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Derek Offord, Vladislav Rjéoutski, and Gesine Argent

The French Language in Russia

A Social, Political, Cultural,
and Literary History

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The French Language in Russia

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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Preface

The aim of this book is to offer a multi-faceted history of the French language in pre-revolutionary Russia, where French was widely used for many purposes by the eighteenth- and nineteenth-century elites. (By 'French language' we mean the exclusive standardized variety used by the upper classes, which came in the eighteenth century to be seen as the only correct form of expression, a variety synonymous with the French language itself.¹) This is a subject that has been rather little explored, at least until very recently, but we believe it has considerable importance. Study of it may afford insight into the social, political, cultural, and literary implications and effects of bilingualism in a speech community over a long period. The subject also has a bearing on some of the grand narratives of Russian thought and literature, particularly the prolonged debate about Russia's relationship with the world beyond its western borders during the ages of empire-building and nation-building. At the same time, we hope that a fuller description of Franco-Russian bilingualism than has yet been provided will enlarge understanding of francophonie as a pan-European phenomenon. On the broadest plane, the subject has significance in an age of unprecedented global connectivity, for it invites us to look beyond the experience of a single nation and the social groups and individuals within it in order to discover how languages and the cultures and narratives associated with them have been shared across national boundaries.

Two principal threads run through our book; each could be the subject of a discrete enquiry, difficult as it might be to separate them at certain points. The first thread concerns language practice, that is to say, the functions of French in Russia and the settings and media in which it was used over a long period from the early eighteenth century. We analyze, for example, the use of French as a spoken and written language in various social milieus (the court and sites of aristocratic sociability, such as the salon, the ball, and the Masonic lodge) and in some official domains, especially diplomacy. We also examine its use as a literary language, both for amateur and more professionalized forms of writing, and as a propagandistic or polemical language for the promotion of a positive image of Russia beyond the country's borders and for international debate about politics and grand questions of historical destiny. Language practice is the principal subject-matter of Chapters 3–7, which we arrange in a way that is primarily thematic rather

1 We use here the definition given by Lodge, *French*, 184.

than chronological. Although we make occasional reference to language use in the closing years of the imperial regime, at the end of the nineteenth century and the beginning of the twentieth, the period with which we are principally concerned in our consideration of language use ends in 1861. This was the year in which the government of Alexander II abolished serfdom, and the nobles' loss of their exclusive right to own serfs marked the end of an era: after this date the prestige of the noble estate, of which nobles' use of French among themselves was a symbolic indicator, was on the wane.

The second thread of our investigation concerns language attitudes and the ways in which language use is bound up with conceptions of identity of various sorts (especially social and national identity). It takes us into the realm of perceptions, imagined communities, mental landscapes, and notions of worth. We explore, for instance, the penetration of ideas about the qualities of languages and the implications of language choice into Russian cultural consciousness. We consider the degree to which attitudes towards Russians' adoption of the French language were entangled with conceptions of France and the French people. Equally important, we discuss the narratives that unfolded in Russia about the supposed perils of cosmopolitanism and bilingualism for an awakening nation. In Chapters 8–9, where such matters come to the fore, our account is largely chronological. It begins in earnest slightly later than our account of linguistic practice, around the middle of the eighteenth century. This was the time when French was establishing itself at court and as a prestige language among the Russian nobility and when Russians were beginning to reflect on their use of foreign languages and on the varieties and qualities of their own. It also ends a little later than our account of language use, because the great classical novelists, whose treatment of Franco-Russian bilingualism we examine in our final chapter, continued to regard the subject as highly relevant to their reflections on Russian destiny throughout the reign of Alexander II, who was assassinated in 1881.

However, before following the two main threads that we have described, on language use and language attitudes, we shall try to construct a conceptual framework for our investigation and to provide a rich historical context for it. The first of these tasks we address in our introduction. Here we begin by questioning some common assumptions about the Franco-Russian bilingualism and related biculturalism of the elite in imperial Russia (or rather their multilingualism and multiculturalism, for the eighteenth- and nineteenth-century elite was exposed to a range of European languages and cultures, not just to French language and culture) and about the effects of these phenomena. We then consider two notions which have strongly

affected discussion of Russian culture: first, that Russia is best defined by comparison with, or even in opposition to, an imagined 'West' and second, that Russian cultural development has been exceptional or even unique. Next, we approach the subject of language use and language debate from two different disciplinary angles: as a subject that is germane both to historians, especially historians interested in empire-building and nation-building, and to sociolinguists interested in bilingualism, diglossia, language choice, language loyalty, code-switching, purism, and so forth. The interdisciplinary nature of our investigation also necessitates some reflection on the extent to which the approaches of history and sociolinguistics can be reconciled and on other methodological matters. In the last section of the introduction, we discuss the nature, value, and shortcomings of some of the types of primary source we have used, especially prose fiction and drama.

The linguistic phenomena we bring to light and the twists and turns in both the threads of our narrative may be explained to a considerable extent by social and political developments and by external and internal cultural and intellectual stimuli. We therefore aim, in Chapter 1, to establish a broad historical background which can be borne in mind as we examine the functions of language and perceptions of the effects of language use in pre-revolutionary Russian society over some two centuries. After some discussion of the international spread of French from the age of Louis XIV, we briefly describe the empire-building undertaken by eighteenth-century Russian sovereigns, starting with Peter the Great, and the accompanying reforms initiated by Peter with a view to modernizing the state he inherited and westernizing its elite. We then outline the reception of foreign languages in eighteenth-century Russia, focusing on the adoption of French as a prestige language among the elite from around the middle of the century. A key social factor in Russia's modernization was the development of the nobility into a corporation of a western kind, conscious of its privileged status, and this process we survey in the fourth section of Chapter 1. After mention of historical events (the Napoleonic Wars and the so-called Decembrist Revolt of 1825) to which we shall often refer, we dwell on the emergence of the literary community and intelligentsia in the oppressive age of Nicholas I. These groups began in the second quarter of the nineteenth century to vie with the nobility for cultural and moral authority. They also played a key role in shaping a sense of national identity, fostering the development of the modern Russian literary language and at the same time promoting a predominantly negative attitude towards the Franco-Russian bilingualism of the nobility. If in Chapter 1 we provide more contextual information than might be required by specialists in the field of Russian history and culture,

it is because we are also aiming our work at readers who are students of other fields and disciplines.

Our account of language use and language attitudes is preceded by one further chapter, in which we describe and discuss both the place of French in the curriculum of public educational institutions (especially the Noble Land Cadet Corps) and the investment made by families in the Russian elite in teaching their children French, if they could afford to do so. This chapter (Chapter 2) is structured in such a way as to reveal the panoply of languages to which the upper stratum of the nobility was exposed, as well as the special place of French in their upbringing. We consider the ways in which French was learned, through tuition in private or public educational institutions or through the employment of foreign tutors in aristocratic households. We point out that the learning of it was supported by such means as study abroad, the Grand Tour, use of French as a medium for tuition in other subjects, and personal correspondence between parents and children. We emphasize that the symbolic value attached to command of the French language, and to the assimilation of the refined culture for which French was the primary international vehicle, is indicated by the material cost willingly incurred by nobles in order to ensure that their offspring acquired it.

Besides contextualizing the linguistic phenomena we examine, we attempt continually to relate language use, language choice, and language attitudes to such matters as upbringing, pedagogy, social and cultural practice, fashion, manners and morals, views of individual and national character, and the formation of social and national identity. At the same time, we resist casual generalizations about what we believe was a complex multilingual environment, where practice did not always conform to assumed rules of etiquette. We do not seek to explain all Russian cultural and linguistic developments as the outcome, in the final analysis, of autocratic initiative, even in eighteenth-century Russia; rather, we emphasize the initiative of families and individuals, especially in the upper nobility, as well as sovereigns and individuals who were in some sense agents of the state. We call into question the largely negative view of the effects of Franco-Russian bilingualism that tends to emerge from classical Russian literature and thought and that has been perpetuated by some works of scholarship. We also make reference to linguistic practice and debate in other European speech communities. We do this partly in order to give breadth to our account but also for two other reasons. First, we wish to cast doubt on the claims that are often made about the extent to which Russian cultural development has been exceptional or to which Russia's culture has been

imitative and its presence in European civilization marginal. Secondly, we wish to underline the transnational nature of the cultural history we are tracing, of which language use and language attitudes are a part.

Our approach, as we have said, is interdisciplinary. As our sub-title indicates, our investigation of linguistic matters takes us at various points into the fields of social, political, cultural, and literary history. On one level, we are examining the relationship between language choice and social class: the adoption of the French language for many purposes, especially for social differentiation, is an aspect of the history of the pre-revolutionary Russian nobility. Our work enters the terrain of political history to the extent that the use of French in Russia is also a manifestation of the westernizing and empire-building project of eighteenth-century sovereigns. Examination of the strong reactions to the use of French by the Russian nobility also leads us into the territory of students of national consciousness and nationalism of various kinds, political and cultural. At the same time, we are writing cultural history, since we are concerned with language use as an aspect of cultural behaviour and as subject-matter in debate about Russian culture. We are concerned with literary history too, for the corpus of writings produced by Russians in French, including writings that are 'literary' even if we use the term in the relatively narrow sense of *belles-lettres*, is quite substantial, and this corpus does constitute an element in Russian literature. We are working in the field of historical sociolinguistics as well, making use of categories (bilingualism, diglossia, standardization, code-switching, and so forth) employed by sociolinguists in their study of language as it functions in society and as it is affected by social and cultural factors. We hope that our attempt to integrate the approaches and findings of these various disciplines will make the book of use to readers beyond the community of Slavists and the community of French scholars who have an interest in the reception of French language and culture in lands outside France.

It would be prudent also to make clear at the outset what we are *not* aiming to achieve in this book. We do not attempt, for example, to provide a fully comprehensive account of the history of French in Russia, although we do try to survey the subject over a long time span, from the early eighteenth century to the second half of the nineteenth, and to view it from many angles. Admittedly, the abundance of pertinent primary sources might enable us to describe certain relevant matters, such as foreign-language teaching in educational institutions and language practice in the family circle, more evenly over the whole period covered by our study. However, constraints of time and space and the limitations of our own expertise preclude quite such thorough treatment. In any case, only a relatively small proportion of

the primary source material has yet been examined in a way that would allow us to draw copiously on secondary literature in a truly comprehensive survey. The chronological scope of our study is also more restricted than the sources available would no doubt allow it to be. For example, we have not extended the study into the last two decades of the nineteenth century and the first two decades of the twentieth (except insofar as we deal with language practice in the royal family in the reigns of Alexander III and Nicholas II). Nor have we attempted to write a systematic account of the influence of the French language on the Russian language, because we are concerned with the functioning of language in society rather than with linguistic processes such as syntactic change. The lexical influence of French on Russian also lies outside the fields of social and cultural history in which we are primarily interested, although it is of tangential interest to us insofar as it indicates the impact of French language and culture on pre-revolutionary Russian elite society, and indeed its enduring impact on Russian culture more broadly. What we have wanted to produce, in spite of these limitations, is a many-sided account of the role of linguistic matters in the social, political, cultural, and literary history of imperial Russia, striking a balance between broad overview and close study of particular cases and bringing together the approaches of both historical scholarship and historical sociolinguistics.

Of the many areas on the margins of our investigation that future students of the subject could usefully explore, we are inclined to mention five in particular. First, further research needs to be done on the use of French among the middling and lower provincial nobility and in non-noble classes, such as the merchants (*kupechestvo*) and the clergy (*dukhovenstvo*), in order to determine where the social boundaries lie beyond which French was not used or barely used. Secondly, scholars might profitably investigate the use of French in regions of the empire which were remote, peripheral, or inhabited by a majority of people who were not ethnically Russian, such as Siberia, the Caucasus, and the Ukraine.² The language practice of the Baltic German nobility, who played such an important role in the Russian administration after the absorption of the Baltic provinces in the empire in the eighteenth century, might prove especially illuminating. Thirdly, although we have briefly alluded to theological disputation in French,³ we have not dealt with such subjects as the conversion of Russian men and

2 We shall frequently use the term 'the Ukraine', in order to denote the pre-revolutionary region, as opposed to the modern, post-Soviet political entity.

3 See the last section of Chapter 7.

women to Catholicism, the influence of French abbés who for one reason or another resided in Russia, the presence of Jesuit schools there, or the impact of French writings about spiritual matters and of translations of ecclesiastical literature written in French.⁴ All of these subjects are potentially of interest from the point of view of linguistic history. Fourthly, official language policy in the Russian Empire deserves a separate study, for which one would need to undertake an exhaustive examination of legislation on linguistic matters in the complete collections of the empire's laws.⁵ Fifthly, we are sure that fruitful work could be done on the language practice of the Russian aristocracy in the twilight of its life and on multilingualism among the artistic community during the cultural resurgence of the Silver Age in the early twentieth century.

