his natural tendency towards goodness in order to attain both Edmée as romantic partner and the social status he is due.

As discussed above, one of Sand’s favorite tropes is elevation and devaluation of her primary romantic pairing. In several novels – *Nanon* (1872) and *Le meunier d’Angibault* (1845),²⁵ for example – *mésalliance* is solved through careful shifting of the economic and social fortunes of the characters until class difference is overcome by upward (or downward) social mobility. *Mauprat*, though technically without *mésalliance*, nonetheless contains a mismatch of social polish. Edmée’s protector, the priest, is consistently against her union with Bernard, and he repeatedly tells her that she couldn’t be married to such a “savage” as him. Bernard’s brutality and language are highlighted as clear impediments to such a match; as the priest says, “Mais quand même cet homme aurait de l’affection et des égards pour vous, songez-vous à l’impossibilité de vous entendre, à la grossièreté de ses idées, à la bassesse de son langage? Le cœur se lève de dégoût à l’idée d’une telle association; *et dans quelle langue parleriez-vous*, grand Dieu ?” (143; emphasis added). Their social and educational differences are reframed in linguistic terms. Since Bernard is our omnipresent narrative mediator, we cannot know what language he is speaking any more than we can have direct access to the speech of a character like Patience. However, the priest’s objection suggests that Bernard’s speech is marked by a form of linguistic difference – likely associated with rural or dialectal usage, such as Berrichon – which would align with his role as mediator. It is no accident that the priest’s concern is framed through a lack of linguistic similitude: the use of the word “sauvage” implies that from his perspective, Edmée and Bernard might as well be different species.

Edmée is also subject to Sand’s puppet strings before her eventual union with Bernard. Both her beauty and her fortune alter (for the worse) before they can marry. When Bernard returns from fighting in the American Revolution, Edmée’s transformation is revealed:

²⁵ As Schor writes, “*Le Meunier* enables both couples to eventually marry, but by changing their fortunes so they are on more-or-less equal footing. Biermann rightly points out that the supposed cross-class fusion in Sand is nothing but a myth fabricated by Lanson and uncritically reinscribed by subsequent readers” (116).

Elle avait donc vaincu son caractère d'une manière héroïque. Dans une de ces luttes obscures qui s'accomplissent souvent sous nos yeux sans que nous en soupçonnions le mérite, elle avait fait plus que de dompter son caractère, elle avait changé jusqu'à la circulation de son sang. Je la trouvai maigrie, et son teint avait perdu cette première fleur de la jeunesse, qui est comme la fraîche vapeur que l'haleine du matin dépose sur les fruits et qui s'enlève au moindre choc extérieur, bien que l'ardeur du soleil l'ait respectée. (205)

Edmée, we later discover, had to “conquer” an internal sexual desire for Bernard before being able to “deserve” him; it was attraction to him *without his meriting it* which she manages, finally, to quell. Her physical beauty is understood to have been wasted in this effort. In addition, due to a combination of her generosity and a lack of knowledge of economics, she over-spent her fortune in giving alms, and Patience, the illiterate hermit, is tasked with running the estate in her stead. It is not merely, then, that Bernard improves himself; Edmée also loses her beauty (though Bernard claims to find her even more beautiful than ever) as well as her fortune. Sand excels in these maneuvers of elevation and descent, constantly adjusting the personal and educational backgrounds of her characters to make their romantic pairings narratively plausible.

Bernard is not the only character on the receiving end of an education. Patience – the sage in the tower – constantly battles between a desire to learn and an incapacity to retain information or formally structure his knowledge. The priest's repeated failures to get Patience to learn how to read are a recurrent source of disappointment. Consider the following description of Patience's early education:

Le ciel lui avait départi une haute intelligence; mais l'éducation lui avait manqué, et, par une sorte de fatalité inconnue, son cerveau avait été complètement rebelle au peu d'instruction qu'il avait été à même de recevoir...C'était une nature éminemment contemplative, douce, et indolente, mais fière, et poussant jusqu'à la sauvagerie l'amour de l'indépendance; religieuse, mais ennemie de toute règle. (48)

Despite numerous similarities between Bernard and Patience – chief among them pride – Patience is ultimately untrainable. He never succeeds in learning to read, and though he proves to be a valuable and talented manager of the estate, it's understood to be thanks to his innate wisdom rather than any active study or mastery. Bernard reflects on the irony of their personal similarities in light of their wildly diverging fates:

Comme lui, j'avais été inculte; comme lui, j'avais cherché au dehors l'explication de mon être, comme on cherche le mot d'une énigme. Grâce aux circonstances fortuites de la naissance et de la richesse, j'étais arrivé à un développement complet, tandis que Patience se débattit jusqu'à la mort dans les ténèbres d'une ignorance dont il ne voulait ni ne pouvait sortir. (121)

By the end of the novel, Bernard considers his own moral and scholarly education complete: he has mastered his “wolfish” nature. He is clearly conscious of his social position, which has enabled and guaranteed this transition. It is only due to his birth and fortune that he escaped a similar fate to Patience, and the two verbs – *vouloir* and *pouvoir* – imply that desire is a prerequisite for the capacity to educate oneself. Education and self-improvement require two things: an internal conviction that one should and can acquire knowledge and also the structural conditions, social and economic, necessary for that realization. Patience represents a missed opportunity, though he still ends up

being largely responsible for keeping the community of the estate together. He also embodies a hidden diglossia: within the community, multiple languages are presumably used in different circumstances. Yet these remain invisible to the reader. Patience is never speaking the “French” in which his words appear. With Bernard, Sand’s idealist project can be realized; exceptional by birth and circumstance, and probably also by nature, Bernard proves himself capable of eventually integrating into the aristocratic milieu of his family through personal diligence and self-transformation. Take his early admonition to his youthful listeners as an indication of an idealist vision in which equity, through the vehicle of education and social integration, is seen as a desirable threat to the current unequal social order:

Les lumières de l’éducation, une sorte de bon goût, reflet lointain d’une cour galante, et peut-être le pressentiment d’un réveil prochain et terrible du peuple, pénétraient dans les châteaux et jusque dans le manoir à demi rustique des gentillâtres. Même dans nos provinces du centre, les plus arriérées par leur situation, le sentiment de l’équité sociale l’emportait déjà sur la coutume barbare. (38)

Though “the people” are evoked as a powerful, inevitable force of social change, the motivation behind their presumed violence is clearly good: social equity. Bernard and Patience are demonstrations in the contrast of fate. Only Bernard, due to his proximity to wealth and the expectations of his birth, is able to escape from his ignorance. It is Bernard’s mastery of language – forever denied to Patience – that is central to his social and moral success. From the perspective of equality, Sand seems to be interested in a national linguistic standard. Without everyone speaking the same way, how could legal battles be won, or romantic suits be recognized, or social change be possible? Presumably, society is changing to allow any person to make a similar transformation away from whatever “barbarism” might still exist – a “barbarism” associated, above all, with languages that deviate from the standard.

In spite of Sand’s famous intrigues, in *Mauprat* specifically, Bernard and Edmée are the only characters who truly transform. Patience and Marcasse, in a testament to their integrity, never change. But as discussed, this inviolable interiority ends up having severe consequences for them. Bernard’s great-uncle, the chevalier, also has a hard time accepting the social upheavals of his time. Moral education does not seem to follow the same trajectory of eventual mastery as, say, the acquisition of social register. Something about the origin of the chevalier – his aristocratic lineage – makes him a master of empty grace, and he is unable to develop an appreciation for people from a variety of social backgrounds. In assessing his uncle, for example, Bernard says: “Il était pieux, équitable, plein de charité; mais, chez lui, comme chez la plupart des gentilshommes, les préceptes de l’humilité chrétienne venaient échouer devant l’orgueil du rang” (98). His politeness is stylistic, ritualistic, and entirely tied to his class rather than any genuine interest in others. Edmée and Bernard, perhaps due to their youth, represent the new generation: they have a flexibility in temperament and intelligence that allows adaptation.

Mauprat thus presents a two-fold perspective on the dual question of multilingualism and social cohesion. Key to Bernard’s ability to be socially and romantically accepted is his willingness to alter his language to suit the demands of rank and economic circumstances. For all her idealism, Sand was still intimately interested in the question of fixed human nature; as Schor writes, “Sand never stopped grappling with reconciling the social contract theories inherited from the Revolution with notions of heredity that passed disturbed but not destroyed from feudalism to positivism” (154). What one can change – language, manners, education level – is what enables social contract ideals to

prevail in her writing. Sand repeatedly acknowledges the multilingual environment in *Mauprat*. But her refusal to show it fully is a balance between a flattening and a sociological rendering of difference. For a novel which traffics so explicitly in linguistic mastery, there is consistent avoidance of detailed descriptions of the variety it so clearly seeks to represent. *Mauprat*, then, presents a dual vision: social and linguistic competence are both tools and tests of moral and personal development. Sand carefully modulates access to multilingualism and social mastery, showing that transformation is possible – but contingent on both individual effort and structural advantage.

2.3 Sand's experiment with "pure" Berrichon: *Jeanne* and the stylistic pitfalls of idealist multilingualism

Jeanne (1844) is an adventure tale, a mystery, and a striking portrait of the rites and beliefs of France's peasant class.²⁶ The novel begins in 1816, when three men stumble upon a beautiful girl sleeping in what is rumored to be a fairy cave. They all make wishes for her future, leaving coins in her hand. Four years later, a twist of fate brings one of the men – Guillaume – back to the same countryside, where a series of coincidences leads him to the funeral of his former wet nurse. She has a daughter – Jeanne – who is revealed to be the girl from the cave four years before. Guillaume is noble; Jeanne is a peasant. She vows that she will never marry and is deeply religious, a faith which combines in unorthodox ways with her folk superstitions. Guillaume falls in love with his "sœur de lait," as do the other two members of the original trio: the devious Léon Marsillat and the sincere Englishman Arthur. After the death of her mother and the burning of her home in a freak lightning strike, Jeanne has nowhere to go. Guillaume brings her back to his country estate where she lives among his family and interacts with other nobles. Jeanne's strong convictions often cause friction. Her manner of speaking and her illiteracy are frequent subjects of conversation – and, to Guillaume's mother, proof that Jeanne and her son could never marry. Jeanne receives and rebuffs an offer of marriage from Arthur. She is increasingly alienated from the wealth and ease of her social betters and misses her former life; she repeatedly tells Guillaume that they are not from the same world. As tensions mount, Jeanne decides to leave quietly in the night to return to the true countryside. On her way, Marsillat abducts her – Guillaume and Arthur follow, hoping to rescue her, and learn that Guillaume and Jeanne are in fact biological brother and sister. When the men arrive to liberate Jeanne, they find that she has jumped from a window to protect herself from Marsillat. Ultimately, she dies, having made good on her promise to never marry.

In her 1853 introduction, Sand claims that the novel was the natural precursor to her celebrated *romans champêtres*.²⁷ As she writes:

Jeanne est une première tentative qui m'a conduit à faire plus tard *la Mare au Diable*, *le Champi*, et *la Petite Fadette*. La vierge d'Holbein m'avait toujours frappé comme un type mystérieux où je ne pouvais voir qu'une fille des champs rêveuse, sévère et simple: la candeur infinie de l'âme, par conséquent un sentiment profonde dans une méditation vague, où les idées ne se forment point. *Cette femme primitive, cette vierge de l'âge d'or, où la trouver dans la société moderne?*

²⁶ Sand explicitly discusses how this was her first foray into the *feuilleton* genre, expressing both excitement for the challenge and dismay over not being able to reach the stylistic heights of its most famous practitioners of the age, Alexandre Dumas and Eugène Sue. This book, then, can be understood as an experiment on multiple levels for Sand – genre, thematic, and linguistic.

²⁷ This introduction to the text is not only temporally removed both from the original publication of *Jeanne* but also post-dates the celebrated triptych of *La mare au diable* (1846), *François le Champi* (1847), and *La Petite Fadette* (1849).

Du moment qu'elle sait lire et écrire, elle ne vaut pas moins, sans doute, mais elle est autre, et appartient à un autre genre de description. (2; emphasis added)

The way Sand describes her source of inspiration – mysterious, dreamlike, and meditative – might seem oddly discordant with the prevailing style of the *romans champêtres*, which are framed as genuine artifacts of the communities they represent. Though simplicity does predominate in the stylistic repertoire of the *romans champêtres*, there is also plenty of interest in legend, folk tales, and traditional forms of knowledge. *La mare au diable* revolves around a mysterious pool in the woods where generations of local residents fear to go; *La petite Fadette* features a woman rumored to be a witch for her uncanny ability to locate people and objects. Sand's description of Jeanne as a "primitive" woman separates Jeanne and her regional compatriots from "modern" French society – a distinction notably effected by literacy. In staging a confrontation between the old world and the new, Sand stumbled upon a richness of subject matter which she would further refine in the *romans champêtres*. The charm of the countryside is not the primary subject of *Jeanne*, however. This novel functions less as an ethnographic portrait of particular customs and more as a staging ground for a series of social oppositions – rural vs. urban, primitive vs. modern, illiterate vs. educated, and faithful vs. cynical/non-believing. Part of the charm of the *romans champêtres* is the absence of these dichotomies: except for the introductory conversations between the author and a "friend," as in *La mare au diable*, Sand preserves the sanctity of the countryside in these later tales.

One formal aspect also sets *Jeanne* apart from the *romans champêtres*, and indeed from most of the works in Sand's *œuvre*: the almost overwhelming inclusion of other languages and consideration of accent. Even when she achieves country-custom verisimilitude, Sand shies away later in her career from including more than an occasional word or two in a language other than Standard French. *Mauprat* exemplifies the tension between Sand's acknowledgement of France's multilingualism and her deliberate efforts to limit the reader's actual contact with non-Standard French. In contrast, *Jeanne* fully explores the multilingual reality of its characters, providing an unusually generous representation of linguistic diversity. The novel also features familiar reflections on how language operates as a tool or signifier of social belonging. However, there is a cost to this preponderance of diversity: *Jeanne* is about the death, literal and metaphorical, of a way of life. Multilingualism thus forms one side of a broader dichotomy, ultimately giving way to its modern counterpart: the monolingual standardization of French. Unlike in *Mauprat*, where linguistic mediation facilitates narrative ease, *Jeanne* stages a form of multilingualism that forecloses readerly sympathy. The proliferation of languages does not widen access but rather fixes Jeanne in a position that resists narration and integration.

There are three primary considerations regarding *Jeanne's* multilingualism. The first involves examples of actual multilingualism and how they are treated meta-textually. The second is Sand's reflections on belonging and non-belonging to various communities, which is mediated by mastery of linguistic and social codes. Third and finally is the role that education and knowledge acquisition play within the novel, specifically as regards re-accessing lost linguistic competencies. The fate of Jeanne, and of the "old world" she represents belies the seeming progressiveness of linguistic representation in this text. Sand's idealism requires adaptation and integration: *Jeanne* demonstrates in no uncertain terms the consequences of holding onto the past. Rather than a celebration of diversity, this dark novel plays out the fate of communities left behind in France's unifying project.

Rather than attempting to index the countless instances of multilingualism in this text, it is more fruitful to give a general overview of when multilingualism appears and how it is treated. There are a

few key rules for how Sand treats other languages in *Jeanne*. First, Berrichon – and here it is explicitly identified as being Berrichon, unlike the unspecified languages spoken in texts like *Mauprat* – is always italicized, unless an entire utterance is in Berrichon (which only happens with the character of Cadet, a fellow peasant and Jeanne's friend). Second, glossing of words happens in three distinct ways: either a definition is provided in the footnotes, the translation is provided in parentheticals within the utterance itself, or no gloss is provided at all, which seems to be the case for any word “close enough” to Standard French to be easily understood. Finally, narratorial commentary and intervention play a key role in framing multilingualism for the reader. Oftentimes, the narratorial perspective communicates both insider knowledge and outsider status simultaneously. In other words, the narrator has enough contact with (and genuine knowledge of) the language community being described to be able to accurately translate and describe unfamiliar customs to her reading audience. Nonetheless, there is also a clear indication (often through the pronoun “nous”) that she herself does *not* belong to the Berrichon-speaking, peasant community being described. Taken together, these formal strategies ensure that in *Jeanne*, linguistic difference is never presented without mediation. Unlike in *Mauprat*, where behind-the-scenes translation functions as a mechanism of narrative and social ease, in *Jeanne* the proliferation of glosses, typographical markers, and narratorial interventions fixes linguistic difference as an obstacle to be overcome.

While the strategies for metatextual treatment are neatly separated above, often all three occur at once. The italicization/parenthetical treatment of words occurs right alongside glossing in various forms as in, for example, “Il ne lui reste qu'un peu de bestiau, trois ou quatre *ouailles*, *quat'* ou cinq chèvres, et sa *chétite* maison...” (35). Written in a footnote below the word “*chétite*” is “Chétive, mauvaise, méchante.” The other italicized words remained un-glossed, presumably because they are close enough to their Standard French equivalents to be easily understood. It is difficult to know what metric Sand used to evaluate the distance between the Berrichon and Standard French lexicons. Even in the above quotation, the standard “quatre” occurs with the italicized, truncated “*quat'*.” “*Ouaille*” also appears in italics, and though it is certainly in a different register (literary), it isn't lexically distinct from Berrichon.²⁸ Non-standard forms of standard words, so long as the etymology is clear enough, are italicized but left untranslated in Jeanne's speech. On page 110, for example, she tells Guillaume “J'y suis *naissue*.” A few pages later, on 113, she uses a similarly conjugated past participle: “*connaissu*.” The ease of identifying the verb root of these forms explains the lack of metatextual support. Italics are also used simply to indicate accent, as in Cadet's speech, where a “z” is often added and italicized without having a lexical or grammatical role.

Sand's translation strategies are elastic and inconsistent. In-dialogue parenthetical glosses occur frequently, but not always with the same characters; footnotes occur sometimes but not always.²⁹ Italicization is used indiscriminately for both lexical items and to connote accent. A distinction seems to exist in Sand's mind between words a Standard French reader would recognize and those which are too “unfamiliar” to be easily understood. Sand's primary concern is not to cultivate sustained sensitivity to linguistic variation, but to regulate it in accordance with the perceived

²⁸ There are more glossed lexical items in this text than one dissertation could possibly account for. As a few examples, on page 36 “*affener*” is italicized in text and glossed as “rentrer du foin” in the footnotes, and on 55, “*bouriner*” and “*jafieter*” are glossed as “muser, perdre du temps pour en gagner” in the footnotes.

²⁹ And even the footnotes lack consistency; sometimes only the definition is provided, as in the examples above, while other times the unfamiliar word is repeated, often in a nominative/infinitive form, also italicized, before being followed by the definition in Standard French (as on page 313, “ne me *dessoubrez* pas mes vêtements” in which the italicized verb is glossed in the footnote as “1. *Dessoubrez*, déchirer”). Still other times, narratorial commentary accompanies the linguistic information.

capacities of her readership. Sand's inclusion of Berrichon serves a concrete stylistic and narrative purpose: this language belongs to the *past*, and it is used as a signal of those who are failing to integrate into France's present. The editorial interventions thus do more than signal the labor of mediation: they delineate the boundaries within which linguistic difference can appear, ensuring that it remains legible but contained.

Footnotes aren't the only method Sand has for glossing, however. More interesting is her occasional choice to gloss *mid-utterance*, providing in parentheses the definitions to words which would have otherwise been relegated to the *bas de page*. This strategy is most common with Jeanne herself. Take Jeanne's speech to Guillaume on page 64: "Elle a voulu venir me chercher aux champs parce qu'il faisait un rude temps comme aujourd'hui, et qu'elle a eu peur que je ne *peuve* pas passer le *rio* (le ruisseau) pour rentrer à la maison" (64). Both the non-standard conjugation of "pouvoir" and the Berrichon word "*rio*" are italicized: while it is possible to identify the verb from which "*peuve*" is formed, the narrator clearly believed "*rio*" was distinct enough to require translation for the reader. The parentheses are a visual interruption to Jeanne's discourse. Jeanne's speeches are often treated in similar fashion;³⁰ she thus never *really* speaks without some sort of intermediary. While footnotes seem like an objective editorial choice, parenthetical glosses embedded within her words make it difficult to separate out voices. The merging of gloss with speech itself begins to muddy the waters of authenticity, even when multilingualism is theoretically included to further emphasize Jeanne's identity as a distinctly Berrichon peasant.

It is valuable to pause and contrast Jeanne with Bernard Mauprat. Bernard, though lacking in social grace, civility, and education, is nonetheless able to narrate his own tale. He is his own intermediary, but Jeanne, a true peasant, is denied this role. Jeanne is narrated *for* us; her language is ceaselessly interrupted, emphasizing the distance between her utterances and our own. Sand's idealism thus has an absolute limit: the precision of Jeanne's identity and language foreclose the possibility of her taking narrative control. *Jeanne* reveals that Sand's idealist multilingualism only works when difference is temporary, educable, and mobile. When linguistic identity is fixed, idealism collapses into elegy.

Narratorial intervention is the crucial second component of the metatextual analysis in *Jeanne*. Either in footnotes or interspersed in dialogue, Sand's narrator makes her presence known as an authority and commentator upon multilingualism. Consider the following description of Guillaume's reaction to Cadet's speech:

Guillaume écumait d'indignation pendant ce beau discours *en pur Berrichon*, et il soutenait contre ses préservateurs superstitieux une lutte dont il allait sortir vainqueur, lorsque Jeanne reparut sur le seuil de la maison ébranlée par des craquements sinistres. (98; emphasis added)

The adjective "pur" is key: it connotes a sense of linguistic inviolableness while nonetheless being false. After all, the speech of Cadet's which Guillaume is responding to is decidedly *not* "pure" Berrichon, as its grammatical structure and most of its words are simply in Standard French. Instead, a few lexical items are thrown into the speech for variety's sake. In some ways, the effect of this

³⁰ See, for example, on page 186: "Mais voilà mes vaches qui ne mangent plus, la *mouche* les fait enrager. C'est l'heure de les conduire au *têt* (au toit, à l'étable)." Or, on 246 (in a speech from Jeanne to Sir Arthur): "Vous travaillez *trop bien!* Lui disait Jeanne, naïvement émerveillée de sa force et de son ardeur; jamais je n'ai vu un *bourgeois se prendre* (s'en acquitter) si bien."

effacement is to (falsely) indicate that the purest form of Berrichon is only a few lexical items away from Standard French. However, that has potentially dangerous consequences in the overall novelistic project. If these languages are close, then the worlds which their respective speakers belong to are not nearly so distant as we might believe. Sand needs Berrichon to connote at once foreignness and familiarity, a paradox the text labors under.

The narrator's commentary frequently invokes similarly evaluative statements about language. Following a long speech by Jeanne, the narrator observes:

Le lecteur me pardonnera, j'espère, de ne pas faire parler Jeanne correctement; mais bien que je sois forcé, pour être intelligible, de traduire son vieux langage, l'espèce de compromis que je hasarde entre le berrichon et le français de nos jours, ne m'oblige pas à employer cet affreux imparfait du subjonctif, inconnu aux paysans. (257)

This direct address to the reader is a mainstay of Sand's authorial style. There is a tension here over which linguistic compromises Sand is willing to make. Jeanne is somewhat betrayed: she doesn't speak "correctly," according to the prescriptions of Standard French grammar. However, Sand is loyal to Jeanne insofar as she does not force her to produce the imperfect subjunctive, a form of which she would have been entirely ignorant. Sand has a keen sense of what is or is not "believable" and must constantly negotiate the tension between comprehensibility and style. The "compromise" Sand evokes in *Jeanne* echoes the concessions which abound behind the scenes in *Mauprat*. On page 279 of *Jeanne*, Sand makes explicit that the "Berrichon" presented up to that point has been mediated for comprehensibility. This is as far as language diversity can be pushed in Sand's *œuvre*. In another footnote just a few pages later, Sand makes the following remark:

Nous avons conservé ce vieux mot; et si vous alliez parler de brebis chez nous, personne ne vous comprendrait, à moins que vous n'eussiez le soin de généraliser et de dire le *brebiage*; encore n'auriez-vous pas la prononciation, et l'on vous accuserait de parler le *chenfrais*, c'est-à-dire le français moderne. (279)

The pronouns here deserve careful attention. The "nous" implies a speaking/editing community at the helm of the novel which positions itself decidedly against the "vous" of its reading audience. Who, though, is included in the "nous"? Sand certainly doesn't consider herself part of the community of peasants she represents, and we have plenty of indications that this division is very clearly delineated in her mind.³¹ Nonetheless, an evoked "community" operating behind the text does imply a split between those who are familiar with the cultural and linguistic customs of Berry and those who are not. Familiarity with, however, does *not* necessarily imply belonging to.

Sand's primary method for determining belonging and non-belonging is language use and mastery of social codes. In her 1852 preface, Sand writes the following:

En mêlant Jeanne à des types de notre civilisation, je trouvai que j'atténuais la vraie grandeur que je lui avais rêvée, et que j'altérais sa simplicité nécessaire. Je fis un roman de contrastes,

³¹ An utterance as simple as the following shows how Sand clearly separates the peasants off from herself: in describing Jeanne collapsing after heroically rescuing the corpse of her mother from her burning cottage, she writes, "elle tomba en *faiblesse*, comme disent les paysans" (100). She might use the same terminology, but she is decidedly *not* a member of the "paysans" to which she refers.

comme ces contrastes de paysages et de mœurs dont j'ai parlé tout à l'heure ; mais je me sentis dérangé de l'oasis austère où j'aurais voulu oublier et faire oublier à mon lecteur le monde moderne et la vie présente. *Mon propre style, ma phrase me gênait. Cette langue nouvelle ne peignait ni les lieux, ni les figures que j'avais vues avec mes yeux et comprises avec ma rêverie.* Il me semblait que je barbouillais d'huile et de bitume les peintures sèches, brillantes, naïves et plates des maîtres primitifs, que je cherchais à faire du relief sur une figure étrusque, que je traduisais Homère en rebus, enfin que je profanais le nu antique avec des draperies modernes. (3; emphasis added)

A different language is needed for this project precisely because the subject Sand is describing is so far removed from her own reality. It is the “new” language of modernity which fails to capture the rural purity and antiquity of Jeanne’s milieu. Calling Standard French, or literary French, a “new” language is noteworthy at this historical moment. Its influence and ubiquity were, in fact, new for France. Berrichon, then, emerges as a vehicle through which Sand can add a patina to her descriptions. To “*faire parler les paysans*,” Sand halfheartedly resorts to a sort of multilingualism to reflect the linguistic and cultural milieu she is describing. *Jeanne* does not give free reign to Sand’s linguistic impulses; there is a constant push and pull behind the scenes of how much “original” language is allowed to bubble up to the narrative surface.

Characters within *Jeanne* often engage in lengthy reflections on how to talk to one another across divides of language and social status. Their awareness of the need to modulate their language, of the perceived insufficiency of their expressive capacity, is a consistent theme. This divide is starkly painted in racial terms: the *paysans* and the educated aristocrats are quite literally described as different races, clearly echoing the refrains of “sauvage” from *Mauprat*.³² Guillaume, the educated, wealthy aristocrat, often changes his language in order to talk to the illiterate and rustic Jeanne: “Jeanne, dit Guillaume *après avoir un peu cherché grâce à quelle forme de langage il pourrait se faire comprendre d’une paysanne*, vous m’avez appelé votre parrain, et cela me fait plaisir” (62; emphasis added). It is difficult for the reader to know if the novel ever accurately reflects Guillaume’s speech. Rather than reassuring the reader, the primary effect of the narrator’s constant interference is to lessen our faith in any truth attestation vis-à-vis language. The narrator’s preoccupation with language seeps into the reflections of the characters themselves – they all acknowledge needing to self-censor. Guillaume’s social awareness prompts him to articulate a recognition of difference. Jeanne herself is not ignorant of the disparity in expressive capacity between herself and Guillaume. After he asks her to listen carefully, she replies, “Vous parlez trop *comme il faut* pour que je ne vous écoute pas, mon parrain. Vous en savez plus long que moi, et je vous crois bien” (108). One of the most striking components of their linguistic exchanges is the consistency with which Guillaume says *tu* to Jeanne, and that Jeanne always says *vous* to her *parrain* in return.³³ She recognizes the supposed superiority of his

³² Marsillat, the uncontested villain of the story, provides such stark terms himself: “*La race du pays est comme cela*, reprit Marsillat; les filles jusqu’à seize ans, et les garçons jusqu’à vingt, sont tout petits et conservent des traits enfantins; ils se développent tout d’un coup, et deviennent grands et forts, lorsqu’on les croyait noués pour toujours. C’est la même chose pour les poulains et les taureaux” (11; emphasis added). Of course, voicing such thoughts through the mouth of the kidnapper/rabble rouser might in some ways serve to discredit the belief, but its very presence in the narrative places it into the general realm of contemporary opinions and positions as regards the rural vs. urban divide.

³³ Pronoun choice is a recurring theme in the narrative; Marsillat, for example, purposefully says *tu* to Jeanne in front of Guillaume to bother him: “qui affectait de tutoyer Jeanne, pour faire un peu souffrir ses deux rivaux” (220).

language and does not even try to approximate the way that Guillaume talks.³⁴ She says as much in a rousing speech to Guillaume, Arthur, and Marsillat:

Vous autres savants, vous avez vos idées, et nous avons les nôtres. Nous sommes simples, je le veux bien, mais nous voyons aux champs, où nous vivons de jour et de nuit, des choses que vous ne voyez pas et que vous ne connaîtrez jamais. Laissez-nous comme nous sommes. (220)

Belonging and non-belonging couldn't be more elegantly evoked: Jeanne explicitly names the divide between herself and her three wealthy acquaintances. While avoiding rudeness, she firmly and clearly states her desire to remain apart. Jeanne sees value in her separate identity and in her way of life.³⁵ This strength in conviction is perhaps why she is often compared, even in the forward, to Joan of Arc. Yet, like her namesake, her martyrdom is the cost of her conviction and comfort in difference. There is no space for Jeanne in modernity, nor language for her to use.

One final character deserves our attention: poor Arthur the Englishman, whose accented and grammatically imperfect French is a running joke throughout the novel. Sand's careful accounting of his linguistic faults is unusual. In *Mauprat*, an entire episode set in America fails to feature a single word of English. But Arthur's misgendered nouns and slips of the tongue are consistently brought to our attention. When introducing Arthur, the narrator describes him as having "un accent britannique bien marqué" (7). Guillaume and Marsillat often struggle to understand him, or delight in mocking his mistakes. Consider, for example, the following early exchange:

-Des hommes, et puis des hommes, reprit l'Anglais. -Comprends pas, dit Guillaume en souriant, à Marsillat. -Pas de maîtres et pas d'esclaves; des hommes et des hommes! Reprit sir Arthur, étonné de n'avoir pas été compris, lui qui croyait parler clair. (8)

The italics, which are in the text, provide an interesting implication: it is possible that Arthur's speech is italicized only when his speech is accurately reported, and too difficult to understand, while any *other* dialogue is least partially mediated by the narrator. It is true that Arthur's mistakes are almost always italicized, but the shifting of his language must itself be the result of hidden decisions around translation and comprehensibility.

The comedy arises from Arthur's errors coupled with his inability to recognize when he errs. It is a low form of mockery, of course, to have someone genuinely and guilelessly play the fool, but it's effective. The narrator, at least, affects to be somewhat charmed by Arthur's mistakes. Gendered

³⁴ Jeanne's unwillingness to change to integrate into the aristocratic, "civilized" world of Guillaume's family is remarked upon by the narrator as well: "Transplantée brusquement de sa vie sauvage à un état de civilisation, tout avait été incompréhensible pour Jeanne dans les commencements. Entre les besoins restreints de son existence rustique et les mille besoins artificiels des personnes aristocratiques qu'elle servait, il y avait un monde inconnu que sa pensée avait renoncé à franchir" (197).

³⁵ Jeanne is aware of her actual and perceived weaknesses: when Guillaume tells her she speaks well, she responds by saying, "-Oh! Non, mon parrain, je ne sais pas bien parler. -Tout ce que tu dis est d'un bon cœur pourtant. -Je ne puis pas avoir un mauvais cœur, puisque ma pauvre mère en avait un si bon! Mais pour bien parler, je ne peux pas: je n'ai jamais appris. -Tu n'as jamais été à l'école? -Non mon parrain, je n'avais pas le temps. -Mais tu sais lire? -Oh non, mon parrain! Je ne sais pas. -Et tu ne regrettes pas de ne pas le savoir? -Ça ne me servirait de rien. J'ai été élevée aux bêtes. C'est ça mon ouvrage" (76).

nouns are a source of difficulty, and Arthur often misgenders himself. “-Je voudrais voir *son* figure, dit l’Anglais qui, par quelques fautes de langue, donnait parfois, sans le savoir, un tour assez plaisant à ses discours ordinairement graves” (12).³⁶ The aesthetic pleasure of his grammatical faults is only felt by those in the know. In this particular instance, the readers join a community from which Arthur himself is excluded. This is a reinforcement of linguistic unity as an ideal: perfection of Standard Language enables mockery of those unable to produce faultless utterances. Interestingly, Marsillat is the one who often points out Arthur’s mistakes in-text. “Oui, Oui *mylord* est seul digne de contempler la *biouté*, dit Marsillat, en contrefaisant l’accent comique de Sir Arthur” (14). Marsillat’s villainy is evident early on: his ridicule of Arthur is yet another confirmation of the baseness of his character. However, Marsillat is merely the mouthpiece of general incomprehension and bafflement, and the text itself relies on Arthur’s faults for comic relief. Arthur’s blindness to his own linguistic impropriety seems to be indicative of a fundamental character trait, mirroring as it does his incapacity to recognize Jeanne’s true identity when she is dressed up as an English governess as an April Fool’s joke.

