

Souvenirs.

Mon père nous conseille, à ma sœur et à moi
de prendre de bonne heure l'habitude de no-
ter de temps à autre les événements dont nous
sommes témoins, ou dont le souvenir pourra
un jour nous être agréable ou utile.

L'expérience des parents est perdue pour
les enfants, dit-on; il faut donc que les en-
fants en forment une eux-mêmes. Il est
bon de

Edited by Madeleine van Strien-Chardonneau
and Marie-Christine Kok Escalle

French as Language of Intimacy in the Modern Age

Le français, langue de l'intime
à l'époque moderne et contemporaine

French as Language of Intimacy in the Modern Age

Languages and Culture in History

This series studies the role foreign languages have played in the creation of the linguistic and cultural heritage of Europe, both western and eastern, and at the individual, community, national or transnational level.

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et contemporaine*

*Edited by
Madeleine van Strien-Chardonneau and
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Introduction

*Marie-Christine Kok Escalle & Madeleine van Strien-Chardonneau**

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INTRODUCTION (ENGLISH VERSION)

If multilingualism has been a European reality since the Middle Ages, it has generated different practices both oral and written according to the period. The use of several languages by the same person assumed different forms according to the user, the listener/recipient, the object of the communication, the social and geographical context, and finally, the period. The spread of the French language is a fact in pre-modern Europe: Latin functioned as a *lingua franca* for learned communication, the language of reference for culture and science saw its role gradually become more limited and overtaken by French.¹ French co-existed with Germanic dialects in Northern Europe, with English in Medieval England,² with Russian in Eastern Europe, with Italian and Spanish in Southern Europe. Willem Frijhoff has talked of Francization in the context of the Netherlands,³ and Marc Fumaroli's choice of title,⁴ *Quand l'Europe parlait français* to describe

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1 Frijhoff, 'Multilingualism in the Dutch Golden Age: An Exploration': 'A modern language, French, was now slowly overturning classical Latin, previously the universal reference language for culture and science', 109-110.

2 Ailes & Putter, 'The French of Medieval England', 51-79.

3 Frijhoff, 'Verfransing? Franse taal en Nederlandse cultuur tot in de revolutietijd', 592-609.

4 In September 2011, the publication in English of Fumaroli's famous book caused discussions on the other side of the Atlantic: 'English reigns as master of the planet, of course, and French is only spoken by a small – and obscure – international élite of the old school', Caroline Weber, who teaches French literature at Columbia University, wrote in *The New York Times*, before going

the impact and spread of the French language during the Enlightenment is equally eloquent. In recent years the concept of *Francophonie européenne*⁵ has appeared in order to designate a phenomenon that was studied as early as the end of the nineteenth century.⁶ Most studies of the practice of French, in zones where it was neither the official nor the vernacular language and by people with different mother tongues, concern the teaching and public use of French, its social functions and its cultural dimension.

The works of Catherine Viollet and her research team⁷ on personal diaries have convinced us of the wealth of personal documents, diaries, and also letters, *alba amicorum*, and autobiographical texts written in French, often unpublished and kept in private and/or public archives in many European countries. It is documents of this type, produced within an autobiographical framework and concerning private or semi-private use, that make up the greater part of the corpus of texts studied in the contributions to this volume.

We will be asking questions about the use of French, as second language or foreign language, for written communication between friends/family, for writing in the first person, and favouring the appearance of personal, confidential writing. To what extent can we talk of the language of private life?

We shall first attempt to define this concept in the context of a historic Francophony with multiple practices of writing in French, a second language whose diverse and complementary functions brought to light in the analysis of specific examples, are the illustration of what Bourdieu has called the symbolic power of language.⁸ The chief interest of the case studies we present in this collection is that they highlight the issues related to the use of French outside France and between people whose first language is not French. Spread over time (the sixteenth century, the second half of the eighteenth century, the nineteenth and early twentieth centuries) and space (the Netherlands, Russia, Turkey and Italy), they identify this reality

on to praise Marc Fumaroli's book. The academician evokes 'a period where it was exactly the opposite (...), where the best minds of the Enlightenment were drawn into the French orbit by the incomparable sophistication of the art of living and the brio of intellectual exchanges in the Parisian salons' [<http://bibliobs.nouvelobs.com/essais/20110927.OBS1180/marc-fumaroli-les-lumieres-et-ta-s-ur.html>].

5 Gretchanaia, Stroeve & Viollet, *La francophonie européenne aux XVIII^e-XIX^e siècles. Perspectives littéraires, historiques et culturelles*. Rjéoutski, Argent & Offord, *European Francophonie*.

6 See 'Le français langue seconde, langue de la relation intime ...' in this book.

7 Gretchanaia & Viollet, *Si tu lis jamais ce journal...Diaristes russes francophones 1780-1854*.

8 Bourdieu, *Ce que parler veut dire, l'économie des échanges linguistiques; Langage et pouvoir symbolique*.

over a long period and in a broad geographical context, transversing Europe from North to South via the East. Further examples could be taken from the other side of the Mediterranean, in Egypt. Through their detail and varying contexts, these studies illustrate and give nuance to the necessary summaries, while suggesting new perspectives on the role of language in the historical development of national consciousness.

Over time, numerous publications have highlighted the use of French in non-French-speaking countries, as we can see for example in the publications of the SIHFLES (Société pour l'histoire du français langue étrangère ou seconde) and the studies mentioned earlier concerning Russia. However, our standpoint is relatively new, in considering the personal use of a second language, French, to express what is on the one hand, essentially private, and on the other, what could be taken as an identity position. The studies by Viollet, Offord *et al.* gave us something to compare and inspired us to explore more systematically this private writing in a language other than the author's native tongue. When combined with the historical perspective of the works like those already mentioned, the documents we study here broaden the socio-cultural and socio-linguistic approach considering French as *language of private life*. Our approach also provides a new dimension to the study of first-person literature, giving it a transnational dimension through the analysis of hitherto unpublished documents (studied little or not at all), written by authors of varying origins, nationalities and native tongues, but all using a common second language, French.

The French language is a means of expression which reveals as much about the person writing as the person reading the text, a virtual reader in the case of a diary, or the addressee in the case of correspondence. It also reveals what is said about love, the sense of literature, the copying of ready-made ideas and the construction of commonplaces concerning both education and society.

While French was a language of distinction for a long period, around the year 1600 it was, as Sophie Reinders points out, a language already used in the *alba amicorum* of the young girls of the Guelder and Overijssel nobility. This indicates the existence of a network of relations between members of a same social elite, with French serving as a vehicle for mottos such as, for example, 'Paix passe richesse', that is found on the pediment of a house on a canal in Amsterdam or 'l'homme propose et Dieu dispose', which suggests the remnants of the religious power that French had in the Netherlands in the sixteenth century with the arrival of the Walloons, French speaking Protestants, and refugees in the Southern provinces. A