The large corpus of primary sources on which students of the history of French in Russia can draw includes unpublished documents of many kinds that survive in Russian archives in Moscow and St Petersburg, such as AVPRI, GARF, RGADA, RGALI, and RGIA, and in the Manuscript Departments of RGB and RNB (all these and other abbreviations are explained on pp. 29–31 below). We have also used material from GATO, the provincial archive in Tver', the capital of a province to the north-west of Moscow in which well-known noble families, including the Bakunins and Glinkas, owned estates. In these repositories, we find the personal archives of Francophone noble families, nobles' correspondence with friends and family members, personal diaries and notebooks, family albums, children's educational exercises, library catalogues, official reports and correspondence, and even reports written in French by agents of the Third Section, the secret police force set up by Nicholas I in 1826. Some archival holdings have long since been published, notably the forty-volume collection of correspondence and other documents relating to four generations of the powerful Vorontsov family. The very numerous relevant primary sources that have been published also include the personal correspondence of many other individuals, diaries and memoirs, and the impressions of foreign travellers of various nationalities who visited Russia in the period in which we are interested. Of the types of published primary source that we have used, works of Russian literature, such as plays, short prose fiction, and novels, are perhaps the most familiar to many readers. (This type of source, which often contains comment on language use, will come to the fore when we discuss perceptions, as opposed to usage, in Chapters 8–9.) Examples of each type of source may provide

4 We are grateful to Elena Grechanaia for identification of these lacunae.

5 i.e. *PSZ* (see list of abbreviations on p. 30).

useful insights, but each type may also pose particular problems, of which we take note at appropriate points in our account, especially in the last section of the introduction.

We also draw, of course, on the secondary literature in various disciplines in which scholars share an interest in language. In the fields of social, political, cultural, and literary history, we make use of work on European nobilities in general and the Russian nobility in particular, empires and nationalism, the cultural history of Russia, and classical Russian literature and thought. In the field of sociolinguistics, we have benefited from the extensive literature – which is not specific to any particular national situation – on such matters as multilingualism and bilingualism, diglossia, *lingua francas*, purism, standardization, and code-switching. We also make use of work on the general history of francophonie and the history of the Russian language. Since the range of fields in the humanities and social sciences into which we enter is quite large, and since we hope that our material will be of use to scholars from different backgrounds who may be familiar only with certain parts of the terrain we explore, we include references to some standard works in several footnotes.

We have also made use, of course, of the existing corpus of scholarly literature on the history of French cultural influence in Russia and, in particular, the history of Russians' use of French. Interest in the use of French in Russia was already apparent in the nineteenth century, as attested by a bibliography published in the 1870s, when French was still highly visible in the Russian linguistic landscape.⁶ However, it was in the Soviet period that the subject first began to attract serious scholarly attention, not least because the attempts made during that period to deepen knowledge of Russian literature in the age of Pushkin encouraged its investigation.⁷ The main focus of Soviet studies of the subject was the use of French as a medium of literary activity and a language of sociability among Russian writers of the first half of the nineteenth century. Work was also done in the Soviet and immediate post-Soviet periods on Russians' bilingual correspondence,

6 Ghennady (1874). As a rule, we shall provide in our footnotes the surname of each author whose work we cite together with a short title of the publication in question. We also give the author's forename if, in the book as a whole, we cite work by different authors who have the same surname (e.g. Smith). In notes of a bibliographical nature (e.g. the notes in this section of our preface), for the sake of economy, we generally provide only the surname of the author and the date of publication of the work in question. Full details of all works cited in the footnotes can be found in the bibliography at the end of the volume.

7 See especially the works in our bibliography by Lozinskij (1925), Vinogradov (1938), Paperno (1975), Paperno and Lotman (1975), Galland (1976), and Zhane (1978).

especially the correspondence of men of the nineteenth-century literary world.⁸ In addition, there are several works dating back to the 1970s and 1980s on the circulation of French books in Russia and their presence in Russian libraries and book collections.⁹ Interest in Russian francophonie continued after the end of the Soviet era¹⁰ and has been reinforced by a new curiosity about the culture of the eighteenth- and nineteenth-century Russian elite. Much of the recent scholarship on these subjects, like the scholarship of the Soviet era that we have cited, has continued to be devoted primarily to the phenomenon of Russian Francophone writings. A particularly notable post-Soviet contribution to this part of the field has been made by Elena Grechanaia, in the form of a monograph and two edited volumes produced in collaboration with other scholars.¹¹ Personal correspondence has continued to receive attention, for example in Michelle Lamarche Marrese's important reexamination of Iurii Lotman's conception of noble identity and in Wladimir Berelowitch's recent discussion of Russian francophonie.¹² There have also been important new contributions in this area of the field by Rodolphe Baudin, on Radishchev's letters from exile, and Jessica Tipton, on the correspondence of several generations of the Vorontsov family.¹³ Particular aspects of the social and cultural history of Russian francophonie that have attracted relatively recent attention include the development of a Russian Francophone press¹⁴ and translation from French into Russian.¹⁵ A number of studies have been devoted to 'French education' among the Russian nobility as well.¹⁶ Finally, there has been new work in the twenty-first century in another field directly related to our study, namely the linguistic influence of French on Russian, particularly lexical borrowings from French.¹⁷

8 See Paperno (1975), Maimina (1981), and Ekaterina Dmitrieva (1994).

9 e.g. Luppov (1976 and 1986), Khoteev (1986), Somov (1986), and Kopanev (1988); see also the more recent study by Berelowitch (2006).

10 e.g. Lotman and Rozentsveig (1994).

11 See Grechanaia (2010; translated into French and with an augmented set of texts, 2012), Gretchanaia and Viollet (2008), and Gretchanaia *et al.* (2012).

12 Lamarche Marrese (2010); Berelowitch (2015). We explain our use of the term 'francophonie' in our introduction: see p. 41, n. 25 below.

13 Baudin (2015) and Tipton (2015 and 2017). Tipton was attached as an AHRC-funded post-graduate to the research team described in the following paragraph and in 2017 was awarded a doctorate for her work on the Vorontsovs.

14 e.g. Speranskaia (2005, 2008, and 2013), Rjéoutski (2010 and 2013), Somov (2011), and Rjéoutski and Speranskaia (2014).

15 e.g. Levin (1995–1996), Barenbaum (2006), and Maier (2008).

16 Berelowitch (1993), Rjéoutski (2005), Chudinov (2010), Rjéoutski and Tchoudinov (2013), and a further large volume edited by Rjéoutski (2016).

17 Gabdreeva (2001) and May Smith (2006); see also the earlier study by Hüttl-Worth (1963).

This book will also build, finally, on all the work already done by its three co-authors and other scholars within the framework of a project generously funded by the Arts and Humanities Research Council (AHRC) of the United Kingdom on ‘The History of the French Language in Russia’ over the academic years 2011–2015. Publication of findings arising out of this project began with the appearance on the project website of the first set of documents in a corpus of primary sources that may be used for the study of Franco-Russian bilingualism, together with essays of our own on each text or group of texts.¹⁸ The broad purposes of this corpus were, first, to begin to classify the functions of French in imperial Russia and the domains in which French was used and, secondly, to explore possible approaches to and interpretations of Franco-Russian bilingualism.

We then edited a cluster of four articles on ‘French Language Acquisition in Imperial Russia’, two of them written by Rjéoutski and one each by Ekaterina Kislova and Sergei Vlasov. This cluster appeared in the opening number of an online American journal, *Vivliofika*.¹⁹ These articles investigate foreign-language education in Russian public and private educational institutions and noble families and examine the values and ambitions that pedagogical policy and practice reflect. Our broader aim here was to illustrate the importance of educational matters in the study of the socio-cultural history of language.

Next, we explored the incidence and importance of francophonie as a social and cultural phenomenon in seventeenth-, eighteenth-, and nineteenth-century Europe.²⁰ In collaboration with sixteen other European scholars,²¹ we surveyed aspects of historical francophonie in a dozen European language communities outside France (Bohemia, medieval England, Holland, Italy, Piedmont, Poland, Prussia, the Romanian Lands, Spain, Sweden, and Turkey as well as Russia) and published our findings in a volume containing twelve single-authored or co-authored chapters. We ourselves contributed an introductory chapter, in which we attempted

18 The website can be found at <http://www.bristol.ac.uk/arts/research/french-in-russia/>. Electronic sources on which we have drawn were last accessed by us on 26 October 2017, and references to them were accurate at that date.

19 *Vivliofika*, no. 1 (2013); available at <http://vivliofika.library.duke.edu/issue/view/2231/showToc>.

20 Rjéoutski *et al.* (eds), *European Francophonie* (2014).

21 Marianne Ailes, Manuela Böhm, Silviano Carrasco, Ivo Cerman, Laurent Mignon, Ileana Mihaila, Nadia Minerva, Katarzyna Napierała, Luis Pablo-Nuñez, Margareta Östman, Ad Putter, Begoña Regueiro-Salgado, Alda Rossebastiano, Amelia Sanz-Cabrerizo, Maciej Serwański, and Madeleine Van Strien-Chardonneau. The chapter on Russia in *European Francophonie* was written by Derek Offord.

to provide a framework for the study of the use of French as a European lingua franca and prestige language in the seventeenth, eighteenth, and nineteenth centuries. Peter Burke contributed a further preliminary chapter, on diglossia in early modern Europe. We thus used this volume to provide a pan-European context for our study of the language situation in imperial Russia and a background against which to test claims about the exceptional nature of Russian linguistic and cultural development.

We used a further cluster of articles, on 'Foreign Language Use in Russia during the Long Eighteenth Century', to underline the complexity of the language situation there.²² The cluster contains articles by Kristine Dahmen, Wladimir Berelowitch, and Anthony Cross on the presence of German, French, and English respectively in eighteenth-century Russia. In our co-authored introductory article,²³ we pointed to the strong presence of German alongside French and invoked the concept of value in the linguistic market-place to explain the pre-eminence of French in the eyes of the elite. We also explored the link between foreign-language acquisition, on the one hand, and Russia's westernization and empire-building, on the other – a link to which we return in this book in our introduction and in Chapter 1.

Together with Lara Ryazanova-Clarke, we have also edited two volumes on the co-existence of French and Russian in imperial Russia and the interplay between them.²⁴ Volume 1 of this pair concerns language use among the Russian elite and Volume 2 concerns language attitudes and identity. Here, in collaboration with a further 20 scholars²⁵ from France, Russia, and the United States, as well as the UK, and in many chapters of our own, we undertake a more detailed examination of language use and language attitudes among the eighteenth- and nineteenth-century Russian elites. Our main aims in these volumes were twofold. First, we sought to determine who spoke or wrote French in pre-revolutionary Russia and in what domains and for what purposes. Second, we wished to consider the effects that the use of French had on Russian society, culture, and thought during the period when Russian

22 See *The Russian Review*, 74:1 (2015).

23 Available online, on open access, at <http://onlinelibrary.wiley.com/doi/10.1111/russ.10752/abstract>.

24 Offord *et al.*, *French and Russian in Imperial Russia* (2015).

25 i.e. (as their names appear in these volumes) Rodolphe Baudin, Xénia Borderioux, Stephen Bruce, Carole Chapin, Sara Dickinson, Nina Dmitrieva, Georges Dulac, G.M. Hamburg, D. Brian Kim, Iuliia Klimenko, Sergei Klimenko, Michelle Lamarche Marrese, Emilie Murphy, Liubov Sapchenko, Svetlana Skomorokhova, Vladimir Somov, Natalia Speranskaia, Jessica Tipton, Olga Vassilieva-Codognet, and Victor Zhivov.

writers were beginning to create a rich secular literature and to construct a distinctive identity for their nation.

In the present volume, we synthesize and enlarge upon all this preparatory work in order to provide both an overarching account of an important aspect of Russian social, political, cultural, and literary history and an examination of a striking example of bilingualism and its effects. We hope that in the process we shall also have offered fresh insight into the interaction of languages and cultures across national boundaries and proof of the intricate connections of Europe's cultures.

Derek Offord, Vladislav Rjéoutski, Gesine Argent
October 2017

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The AHRC grant also enabled us to make three research trips to archives and libraries in Russia and to organize a series of academic events and collaborations that laid extensive and solid foundations for this monograph. The first of these events was a seminar series on European francophonie in 2012, to which scholars from the Czech Republic, Germany, Italy, the Netherlands, Romania, and Sweden, as well as scholars from the UK, contributed. (Fuller details of this seminar series are available on our project website at <http://www.bristol.ac.uk/arts/research/french-in-russia/seminars/>.) The second event was an international conference, attended by some 60 delegates, that was held in Bristol in September 2012 to mark the bicentenary of Napoleon's invasion of Russia and the rapid repulsion of the invading force. (Details of this conference too can be found on our website, at <http://www.bristol.ac.uk/arts/research/french-in-russia/conference/>.) The third event was a colloquium in Bristol, attended by some 35 delegates, at the end of June 2015, which concluded with a three-hour round table which we found highly rewarding. In our preface we describe the various publications that have arisen out of this AHRC project and the ways in which they have prepared the ground for the present volume. We also acknowledge in our preface the contributions made to these publications by many individual scholars (42 *in toto*) from outside the project team.