The response to Arthur’s accent and grammatical mistakes is proof of just how narrow the linguistic environment is for *Jeanne’s* characters – a remarkable fact when one thinks of the preponderance of Berrichon. If the characters of the novel were used to interacting with a variety of linguistic forms, Arthur’s imperfect French wouldn’t be unusual. Every character, not just the mean-spirited Marsillat, comments on Arthur’s French: Guillaume’s sister exclaims, “Comme ce grand Monsieur parle drôlement! disait Claudie surprise de l’accent britannique très-prononcé de Sir Arthur. – Tu vois bien qu’il parle anglais! lui répondit d’un air avisé Cadet, qui s’était rapproché d’elle.” (161). The international Arthur is proof of the new insularity of national linguistic traditions. Rather than effecting a *rapprochement*, his errors remain constant, and the other characters seem to delight in his lack of mastery rather than seeking to help Arthur with his French. Consolidation of language use is thus happening even in the midst of a supposedly varied linguistic environment.

Finally, on the subject of re-accessing lost competencies, Guillaume experiences a sort of linguistic re-awakening as he returns to the countryside of his childhood. This ends up being a point of tension in the fixed dichotomies outlined above. In an extended scene early in the novel, Guillaume overhears peasants speaking:

Et la vieille se mit à parler avec animation, mais en patois marchois, et quoique ce dialecte ne soit pas difficile à comprendre par lui-même, il devient inintelligible aux oreilles non exercées à cause de ses brusques élisions et de la volubilité que les femmes surtout mettent à le débiter. (31)

Guillaume’s initial difficulty comprehending is overcome with continued exposure: “Ce patois qu’il avait oublié, il se souvenait maintenant de l’avoir parlé avec sa nourrice avant de parler français, et peu à peu il se remettait à l’entendre comme sa langue maternelle” (32). Berrichon, not French, is revealed to be Guillaume’s native language.³⁷ Buried underneath the intervening years is the memory

³⁶ This isn’t the only example of Arthur’s misgendering. See, for example: “Je ne suis pas *amoureuse*, dit l’Anglais” (166); “Je voudrais être aimé et estimé de *mon* femme” (167).

³⁷ The narrator does provide a bit of linguistic commentary during this scene: “Les habitants de cette partie de la Marche, qui a été si longtemps le Berri, emploient indifféremment le patois et le vieux français naïf, qu’on parle en Berri” (31). The distinction between “le patois” and “le vieux français naïf” is left unexplained, but again, we are left with a sense of incredible depth of knowledge and familiarity operating beneath the text.

of this language, and an affection tied to his earliest childhood experiences. Nonetheless, while Berrichon is restored as his mother tongue, Guillaume still struggles to modulate his language with Jeanne. This encounter with Berrichon is a motor for the entire narrative: Guillaume's memory of the language prompts him to seek out his former nurse, introducing him to Jeanne, whom he realizes only later was the young girl he once left a coin for while she was sleeping. Language provides the nexus through which these characters meet each other and maintain relationships: Berrichon is thus the critical communicative tool that arranges the social connections which the novel investigates.

Unlike in *Mauprat*, where linguistic and social codes must be mastered in order to effect the romantic plot, in *Jeanne*, both ignorance and mastery of language are ultimately unable to reconcile the enormity of the social divide. Guillaume is the closest equivalent to Bernard in this text: unwittingly, he is himself a product of the linguistic environment which Jeanne represents. However, he has an undeniable advantage over her and her ilk: he has been socialized and integrated into wider society. The naturalness of his reacquisition of Berrichon – Guillaume is immediately capable of deciphering the speech of the nearby peasant women – communicates something vital about Sand's opinions on language, education, and multilingualism. This is not a scene of laborious study; early contact and exposure have ensured Guillaume's ease of understanding in the present. While far from a realistic depiction of the true work of language acquisition, Berrichon is framed as a language one can pick up, leave for twenty years, and return to without friction. Jeanne, however, can never hope to attain a similar mastery of "proper" Standard speech – like Patience and Marcasse, she is condemned to forever use language which is increasingly out-of-time and incapable of evolving. Guillaume is positioned like Sand herself: An intermediary, caught by circumstance not only between two languages, but indeed, between two versions of France. These versions are becoming mutually exclusive as customs, language, and culture progress.

2.4 Conclusion

George Sand, throughout her prolific career, managed to produce works straddling the numerous genres which characterized the nineteenth century. Social commentary, romanticism, sentimentalism, idealism, even traces of realism – all can be found in her *œuvre*. Unlike her naturalist contemporaries, Sand was interested in writing novels she believed could educate and morally orient their reader by proving that change and positive evolution are possible. Her idealism waned in popularity as the century progressed, as readers gravitated more towards close, unflattering, and "real" portraits of the contemporary populace. Yet, for all of Sand's tangible ethical aims, she often resorted to a formal device more normally reserved for her realist contemporaries: inclusion and reflection upon other languages.

As a narrator, Sand often effaces her own linguistic competencies, moving the skills required to act as a cultural intermediary to the unspoken background. Her novels regularly feature figures who operate similarly: people perched between two periods of time and two languages, who enable cross-cultural exchange thanks to their mastery of multiple registers and social codes. Bernard in *Mauprat* and Guillaume in *Jeanne* are unique figures; their enormous tasks, one successful, one not, are to counteract the social divisions which arise from differences in education and access. *Jeanne* and *Mauprat*, from two distinct periods of Sand's career, reflect an increasingly negative view of the

possibilities of integrating the “old” and the “new” in a changing France. In *Mauprat*, Bernard is able to master both the social codes to ensure his social integration and quite literally learn the language of his lover. In *Jeanne*, though Guillaume re-accesses his childhood Berrichon, the actual incarnation of the “former” way of life, Jeanne, dies at the end of the novel. In both texts, Standard French ultimately prevails. As Sand herself predicted, her own literary fortunes waned as naturalism and realism came to predominate. How can she make the *paysan* speak? As she opined, “c’est pour moi une cause de désespoir que d’être forcé d’écrire la langue de l’Académie, quand j’en sais beaucoup mieux une autre qui est si supérieure pour rendre tout un ordre d’émotions, de sentiments et de pensées.” (*François le champi*, 19). Even as she recognizes what is lost, Sand must nonetheless resign herself to Standard French.

Chapter 3

The *romans du terroir*: agricultural idealism and literary enactment of nationhood

3.1 The *romans du terroir*

The *romans du terroir*, a genre of agricultural idealist novels published in Quebec from the mid-nineteenth to the mid-twentieth century, provide insight into how French Canadian identity was forged in the decades following the British conquest of 1763.³⁸ In *Histoire de la littérature québécoise*, Michel Biron, François Dumont, and Élisabeth Nardout-Lafarge write, “La période qui va du début du régime anglais à la fin du XIXe siècle présente une série de textes souvent épars dont le dénominateur commun est de servir à construire la nation et, de façon plus immédiate, de s’adresser à un lecteur d’ici” (57). Although Biron and his co-authors describe these texts as “épars,” they nonetheless attribute them with a clear purpose. However, this presumed clarity becomes more complicated when one considers the multilingual environment from which this genre emerged. The goal of Quebec literature of this period was not simply to reflect a French-speaking community, but to imagine and produce one in which French functioned as a prestige language – despite the fact that it did not hold that status within the contemporary colonial context. Paul Perron likewise emphasizes the centrality of the *romans du terroir* in *Narratology and Text: Subjectivity and Identity in New France and Quebecois Literature* (2003), calling them “the most widely published genre of the first century of literary production in Quebec” (152). As the genre developed, it became defined by recurring thematic elements: the strength of familial ties, the guiding influence of Catholicism, and the morally redemptive (and economically rewarding) work of agriculture. These novels are also deeply engaged with questions of language, though their often-contradictory strategies for representing linguistic difference complicate the coherence of the very French-Canadian readership they seek to construct.

I use the qualifier “idealist” for two reasons. First, these novels align with the sentimental-idealist paradigm examined throughout this dissertation; second, following Naomi Schor’s definition of idealist art, the *romans du terroir* reshape, or selectively render, the demographic and linguistic realities of nineteenth-century Quebec. As Schor writes, “Because the ideal is by definition an essence, a

³⁸ The most well-known of these is no doubt Louis Hémon’s *Maria Chapdelaine*, published in 1913. The *romans du terroir* also spawned their satirical double, mocking the conventions of the genre, exemplified by Albert Laberge’s 1918 *La Sconine*.

type, a perfection that cannot be realized, idealist art arises from the disjunction between the purely intellectual ideal and its sensory manifestations” (*George Sand and Idealism*, 37). Like the sentimental texts examined elsewhere in this dissertation, these novels rely on shared emotional identification and moral legibility, using idealized communities to render social cohesion both visible and desirable. The use of an abstract ideal to represent a supposedly concrete “nation” creates the very disjunction these literatures attempt to overcome. The genre emerged in response to accelerating trends towards urbanization, professionalization, and assimilation into the English-speaking urban spaces (and upper classes) of Quebec. The idealist novel offers a model of collective life to which readers are invited to aspire, presenting harmonious visions of Quebec unity and self-sufficiency. This chapter focuses on Patrice Lacombe’s *La terre paternelle* (1846), often seen as the inauguration of the genre, and Antoine Gérin-Lajoie’s *Jean Rivard, le Défricheur* (1862). Perron identifies two basic types of agrarian novel: “the novel of the paternal farm, transmitted from one generation to the next...” and “the novel of colonization...in which the clearing of land and the demarcation of the frontier” is the primary fixation.³⁹ These two *romans du terroir* are representative of the genre, and combine anti-realism – the countryside they seek to depict, as well as the people living in it, do not and cannot exist – with a form of utopian idealism that imagines a morally coherent nation structured around resistance to the anglophone majority. As Lisa Gasbarrone observes in *The Sense of the Sacred in the Early Novels of Quebec* (2024),

Nineteenth-century writers in Quebec undoubtedly understood this: paradoxically, a longing for the past can be forward-looking. The novelists enshrine the past as a sacred space in order to secure the “continual existence” of the “we” that forms their community. And why would they not? The threats to a way of life were not imagined. Change was imminent and inevitable. (80)

Fear of change provoked both creativity and retrenchment. The past that is evoked and enacted in these novels is one that exists primarily in the literary imagination. The intertwining of linguistic and cultural identity – French, English, and Indigenous languages; rural and urban; colonial and national – complicates the identity boundaries these novels seek to construct. These complexities are set aside in favor of narratives that offer simplified models of belonging, even as the novels reveal themselves to be shaped by the overlapping identities of Quebec-dwelling, French-speaking citizens of their era.

Despite the *roman du terroir*’s goals of cultural preservation and separation, my primary texts necessarily engage with multilingualism. The role of English in both novels is significant; the presence – or notable absence, as in *La terre paternelle* – of Indigenous languages likewise attests to a multilingual society committed to imagining itself as unilingual, and therefore unified. These novels engage, variously, four distinct linguistic codes: literary French; a literary rendering of colloquial Canadian French (a precursor to what would later be termed *joual*); English; and Indigenous languages such as Huron. Of the contexts examined in this dissertation, Quebec presents the most complex linguistic configuration. This chapter argues that the *romans du terroir* stage multilingual reality only to contain and subordinate it, transforming linguistic diversity into a tool for imagining a unified French-Canadian nation. Through narratorial framing, selective representation, and strategic silences, multilingualism is rendered visible, but then stylistically contained. Negotiation of meaning, communication, and power occur continually in scenes of both unilingualism and multilingualism. These novels emerge from an environment that is functionally, politically, and socially plural.

³⁹ See page 153.

Nonetheless, they strive to imagine the possibility of a unilingual, French-speaking nation – even as their inclusion of other languages quietly destabilizes that vision.

3.2 A History of Quebec

The *romans du terroir* can only be understood within the historical and linguistic context of French Canada. Quebec, formerly New France, “...was controlled and, until 1663, directly governed by the fur-trading monopolies. They did not encourage settlers, and the fur trade itself demanded expansion into the interior rather than the establishment of sedentary pursuits like agriculture” (McRoberts 24). France did not prioritize large-scale colonial development in the region;⁴⁰ fewer than 10,000 migrants settled in Quebec, and Canada had no printing press during French rule.⁴¹ Without the traditional investments of a colonial power, Quebec’s economic and cultural development remained somewhat stunted. Following its victory in the Seven Years’ War in 1763, Britain gained possession of France’s Canadian territories. Quebec and its French-speaking inhabitants soon faced threats on both religious and linguistic grounds.⁴² As McRoberts writes,

It was the proclamation of 1763, rather than the brief interlude of military occupation, that threatened the French lifestyle and institutions. The Church of England was made the established church, to be aided by government encouragement of Protestantism; Catholics, which is to say all French Canadians, were banned from holding government offices. (26)

Although the Quebec Act of 1774 restored the power of the Catholic Church,⁴³ the earlier threat of forced assimilation had fostered a heightened consciousness of French Canadians as a distinct population under pressure. This sense of vulnerability contributed to the development of a French Catholic nationalism.⁴⁴ In spite of legislative threats, French Canada persevered, linguistically and culturally. This phenomenon, called *la survivance*, is often attributed to several factors: social isolation, the seigneurial, semi-feudal organization of the community, and the perpetuation of Catholic ideology by the powerful clergy that preserved French Canadian institutions and way of life. *La survivance* occupies an uncanny place between historical fact and epic myth: it reinforces a sense of

⁴⁰ Indeed, though the lack of investment was particularly glaring during the Seven Years War with the British, a sense of abandonment – political and cultural – by the mother country is a theme frequently taken up in Quebec literature. See, for example, the poems of William Chapmen, which often speak of the relationship as being quite literally familial (the inaugural poem of his collection *Les Aspirations*, from 1904, includes the following lines: “Et toi, mère patrie, entends-tu mes accents / À travers l’Océan que le printemps caresse?... / J’irai bientôt fouler ta rive enchanteresse, / Boire aux flots de ton art aux jets éblouissants. // France que je chéris, dont le nom seul m’enivre, / M’entends-tu te parler, malgré l’éloignement?.../ Sans cesse fasciné par ton rayonnement, / Je franchirai la mer pour te porter mon livre.” (7)

⁴¹ McRoberts 25. The slow population growth of this colony was of deep concern at the time and remained a relevant worry even up to Gérin-Lajoie’s day.

⁴² Though not the focus of my chapter, the threat was also economic. Due in part to the 1763 proclamation, there was a “failure, during the 1800’s, of the new French-Canadian liberal professional elite to secure a major role in the direct exercise of political power” (McRoberts 16).

⁴³ Which primarily translates into the removal of the mention of Protestantism from the oath of allegiance and allowed the Church’s collection of tithes, while also guaranteeing free religious practice. One other important change was the reversal of requiring private law to be conducted in English; French civil law was reinstated. Interestingly, the primary goal of this legislation was expansionist, justifying territory gains which had been held by indigenous populations in southern Ontario. For more information, see R. Douglas Francis, Richard Jones, and Donald B. Smith’s *Journeys: A History of Canada* (6th ed), 2010.

⁴⁴ As McRoberts writes, “Quebec Francophones have long seen themselves as members of a distinct national collectivity, whether a French-Canadian nation extending to many parts of Canada or, as more recently, a Québécois nation delimited by the borders of Quebec itself” (19).

exceptionalism and cohesive community, which, while grounded in historical reality, paints this cultural persistence as something akin to divine destiny.⁴⁵

The Catholic Church's battle to control education was another crucial factor.⁴⁶ As it was integrated into the larger British colony, Quebec feared losing the markers of French identity. Agricultural labor became an ideologically motivated source of community inviolability, an attempt to preserve the closed society of French Canadians by opposing urban migrations for labor:

The rural and farming way of life was surrounded by an aura of sanctity in French Canada, and it became a stereotype that persisted long after it was denied by reality. This agrarian mythology, which began to appear at the beginning of the century, served to distinguish French Canada as a separate culture and was thus an important element in the struggle for cultural survival. (McRoberts 27)⁴⁷

As vehicles for promoting this agrarian ideal – and, by extension, preserving the relative isolation of the French-Canadian community, often with clerical support – the *romans du terroir* emerged as explicitly national projects within a nascent literary tradition understood as distinctively Québécois. Rather than functioning as travel narratives or practical guides, these novels address a reader “d’ici,” thereby helping to consolidate a specifically French-Canadian literary public.

La terre paternelle and *Jean Rivard* are, ultimately, both triumphant narratives. In the former, a prodigal son leaves to work for a fur trading company, but eventually returns with enough money to buy back the ancestral land, lost through his father's imprudent decisions and social pretensions.⁴⁸ In *Jean Rivard*, the eldest of ten siblings is initially tempted by a career in law, only to be dissuaded by his local abbot, instead resolving to clear his own land and start a prosperous farm. Jean's increasing wealth and fulfillment are contrasted with the fortunes of his childhood friend, who has moved to Montreal to practice law and lives a lonely, impoverished, and unfulfilled life. Jean's near-mythic physical strength and painstaking agricultural labor – described in meticulous detail, including practical instructions such as a recipe for high-quality potash – function as a kind of worker's manual for disaffected readers fed up with the woes of urban life. Both texts exemplify many conventions of the genre: the celebration of agrarian life over urban professional careers; the central

⁴⁵ This messianism is evident in contemporary poetry, such as Émile Nelligan's poem “Notre-Dame-des-Neiges,” in which he writes, “Sainte Notre-Dame, oh! tôt nous délivrer // De tout joug pour le tien; // Chasse l'étranger! Au pays de givre // Sois-nous force et soutien. // Ce placet fleuri de choses dorées, // Puisse-tu de tes yeux, // Bénigne, le lire aux roses vespérales, // Quand tu nous viens des Cieux! // Sainte Notre-Dame a pleuré longtemps // Parmi ses petits anges; // Tellement, dit-on, qu'en les cieux latents // Se font des bruits étranges. // Et que notre Vierge entraînant l'Eden, // O floraison chérie! // Va tôt reflorir en même Jardin // Sa France et sa Ville-Marie...”

⁴⁶ See Chad Gaffield's *Language, Schooling, and Cultural Conflict: The Origins of French-Language Controversy in Ontario* (1987) for a deeper consideration of the conflict around language and schooling in Canada.

⁴⁷ The farm as a microcosm of a well-functioning state is a trope with long legs in history. Renaissance authors in Italy and Enlightenment thinkers in Scotland often combined a moralizing tone with the idealized delight of country life (see Michael Wyatt's essay “Technologies” (100-138) in the *Cambridge Companion to the Italian Renaissance*, published in 2014). It's no accident that the farm became an imagined site of moral and functional excellence in the context of political upheaval...relevant, as well, in eighteenth- and nineteenth-century Canada.

⁴⁸ It is also important to consider these farms within the indigenous context of Canada. Though *Jean Rivard* includes some footnotes about “*langue sauvage*,” such considerations are absent from *La terre paternelle*. Recent scholarship on indigenous presence in nineteenth century Quebec includes Daniel Ruck's 2021 *The Laws and the Land: The Settler Colonial Invasion of Kahnawà:ke in Nineteenth Century Canada* and Michel Bouchard's 2020 *Bois-Brûlés: The Untold Story of the Métis of Western Quebec*. It will be interesting to consider the multilingualism which is missing from these texts, providing a marked contrast to the multilingualism which *is* present.

presence of Catholic authority figures; and the strengthening of family bonds as a prerequisite for narrative closure. In fact, the narrator in *Jean Rivard* addresses the alleged “prejudice” against education in rural populations,⁴⁹ and Jean himself is a highly literate character, reading classics each night and writing in his journal every day.

These texts engage with linguistic variation in systematic and revealing ways. Multiple languages appear directly within the narrative: English is frequently associated with socially destabilizing figures (such as the settler who purchases the paternal farm after the family’s bankruptcy in *La terre paternelle*), and “Canadian” French is often invoked, meant to contrast with the Standard French of the narration. The narrators frequently intervene as either evaluators or translators for their audience. As in Sand’s novels, the narratorial voice takes a variety of positions vis-à-vis multilingualism in these texts. Sometimes, the narrators knowingly “censor” words from a delicate reading public; other times, they evaluate the language(s) spoken; other times, they operate as benevolent editors for readers presumed not to understand Canadian French, adding in translations, glosses, and numerous footnotes. In both novels, the treatment of linguistic diversity is similar: words are italicized and then immediately glossed in parentheses or explained in footnotes.

Language thus emerges as a central vehicle of community formation, even as these texts expose the tensions inherent in narratives that must accommodate linguistic plurality while envisioning a unified “imagined” community. Who constitutes the implied readership of these texts? Why do the authors gloss varieties, such as Canadian French, that their presumed readership would already understand? What does their treatment of these languages reveal about their attitudes towards a potentially multilingual state? Finally, how do the conventions of the *romans du terroir* intersect with those of sentimentalism and idealism, and does this overlap reveal a failure to mobilize the population it seeks to address? The management of linguistic variation in these novels reveals the central role of idealized French in Quebec’s literary and political self-conception.

3.3 *La terre paternelle*: The “acte de damnation” of leaving the land, linguistic variation, and moral purity

Patrice Lacombe’s *La terre paternelle*, published in 1846, is widely regarded as inaugurating the genre of the *roman du terroir*.⁵⁰ Lacombe, a notary⁵¹ as well as an author, was not affiliated with the emerging literary societies that would later shape Quebec’s cultural life. Yet the influence of his novel – reprinted repeatedly⁵² in the decades that followed – is undeniable, not least because Lacombe consciously distinguished its style from the popular French *feuilletons* of Alexandre Dumas and Eugène Sue. In doing so, he contributed to the formation of a literature explicitly oriented to the

⁴⁹ “Il existe aussi malheureusement chez nos populations rurales un préjugé funeste qui leur fait croire que les connaissances et l’éducation ne sont nullement nécessaires à celui qui cultive le sol: à quoi sert d’être savant, dira-t-on, pour manier le manchon de la charrue? Et rien n’est plus étrange aux yeux de certaines gens que de voir un jeune homme instruit ne pas faire choix d’une profession libérale” (17).

⁵⁰ It is not, however, the first properly Quebec novel. That honorific belongs to Philippe-Ignace-François Aubert de Gaspé’s *L’Influence d’un livre*, published in *Le Populaire* journal in 1837.

⁵¹ A “notary” in the Quebec context is unique, especially when contrasted with the job in the United States. They have similar roles to lawyers, but a monopoly on certain activities such as marriage contracts. It is the oldest profession in Canada and well-respected. Many notaries participated in the rebellions of 1839, amongst the patriots, hoping to preserve the use of French.

⁵² After its initial publication in *La Revue canadienne*, *La terre paternelle* was then included in *Le Répertoire national* by James Huston, a literary anthology, which then went through successive reprints.

sensibility of a French-Canadian readership rather than towards metropolitan models. As was common for early Quebec fiction, *La terre paternelle* first appeared in serialized form in the *Album littéraire de la Revue canadienne*. Its publication marked a decisive moment in Quebec literary history: 1846 was the first year the journal included a literary supplement devoted to Canadian works, expanding beyond imported French fiction to showcase novels written locally in French.⁵³ Despite this historical importance, critical evaluations of the text have often been dismissive, focusing on its overt moralism while overlooking its more complex formal features – including its treatment of linguistic difference.⁵⁴ At the level of plot, the novella appears to offer a straightforward endorsement of agrarian life. The Chauvin family's suffering is presented as the consequence of greed, susceptibility to urban temptation, and the “original sin” of abandoning their ancestral land. Family solidarity, Catholic faith, and rural labor are thus aligned with national survival in ways that may strike modern readers as didactic. Yet beneath this superficial simplicity lies a more ambivalent narrative voice. The text's erratic editorial interventions and narrative asides complicate any purely moralistic reading, revealing tensions within the very ideals the novel ostensibly promotes – including the ideal of a linguistically unified French-Canadian community.

La terre paternelle's engagement with multilingualism has been largely passed over in existing scholarship. Most critics acknowledge the novel as the origin point of the genre but stop short of sustained analysis. Only recently has attention returned to the novella with a kinder eye. For example, in *The Sense of the Sacred in the Early Novels of Quebec*, Lisa Gasbarrone challenges the broader dismissal of the *romans du terroir* on aesthetic grounds, while offering a compelling reading which highlights the internal complexity of *La terre paternelle*. Rather than functioning as simplistic propaganda, the novel proves oddly slippery on both narrative and editorial levels. As she writes,

Unlike the prodigal son of the parable, the younger son in Lacombe's story benefits materially from his departure, and he returns, not broken as he does in Luke's narrative, but in splendid condition and in a position to help his family financially. He has made his fortune rather than squandered it. This makes it all the more ironic that he provides the means of financial redemption for his family, the fortunate consequence of his otherwise unfortunate transgression. Indeed, he left in the first place not merely for adventure, but also because, were he to remain, his prospects as the second son would be limited. (69)

The novel's arc of leaving and returning is thus more complex than a simple condemnation of the desire to leave the ancestral land. The narrative eventually confirms the necessity of the son's departure: his work among fur traders in the north is what ultimately provides the financial means to repurchase the land. It is true that the miseries and indignities suffered by the family could have been avoided had the land never been abandoned; but the tidy, almost fairy-tale ending provides a sly justification of even that “original sin.” Significantly, Charles obtains economic stability by participating in the fur trade, a trade closely tied in the cultural memory to the early French colonization of North America. For French Canadians in Quebec, the romanticization of France's

⁵³ See Caroline Loranger's “Variation des formes de la fiction romanesque dans la presse canadienne au Québec” in *Presses anciennes et modernes à l'ère du numérique*, 2024. Loranger points out that, “Dans l'*Album littéraire de la Revue canadienne*, on fait une distinction entre les ‘feuilletons’ (français) et la ‘littérature canadienne’ (en l'occurrence les romans de Chauveau et Lacombe).”

⁵⁴ See, for example, Patrick Imbert, who dismissed the novel as “tautological” in his article “The Evolution of Canonical Circuits.” *Poetics Today* 12, no. 4 (1991): 697–712, or Bernard Andrès' book *Écrire le Québec: De la contrainte à la contrariété. Essai sur la constitution des lettres*. Montreal: XYZ, 1990, in which, though acknowledging the iconoclastic potential of Lacombe's text, he nonetheless sees it as reinforcing a religious and cultural norm.

limited colonial investment is unsurprising; a distinct cultural identity was being consolidated – linguistically, literarily, and politically – from the encroaching British anglophones. Rather than destabilizing the novel’s ideological project of return to the land, Charles’s foray into the fur trade reinforces it by linking economic success to a foundational myth of the French presence in North America.

The *romans du terroir* are conventionally organized around four pillars: church, language, family, and state. *La terre paternelle* undermines each of these in subtle yet consequential ways. Most critics describe the *romans du terroir* as uncritically endorsing the Catholic Church, a tendency often attributed to the church’s increasingly tight control over literary production. However, as Gasbarrone argues, Lacombe’s novel may be the most starkly anticlerical of the genre. For example, the unscrupulous parish curate accepts a bribe from the notary who drafts the exploitative rental agreement between Jean-Baptiste Chauvin *père* and his son (also named Jean-Baptiste). Later in the novella, while Jean-Baptiste *père* is attempting to bury his son, the narrator offers a long aside questioning the trustworthiness of church officials charged with guarding the bodies of the poor. Historical context helps explain this surprisingly ambiguous portrayal of religious authorities. As Solange Lefebvre writes in “The Francophone Roman Catholic Church” from *Christianity and Ethnicity in Canada* (2005), the Catholic Church only reached its peak of power and influence after the rebellions of 1837 and 1838. Notably, Quebec bishops sided with the British Empire against the agitating “patriots,” even though the agitators were French Canadian (107-108). French-speaking Catholics in Canada did not, in fact, form a unified front against English colonial power, which may help explain the lingering bitterness of Lacombe’s portrayal of the clergy.

Alongside agriculture, the church, family values, and nationalism, language is also a central concern of the genre. Language, after all, is inseparable from projects of nationalism and community formation. Yet, language is a surprisingly unstable category in *La terre paternelle*. Despite its brevity, Lacombe’s text encompasses both actual multilingualism and metatextual commentary on language use. My analysis therefore considers both narratorial/editorial interventions and instances of linguistic variation within the text.

First, the narrator sometimes consciously censors the dialogue of his characters. The first occurrence happens under the pretext of moral propriety. Charles and his mother, sitting in the hotel to wait out a winter storm, overhear the conversation of a group of men planning to head north to work as fur traders. As the men discuss the necessary brutality of existence in the far north, there is no direct dialogue. Instead, the narrator remarks, “La conversation, fréquemment assaisonnée d’énergiques jurons dont nous ne blesserons pas les oreilles délicates de nos lecteurs, s’était prolongée fort avant dans la soirée” (22). Leaving aside the supposed “delicacy” of the readers’ ears, this refusal to reproduce the workers’ speech closes off a more realist mode of representation. Balzac or Zola would delight in the inclusion of “true” words used by workers as proof of their attention to linguistic register. Lacombe, however, is pursuing a fundamentally different literary project – one that prioritizes moral and national legibility over linguistic realism.

In fact, the narrator’s voice is the only one heard until roughly a quarter of the way through the text. The first extended dialogue – occurring several pages after the hotel scene on page 29 – is marked by a highly sentimental register as the family bids farewell to their youngest son, Charles. This narrative choice is deliberate: as a parable and a decidedly anti-realist text, *La terre paternelle* is not

interested in the naturalistic linguistic depictions characteristic of later *romans du terroir*.⁵⁵ An author's explicit refusal to represent speech is itself revealing. By marking the space where speech would occur, the narrator invites readers to imagine what has been excluded. Though moral purity is central to the genre – unsurprising given the Catholic Church's increasing influence over literary production – this is not true sanitization. The characters themselves are not untainted; the narrator's intervention prevents their "inappropriate" expression from reaching the reader, rendering moral purity an effect of narration rather than an intrinsic quality of the characters. Idealism thus functions largely as a veneer. Nonetheless, Lacombe's treatment of undesirable language positions literature itself as a moral authority. In a text marked by anticlerical undertones, linguistic censorship becomes a signal of ethical engagement. Valuing such purity is also framed as being specifically French Canadian: Lacombe explicitly distinguishes Quebec literature from melodramatic metropolitan French models in both theme and moral orientation.

The narrator's second direct address to the readers – another act of bringing a community into being through language – is of a different sort. Here, rather than suppressing morally offensive speech, the narrator spares the reader the tedious legal language of a contract.

Nous ferons grâce à nos lecteurs du reste des charges, clauses, et conditions de ce contrat, lesquelles furent de nouveau longuement débattues, et qui en prolongèrent la durée bien avant dans l'après-midi. Aussi ce ne fut pas sans une satisfaction générale, que le notaire annonça qu'il allait en faire la lecture. (57)

Although the content differs from the earlier example, it shares a key stylistic feature: both the *jurons* and the legal discourse are characterized as excessively lengthy. In both instances, the formulation of "avant dans le" suggests discourse so extensive that it exceeds what the narrative can represent. For a notary like Lacombe to choose to avoid the legalistic language which defined his profession is especially striking. Censorship motivated by presumed reader disinterest differs from the earlier moral justification. This disparity in interest highlights the distance between the implied readership and the community depicted within the text. After all, the assembled neighbors, citizens, and family eagerly follow the lengthy legal proceedings with keen attention; they hang onto every word, offer suggestions, and are pleased by the prospect of hearing the entire contract read out, the very contract to which the reader is denied full access.

Both censored passages emphasize the length of expression that has been cut from the text; significantly, the scene concludes with a demonstration of illiteracy. The Chauvin mother and father, unable to sign their names, mark crosses on the contract to signify their acceptance. This predominantly oral proceeding contrasts sharply with the written text of *La terre paternelle* itself, positioning the characters as fundamentally distinct from its literate readership. At the same time, however, this distinction does not grant the reader full access to meaning. The contract's significance, and the crosses that seal it as the family's financial death knell, remain partially opaque, as the precise terms of the agreement are withheld from both characters and reader alike. The episode thus stages two forms of exclusion: the characters' inability to access written language, and the reader's inability to fully grasp its content. In doing so, it foregrounds the authority of written documents while simultaneously limiting access to that authority. Perhaps unintentionally, then,

⁵⁵ Even Philippe-Joseph Aubert de Gaspé's *Les Anciens Canadiens*, published 15 years after *La Terre Paternelle*, includes a basic linguistic variation which is lacking Lacombe's text. The character of José speaks in accented French, indicating an origin and language use which is markedly different from the narratorial voice and the dialogue of the other characters.

Lacombe indicates the consequences of being beholden to an administrative language one cannot fully understand. Even the literate reader strains against the frustration of being denied full clarity. In the colonial and assimilationist context of French Canada, this dynamic carries both emotional and political weight.