Secondly, we thank the German Historical Institute in Moscow (DHI Moskau) and its Director, Professor Nikolaus Katzer, for the award of a

generous subvention which has enabled us to publish such a long book at a price which should not be prohibitive. This subvention has made it possible for us to explore our relatively unploughed terrain widely and without seeming, we hope, only to scrape the surface of it.

Next, we warmly thank the members of an advisory board of scholars whose expertise in a range of fields (Russian history and literature, European history, language as a subject of investigation for historians, and sociolinguistics) helped to guide us. This board, for whose meetings the AHRC also made provision, consisted of Robert Evans (University of Oxford), Rosalind Marsh (University of Bath), David Saunders (University of Newcastle), Andreas Schönle (Queen Mary, London), Wim Vandebussche (Vrije Universiteit, Brussels), and Andrei Zorin (University of Oxford). We have also benefited from the fact that Professors Schönle and Zorin have concurrently been leading another project, 'The Creation of a Europeanized Elite in Russia: Public Role and Subjective Self', supported by the Leverhulme Trust, and that they kindly invited Derek Offord to participate in symposia associated with that project in Oxford and London in 2013 and 2014 respectively.

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Among Bristol colleagues, or former Bristol colleagues, Nils Langer deserves a special mention for his advice on all sociolinguistic matters, for his organization of numerous academic events that were of relevance to us, and for his introductions to other scholars working in the broad field of sociolinguistics. We are grateful also to Mair Parry, for advice on sociolinguistic matters and on the history of Italian in particular. Thanks are due to other Bristol colleagues (Stephen Gray, Gilles Couzin, Markland Starkie, and Chris Bailey) for advice at one time or another about IT matters and construction and maintenance of the website that has helped us to clarify our views and manage the project out of which this book has grown. We are also grateful to the staff of the German Historical Institute in Moscow (DHI Moskau) and particularly to the librarians Larisa Kondrat'eva and Viktoria Silwanowich.

We are indebted too to the staff of the many archives and libraries, including their manuscript departments, in which we have carried out the research on which this volume is based. We should like to mention the following in particular: the Archive of the Foreign Policy of the Russian Empire, the Archive of the Russian Academy of Sciences (St Petersburg Branch), the Institute of Russian Literature of the Russian Academy of Sciences, the Library of the Russian Academy of Sciences, the National Library of France, the Russian National Library, the Russian State Archive of Ancient Documents, the Russian State Historical Archive, the Russian State Military History Archive, the Russian State Naval Archive, the Russian State Library, the State Archive of the Russian Federation, and the Tver' Province State Archive.

We also thank the Russian National Library, the Russian State Library, and the David Rumsey Map Collection for their permission to use the illustrations listed on p. 9 above.

Finally, we thank many individuals working for publishers and editing academic journals whose prompt, efficient, and courteous oversight has enabled us to publish volumes and articles arising out of our project sooner than we might reasonably have expected when we began work on it in 2011. These individuals include Laurel Plapp of Peter Lang, Laura Williamson and Richard Strachan of Edinburgh University Press, Eve Lewin and Kurt

Schulz, as well as Michael Gorham, at *The Russian Review*, Ernest Zitser at *Vivliofika*, and of course Louise Visser and Jaap Wagenaar of Amsterdam University Press, who have overseen the production of this book. Last but by no means least, we thank Willem Frijhoff and Karène Sanchez for affording us the opportunity to publish this volume in the series they are editing on 'Languages and Culture in History' and for their advice on its conception and design. The role that foreign languages have played in the creation of the European cultural heritage; the diffusion of foreign languages and the demand for them; the historical relationship between languages in a given cultural context; the relationship of languages to identities of various kinds; the history of pedagogical practices: these topics, on which these scholars in the Netherlands have focused their series, provide a framework within which our present volume, we hope readers will agree, is ideally accommodated.

Presentation of dates, transliteration, and other editorial practices

Old style and new style dates

In 1700, Peter the Great adopted the Julian calendar, which was eleven days behind the Gregorian calendar in the eighteenth century, twelve days behind in the nineteenth, and thirteen days behind in the twentieth. Thus, the Bol'shevik Revolution took place in Russia on 25 October 1917 according to the Julian calendar but on 7 November according to the Gregorian calendar. The Gregorian calendar, which western states had begun to adopt in preference to the Julian calendar in 1582, was not adopted in Russia until 1918. In this book, dates are given in the Old Style (OS; i.e. according to the Julian calendar) when the event to which reference is made took place in pre-revolutionary Russia and in the New Style (NS; i.e. according to the Gregorian calendar) when it took place outside Russia.

Transliteration

We have followed the Library of Congress system of transliteration in our text, footnotes, and bibliography. Thus, Russian surnames ending in *-скиѹ* have been rendered with *-skii* (e.g. as in Dostoevskii) rather than with the commonly used English form *-sky* (as in Dostoevsky). The Russian soft sign has been transliterated with an apostrophe, e.g. Gogol', and the letter *ѣ* as *e*. Russian words printed in pre-revolutionary orthography (e.g. the titles of pre-revolutionary periodicals) have been transliterated from their modernized form. In the footnotes and bibliography, alongside the transliterated name of an author who has published a cited item in Russian, we have in a few instances added, in square brackets, the form of the surname by which the scholar in question may be known from publications in languages other than Russian (e.g. Chudinov [Tchoudinov]).

Forms of forenames

We have preferred transliterated Russian forenames (e.g. Aleksandr, Ekaterina, Petr) to translated ones (Alexander, Catherine, Peter), except in the case of monarchs and other members of the Russian royal family (e.g. Alexander I, Catherine II, Peter the Great), who are familiar to the English-speaking reader from the translated form of their names. We also use the form Alexander in the cases of the poet Pushkin and the thinker Herzen.

Translation of quotations in foreign languages

In many cases (for example, when authors are merely quoting an opinion or a statement about a fact), we have not considered it necessary to retain the language of the original and the words we quote have been translated into English. However, in many other cases (for instance, when language usage is being illustrated), it has seemed important to retain the original. In these cases, we have also provided a translation in the text, either within the quotation itself or separately after or beneath it, as seemed most appropriate.

Translation of titles

In the text of each chapter, titles of novels, plays, poems, articles, chapters, and other works written in a language other than English have been translated, but the original title (in transliterated form, if it was in Russian) is given, with only a few exceptions, in a footnote. In the references, as a rule, only the original foreign-language title is given.

Titles of periodicals

Titles of periodicals, on the other hand, are presented in the text of a chapter in their original or transliterated form. A translation of the title is also given, in brackets, when the periodical is first mentioned.

Dates of works

Dates given in parentheses after the titles of works mentioned in the text are, unless otherwise stated, the date of first publication, not the date of composition.

Ellipses

Where we have omitted material from a quotation or title we have indicated the omission by use of three dots in square brackets (i.e. [...]), in order to distinguish this type of ellipsis from suspension points (i.e. ...) used by an author who is being quoted.

Punctuation

We have anglicized the punctuation in quotations and titles in French; for example, we have removed the space that normally precedes a colon or semi-colon in French.

Abbreviations used in the notes

Names of archives, libraries, and research institutions

AN	Akademiia nauk (Academy of Sciences)
AVPRI	Arkhiv vneshnei politiki Rossiiskoi imperii (Archive of the Foreign Policy of the Russian Empire), Moscow
BAN (BRAN)	Biblioteka (Rossiiskoi) Akademii nauk (Library of the (Russian) Academy of Sciences), St Petersburg
BNF	Bibliothèque nationale de France (National Library of France), Paris
GARF	Gosudarstvennyi arkhiv Rossiiskoi Federatsii (State Archive of the Russian Federation), Moscow
GATO	Gosudarstvennyi arkhiv Tverskoi oblasti (Tver' Province State Archive), Tver'
IMLI	Institut mirovoi literatury im. A.M. Gor'kogo (Gorkii Institute of World Literature), Moscow
IRLI	Institut russkoi literatury (Pushkinskii Dom) Rossiiskoi akademii nauk (Institute of Russian Literature (Pushkin House) of the Russian Academy of Sciences), St Petersburg
RAN	Rossiiskaia akademiia nauk (Russian Academy of Sciences)
RGA VMF	Rossiiskii gosudarstvennyi arkhiv VoЕННО-Morskogo Flota (Russian State Naval Archive), St Petersburg
RGADA	Rossiiskii gosudarstvennyi arkhiv drevnikh aktov (Russian State Archive of Ancient Documents), Moscow
RGB	Rossiiskaia gosudarstvennaia biblioteka (Russian State Library), Moscow
RGIA	Rossiiskii gosudarstvennyi istoricheskii arkhiv (Russian State Historical Archive), St Petersburg
RGVIA	Rossiiskii gosudarstvennyi voenno-istoricheskii arkhiv (Russian State Military History Archive), Moscow
RNB	Rossiiskaia natsional'naia biblioteka (Russian National Library), St Petersburg
SPbF ARAN	S.-Peterburgskii filial Arkhiva Rossiiskoi akademii nauk (St Petersburg Branch, Archive of the Russian Academy of Sciences)
SPb II RAN	Sankt-Peterburgskii institut istorii Rossiiskoi akademii nauk (St Petersburg Institute of History at the Russian Academy of Sciences)

Titles of books and journals

AKV	<i>Arkhiv kniazia Vorontsova</i> (Archive of Prince Vorontsov)
IP	<i>Izbrannye proizvedeniia</i> (Selected Works)
IS	<i>Izbrannye sochineniia</i> (Selected Works)

KA	<i>Krasnyi arkhiv</i> (Red Archive)
LN	<i>Literaturnoe nasledstvo</i> (Literary Heritage)
PSS	<i>Polnoe sobranie sochinenii</i> (Complete Works)
PSSP	<i>Polnoe sobranie sochinenii i pisem</i> (Complete Works and Letters)
PSZ	<i>Polnoe sobranie zakonov Rossiiskoi Imperii</i> (Complete Collection of the Laws of the Russian Empire)
RA	<i>Russkii arkhiv</i> (Russian Archive)
RBS	<i>Russkii biograficheskii slovar'</i> (Russian Biographical Dictionary)
RR	<i>The Russian Review</i>
RS	<i>Russkaia starina</i> (Russian Antiquity)
SEER	<i>The Slavonic and East European Review</i>
SRC	<i>The Semiotics of Russian Culture</i> , by Lotman and Uspenskij
SS	<i>Sobranie sochinenii</i> (Collected Works)
SSPAS	[Shishkov], <i>Sobranie sochinenii i perevodov admirala Shishkova</i> (Collected Works and Translations of Admiral Shishkov)

Other abbreviations

bk	book
Bulg.	Bulgarian
CS	Church Slavonic
d.	<i>delo</i> (dossier, file)
Dan.	Danish
ed. khr.	<i>edinita khraneniia</i> (individual file)
Erm.	Hermitage (in St Petersburg)
f.	<i>fond</i> (collection)
fol.	folio (<i>list</i> in Russian)
Fr.	French
Ger.	German
It.	Italian
k.	<i>karton</i> (box)
Lat.	Latin
op.	<i>opis'</i> (inventory)
Pol.	Polish
pt	part
r.	<i>razriad</i> = <i>fond</i>
Russ.	Russian
sect.	section
SIRIO	<i>Sbornik imperatorskogo russkogo istoricheskogo obshchestva</i> (Collected Papers of the Imperial Russian Historical Society)
Sp.	Spanish

Swed.	Swedish
Tat.	Tatar
trans.	translated <i>or</i> translation
Turk.	Turkish
v.	<i>verso</i>

The Romanovs

Michael (1596–1645; reigned 1613–1645)

Alexis (son of Tsar Michael, 1629–1676; reigned 1645–1676)

Sof'ia (daughter of Tsar Alexis, 1657–1704; regent 1682–1689)

Peter I (i.e. Peter the Great; 1672–1725, son of Tsar Alexis; co-ruler with his half-brother Ivan V, 1689–1696, and sole ruler 1696–1725)

Catherine I (1684–1727, Lithuanian peasant taken captive by the Russians in 1702; consort of Peter I from 1703 and his wife from 1712; reigned 1725–1727)

Peter II (1715–1730, infant son of Prince Alexis (1690–1718), who was the son of Peter I; reigned 1727–1730)

Anna (1693–1740, daughter of Ivan V; reigned 1730–1740)

Elizabeth (1709–1761, daughter of Peter I and Catherine I; reigned 1741–1761)

Peter III (1728–1762, son of a daughter of Peter I and of Charles Frederick, Duke of Holstein-Gottorp; reigned December 1761 (OS) or January 1762 (NS)–July 1762)

Catherine II (i.e. Catherine the Great; German princess who came to Russia as fiancée of the future Peter III, 1729–1796; reigned 1762–1796)

Paul (1754–1801, son of Peter III and Catherine II; reigned 1796–1801)

Alexander I (1777–1825, son of Paul; reigned 1801–1825)

Nicholas I (1796–1855, son of Paul and younger brother of Alexander I; reigned 1825–1855)

Alexander II (1818–1881, son of Nicholas I; reigned 1855–1881)

Alexander III (1845–1894, son of Alexander II; reigned 1881–1894)

Nicholas II (1868–1918, son of Alexander III; reigned 1894–1917)

Introduction

Conventional assumptions about Franco-Russian bilingualism

Until recently, the role of the French language in Russia had attracted rather little attention, save for passing remarks in works on Russian social or cultural history.¹ No doubt this oversight is due partly to the fact that social and cultural historians and western students of the Russian nobility, on the whole, have not been specialists in linguistic matters and partly also to the fact that historical sociolinguistics is a relatively new academic discipline. In those works of scholarship (especially Anglophone scholarship) in which Franco-Russian bilingualism has been mentioned, moreover, we find a number of generalizations which have tended to reinforce the predominantly negative discourse on the subject in classical Russian thought and literature. Since we shall want to probe the accuracy of these generalizations in the course of our account of language use and language debate in eighteenth- and nineteenth-century Russia, we begin by briefly considering three of them. In the process, we shall introduce some of the key questions that our discussion of language use and language attitudes will need to explore and some of the larger narratives about Russian culture within which that discussion needs to be situated. We shall also rehearse some of the arguments against the commonplaces that are encountered.

First, the Russian nobility (which was numerically very small as a proportion of the population of the empire²) is commonly treated as a clearly defined and undifferentiated class which uniformly adopted French in preference to Russian.³ The impression may even be given that all nobles, over a long period, spoke French all the time, and in all situations, to any compatriots who could understand that language. Thus it is claimed – to take an extreme example – that ‘for over two hundred years French (and,

1 For a brief outline of the literature on the subject, see our preface above (pp. 18–19).

2 The number of persons of both sexes who were entitled to noble status in the years before the emancipation of the serfs in 1861 was only just over 600,000 (Seton-Watson, *The Russian Empire, 1801–1917*, 240). The number of landowners at this period was just over 100,000 (Roosevelt, *Life on the Russian Country Estate*, 233). The population of the Russian Empire was a little over 70 million.

3 See, e.g., Charques, *A Short History of Russia*, 102, where it is stated that Catherine’s reign ‘confirmed the sway of French fashion at the higher levels of society and the adoption by the Russian nobility of the language of France in place of their own’. Similarly, Evtuhov and Stites assert, with respect to the age of Paul, that ‘the Russian nobility used the French language in preference to Russian’ (*A History of Russia*, 7).

to a smaller extent, English) replaced Russian as the principal language spoken by the vast majority of Russian aristocracy, landed gentry, government officials, army officers, and wealthy merchants'.⁴ Even a leading sociolinguist, whose authoritative work we frequently cite, is drawn into a large generalization covering a vague time-span: 'In some countries it is expected that educated persons will have knowledge of another language. This is probably true for most of the European countries, and was even more dramatically so earlier in countries like pre-Revolution Russia, where French was the language of polite, cultured individuals'.⁵ We shall want to guard in this study against unqualified statements about the replacement of Russian by French throughout the noble estate⁶ over a long period and to consider instead questions of the following sort. Was the language practice of nobles really uniform or very similar throughout the estate? What effect did educational opportunity have on Russians' language use? Did nobles invariably use French for communication, oral and written, with other Francophone individuals? Did French predominate among Francophone groups in all linguistic domains? If preference for French was so marked, how could Russia's magnificent literature in the vernacular have come into being, unless nobles had no part in its creation? (In fact, of course, they played the leading role.) Was language use the same in all parts of the empire? Did it remain constant over the whole period between the adoption of western culture and habits by the nobility in the early eighteenth century and the collapse of the Russian Empire, and the consequent destruction of the nobility, in 1917? What place did language practice have in conceptions of social and national identity, and indeed conceptions of gender differences? How and why did such conceptions change over the long period we examine? We begin to address such questions in Chapter 1 by noting the economic and social differentiation within the noble estate and the consequent variations in opportunity to acquire a command of foreign languages.

Secondly, alongside assertions about the universality of competency in French among the eighteenth- and nineteenth-century nobility we commonly find equally confident assertions about their lack of competency in Russian, at least up until the Napoleonic invasion of Russia in 1812. Their mother tongue (if that is how Russian can be classified in this case)

4 Sutherland, *The Princess of Siberia*, 24.

5 Romaine, *Bilingualism*, 31. It is the implication of the last part of this statement that seems most problematic, as if all such individuals altogether abandoned Russian.

6 We shall generally use the term 'estate' (Russ. *soslovie*) to denote this social stratum, rather than the term 'class', which is anachronistic, at least with regard to the eighteenth-century nobility.

is frequently described as a language that nobles never learned, or never properly learned, or did learn in infancy but then more or less forgot. 'By the time of Catherine's death in 1796', Catherine Merridale writes, 'her court conversed and wrote in French' and *Russia*, no longer content 'to be an apprentice to Europe (especially as France dissolved into revolution after 1789)', would 'attempt to revert to its roots, reviving a half-forgotten language'.⁷ 'The use of the French language by the Russian aristocracy was often pushed to the point of forgetting their own', Hugh Seton-Watson affirms in his valuable history of the nineteenth-century Russian Empire.⁸ There are indeed grounds for such assertions in Russian memoirs, such as those of Princess Dashkova who, recalling her childhood in the Vorontsov family in the mid-eighteenth century, claimed not only that members of the younger generation in her family circle spoke French as their first language but also that they spoke Russian very imperfectly.⁹ The presumption of noble incompetency in Russian is sustained by entertaining anecdotes. For example, when the sixteen-year-old Nikita Murav'ev ran off without his mother's permission to fight against Napoleon's invading army in 1812, it is said, he was detained by peasants who suspected him of being a French spy because his Russian was so poor.¹⁰

In its extreme form, the presumption of nobles' ignorance of Russian is hard to maintain, for the evidence will not support it. Thus Orlando Figes, while he speaks at one point in his panoramic cultural history of Russia about a pronounced and persistent prejudice against study of Russian among the nineteenth-century aristocracy, in a subsequent passage points to a fashion after 1812 for the sons of nobles to read and write Russian and a growing trend in the provinces for women as well as men to learn it.¹¹ Common sense, moreover, may lead scholars to admit that noblemen who served in the army, at least in the lower officer ranks, must have needed some minimal competence in Russian in order to command Russian peasant soldiers, and that nobles also needed Russian in order to manage the overwhelmingly monolingual inhabitants on their rural estates.¹² This admission about men's practical linguistic needs may partly account for the belief, which has been convincingly contested by Michelle Lamarche Marrese in an article

7 Merridale, *Red Fortress*, 197–198. Our italics, to emphasize the scale of the generalization.

8 Seton-Watson, *The Russian Empire*, 40.

9 Dashkova, *Zapiski*, 38, 42. For further examples, see Roosevelt, *Life on the Russian Country Estate*, 181.

10 Lotman 'Russkaia literatura na frantsuzskom iazyke', 353–354.

11 Figes, *Natasha's Dance*, 56, 102–103.

12 Sutherland, *The Princess of Siberia*, 172–173.

to which all students of French-speaking in Russia are greatly indebted,¹³ that noble women found it even more difficult than noble men to express themselves in Russian. This belief is most famously inscribed in *Eugene Onegin* (1823–1831), in which Alexander Pushkin's heroine seems to exemplify incompetence in the vernacular. Foreseeing a problem and wishing to save the honour of his native land, the narrator confides to his readers, he will have to translate Tat'iana's letter to Onegin, for

She knew Russian poorly, / Didn't read our journals / And expressed herself with difficulty / In her native language, / And so, she wrote in French... / What is to be done! I repeat anew, / As yet, a lady's love / Has not declared itself in Russian, / As yet, our proud language / Has not become attuned to postal prose. / [...] Is it not true that those sweet subjects, / To whom, for your sins, / You secretly wrote verses, / To whom you gave up your heart, / Did they not all, weak in Russian / And finding it hard to use, / Mangle it so sweetly, / So that a foreign language / Turned in their mouths into a native one?¹⁴

And yet, paradoxically, Tat'iana also illustrates another commonplace that became entrenched in Russian fiction in the age of Nicholas I: in contrast to feckless westernized males, Russian woman had a sound moral compass and was rooted in native soil. Tat'iana herself was 'Russian in soul, although she herself knew not why', Pushkin asserted.¹⁵ Dostoevskii would agree, exalting Pushkin's favourite female creation as an authentic embodiment of the national spirit.¹⁶

With respect to some aristocrats, assertions about their mastery of French and the low level of their competency in Russian are no doubt entirely true. It is likely that such assertions hold good, for example, in the case of some (but by no means all) nobles who spent much of their childhood abroad. Prince Dmitrii Golitsyn, who had been brought up in Paris in the last years of the French *ancien régime*, initially had to have his speeches translated from French into Russian when he was appointed governor of Moscow in

13 Lamarche Marrese, "'The Poetics of Everyday Behavior" Revisited'.

14 *Evgenii Onegin*, Canto 3, Stanzas 26–27, in Pushkin, *PSS*, vol. 6, 63. Of course, a woman's inability to use Russian for the purpose of writing a letter to a noble suitor does not necessarily indicate that she was unable to use it for any other purpose!

15 *Ibidem*, 98 (Canto 5, Stanza 4). As Priscilla Roosevelt points out, Tat'iana believes in popular superstitions (Roosevelt, *Life on the Russian Country Estate*, 277).

16 On the speech in which Dostoevskii expressed this view, see the last section of Chapter 9 below.

1820.¹⁷ In general, though, there are grounds for treating claims about the extent of noble ignorance of Russian, as well as claims about the universal predominance of French among the nobility, with caution. For one thing, we need to take a sceptical attitude towards our primary sources. There may be reasons, for example, why memoirists wished to create the impression that they had almost no knowledge of their native language in childhood. For instance, Dashkova, who edited the first dictionary produced by the Russian Academy, may have wanted to show what sterling efforts she had made as an adult to master Russian. Most importantly, we should bear in mind the typical language-learning process in a noble household which could afford to employ a resident Francophone tutor or tutors or to send a child to a Francophone *pension*. As Priscilla Roosevelt explains in her monumental study of life on the Russian country estate, the arrival in the household of

the first governess or tutor marked the cultural divide between a Russian infancy and a European adulthood [...] In some families social contact with serf servants was prohibited after infancy, lest the young noble's language and habits be corrupted by peasant speech, prejudices, and superstitions. The inability of most tutors to speak Russian forced young nobles to learn a foreign language in short order. One memoirist notes that as a small child she rarely saw her older sister and even more rarely spoke with her, chiefly because the sister spoke only French or English, while the younger children spoke only Russian.¹⁸

However intense the exposure of noble children to foreign languages during their childhood and adolescence, though, the fact remains that the language they mainly heard in infancy, in the years when they were learning to speak, was Russian. Most noblemen and noblewomen, Roosevelt affirms, 'were raised almost exclusively by wet nurses and nannies, who periodically presented them to their parents'.¹⁹ These nannies were domestic serfs, like the Arina Rodionovna whom Alexander Pushkin fondly remembered, and the nobleman's or noblewoman's bond with them might be very close: Anna Kern, to whom Pushkin addressed a famous love poem, once cuttingly remarked that she did not think Pushkin ever really loved anyone other than his nanny and, later on, his sister.²⁰ To overlook this fact is to make it

17 Roosevelt, *Life on the Russian Country Estate*, 216.

18 *Ibidem*, 181.

19 *Ibidem*, 180.