La terre paternelle contains two extended scenes with explicit multilingualism. In both, the English represented in the text is untranslated and un-glossed and therefore requires reader bilingualism. The first, a scene featuring the town crier, has received considerable attention in existing scholarship. By this point in the narrative, the youngest son Charles has departed to work with fur traders in the far north. His mother and sister pray for him and miss him greatly; his father, however, disapproves of his choices and decides that he has only one true son. In an attempt to keep his eldest at home, father Chauvin decides to transfer the farm to his eldest son prematurely. The mother disapproves, but father Chauvin is resolute. Daily life resumes, with church attendance as a central routine. A detailed description of the church and its congregation follows. Many are anxiously awaiting not the sermon, but rather the announcements delivered by the town crier. In rural, often isolated parts of Francophone Canada, it is the crier who served as both information conduit and public performer. Lacombe directly addresses the importance of the role in community life:

Ces criées qui se font régulièrement, le dimanche, à la porte de l'église, sont regardées comme de la plus haute importance par la population des campagnes; en effet, toutes les parties des lois qui l'intéressent, police rurale, ventes par autorité de justice, les ordres du grand-voyer, des sous-voyers...c'est pour eux la gazette officielle...tout tombe dans le domaine de ces annonces; c'est la chronique de la semaine qui vient de s'écouler. (39)

In a largely oral culture, access to news and legal transfers are sourced through this singular figure. The role even carries implicit requirements, including partial literacy:

Ces criées sont confiées à un homme de la paroisse qui porte le nom de crieur, qui sait lire quelquefois, et bien souvent ne le sait pas du tout, mais qui rachète ce défaut par de l'aplomb, une certaine facilité à parler en public, et une mémoire heureuse qui lui a permis *de se former un petit vocabulaire de termes consacrés par l'usage*. Si l'on ajoute à cela le ton comique et original avec lequel il parle, les contresens et les mots merveilleusement estropiés, on aura quelque idée de cette scène quelquefois unique en son genre. (41; emphasis added)

This passage offers a remarkably literary definition of social role. The town crier is a member of the community; thus, he has a privileged sense of both its activities and its concerns. The capacity to read comes first in the list, as if it were paramount; the slight irony of the following clause, specifying that literacy is both rare and, also, therefore unnecessary, undercuts that initial positioning. The performative aspect – an ability to speak in public – is tied to possessing a strong memory of a “vocabulary of terms.” This is the most significant aspect of the description. The town crier collects and displays a vocabulary specific and specialized to the profession. The crier’s authority does not stem from authorship but from repetition. His performance is constrained by preexisting legal formulas yet animated by personal inflection and error. His distinctive manner of speaking reflects both individual style and insider knowledge of the community he serves. His “mots estropiés” foreshadow linguistic features later associated with *joual*. The town crier thus becomes a microcosm of the linguistic environment that produced *La terre paternelle* itself. He utilizes standardized language and a set terminology, yet infuses them with a bit of style. These deviations from Standard French reveal ongoing linguistic change: words in *joual*, and words in English, reflect the multilingual

environment in which these French Canadians live. Yet there is a tension in this representation as well. Although hints of linguistic variety appear – and are sometimes explicitly included – the surrounding narrative language remains firmly standard. Ultimately, both the narration and the grammatical structure of the town crier’s speech revert to Standard French.

Lacombe’s language offers numerous opportunities for close linguistic analysis. Often, his non-standard spellings, pronunciations, or lexical items are italicized; most are followed by a parenthetical gloss that provides a translation into Standard French. However, as with Sand, the parenthetical explanations are not always present; an implicit sense of distance from the standard determines what is left unglossed and what requires metatextual explanation. The implication is that the presumed reader requires scaffolded support for any utterance which isn’t Standard French. Consider, for example, the crier’s announcement: “C’est défendu de lâcher les animaux dans les chemins, avant le temps *fisqué* (fixé) par la loi; ainsi, tous les animaux qui seront trouvés dans les chemins, seront *poursuis* et paieront l’amende” (42). The majority of this utterance is in easily recognizable Standard French. Like Sand, Lacombe linguistically sanitizes non-standard grammatical structures, allowing only limited traces of variation to create a sense of local color. While *fisqué* requires a gloss and is immediately followed by a parenthetical, *poursuis* apparently does not. It is still set apart, of course, from the other words by virtue of the italics. A semi-illiterate town crier spreads local news to a similarly illiterate and undereducated population, yet the distinction between standard and non-standard language operates purely graphically, through typographic markers that signal difference. The visual marking of difference thus produces multilingualism as a phenomenon for readers rather than for characters. This is elegant proof of the disjuncture between the reading population of the book and the inner population of the story. These language distinctions would be unnecessary and even meaningless to the people inhabiting *La terre paternelle*, since the crier’s vocabulary would have been acquired organically within the community he addresses.

Other utterances of the crier contain a higher proportion of non-standard forms. As in the previous example, only some of the non-standard utterances here receive translation or contextualization:

Les seigneurs de l’île vous font annoncer que le temps des rentes est arrivé; ainsi, tous ceux qui doivent des *zods lé ventes* (lots et ventes) et des *arrériages* sont avertis d’aller *s’éclaircir* en patent ce qu’ils doivent, et d’y aller sans délai, s’ils veulent avoir du *grati* (gratis). (42)

Only half of the italicized non-standard utterances receive an in-text gloss. Both “lots et ventes” and “arrérage” are legal terms; their mispronunciations link phonetic distortion to the family’s confusion with legal terminology. Legal language has disastrous consequences for the Chauvin family: the impossible rental agreement prevents Jean-Baptiste from fulfilling its terms, resulting in financial ruin and the loss of the ancestral land. The family lacks the legal knowledge necessary to recognize that the document is impossible to fulfill. The town crier, who shares information the only way these residents can understand it, creates an irreconcilable gap between his listeners and the language of the law. “S’éclaircir,” a Standard French verb meaning “to light up” or “to clarify,” is used here in a non-standard sense. Its usual association with enlightenment introduces a pointed irony. After all, the “enlightenment” bestowed by the crier upon the townspeople is an imperfect one, marked by distortions that obscure meaning rather than clarify it. Ignorance and vulnerability to incomprehensible language are recurring themes of the novel. Charles leaves because the fur traders’ descriptions of northern adventure prove irresistible. Father Chauvin is likewise seduced by the promise of legal protection, even though the contract’s language remains inscrutable to him.

Lacombe thus walks a tightrope between condemning ignorance – of law, of language, of modern institutions – and staging an ideal of linguistic purity.

Notably, the text makes no use of footnotes to explain language.⁵⁶ From this pattern, we can infer which forms the presumably educated readership is expected to understand. On the same page, a sequence of words including *trompe* (erreur), *ous qu'il*, *longs*, and *Ac* (actes) (42) are variously translated and untranslated. Through his non-standard utterances, Lacombe manages to plant the seeds of the ensuing drama. After accepting two bribes from the new town notary, the crier offers an enthusiastic endorsement of his legal capacities for drawing up contracts of every kind, from simple to the most complex. The “actes de donation” are mistakenly said to be *Ac de damnation* (actes de donation) (45), suggesting both the notary’s opportunism and the corrupt foundation of his authority. The crier calls him “un jeune homme qui paraît *ben retors dans le capablement*” (45). Jean-Baptiste père opts to use the new notary, thereby condemning his family to an exploitative contract secured through bribery. What, then, is the relationship between this language and the moral and familial implications of the novel? The town crier, a literal mouthpiece of the community, is both treated as a trustworthy source of information and yet is also fallible. His language use reinforces this dual role. Although he deploys complex terminology, he is incapable of correctly rendering the legal language which is his responsibility to advertise. In general, his language is a mix of familiar and standardized forms; he is both the circulator of information, and therefore a reflection of the linguistic practices of his community, and yet is susceptible to personal gain. Language is the medium through which his half-belonging is signaled: he is both part of the community and structurally aligned with the institutions that regulate it. The crier’s mangled legalisms do not merely provide local color; they dramatize the structural distance between the rural populace and the legal-administrative system that governs it.

One final scene crystallizes these tensions. When Charles returns from his years in the fur trade, he anticipates a warm reception back at his family home. When the door is opened for him, however, he is confronted not by his father but by a “foreigner” who speaks English:

Celui-ci, surpris de cette brusque apparition, toise son visiteur de la tête au pied, et lui dit: “*What business brings you here?* - Oh! Monsieur, pardon, je ne parle pas beaucoup l’anglais; mais, dites-moi.non, je ne me trompe pas, c’est bien ici...où est mon père, où est ma mère? “-*What do you say? Moi pas connaître ce que vous dire.* (110)

This exchange stages multiple levels of understanding. Both characters and readers occupy an unstable middle ground between comprehension and incomprehension. The decision to italicize both English and nonstandard French merits closer analysis. The stranger’s French contains surprisingly complex grammar, including the indefinite relative pronoun “ce que” and the emphatic pronoun “moi” in the place of the first-person subject. Although the English speaker supplanted the family on their own land, he is nonetheless forced to make linguistic accommodations. Charles is unable to produce even a form of *franglais*; he persists in his pure French. It is the new, English-speaking inhabitant who must, in a striking reversal of linguistic power, bend his own communication to suit the prodigal son. As Charles attempts to explain, the new owner responds:

⁵⁶ Footnotes are used, however, to offer precise explanations of particular customs, such as the (non) burying of the poor in churches and, in this passage, the yearly donation drive conducted by the local parish. This distinction – in-text translation for unknown words, and footnotes for ethnographic information – indicates a division in the attitude towards supplemental information.

-No, no, moi non connaître votre père, moi havoir acheté la farm de la sheriff
 -Non, ce n'est pas possible, c'est mon père qui vous l'a vendue; où demeure-t-il?
 -No, no, goddamn, vous pas d'affaire ici, moi avoir une bonne deed de la sheriff. (111)

The increasing anger and frustration of the English interloper is evident here. He is supposedly on land which he bought and owns. Yet in his new home, he is confronted by someone with a prior claim to his land. Despite being in an English colony, the prior owner only speaks French, and the interloper must converse in the ancestral owner's preferred tongue. This situation inverts the expected colonial hierarchy. Again, the interloper's "franglais" displays remarkably complex grammatical features. The past infinitive appears, even with the added 'h' (more often associated with native French speakers learning English than the reverse); although English is used for both "farm" and "sheriff," the definite article of "farm" is nonetheless correct. At the same time, he reverts to the simple infinitive and rarely conjugates, both typical of a limited second-language speaker. Throughout, Charles's speech remains entirely standard. This exchange admits several interpretive possibilities. The simplest explanation is that Lacombe renders the Englishman's speech legible for a francophone readership that may not understand English. However, a second, more destabilizing explanation is more likely. By portraying an interloper, an English speaker, as someone who has taken over the land *and yet has been socialized enough in French-speaking society to produce adequately conversational French*, there is a dual argument: the assertion of francophone linguistic authority coupled with the expectation that anglophones must accommodate it. Even the English-speaking higher economic class must be able to use French through the practical necessity of operating in a francophone environment. Contrast this with the francophone character's refusal to reciprocate. Although the pragmatic explanation – reader legibility – is plausible, the second also encodes a clear linguistic power differential. For in the end, Charles *does* buy back the farm; and even at the moment of confrontation, which is also a moment of loss, he retains the dignity of speaking his own language. Ownership of the land may have changed, but linguistic authority has not. After reuniting with his impoverished family – father, mother, and sister – Charles relocates them to the countryside to recover. In the novel's closing movement, the narrator reports that Charles repurchases the land "après quinze ans d'exil et de malheurs" (123), marries a local cultivator's daughter, and restores the family's fortunes.

This scene operates as a double parable: the prodigal son's return illuminates the struggles of a minority linguistic community that nonetheless outlasts a more powerful English majority. Even a monolingual French reader can follow the dialogue between Charles and the Englishman. This constitutes a triumph of monolingual reading: in a scene which plays out across two languages. English is rendered subordinate to French. The message is clear: despite their financial advantages, the English do not have the staying power or the connection to the land that enables French Canadians to claim their home.

A nightmarish sequence involves Charles running to former neighbor after former neighbor, only to find that all of the old community has been supplanted by the English (a vision of community erasure that the *romans du terroir* seek to forestall). The narrator comments on Charles' internal state: "Il comprit tout: son père s'était ruiné, sa terre était vendue, et l'étranger était insolent assis au foyer paternel!" (112). The "insolent" stranger is not, in fact, insolent: he purchased the farm in a presumably legal manner. Though he does curse at Charles, violating some norms of polite interaction, he is forced to adapt to Charles' monolingual demands. The "il comprit tout" functions as an inadvertent double entendre, for it is the "insolent foreigner" who in fact understands everything. In their conversation, he responds to Charles' utterances in French, while Charles grasps

only the situation's stakes, not the linguistic exchange itself. Once gone, the stranger does not reappear; he disappears from the land as easily as if he had never been there, adapting and disappearing like a conveniently disposable plot device. Comprehension itself becomes bifurcated: Charles grasps history, the Englishman linguistic form. This scene thus stages not mutual incomprehension but asymmetrical intelligibility.

Lacombe's novel proves to be surprisingly complex despite its brevity. From its reworking of the prodigal son narrative to its ambivalent portrayal of the Catholic establishment, *La terre paternelle* is only an uneasy endorser of the pillars the *romans du terroir* conventionally represent. The nation – that is, French Canada – is already violated in this story: English settlers are present and they dispossess French families of their land. Yet in the climactic sequence, French ultimately reasserts symbolic dominance over English. The narration complicates any simple reading of multilingual representation. Linguistic varieties appear, but only in dialogue, never in the narration. Variation is never so distant as to become unintelligible to a reader of Standard French; any markedly nonstandard term is glossed for convenience. There is a permeability in linguistic representation in *La terre paternelle* which is absent in *Jean Rivard*. Other languages cannot threaten French because the narrative subsumes them, ensuring readerly alignment with the Standard French of the narration. Quebec's situation differs fundamentally from that of France: here French is threatened, whereas in France Standard French functioned as the agent of threat against so-called “patois”. This minority, though lacking the economic power of their English colonizers, saw in language a means of cultural self-preservation. The novel ultimately stages this dynamic: despite the presence of multiple languages, the result is a singular French-language identity. Multilingualism is not erased in *La terre paternelle*; it is staged, managed, and ultimately subordinated to the project of imagining a unified French-Canadian community.

3.4 *Jean Rivard, le défricheur*: The ultimate triumph of self-fashioning, or when the individual speaks the nation

Eighteen years separate the publication of *La terre paternelle* (1846) and *Jean Rivard* (1862). In that brief span, Quebec and the Canadian colony as a whole underwent profound political, territorial, and cultural changes. *La Terre Paternelle*, which appeared in 1846, closely followed two pivotal events in French Canadian history: The Durham report (1839) and the Act of Union (1840). The Durham Report was completed by John Lambton, 1st Earl of Durham, the newly appointed British Governor General in the wake of the 1837/38 rebellions to assess the feasibility of unifying English-speaking Upper and French-speaking Lower Canada. Language was a particular target of this report, which famously concluded that,

There can hardly be conceived a nationality more destitute of all that can invigorate and elevate a people, than that which is exhibited by the descendants of the French in Lower Canada, owing to their retaining their peculiar language and manners. They are a people with no history, and no literature.⁵⁷

Durham's diagnosis hinged on language: French Canadians' “peculiar” speech and customs were cast as obstacles to political vitality. It is therefore striking that the first distinctly Quebec literary

⁵⁷ A full text of the report is available to read here: <https://www.canadiana.ca/view/oocihm.32374/2>

genre emerged in the decades following Durham's withering remarks. A sense of belonging and the ability to claim a national identity relies on tangible proof of cultural and literary production.

Although French-Canadian writing predates the mid-nineteenth century, little of it can be described as distinctly Québécois or nationally formative.⁵⁸ Durham aimed both to consolidate a loyal English-speaking majority and to accelerate the Anglicization of French Canadians. Upper Canada was seeing an increase in its "desirable" (namely, British and Protestant) population while also suffering from untenable debts acquired from unwise infrastructure investments. As part of this assimilationist program, French was banned from official use in the Canadian parliament. Both Upper and Lower Canada had large-scale rebellions in 1837/38 over lack of political reform and a desire for responsible government, which would enable the elected legislature to participate in governmental decisions, rather than functioning as a mere fundraising tool for the executive branch.⁵⁹ The Act of Union (1840), while technically tying Upper and Lower Canada together, had disastrous consequences. In the 1850s, many English-speaking Protestants immigrated to western Canada (of the province of Canada, today comprising the lands from Toronto west to the area above the Great Lakes), shifting the former demographic imbalance. Stalemates in the legislature also produced chronic legislative deadlock. *Jean Rivard* appeared only a few years before Confederation in 1867, which reorganized the colony into four provinces with separate parliamentary representation – a development crucial for protecting French-Catholic interests.⁶⁰ As *Jean Rivard* was being published in *feuilleton*, the Quebec Conference of 1864 was debating whether a centralized legislative union or a federal system would better safeguard linguistic and cultural autonomy. These debates were fundamentally attuned to language as well as politics: they concerned not only governance but also the survival of French as a public language. *Jean Rivard* emerges from precisely this moment of defensive cultural consolidation.

It was in this tense context that Antoine Gérin-Lajoie published – to considerable acclaim on both sides of the Atlantic – the proto-socialist-realist, didactic, bootstrap novel that is *Jean Rivard, le défricheur*. In implicit rebuttal to Durham's claim that Quebec lacked a literary tradition, Gérin-Lajoie pointedly invoked Pierre Boucher's 1664 *L'histoire véritable et naturelle des mœurs et productions du pays de la Nouvelle France, vulgairement dit le Canada* as a precursor to his work. *L'histoire véritable* was itself preoccupied with the possibility of a colonial "renaissance," since the population was too small to fully exploit its potential. According to Michel Biron, Boucher's text shaped Gérin-Lajoie's indomitable tone, noting how he "...conclut par des conseils destinés aux nouveaux colons, dont le ton enthousiaste et déterminé s'apparente à celui du roman *Jean Rivard*" (44). By positioning his novel in relation to an earlier colonial text, Gérin-Lajoie symbolically claims a preexisting literary lineage and asserts the historical roots of francophone cultural production in North America. *Jean*

⁵⁸ In Michel Biron's *Histoire de la littérature Québécoise*, it is noted that there were only around 50 texts published from the "discovery" of Canada by Jacques Cartier to the ceding of Canada to England in 1763 (18). Most of them are what we might refer to as genre texts: *le récit de voyage, le journal, la correspondance, l'histoire, la chronique, les mémoires, les annales* (19). They had "marginal" aesthetic goals and are mostly bound into a corpus because, "ces textes s'adressent à un lecteur de la France, mais ils parlent des réalités du Nouveau Monde" (20) while nonetheless having been written and edited in Quebec. This small but tightly bound corpus, is understood to provide a sort of foundation upon which later authors like Gérin-Lajoie built a literature more explicitly interested in addressing a reader from Quebec, and which imagined and built the "nation" of Quebec.

⁵⁹ For more information on changes in governmental policy in the British colonies of North America, see Phillip A. Buckner's 1985 book *The Transition to Responsible Government: British Policy in British North America, 1815-1850*. Chapter 4 deals particularly with the legislative changes in Canada after the rebellions of 1837/38.

⁶⁰ For a thorough history of the development of Canadian confederation, see Ged Martin's 1995 book *Britain and the Origins of Canadian Confederation, 1837-67*.

Rivard thus presents itself not as an isolated contribution to a sparse literary field, but as a continuation, thematically and tonally, of an existing literature. This literature had and continued to diagnose the ills of contemporary Canada, including demographic weakness and insufficient commitment to frontier development.

The popularity of *Jean Rivard* may come as a surprise, especially considering the dismissive critical consensus of the text today.⁶¹ It wasn't just popular in Quebec; it was also published as a *feuilleton* in *Le Monde*, causing something of a sensation amongst French audiences. What made a deliberately didactic novel – one invested in representing a highly specific local culture – so compelling to both Canadian and French audiences? What had transpired in the years since *La terre paternelle* first appeared that enabled an author to advocate so confidently for Quebec particularity? The answer lies partly in formal innovation and, crucially, in Gérin-Lajoie's treatment of language.

Jean Rivard asserts a striking clarity of purpose from the outset; the text positions itself as a vehicle for social change. Like Pushkin and Sand, Gérin-Lajoie often addresses his readers directly through pointed commentary. The *avant-propos* establishes the work's defining directness of tone:

Jeunes et belles citadines qui ne rêvez que de modes, bals et conquêtes amoureuses ; jeunes élégants qui parcourez, joyeux et sans soucis, le cercle des plaisirs mondains, il va sans dire que cette histoire n'est pas pour vous. Le titre, même, j'en suis sûr, vous fera bâiller d'ennui...Mais, que voulez-vous ? Ce n'est pas un roman que j'écris, et si quelqu'un est à la recherche d'aventures merveilleuses, duels, meurtres, suicides, ou d'intrigues d'amour tant soit peu compliquées, je lui conseille amicalement de s'adresser ailleurs. On ne trouvera dans ce récit que l'histoire simple et vraie d'un jeune homme sans fortune. (16)

The gendered address of the opening is striking, since the labor which is so prominently and minutely featured in the text – land clearing, planting, building, potash production – is coded masculine. Yet, we are in the world of novel readers, and it is women who constituted the central reading public at this time. The easy life evoked in the rapid catalogue of pleasures – trends, balls, amorous conquests – nonetheless includes elements which appear in this very same novel, though interspersed with the redemptive physical efforts of the indefatigable Jean. Gérin-Lajoie jokes that the “boring” title will deter readers; yet, if you are reading the opening page, presumably you already had some sort of interest in the book. The text itself is a moral reward: readers who persist prove themselves worthy of the book's message. Through reading, you yourself are Jean Rivard-esque – and it is no accident that even his name merits commentary on its very unoriginality; “En effet, ‘Jean Rivard’...quel nom commun! que pouvait-on imaginer de plus vulgaire?” (15). The banality of his name enables a universalizing gesture to include any and every reader in this ordinary man's existence, which could so easily resemble their own. Much like his name, Jean Rivard's language must also be made legible and imitable by his legion of readerly devotees.

⁶¹ Gasbarrone, for example, writes, “Popular in its day, *Jean Rivard*, like so many of these novels, has come to be viewed as a painful sort of story.” (59) For additional critical commentary, see Robert Major's *The American Dream in Nineteenth-Century Quebec* (1996), which includes withering ideologically focused commentary on the novel, and E.D. Blodgett's *Five-Part Invention: A History of Literary History in Canada* (2003), which includes historical evaluations of the work from the earliest literary histories of Canada (where it slowly lost prestige as an exemplar of Quebec literature as the nineteenth century turned to the twentieth and the Quiet Revolution approached).

Working through a text the author himself calls “boring” mirrors the repetitive, thankless labor of frontier agriculture. This demand for sustained attention becomes a recurring feature, especially in passages requiring lexical effort or linguistic interpretation. Patrice Lacombe ends, rather than begins, his text with a strikingly similar address:

Quelques-uns de nos lecteurs auraient peut-être désiré que nous eussions donné un dénouement tragique à notre histoire; ils auraient aimé à voir nos acteurs disparaître violemment de la scène...mais nous prions de remarquer que nous écrivons dans un pays où les mœurs en général sont pures et simples, et que l'esquisse que nous avons essayée d'en faire, eût été invraisemblable et même souverainement ridicule, si elle se fût terminée par des meurtres, des empoisonnements et des suicides. Laissons aux vieux pays, que la civilisation a gâtés, leurs romans ensanglantés, peignons l'enfant du sol, tel qu'il est, religieux, honnête, paisible de mœurs et de caractère, jouissant de l'aisance et de la fortune, sans orgueil et sans ostentation, supportant avec résignation et patience les plus grandes adversités. (*La terre paternelle*, 124)

Lacombe makes explicit what Gérin-Lajoie only hints at, namely, that it is a *purposeful aesthetic choice* on his part to distinguish his work from the more sensational, “French” texts that had dominated the Canadian literary market. The “vieux pays” is the site of tragedy and violence; the pure simplicity of French Canada does not permit such extravagance of plot. The aesthetic conventions of this Quebec genre remain remarkably consistent across two decades. Lacombe and Gérin-Lajoie, though their texts are different (both formally and in terms of their elicitation of readerly enthusiasm) nonetheless share a sense of the distinctiveness of their literary projects; here are self-conscious contributions to a deliberately constructed national literature. Where *La terre paternelle* stages multilingualism only to contain it within the narration, *Jean Rivard* goes further, actively circumscribing linguistic difference in order to train readers in a shared national language.

Gérin-Lajoie's insistence that this is *not* a novel explains the subtitle of the work: this is a *récit de la vie réelle*, and the non-novel includes an unconventional set of formal features that distinguish it from more “traditional” fiction. Gérin-Lajoie's frequent asides, meticulous historical citations, careful lexical precision, and the inclusion of charts, expense reports, and recipes differentiate the work from conventional novels. Gasbarrone likewise highlights these formal features, paying particular attention to the embedded narrative of Gustave, the unhappy, poor, emotionally ruined lawyer whose attempt at city living turns out to be so very miserable. As she writes,

The asides here (“as the novelists would say”) and the hackneyed language (signaled by the odd “etc.” in the French text) underscore the purpose of including Gustave's story within Rivard's: the rival narrative illustrates the novel that Gérin-Lajoie preferred not to write, with its worldly temptations, its string of disillusionments, and its melancholy, regretful ending. Recalling Jacques Allard's observation that the nineteenth-century novel in Quebec produced neither a Balzac nor a Flaubert, I cannot help but think that this is deliberate on Gérin-Lajoie's part. (74)

Gérin-Lajoie, through a kind of narrative sleight-of-hand, *does* include the very tragedy (balls, trends, amorous encounters) he dismisses so thoroughly at the start, but these elements are used as a foil for the central narrative. In addition to this structural maneuver, I focus here on these strategies of documentary credibility before turning to a close analysis of nation-building and the management of multilingualism in *Jean Rivard*.

Gérin-Lajoie relies on several “hackneyed,” as Gasbarrone terms them, strategies of truth attestation: references to contemporary political figures (notably Lord Elgin); documentary materials such as charts, expense reports, and recipes that readers could plausibly reproduce; and ethnographic descriptions of local customs (reminiscent of Sand). These documentary elements closely resemble the records preserved in Gérin-Lajoie’s own personal papers in the National Archives of Montreal. James Bruce, 8th Lord of Elgin, was appointed Governor General of the Province of Canada in 1847. Though he was a British official, his policies nonetheless earned the support of many French Canadians. He was especially lauded for securing financial compensation to French Canadians after the losses of the 1837 rebellions. In a lengthy chapter introduction that anticipates the infrastructure developments connecting frontier settlements to urban markets, Gérin-Lajoie writes:

Tous ceux qui parmi nous ont à cœur le bien-être du peuple et la prospérité du pays regardent avec raison la colonisation des terres incultes comme le moyen le plus direct et le plus sûr de parvenir à l’accomplissement de leurs vœux. Lord Elgin, ce Gouverneur dont les Canadiens conserveront à jamais la mémoire, parce que dans son administration des affaires de la Province il ne se contenta pas d’être anglais mais voulut avant tout être juste, Lord Elgin disait en 1848 que la prospérité et la grandeur future du Canada, “dépendaient en grande partie des avantages qu’on retirerait des terres vacantes et improductives, et que le meilleur usage qu’on pût faire était de les couvrir d’une population de colons industriels, moraux, et contents.” (165)

This passage provides not only a direct reference to Elgin but also echoes Boucher’s 1664 *L’histoire véritable et naturelle*. The question of how a colony might achieve prosperity is an enduring question behind much of Quebec’s literary production. The gloss of the real – the historical, undeniable proof of Elgin having existed and spoken thus – builds Gérin-Lajoie’s illusion that Jean Rivard is not fictional, rendering him paradoxically both an exemplary figure and a plausible model for imitation. Additionally, by incorporating Elgin’s words, Gérin-Lajoie suggests that successful colonization requires support from the highest levels of political authority. Notably, this patriotic project is framed as transcending linguistic divisions: a Scottish governor becomes an agent of French-Canadian national development.

Another striking feature of the text is the frequent inclusion of charts, particularly expense and profit tables. Archival materials in the Bibliothèque nationale de Québec à Montréal reveal that the format used for Jean’s profits and expenses derives directly from Gérin-Lajoie’s own meticulous record-keeping over several decades. For a figure known primarily for his cultural and literary contributions, Gérin-Lajoie’s personal records are strikingly prosaic. Entries documenting purchases of grain or lamp oil dominate these notebooks, rather than reflections on artistic production. Take, for example, the following chart included near the end of *Jean Rivard*:

DÉPENSES	
Prix de 100 acres de terre à 3s 3d	£ 16 5 0
Pour faire défricher, clôturer, et ensemen- cer à £ 3 10 par acre	£ 350 0 0
Pour construire une petite maison	£ 50 0 0
Pour deux paires de bœufs, avec attelage	£ 34 0 0
Chaudière à potasse, etc.	£ 10 0 0
Fabrication de la potasse, barils, etc.	£ 40 0 0
Seconde année, pension et gages de 3 hommes, et de 5 durant les récoltes, entretien des bœufs, etc.	£ 180 0 0
	£ 680 5 0
RECETTES	
Potasse, 20 barils à \$ 6	£ 120 0 0
Bois de pin, savoir cent arbres à 6s	£ 30 0 0
Première récolte de blé, 2000 minots à 5s	500 0 0
Seconde récolte, orge, seigle, avoine, pois et patates, £ 3 par acre	300 0 0
	£ 950 0 0
Surplus, après la seconde récolte, sans compter la terre	269 15 0
213	

Figure 3.4.1 Photo of a chart on page 213 of Antoine Gérin-Lajoie's *Jean Rivard, le défricheur*. Figure from E.S. Dunbar. (2025)

And compare it with the following exemplary entry from Gérin-Lajoie's own expense books:⁶²

DÉPENSES	
1/2	1. Appointement
4	2. Pension
0 1/2	3. Flouze stand
1 1/2	4. À l'église
6	5. Croquerie Cards
10	6. À un pauvre
7 1/2	7. The Laws of Love (Campbell)
3	8. Pages d'un tel
3	9. Un livre de Noire (Mouton)
1	10. Michel du pain d'un plan
6	11. Michel de vin
10	12. Un blanc-shessee
5	13. Une corne (à l'encan)
1 1/2	14. À l'église
3 1/2	15. Dépense télégraphique (Suz)
1 1/2	16. Dépense à la
1 1/2	17. Chronique à la famille
1 1/2	18. Concert Sormade
0 1/2	19. Port de lettre

Figure 3.4.2 Photo of Gérin-Lajoie's personal expense list from December of 1862. Figure from E.S. Dunbar. (2025)

Gérin-Lajoie consistently writes as a modeler: his characters, his treatment of language, and even his presentation of bookkeeping practices offer templates for imitation. Jean Rivard is presented as exemplary, yet his exemplarity is deliberately positioned as attainable. By the end of the text, an attentive reader might have compiled a glossary of Canadian agricultural terms, adopted a method of expense tracking, recorded practical recipes, and even absorbed a reading regimen designed to cultivate moral and intellectual discipline. Language itself becomes one more domain of disciplined practice, subject to the same logic of improvement and standardization as agriculture or finance.

⁶² See the Addendum for additional photos of works from the archives.

One additional pillar of French-Canadian identity structures Gérin-Lajoie's project: education. In contrast to *La terre paternelle* – with its largely illiterate Chauvin family and predominantly oral society – *Jean Rivard* features a markedly literate hero: Jean reads, writes, and even teaches his servant Pierre Gagnon how to read. Education is valued and not opposed to the colonial project of clearing the land. Jean's father intervenes early after recognizing signs of intellectual promise in his son:

Comme il montra dès son bas âge, une intelligence plus qu'ordinaire son père se décida, après de longues consultations avec ses plus proches parents et le curé de Grandpré, à le mettre au collège pour l'y faire suivre un cours d'études classiques. (12)

After the death of his father, Jean leaves school to help support his eleven siblings and mother. School is thus not presented as a reliable route to financial stability. When he asks the abbot about his future path, he is recommended *not* to go into law, as it would be nearly impossible to support himself, let alone the rest of his sizeable family (a judgement borne out by the fate of Gustave). The novel thus constructs an uneasy détente between pragmatism and the intrinsic value of education. Education, literacy, and literature have a place *within* life; but when learning predominates, a bleak fate awaits. Jean's desperation about his future prompts one of his few moments of weakness: "La pensée d'émigrer, de s'expatrier, lui venait bien quelquefois, mais il la repoussait aussitôt comme antipatriotique, antinationale" (33). His creative solution is to buy land to clear; his friends and family mock him, and his choice is generally seen as unwise. Education is important, but explicitly circumscribed. Even in Jean's own assessment, as he explains to Pierre Gagnon, literary knowledge confronts an impossibly vast body of texts for those with limited time and attention: "Oh! si tu savais, mon cher Pierre, combien je suis ignorant, bien que je sache lire! Sais-tu que, quand même je passerais toute ma vie à lire et à étudier, et que je serais doué d'une intelligence supérieure, je ne connaîtrais point la millionième partie des choses?" (143). Literacy and knowledge emerge as distinct, quasi-moralistic categories in this text. Gérin-Lajoie's commentary continually sorts forms of knowledge into "worthy" and "unworthy" domains (pay attention, young female citizen!). If literature is insufficient for nation-building, what is? Jean Rivard himself provides the answer:

Il sent qu'il obéit à la voix de Celui qui a décrété que l'homme "gagnera son pain à la sueur de son front." Une voix intérieure lui dit aussi qu'il remplit un devoir sacré envers son pays, envers sa famille, envers lui-même; que lui faut-il de plus pour ranimer son énergie? (150)

His "sacred" duty to his country is fulfilled through labor: he works the land, enriches himself and his community, and reserves the evening for intellectual cultivation. This hierarchy – labor first, literacy second – also shapes the novel's treatment of language itself.

This delicate balance between praise and denigration of education raises an obvious question: how does it operate in a text that is itself a work of literature? Is Gérin-Lajoie, as author, fulfilling the same patriotic duty that Jean performs through labor? Gustave, a mouthpiece for the urban alternative that Jean rejects, offers an answer in the following description of a conversation with his (forever denied) lady love: "Mais, mademoiselle, dans notre pays, celui qui voudrait s'obstiner à être poète serait à peu près sûr d'aller mourir à l'hôpital. Ce n'est pas une perspective bien amusante" (150). Literature offers no financial stability – and financial stability is the novel's primary measure of success and happiness. He elaborates:

Notre siècle ne peut guère se vanter, il me semble, de ses progrès en littérature, et je crois que la lecture des grandes œuvres des siècles passés est encore plus intéressante, et surtout plus profitable que celle de la plupart des poètes et littérateurs modernes. (151)

The inclusion of such blunt criticism of contemporary literature is strikingly unselfconscious. Yet *Jean Rivard* is strikingly different from the classics Jean himself reads in the evenings after his day's labor. Gérin-Lajoie is subtly positioning his own text *outside* the familiar framework of literary history. From the outset, he sought to distinguish his work from the plot-driven, aestheticizing works of France. He considers *Jean Rivard* itself a fresh frontier. It is not literary in the classical sense, but rather a pragmatic work offering a model of cultural production under conditions of economic necessity.