20 Kern, 'Vospominaniia Anny Petrovny Kern', 233.

seem miraculous that Pushkin, having been brought up in a Francophone noble household and educated in the elite lycée at Tsarskoe selo, could turn out to be a figure of cardinal importance in the creation of the Russian literary language. Likewise, any account of noble language practice has to accommodate the fact that the perfectly Francophone Fedor Rostopchin, who for some six years was educated in a house separate from the manor house on his parents' estate so that he would be compelled to communicate exclusively in French with his resident French tutor, was nonetheless able to produce rabble-rousing leaflets in demotic Russian when he served as governor of Moscow in 1812.²¹

There is no doubt that many noble families attached greater weight to the development of their children's ability to use French than to having them taught Russian, especially in the late eighteenth and early nineteenth centuries when Russian francophonie was in full bloom. At the same time, it seems questionable whether so many Russian nobles found it so difficult in adulthood to use Russian as some sources, both primary and secondary, would have us believe, as if command of one language precluded proficiency in another. The impression that nobles were unable to develop and retain functional competence in Russian as well as French may rest on a rigorous notion of competence as perfect command in all domains or on a polarized, black-and-white view of linguistic competence (either one knows a language or one does not) to which few sociolinguists would subscribe. What we seem in fact to be dealing with in the Russian case is a phenomenon common to bilinguals: individuals attain different levels of competence in the languages spoken, or they perform unevenly in the languages in different linguistic domains. Disparagement of nobles' competence in Russian, moreover, may sometimes be due to disdain for the variety of Russian acquired by the nobleman or noblewoman in infancy through exposure to domestic serfs, peasants, and their children, that is to say, Russian 'of the careless and ill-educated kind, culled from the servants'.²² However, we should beware of falling into the trap of classifying users of Russian as incompetent on the grounds that they did not master a register deemed appropriate in refined society. Indeed, Nikolai Karamzin – an important man of letters to whom we shall often refer – doubted at the beginning of the nineteenth century whether such

21 On Rostopchin's bilingualism, see Vigel', *Zapiski*, vol. 2, 13–14, and Offord and Rjéoutski, 'French in the Nineteenth-Century Russian Salon'. For his leaflets in Russian, see Kartavov, *Rostopchinskie afishi*. Some of these leaflets may be viewed online at <http://www.museum.ru/1812/Library/Rostopchin/index.html>. They are briefly discussed in Martin, *Romantics, Reformers, Reactionaries*, 126–129.

22 Sutherland, *The Princess of Siberia*, 24.

a register had even come into being in Russian, since ‘in the best houses’, where such society was to be found, people tended to use French for polite conversation.²³ In general, we are inclined to think that existing discussion of the subject of Franco-Russian bilingualism has been marred by failure to consider linguistic competence as relative rather than absolute, a matter of degree,²⁴ and even by intrusion of the assumption common in monolingual communities that bilingualism, even if we define it as functional competence in more than one language, is an unusual phenomenon.

A third common assertion, or set of assertions, about Franco-Russian bilingualism concerns the supposedly detrimental effects of Russian francophonie²⁵ and the cultural westernization of the elite of which francophonie was symptomatic. These effects, it has often been thought, might be felt at national, social, and personal level.

The practice of speaking French, Russian writers began to suggest as far back as the mid-eighteenth century, weakened the sense of national identity, or indicated that a sense of national solidarity that should have been experienced was lacking. It even seemed to call into question nobles’ allegiance to their native land or, worse still, to undermine their loyalty. The strong association of language use with nationhood in the minds of late eighteenth- and nineteenth-century Russian writers and thinkers will repeatedly be apparent in this volume, especially in our account of language attitudes in the last two chapters. We emphasize here at the outset that this association depends upon a rigid and ethnic view of national identity, according to which peoples have fixed, primordial attributes. (We shall shortly attempt to describe the cultural background against which this view arose.) We also emphasize the highly problematic nature of the assumption that foreign-language use implies acceptance of the cultural values and political beliefs with which a language may be associated at a particular time.²⁶

At the social level too, francophonie could be perceived as a negative phenomenon, on the grounds that it was divisive. By using a foreign language,

23 ‘Otchego v Rossii malo avtorskikh talantov?’, in Karamzin, *IS*, vol. 2, 185, translated as ‘Why is there so Little Writing Talent in Russia?’, in Karamzin, *Selected Prose*, 193.

24 We return to this subject in the penultimate section of this introduction, on methodological matters.

25 We use the term ‘francophonie’ in this book to denote the historical phenomenon of the use of French from the seventeenth century onwards in European countries, including Russia, where it was not the mother tongue. On meanings of the term, see Argent *et al.*, ‘European Francophonie and a Framework for its Study’, especially 4–10.

26 We consider the question of allegiance in the section on eighteenth-century comic drama in Chapter 8 below.

it was supposed, the nobility separated itself from the rest of the ethnically Russian population of the empire, especially the bulk of the peasantry, and allegedly fractured a nation which, in the opinion of Romantic conservatives, had been whole and organic before the elite was westernized in the eighteenth century.²⁷ Now, francophonie was indeed a means of social differentiation, insofar as it served as a marker of nobility, and in our account of Russians' use of French we shall dwell on this function of it.²⁸ However, the notion that nobles' habit of using French among themselves was damaging to social cohesion perhaps depends to some extent on the assumption – which, we have already suggested, should be treated with caution – that nobles had little or no competence in Russian and were therefore incapable of communicating with monolingual compatriots from lower social strata. In general, we are inclined to keep an open mind about the extent to which it was nobles' adoption of a western style of life and their foreign-language use (as opposed to their right to own serfs) that separated them from the common people. Roosevelt usefully draws our attention, moreover, to beliefs and customs that brought lord and peasant together on the rural estate. The Orthodox religion, its rituals, celebration of its festivals, and even popular superstition, she points out, all provided a basis for shared experience and common identity.²⁹ After all, not all late eighteenth-century nobles were Voltaireans, nor were all nineteenth-century noblemen and noblewomen atheists or agnostics: many promoted church-building, gave hospitality to pilgrims and protection to beggars and holy men, or collected icons.³⁰ In any case, memoirs and belles-lettres, as Mary Cavender points out, 'testify to the commonsense notion that interaction between serfs and landlords was ongoing and multifaceted'.³¹

At the personal level, it has been claimed, cultural westernization also had a detrimental psychological effect: Europeanized Russians were divided

27 Such conservatives included the Slavophiles (on whom see the following section of this introduction) and Native-Soil Conservatives, including Dostoevskii (on whom see the last section of Chapter 9).

28 On the use of French as a marker of social identity, see especially the fourth section of Chapter 4.

29 See Roosevelt, *Life on the Russian Country Estate*, Chapter 10, especially 271.

30 *Ibidem*, 273. The view that the Orthodox religion was 'remote from the consciousness of the Westernized elites' is expressed in, e.g., Figs, *Natasha's Dance*, 57. For an example of a Francophone nobleman who did his best to support Orthodox piety among his serfs through church-building, see the case of the mid-nineteenth-century nobleman Valerii Levashev that is described in Offord and Rjéoutski, 'Family Correspondence in the Russian Nobility', n. 9, on the basis of a document in GARF, f. 279, op. 1, d. 69, fol. 23. The peasants seem to have been disappointingly indifferent to Levashev's efforts, though!

31 Cavender, 'Provincial Nobles, Elite History, and the Imagination of Everyday Life', 47.

selves with a 'split identity',³² and the elite was consequently disoriented and enervated. Isolated by an education based on the study of western languages and culture and on the acquisition of French in particular, the eighteenth-century Russian nobleman³³ – so this argument runs – absorbed ideas that could not be put into practice in Russia and thus became alienated from his own country.³⁴ He turned into a 'superfluous man' *avant la lettre*, that is to say a prototype of those disillusioned, nomadic characters, lacking a moral compass or the ability to form enduring relationships, such as Evgenii Onegin in Pushkin's novel in verse, Mikhail Lermontov's Pechorin in *A Hero of Our Time*, and Ivan Turgenev's eponymous hero Rudin, who abound in the fiction of the age of Nicholas I and beyond. Attempts have even been made – in American biographies of the mid-nineteenth-century metaphysical poet and nationalist polemicist Fedor Tiutchev, for instance – to explain the personal crisis that biculturalism and bilingualism supposedly induced in the Russian nobleman in psychoanalytic terms, as a morbid 'psychosocial dislocation'.³⁵ It is worth noting in passing at this point that the argument that Russian francophonie had pernicious effects on nobles' psychological wellbeing – and indeed the argument that it had pernicious effects at other levels too – rests to a considerable extent on evidence in *literary* sources. We shall consider at the end of this introduction how we should approach such sources and what weight we should attach to them.

It will be seen that at all the levels we have identified – national, social, and personal – the argument about the detrimental effects of biculturalism and bilingualism hinges on anxiety about fracture and loss of imagined wholeness. It is also apparent that the principal cause of the schism perceived in the collective or individual personality is the westernization of the elite, of which foreign-language use was symptomatic. In order fully to understand the perceptions we have outlined about the national, social, and personal problems to which Russian francophonie allegedly contributed we therefore need to see them in the larger discourse about the relationship of Russia

32 Figes, *Natasha's Dance*, 44–45.

33 We say 'nobleman' here because it is men with whom the exponents of this idea are primarily concerned.

34 The main proponent of this thesis in western scholarship is Marc Raeff, in his *Origins of the Russian Intelligentsia*. The thesis has often been well summarized in subsequent scholarship, e.g. by Hartley, *A Social History of the Russian Empire*, 129, and, most recently, Schönle and Zorin, 'Introduction', in *The Europeanized Elite in Russia*, ed. by Schönle, Zorin, and Evstratov, 10–11. The fullest arguments against it are advanced in Confino, 'Groupes sociaux et mentalités collectives en Russie' and *idem*, 'Histoire et psychologie'.

35 Conant, *The Political Poetry and Ideology of F.I. Tiutchev*, 9–10; see also Gregg, *Fedor Tiutchev*, especially 106, 145–146.

to Europe in which they were entwined. Was Russia a part of Europe or something *sui generis*? Should Russia orient itself towards the West or, on the contrary, look within its own history and tradition for principles that would guide its further development? These questions provided the framework within which classical³⁶ Russian thinkers and writers reflected on their national identity, the role and predicament of the Russian elite, the nature of the Russian common people, and the national mission and destiny. We shall need at the same time to refer to the influential corpus of scholarship on Russian cultural history produced in the late Soviet period by Iurii Lotman, in which the relationship of Russian culture to European culture was also a central preoccupation. Lotman had more than most other scholars to say about late eighteenth- and early nineteenth-century Russian francophonie and his analysis of this subject is often cited as received wisdom by other scholars who touch upon it.³⁷

Russia and 'the West', and the two Russias

Russian self-definition since the early modern era has depended heavily on the notion of opposition between 'Russia' and 'Europe' (*Evropa*) or 'the West' (*Zapad*). And yet, the nature of the concepts being compared is very hard to define. Even the unit 'Russia' in this opposition is less tangible than it may seem at first sight, for it could refer to a multi-ethnic empire or to the Russophone nation (concepts which we discuss in the following section). The notion 'the West', however, is more elusive still. It belongs as much to a mental landscape as to a geographical one. Although it theoretically included everything European beyond Russia's western border, in truth nineteenth-century Russian writers, when they railed against 'the West', were generally thinking of the more advanced European powers (Britain, France, and the German states). Besides, the notion is too capacious to mean anything very precise. It assumes that a group of nations³⁸ divided for many centuries by religious and cultural heterogeneity, political rivalries,

36 We use this term in this work to describe the writers of what is generally considered the golden age of Russian literature, which spans the period from about 1820 to 1880, when a literary canon was created and the question of Russia's relationship to Europe was explicitly and exhaustively examined.

37 See especially Lotman, 'Russkaia literatura na frantsuzskom iazyke'.

38 Or peoples, empires, polities, or other entities, for the term 'nation', which for convenience we use loosely here, may be anachronistic before the early modern period. We consider nationhood and language in the following section of this introduction.

military conflicts, and linguistic diversity in fact had a uniformity, coherence, and solidarity which were not always obvious to the inhabitants of those nations themselves. Its use as a term denoting a conceptual antipode to 'Russia' implies, furthermore, that differences among the western nations pale into insignificance by comparison with the collective difference of those nations from Russia. Nonetheless, for all its weaknesses, the idea that Russia can be best defined by contrasting it with an imagined 'West' has repeatedly been employed as a tool for examination of Russia's history, religion, economic development, national character,³⁹ and – in ways we explore in this book – language use.

The classic formulation of the contrast between Russia and the West – but by no means its first formulation, let alone its last – is to be found in the 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',⁴⁰ believed that Russia needed to adopt European ideas and practices in order to overcome its backwardness.⁴¹ The Westernizers therefore admired Peter the Great as a ruler who had greatly accelerated the modernization of Russia in the early eighteenth century.⁴² 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 as the ruler who was responsible more than any other for

39 On the use of this device in eighteenth- and nineteenth-century Russian travel-writing, for example, see Offord, *Journeys to a Graveyard*.

40 Billington, *The Icon and the Axe*, 379.

41 In fact, the concept of 'Westernism' is not nearly so coherent as this conventional description suggests. For one thing, the group of individuals commonly cited as representatives of the Westernist camp is too large and the intellectual and political complexion of the individuals in it too diverse for us to be able to form any precise idea of the Westernizers' thinking. Moreover, the thinkers often cited as outstanding representatives of Westernism, especially Vissarion Belinskii and Alexander Herzen, in fact expressed views, at one time or another, that were critical of the very bases of the Western economic, social, and political life that they are supposed to have admired. Nor were positions in the Westernizer-Slavophile controversy as polarized as they might appear at first sight. Writers working within the Westernist tradition were in most cases nationalists of a sort themselves, while Slavophiles owed their ideas to a considerable extent to the European counter-current to the Enlightenment, particularly to ideas associated with the pan-European Romantic movement and emanating from the late eighteenth- and early nineteenth-century German world.