Jean Rivard treats religion and family with an earnestness absent from *La terre paternelle*. The priest functions as a benevolent guide rather than a compromised authority, directing Jean toward the agrarian path that secures both personal success and communal stability. Family, too, becomes a mechanism of expansion rather than collapse: Jean settles his brothers nearby, transforming individual prosperity into collective continuity. In this respect, the novel fully embraces the ideological pillars of the *roman du terroir* – religion, family, education, and patriotic duty – and presents them as mutually reinforcing foundations of French-Canadian identity. Language, however, occupies a more complicated position within this schema.

The level of narratorial intervention in *Jean Rivard* is striking, though consistent with Gérin-Lajoie's overtly didactic project. Gérin-Lajoie does not shy away from opinionated tirades, sharp commentary, or didactic suggestions. In addition to the gendered address of the opening, and his reproof of the rural distaste for education, Gérin-Lajoie frequently directly addresses his "lecteur;" this is what I term the novel's "training" of the reader. His commentary often anticipates and attempts to control the reader's interest or disinterest. Gérin-Lajoie begins by assuming what reaction his reader will have, and then either confirms or challenges that belief. Consider, for example, the following passage: "Le lecteur s'est déjà sans doute demandé plus d'une fois comment nos défricheurs passaient leurs longues soirées d'hiver? D'abord il ne faut pas oublier que jamais Jean Rivard ne laissait écouler une journée sans écrire" (84). Perhaps the reader did indeed wonder, but Gérin-Lajoie knows very well what should be discussed and has particular ideas about *how* time can be best spent (hint: it looks a lot like Jean's daily schedule). If you as a reader *didn't* have this question, you might feel slightly abashed. Gérin-Lajoie thus reveals how he wants his readers to react. A life in which every moment is productively filled – mentally and physically – demands a comparable commitment from the reader.

Several times, Gérin-Lajoie also makes a show of apologizing to the reader for presumably "boring" content. But the spikiness of his opening – that one will only be interested in this book if one has the personal characteristics required to be a tree-cutting frontiersman – somewhat undercuts his performative apologies for "boringness". See, for example: "Mais il me faut entrer ici dans des détails tellement prosaïques que je désespère presque de me faire suivre par mes lecteurs même les plus bénévoles. En tous cas, je déclare loyalement que la suite de ce chapitre ne peut intéresser que les défricheurs et les économistes" (120) and, just a few pages later, "Il faut que le lecteur me permette d'empiéter sur l'avenir pour énoncer un fait de la plus grande importance dans notre récit : je veux parler du résultat de cette première récolte de Jean Rivard" (135). Gérin-Lajoie playfully mocks both himself and his reader, but in a way that reinforces the value of the "boring" daily concerns he chronicles in his non-novel. After all, he wants his readers to follow Jean's example.

The frequent apologies, asides, and precision of detail are ironic and, importantly, guide the reader toward the book's true subject: the disciplined, everyday labor of agricultural life. After all, the excitement of Jean's love story, or the particularities of the plot, are deliberately skipped over in favor of...something else. If you are bored by harvest statistics or agricultural minutiae, you are unworthy of the book you hold. Take the following remonstrance as proof:

Ô jeunes gens pleins de force et d'intelligence, qui passez vos plus belles années dans les bras de l'oisiveté, qui redoutez le travail comme l'esclave redoute sa chaîne, vous ne savez pas de quel bonheur vous êtes privés ! Cette inquiétude vague, ces ennuis, ces dégoûts qui vous obsèdent, cette tristesse insurmontable qui parfois vous accable, ces désirs insatiables de changements et de nouveautés, ces passions tyranniques qui vous rendent malheureux, tout cela disparaîtrait comme par enchantement sous l'influence salubre du travail. (137)

Not only is it *not* boring to bury oneself in the particularities of a homesteading life, but it is also personally and morally redemptive. Do not fear work – and, by extension, do not skip the “boring” parts of this book, or you risk remaining in the very idleness it condemns. The novel thus demands from its readers the same disciplined endurance it celebrates in frontier labor.

Before turning to specific examples of multilingualism, a brief remark is necessary about its metatextual treatment. Gérin-Lajoie sometimes embeds explanations directly within character dialogue – a striking device, given that the characters ostensibly share the same linguistic and social background⁶³ – while also making use of footnotes and, as with Sand and Pushkin, italicizing forms that deviate from the narrative's Standard French.

One of the most revealing examples of Gérin-Lajoie's approach to multilingualism is his introduction, definition, and repetition of French-Canadian vocabulary words. In this text, several linguistic codes are mobilized: the Standard French of the narration, itself a historically and ideologically constructed category; Indigenous terms, primarily for animal species and plants; English (notably, the only “speakers” of English are the miserable Gustave and the cows – an equivalence that is unlikely to be accidental); and, finally, “Canadian French,” which Gérin-Lajoie introduces pointedly as lexical items in his own text. Particularly striking is the recurrence of these terms later in the text, still italicized but no longer defined. This constitutes a form of linguistic training: readers are discouraged from defaulting either to English or to alternative French synonyms, because the text equips them to internalize specifically Canadian terms. Gérin-Lajoie positions his readers as linguistic apprentices. In the complex process of harvesting maple syrup, consider the specialized terminology used and the lengthy footnote explaining the words:

Nos défricheurs improvisèrent donc au milieu du bosquet une petite cabane temporaire, et après quelques jours employés à compléter leur assortiment de *gondrelles*, ou *goudilles*, d'auges, *casseaux* et autres vases nécessaires, dont la plus grande partie avait été préparée durant les longues veillées de l'hiver, tous deux, un bon matin, par un temps clair et un soleil brillant, s'attaquèrent à leurs deux cents érables. (75)

⁶³ Take, for example, the following remark, which includes a word italicized for the reader which context permits to define: “Tiens, ça me fait penser, dit Mathilde, que tu ne pouvais jamais venir plus à propos; il va y avoir demain ou après-demain une *épuchette* de blé d'inde chez notre voisin monsieur Routier; il y aura de la danse; tu peux croire si nous aurons du plaisir; j'espère bien que tu viendras avec nous?” (160).

Gérin-Lajoie has a specialist's attention to language. Each term is italicized, and when multiple spellings or definitions exist, both are included. The opening of this chapter is brimming with specialized terminology. Keeping the text's pedagogical function in mind, it becomes clear that a reader might be willing to embark on frontier life yet lack the vocabulary required to perform its tasks. The footnote accompanying this passage – which also defines *trampette*, *micouenne* and the verb *tirer*⁶⁴ – reads as follows:

Tire, Trampette ou Trempine, Goudrelle ou Goudille, Casseaux ou Caseaux ou Cassots etc., mots destinés comme beaucoup d'autres à notre futur dictionnaire canadien-français. Il a bien fallu que nos ancêtres inventassent des mots pour désigner des choses qui n'existaient pas en France. Ces mots d'ailleurs sont expressifs et vivront toujours dans la langue du peuple canadien. Le mot micouenne est tiré du sauvage et est employé fréquemment dans les anciens ouvrages sur le Canada. Aujourd'hui on ne se donne guère de soin pour trouver des mots français; on s'empresse d'adopter les mots anglais. Qui voudra prétendre que c'est une amélioration? (76)

This footnote lays bare Gérin-Lajoie's linguistic policies. First, he imagines the creation of a future French-Canadian dictionary, implicitly seeking official recognition for this lexicon. Second, the justification of a particular lexicon is geographically based; things in Canada exist which aren't in France, requiring new words (a logic reminiscent of Karamzin's arguments for Russian lexical innovation⁶⁵). Third, Gérin-Lajoie supplies an indigenous vocabulary and condemns the adoption of English terms, arguing that borrowing from English is inferior to adapting Standard French to uniquely Canadian realities. Language thus becomes another terrain of colonization: just as Jean clears land and renders it productive, Gérin-Lajoie clears linguistic space for a distinctly Canadian French lexicon. Indigenous populations, and their languages, are thus treated as assimilable to a French-Canadian identity. They are not positioned as existing fully apart from Gérin-Lajoie's French colonists, nor as a threat in the way that English influence is.

Gérin-Lajoie saturates the text with localized vocabulary. All the words Gérin-Lajoie includes as part of his projected French-Canadian dictionary are italicized, glossed parenthetically in-text, or explained in a footnote. A sample of these inclusions appears here, even at the risk of taxing my reader's patience. Parenthetical glosses occur more rarely than footnotes, which are clearly written in Gérin-Lajoie's own voice – unlike Lacombe's more ambiguous editorial interventions. Consider, for example, the following description of transport through the woods: “les hommes de M. Lacasse et d'Arnold, traînant sur des *menoires croches* (espèce de véhicule grossier, sans roues ni essieu, ni membres d'aucune espèce, inventé pour les transports à travers les bois) les grains de semence et divers autres articles achetés par Jean Rivard” (98). Footnotes remain the primary method of explaining these terms, as in the following passage: “Le lendemain, la neige qui restait encore sur le sol étant assez gelée pour porter un homme, les deux défricheurs partirent à pied sur la *croûte*” which carries footnote 2, which reads, “Mot canadien pour désigner la surface durcie de la neige” (84). The

⁶⁴ “Pendant que nos deux sucriers savouraient ainsi leur *trampette*, la chaudière continuait à bouillir, et l'eau s'épaississait à vue d'œil. Bientôt Pierre Gagnon, y plongeant sa *micouenne*, l'en retira remplie d'un sirop doré presque aussi épais que le miel. Puis vint le tour de la *tiré*” (76).

⁶⁵ I am thinking particularly of his complaint that the ladies of England won't speak to Karamzin in French: “All well-brought up English know the French language, but do not wish to speak it, and now I deeply regret that I know English so poorly. What a difference between us! With us, anyone who can say no more that ‘*Comment vous portez-vous?*’ mangles the French language in order not to speak Russian with Russians; and in our so-called ‘good society’ you might as well be deaf and dumb without French. Is this not a shame? Why do we have no national pride?” (391)

presence of these definitions raises an important question: who, exactly, does Gérin-Lajoie imagine as his reader? On the one hand, this is supposed to be a call to abandon urban life: perhaps his French-speaking urban readers are so enmeshed in anglophone society that they require support for terms that should form part of their cultural patrimony (a critique with clear links to Karamzin's dislike of the overly-Frenchified Russian elite). On the other, *Jean Rivard* was an enormous success in France. A metropolitan French audience, by contrast, would be unfamiliar with these agricultural words. These glosses render the boundaries of community explicit: whether or not you need a definition determines whether you are in the category of belonging or non-belonging. The glosses integrate both types of readers. Glossing simultaneously marks difference and erases it, transforming ignorance into belonging through instruction.

The pronoun “on” also functions as a powerful means of defining, through inclusion, the national and linguistic community Gérin-Lajoie both inhabits and seeks to shape. For example, *renards* is italicized on page 83, and accompanied by a clarifying footnote which reads, “On appelle *renards* ceux qui passent le temps de Pâques sans communier.” This definition implicitly constructs a collective “we,” while also invoking Catholic customs and holidays. Similarly, on page 110, the italicized *patates* is explained thus: “On dit *patates* au lieu de *pommes de terre*, mot inconnu dans les paroisses canadiennes.” It is possible that in larger urban centers like Montreal, the Standard French “pomme de terre” might be acceptable. One might ask how Gérin-Lajoie himself learned the term *pomme de terre* if it is supposedly unknown, but that question risks revealing his own position within a cultural and literary elite. As part of this same act of distinction – linguistic, communal, and social – Gérin-Lajoie also calls attention to important divergences in meaning between the same term in French and Canadian French. Take, for example, his extended commentary on the word “*corvée*,” which is accompanied by a footnote:

Jean Rivard engagea d'abord les services d'un *tailleur* qui en trois ou quatre jours aidé de ses deux hommes, put tracer et préparer tout le bois nécessaire. Quand les matériaux furent prêts et qu'il ne fut plus question que de *lever*, Jean Rivard résolut, suivant la coutume canadienne, d'appeler une *corvée*. Le mot “*corvée*,” d'après tous les dictionnaires de la langue française, s'emploie pour désigner un travail gratuit et forcé qui n'est fait qu'à regret, comme, par exemple, la corvée seigneuriale, les corvées de voirie, etc., regardées partout comme des servitudes. Mais il a dans le langage canadien un sens de plus qui date sans doute des premiers temps de l'établissement du pays. Dans les paroisses canadiennes, lorsqu'un *habitant** veut lever une maison, une grange, un bâtiment quelconque exigeant l'emploi d'un grand nombre de bras, il invite ses voisins à lui donner un coup de main. C'est un travail gratuit, mais qui s'accomplit toujours avec plaisir. Ce service d'ailleurs sera rendu tôt ou tard par celui qui le reçoit; c'est une dette d'honneur, une dette sacrée que personne ne se dispense de payer. (200)

Gérin-Lajoie accomplishes a complicated bit of linguistic and nationalistic work here. First, he exposes the insufficiency of official dictionaries to capture Canadian usage. He presents himself as a linguistic authority who has consulted “all” dictionaries of the French language. Second, he dates the meaning of *corvée* to the beginnings of Canada, at least two centuries in the past, conferring the authority of tradition and longevity. This move is strategic, continuing his project of demonstrating that French Canada possesses a linguistic and literary history. This emphasis on continuity minimizes the role of Indigenous languages and the pervasive presence of English in shaping Canadian French. The factual accuracy of Gérin-Lajoie's claim matters less, however, than the ideological power of asserting it. Third, the manipulation of the term *corvée* is ideologically charged. French Canadians are

portrayed as inherently moral and communal, eager to assist their neighbors. Asking for help cannot imply unwanted, forced labor; in this non-novel universe, French Canadians always want to labor. The word “*habitant*” in this passage carries an additional footnote, which further historicizes and localizes Canadian French: “C’est avec intention que je me sers de ce mot qui date aussi des premiers temps de la colonisation de la Nouvelle-France et qui restera dans le langage canadien” (200). Again, the appeal to historical continuity is explicit: Canadian French endures. This passage perfectly encapsulates *la survivance* through terminology dating back to the earliest settlers of the country. Gérin-Lajoie thus presents Canada as possessing its own language, culture, and customs – directly contradicting Durham’s claims and implicitly challenging the cultural authority of France itself.

Gérin-Lajoie’s text also incorporates linguistic codes that fall outside French-Canadian vocabulary. The first, and most obvious, is English. The second consists of terms drawn from Indigenous languages of Canada, which tend to be used specifically for varieties of animals and plants. English is used sparingly (unsurprising given Gérin-Lajoie’s explicit disapproval of borrowing from English). This constitutes a very different linguistic universe from that of *La terre paternelle*. English appears only twice, both under comedic circumstances. The first instance occurs when Pierre’s cows respond only to “English” commands:

Il regrettait une chose cependant, c’est qu’ils n’entendaient que l’anglais; ils avaient été élevés dans les Cantons de l’Est, probablement par quelque fermier écossais ou américain, et cela pouvait expliquer cette lacune dans leur éducation. L’un d’eux s’appelait Dick et l’autre Tom. Pour les faire aller à droite il fallait crier Djee, et pour aller à gauche Wahaish. À ces cris, ces intelligents animaux obéissaient comme des militaires à la voix de leur officier. (101)

In this scene, the only “English speakers” are the cows. Yet, neither “dje” or “wahaish” are English at all. They more closely resemble Scots Gaelic herding commands rather than Standard English. English is so distant from this French-language agricultural idyll that Pierre cannot even identify it correctly. In contrast to the conflict of *La terre paternelle*, Gérin-Lajoie’s narrative constructs a near-utopian space. Encroachments on the French-speaking colonist community are barely imaginable, and the cows come closest to representing “English-speaking” settlers. This text, and the nation it hopes to create, is emphatically French speaking. The only other figure who dabbles in English is the unfortunate Gustave. As Gasbarrone notes, the would-be urban protagonist occasionally interjects English words, particularly when remarking bitterly about his economic and financial troubles. For example, after being forced to sell off his books in an attempt to stave off dire poverty, he writes a letter to Jean, darkly joking that his pecuniary trouble might enhance his literary appeal: “Cela ne m’empêcherait pas de passer pour un *gentleman*; au contraire. Avec mes beaux habits et mes livres allures je serais sûr d’en imposer aux badauds qui malheureusement sont presque partout en majorité” (187). His use of English signals his cosmopolitan, upper-class education. His bitterness stems from the mismatch between his cultural capital and his economic failure. For both Gustave and the cows, English proves not an advantage but a liability.

Gérin-Lajoie also incorporates terms drawn from various Indigenous languages, often accompanied by etymological commentary with a veneer of linguistic and anthropological precision. On page 114, for example, when listing various fish species, familiar terms such as “l’anguille” and “la carpe” are followed by italicized names such as “la *barbue*, la *barbotte*.” The leisurely fishing scene is accompanied by “le coassement des grenouilles et le *beuglement* du *ouaouaron*,” (115) which is accompanied by the following footnote:

Il y a, pour désigner un certain nombre de poissons, de reptiles, d'oiseaux et d'insectes particuliers au Canada, des mots qui ne se trouvent dans aucun des dictionnaires de la langue française, et qui sont encore destinés à notre futur dictionnaire canadien-français. Ainsi le *maskinongé*, qui tire son nom d'un mot sauvage signifiant gros brochet, l'*achigan*, la *barbue*, la *barbotte*, les *batteurs de faux*, les *siffleurs*, les *brenèches*, les *canards branchus*, etc., sont désignés sous ces noms dans les anciens auteurs sur le Canada comme Boucher, La Hontan, Charlevoix, quoique ces mots ne se trouvent pas dans le dictionnaire de l'Académie. Le mot *ouaouaron* ou *wawaron* vient évidemment du mot sauvage *Ouaraon*, grosse grenouille verte. (Voir Sagard, *Dictionnaire de la langue Huronne*.) Ceux qui ont eu occasion d'entendre les mugissements de cet habitant des marais ne trouveront pas étrange que nos ancêtres Canadiens-Français se soient empressés d'adopter ce mot si éminemment imitative. (115)

Several features of this passage merit attention. First, both “*barbue*” and “*barbotte*” had appeared earlier, in the list of fish species, without a specific gloss until the following page. Context clues allow readers to infer that the terms refer to fish, but only later does Gérin-Lajoie reveal to us their origin. Gérin-Lajoie familiarizes his readers with local terminology through a two-step process: introduction followed by definition, or definition followed by repeated use. Second, we have another mention of a dictionary of Canadian French. Third, Gérin-Lajoie refers to particular terms as coming from “un mot sauvage” – a value judgment. What is striking about this choice is that he has clearly done his research; he cites the Dictionary of the Huron Language and could easily attribute the term to Huron rather than calling it “sauvage.” The disparity in language treatment is striking. Gérin-Lajoie devotes extensive editorial attention to distinguishing French-Canadian terminology from Standard French. Indigenous languages, by contrast, are rarely treated with specificity; their origins are flattened into the undifferentiated category of “sauvage.” The ready adoption of this term, and his claim that Huron words are “si éminemment imitatif,” sits uneasily alongside his moral judgment on borrowing from English. Indigenous words are absorbed into French-Canadian identity rather than recognized as belonging to distinct linguistic traditions. English, by contrast, is marginal, symbolically excluded, but poses a threat to that identity. Gérin-Lajoie’s linguistic attention is thus highly selective. His linguistic care and editorial precision are devoted to the construction and regulation of French-Canadian language. Indigenous terms are absorbed into this linguistic framework, forming a central pillar of the “Canadianness” of Canadian French. Multilingualism is thus shaped quite explicitly to view just one language as worthy of sustained attention and cultivation: French, specifically its Canadian form.

Where does Gérin-Lajoie’s *Jean Rivard* leave us? It differs in important respects from Lacombe’s *La terre paternelle*, while still consciously extending a literary tradition specific to French Canada. Jean is, for both the author and his readers, the everyman: he is exemplary yet imitable, ordinary yet capable of extraordinary success. As part of this didactic project, Gérin-Lajoie renders Jean’s fulfillment palpable – especially in comparison with Gustave’s misery. Education, family, hard work, and religion all play central roles; so, too, does a sense of national obligation and a conscious awareness of one’s identity as a French-Canadian. This community is defined both culturally and linguistically. Canadian French words have specific meanings tied to the country’s history, customs, and contact with Indigenous languages. French Canadians require their own dictionaries just as they require their own literary references. *Jean Rivard* – not a novel but a *récit de la vie réelle* – becomes such a reference itself. The depth of knowledge underlying the text – from Gustave’s isolated English expressions to its discussion of Indigenous etymologies and French-Canadian vocabulary – signals Gérin-Lajoie’s erudition. Yet Gérin-Lajoie does not share the fate of the urban intellectuals he portrays as doomed to professional misery. Through Jean, Gérin-Lajoie attempts to write a nation into being – and to

explicitly encourage a colonial project among French Canadians. The instructions he provides – linguistic, political, and agricultural – translate directly into practice.

3.5 Conclusion

Patrice Lacombe's *La terre paternelle* (1846) and Antoine Gérin-Lajoie's *Jean Rivard, le défricheur* (1862) respond in markedly different ways to the same cultural and political imperatives. Both seek to create a Quebec-specific French-language literary tradition as part of a nation-constructing project. In addition, both were written under British colonial rule, when linguistic, religious, and political autonomy felt precarious. Lacombe and Gérin-Lajoie attempt to produce a shared culture through literature rather than merely reflect it. *La terre paternelle*, for instance, depicts the consequences of lost community values. Lacombe dramatizes the destruction and reconstruction of a French-Canadian family and its land, staging English as both an economic and linguistic disruptor. English is embodied in the settler who occupies the ancestral home. Still, this is a triumphant narrative; an idealist text. The wayward son returns to repurchase the land; he “talks” with the English settler, and the encounter devolves into linguistic terms intelligible to the French reader. Disregarding the salient details, the land is miraculously repurchased. Charles saves his family from economic and moral destitution, and the land continues to be farmed for generations to come. The novel is dominated by an authoritative narratorial voice that mediates all linguistic difference. English is both a social threat and a textual presence, the language of domination entering the narrative itself.

Gérin-Lajoie takes a different tack. Though also invested in the construction of a linguistically unified French Canada, his strategy differs from Lacombe's. Jean, his hero, faces no crisis of conscience. *Jean Rivard* presents not an embattled community but a prescriptive model. English is barely present in the novel, and even in these limited instances, non-English words are incorrectly attributed to it, underscoring the text's unstable and mediated representation of linguistic difference. The utopian world of *Jean Rivard* is linguistically closed: it permits little interference from other languages, even at the level of the text. Indigenous terms are permitted only insofar as they can be absorbed into a French-Canadian lexical patrimony. Gérin-Lajoie explores the linguistic and colonial threats that characterize Lacombe's text in a very different way. In *Jean Rivard*, the central threat is not linguistic contamination but the loss of agricultural populations to urban centers. Rather than flocking to cities, French Canadians could build economic power, and community strength, by remaining in their rural strongholds. In both works, multilingual reality is not denied but reorganized, admitted into the narrative only to be subordinated to the vision of a coherent French-Canadian community.

Across twenty years of publication, Quebec's linguistic and literary identity underwent a significant transformation. For Lacombe, English was an external threat, a linguistic and colonial challenge to be thwarted. For Gérin-Lajoie, the threat to the community was internal: abandonment of the rural way of life for a life in the city that had the potential to fracture the French-Canadian community. For later authors of the *roman du terroir* – Louis Hémon, Félix-Antoine Savard, Germaine Guèvremont – linguistic threats fade to the background, suggesting that once French-Canadian literary culture felt secure, overt linguistic conflict no longer required dramatization. Instead, later novels focus on the realities – poignant, difficult – of agrarian lives. In that sense, Lacombe and Gérin-Lajoie can be said to have achieved their purpose: French-Canadian identity was forged within this literary tradition and sustained through the portrait of a people contained in this idealist genre – a linguistic unity imagined into being through literature itself.

3.6 Addendum: The National Archives at the Library of Quebec

In the National Archives at the Library of Quebec, I examined the private papers of Antoine Gérin-Lajoie alongside extensive documentation on the founding of the *Institut Canadien* in Montreal. These materials illuminate a tension between Gérin-Lajoie's language policies in private and public writing, as well as the broader stakes of cultural production in a colonial society undergoing transition. The archive includes the complete personal writings of Gérin-Lajoie, his wife, and his son, Léon Gérin, a prominent sociologist of his time. The personal notebooks of Gérin-Lajoie were primarily concerned with daily expenses, lists of possessions, and similarly quotidian matters. One literary mention, and one only, was to be found in his personal journals: he speaks of the impending publication of *Jean Rivard, l'économiste* "qui paraîtra dans le cours de l'année." There is no tortured poetic self-reflection for Gérin-Lajoie; instead, we know exactly how many small tables he owns (it varies from year to year, but the number hovers around 4). Interestingly, in these expense books, Gérin-Lajoie often switches between French and English. Sometimes he switches mid-list, from line item to line item, while other lists are entirely in French or English. Although he insisted that French alone could supply the necessary vocabulary, Gérin-Lajoie's private notebooks reveal a far more flexible linguistic practice than the prescriptive vision of French-Canadian purity advocated in *Jean Rivard*. In everyday life, French and English appear side by side, suggesting that the novel's linguistic program represents an ideological aspiration rather than a lived reality. See, for example, the following lists from page 42 of his 1862 expense book, coincidentally the same year as the initial appearance of *Jean Rivard, le défricheur*.

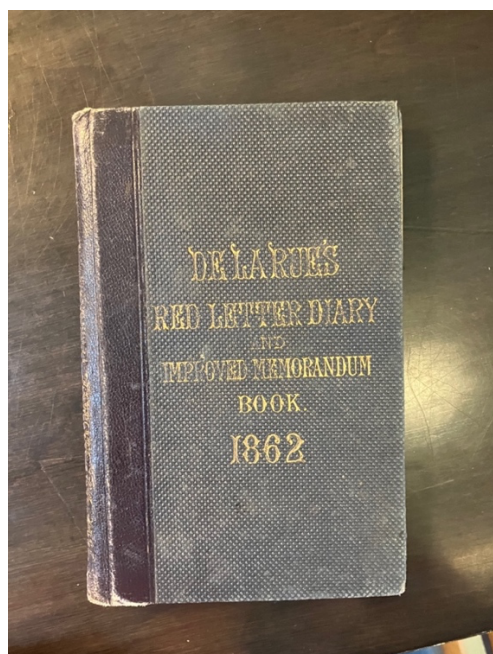


Figure 3.6.1 Photo of the cover of Gérin-Lajoie's 1862 personal expense book. Figure from E.S. Dunbar. (2025)

Decembre (Continue)

	Rapports	
7. Penier	4-0-0	
8. Fleur stand	0-1-3	
9. A l'eglise	0-0-7½	
10. Conversation Cards	0-0-3½	
11. A un pauvre	0-0-1½	
14. The Laus of Love (Campbell)	0-1-3	
15. Façon d'un col	0-0-3	
16. Une livre de noix (Walnut)	0-0-7½	
22. Mèche de pain d'un plan	0-12-6	
23. Stock de bois	0-6-3	
24. Ma Blanchisserie	0-4-4½	
25. Une canne (à l'encre)	0-0-7½	
26. A l'eglise	0-0-1	
27. Reproduction de l'épigramme (Zola)	0-0-7½	
28. Dépense à la	0-0-8½	
29. Encre à la paille	1-5-0	
30. Concert Permonade	0-1-3	
31. Port de lettre	0-0-3	

Figure 3.6.2 Photo of the second page of Gérin-Lajoie's December expense list of 1862. Figure from E.S. Dunbar. (2025)

Janvier (Continue)

	Rapports	
32. Leg frète	0-0-7½	
33. 6 clous	0-0-0½	
34. A un pauvre	0-0-0½	
35. New-York Times	0-0-3	
36. Blanchissage	0-10-0	
37. Façon de pantalon	0-7-6	
38. Raccourcissage	0-3-9	
Total	13-1-9½	

Figure 3.6.3 Photo of Gérin-Lajoie's January expense list. Figure from E.S. Dunbar. (2025)

Mars	
1.	Un parapluie — 20-6-10 ¹ / ₂
2.	Pension (une semaine) — 1-10-0
3.	A l'Eglise — 0-0-10 ¹ / ₂
3.	A Rosa (servante) — 0-2-6
4.	Lignes (pour le schéma) — 0-0-11 ¹ / ₂
5.	Buchan's Apprend Lettres — 0-2-6
6.	Plantagenet Water — 0-0-6
8.	Une Colie — 2-0-0
6.	Pension (une semaine) — 1-12-6
14.	Parapluie (chèque) — 0-0-7 ¹ / ₂
15.	Semaine de pension — 1-12-6
0.	Katharion (for the house) — 0-1-3
16.	A l'Eglise — 0-0-4
21.	do — 0-0-3
22.	Pension (une semaine) — 1-12-6
	Lavage — 0-3-9
23.	A l'Eglise — 0-0-6
29.	Passe de Sauter — 0-17-6
11.	Semaine de pension — 1-12-6
	<u>21-18-5</u>

Figure 3.6.4 Photo of Gérin-Lajoie's March expense list. Figure from E.S. Dunbar. (2025)

Also included in the Antonin Gérin-Lajoie files was a speech read at the moment of his death, containing the following acknowledgement of his contributions to Canadian literary society:

Comme homme privé, comme écrivain, et comme fondateur de cette société, on lui devra une éternelle reconnaissance. Après Monsieur Gelinas, M. Antonine Garin fit l'éloge du premier travail littéraire de M. Gérin-Lajoie de sa tragédie intitulé "Le jeune Latour." M. Ernest Devoy [*Deroys*?] succéda à M. Garin et loua à son tour le chef d'œuvre littéraire de notre fondateur, son ouvrage éminemment patriotique auquel il a donné le nom de "Jean Rivard" et qui le fera vivre à jamais dans la mémoire de tous les Canadiens instruits.

The literary life that Gérin-Lajoie supposedly led receives almost no mention in his private writings. Nor, interestingly, did his name appear often in the archives of the *Institut Canadien*, the cultural center he himself helped to found.

The documents associated with Montreal's *Institut Canadien* – including library catalogues, speeches, weekly debate topics, and annual institutional reflections – reveal how cultural identity was actively constructed through reading practices, intellectual exchange, and institutional organization. Whereas the novels examined in this chapter locate French-Canadian identity in the rural landscape, the *Institut Canadien* represents an urban intellectual project devoted to cultivating national consciousness through reading, debate, and institutional organization. The Montreal *Institut Canadien* was founded in December of 1844, and established a literary prize, Le Concours-Boucherville, the "premier concours littéraire ouvert à la jeunesse française du pays" whose creation was motivated by "le besoin de créer un point de ralliement pour la jeunesse de Montréal, un centre d'émulation, où chaque jeune homme entrant dans le monde pourrait venir s'inspirer d'un pur patriotisme, s'instruire en profitant des avantages d'une bibliothèque commune et s'habituer à parler en prenant part aux travaux de cette tribune ouverte à toutes les classes et à toutes les conditions" (8) (see photo below).

Quite consciously, the *Institut* saw itself as a cultural meeting point and hoped to start a tradition of literary engagement: “L’institut Canadien a inauguré chez la population française de notre ville, l’habitude de lire publiquement des essais préparés pour des soirées littéraires” (9). As the novels examined in this chapter focus on rural spaces, the *Institut* sought to extend its influence outward from its urban base:

Bon nombre de jeunes hommes qui viennent à la ville pour s’instruire, étudier une profession, apprendre un métier s’en retournent s’établir dans les campagnes et remportent avec eux la soif de continuer l’œuvre à laquelle ils prenaient part durant leur séjour à la ville. (10)

Indeed, eleven other institutions were founded in inspiration of Montreal’s success. Key to the functioning of the *Institut* were its library and public spaces for cultural engagement: “L’Institut compte dans ses rangs 350 membre; sa bibliothèque contient 1600 volumes et fournit de 64 journaux” (see photo below of a list of library books by language. The total count includes 1360 in French, 146 in English, 25 in Latin, 5 in German, 3 in Spanish). One final remark on this groundbreaking cultural institution: within its Constitution and Rules section, Article XXI reads, “Tous les procédés de l’Institut se font en français. Tous motion et rapport se font par écrit” (41).

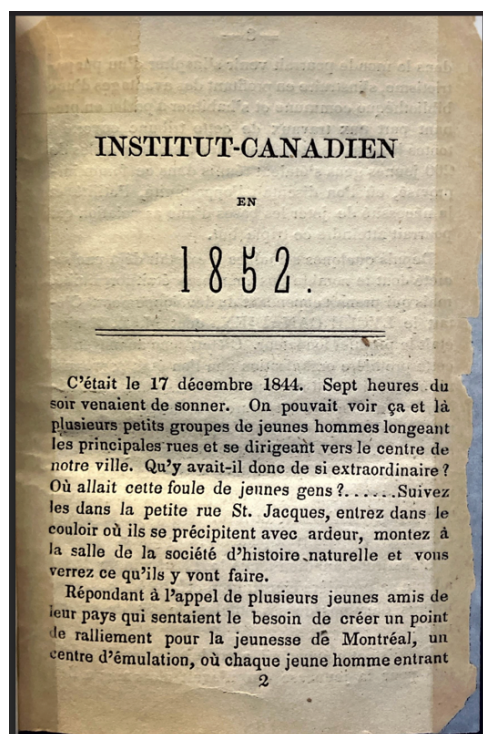


Figure 3.6.5 Photo of the opening page of the 1852 *Institut Canadien*'s explanatory book and constitution. Figure from E.S. Dunbar. (2025)

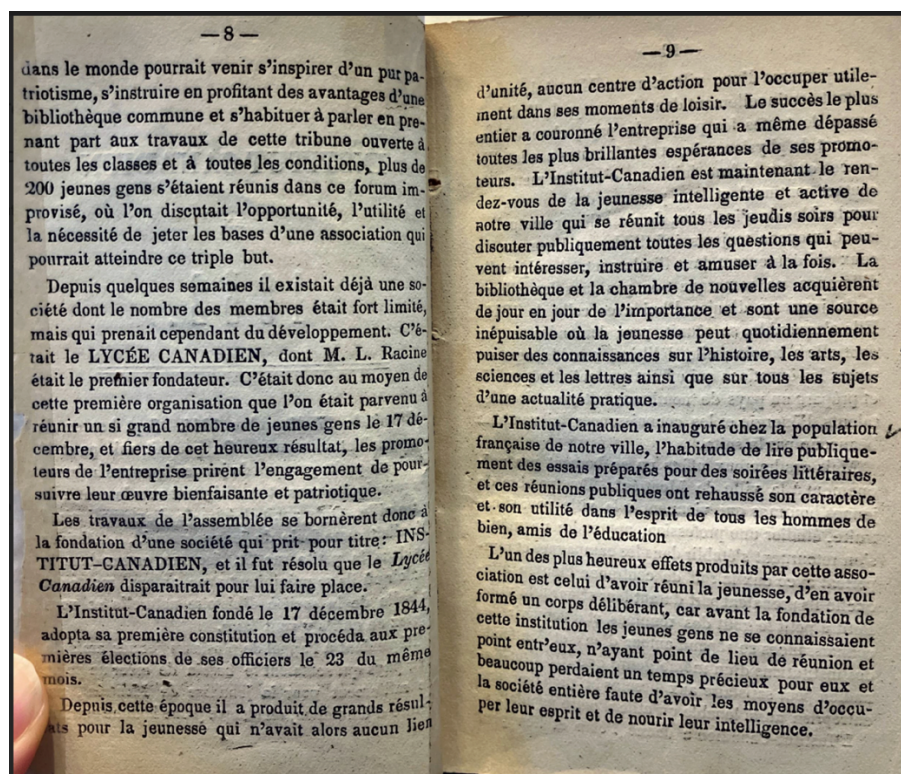


Figure 3.6.6 Photo of pages 8-9 of "Pamphlets from the Institut Canadien." Figure from E.S. Dunbar. (2025)

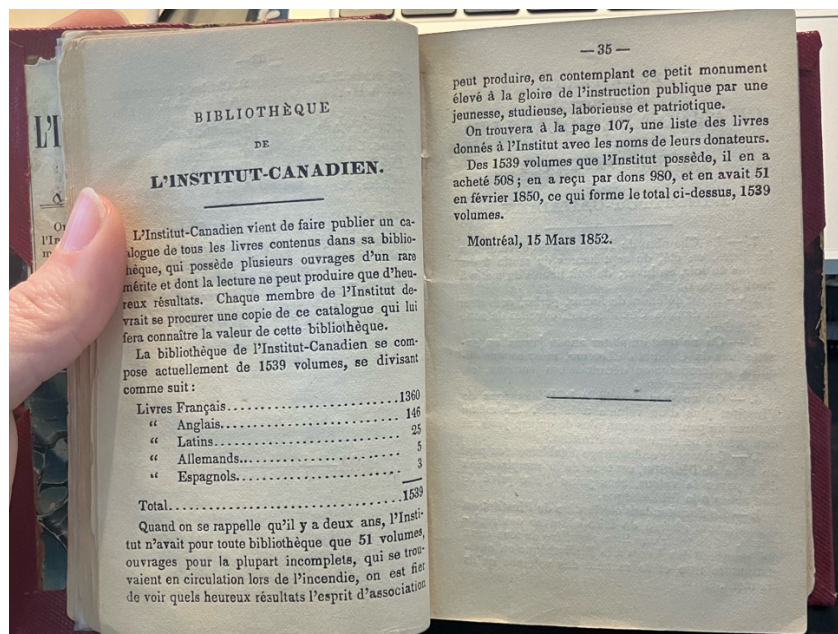


Figure 3.6.7 Photo of a list of books contained in the Institute's library by language. Figure from E.S. Dunbar. (2025)

I was particularly interested in considerations concerning how purchases should be made for the library, as well as how the changing subjects of debate reflected the most pressing political and linguistic concerns of the period. A fire the year after its founding almost destroyed its library, and

the immediate priority was to rebuild. On p. 52 of the same volume, the *Institut* reports having a member go to France “afin de faire acheter une collection de bons ouvrages français, lesquels nous arriveront au printemps.” Over the years, the process of cataloguing the books changes from a linguistic point of view. Sometimes, the books are listed alphabetically by title (as in 1852 and 1868) or by author, regardless of language. Other times, the books are listed specifically by their language (as in 1874), and yet other times by genre (as in 1870)

A sampling of debate topics over the years helps to sketch the questions of confederation, unification, and linguistic adherence that characterized the first decades of the *Institut*'s functioning. (See photos of the relevant pages below) In the *Procès-verbaux de l'Institut canadien de Montréal, 14 juin 1855-23 novembre 1871* (P768,S2,D1), the debate topic mentioned on August 20, 1855 is as follows: “L’union de toutes les provinces anglaises de l’Amérique du nord, avec un seul parlement, serait-elle fatale à la nationalité canadienne française?” (9). Clearly, the cultural and literary center that was the *Institut* was deeply concerned about the sanctity of their community. Additional topics included: “Lors de la conquête du Canada par les Anglais, les lois civiles françaises étaient-elles plus avantageuses au développement d’une colonie que les lois anglaises” (14), from the 11th of October, 1855, “Dans les circonstances actuelles le rappel de l’Union serait-il avantageux pour le Bas Canada” (15), and finally, on page 61 : “Dans les circonstances actuelles, la division des provinces du Haut et du Bas-Canada, en trois ou en quatre états, qui auraient chacun leur législature locale et un gouvernement fédéral, serait-elle dans l’intérêt du peuple des Provinces-Unies?” The tradition of public debate on topics deeply felt by the local French community seems to have been at the heart of the *Institut*'s modus operandi.

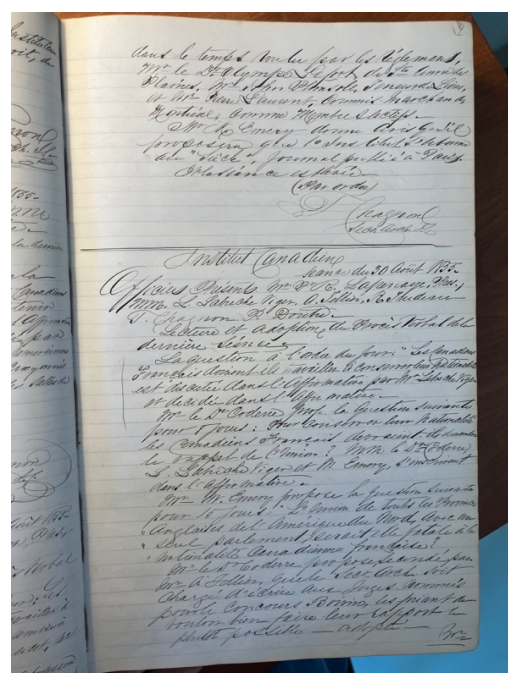


Figure 3.6.8 Photo of an explanation of the debate topic on August 20th, 1855 (page 9) at the Institute as contained in the *Procès-verbaux de l'Institut canadien de Montréal, 14 juin 1855-23 novembre 1871*. Figure from E.S. Dunbar. (2025).

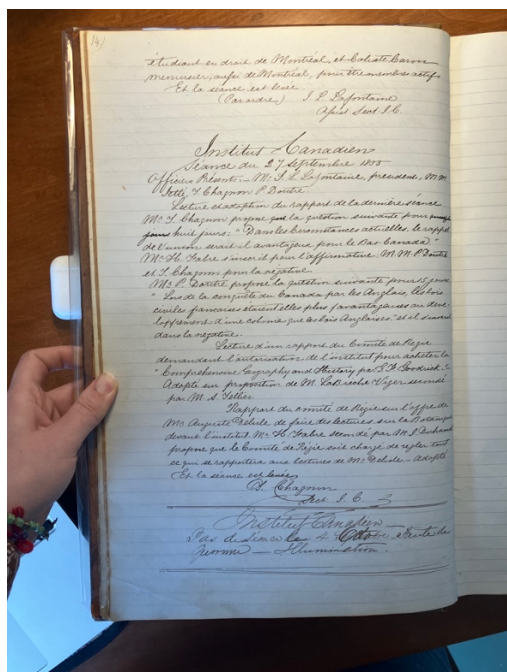


Figure 3.6.9 Photo of the debate topic about the civil laws of France in a colonial, Anglophone context on page 14 of the Procès-verbaux. Figure from E.S. Dunbar. (2025)

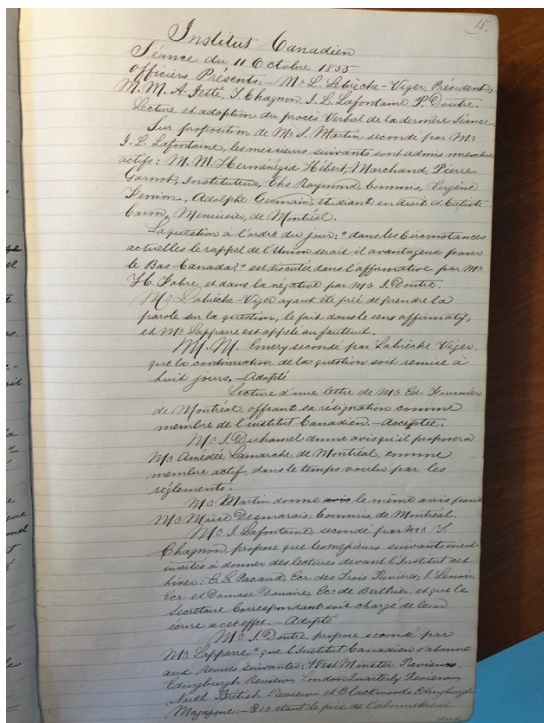


Figure 3.6.10 Photo of the debate about the Act of Union on October 11th, 1855 on page 15 of the Procès-verbaux. Figure from E.S. Dunbar. (2025)

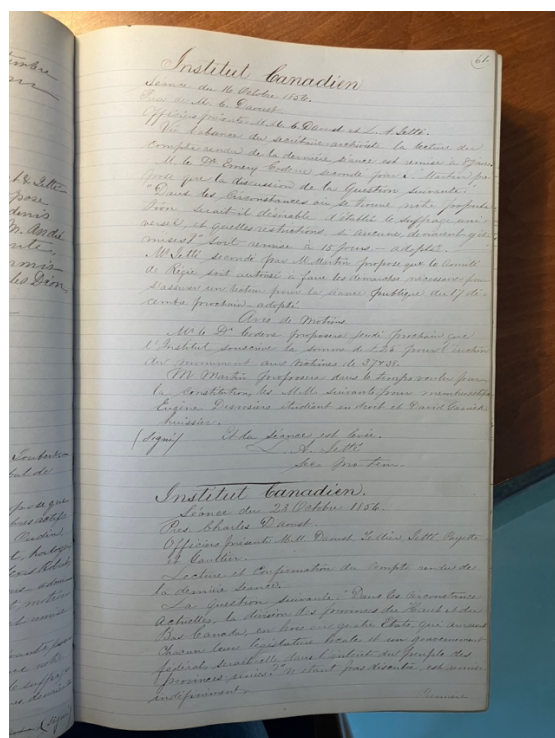


Figure 3.6.11 Photo of the debate topic about dividing Canada between Upper and Lower colonies on page 61 of the Procès-verbaux. Figure from E.S. Dunbar. (2025)

All in all, the archives provide a rich glimpse into a period of intense literary self-consciousness in Quebec. Purposeful public-facing initiatives – from the library to literary debate evenings – helped to craft an intellectual community in Montreal, one which saw its purpose spreading beyond the city limits, to encompass those in far-flung rural districts. Notably, neither *La terre paternelle* nor *Jean Rivard, le défricheur* appear in the Institut's library catalogue, suggesting a gap between the literary imaginaries of rural identity and the reading practices of this urban intellectual community. Though literary pursuits were key to the functioning of the *Institut*, the majority of its debate topics tended to focus on current political issues. These novels, then, staged a crisis of identity and belonging which does not appear as explicitly in the day-to-day functioning of the (admittedly urban and elite) *Institut*. Where the *Institut Canadien* worked to preserve French language and culture through institutional structures – libraries, debates, and public discourse – the novels examined in this chapter attempted something different: the imaginative construction of a unified French-Canadian community through literature itself. The archives reveal that the linguistic anxieties dramatized in *La terre paternelle* and *Jean Rivard* were part of a broader nineteenth-century effort to define, preserve, and institutionalize French-Canadian identity in the face of political and linguistic pressure.

Chapter 4

Sentimentalism and the new nation: Conceptions of Russian statehood from Karamzin to Pushkin

4.1 Introduction: Setting the Stage – Historical Events and the Stakes of Language Use

“Who among us does not love those years when Russians were Russians and spoke their own language?”
 — “Натаалья, боярская дочь” (“Natali’ia, The Boyar’s Daughter”), Nikolai Karamzin, 1792

Russian literature and Russian literary language experienced profound growth and change across the eighteenth and nineteenth centuries. Beginning with language reforms under Peter the Great (1682-1725), continuing through the culturally rich reign of Catherine II (“the Great,” 1762-1796), and winding through the repressive censorship and bursts of literary innovation which characterized the reigns of the tsars of the first half of the nineteenth century (Alexander I, 1801-1825 and Nicholas I, 1825-1855), this historic period included rapid alterations in how literature was produced and what literary style or mode was popular with a swiftly growing readership. It is also characterized by an escalating sense of the importance of national unity. The subjects of this chapter are two authors who contributed to the transformation of Russian letters – Nikolai Karamzin (1766-1826) and Alexander Pushkin (1799-1837).

This revolution in language and literature was in many ways indebted to the influence, use, and contested status of French amongst the upper strata of Russian society. In a paradox now familiar from the preceding chapters of this dissertation, it is the presence of another language – in the Russian context, that of French – which manages to unify and solidify a national linguistic identity which defines and structures itself in opposition to the language it is not. This evolution of Russia’s self-conception through language is traceable through the changing representations of French in literature. While taking into consideration the wider historical context, the temporal frame of this chapter is slightly narrow, focusing as it does on the beginnings of Karamzin’s literary career, in the 1790’s, and ending with Pushkin’s publications in the 1830’s. This handful of decades represents an impressive leap: for Karamzin, who was the stylistic innovator *par excellence* for the generation of writers which included Pushkin, French was an ideal to strive for, a language whose flexibility of expression allowed for literary innovation which Russian authors could only dream of. A mere forty years later, French, though omnipresent as an encoded norm amongst the upper classes which Pushkin represented in his fiction, had been reduced to an object of satire. Through a close examination of their respective literary outputs, this chapter will explain how the status of French proved so slippery in such a short period of time.

The linguistic situation in Russia is somewhat distinct in the context of this dissertation. Unlike in France, this period in Russian history is less about linguistic diversity operating behind a supposedly singular national language. If anything, the literary overrepresentation of linguistic diversity (French and Russian) contributed to the increasingly negative view taken towards Francophilia. And, unlike in Quebec, French was not in danger of being supplanted by another, powerful colonial language. If anything, French *was* the language theoretically threatening to supplant homegrown, native Russian. French, through its very otherness, managed to reinforce the particularity of Russian language and identity by the end of the period examined here. This chapter thus epitomizes the larger concerns of this dissertation: debates about linguistic unity, national self-image, and the failures of certain literary

modes – namely, sentimentalism and idealism – to reflect the concerns of states developing their own, singular, national and linguistic identities.

The historical origins for this chapter require a brief detour to a period of Russian history that predates Karamzin's early publications by almost a century. In 1708, Peter the Great introduced reforms to written Russian – a momentous change, as it signaled both his desire to Europeanize Russia more generally and created a stark, visible difference between the Russian used for political and cultural purposes and Church Slavonic, now used more narrowly in religious contexts. The nascent print industry also adapted, changing the typescript used in institutional contexts outside of the church. As Vladimir Yefimov writes in his 2013 article "Civil Type and Kis Cyrillic,"

The old *polunstav* type was preserved only for religious literature, while for all other publications, Peter introduced a new style that imitated the forms of contemporary Western type; in later days, the new type became known as Civil Type (*grazhdanskiy shrift*). The reform partially altered the structure of the Russian alphabet, too: the use of European (Arabic) numerals was introduced, and punctuation and caps usage were put in order. Thus, Cyrillic took on the form of roman serif type, in much the same way that Muscovy was dressed up in European clothes.^{66,67}

It took Peter the Great's Europeanizing reforms to create a space in which secular literature could appear. In taking Western European examples as his models of typography, military organization, and even dress (much is said about his edict that men shave their beards – even Karamzin waxes on about the subject 90 years later), Peter hoped that through mirroring he could create a national identity which more closely resembled that of his European neighbors. This universalist mindset – which has much in common with the belief that a shared human identity is sufficient for mutual understanding, key to both Enlightenment philosophy and the sentimental literary mode – skates along the same linguistic paradox mentioned above. Just as the presence of another language reinforces the particularity of your own, the importation of foreign models, rather than creating a pan-national identity, ended up reinforcing Russian identity.

The subject of Petrine language reform in some ways illustrates what Benedict Anderson in *Imagined Communities* identifies as the "dusk" of religious communities and the "dawn" of nationalism (13).⁶⁸ A key component of the early religious imagined community was the power of sacred language and written script. Knowledge of the sacred language was confined to a small class of individuals: "The literati were adepts, strategic strata in a cosmological hierarchy of which the apex was divine" (15). Anderson identifies many sources which contributed to the decline of religious imagined communities but indicates that it was print capitalism in particular which began to spread

⁶⁶ And Francophone influence might be to thank even for this specifically Russian language reform; as Yefimov points out, Louis XIV of France had commissioned typographical reform, resulting in an "ideal alphabet:" "In 1702 that font was used for the luxurious illustrated book *Médailles sur les principaux évènements du règne de Louis le Grand* at the Royal Printing House in Paris. Peter had a copy of this book in his library," n.p.

⁶⁷ As a note on transliteration versus original language: Russian terms appear in both Cyrillic and transliteration depending on source conventions; original orthography has been preserved in quotations. For titles, I have opted to use the Cyrillic Russian followed by an English translation.

⁶⁸ Anderson's sometimes simplistic models have been critiqued for ignoring the complex multilingualism which operated within the territories he considered. For an excellent examination of linguistic change in South Africa, Senegal, and Macedonia, see Irvine, J. T., & Gal, S. (2000), "Language ideology and linguistic differentiation." In P. V. Kroskrity, (Ed.), *Regimes of language: Ideologies, politics, and identities*. Santa Fe: School of American Research Press, 35-84.

vernaculars, switching the language of the intellectual class away from Latin in his European case studies. In Russia, as discussed above, it was indeed print capitalism that created the space for a secular literature that would become key to national cultural identity – but more literally, it was the typographical revolution begun by Peter which signaled and enabled this shift. And, as a further mark of distance from the relevance of Anderson’s model in the case of Russia, Victor Zhivov explains in his book *Language and Culture in Eighteenth Century Russia* (1996) that Church Slavonic cannot easily be compared with the role of Latin in Catholic countries, as Latin was taught through grammars and with a dictionary, while Church Slavonic was principally taught through memorization (the result being that those who studied it would produce entire memorized fragments rather than individually selected words). In addition, Church Slavonic in the pre-Petrine era was neither uniform (in the sense of being standardized) nor polyfunctional (in the sense of fulfilling various linguistic needs). As Zhivov writes of Peter the Great’s reign,

It was just at this time that in various spheres of writing and pursuant to a conscious linguistic policy the new literary language was established and the old registers of the written language were reduced to the periphery of discourse, marking the start of their gradual demise, for some complete (as in the case of official and hybrid Church Slavonic), and for others partial (in the case of standard Church Slavonic, which remained in use only as the liturgical tongue). As a result of this process, the new literary language acquired polyfunctionality and universal comprehensibility. (3)

Church Slavonic did not disappear; rather, it was relegated to a specific realm (religion and religious publications), but remained a popular source of potential inspiration, linguistic and literary, as the centuries progressed.

There was a continual, public reflection on the question of linguistic evolution in Russia, during and after Peter’s reign. Vasily Trediakovsky (1703-1768), author and translator, delivered the first speech in Russian at the Academy of Sciences in 1735 and urged a cultivation of Russian; he compared it to Romans starting to write in Latin when Greek was the language of the learned (*A History of Russian Literature*, 210).⁶⁹ Importantly, Trediakovsky was against using either foreign borrowings or Church Slavonic as inspiration for linguistic innovation. As Gary Marker writes in *Publishing, Printing, and the Origins of Intellectual Life in Russia* (2014), “Trediakovsky rejected both the use of Church Slavonic as the basis for a literary Russian and the assimilation of foreign words into the Russian language. Vernacular Russian was rich enough to provide a modern grammar and vocabulary” (52). Linguistic change was thus recognized as being necessary; the point of contention was where, exactly, to locate the source of the needed innovation. Marker also discusses the waves of publishing growth and shrinkage over the course of the eighteenth century. Though it is true that Peter the Great initiated enormous growth in the publishing sector, and introduced a wider variety of publishable materials, Marker points out that his reforms didn’t continue after his rule; first Catherine I, then Paul managed to severely curtail the nascent secular publishing industry, essentially returning much control to the Church.

Catherine II’s reign, from 1762-1796, was characterized by further changes to the literary environment of Russia – in particular, the rising popularity of works of foreign literature in

⁶⁹ The authors point out that Trediakovsky was influenced by the seventeenth-century debates between the *Anciens* and the *Modernes* in the Académie Française: “In Russia, as had been the case in seventeenth-century France, the critical issue in the development of new forms of literature was the development of an appropriate vernacular” (208).

translation, and the beginnings of a Russian literary community within salons. The final years of her reign, including as they did a relatively severe crackdown on freedom of expression, saw the seeds of Karamzin's literary career being sown. One enduring fact of Catherine's time in power was the immense influence and popularity of works of literature from Western Europe. Catherine herself founded a Society for the Translation of Foreign Books into Russian in 1768, which continued until the establishment of the Russian Academy of Letters in 1783.⁷⁰ Indeed, no doubt thanks in part to the reforms begun under Peter, members of Russia's elite felt a sense of cultural and linguistic identification with the countries of France, Germany, and England. Unfortunately, this identification was often one-sided; for example, *Le Voyage en Sibérie*, a French travelogue published in 1768 and written by abbé Chappe d'Auteroche, presented Russia as a decidedly backwards place.⁷¹ Nonetheless, for upper-class Russians, this identification resulted in a mirroring of social structures (in the sense that the literary salon became the predominant organizing cultural space) and of literary taste (in that works in translation from these European nations, including their tropes, set the standard for tone, genre, and literary mode for successive generations of Russian writers and readers).

This influential group of salons, whose power began to grow in the final decades of the eighteenth century, is thus to thank for many of the literary changes of this period (including, of course, Karamzin's prose: he published his early sentimental stories and *Letters of a Russian Traveler* before Catherine's death). As Alessandra Tosi writes in *Waiting for Pushkin: Russian Fiction in the Reign of Alexander I* (2006),

The values of salon society permeated contemporary literature at every level, from the understanding of writing as a leisured activity detached from commercial consideration to the prescription of aesthetic tenets for works of literature often judged according to the same shifting taste that dictated society behavior, to the choice of literary language. (50)

The cultural elite was a small enough world to remain somewhat contained in this period. Producing a work of literature meant that, in all likelihood, you knew exactly who would be reading you. The tastes of the salon attendees, as well as their linguistic preferences and practices, therefore had immense influence on what literature was produced, circulated, and consumed. This also resulted in calls for changes in language and created consistent demand for new literary modes – namely, the sentimental, but also for genres like letters and the elegy. As William Mills Todd III writes in *The Familiar Letter as Literary Genre in the Age of Pushkin* (1976),

The rise of the salons in France, and later of those in Russia, stimulated the taste for a lighter, more pleasant literary language. As had the Humanists, seventeenth-century writers found letters a useful form for exploring the possibilities of the new language. (23)

Light and pleasant being the adjectives of the day, Russian – increasingly distanced from Church Slavonic – required new pliancy to meet the evolving tastes of its readers.

⁷⁰ See Isabel de Madariaga's *Russia in the Age of Catherine the Great* (1981, p. 330).

⁷¹ As de Madariaga writes in *Russia in the Age of Catherine the Great* (1981), "To the Frenchman, Russia was a country sunk in sloth and ignorance; its people were slaves living in grinding poverty, borne down by the yoke of serfdom" (337). Catherine II was incensed by its publication and responded with a publication of her own. Her pride in Russia also caused the suppression of some of Rousseau's works, which she declared to be anti-Russian (particularly *Du contrat social*).

It is important to note that the “taste” of the literary salons of the 1820s–30s was coded feminine, and the salons themselves were often helmed by witty society women. For women who were interested in writing, it was imperative to emphasize the amateurish nature of their literary production. It wasn’t socially acceptable, particularly for women, to think of authorship as a vocation.⁷² Additionally, so-called “feminine taste” also extended to the popularity of certain genres within the salon space: namely, the sentimental or idyllic modes. These imports – coming as they did from the countries the upper classes of Russia felt tied to, namely France, Germany, and England – also carried with them certain tropes which would serve the purpose of creating an intellectual link between the literary output of Russia and that of its European neighbors. Key among those tropes, both for this chapter and for creating a sense of international literary belonging, is the figure of the disaffected francophone dandy.

The enduring popularity and importance of the French-speaking dandy as literary type is tied to both the sentimental mode and the multilingual environment of the Russian nobility. As Russia began to assert both its national and literary identities, language use became a focal point, as well as a target, of newly insurgent nationalist tendencies. However, these literary representations are not necessarily to be taken as descriptive fact of what the upper classes were like. As Derek Offord writes in his 2018 book *The French Language in Russia*,

We should then be alert to the fact that an abundance of references in a literary text to phenomena such as Gallomania, Gallicized speech, and language-mixing does not necessarily prove that those phenomena were ubiquitous in society. Such references might equally show that ridicule of French-speaking and French fashion was a common *topos* in European literature from the seventeenth to the nineteenth centuries. (76)

In fact, the long history of poking fun at a perceived over-affection towards French culture, language, and politics in Russian literature stretches back long before Tolstoy,⁷³ Pushkin, and even Karamzin were writing. Satires about Gallomania were produced early in Catherine’s reign. Denis Fonvizin wrote *Бригадир* [*Brigadier*] in 1766, a play which features a horribly mismatched young couple consisting of a Frenchified dandy who despairs over his betrothed’s inability to speak fluent French and a serious young girl with a “proper” moral (and Russian...) perspective. Over the course of the play, misalliances abound as an older generation of married couples experience attraction towards similarly woefully suited partners. The irony of an old-guard attraction to French expression isn’t lost. The play, which made the rounds in salons of the period, became so popular that Catherine II asked Fonvizin personally to read it aloud to her. And Fonvizin wasn’t alone: Yakov B. Knyazhnin, in the libretto for the 1779 comic opera *Несчастие от кареты* [*Misfortune from a Carriage*], took as his subject two Francophiles hoping to break up the intended marriage between two serfs in order to use the money that would have gone towards the wedding to buy a French carriage. There

⁷² This explains the disavowals of importance that often accompany literary works produced by women in this period; they are “unimportant,” produced in a short amount of time, and have no presumptions to “real” literary value. As Tosi writes, “women’s intellectual activity was meant to be an amateurish exercise, serious study and professionalism being allegedly alien to the female nature and possibly devious” (133).

⁷³ Of course, Tolstoy’s historical novel *War and Peace* can in many ways be taken as revisionist, not the least for its depiction of and discourses about Napoleon; it is nonetheless interesting to consider how Tolstoy’s portrayal of the disaffected, morally corrupt St. Petersburg elite became in some ways a matter of historical fact. As explained in *A History of Russian Literature*, “Soon after the book’s publication – and regardless of its initial poor critical reception – Tolstoy’s version of events and persons began to replace both the memories of the war and the documented historical accounts” (500).

is thus an enduring relationship between representations of Gallomania and a persistent, self-directed mockery in Russian literature from Catherine's age on.

I am interested in precisely this tension – that a *topos* imported from the literatures of Western Europe became framed as an enduring, important *national* (in other words, particular) aspect of Russian literature. The taking up of this figure was itself an act of connection to an international literary and intellectual community; however, reactions to the French-speaking upper classes of Russia became a vitally important trope in a decidedly national literature. Woven into the literary fabric of a newly emerging secular Russian literature was the figure of a decidedly *non-Russian* Frenchman. The particularity of this “national” literature hides a transnationalism. The incorporation of the trope, and then the castigation of those in society considered to be bearing it out, show the uneasy relationship between inspiration, source, and individuality of literary output.

The professionalization of literature in Russia developed slowly and was frequently disrupted by waves of censorship. Although publishing expanded considerably during the eighteenth century, particularly under Catherine II, the state remained wary of the press. In the final years of her reign, Catherine became increasingly wary of freedom of the press; much has been written of her targeting of Nikolai Novikov.⁷⁴ However, she still permitted significant works about the French Revolution to be published in Russian. As Isabel de Madariaga writes,

In the first years of the French Revolution, a considerable amount of information about events in France was disseminated in the Russian periodical press and in the pages of the St. Petersburg and Moscow *Gazettes*, which increased their runs to 2,000 and 4,000 respectively. “The Declaration of the Rights of Man” was published in full in the St. Petersburg *Gazette*. (421)

This, of course, was despite the great fear the revolution inspired in Catherine – a fear which is mirrored in Karamzin's *Letters of a Russian Traveler*, which was published during Catherine's final years and in some sense reflected, or perhaps had to reflect, her negative views on the political situation in France.

Though a subject of satire, French still enjoyed significant prestige amongst the upper classes during and after Catherine's reign. Its status, indeed, probably resulted in the abundance of comedies placing French language use at their center: it was a visible marker of class differentiation. However, in spite of its prestige, people were not necessarily reading works in French. In his article “Reading Foreign Novels, 1800-1848,” Damiano Rebecchini explains that the actual number of people reading texts in French was only a small minority of the Russian reading public. Translation of foreign novels far outpaced simple importation or the production of original Russian works; increasingly, readers turned to novels as their preferred reading material.⁷⁵ Indeed, this explains the dizzying

⁷⁴ Novikov's troubles with Catherine might be better chalked up, at least in Isabel de Madariaga's view, to his continued interest in and decision to publish about Freemasonry. His imprisonment in 1792 was due to “the holding of secret meetings, with oaths on the gospels, etc., at which the misguided were induced to promise eternal submission to the order of the Rosicrucians” (528). Though scholarship has tended to claim censorship was the cause of the closing down of his journal “The Drone,” Madariaga emphasizes that it was far more likely to have been closed due to financial troubles (333), especially since Novikov continued assiduously thereafter in pursuing other publishing ventures.

⁷⁵ Rebecchini also explains the tiered system of cultural prestige associated with newly emerging genres; traditional *lubok* literature (prints with simple graphics and narratives, often religious in nature or deriving from folk tales) was popular

statistic, as cited by Hilde Hoogenboom in her article “Sentimental Novels and Pushkin: European Literary Markets and Russian Readers,” that “until the 1860s, over 90 percent of the market for novels in Russia consisted of foreign literature in translation (the percentage would be higher if we could account for foreign literature in the original)” (553). No wonder, then, that as Russian literature started to get its sea legs, it reached for figures that would have been familiar to a reading public which had consistently consumed foreign literature for decades.

Following Catherine’s reign, the social and cultural elite of Russia began subtly shifting its sense of identification with Western Europe. This took the form of some parties voicing concerns about an “over-reliance” on French, and about the potential moral ramifications of conducting life mostly or entirely in a language other than Russian. Tosi highlights the example of the writer Iakob Galinkovskii, who, in a footnote to his 1808 novel *Сидония* [*Sidoniia*] writes,

I tried as far as I could to avoid the foreign words we educated people cannot do without in conversation. I tried to think in Russian when writing my novel and if some unwieldy non-Russian expressions have crept in then they have most likely done so against my will or according to our ingrained habit of turning to French. (55)

The give and take of French language influence – a necessary evil, if we are to take Galinkovskii at his word – became a structuring component of the emerging, particularized, and national literature of Russia, much like the trope of the French-speaking dandy. This seeming paradox – reliance upon and influence from a language which is pilloried in literature – emerged alongside the desire for the creation of a purely “Russian” literature. The French language had a close association with the sentimental mode; both suffered in prestige as the nineteenth century progressed, especially following Napoleon’s 1812 invasion of Moscow. As Tosi writes, “In the wake of patriotic feelings aroused by the events of 1812, the negative evaluation of sentimental works spread further,” and there was an emergent “desire for a literature which described the Russian people (народ/*narod*) instead of the Westernized elite” (81).⁷⁶

Under Alexander I, whose reign began in 1801 and ended in 1825, censorship continued; after Napoleon’s invasion, and particularly after the Congress of Vienna in 1815, Tosi writes that Alexander became even more conservative and concerned with censorship, “leaving most of his early projects of reform of the early days unaccomplished” (23). Nonetheless, there was a shift in how literature was conceived of and circulated in this period. While Catherine’s reign had featured the ascendancy of the literary salon, a new set of literati came together in literary societies to engage in debates about how Russian literature should evolve. It is important to note that, unlike the salons discussed above, these literary societies were distinctly masculine spaces.