42 On Peter's reforms, see the second section of Chapter 1. We shall refer to Peter in this book as Peter the Great rather than as Peter I, as twentieth- and twenty-first century Russian scholars have often preferred to call him.

the introduction of alien habits and for the consequent disruption of the organic community that had existed, they imagined, in Muscovy before the eighteenth century. Whereas western peoples, the Slavophiles believed, were aggressive, materialistic, and individualistic, the Russian people – or more precisely, the Russian peasantry, who most truly represented Russian character – were peace-loving and uninterested in private property, sharing the land and other resources available to them and abiding by the decisions of their village commune, the *obshchina* or *mir*. At bottom, Slavophilism reveals an understandable concern about loss of spirituality and the weakening of a sense of social cohesion in the prosaic age of urbanization, industrialization, and thriving commerce, whose effects Russian nobles could observe when they travelled abroad. At the same time, it shows very well where a strongly contrastive approach to national identity may lead: that is to say, to sweeping generalizations, crude stereotyping about peoples, and chauvinism.⁴³

The Russia-West paradigm that was used to view relations with the external world was replicated in the notion of two contrasting Russias, which helped to shape views on the internal realm.⁴⁴ On the one hand, there was 'Russian Europe', consisting of the court and the noble elite which in the eighteenth century adopted western cultural practices, dress, and fashion and learned foreign languages. This Russia was minute as a percentage of the population of the empire and yet omnipotent politically. It was concentrated in St Petersburg and Moscow, at least during the winter months; its outposts were the manor houses on the isolated estates owned by the nobility that were scattered over Russia's agricultural heartland. On the other hand, there was the much more populous indigenous Russia, including the peasant mass clothed in traditional Russian costume. While this non-noble Russia was present in all towns and cities, it was located mainly in the countryside, in innumerable villages, which a peasant might never leave unless he was recruited for military service. This other Russia provided the labour force (which remained enserfed up until 1861) on the lands owned by nobles, the Church, and the state. Even in the mid-nineteenth century, it remained more or less untouched by western culture and, being untutored and illiterate,

43 There is a large literature on Slavophilism. For general studies, see especially the works by Riasanovsky (1965) and Walicki (1975) that are cited in our bibliography. Useful monographs on individual Slavophiles include Gleason's study of Ivan Kireevskii (1972), Christoff's separate volumes on each of Khomiakov, Ivan Kireevskii, Konstantin Aksakov, and Samarin (1961, 1972, 1982, and 1991 respectively), and Lukashevich's biography of Ivan Aksakov (1965). Rabow-Edling (2006) places the Slavophiles in the tradition of cultural (as opposed to political) nationalism.

44 For a classic exposition of this notion, see Dostoevskii's *Winter Notes on Summer Impressions* (*Zimnie zametki o letnikh vpechatleniakh*), in Dostoevskii, *PSS*, vol. 5, 46–98, especially 50–64.

had no knowledge of the major Western European languages which served as the vehicles for that culture. The Prussian aristocrat Baron August von Haxthausen, who travelled widely in Russia in 1843–1844, noted the gulf between these two Russias. ‘The cultivated class in Russia’, he wrote,

is separated from the people by a much wider chasm than in the rest of Europe, where modes of living, riches and poverty stand far apart, but not the different spheres of ideas, as in Russia; in other parts of Europe the people have the same cultivation as the educated classes, only in a less degree. In Russia the higher classes have assumed that of the West, while the people have an ancient national cultivation, not much developed, and of a lower grade in comparison to the other.⁴⁵

The tendency to depict Russia itself as containing two different cultural worlds, like the tendency to characterize Russia by comparison with the West, was strong in classical Russian writing. It has also been sustained in scholarship: the juxtaposition of ‘the European culture of the upper classes and the Russian culture of the peasantry’, for example, is the organizing principle of *Natasha’s Dance*, the book by Figes to which we have already referred, one of the major studies of Russian cultural history written in recent times.⁴⁶

The contrastive approach to the task of defining Russian identity that is encountered in classical Russian writing has been sustained and reinforced in cultural historiography over the last fifty years by the work of Lotman, with regard both to the relationship between Russian culture and European culture and to the inner dynamic of Russian culture itself. The influence of Lotman and his followers on western students of Russian culture no doubt explains the persistence of some of the commonplaces about the detrimental effects of Franco-Russian bilingualism that we have identified. Three notions that run through Lotman’s writings about Russian culture have particular importance from our point of view, and we illustrate them here by reference to some much-cited texts in his corpus.⁴⁷

45 Haxthausen, however, did not consider bilingualism a factor that contributed to the gulf he observed. On the contrary, language and religion were the only things, he thought, that nobles and peasants had in common. See Haxthausen, *The Russian Empire*, vol. 2, 185–186.

46 Figes, *Natasha’s Dance*, xxvii.

47 Most of these texts are available in English in Lotman and Uspenskij, *SRC*. Lotman’s writings contain many arresting insights to which we shall refer, but they are also highly schematic and make generalized assertions about culture that are based on slender evidence. For discussion of Lotman’s reliance on evidence of a literary nature, see the last section of this introduction.

First, Russian culture, according to Lotman, is 'constructed on a marked dualism'. Before the nineteenth century, for example, life beyond the grave was divided conceptually into heaven and hell: unlike Catholicism, Orthodoxy placed no 'neutral axiological zone', no purgatory, between life on Earth and the afterlife. This dualism extended to concepts unconnected with the Church, so that Russia lacked social institutions of the sort found in the medieval West which were 'neither "holy" nor "sinful", neither "state-organized" nor "anti-state"'. The absence of a neutral sphere in Russia led to a conception of the new as total eschatological change, 'the radical rejection of the preceding stage', rather than a continuation of the past. Thus, Russian culture, which is seen with hindsight to have an underlying structure and unity over various historical periods, is perceived by its bearers as embodying an 'opposition' between what is old (*starina*) and what is new (*novizna*).⁴⁸ The experience of the alien as revolutionary novelty was acutely felt, Lotman argues, by the noble elite on whom Peter the Great and subsequent sovereigns imposed a western way of life in the eighteenth century, with profoundly unsettling effects. The introduction of foreign-language use in eighteenth-century Russia may easily be seen as a manifestation of the 'binary opposition' between tradition and innovation, Russia and the West.

Secondly, Lotman argued, the everyday behaviour of the post-Petrine nobleman was a sort of improvised theatrical performance. Underlying this claim is a distinction that Lotman makes between two modes of human behaviour. On the one hand, there is the ordinary, everyday, customary, social behaviour that seems normal and natural to a group. On the other hand, we have all types of ceremonial and non-practical behaviour, which may be connected with the state, worship, or ritual and which is perceived by native speakers of a culture (for culture is in a sense a language) as having an independent meaning. The first type of behaviour is learned by bearers of the culture unconsciously, like a native language, through immersion. The second type is consciously learned like a foreign language, with the aid of rules and grammar books. (The distinction also applies literally to language itself, of course.) The result of the adoption of a foreign style of life by the Russian nobility from the early eighteenth century on was that members of the elite came to resemble foreigners in their own country. Even when fully grown up, the Russian nobleman

had to learn artificially what people usually absorb in early childhood by direct experience. The alien and the foreign became the norm. To

48 Lotman, 'The Role of Dual Models in the Dynamics of Russian Culture (up to the End of the Eighteenth Century)', in *SRC*, 4–5.

conduct oneself correctly was to behave like a foreigner, that is to act in an artificial way according to the norms of an alien life-style. It was as necessary to bear these norms in mind as it was to know the rules of a foreign language in order to be able to use it properly.⁴⁹

At the same time, Lotman argues somewhat tortuously, the nobleman was obliged to retain the outsider's 'alien' – that is to say, Russian – attitude to the forms of a European life-style that he was assimilating, 'for in order to be constantly aware of one's own behavior as foreign, it was necessary *not to be* a foreigner'. 'One did not have to become a foreigner, but to behave *like* one'. Thus, it became 'entirely typical of the Russian eighteenth century that the members of the nobility passed their lives as if they were plays, conceiving themselves to be forever on the stage', while the common people 'tended to look on the gentry as if they were mummers, whom they watched from the pit.'⁵⁰

Andreas Schönle and Andrei Zorin, in the important essay with which they introduce their recent volume on the sense of self that developed among the Europeanized elite in Russia from roughly 1762 to 1825, emphasize that Lotman's theory, while it 'aptly captures the overall theatrical dimension of courtly culture', does not accurately characterize noble life or – what is particularly important for our purposes – noble language use. The theory

rests on a dichotomy between the public sphere and private life that was not intrinsic to the life of the nobility, in which the public and the private were thoroughly intertwined [...] Furthermore, [it] implies the notorious antinomy between authenticity and artificiality, which not only mischaracterizes the nobility's ambivalent structures of feeling and identity but also fails to account for the syncretic and, with regard to the choice of language, macaronic ways in which the nobility often discharged the codes of behavior and modes of expression fashionable in its times.⁵¹

Lotman's claims that Russian culture is characterized by dualism and that westernized Russian nobles acted out a role as foreigners in their own land support a third notion: the Russian cultural case, and indeed Russian

49 *Idem*, 'The Poetics of Everyday Behavior', in *SRC*, 232–233.

50 *Ibidem*, 233–234; Lotman's italics. Lotman cites no evidence for his claim about what 'the people' thought or felt; indeed there may be none that is reliable.

51 Schönle and Zorin, 'Introduction', 12. In general, Schönle, Zorin, and Evstratov resist stark 'binary mapping' of the sort 'which emphasized the ideological, cultural, and behavioral divide between a thoroughly Westernized elite and the uneducated mass of people over which it ruled' (*ibidem*, 10).

history, are exceptional, or in fact unique.⁵² This notion, which was implicit or explicit in much classical Russian writing about the relationship of Russia and the West and which we shall encounter at several points in this book, has also had wide currency in scholarship.⁵³ Strictly speaking, the assertion that Russia is unique cannot be gainsaid, for it is a statement of the obvious. After all, which state, region, city, or community, cannot be described as unique, especially if – like Russia – it has an ethnically diverse population and is culturally heterogeneous?⁵⁴ Thus to be unique, in one sense, is not to be exceptional at all. Claims about Russian uniqueness or exceptionality may seem particularly weak, though, if it cannot be convincingly shown that those features that are held to be peculiar to Russian culture really are altogether lacking, or at least are poorly developed, in all the other cultures that are being used as comparators. In fact, many of Lotman's observations about Russian culture, on close scrutiny, might seem equally applicable, *mutatis mutandis*, to the culture of other societies, in Europe or on other continents, either during the period in which Lotman was interested or at other times. May we not find evidence in other cultures too, for instance, to suggest that what is perceived as 'new' in fact has roots in the distant past?⁵⁵ Surely the most superficial study of the toponymy of other countries would make it impossible to uphold Lotman's view that the frequency of the word 'new' in Russian place names demonstrates some distinctive tendency on the part of Russians to perceive their history 'as a chain of explosions'.⁵⁶ What evidence do we have to suggest that the conscious or subconscious ability of Russian nobles to convey meaning in a variety of behavioural registers⁵⁷ distinguished them from their peers in other lands? Did the Russian nobility really differ from other elites when they theatricalized their behaviour or performed their adopted roles before social groups which

52 Lotman additionally claims, incidentally, that a semiotic study of Russian culture has exceptional value as a means of proving the validity of his theory of culture: see 'Authors' Introduction', in *SRC*, xiii–xiv, and Lotman, 'Theses towards a Semiotics of Russian Culture'.

53 'For very many Western historians of Russia', Dominic Lieven has observed, 'the country's uniqueness is a matter of faith. For many Russians it is the core of true religion itself' (Lieven, *Empire*, x). Among western historians on whose work we draw in this book, Geoffrey Hosking in particular leans towards the exceptionalist viewpoint, both on account of the late and stunted development of civic nationhood in Russia and on account of the comprehensive adoption by the elite of a culture initially alien to it (Hosking, *Russia*, 156–157).

54 On heterogeneity as a characteristic of Russian culture, see 'Authors' Introduction', in *SRC*, xiii.

55 Lotman, 'The Role of Dual Models', in *SRC*, 7.

56 *Idem*, 'Theses towards a Semiotics of Russian Culture'.

57 *Idem*, 'The Poetics of Everyday Behavior', in *SRC*, 235.

were enthralled? Again, Lotman rightly points out that the imported forms of everyday behaviour and the foreign languages which came into use among the Russian nobility 'altered their function in this process'. That is to say, everyday norms which were native and natural in the West acquired high prestige when they were transferred to Russia, where they increased a person's social standing, as did knowledge of foreign languages.⁵⁸ Surely, though, Russia is not the only place in which the function of imported behaviour or language has altered in some way. Might one not expect to find such alteration wherever and whenever an elite group seeks to differentiate itself socially by use of a foreign language?

Lotman, then, seems to overlook or understate the possibility that what he regards as the most significant characteristics of Russian culture might also be observed elsewhere.⁵⁹ In fact, international comparisons of the behaviour of aristocratic elites in multi-ethnic empires and studies of elite bilingualism and of the development of cultural nationalism among oppressed or backward groups in nineteenth-century Europe do yield plentiful evidence of Russia's affinities with its western neighbours, as well as its differences from them, as we shall hope to show in our account of Russian francophonie and attitudes towards it. We shall therefore not interpret the evidence of Franco-Russian bilingualism that we offer in this book as corroboration of a Lotmanesque grand thesis about the exceptional nature of Russian culture, although we do not deny, of course, that every European example of historical francophonie is bound to have certain local features.⁶⁰

⁵⁸ *Ibidem*, 233.

⁵⁹ Lotman may even categorically rule out the possibility that such phenomena could occur in the West. He confidently asserts, for example, that the 'subjective "Europeanization" of [Russian] life had *nothing in common with any real convergence with Western life-style*, and at the same time *definitely* influenced the setting-up of anti-Christian forms such as had *certainly never been possible in the life of the Christian West*' ('The Role of Dual Models', in *SRC*, 21; our italics).

⁶⁰ With regard to the argument about the degree to which Russia is an exceptional case, Schönle and Zorin perhaps take a more Lotmanesque approach than we do, albeit with reservations. Comparing Russia with Japan and Turkey, which also undertook rapid military, economic, technological, and cultural modernization (in the late nineteenth century and early twentieth century respectively) as a means of saving their countries from 'annihilation' by their more advanced rivals, they argue that only in Russia did the state consider the top-down Europeanization of a narrow upper class 'more effective, and often safer, than fundamental social and political transformation'. The most distinctive feature of Russia's experience of modernization and westernization, which also separated it from the Japanese and Turkish models, was that whereas 'Meiji, Ottoman, and later Kemalist elites aspired to *become similar* to Europeans or sometimes Americans, Russian nobles strove to *be* Europeans' (cf., though, Lotman's contention, which we quoted above, that Russians strove to *behave like* Europeans). Moreover, the mental outlook and subjective sense of self of the Europeanized elite which emerged in Russia, and

In sum, our examination of language use and language debate in imperial Russia will take account of the framework within which Russian writers and thinkers have discussed Russian culture and national identity, a framework which sets Russia against an imagined external entity, 'the West', and replicates this opposition within Russia itself. We shall also engage with the insistent narrative in Russian literature and in scholarship on it, to which Lotman made a particularly influential contribution, about the degree to which Russian culture is exceptional, not least by virtue of the existence of this tension within it. Our description of foreign-language use in imperial Russia is bound to reveal the intensity of the Russian encounter with foreign cultures. However, we shall not uncritically accept the emphasis on Russia's alterity which characterizes much discussion of this phenomenon or endorse the view that linguistic and cultural diversity was as damaging on several levels as it has often been thought to be. We shall pay attention to what Russia had in common with other European nations as well as what made it different, to what is transnational as well as what is nationally exclusive. In the broadest perspective, we shall hope to show how francophonie in imperial Russia contributed to the flow of information both from the west of the continent to its east and from east to west, with the result that Russia became more closely integrated into European society and cultural space, despite the emphasis in Russian language debate on difference, division, and disorientation.

Empire, nation, and language

We need to locate our investigation of Franco-Russian bilingualism not only in the discourse about the relationship of Russia to the West that runs through Russian literature and thought and in the corpus of scholarship on that discourse but also in the scholarly discussion of empires and nations that has taken place over the last three or four decades. Pre-revolutionary Russia, after all, was both a multi-ethnic empire and a nation. The very existence of more than one Russian term for 'Russian' attests to difference between state and nation, between a political entity and a cultural community, as Geoffrey Hosking in particular has pointed out.⁶¹ (The adjectives

which is the primary focus of the volume assembled by Schönle, Zorin, and Evstratov, 'was a completely new and distinctive social, cultural, anthropological, and psychological phenomenon' (Schönle and Zorin, 'Introduction', 2–5; Schönle's and Zorin's italics). The problem of proving exceptionality, when one cannot be omniscient, recurs.

61 Hosking, *Russia*, xix.

that describe the imperial state and the nation are *rossiiskii* and *russkii* respectively.) It will be important for us to bear this distinction in mind and to consider at various points in our work which entity, empire or nation, was the prime focus of the loyalty of the elite and what bearing that loyalty had on linguistic consciousness.

An empire, Dominic Lieven contends, is 'by definition large and diverse'. It is both 'a very great power that has left its mark on the international relations of an era' and 'a polity that rules over wide territories and many peoples, since the management of space and multi-ethnicity is one of the great perennial dilemmas of empire'.⁶² In the Russian case, the aristocracy was itself multi-ethnic – a fact that is graphically illustrated in the Hermitage in St Petersburg, in the gallery of portraits of over 300 high-ranking officers who served in the campaigns of 1812–1814 against Napoleon.⁶³ Moreover, in embracing the empire-building project of Russia's eighteenth- and nineteenth-century rulers, and therefore accepting the western culture that Russian sovereigns encouraged it to adopt, this aristocracy took on an identity that was to some extent supra-ethnic. The foreign-language use that conspicuously demonstrated this cosmopolitan identity, and command of French in particular, gave Russia sudden international cultural status, to be sure; it also served as a means of unifying the Russian elite, aiding the assimilation of its diverse ethnic and cultural elements, and conferring prestige on them at the same time.

There is no clear agreement as to whether, in the Russian case, the process of empire-building, which began in the mid-sixteenth century under Ivan IV (Ivan the Terrible), preceded or followed the making of the Russian nation. In Hosking's view, empire-building consumed so many resources and so much effort that it 'impeded the formation of a nation', that is to say '*Rossia* obstructed the flowering of *Rus* [the old Russian nation]'.⁶⁴ Lieven, on the other hand, takes the view that while Russia was not a nation in the modern sense in the 1550s, nevertheless it was a great deal nearer to being one than most of the other peoples of Europe at that time, by virtue of the 'unity of dynasty, church and people which the term "Holy Russia" implied'.⁶⁵ Gary Hamburg also traces a conception of Russian identity that amounted to 'a prototype of integral nationhood' at least as far back as the mid-sixteenth century.⁶⁶ However, irrespective of the extent to which a sense of nationhood

62 Lieven, *Empire*, 89, xiv.

63 See Offord *et al.*, 'Introduction', in *French and Russian in Imperial Russia*, vol. 1, 1–2.

64 Hosking, *Russia*, xix.

65 Lieven, *Empire*, 253.

66 Hamburg, *Russia's Path toward Enlightenment*, 76.

had developed in sixteenth- and seventeenth-century Muscovy, account had to be taken in the eighteenth and nineteenth centuries of the new relationship that Russia had with her western neighbours after the reforms introduced by Peter the Great. This reconsideration of nationhood was bound to be affected, especially in the nineteenth century, by the rise of the nation as the most effective focus for political loyalty. It was also affected, of course, by the European ideas and currents to which Russia was now being exposed, including the development of nationalism.

The sense of solidarity that underlies national consciousness may be derived from many sources, such as a shared religion or attachment to a type of political institution or way of life. Very often it is associated with language.⁶⁷ The embryonic nationhood of Muscovy already had a linguistic element, as well as religious, territorial, and political elements. *The Book of Royal Degrees*, Hamburg points out, stressed the mortal threat posed to Rus' by a godless 'foreign tribe', the Tatars, who used a 'language unknown' and 'forced the alien tongues of barbarians' on the clan or people (*rod*) who inhabited this land.⁶⁸ However, it was in the late eighteenth and early nineteenth centuries that language came to be seen in some quarters as an essential and distinctive attribute of an ethnic group that was capable of becoming a nation. Interest grew in the origins and history of languages, and the qualities of one's own vernacular were extolled and other vernaculars were disparaged.⁶⁹ A prominent role in the new discussion of the origins and functions of language was played by German representatives of the counter-current to the Enlightenment, especially Johann Georg Hamann and Johann Gottfried Herder.⁷⁰ 'Has a people, especially an uncultivated people, anything dearer than the speech of its fathers?' Herder asked rhetorically in his *Letters for the Advancement of Humanity*. 'In it reside all the riches of its thought, its tradition, history, religion, and principles of life, all its heart and soul. To take its speech from such a people or to abase it is to take away its only imperishable property.'⁷¹ Fichte, in his patriotic *Addresses to the*

67 This was especially the case with communities that were becoming aware of themselves as nations in the nineteenth century: see Seton-Watson, *Nations and States*, 9–10. See also Lieven, *Empire*, 172.

68 Hamburg, *Russia's Path toward Enlightenment*, 75–76.

69 For a summary of such developments across early modern Europe, and of the interest in national cultures that accompanied them, see Burke, *Popular Culture in Early Modern Europe*, Chapter 1.

70 On this discussion and its relevance in the Russian context, see Hamburg, 'Language and Conservative Politics in Alexandrine Russia', especially 121–123.

71 Herder, *Briefe zur Beförderung der Humanität*, vol. 1, 146.

German Nation (1807), goes further. He seems to regard the German language as indicative of the superiority of the Germans themselves over other races: the French, because German has fewer Latinate borrowings, and the other Teutonic races as well, because 'the German speaks a language which has been alive ever since it first issued from the force of nature, whereas [they] speak a language which has movement on the surface only but is dead at the root'.⁷² A language, for Fichte, not only expresses national character, inasmuch as its speakers are the mouthpieces of the people's collective knowledge. It also determines the people themselves: people, Fichte argues, 'are formed by language far more than language is formed by people'.⁷³

The concurrent development of national consciousness and language consciousness among peoples in early modern Europe was bound up with other processes whose importance in nation-building projects has been emphasized by students of nationalism such as Benedict Anderson.⁷⁴ One such process is the development of a standardized and polyfunctional literary variety of the language in question. As Stephen Barbour has pointed out, a codified standard variety which is clearly differentiated from others gives a language 'a kind of focus and identity that it may have not possessed before'. Consequently, 'the growth of nations and the sharp demarcation of languages are actually related processes'.⁷⁵ Another process connected to the development of national consciousness and language consciousness is the emergence of a literary community capable of producing an exemplary corpus of writings. Ethnicities turn into nations (although not all do), Adrian Hastings has argued, when the written form of their vernacular is regularly employed for the production of an extensive living literature.⁷⁶ A further stimulus for the formation of the consciousness we are describing is the growth of a print culture, with publishing houses, periodicals, and critics (as arbiters of taste and good practice), through which the new writings can be disseminated. Russia began to undergo all the processes we have mentioned during the eighteenth century, especially during the second half of the century.⁷⁷ These processes prepared the ground for the creation, in the nineteenth century, of a native literature, written in Russian, which served

72 Fichte, *Addresses to the German Nation*, 68. This passage is quoted by Edwards, *Multilingualism*, 131. See also Hamburg, 'Language and Conservative Politics', 122–123.

73 Fichte, *Addresses to the German Nation*, 55.

74 Anderson, *Imagined Communities*.

75 Barbour, 'Language, Nationalism, Europe', 13.

76 Hastings, *The Construction of Nationhood*, 12; see also 19–20.

77 See especially Marker, *Publishing, Printing and the Origins of Intellectual Life*.

as a foundation for the imagined nation that was being constructed, or rather reconstructed in the wake of Russia's eighteenth-century westernization.

It is worth pausing here to make two further points about the role of language consciousness in the development of national consciousness in eighteenth- and nineteenth-century Russia. First, it may be that language assumes particular importance as a basis for national consciousness if other possible sources of a sense of unity, such as religious affiliation or the perceived ideal nature of a polity, are for some reason hard to agree upon. In Russia, the authority of both the Orthodox religion and autocratic government was severely challenged, and opinion in the elite was radically divided as a result, by the sudden influx of western ideas in the eighteenth and nineteenth centuries. Nation-building was also complicated to an unusual degree by geographical factors. Nations can have historical existence, Ingrid Kleespies has argued in a stimulating recent monograph on the topos of nomadism in Russian culture, only when they inhabit a clearly defined territorial space or homeland.⁷⁸ However, in the Russian case the very centre of the state shifted, in the twelfth and thirteenth centuries, from Kiev to more northerly cities, first Vladimir and then Moscow. Subsequently, continuous imperial expansion and the existence of marginal regions in which nomadic enemies or independent Cossacks roamed made it impossible to say precisely where borders lay in the endless Eurasian steppe. As Vera Tolz has also emphasized, territorial vastness was a central feature of Russian national discourse from the eighteenth century on, and a source of pride in that discourse, but it made the issue of national definition problematic.⁷⁹ In these circumstances, language, as manifested in the national literature that was coming into being in the eighteenth and nineteenth centuries, may have provided a particularly strong centripetal force as the modern conception of nationhood was being formed.