These societies, much like Trediakovosky before them, were inspired by the debates which occurred in the *Académie Française* in the 17th century between the *Anciens* (Ancients) and the *Modernes* (Moderns). In the 1810’s, the emerging literary societies of influence were the so-called Archaists and the Modernizers.⁷⁷ These are not the terms used by the groups themselves; in Russian letters at

and held little prestige; above that were sentimental novels, such as those written by Kotzebue; finally, with the most prestige, were European novels (see pages 67-68).

⁷⁶ Kahn also invokes the *narod* as “the people, contrasted and split with the educated classes (*publika*)” (447).

⁷⁷ hilariously, Vladimir Nabokov, in his commentary to his translation of Pushkin’s *Eugene Onegin* has the following to say about the debates: “The literary feud between the Moderns, or Westernizers (the Arzamas group), and the Ancients, or Slavonizers (the Beseda group), [was] a feud that had no effect whatsoever on the course of Russian literature and was

the time, they would have been referred to by the name of their respective literary societies.⁷⁸ The Archaists advocated for literary classicism: their literary society was named “Беседа любителей русского слова” [“Colloquy of Lovers of the Russian Word,” or simply “Beseda”], and their primary mouthpiece was the conservative Admiral Alexander Shishkov. The Modernizers, on the other hand, were represented by the literary group Arzamas, of which Karamzin and briefly Pushkin were members. The primary conflicts between these two groups were over questions of language: where should linguistic reform and innovation begin in Russian – within its own history (that is, in forms rooted in Slavic) or should they look to Western European languages, particularly French? Consider, for example, that Admiral Shishkov called Old Church Slavonic “virile” in contrast to the “new,” and presumably weak and feminine, language promoted by Arzamas and the sentimentalists (Tosi 96). French, and sentimental language more generally (which were sometimes treated as being the same thing) thus began to be associated with undesirable social traits.⁷⁹ Thus the waning of the feminine, private literary salon and the ascendancy of a masculine, public world of letters.

It is perhaps imprecise to call these literary societies “public.” Beseda certainly was: as Joe Peschio writes in *The Poetics of Impudence and Intimacy in the Age of Pushkin* (2012), “Beseda set itself up as an institution of the state, not of literature” (36). It benefited from its highly regimented social structure and official recognition from the tsar. On the other hand, Arzamas, and particularly the later society The Green Lamp, attempted to be private.⁸⁰ Peschio points out the difficulty, and eventually the serious danger, of attempting to write and read material which the tsar would not approve of, and which, by extension, was unpublishable. He writes,

The rhetorical ethos of Shishkov and his comrades was not literary, but derived from station in state and society, and the pomp and regalia of the Beseda meetings were designed to reinforce that ethos. From the Arzamasian point of view, this was fundamentally dishonest, cowardly, and ignoble. It also made for excruciatingly boring proceedings. But perhaps most importantly, the Arzamasians viewed it as an impediment to the development of Russian literature, their greatest passion, a deep commitment to which brought them together: bringing about a national literature on a level with the European traditions. (37)

marked by execrable taste on both sides” (21). Nabokov’s assertion that the feud had no effect on Russian literature is perhaps exaggerated; what is clear, however, is that the two sides did indeed represent a changing of the guard, as it were, in terms of stylistic considerations, genre conventions, and even language use. One must assume that Nabokov merely meant that the linguistic innovation which was advocated by Arzamas was inevitable; Karamzin’s wildly popular writings, after all, display the neologisms and grammatical innovations of the “new” style while the debates themselves were taking place.

⁷⁸ The originator of the terms “Archaists” and “Modernizers” is the Formalist scholar Yuri Tynianov, whose 1929 article “Archaists and Innovators” described the conflict in these terms (and he was no doubt influenced by the naming convention of the conflict in seventeenth-century France).

⁷⁹ The fact that many salons were conducted entirely in French didn’t mean, however, that no literary activity happened in Russian: “The model for the salon in Russia came from Enlightenment France, and a good deal of French was spoken. But not everywhere and not always; considerable intellectual banter occurred in Russian, and salons helped advance the language for a nascent modern literature and literary criticism” (*A History of Russian Literature*, 359).

⁸⁰ Peschio points out that Arzamas only formed because, since all publication had to be approved by state censors, the literary men of the society were unable to respond to attacks on them and their writing that appeared in the press by members of Beseda. These authors, he explains on page 34, also couldn’t get paid for reviews of imperial plays due to their sidelined status. The layered jokes that characterize the correspondence of members of Arzamas (the familiar letter analyzed by William Mills Todd) developed in order “to make fun of stuffy Beseda officialese” (35).

Put another way, the conflict between Beseda and Arzamas revolved around whether or not Russian literary language should move closer to or further from a language presumably spoken by the reading class – French.⁸¹ Arzamas and Beseda can thus be differentiated by a series of oppositions: sentimental vs. classical, Western European languages vs. Church Slavonic, youth vs. maturity, and playfulness vs. seriousness.

Though these literary societies were short-lived due to increasing encroachments by the state upon the private lives of its citizens,⁸² the public nature of their debates, and the content of their disagreement, set the tone for discussions of Russian literature for decades to come. Count Sergei Uvarov, a scholar and statesman under Nicholas I, released an official report in 1832 which proposed that the realm should be based on the three principles of Autocracy, Orthodoxy, and Nationality.⁸³ These call-backs to an idea of a particular, historical Russian identity echo the concerns voiced by Beseda. The question of what, exactly, Russian identity should entail was polarizing, especially with regard to language use. Karamzin and Pushkin represent differing perspectives on the question of Russian literature and linguistic influence, though they both come from the same literary and social milieu. Their literary works, coming as they do at inflection points in the history outlined above, exemplify the shift away from a multiplicity of identities and sources of literary innovation to a more particular, Russian, and, ultimately, national conception of what language change and literature should look like.

4.2 Karamzin: Tears, Travels, and a New Dawn for Russian Literary Language

Nikolai Karamzin (1766-1826) is often credited as the driving force behind the development of a new Russian literary language. He was also the representative sentimental author before pivoting to historical writing with his monumental *История государства Российского* [*History of the Russian State*] (1818). The sentimental mode, which Karamzin popularized in his short stories “Бедная Лиза” [“Poor Liza”] and “Наталья, боярская дочь” [“Natali’ia, the Boyar’s Daughter”] (both published in 1792), was defined by this “new” literary language. Features of this language – sentimental in tone and characterized by evolutions in syntax – paved the way for an entire generation of authors,

⁸¹ This is not to be confused with the later, mid-nineteenth century debate between the Slavophiles and Westernizers. As Derek Offord writes in his book *The French Language in Russia*, there was a “mid-nineteenth-century dispute between so-called Westernizers (*zapadniki*) and Slavophiles (*slavianofily*), especially in the writings of members of the latter group. It is conventional to say that the Westernizers, who were often known in their time as ‘Europeans’ or ‘cosmopolitans’, believed that Russia needed to adopt European ideas and practices in order to overcome its backwardness. The Westernizers therefore admired Peter the Great as a ruler who had greatly accelerated the modernization of Russia in the early eighteenth century. The Slavophiles, on the other hand, believed that native values and traditions could provide the bases for a bright and distinctive Russian future. They extolled Russia’s Orthodox form of Christianity and detested Peter” (45).

⁸² Arzamas had a lifespan of only 1815-1818; Beseda, whose regular meetings began earlier, in 1811, dissolved in 1816, but was revived in the 1850’s and continued through the beginning of the twentieth century. Notably, and perhaps unsurprisingly, Tolstoy was a frequent speaker at the later meetings. The Green Lamp, which followed Arzamas, was decidedly unpublic and secret; society and government had changed. As Peschio writes, “The Green Lamp is self-consciously rooted in discourses of eighteenth-century French libertinism, whereas Arzamasian aesthetics, following Zhukovskii, bore little relation to that tradition. And unlike Arzamas, the Green Lamp shunned literary polemic in general, and in published form in particular” (63). The influence of French, and the references and jokes which layered and came from works by authors like Diderot and Voltaire is also particularly important to the Green Lamp.

⁸³ Historians have often distinguished between the cultural conservatism of Shishkov and the more programmatic state ideology articulated by Sergei Uvarov, whose doctrine of “Orthodoxy, Autocracy, and Nationality” has been interpreted as an attempt to reconcile traditional Russian institutions with the realities of a modern European state. See, for example, Nicholas V. Riasanovsky, Cynthia Whittaker, and Andreas Renner.

including Pushkin, to introduce a certain pliancy into the mechanics of Russian, resulting in the widening of the representative capacities of the language in literary contexts. “Poor Liza” displays many of these characteristics and is interesting to consider alongside Karamzin’s *Письма русского путешественника* [*Letters of a Russian Traveler*] (1797), which represents the apotheosis of these trends.

“Poor Liza” follows a young girl who wants to support her mother after her father’s death. She is uneducated, but beautiful and good. Selling flowers in Moscow, she meets a handsome gentleman; he is landowner, far above her in class, yet he pursues her, and pays a visit to her and her mother. Karamzin takes pains to point out that Erast is not a bad man, merely “weak and frivolous” (he often read novels! The horror). What Erast cannot do is resist his own impulses. For several weeks they see each other often, but when Liza tearfully tells him that another suitor is courting her who wants her to marry him, she and Erast finally sleep together. Their relationship changes: he starts to spend more time away. One day, while selling flowers in Moscow, she sees him with another woman in a carriage; he is engaged to a wealthy woman who will help pay his debts. He gives Liza 100 rubles; she passes this along to her mother and then kills herself from grief. Liza is distinct from Erast not in language but in moral action, and importantly, in sincerity. The tragedy turns on the question of her innocence; the question of inequality of class, while key to the plot, does not manifest itself in any way except for the exchange of money. In other words, utterances happen the same way for everyone. Importantly, as this contrasts markedly with Pushkin, Karamzin has no interest in developing individual voices for his characters; across classes, genders, and geographic origins, characters speak the same. As Gita Hammarberg explains in *From the Idyll to the Novel: Karamzin’s Sentimentalist Prose* (1991), “The tendency in Karamzin’s works is for the educated, refined narrator’s discourse to penetrate and transform the personage speech stylistically so that the two utterances are hardly distinguishable in terms of language” (42). Take, for example, Liza’s first lines:

“Бог дал мне руки, чтобы работать,” — говорила Лиза, — “ты кормила меня своею грудью и ходила за мною, когда я была ребенком; теперь пришла моя очередь ходить на тобою. Перестань только крушиться, перестань плакать: слезы наши не оживят батюшки.” (5)

[“God gave me hands in order to work,” Liza would say, “you fed me at your breast and watched after me when I was a child: now my turn has come to watch after you. Only do stop grieving, stop weeping; our tears will not bring dear father back to life.” (55) Translation by Carl R. Proffer]

This is high sentimentalism at its best: the callback to being a child suckling at its mother’s breast is an image fundamental to sentimental texts (consider this exemplar of the sentimental mode: Rousseau’s *Émile*, published in 1762). The profusion of tears, as well, is a foregrounding of a physical expression of grief key to the sentimental mode (just think of young Werther). Liza speaks with the same cadence as the narrator, and the images she conjures up while speaking to her mother are poetic, moving, and reassuring. Though it is Erast who reads novels, it is Liza who speaks in the register of the sentimental narrator. Near the end of the story, after the disappointment of learning that she has been deserted, Liza’s thoughts begin to intertwine with the speech of the narrator, who expresses his own incapacity in rendering them (a familiar leitmotif from Sand):

Лиза очутилась на улице и в таком положении, которого никакое перо описать не может. “Он, он выгнал меня? Он любит другую? Я погибла!” — вот ее мысли, ее чувства! Жестокий обморок перервал их на время. Одна добрая женщина, которая

шла по улице, остановилась над Лизою, лежавшею на земле, и старалась привести ее в память. Несчастная открыла глаза — встала с помощью сей доброй женщины, — благодарила ее и пошла, сама не зная куда. “Мне нельзя жить,” — думала Лиза, — “нельзя!... О, если бы упало на меня небо! Если бы земля поглотила бедную!.. Нет! небо не падает; земля не колеблется! Горе мне!” (25)

[Liza found herself on the street and in such a state no pen could describe. “He, he has driven me out? He loves another? I am lost!”—These were her thoughts, her feelings! A cruel fainting spell interrupted them for a while. A kindly woman who was coming along the street stopped over Liza, who was lying on the ground, and tried to revive her. The poor thing opened her eyes, stood up with the help of this kind woman, thanked her and set off, whither she did not know. “I can live no more,” thought Liza, “no more! . . . Oh, if only the sky would fall on me! If only the earth would swallow up a poor girl! . . . No! The sky will not fall, the earth will not tremble! Woe is me!” (66)]

Liza is in a state beyond description (“которого никакое перо описать не может”/“which no pen could describe”), and yet Karamzin theoretically acts as a conduit for her thoughts, or more precisely, for *her feelings*. The claim that these feelings are beyond his authorial capacity to render immediately followed by the interior monologue of Liza represents, in no small sense, the manifestation of the language which had been lacking in Russian letters up to this point. The power of these sentiments is expressed through a style – short sentences, questions, exclamation points, ellipses – which is attempting to reflect the way that one would think while in distress. Liza even refers to herself in the third person as “бедную”/“poor girl,” the adjective which the narrator uses to describe her and title the story. Her grief pushes her to seek her own death, and we, the reader, follow along her poetic thoughts to the end. The elevation of Liza’s language – or to be more precise, the lack of interest in inflecting Liza’s language to reflect her educational and class background – mimics, for example, Lacombe, and feels of a time. There is even a potentially revolutionary aspect to the flatness of expression here: it speaks to a vision of literature which can extend the same register and voice to all. Karamzin’s democratization is on full view: peasants have emotionally rich inner lives as well. However, this potential democratization comes at a familiar cost: the elimination of linguistic diversity and particularity of expression, familiar already from Sand, Lacombe, and Gérin-Lajoie.

“Poor Liza” and Karamzin’s other early sentimental tales showcase both a literary style and a worldview which reaches its culmination in *Письма русского путешественника* [*Letters of a Russian Traveler*]. The publication history of the *Letters* is circuitous – though presented as a series of letters written to friends in the moment, the reality is significantly more complex, and involves the ever-present issue of censorship.⁸⁴ Published serially in the *Московский журнал* [*Moscow Journal*] from 1791-92, but not in a “complete” edition until 1797,⁸⁵ several rounds of editing (performed by Karamzin

⁸⁴ As A.G. Cross writes, “Karamzin wished to speak on subjects which were actively discouraged in the last years of Catherine’s reign and throughout Paul’s. It is significant that volume 5 begins: ‘Should I speak about the French revolution?’ (2, 460) and is followed by the cautious words: ‘You read the newspapers; therefore, the events are known to you.’ The completion of the second edition does not, however, indicate merely the eventual overcoming of censorship difficulties, for in the interim Karamzin’s own attitude to events in France and Europe had changed. Karamzin became his own censor, guided by the most conservative and cautious views of his maturity” (67).

⁸⁵ And the “complete” edition from 1797 was, in fact, incomplete, ending with letter 124 (instead of the 158 written). Only in 1801 were all of Karamzin’s letters published as a complete text (with several revisions, indeed, from the 1797 edition). See Kahn’s introduction to the 2004 translation of the *Letters*, pp. 13 – 15.

himself) changed the text, sometimes subtly and sometimes fundamentally, as it appeared and reappeared throughout the years. In particular, Karamzin increased the “negative coloring” (A.G. Cross’s description, from his 1971 book *N. M. Karamzin: A Study of His Literary Career, 1783-1803*) of Paris and the French revolution from the first to the second edition, corresponding to a conservative trend in Catherine’s reign.⁸⁶ In addition, the popularity of Karamzin’s *Letters* is not to be understated, and as Tosi writes, “Notably, the fame of Karamzin’s *Letters* spread outside Russian borders, an occurrence indeed rare – if not unique – in the early nineteenth century, providing the first glimpses of the admiration Russian fiction was soon to gain in the West” (275).⁸⁷ This is a significant change indeed when one considers what was historically a one-way road of cultural influence.

Although the narrator of *Letters of a Russian Traveler* closely resembles Karamzin himself, I treat the traveler as a narratorial persona rather than as a direct autobiographical voice. This distinction is important for understanding how the text constructs its reflections on language, travel, and cultural exchange. Karamzin’s linguistic and stylistic innovations in the *Letters* demonstrate the usefulness of his new prose as a vehicle for expressing emotions. On this point, Cross makes the following remark:

The sentimental lexicon which Karamzin canonized in his work was already partially familiar to readers of the eclogues, elegies, and love poems of such poets as Sumarokov and Kheraskov, of the translations from writers such as Gessner, Rousseau, and Young; and of certain existing Russian novels and plays. Karamzin popularized certain already existing words and expressions, introduced calques and neologisms, not haphazardly but *systematically*. (90)

In the *Letters*, Karamzin constructs a narrator whose writerly goal appears to have evolved from an interest in provoking an emotional reaction in his readers through the use of a high sentimental register. He is now engaged with the broader question of how to accumulate cultural capital and cachet by deploying the language of sentimentalism. Indeed, the *Letters* are a double project of construction and projection: his thinly veiled self in the *Letters* is notable for showcasing a mutual cultural exchange. While he is abroad, he “collects” information (mostly from learned geniuses, such as Kant) for the presumed educational purpose of his fellow Russian readers,⁸⁸ his voyage also serves to broadcast his own learning and erudition, particularly his facility with languages (notably French and German, and *not* English). He is engaged in the business of fashioning himself as an exemplary enlightened Russian. The French language occupies a double position in Karamzin’s Russia: aspirational and in vogue, but also mockable as a foible of the upper classes, a continuation of the long literary tradition of poking fun at Gallomania. While the mockery of Gallomania has earlier roots, Karamzin’s *Letters* is one of the first texts to register a sustained tension between admiration for French cultural authority and anxiety about its implications for Russian literary identity. In the

⁸⁶ Cross has a series of examples of this, such as the changing of “street noise” (*ulichnyi shum*) as a descriptor to “the noise of drunken rebels,” (*shum p’ianykh buntovshchikov*) and, when describing the actions of the “mob,” transformed the sentence that a “victim was dragged” (*vlachimyi*) into “the victim was torn to pieces by the mob” (*terzaemyi*). See pages 77 to 78.

⁸⁷ Perhaps Karamzin was himself aware of filling the lack pointed out by Moritz, who, after asking Karamzin to recite verse in Russian to get a sense of the sounds of the language, says, “Perhaps there will come a time when we’ll learn the Russian language; but if that is to happen, you’ll have to write something marvelous” (72).

⁸⁸ While the practice of sending nobles abroad began in earnest during Peter the Great’s reign, the travelog as a literary genre only emerged in Catherine’s reign. As Andreas Schönle points out in *Authenticity and Fiction in the Russian Literary Journey*, it was the circulation and popularity of books such as Sterne’s *Sentimental Journey* and Dupaty’s *Letters on Italy* which created a reading public for travel narratives in Russia.

Letters, it is possible to identify the beginnings of resentment towards a reliance on foreign languages and imported linguistic models. French is an ideal to strive for, yet there is a fine line between inspiration and overreliance in Karamzin's formulation. This is key, since his early tales only conceived of the possibility of communicating sentiment through transnational literary trends like sentimentalism. Thus, at the heart of this work is the following tension: Karamzin has polished and perfected a transnational language of sentiment but has begun to resent the idea that this language is not particularly Russian.

Though the heyday of the sentimental narrative in Russia was brief and then satirized in the subsequent romantic and realist eras, Karamzin's narratorial and linguistic innovations stuck.⁸⁹ Quite consciously, however, Karamzin calibrated his prose to include limited amounts of linguistic borrowing, hoping to avoid what he would consider a potential over-reliance on foreign sources. Echoing the strategies of Sand, Lacombe, and Gérin-Lajoie, multilingualism is acknowledged only to be carefully managed (and limited) in this text. Karamzin's narrator maintains an emotional and laudatory view of his own culture and language throughout the *Letters*. The use of the Russian language is an issue of national pride. Indeed, extensive experience in foreign countries and cultures fostered a basis for Karamzin's nationalism that would fully emerge in the second phase of his literary career, when he reinvented himself as a well-respected historian.

Part of the educated and refined narrator's voice for Karamzin, of course, still relies on foreign loan words, foreign epigraphs, and indications of instruction in foreign languages. These foreign inclusions are at once a reflection of the prestige status of French, a gesture towards linguistic idealism which Karamzin hopes Russian will soon be able to imitate, and also a source of increasing irritation for a committed nationalist. It is also important to note that the influence of French on Russian sentimental style was not limited to lexicon; even the syntax underwent shifts. Hammarberg identifies a reduction in subordinate conjunctions, and a preference for more natural or logical links between ideas as indications of the influence French had on Karamzin's writing. As she writes, the "declamatory" style of scholastic and devotional writing was sidelined in favor of simplicity and clarity of expression (39).

Karamzin's account of his narrator's wide-ranging travels across Germany, Switzerland, France, and England were not the first fictionalized journey to be published in Russia, but they became the standard-bearer of the genre.⁹⁰ The role of foreign travelling in cementing national consciousness may seem somewhat paradoxical, but it has a long literary tradition and makes a perverse kind of sense.⁹¹ As Karamzin's narrator writes in a sentimental aside to his "friends," the supposed recipients of his numerous letters, "In order to know our attachment to our country fully, we have

⁸⁹ Not all of the mockery came after the fact; as Tosi writes about Karamzin's contemporary, "In Benitskii's view sentimentalism, besides being fashion-driven and imitative, was doomed by depictions of feelings as overstated as they were inauthentic" (78).

⁹⁰ The practice of producing a text after being sent abroad for studies began during Peter the Great's reign, and early examples of the genre include P.A. Tolstoi's and B.P. Sheremet'ev's (see Schönle, pp. 2). Perhaps the clearest predecessor to Karamzin's *Letters*, however, was Radischev's *Journey from Moscow to St. Petersburg*, published only a year before the serialization of Karamzin's *Letters*. However, Radischev's *Journey* was far more controversial for its inclusion of reflections on the immorality of serfdom, and faced much harsher reactions from censors (indeed, Radischev was exiled to Siberia shortly after Karamzin visited him in St. Petersburg, a meeting recorded in the *Letters*). In addition, Radischev wrote in an archaic style which the new generation of readers found laborious (see Tosi, 170/171).

⁹¹ Sterne, of course, but also a mirror-image of this type of narrative: the foreigner "visiting" a country and seeing it as through the anthropologist's eyes, as in Montesquieu's *Lettres Persanes*.

to leave it; in order to learn the extent of our love for our friends, we have to part from them” (138). Karamzin wrote at a time of diverging literary trends in Russia: on the one hand, there was a continued fascination for cultural imports from the West; on the other, there was also an emerging interest in “genuine” Russian texts featuring “real” Russians.⁹² An increasingly rationalist desire for clear definitions and identities reigns supreme in the *Letters*, reflecting a newly ascendant anthropological and sociological perspective. In *Authenticity and Fiction in the Russian Literary Journey, 1790-1840* (2000), Andreas Schönle argues that Karamzin’s letters were an exercise in authenticity, in a period when the definition of that concept was undergoing a profound change as rhetoric shifted first towards and then away from Enlightenment discourse. By this, he merely means towards a conception of universal humanity, and then away, towards individual and, of course, national identities. Schönle also distinguishes between literary and non-literary travelogues, which he explains are separated based not on the mere inclusion of pragmatic information but rather “the extent to which a travel account takes its origin from, or defines itself in connection with, a literary antecedent” (8). Karamzin evidently takes inspiration both from travelogues that preceded his own and from literary sources more generally.⁹³ The frequent, some might say dramatic, evocations of Rousseau’s *Julie, ou la nouvelle Héloïse* (1761) provide a consistent sentimental and narrative thread in his work that functions as a sort of shorthand for his inclusion among transnational literati.

I am interested in the aspects of Karamzin’s text that reveal a potentially destabilizing linguistic preoccupation. In particular, the traveler’s frequent evaluative comments vis-à-vis the languages he hears spoken, especially his obsession with “originality” (which we might understand as a synonym for Schönle’s “authenticity”); his nationalistic pride and the situations that provoke it; the work of translation, and the implications of translation for transnational exchange; and finally, how this travel narrative proves itself unique, both in terms of its sentimental discourse and its other formal innovations. These four characteristics, when taken together, paint a portrait of nationalism-in-emergence, tied inextricably to both language and a newly elaborated “rationalist” discourse inherited from the Enlightenment, which nonetheless rejects the universalist claims of Enlightenment philosophy. Karamzin teeters tensely between the universal relatability of human emotion and experience and the hardening of dividing lines between identities. His attitudes towards language are perhaps the most expedient way to access how this tension functions literarily and philosophically.

In contrasting Karamzin’s *Letters* to Pushkin’s *Путешествие в Арзрум* [*Journey to Arzurum*] (1836), Schönle asserts that Karamzin prides himself on his adaptability to various environments, as opposed to Pushkin, who frequently expresses feelings of profound alienation. This contrast is particularly striking, in Schönle’s view, as Pushkin’s travels are still within the boundaries of the Russian empire (he was, after all, forbidden from leaving the country), while Karamzin travels widely throughout Western Europe. However, Karamzin’s narrator does not always integrate smoothly into the cultures he visits. In particular, “when Karamzin reaches border regions that are culturally less clearly defined, he experiences a semiotic breakdown, forcing him to lament their lack of authenticity” (60). Karamzin’s formulation implies that languages possess an underlying core of “proper” vocabulary, against which borrowed elements are measured. Borrowing is thus not neutral

⁹² In his footnotes to the *Letters*, Kahn writes, “The authentication of native culture by ancient epic became an important one in Russia at the moment of Karamzin’s return since the only copy of ancient Russia’s sole surviving epic, the *Lay of Igor’s Campaign*, was discovered in 1792.” (255)

⁹³ In Calais, for example, Karamzin’s traveler goes to visit the room and carriage house featured in *A Sentimental Journey* and has a “conversation” with another Sterne-inspired pilgrim which consists only of lines from the book (375).

but evaluated in terms of proximity to or distance from this imagined linguistic essence. This evaluative framework is closely tied to two key concepts: purity and originality. These two categories, when applied to language, take on enormous stakes in the context of emerging nationalisms. Karamzin's traveler is particularly attuned to his perception of linguistic provenance, i.e., from where and how languages "acquire" words which might not be, in his view, their "own." Such evaluations begin to appear very early in the text, as soon as the second letter. After crossing his first international border, he makes the following remark:

I detected no difference between the inhabitants of Estonia and Livonia, apart from that of language and their coats: black for the former, gray for the latter. Their languages are similar, and have some Slavonic words, a lot of German ones, and very few of their own. (26)⁹⁴

The concept of "their own" words is a particularly striking one. Karamzin, actively engaged in a process of selective borrowing from French in the very work he is presenting to his readers, nonetheless indicates a belief that languages have a fixed, internal identity. A language has a set of words which "belongs" to it. Adopting other words, then, "pollutes" this pure lexicon. Karamzin seems to be voicing a founding myth of language; this is a particularly thorny proposition in the context of the linguistic debates he will be engaged in just a decade after the publication of his letters.

This is not the sole example of Karamzin claiming that a language has "stolen" part of its lexicon. In England, the country where he is consistently the least at ease in the language, the narrator makes the following remarks about English: it is rough on the ear but good for writing, and "rich in what has been *stolen*, or (in order not to offend British pride) *taken* from others" (433). This raises the question of how Karamzin understands linguistic evolution, particularly in the context of historical contact and migration. The narrator holds the concept of "originality" in high regard; how much a language can truly be original, however, is largely an aesthetic and subjective judgement rather than an objective or linguistic one. Take, for example, his remarks regarding some of his German traveling companions:

Their very language is strange. For even though they have no French, in their conversation they use lots of French words that are pronounced idiosyncratically: for example, "*Da ist keine Precispice*," "*Ich have eine Ture gemacht*," "*Ich schanschire est*," etc. (52)

It is unclear which is the greater aesthetic injury: using a language one doesn't speak or mixing languages at all. Concerns about linguistic "purity" run throughout the *Letters*. And, though Karamzin was a member of the more liberal literary society Arzamas, this language of "purity" is much closer to the arguments made by Admiral Shishkov's Beseda. Mixing in French expressions without knowing their meaning is exactly the sort of linguistic practice which Karamzin's narrator opposes. Often, Karamzin uses the word "corrupted" (in Russian, "испорчен," the short form of the adjective "испорченный," which can be translated variously as faulty, damaged, bad, rotten, or even evil) to refer to the languages spoken in regions which have more than one clear national influence. For example, in Strasbourg, Karamzin writes, "As for the local German language, it is

⁹⁴ This is a clear example of Schönle's identification of regions which make Karamzin uneasy due to their ambiguous distinction amongst themselves.

corrupted; in the best circles people always speak French” (125).⁹⁵ This sentiment is echoed later in Berne, where Karamzin says the inhabitants “always converse with foreigners in French, and for that matter far better than in other cities of Switzerland, as for the German spoken locally, it is thoroughly ruined and hard on the ear” (176). Ruination, corruption: the moral dimension of Karamzin’s critique is hard to ignore. What provoked this moral descent is never specified but can be inferred from the places which provoke the narrator’s ire. As Schönle points out, Karamzin’s sense of ease is disrupted in border regions, which I will expand to mean areas with competing spheres of national influence. The significance of this reactionary position is clear for Karamzin’s view about his *own* language: a language is something which must be protected, kept pure, and whose moral value is tied to its originality. No wonder Karamzin spent so much time attempting to work out exactly the right amount of “borrowing” that would enrich Russian without “ruining” or “corrupting” it. Containment of foreign influence is thus a guiding principle of his linguistic methodology.

There is one encounter that complicates the *Letters*’ dichotomy of corruption and purity, as well as his emphasis on originality. Karamzin himself is not necessarily conservative, at least in this period, with regard to linguistic change; as noted in the introduction to this chapter, his proposed reforms were relatively liberal when compared to those of figures such as Admiral Shishkov. Karamzin’s narrator acknowledges that languages must evolve. This becomes apparent during his visit to Potsdam, where he encounters an elderly Russian soldier staffing an Orthodox church. Their attempt at conversation falters: separated by two generations and a significant class divide, they struggle to understand one another.⁹⁶ The soldier remarks, “Well, it’s clear that the language has changed greatly in Russia, or perhaps I’m forgetting it” (65).⁹⁷ Karamzin does not dwell on this moment, yet his lack of reflection is revealing. The breakdown in communication is not merely anecdotal but symptomatic of the very linguistic transformation his work promotes. A figure like the soldier has already been left behind by the evolving literary language Karamzin champions. As in Sand’s *Mauprat*, where characters are excluded through linguistic difference, participation in cultural and intellectual life here depends on mastery of current linguistic codes. Linguistic reform thus produces not only refinement but exclusion.

The second element of note in the *Letters* are situations which pique Karamzin’s sense of national pride. In one of his first interactions recounted in the *Letters*, he overhears a pair of Germans slandering Russia:

Out of boredom they began slandering the Russian people. I put down my writing and asked them coolly whether they had been anywhere in Russia besides Riga. They answered that they had not. “Well then, gentlemen,” I said, “you can hardly make a judgement about Russians if you’ve only been to *a city on the border*.” They saw little good in arguing the point, but for a long time would not acknowledge that I was Russian, considering it impossible that we should be able to speak foreign languages. (31, emphasis added)

⁹⁵ The original text in Russian reads: “Что принадлежит до записного Немецкого языка, то он очень испорчен. В лучших обществах говорят всегда по-Французски.” (96)

⁹⁶ And it is this kind of class divide that would no doubt interest the later realist authors; it is easy to think how differently Sand, for example, might treat such a “failed” conversation across class, generation, and vocation.

⁹⁷ From the original: “Видно, что у нас на Руси язык очень переменился, сказал он: или я, может быть, забываю его” (41).

There is a bit of delight in recounting this tale which goes hand in hand with Karamzin's offense. The Germans cannot be correct in the content of their critiques of Russians, as they are unable to accept that Karamzin – educated, polished, refined – is himself Russian. Thus, this act of recounting serves to prove to his own readers how erroneous foreign critiques of Russia are: they are behind the times and unable to acknowledge the progress and forward momentum of the quickly changing nation-state. Indeed, as often happens in the *Letters*, ignorance is frequently revealed on the part of the French, German, and Swiss citizens Karamzin interacts with. Take, for instance, the narrator's sadness that everyone discusses the revolution in Paris, "but no one knows that Russia is at war with Sweden and Turkey" (193).⁹⁸ Karamzin's text operates masterfully to flip the expected relationship of ignorance and knowledge; it is our narrator who is equally informed about both momentous international events, unlike his fellow "enlightened" Europeans. It is not just ignorance, which is revealed, however; the traveler's national pride is also piqued in these instances of unequal information sharing. For instance, when he goes to see the play *Pierre le Grand* (1790) with a libretto by J.N. Bouilly while in Paris, he has the following to say: "There are very moving scenes – at least for a Russian" (277) and follows up by remarking that he had immediately noticed an error with the costume design, as the actors had been put into traditional Polish costumes rather than Russian ones. Karamzin, overhearing the praises of the "accurate" outfits, decides against enlightening his fellow theater-goers. This moment is interesting not only for the shifting power dynamics vis-à-vis knowledge but also because Karamzin indicates a boundary to his emotional universalism. The play is moving to him, but perhaps it cannot be for someone unfamiliar with Russian life and history (such as, for example, those unable to identify the national origin of traditional costumes...). While Karamzin's narrator is always able to identify with and react emotionally to the works of art he encounters along his travels, he does not seem to expect the same of the inhabitants of the countries he travels to *specifically as regards Russian identity and culture*.

This emotional and identificatory boundary is even more firmly planted when Karamzin's traveler, visiting the French Academy, sees Pierre-Charles Lévesque, author of *Histoire de Russie* (1782). The narrator disapproves of this volume, writing,

Moreover, Russia is not his mother; our blood does not flow in his veins; could he speak about Russians with the feelings that a Russian has? Above all, I do not like him because he diminishes Peter the Great (if it is possible for a mediocre French writer to reduce the stature of our glorious monarch). (293)

While one might be tempted to place the limit of emotional universalism within specific literary modes such as sentimentalism, Karamzin's own peregrinations and intellectual interactions throughout the *Letters* complicate such a neat division. He interacts with philosophers, natural scientists, historians, theologians, and writers of fiction; his evaluations of their work, and his enthusiastic endorsements of many of them, are not limited by genre. Russian history, even when the subject of a fictionalized account (as in the *Peter the Great* play), is *not* transferable in terms of emotional weight to the Western European audiences that Karamzin finds himself immersed in. The

⁹⁸ Or the delightful salon scene in which Karamzin angrily reports being asked whether or not he rides reindeer in the winter time at a Parisian salon: "The conversation is desultory; everything relates to personalities; and it is all in *jargon*, in a language incomprehensible to a foreigner; you keep quiet and yawn, or say about a couple words in response to questions like: 'how strong are the frosts in Petersburg?' 'How many months do you ride about on sleighs?' 'Do you ride on reindeer in the winter?'" (319).

relative truth of this claim is, again, less interesting than the implication: the rising sense of Russia's *uniqueness* precludes the possibility of the enlightened, universalist emotional connection which Karamzin can apply to any other work of literature or philosophy.

And yet, complicating this sense of Russia's limited emotional resonance, Karamzin offers a long aside in Letter 103. As a continuation of his critique of L  vesque's *Histoire*, Karamzin indulges in a defense of Russia's "borrowings" from "more advanced cultures": regarding Peter's reforms, he writes,

There is only one path of education or enlightenment for peoples; they all follow it one after another. Foreigners were more intelligent than Russians: and so it was necessary to borrow from them, to learn, to use their experiences. Is it rational to search for what has already been discovered? Would it have been better for the Russians not to build ships, not to form a regular army, not to found Academies or factories because all of this had not been invented by Russians? Where is the nation that has not borrowed from another? (393)

He goes on to credit Peter with "breaking" with the past: "It was necessary, so to speak, to break the neck of Russian obstinacy all at once, in order to make us more flexible, able to learn and to adapt" (294). Karamzin's diatribe is fascinating for its apparent contradictions of two long-running themes of his letters: first, the concepts of cultural and educational (or, better put, intellectual) borrowing seem to be exempt from the moralistic judgements of linguistic borrowing which earns Karamzin's ire in evaluating the "corrupt" and "impure" languages which have few of their "own" words. Second, in the context of a discussion about the *limits* of emotional identification, it is potentially destabilizing to consider the fact that Russia's culture, itself clearly an amalgam of sources and cultural practices which were consciously imported from Peter's reign on, would seem to have *more* in common with the nations Karamzin finds himself in, and yet in spite of this cultural borrowing, Karamzin still considers Russia to be somehow apart. The cultural borrowing is also not firmly planted in the past; it continues through the present of the narrative of the *Letters*, as when Karamzin plays an intellectual game in Germany and writes that he hopes his Russian salon contemporaries "took over from the Germans such intellectual exercises, which can be so amusing in friendly societies" which he answers with his own footnote, "The wish of the author was fulfilled: several of your ladies conceived a liking for the game of question and answer" (141)

One can see here the seeds of a more closed-off nationalism which characterizes the later eighteenth century. However, Karamzin is still a writer of the late Enlightenment, and the nationalist program at this time depended on openness and exchange between countries and cultures. The *Letters* abound in examples of such mutual exchange – linguistic, literary, and cultural. For many Russians in this period, education *was* the Age of Enlightenment; to be enlightened was, quite simply, to access, master, and be familiar with the works of philosophical and literary authors of the time. In order to access those works, however, translation was often required. Luckily, our narrator is adept in this field as well. Karamzin, for his reader's benefit, often includes works he has translated and describes many scenes in which he is asked by prominent scholars and intellectuals to translate such-and-such work for the Russian public.⁹⁹ Often, these requests culminate in a pseudo-public performance of Karamzin's completed translation, which can only be assessed by his audience based on the way it

⁹⁹ For example, while in Windsor, Karamzin is overcome with the natural beauty and produces a translation "on the spot" of Pope's *Lodona*, writing, "Pardon me if the translation is inferior to the original. While listening to the languorous murmuring of *Lodona* I conceived the idea of telling her story in Russian verse" (410).

sounds (the meaning, of course, being inaccessible for audiences who have never studied Russian).¹⁰⁰ While at a dinner party hosted by the German physician Ernst Platner in Leipzig, for example, Karamzin tells the surprised guests that a translation of the *Messiah* exists in Russian. He then writes, “As proof that our language is not disagreeable to the ears, I read out Russian poems in various meters, and they felt their distinctive harmony” (94). Indeed, the topic of translation comes up frequently in Karamzin’s “intellectual” visits. While talking with the poet Christoph Martin Wieland, Karamzin writes,

He appeared pleased when I told him that several of his most significant compositions have been translated into Russian. “But what is the translation like?” he asked. I answered that it would not please anybody who knew the original. “Such is my fate,” he said. “Both the French and English translators have disfigured me.” (105)

Karamzin tries to emphasize his difference from previous translators. For example, while in Geneva, Karamzin requests to be able to translate some of Charles Bonnet’s compositions into Russian (202). As a sort of “test” before granting permission, Bonnet asks him to perform a translation on the spot: he sits down and works for an hour or so, and then reads it out loud: “‘I hear but do not understand,’ said Bonnet graciously with a chuckle” (206). One might ask the rationale behind Bonnet’s request: what exactly can one evaluate in a translation performed in a language one cannot make head or tail of?¹⁰¹ Seeming to be able to perform the work of translation is enough of an endorsement for Bonnet; performativity of labor takes on an enormous and surprisingly unironic role in this exchange.

Karamzin’s enthusiasm for the process of translation is not always uniform, however. For example, he expresses concern about a lack of a reading public for Lavater’s sermons in Russian (145) and seems to have felt offended by Mrs. N’s insistence that Karamzin *not* embellish her sentimental tale of woe about Alina when he translates it into Russian verse (366). One might be tempted to ask what Karamzin’s reputation as a conversationalist entailed if Mrs. N was so concerned about a “faithful” rendering of her tale (which, incidentally, is one of a series of included sentimental tales recorded from various sources, all of which serve as models for Karamzin’s own sentimental tales).

What is the impact of all this translating activity? A positive evaluation of Karamzin’s erudition is an obvious takeaway. However, it is also interesting that Karamzin acts as the sole intermediary in these interactions. As mentioned above, the true intellectual activity is on his side; the exchange is imbalanced because only Karamzin knows all of the languages he works with. Wieland, for example, would have no sense of whether or not he would be “disfigured” in Karamzin’s Russian. The limitations of language knowledge end up being a strength for Karamzin’s narrator.¹⁰² The tension is

¹⁰⁰ I couldn’t help but be reminded of Julien’s performances of Latin to his provincial neighbors in *Le rouge et le noir*.

¹⁰¹ Bonnet, incidentally, heavily compliments Karamzin’s French. In a letter from Bonnet, which is quoted in the original language within the text, he says the following: “Si je n’avois pas su, Monsieur, que vous êtes Russe de naissance, je ne m’en serois pas douté à la lecture de votre obligeante lettre. Vous maniez notre langue comme un François qui l’a cultivée, et je ne puis trop me féliciter d’avoir rencontré un Traducteur aussi capable que vous l’êtes de rendre bien son original” (205).

¹⁰² This is similar to the scene of the son’s return to the family farm in Lacombe’s *La terre paternelle*: though theoretically at a disadvantage, not just economically but linguistically, it is the settler who must adapt to the French spoken by Charles. Here, though Karamzin comes from a culture perceived as backwards, he nonetheless instructs and affects the educated and supposedly enlightened Europeans he finds himself amongst. In both instances, there is a clear wresting of power back onto the side of the community or nation they are in the process of delimiting and creating.

thus: while Karamzin's narrator eagerly consumes and evaluates the works from the West, only he has the capacity to share them with the Russian public. His multilingualism makes this exchange possible. It is also important to note just how important translation was to Russia's literary world at this point in time. As Cross writes,

Over the years 1730-90 only *seven* original novels or stories were published in Russian journals, although some 426 foreign works were published and republished. In the following decade the popularity of the novel and short story (written in Russian) grew considerably: the total of 403 translated works nearly equals the total for the preceding sixty years and the fifty-eight original Russian works represent a figure eight times greater than the earlier one. Karamzin's role in this sudden creative activity on the part of Russian authors would seem to be of paramount importance. (40)

Contained within the *Letters*, then, is a fascinating dualistic portrait of Russian literary production: on the one hand, Karamzin is contributing further to the wealth of foreign texts which are available to the (admittedly small) reading public in Russia. However, in describing the process of procuring and producing these translations, he also begins to establish himself as a narratorial voice in the emerging and expanding domain of *original* Russian verse and prose. The knottiness of this entanglement is evident, and sorting out influence from originality becomes as subjective and political as Karamzin's efforts to distinguish "pure" languages from "corrupt" ones.

Karamzin is a pioneering figure and is treated as such within the field of Russian letters more generally. It is possible to trace how differently his narratorial persona is treated within the *Letters* as well. His distinction from his countrymen is even remarked upon by his intellectual interlocutors. Wieland, when he first meets our narrator, greets him coolly. It is only after an hours-long discussion that Wieland warms to him, saying, "Usually your countrymen attempt to imitate the French, but you – you only want to be kind" (103). Karamzin's narrator – engaged from letter two in a spirit of defense for the Russian national character – is content to be praised as a cut above when that praise emanates from the European intellectuals he encounters on his way. Indeed, this moment could be interpreted as instructive; it is not imitation but rather genuineness, authenticity *within a particular national identity* which guarantees social respect and success. Karamzin totters between a desire for clear national boundaries and a belief, perhaps exaggerated through the words of his character of the traveler, of a universalism of emotions. His particular refinements and social skills allow him to transcend expectations and prejudices. He proves himself to be unique, a standout; and yet in so doing, paves the way for a greater evaluation of Russian culture in the West. He is exemplary, and also, hopefully, the first of many Russians to impress a European audience. It is Karamzin's mastery of sentimental discourse which enables him to access and accumulate social power in foreign locations. As Andrew Kahn writes in the afterword to his translation of the *Letters*,¹⁰³

Karamzin is implicitly refuting that charge of artificiality: for him, the refinement of society stands in organic relation to the deeper dynamic of affection that holds all society together. Unlike many sentimental journeys, where the narrator enacts values of sensibility that prefigure a larger sentimental community, Karamzin's journey is designed to reveal something more important than the topographical, a part of a deeper structure of human feeling *and national self-definition*. (500, emphasis my own)

¹⁰³ The afterword is an essay entitled, tellingly, "Nikolai Karamzin's Discourses of Enlightenment."

Karamzin certainly engaged with national self-definition: indeed, his negative evaluation of Lévesque's *Histoire* within the *Letters* created the need for Karamzin's own *History of the Russian State*.

Karamzin's literary career – from his earliest stories, which systematically created the possibility of sentimental expression within Russian on a large, imitable literary scale, to the enormous undertaking that was *Letters of a Russian Traveler*, to his corrective, decades-long project of *History of the Russian State* – thus traces for us the changes within the world of Russian letters as the eighteenth century transitioned to the nineteenth. Universalism, openness, borrowing, and transnationalism gradually give way to particularity, individuality of identity, originality of source, and nationalism. There is an enormous leap even between “Poor Liza” and the *Letters*: when Karamzin finds himself amongst the western literary and philosophical elite, he finds his Russianness more compelling, and desires to preserve and vaunt it. Though his linguistic and stylistic changes, as well as the literary modes he engaged in, were inherited from elsewhere, Karamzin ends as an advocate for a Russian-specific literature which belies the importance of these earlier trends. His younger contemporary, Pushkin, will take the innovations of Karamzin even further, ushering in (along with many of his friends and fellow authors) the Golden Age of Russian Letters.

4.3 Pushkin: Linguistic Dissimulations and the Register of Sentiment

Alexander Pushkin (1799-1837), who published his major works after the sentimentalist literary heyday had already waned, engaged ironically with the same questions of linguistic borrowing, foreign education, and language models that preoccupied Karamzin's traveler. It is partially thanks to Pushkin's works, poetry and prose alike, that scholars use the term “Golden Age” to refer to this period of Russian literary history. As Daria Khitrova writes in *Lyric Complicity: Poetry and Readers in the Golden Age of Russian Literature* (2019),

Chronologically, the Golden Age of Russian poetry falls within the space of roughly forty years, from the mid-1790's to the mid-1830's; it would be counterproductive to tie it to more specific dates. The Golden Age did not start with a datable literary landmark; rather, it was first imagined by literary visionaries like Nikolai Karamzin. (15)

Of course, Karamzin and Pushkin, though stylistically distinct and a generation apart, were nonetheless contemporaries in the very real sense that they shared social spaces and operated within the same insular world of early nineteenth-century Russian literature. They were also frequent correspondents, which is unsurprising given the importance of the genre of the familiar letter in this epoch. To better assess Pushkin's impact, as well as to understand the stakes of his public behavior and writerly practice, it is helpful to use a tripartite division of space borrowed from Joe Peschio's *The Poetics of Impudence and Intimacy in the Age of Pushkin*. Peschio points out that the public/private divide is not a sufficient, or apt, description of the different spheres in which writers and intellectuals circulated in this era of Russian history; instead, he delimits the three spaces of state, society, and domesticity. He explains that because “society” was heavily implicated in the consolidation of both state and social power, it was not a sufficiently free environment to permit artistic creation.¹⁰⁴ It is domesticity which proved to be the most important for Pushkin's generation; it was the domestic

¹⁰⁴ “Domesticity is distinct and isolated from larger structures of social power. It is that exclusive and insular social space in which one is much freer to do as he pleases and be who he wants” (Peschio 17). As he explains, there was a continual struggle between individual autonomy, the nobility's attempts to build its corporate strength, and the autocracy's need to keep both of these subjugated to its interests.

which was truly private, and allowed a certain playfulness with language, dirty jokes included, which resulted in linguistic innovation. As Peschio writes,

A pattern of literary misbehavior was cultivated in the insular domesticity of unofficial literary societies, where it both served as the social glue binding together the membership and allowed them to assert the social and literary autonomy of the groups. Such cohesion and autonomy were a necessity in the highly charged polemical atmosphere of the literary language debates, which were then at the center of intellectual life. Later, central members of these groups – most importantly, Pushkin – brought this mode of domestic behavior to the broad stage of literature. (8)

The domestic thus provided respite from both the state *and* the public. It is Pushkin we must thank for bringing the style and thematic concerns of the literary objects produced in private domestic space to a broader audience.¹⁰⁵

Although his writings are purposefully distinct from Karamzin's, Pushkin nonetheless indicates the persistent presence, if not popularity, of early sentimental tales. But the references to Karamzin's sentimental style tend towards satire in Pushkin. As Tosi writes,

Parodies are contemporary with, or at least chronologically very close to, the literary movement jeered at, for they presuppose in the writer a literary expertise and deep awareness of the characteristics of their literary target. Additionally, crucial for the success of the parody is a high narrative "competence" in the reader, who is required to be well versed in all the peculiarities of the movement parodied. (241)

If Karamzin's linguistic project depends on the containment of foreign influence, Pushkin's does not dispense with containment but rather transforms it. Instead of restricting or minimizing foreign loans, Pushkin integrates them into the texture of the text, where their potential threat is diffused through irony, translation, and formal play. Containment thus persists in Pushkin's work, not as a principle of exclusion, but as a strategy of aesthetic control. This transformation is closely tied to a broader shift in literary priorities. As first romanticism and then realism eclipsed sentimentalism, pathos-driven tales could claim less and less influence. Speaking of the idealist-sentimental novel in Pushkin's context is thus somewhat tricky: while sentimentalism remains an important and persistent intertext in his work, Pushkin's engagement with idealism is rarely, if ever, sincere. Where Karamzin's writing seeks to model idealized emotional and linguistic unity, Pushkin instead exposes the instability of such ideals, replacing them with irony, fragmentation, and self-conscious literary play. Unlike in Karamzin, where sentimental idealism structures both emotional expression and linguistic aspiration, Pushkin's work is defined by the erosion of idealism as a viable organizing principle. This shift is not simply a matter of changing literary taste, but reflects the breakdown of the conditions that sustained idealism – belief in transparent expression, stable correspondence

¹⁰⁵ This tendency towards the domestic often hurt the commercial and public aspect of literary production, especially for a figure as visible and as controversial as Pushkin. Pushkin's own attempt at a literary journal failed precisely because he limited its potential audience to his friends; he had miscalculated that literary production had already begun to move outside of the close social circles where it had begun. See, in *A History of Russian Literature*: "No matter its bravura wit and incisiveness, the implied (and actual) reader of his critiques was still a circle of friends and not the mass reader" (375).

between language and feeling, and the possibility of emotional universality – within Pushkin’s ironic and self-conscious literary world.

Realism, of course, waxed as the Enlightenment discourse of universalism waned, shadowed by the national consolidation happening across Europe. Indeed, the sentimental mode could not persist as nations begin to understand themselves as being beholden to a specific language and type of discourse. This movement towards consolidation nonetheless, ironically, required the figure of the other (here, the speaker of another language). Differentiation became a way to define the self; but for an author like Pushkin, this required a multilingual knowledge and education which seems, on the face, to be the opposite of a particular linguistic nationality. Even within the insular literary societies that Pushkin frequented, cosmopolitanism was a sort of goal. As Peschio writes, “To call someone a ‘loyal subject’ [*blagonamerennyi*] is an insult in their language, to call one a *European* and a *liberal* – honorable appellations” (111). The uneasy tension at the heart of this is the fundamental paradox of this period of literature: as these authors set about creating their national literatures, it was through the tendencies, tropes, and even language(s) of a broader, non-particular transnationalism.

Himself bilingual, Pushkin’s command of the French language (and Western behaviors) is evident from both his biography and from his literary works. For example, the vast majority of Pushkin’s personal correspondence was conducted in French. As J. Douglas Clayton writes in his article “Linguistic Comedy in *Eugene Onegin*,”

From his earliest years, Pushkin spoke French and read French books in the library of his uncle Vasili L’vovich. In his adult life, Pushkin, like the majority of Russians of comparable social background, used French as the language of communication in certain social situations – in conversation and in correspondence with women of his class, in writing to government officials, and in letters to his rivals in duels, which proceeded strictly according to rules imported from France. (21)¹⁰⁶

Pushkin’s intimate knowledge of French allowed him more precisely to poke fun at the culture of Western manners which reigned in the upper-class salons of this period.¹⁰⁷ Satire and intimate knowledge, as quoted above, go hand in hand; his participation in both salons and literary societies, with their attendant trappings of cosmopolitanism and transnationalism, did not prevent Pushkin from skewering the trope exemplified by the character of Eugene.¹⁰⁸ The work of identification of foreign words and loans has already been assiduously undertaken – first by Nabokov, but also more recently in the work of J. Douglas Clayton. A systematic list of when and how Pushkin borrows from languages other than Russian is thus already available.¹⁰⁹ It is still fruitful to dissect the role

¹⁰⁶ Nabokov, ever playing devil’s advocate, has a different assessment of Pushkin’s language skills, writing in his extensive commentary on his translation of the poem, “Pushkin was a poor linguist: even the fluent French he had learned as a child lacked the personal tang and, judging by his letters, remained throughout his life limited to a brilliant command of eighteenth-century ready-made phrases” (162).

¹⁰⁷ The very same French-using salon culture Karamzin despaired of three decades earlier...

¹⁰⁸ The text itself emphasizes the distinction between Eugene and the narrator: the narrator claims to be good friends with Eugene, but is at pains to emphasize that they are, in fact, different people. See, for example, Chapter I, Stanza LVI: “I’m always glad to mark the difference / between Onegin and myself, / lest an ironic reader / or else some publisher / of complicated calumny, / collating here my traits, / repeat thereafter shamelessly / that I have scrawled my portrait” (120).

¹⁰⁹ By “how,” I mostly mean to reflect the categories loosely sketched by Clayton and Nabokov: are the words in Cyrillic or latinized? Is it a direct translation of a term into Russian or did Pushkin approximate the meaning? If the words are at

these borrowings play in the text overall. Karamzin's concerns about upsetting the "purity" of Russian by over-including words in French has been rendered unnecessary in Pushkin's paradigm. Indeed, Pushkin willingly includes numerous phrases in French – with one exception, discussed below, where Russian predominates. With Pushkin, containment does not disappear but changes form: rather than limiting or excluding foreign elements, he neutralizes their threat through irony, translation, and formal play. This linguistic play is central to Pushkin's reworking of sentimental idealism: rather than sustaining the illusion of transparent emotional expression, he repeatedly exposes it as mediated, constructed, and contingent.

Pushkin's irony and acerbic wit, on full display in *Евгений Онегин* [*Eugene Onegin*] (1833) and in *Повести покойного Ивана Петровича Белкина* [*The Tales of the Late Ivan Petrovich Belkin*] (1831), manage to both subvert and give new life to the figure of a disaffected, French-speaking Russian noble cut off from his roots. *Eugene Onegin* is a novel in verse which follows the escapades of its titular character across eight chapters and several years. After inheriting a country estate from his wealthy uncle, society dandy Eugene retires there and makes the acquaintance of a young poet, Vladimir Lensky, who also introduces him to Olga and Tatiana, two sisters. Tatiana falls for Eugene, who rejects her; Olga, though engaged to Lensky, also dances with Eugene. This destroys Eugene's friendship with Lensky, whom he later kills in a duel. Many years later, Tatiana has married well; Eugene confesses his belated love, only to be rejected. Though this is a tale about love, it is not, exactly, a sentimental tale. Eugene is not an ideal lover; Tatiana, though broken-hearted, avoids tragedy, finding her place in society and growing wise enough to see through Eugene's claims to sincerity.

Clayton argues that the French-language elements of the text are integral to Pushkin's aesthetic project. Helpfully, he also provides a framework for evaluating what, exactly, these foreign loans are doing in the text:

In *Eugene Onegin* we find two types of irony related to foreign language material. The first type may be called "social" or "satirical" irony, generally directed against the caprices and excesses of French fashion or the roguishness of French tutors. The second type of irony associated with foreign language material is what has been called here "formal irony," i.e., the ironic effect that occurs when foreign-language material is subordinated to the metrical and rhyming requirements of the Onegin stanza, e.g., дыша/entrechat, уже/бланманже, позволено ль /do-re-mi-sol; Guillot /мое. (39)¹¹⁰

Of course, making fun of the excesses of French fashion while frequently using French phrases is an interesting choice; like satire, which functions only with an intimate knowledge and understanding of what is being satirized, the true barbs of Pushkin's critiques will be most felt by those with the linguistic knowledge and social position to be able to understand them. Such a small subset of the Russian population could not have been enough to sustain a reading public, however; the delight of

the end of a poetic line, do they rhyme naturally, or have they been adapted to the Russian case system in order to follow the rhyme scheme? These meticulous studies are highly helpful in identifying such uses of the French language.

¹¹⁰ Дыша: a participle: breathing // уже: already // бланманже: a transliteration of "blancmange" // позволено ль: "allowed to" followed by an interrogative, often untranslated, particle which is a reduction of «ли», a poetic form often used to preserve syllable count // мое (моё): neuter first person possessive adjective (traditionally written without the accent, but it is implied and what makes the rhyme).

poking fun at the foibles of the Francophile upper classes no doubt found resonance down through the ranks of Russian society.

Pushkin may have imagined his reading public to be hyper-specific exactly because it was likely to be contained; as already discussed, writing in the age of Pushkin was still largely tied to salon culture and writing for friends.¹¹¹ However, that personal model of friendship (and the intense valuation afforded to those friendships) did not result in a literary output which is uniformly classified as sentimental. Indeed, critics have been invested precisely in divorcing Pushkin from the world of sentimental writing.¹¹² Sociability may be one of the clearest divisions between Karamzin's sentimental mode and Pushkin's satirical poetry. While Karamzin advocated for writers to retreat from society, which was "the enemy" of the author (Peschio 25), Pushkin would perform and endlessly revise his poems for his friends. Karamzin believed the writer had to *imagine* the discourse Russian would soon be capable of representing;¹¹³ for Pushkin, workshopping and translating foreign poems brought that very discourse into being. In some sense, Karamzin's language ideal is borne out precisely in Pushkin's playful inventiveness. Pushkin did not just attempt to linguistically bridge Russian and Western languages; he also engaged thematically with transnational literary trends. *Eugene Onegin* contains, superficially, many of the themes and tropes central to the sentimental project, key among them the importance of male friendship. As William Mills Todd III writes,

Friendship became one of the major themes of Russian literature. The Sentimentalists' interest in the individual personality and belief in the dignity of all people, based on everyone's ability to feel and love, provided fruitful ground for the cultivation of friendship. (40)

Though Pushkin certainly cultivated friendships and frequently performed and workshopped his early writings within the intimate circle of his literary society friends (at least when he was living in St. Petersburg), his texts themselves seem disinterested in the sentimental universalism which is identifiable in Karamzin's travel narrative. After all, though the narrator and Eugene were once close, they drifted apart; Eugene kills his only other close male friend within the text.

Where, then, does Pushkin's work fall along the continuum established with Karamzin, between the enlightenment universalism of emotion and national particularity of sentiment and identity? And what role does French play in the text? Identifying sentimental discourse in Pushkin is trickier than with Karamzin; though sentimental scenarios abound in his texts (Tatiana and Eugene; the Romeo and Juliet quality of the lovers in "Mistress Peasant;" the admittedly historical/folkloric figures of Ruslan and Lyudmila), Pushkin, often through the guise of "translation," manages to undercut the

¹¹¹ This may have been quite a limitation for the commercial success of some of Pushkin's literary ventures; as remarked in *A History of Russian Literature*, Pushkin's short-lived literary journal failed because the jokes were inside jokes targeted to his friends and could have little appeal to the mass reader (if it can be said that such a reader existed in the 1830's in Russia). (375)

¹¹² As Hilde Hoogenboom writes, "Pushkin anchors a new Russian literature's transitions from poetry to prose, from noble patronage to the literary marketplace, and from classicism to pre-romanticism, romanticism, and realism. Yet scholars carefully disassociate Pushkin from the devalued aesthetic of sentimentalism." (556)

¹¹³ "Karamzin's take on the connection between oral speech and written language is far more complex. In 'Otchego v Rossii malo avtorskikh talantov,' he argues, in fact, not that writers should write as people speak in polite society, but that writers should write as they *do not yet speak* – the whole point being that Russian did not yet have its own version of polite discourse, and writers were obliged to invent it" (Peschio 47).

full force of sentiment. Indeed, the crux of my argument hinges on this important fact: diverting to another language, usually French, enables Pushkin to subvert the expectations of a sentimental text. French language inclusions in the text are rarely neutral; they are themselves bracketed by the narrator's voice as being silly, unnecessary, and indulgent.¹¹⁴ Pushkin is writing 40 years after Karamzin, after all; Russian has changed enormously. The influence of foreign texts has accomplished its task. As Khitrova writes,

Poetic translations not only proliferated but were also debated as seriously as were poems written in Russian. One reason for this was that poetic translations were vested with an ethos and mission uniquely theirs. As Tomashevsky says in his *Pushkin and France*: "Their aim was not to render the original precisely, but to enrich Russian poetry with the forms that existed in a foreign language." And, one might add, to advance Russian as a language – its stylistic repertoire and expressive tool kit. (113)

Pushkin never *needs* to resort to French; there is no longer a linguistic or stylistic lack that must be filled by another language. It is a purely stylistic choice.

The only exception to this is Tatiana's letter to Eugene, in which she confesses her love for him. Structurally and emotionally, several impediments exist at the textual level between letter writer and novel reader. Pushkin constantly plays with our access to sentimental discourse; though his text is peppered with French, some latinized, some transliterated, he "translates" her letter for us from French into Russian – though presumably if one made it to the third chapter of *Евгений Онегин*, one has linguistic capacities on par with its author and could have very easily read the letter "in the original." In the stanza immediately preceding her letter, Pushkin writes the following:

Письмо Татьяны предо мною;
Его я свято берегу,
Читаю с тайною тоскою
И начитаться не могу.
Кто ей внушал и эту нежность,
И слов любезную небрежность?
Кто ей внушал умильный вздор,
Безумный сердца разговор,
И увлекательный и вредный?
Я не могу понять. Но вот
Неполный, слабый перевод,
С живой картины список бледный
Или разыгранный Фрейшниц,
Перстами робких учениц (94)

¹¹⁴ See, for example, stanza XXXVI from Chapter I: "Конечно б это было смело, / Описывать мое же дело; / Но панталоны, фрак, жилет, / Всех этих слов на русском нет; / А вижу Я, винюсь пред вами, / Что уж и так мой бедный слог / Пестреть гораздо б меньше мог / Иноплемennыми словами / Хоть и заглядывал я встарь / В академический словарь" (29). // "this would, no doubt, be bold, / however, 'tis my business to describe; / but 'pantaloons,' 'dress coat,' 'waistcoat' - / in Russian all these words are not; / whereas, I see (my guilt I lay before you) / that my poor style already as it is / might be much less variegated / with outland words, / though I did erstwhile dip / into the Academic Dictionary" (106).

["Tatiana's letter is before me; / religiously I keep it; / I read it with a secret heartache / and cannot get my fill of reading it. / Who taught her both this tenderness / and amiable carelessness of words? / Who taught her all that touching, / mad conversation of the heart / both fascinating and injurious? / I cannot understand. But here's / an incomplete, feeble translation, / the pallid copy of a vivid picture, / or *Freischütz* executed / by timid female learners' fingers." (164) Translation by Vladimir Nabokov]¹¹⁵

Interestingly, many of the same tropes which apply in Sand's novels vis-à-vis supposedly reported speech arise here in Pushkin: he is working in real time from a "genuine article" (as Sand's narrators "record faithfully" what they hear in real time); his "слабый перевод," a feeble or bad translation, lets us know before we even read the letter that the full force of its emotion will be unfelt by us (and, similarly to Sand's protestations about failing to capture the "true" language used, we are left with questions about the author's own merits of description and bilingualism...). There is one other important remark on Pushkin's part: he wonders, "Кто ей внушал и эту нежность, / И слов любезную небрежность?"¹¹⁶ Who taught her? The implication, of course, negates the question: these feelings which Tatiana organically expresses (in French, supposedly) arise not from careful study of romantic language but rather from genuine, overwhelming "true" emotion. Contrast this unanswerable "who taught her..." with Eugene's "studied" approach to seduction outlined in the first chapter. He could "dissemble, / conceal a hope, show jealousy, / shake one's belief, make one believe"¹¹⁷ (Chapter I, Stanza X); "How he was able to seem new, to amaze innocence in sport, / alarm with ready desperation"¹¹⁸ (Chapter I, Stanza XI); "How early he already could disturb / the hearts of the professed coquettes!"¹¹⁹ (Chapter I, Stanza XII) (100). Genuine emotion is something that society teaches gentlemen like Eugene to conceal. Eugene's dissimulations – and his eloquence, and his spleen – are the results of the distance he has managed to create between his words and his sentiments.¹²⁰

Interestingly Tatiana's letter has the same problem, but at a structural level rather than at the emotional level: we are removed by the distance of language and a potentially invasive translator, and yet we are primed not to doubt the genuine nature of her words. The most spontaneous-seeming aspect of its composition is the transition from the formal вы (vous) to the informal ты (tu) and then back again.¹²¹ This shift from formal to informal "you" does not occur until the 34th line of her

¹¹⁵I will have Nabokov's translation in the footnotes whenever I quote the original; though it lacks the vivacity of other English translations (including my favorite, the Oxford World's Classics edition by James E. Folen), and certainly is missing the joy of the rhymes, it is so close to the original language that it can only help with the clarity of my analysis.

¹¹⁶ Nabokov, in his commentary, answers this rhetorical question with characteristic pizzazz: "The answer is: Parny. See, for example, his idiom in *Le Lendemain* (*Poésies érotiques*, bk. 1): "Et ton âme plus attendrie / S'abandonne nonchalamment / Au délicieux sentiment / D'une mélancolie" which falls automatically into romanticist Russian" (384)

¹¹⁷ "...лицемерит, / Танть надежду, ревновать, / Разуверять, заставить верить" (16)

¹¹⁸ «Как он умел казаться новым, / Шутя невинность изумлять, / Пугать отчаяньем готовым» (17)

¹¹⁹ «Как рано мог уж он тревожить / Сердца кокеток записных!» (18)

¹²⁰ The "spleen" is identified within the text, interestingly, as having national origins pointedly outside of Russia: "Недуг, которого причину / Давно бы отыскать пора, / Подобный английскому *сплину*, / Короче: русская *хандра*" (37) // «A malady, the cause of which / 'tis high time were discovered, / similar to the English 'spleen' - / in short, the Russian 'chondria'" (112). If negative emotions presumably have national characters, then one can assume positive sentimental discourse would be similarly partitioned.

¹²¹ This is a theme with a long history, not only for Pushkin but in French literature as well. Pushkin's eight-line poem «Ты и Вы» (1828) expresses a desire to use the informal address with a lover. Voltaire, in *Les vous et les tu* (1728) predates Pushkin's by a century yet expresses similar desires (emotional proximity signaled by language). Thus, Tatiana's "authenticity" is also already couched in a storied (and multilingual and transnational) literary history.

letter, and then the formal “you” returns two lines from the end. As Olga Hasty points out in her book *Pushkin’s Tatiana* (1999), the informal address is directed towards an imagined and idealized Eugene, while the beginning and end of the letter speak to a more direct reality (his arrival in the village; his boredom with his surroundings; and, at the end, his concern with his honor). Tatiana is only able to express emotional proximity to Eugene when she makes of him a “character” in her own letter. The “ideal” in Pushkin, then, is understood to be fictional – a creation in Tatiana’s mind which has no relation to reality. Unlike the idealism which operates in other texts considered in this dissertation, there is no sense of “actionable” idealism in Pushkin.

Nonetheless, the full force of her sentiment is impossible for us to access since it remains private, read “in the original” only by herself, Eugene, and the narrator. This feels unutterably distant from Karamzin’s claims and hopes for language transformation. Russian by this time *has* been transformed; the evidence of that is the text of *Евгений Онегин*, which is littered with exactly the kind of linguistic innovation Karamzin hoped for. For Pushkin, though, the malleability of literary language is not an opportunity for national pride, but rather a humorous tool, an offshoot of disaffection, and sincerity is what social study through salon language (*jargon*, if we care to use Karamzin’s discourse) eliminates. Karamzin’s almost embarrassingly sincere narrator would be fundamentally at odds with Pushkin’s playful, inventive, and satirical voice. The study of language, as Karamzin imagined it, would lead to perfect comprehension – Pushkin shows that such assiduous study leads, on the contrary, to dissimulation.

Tatiana’s letter itself bears little trace of any “translation” supposedly undertaken on the part of the narrator. The letter has extremely variable word order, not even close to Karamzin’s advocacy for a tighter subject-verb-object order which would mirror the European languages he was versed in; in addition, the letter abounds in instances of the instrumental case, the “Slavic” case par excellence. Indeed, in his commentary, Nabokov says that Pushkin “had started by jotting down Tatiana’s letter in Russian prose, ‘...Upon which,’ says Annenkov, ‘Pushkin transposed this meager program into wonderous verse’” (394).¹²² The distinguishing formal aspect of Tatiana’s letter is its rhyme scheme, which is significantly freer than the *онегинская строфа* [Onegin stanza] which Pushkin uses for most of his novel (though Tatiana’s letter is also in iambic tetrameter).¹²³ The “myth” of its original document is, of course, a fictional device. It is used by Pushkin for all three of his primary characters – as Nabokov points out, “In the course of the novel Pushkin quotes the writings of all three main characters: Tatiana’s letter, Lenski’s last elegy, and Onegin’s letter” (384). What better demonstration, incidentally, of the variation of voicing which was so sorely lacking in Karamzin’s prose? Indeed, as is clear from Pushkin’s manuscripts, Tatiana’s letter was always conceived of in Russian. Nabokov, as translator, makes an interesting (if impossible to substantiate) claim, however: “Tatiana is supposed to have written her letter in French; and it is indeed much easier to turn it into conventional French prose than into English iambics” (386). Perhaps that is partly due to the abundance of Gallicisms within the text of the letter, including lines 26 and 62, “The tumult of an inexperienced soul...an inexperienced soul’s delusion / *Dushí neópytnoy volnén’ya...Obmán neópytnoy dushí* [gen]: *Neópytnaya dusha* (nom.) is a Gallicism, *une âme novice*” (391). However, *Eugene Onegin* as a

¹²² Pavel Annenkov, author of *Материалы для биографии А.С. Пушкина* [Materials for A.S. Pushkin’s biography] published in 1873 in St. Petersburg. It is his account of Pushkin’s writing which Nabokov uses in his commentary.

¹²³ Nabokov has once again undertaken the labor of identifying the rhyme scheme for us: the letter is, “Seventy-nine lines in iambic tetrameter, which a free pattern of rhymes: ababacfeffegghhijojo; babaaceec; ababecceiddifoofogoog; aabeeiicoco; babaceeciddi; baba” (386). Contrast this with the rhyme scheme for the Onegin stanza: aBaBccDDeFFeGG, where the lowercase letters represent feminine rhymes, which are stressed on the penultimate syllable, and the uppercase represent masculine rhymes, which are stressed on the final syllable.

whole contains many potential “Gallicisms” as identified by Nabokov, and Tatiana’s letter cannot be said to have any more or less than the surrounding stanzas. Why, then, this insistence on linguistic difference that happens beyond both the construction of the letter and the reader’s access to it?

The answer to that question might have been obliquely given by Pushkin himself. In the several stanzas preceding Tatiana’s letter, the narrator reflects at length on language, the limits of expression, and national identity. Tatiana – a Russian heroine par excellence (she even dreams of bears and loves the winter¹²⁴) – cannot write in Russian if she is to give true voice to her emotions. Indeed, from stanza 26 to stanza 29, we are treated to lengthy reflections on literacy, language and appropriate discourse, and the charm of grammatical mistakes in Russian made by well-brought up ladies. Take, for example, stanza 26 of Chapter III:

Еще предвижу затрудненья:
Родной земли спасая честь,
Я должен буду, без сомненья,
Письмо Татьяны перевести.
Она по-русски плохо знала,
Журналов наших не читала
И выражалась с трудом
На языке своем родном,
Итак, писала по-французски...
Что делать! Повторяю вновь:
Доныне дамская любовь
Не изъяснялась по-русски,
Доныне гордый наш язык
К почтовой прозе не привык. (91)

[“Another hindrance I foresee: / saving the honor of my native land, / undoubtedly I’ll be obliged / Tatiana’s letter to translate. / She knew Russian badly, / did not read our reviews, / and expressed herself with difficulty / in her native tongue; / hence wrote in French. / What’s to be done about it! I repeat again; / as yet a lady’s love / has not expressed itself in Russian, / as yet our proud tongue has / to postal prose not got accustomed” (Nabokov, 162)]

Tatiana’s touching sincerity is supposedly a translated sincerity, one which (in a *topos* common to narratives of this time) Pushkin’s narrator claims to have “imperfectly” rendered. When Pushkin writes, “Доныне гордый наш язык / К почтовой прозе не привык,” [as yet a lady’s love / has not expressed itself in Russian], there is a sense that some languages are better suited to certain expressive tasks. Russian cannot be used as a language for letter-writing because it is improper for the expression of genuine emotion.¹²⁵ Yet, French is not *really* treated as the vehicle of sincere expression within the novel. For example, we can assume that Eugene’s salon escapades and seductions were also conducted in French. In addition, the narrator’s frequent cheeky asides about Gallicisms undercut any claim to French having superiority in the realm of emotional expression. If

¹²⁴ From Chapter V, stanza IV: “Tatiana (being Russian, in her soul / herself not knowing why) / with its cold beauty / loved Russian winter” (205).

¹²⁵ We can hear here echoes of Karamzin, bemoaning both that salon attendees abandon native Russian, but also that the language is too clunky to serve in certain, specific (often translation-related) tasks.

anything, the narrator's supposed translation of Tatiana's words into Russian proves just how amenable the Russian language is to ardor. Perhaps the fictional Tatiana was incapable of rendering her innermost thoughts in Russian, but Pushkin the author certainly was not.

Pushkin continues with this theme before "reproducing" the translated letter. Stanza 27 reads:

Я знаю: дам хотят заставить
 Читать по-русски. Право, страх!
 Могу ли их себе представить
 С «Благонамеренным» в руках!
 Я шлюсь на вас, мои поэты;
 Не правда ль; милые предметы,
 Которым, за свои грехи,
 Писали втайне вы стихи,
 Которым сердце посвящали,
 Не все ли, русским языком
 Владея слабо и с трудом,
 Его так мило искажали,
 И в их устах язык чужой
 Не обратился ли в родной?» (92)

[“I know: some would make ladies / read Russian. Horrible indeed! / Can I imagine them / with *The Well-Meaner* in their hands? / My poets, I appeal to [you]! / Is it not true that the amiable objects / for whom, to expiate your sins, / in secret you wrote verses, / to whom your heart you dedicated – did not they all, the Russian tongue / wielding poorly, and with difficulty, / so amiably garble it, / and on their lips a foreign tongue / did not it turn into a native one?” (Nabokov, 162)]

There are two remarks to be made about this stanza. First, women as a reading public are evoked with a particularly satirical stance: they are clearly reading many things indeed, but not in Russian (think of both Tatiana's mother, ruined by French novels, and Tatiana herself). Second, the mere idea that what they would express interest in would have a moral or ethical dimension is sufficient to create the joke for Pushkin. In the introduction to this chapter, I discussed women's roles as arbiters of taste in salons, but the appeal of certain “low” genres to women readers – particularly the gothic novel – no doubt adds a bit of force to Pushkin's irony here.¹²⁶ The combination of charming grammatical mistakes in Russian and the force of the adjective “родной” [native] in describing a foreign language denaturalizes the women flirts that our narrator is concerned with. There is no expectation, seemingly, of these women being “good” at speaking Russian; indeed, it is preferable (for attraction's sake) that they do not have mastery of their native language. This is a fascinating position, and one which creates an interesting intertext with Tolstoy's *Война и мир* [*War and Peace*] (1867).¹²⁷ It would be worthwhile but beyond the scope of this chapter to consider the gender

¹²⁶ The popularity of which, it must be added, itself caused much handwringing over the future of women readers. As Tosi writes, critics lambasted gothic novels for their lack of utility as a genre for civic virtue. “Ladies, however, were not just voracious readers but occasionally - and of more concern for their male contemporaries - the translators of gothic works, as in the case of Mariia Arbuzova. Fears that women would be led astray by gothic novels in part explains why Ann Radcliffe (1764-1823) became the main target against the new literary trend” (87).

¹²⁷ When Prince Andrei first meets Natasha, he is charmed while they dance because of her mistakes in French; he sees in her some sort of genuine “Russianness” which proves irresistible (521). Though a historical novel set before Pushkin's

dynamics vis-à-vis knowledge and power implied here; no doubt, though, Pushkin is indicating that masculine taste and literary production prevail. As Tosi remarks, Pushkin rejected “elegant taste” (coded as feminine) as a type of censorship, “as tyrannical as the tsar’s” (62). Peschio’s point about the domestic space being safe from both state interference and the requirements of polite (read: feminine) society take on a rather sharp edge in this context. Pushkin continues his theme in stanza 28:

Не дай мне бог сойтись на бале
Иль при разъезде на крыльце
С семинаристом в желтой шали
Иль с академиком в чепце!
Как уст румяных без улыбки,
Без грамматической ошибки
Я русской речи не люблю.
Быть может, на беду мою,
Красавиц новых поколение,
Журналов вняв молящий глас,
К грамматике приучит нас;
Стихи введут в употребленье;
Но я...какое дело мне?
Я верен буду старине. (92)

[“The Lord forbid my meeting at a ball / or at its breakup, on the porch, / a seminarian in a yellow shawl / or an Academician in a bonnet! / As vermeil lips without a smile, / with no grammatical mistake / I don’t like Russian speech. / Perchance (it would be my undoing!) / a generation of new belles, / the pleading voice of journals having heeded, / to Grammar will injure us; / verses will be brought into use. / Yet I...what do I care? / I shall be true to ancients” (Nabokov, 163)]

The frightening apparition of a learned woman is enough to make the narrator welcome death. Lack of language mastery is a necessary component of seduction – the narrator has enough sense, however, to know that tastes can change (anticipating Tolstoy), and merely wishes that he doesn’t have to bear witness to a modern woman who has complete linguistic capacities in Russian.

Throughout *Eugene Onegin*, Pushkin often makes recourse to French in order to undercut seriousness. Karamzin’s earlier concerns – that Russian be modified, but without relying too much on foreign words – has become outdated. French is a fixture of high society, and a delightful farcical voice in Pushkin’s work. The pre-eminence of French, however, does not threaten the Russian identity of his text. In many ways, one can see in *Eugene Onegin* the worst-case scenario outlined by Karamzin: Russian women are cut off unutterably from their native language, cannot express themselves equally in French and Russian, and their identity could be said to be split. Yet, Pushkin denies us the consequence of such a state: Russian prevails, structurally and symbolically in the text. Authenticity of expression is proved to be possible in Russian: enduring debates about Tatiana

Eugene Onegin, *War and Peace* clearly reflects the linguistic and national concerns of Tolstoy’s generation of writers (1860’s).

prove how integral her portrait has been to the Russian literary tradition.¹²⁸ Karamzin and Pushkin thus represent two points on a continuum: Karamzin's early ideals of universalism faded into a defensive nationalistic particularity that is threatened by the over-eager inclusion of other languages and cultures within Russian letters. Pushkin proves instead that particularity is possible *even when French is "used" as a literary language*. Pushkin has, in a sense, defanged the threat of linguistic supplantation: through French, he is still able to create a genuinely Russian text. His playful handling of multilingualism does not signal the absence of containment, but rather its transformation. Where earlier texts impose uniformity more directly, Pushkin instead manages linguistic difference through irony and translation, incorporating it into the fabric of the text while still limiting its disruptive potential. Pushkin thus does not abandon the sentimental-idealist paradigm so much as hollow it out: what once functioned as a model of emotional and social coherence becomes, in his work, a stylized and self-conscious device. Idealism is not realized but contained – preserved only as form, and emptied of its original ethical force.

4.4 Coda: "Mistress Peasant" and the Ideal Language Student

Amongst the delightful prose tales collected in Pushkin's *Повести покойного Ивана Петровича Белкина* [*The Tales of the Late Ivan Petrovich Belkin*] (1831), perhaps the crown jewel is "Барышня-крестьянка" ["Mistress Peasant"]. The tale is interesting for more than its Romeo and Juliet-esque depiction of forbidden love; it also deals intimately with language, falsity, and mastery of register. The conceit is simple: two neighboring landowners hate each other and refuse to interact. One has a daughter named Liza – an impossible-to-ignore intertext with Karamzin's sentimental, low-class heroine, who nonetheless speaks as a well-educated Russian would – the other has a son named Alexei. When Alexei returns from carousing in the big city salons, his romantic verve is the talk of the town. Desperate to see him, Liza comes up with a fantastic plan: she will pretend to be a peasant named Akulina and engineer a meeting in a nearby wood. To fully become a peasant woman, she commissions a brand-new costume of clothes and shoes, and assures her maid the disguise will be complete since, "I'm really good at talking the way they do around here" (55). When they meet, Alexei, overcome by the beauty of the simple peasant girl, pretends to be the valet's son to "make their relationship one of equals" (57). Liza quickly calls his bluff; she says, "You're dressed wrong, and you talk a different way, and you call your dog in some other language" (57).¹²⁹ Liza, of course, has the advantage in this interaction; she can play with his expectations and stretch his belief precisely because she has mastered how to act "below her class." Her language is convincing enough that Alexei firmly believes her to be a peasant. When she speaks to him, "It was all said, it stands to reason, in the peasant dialect; but the thoughts and feelings, unusual in a simple girl, astonished Alexei" (59). Like Tatiana, one must be prompted to ask: who taught her the way of such expression?

¹²⁸ See, for example, in Olga Hasty's *Pushkin's Tatiana* (1999) an explanation of the competing critical discourses over Tatiana's "true" identity. As she writes, "Commentators keen on foregrounding Tatiana's 'Russianness' insist, predictably, on the importance of the Russian nanny and folk culture to Tatiana's development. Those critics who argue that Tatiana is European in character naturally choose to focus on the significance the novels assume in her life. Yet Tatiana is rich in character, imagination, and creative potential precisely because she successfully absorbs the divergent worldviews couched in the Russian folk *and* the European literary traditions and is thus determined by neither" (21).

¹²⁹ "Some other language" would, of course, be French, which Liza speaks fluently; when Alexei's dog first runs up to her, he shouts, "Tout beau, Sbogar, ici" (57).

Unfortunately, an unforeseen reconciliation between their fathers threatens the fun of Liza's game. When Alexei is invited to dine at her house, she employs a different stratagem. She powders and rouges herself and "spoke through her teeth in a sing-song voice, and only in French" (64). Alexei is disgusted and disinterested, especially since he has the vision of simple but profound Akulina in his mind's eye. She is not so simple, however; he embarks on her education, and is astonished that she learns to read in a matter of days (the instructional text is none other than Karamzin's "Наталя, боярская дочь" ["Natal'ia, the Boyar's Daughter"]). They begin an amorous correspondence, and she proves herself equally adept at learning French. The jig is up when Alexei, coming to the house one day after the fathers have conspired to marry off their children to one another, discovers Liza/Akulina reading one of his letters; his last shout is "Akulina! my darling Akulina!" (68).

This short tale has much to recommend it, and certain of its elements make it of special interest to the present study. What does it mean that it is "easy" for Liza to speak like a peasant, though Pushkin does not represent such speech for his reader? If it is so easy to master those codes, can we assume a two-way path of register shift? The democratizing potential of such a claim is profound and has more in common with Karamzin's universal sentimentalism than we might find in the textual and translational mechanisms surrounding Tatiana's letter. French when being taught *to* Liza is exciting; when Liza expresses herself as fully fluent at the dinner table, it is a problem. Language has moved far beyond being merely a vehicle of expression; we have surpassed, with this story, Karamzin's hopes for a usable literary language. Now, language is sufficiently complex to mislead. One can inhabit, purposefully, different registers to efface one's identity.

There is one interesting extension of Pushkin's own work: the need for an amorous female subject to have a "lack" which can be filled by the knowledge of her pursuer. It is telling that the "lack" is linguistic in the works examined in this chapter. Ladies may falter in their Russian, Tatiana cannot write her love letters in Russian, and though Liza/Akulina *appears* to need instruction, it is the poet alone who is able to furnish the missing words.

4.5 Conclusion

A period of roughly 40 years separates the publication of *Letters of a Russian Traveler* and *Eugene Onegin*. Karamzin's belief that languages can exist on a spectrum of originality (in the sense that lexical values can "belong" to a language, that a language can have formal elements which are its "own") gradually morphs into an increasingly nationalistic and particularized understanding of what "Russian" is as the nineteenth century dawns. Karamzin was concerned with Russian becoming a sufficient vehicle of emotional expression; the mechanics of Russian were felt to lag behind the sentimental expressivity of languages like French, German, and English which had an impressively well-established sentimental literary tradition. Yet, even in Karamzin's *Letters*, it is possible to identify the limits of that very same universalism – his increasingly piqued offense when questioned about Russian history, culture, and language point inevitably to a certain consolidation of identity that was borne out in his later historical writings. Pushkin takes up Karamzin's general themes of national language and flips them on their head. Russian is proven, in the text itself of *Eugene Onegin*, to have the stylistic pliancy for humor, love, sentiment, and tragedy, even when French is present or, dare I say, omnipresent. Here, national identity is particularized enough that Tatiana can be Russian and have a letter "translated" into Russian while speaking and writing exclusively in French. In a word, Pushkin has already re-worked the genre established by Karamzin.

The clearest proof that Russian literature had become autonomous was its comfort with extra-linguistic inclusions. There was no longer any need for Karamzin's anxiety about Russian borrowing too much from elsewhere; Pushkin demonstrated that even when fundamental elements of a literary work "come from" French, the particularity of the Russian national character can still be expressed.

The trope of the Francophone dandy continued to resonate throughout the nineteenth century. As national consolidation progressed and Russian literature grew in both domestic and international prestige, Gallomania became a frequent target of nationalist satire. A contemporary of Pushkin, Alexander Griboyedov, provides a notable example in his play *Горе от ума* [*Woe from Wit*] (1825), whose protagonist is incapable of adapting to Russian life after spending too much time abroad. His cynicism costs him friendships, social status, and even love. Though written in the classical style of French theater – the unities associated with Molière and Corneille are carefully observed – this play nonetheless exemplifies distinctly Russian concerns. A prickly defensiveness about French cultural incursions characterizes the dialogue, while the sparkling language of the play, writing in iambic couplets, demonstrates Russian's ability to handle even the most classical of dramatic forms. As Chatsky himself wryly remarks observes "At gatherings and holidays, and in discussion, does that same mixture of tongues prevail, one word in French, the next in peasant Russian?" (29).

By the mid-nineteenth century, an important shift occurs in the representation of Francophone characters with Tolstoy's *Война и мир* [*War and Peace*] (1865-69). In this sprawling historical novel, the reverence towards Napoleon once felt by segments of the Russian elite is decisively dismantled after his invasion of Russia. Questions of gender and language politics are also prominent: upper-class Petersburg women in the early nineteenth century are frequently portrayed as confident speakers only of French. The novel's heroine, Natasha, is distinct because of her *incapacity* to speak French properly; her innate Russianness is expressed precisely through her linguistic practice. Later authors like Turgenev and Chekhov further complicate and ironize the trope. In Turgenev's "Ася" ["Asya"] (1858), a Russian expatriate initially seeks to avoid his countrymen abroad but becomes entangled in an unexpected friendship with two fellow travelers, drawn to one of them because of his "true Russian soul" (111). In Chekhov's story "Дорогие уроки" ["Expensive Lessons"] (1887), a man fascinated with French culture hires a private tutor. He falls in love with her, but ultimately fails to learn French or extricate himself from the lessons, even as he realizes he will never gain fluency.

Francophilia and Francophone characters continually appear in Russian literature, but to what end? Karamzin represents an author from the earliest days of a self-conscious Russian literary tradition, when the reputation of both his own writing and his nation's culture was far from assured. Sentimentalism in the Russian context played a key role in shaping literary language. Karamzin's respect for the capacity of English, German, and French writers to formulate emotions was a source of inspiration, and perhaps of resentment, in his *Letters*. Pushkin, inspired by and informed by Karamzin's literary progress, makes frequent reference to the sentimental tropes introduced and developed before while also distancing himself from sincere attachment to the idealism of earlier authors. In Pushkin's work, idealism is no longer a sincere organizing principle but a literary mode to be ironized and reworked. While earlier sentimental texts rely on idealized emotional universality, Pushkin exposes the limits of such idealism by foregrounding its artificiality and its dependence on inherited literary conventions. Borrowing, influence, and transnational literary trends were impossible to ignore. Over the course of the nineteenth century, however, the desire to exorcise or domesticate these early influences gradually solidified into a recurring national trope, repeatedly mobilized in some of the most popular literary works of the century. Once Russian literature no longer depended on French as a linguistic model, it instead required the Francophone figure as a foil

against which Russian literary identity could be defined. In this sense, the Russian case illustrates a broader pattern explored throughout this dissertation: the presence of another language – even when resisted or satirized – remains central to the articulation of national literary identity.

Chapter 5

Conclusion

Andrei Makine, born in 1957, is a contemporary French Russian novelist who is deeply embroiled in the same questions about national belonging, identity, and language which animate this dissertation. His novel *Le Testament français* (1995), written nearly two centuries after the works examined in this dissertation, offers a striking reflection on the legacy of earlier debates around multilingualism and its literary representation. *Le Testament français* follows a young boy growing up in the Soviet Union who faces an identity crisis stemming from the mixed language and culture of his family. The novel weaves together the tragic narratives of multiple generations of a family caught in the maelstrom of two world wars, the Bolshevik Revolution, and the uncomfortable experience of living in a time and place unable to accommodate a complicated relationship to national identity. The narrator's grandmother, Charlotte, is French; she speaks to her grandson of her youth and her memories, and, importantly, transmits her language to him. The boy's unnamed mother is largely indifferent to this cultural multiplicity, referring dismissively to French as “ta langue grand-maternelle” (15). The language politics of this private family prove revealing. At the table, everyone speaks Russian; it is only in the evenings, when Charlotte wants to reminisce, that French makes its appearance. French is a domestic language in this novel; we are far removed from the salon culture of nineteenth-century Russia. As the narrator writes, “Quant au français, nous le considérons plutôt comme notre dialecte familial” (37). The family lives in a remote, provincial part of the steppes. It is this isolation that proves fundamental to Charlotte's difference; as her grandson remarks, if she had been in Petersburg or Moscow, she would not have stood out so much (33).

Makine's novel revisits many of the linguistic tensions explored throughout this dissertation. Like the authors examined in the preceding chapters, Makine presents language as a marker of cultural belonging and as a site where national identity is negotiated rather than simply inherited. Yet the novel also reveals the long-term consequences of the nationalist consolidation traced in earlier chapters. Multilingualism, once a normal feature of elite Russian literary culture, has become a source of personal alienation. The grandson occasionally engages in youthful comparative linguistics:

En effet, quand je prononçais en russe “царь,” un tyran cruel se dressait devant moi; tandis que le mot “tsar” en français s'emplissait de lumières, de bruits, de vent...de cet air inimitable de notre Atlantide. (59)

His linguistic comparison is imbued with an explicit moral judgement. Autocracy has a different feel in another language. He loves French language and culture, which often causes trouble at his school. His predilection for Western imports and ideas makes him a target for bullies. Charlotte's affection for France seems, in some sense, guaranteed by her now-permanent exile. In the years after the revolution, Russia's internal changes also proved too complex for her to grasp: “Charlotte disait qu'une nouvelle langue était en train de naître dans ce pays. Une langue qu'elle ne connaissait pas, et

c'est pour cela que le dialogue dans l'ancien bureau du gouverneur lui avait paru invraisemblable" (84). The "new" language of Soviet bureaucracy produces a second alienation for his grandmother.

Language was not the only thing Charlotte passed on to her grandson; she also passes on her alienation. The grandson's hunger for French language and novels – along with a misguided belief in the greater value of its cultural products – made his school years complicated. In high school, he writes, "La France, cette année, m'enferma dans une solitude profonde et studieuse...je lus tout ce que la bibliothèque de notre école possédait d'intéressant sur la France" (138). He devours the books in his library, even the novels of George Sand (141). Yet this intense, self-directed education has an unexpected consequence: he now believes he has nothing left to learn from his grandmother and considers himself more of an expert on France than she is (150). Despite his previous assurance of France's cultural superiority, his readings have another effect: "Car mes nouvelles connaissances, contrairement à mon attente, semblaient obscurcir mon imagerie française" (152). In adolescent angst, he experiences a reawakening to Russian culture, though now at the cost of his French inheritance. He mocks cosmopolitan trends and bitterly defends the primacy of Russia. As the years pass and he grows older, he is able to better reconcile these two aspects of his personal history and identity. About his grandmother, he writes, "Je trouvais en elle l'Occident personnifié, cet Occident rationnel et froid contre lequel les Russes gardent une rancune inguérissable" (224). His mention of "les Russes" notably excludes himself rhetorically; he has grown out of his youthful rejection of Western culture, proving that he was, in fact, capable of reconciliation. The struggle to reconcile these two linguistic and cultural inheritances ultimately becomes the defining tension of his life. *Le Testament français* is exactly that: a testament to the fact that the national trends – as observed in this dissertation – sought to erase the multilingualism reluctantly present in literature during this period of national consolidation.

A similar tension exists in later Quebec literature, though with a wry twist. In Jacques Renaud's *Le Cassé* (1964), we have come far indeed from the beatific pastoral idyll of the *romans du terroir*. The entire text – both narration and dialogue – is written in *joual*, foregrounding a vernacular register that earlier nationalist literature sought to discipline or suppress. In one key scene, the protagonist's girlfriend, Philomène, encounters a representative of the cultural elite in the form of a literature student at the Université de Montréal:

Philomène. C'est rare. Mémène...Oui, c'est ça Mémène. C'est beaucoup plus joli. Moi je m'appelle Berthe. Je suis étudiante à la faculté des lettres de l'Université de Montréal (Philomène est impressionnée; elle fait un "ha bon" étirée et surprise. Et la jeune femme y va. Elle parle des poètes, des noms que Philomène ne connaît pas; Bauglaire, d'autres) c'est très, très intéressant. (45)

Philomène, whose perspective is often rendered in free indirect discourse, is described as constitutionally quiet because "elle a peur de mal parler" (17). A hierarchy of language still exists in French Canada, but it no longer takes the form of English imposing itself upon French. Instead, access to the cultural prestige of the metropole – here signaled through the poems of "Bauglaire" – becomes a marker of class belonging within an ostensibly monolingual community. The result of cultural consolidation is therefore not unity but a new set of internal distinctions, structured by register, education, and cultural reference.

This dissertation has examined the novels of George Sand, Patrice Lacombe, Antoine Gérin-Lajoie, and the writings of Nikolai Karamzin and Alexander Pushkin to argue that multilingualism played a

key role in the consolidation of national literary traditions. France, Quebec, and Russia shared a common challenge for nineteenth-century nationalists: linguistic diversity was omnipresent, even though one of the most effective ways of ensuring a uniform citizenry was linguistic standardization. For many of the authors examined here, idealism also motivated their writing. Their novels imagined society and culture as they should be, rather than as they were. These literary works perform a balancing act between presentation of linguistic difference and its control, subordination, and, in some cases, elimination. Literature, then, emerges as yet another tool in the consolidation of identity, despite the fact that the presence of multiple languages in these works points to identities that are entangled from the start.

George Sand's *Mauprat* (1837) and *Jeanne* (1844) were published early in her career; *Jeanne* includes the most serious and sustained engagement with Berrichon in her entire *œuvre*. Sand's sentimental and idealist bent manifests in the narratives she weaves. Yet a latent conservatism emerges in the disparity of outcomes for her two heroes – in *Mauprat*, Bernard, born into the upper classes but lacking the socialization required to fit in, learns the ways of polite society and emerges morally redeemed, rewarded with a happy, desired marriage. In *Jeanne*, on the other hand, Jeanne's anachronistic beliefs condemn her from the start. Her religion, language, and country attitudes are simply untranslatable to modern France; her death is the symbolic death of a way of life. Sand's treatment of other languages is a masterclass in containment. For all that she willingly shows her readers, she obfuscates more.

Patrice Lacombe's *La terre paternelle* (1846) and Antoine Gérin-Lajoie's *Jean Rivard, le défricheur* (1862) combine agricultural idealism with controlled representations of multilingualism. Written in a colonial context in which French language and customs were increasingly threatened by an Anglophone majority, these novels, and the genre of the *roman du terroir*, sought to create a rural, French-Canadian stronghold which would survive the threats to community identity. Lacombe's casual inclusion of English culminates in a scene of French-language dominance: an English settler must bend his utterances to the needs of his French-speaking interloper. Gérin-Lajoie has a more conservative approach to linguistic inclusion. English is notably excised from the novel; in his idyllic French community, English is so far removed from relevance that characters cannot even correctly identify it. These novels both seek to construct a pastoral, French-speaking Quebec far beyond the reach of an Anglophone colonial authority.

Finally, Nikolai Karamzin's *Письма русского путешественника* [*Letters of a Russian Traveler*] (1791-92) and Alexander Pushkin's *Евгений Онегин* [*Eugene Onegin*] (1833) reflect the changing fortunes of French as a prestige language in Russia. For Karamzin, linguistic purity is an ideal to strive for. Yet he also gestures towards French as a source of innovation for the Russian language, which he believes is not yet capable of the literary feats achieved in Western Europe. This paradox – the desire for linguistic purity alongside inspiration from French – creates an impossible tension. Russian will borrow, change from contact, and prove strikingly malleable as a literary language, but Karamzin's nationalist sensibilities deny the value of a language born of mixing and influence. Pushkin's *Евгений Онегин* is written in sparkling Russian which proves that his language is more than capable of providing literary equivalents to Western European classics. But *Евгений Онегин* is far from a unilingual text. Pushkin includes words in French, and the visual switch between alphabets makes it impossible to ignore that these words come from elsewhere. Yet he has eliminated the “threat” of Russian's supplantation through Tatiana's “translated” letter. Russian has all the requirements for expressing emotional intensity. His inclusion of French, then, is far from the

national downfall predicted by Karamzin; rather, it demonstrates that Russian literature has neutralized the “threat” posed by an elite class capable only of speaking French.

Taken together, these case studies reveal a broader literary pattern. France, Russia, and Quebec illuminate in three different ways a literary trend which reflected macro-political and historical changes. As national identity came to require unity, language was, understandably, contested ground. Literature, even in the most sentimental and idealist of genres, engaged with multilingual diversity only to contain it. The narratorial and metatextual strategies used to manage multilingualism across these texts are strikingly similar. Narratorial commentary, in-text glossing, and behind-the-scenes acts of translation and censorship abound. In addition, Standard French plays vastly different roles in each of the locations examined here. In France, Standard French was the eliminator of linguistic diversity as it targeted “patois.” In Russia, French was an elite prestige language seen as a threat to Russification. Finally, in Quebec, French language and culture themselves were targets of an Anglophone colonial regime. Across the French, Russian, and Quebec contexts, the presence of multilingualism in nineteenth-century literature initially attempted to represent lived diversity, but gradually became reinterpreted as a threat to national cohesion. The relative prestige of French in each context helps explain the differing techniques of multilingual containment: where French is dominant, it suppresses difference; where it is threatened, it is protected; and where it is external, it is ironized.

Multilingualism is rarely absent from literature; rather, it is managed. Authors decide when linguistic difference should be visible, when it should be explained, and when it should disappear entirely. The emergence of national literatures in the long nineteenth century therefore involved not the elimination of linguistic diversity, but instead its narrative reorganization. The history traced in this dissertation reveals that national literatures are never as linguistically unified as they appear. Behind the ideal of a single national language lies a long history of multilingual encounters, negotiations, and tensions. From the salons of eighteenth-century Russia to the provincial landscapes of Quebec and the revolutionary transformations of France, literature has continually grappled with the challenge of representing linguistic plurality within emerging national cultures. Makine’s novel reminds us that these negotiations remain unfinished.

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