Secondly, we shall argue that the presence of French in eighteenth- and nineteenth-century Russia, paradoxical as it might seem, actually assisted the development of the Russian language and the formation of Russian nationhood in various ways. It provided lexical and phraseological material and stylistic models for the development of the Russian literary language. It was a vehicle for generic models, subject-matter, plots, and themes that could be used by writers creating the literature through which Russian consciousness would eventually find expression. It may even have nurtured that complexity of vision, receptivity to diverse ways of viewing the world,

78 Kleespies, *A Nation Astray*.

79 Tolz, *Russia*, 159, 162–164; Kleespies, *A Nation Astray*, 195, n. 13.

which endowed classical Russian literature with the universality that writers who bemoaned Franco-Russian bilingualism admired in their own culture.⁸⁰ Its presence also wounded national pride and may consequently have stimulated native literary creativity at the time when other European nations were beginning to prize the languages associated with their core ethnic groups, or rather standardized varieties of them.

Thus far we have been discussing the sense of nationhood and various ways in which language consciousness and language itself are bound up with it. However, we need also to take account of the frequent evolution of national consciousness into nationalism, which influential historians have associated with modernity and which became a powerful force in European politics in the late eighteenth and nineteenth centuries.⁸¹ In an important study of eighteenth-century Russian culture written over fifty years ago, Hans Rogger made a distinction that is still useful between national consciousness and nationalism, each of which, he argued, was 'characteristic of a distinct period of Russian history'. Although they share common features, these phenomena differ in their scope, purpose, and nature:

National consciousness is [...] a striving for a common identity, character, and culture by the articulate members of a given community. It is the expression of that striving in art and social life, and characteristic, therefore, of a stage of development in which thinking individuals have been able to emerge from anonymity, to seek contact and communication with one another. National consciousness presupposes extensive exposure to alien ways; it presupposes a class or group of men capable of responding to that exposure; it requires, moreover, the existence of a secular cultural community or an attempt at its formation. In Russia, these conditions were met, could only be met, in the eighteenth century.

Nationalism goes beyond the search [for] or the creation of a national consciousness. In nineteenth-century Russia, as elsewhere, it is an inclusive system of thought, an ideology, which on the basis of a specific national experience attempts to provide answers to moral, social, and political questions. It is more than an awareness of national identity, more than a search for the bases of national being; it has found these and

80 We shall develop this point in the last section of Chapter 9.

81 The modernity of the phenomenon is stressed in the classic studies by Gellner, *Nations and Nationalism*, and Eric Hobsbawm, *Nations and Nationalism since 1780*. For a challenge to the 'modernist' view of the emergence of 'nations', see Hastings, *The Construction of Nationhood*, Chapter 1, especially 8 ff.

proclaimed their eternal validity. It is a philosophy, a value judgement, a metaphysic. Its basis is belief, not consciousness. However tolerant it may be of other beliefs, it usually values what is Russian more highly than that which is not.⁸²

It will also be useful for us to bear in mind the distinction that has been made, by Anthony Smith among others, between ‘political’ and ‘cultural’ forms of nationalism.⁸³ The proponents of political nationalism may seek to build loyalty around a political system or institutions, legal principles, or a set of values. Statesmen, legislators, and agitators tend to predominate among them. The doctrine of Official Nationality, promulgated by the authorities in the Russia of Nicholas I from 1833 and appealing to autocracy, Orthodoxy, and the vaguer concept of nationality (*narodnost’*) as the foundations of the Russian state, exemplifies nationalism of this type.⁸⁴ The proponents of cultural nationalism, on the other hand, aspire to regenerate what they suppose is – in Smith’s words – a ‘community of common descent’ in which birth, family ties, and native culture are of paramount importance.⁸⁵ In place of ‘the legal and rational concept of citizenship’, writes Suzanna Rabow-Edling, who has studied the Slavophiles as representatives of this type of nationalism, cultural nationalists substituted ‘the much vaguer concept of “the people”, which could only be understood intuitively’.⁸⁶ Regarding ‘the people’ as a ‘final rhetorical court of appeal’, they cherish popular vernacular culture. For the most part, they are members of an intelligentsia, thinkers, artists, and scholars rather than politicians. The importance of language to them as a basis for national identity is demonstrated by the presence among their number of lexicographers, philologists, and folklorists.⁸⁷ This exclusive, cultural or ethnic conception of a nation would become widespread in the nineteenth-century Russian literary community and intelligentsia.⁸⁸

We should now return, towards the end of this discussion of language and nationhood, to two related points that we broached in the first section of this introduction when we were outlining some of the views that have

82 Rogger, *National Consciousness in Eighteenth-Century Russia*, 3–4.

83 See especially Anthony D. Smith, *National Identity*, Chapter 1. See also Hutchinson, *The Dynamics of Cultural Nationalism*, Chapter 1.

84 On Official Nationality, see especially Riasanovsky, *Nicholas I and Official Nationality in Russia*.

85 Anthony Smith, *National Identity*, 11.

86 Rabow-Edling, *Slavophile Thought and the Politics of Cultural Nationalism*, 64–65.

87 Anthony Smith, *National Identity*, 12.

88 On the intelligentsia, see the last section of Chapter 1 below.

been put forward about the supposedly detrimental effects of the use of French by the Russian nobility. The first of these points concerns the ways in which identity can be imagined. Nationalism of the cultural variety tends to generate the so-called 'primordialist' conception of collective identity as a fixed phenomenon determined by blood-ties, shared descent, and a particular language and culture. However, as Paul Robert Magocsi has argued, a 'situational' or 'optional' conception of identity, which allows an individual consciously to emphasize or de-emphasize an identity as circumstances dictate, is as widespread as the primordialist view. In most social settings, Magocsi points out, people operate with a network of multiple social and political loyalties: to family or tribe, occupational group, church, clubs, village or city, region or state, and, in multi-national states, to various national identities at the same time.⁸⁹ To groups that were deeply affected by the contrastive approach to identity encouraged by the rise of nationalism, such as the nineteenth-century Russian literary community and intelligentsia, the primordialist view was no doubt attractive. To the cosmopolitan nobleman of eighteenth-century Russia, on the other hand, multiple, hybrid, or fluid identities (servant of the Russian Empire, family patriarch, *grand seigneur*, European aristocrat) might have seemed quite feasible and unproblematic. We therefore do not take it as a given that different identities are mutually exclusive or that it is psychologically difficult or unsettling for an individual simultaneously to accommodate various cultural influences.⁹⁰

The second point concerns language choice and the signals about loyalty that it might be thought to transmit. The motivation for learning a language that is not the mother tongue may be integrative, that is to say use of a foreign language is a means of indicating solidarity with another community. Eighteenth-century Russian aristocrats may indeed have felt that their command of French established various bonds: with their social peers in France and other European countries, with supporters of the European Enlightenment, or even with France as a nation under the *ancien régime*. However, when Russian nobles had their children taught French, in the eighteenth century and beyond, their primary concern was no doubt to ensure that their offspring would be well prepared for life within their own Russian class, in which command of French was *de rigueur* for success in high society and the upper echelons of government service. This motivation

89 Magocsi, *The Roots of Ukrainian Nationalism*, 45–46.

90 There is also an emphasis on 'fluid, shifting, hybrid, and multiple identities' in Schönle, Zorin, and Evstratov (eds), *The Europeanized Elite in Russia* (see 13).

for language-learning might be seen as largely instrumentalist: a choice is made for pragmatic purposes and does not necessarily entail any emotional allegiance to the people mainly associated with the language in question or the polity they inhabit.⁹¹ In any case, the aristocratic culture of the *ancien régime* with which the eighteenth-century Russian noble might have felt an affinity was destroyed by the revolution that began in 1789. Consequently, for nineteenth-century Russian nobles, the living French language had different associations. French could just as easily be associated with Napoleon or with economic, social, and cultural developments that the aristocracy detested, such as the rise of capitalism and bourgeois society under the 'July Monarchy' of Louis-Philippe (1830–1848), or with revolutionary disturbances (in 1830 and 1848), or with the development of socialist ideas and realist literature characterized by physiological sketches on life among the lower classes.⁹² If nineteenth-century Russian nobles continued to place high value on the French language, then, it was not because they loved France as a nation or admired contemporary French civilization.

Thus, by the early nineteenth century, we suggest, French had been assimilated by Russian society as an internal language, as it were, to the extent that users of it in society did not necessarily regard it as an alien phenomenon. Once a language is viewed in this way, as the natural property of a group, the question of whether its users are showing allegiance to a foreign people or power and disloyalty to their own may seem meaningless to members of the in-group themselves. Those who observe the practice from outside the in-group, of course, may see things quite differently.

Sociolinguistic perspectives

We turn next to questions explored in this book which fall within the purview of sociolinguistics and for discussion of which the writings of sociolinguists provide a useful framework. We are concerned, after all,

91 On the question of whether language choice was conscious, see in particular the second section in Chapter 6 below, which deals with personal correspondence. Metalinguistic comments about language choice are scarce in the eighteenth century in the milieu in which French was most frequently used at that time.

92 The multiplicity of the associations that language use may have is well illustrated by the case of the Francophone nationalist intelligentsia in the Romanian lands in the mid-nineteenth century: see Mihaila, 'The Beginnings and the Golden Age of Francophonie among the Romanians', especially 346 ff.

with the key sociolinguistic question famously formulated long ago by Joshua Fishman: ‘Who Speaks What Language to Whom and When?’⁹³ As we shall show, French – in both spoken and written forms – was used in eighteenth- and nineteenth-century Russia in many domains and had many functions. For much of that period, or at certain times within the period, it was a language of diplomacy and a medium for social engagement with foreigners. It was a *lingua franca* that enabled subjects of the Russian Empire to transmit a certain image of their country to the outside world, to conduct cultural propaganda, or to win support for a political or social point of view, loyalist or oppositional. Knowledge of French facilitated communication with members of the imperial elite who were Russian subjects but were not Russophone or for whom Russian was a second language. French also commonly served numerous purposes among ethnic Russians themselves. It was a court language, a prestige language among the nobility, a society language, a language of education, a language of intimacy in the family or among friends, a language of internal administration for discussion of foreign affairs, and a literary language. Other subjects that have an important place in sociolinguistics, besides language use and language choice, are of central interest to us too. In particular, we dwell on language attitudes and linguistic ideologies, for ‘language, and discussions about language, provide an instructive view of broader issues of power, authority, and national identity’.⁹⁴ We shall therefore consider sociolinguistic concepts that pertain to instances of language contact and reactions to such contact. As we are engaged in a diachronic study of language use and language attitudes in a distant period, the writings of historical sociolinguists are particularly relevant, and will be introduced at the beginning of the section on methodology below. In this section, we broach some general questions relating to language use, language choice, and language attitudes: bilingualism, ideological issues surrounding language choice, diglossia, and language loyalty.

Bilingualism is a staple subject of sociolinguistics and central to this project, which deals with a multilingual section of Russian society. We should therefore consider the term at the outset, referring to the types and degrees of bilingualism that sociolinguists identify. First, we emphasize that we are concerned here with bilingualism as a societal and political question, not with its interest from the neurological, developmental, or psychological angles, from which it can also be studied.⁹⁵ Secondly, there is

93 This is the title of a ground-breaking article by Fishman in *La Linguistique* (1965), 67–88.

94 Gorham, ‘Linguistic Ideologies, Economies, and Technologies’, 168–169.

95 Romaine, *Bilingualism*, 7–8.

a distinction to be made between 'societal' and 'individual' bilingualism.⁹⁶ In the case of imperial Russia, we are dealing mainly with the phenomenon of societal bilingualism, insofar as a substantial stratum of the noble estate aspired to have a command of French, but a bilingual society is of course made up of bilingual individuals. We therefore need to consider, thirdly, what constitutes a bilingual individual. In fact, there is a wide spectrum of bilinguals, including heritage speakers, speakers who acquire their second language after infancy, and speakers who do not have the same level of command of all languages in their repertoire. Defining the competence of these various types of speaker is a thorny issue: how well does a user need to know a language in order to be described as 'bilingual'? Functional bilingualism, it has been pointed out, may be interpreted in a 'maximalist' way (users are able to undertake a wide range of activities and have a wide range of capacities in the two languages) or in a 'minimalist' way (they are 'able to accomplish a restricted set of activities in a second language with perhaps only a small variety of grammatical rules at [their] disposal and a limited lexis appropriate to the task in hand').⁹⁷

The distinction between maximalist and minimalist definitions of bilingualism is important for us, because different cultures, as Romaine reminds us, 'may embody different notions of what it means to be a competent member of a particular language community'.⁹⁸ It is possible that when we read in our primary sources about the incompetence of members of the elite in Russian the authors of the sources in question are not telling us that members of the elite were completely unable to speak Russian. Rather they mean that individual speakers failed, when using their mother tongue, at least in certain domains, to meet maximalist criteria which by no means all speakers whom sociolinguists might now classify as bilingual are able to satisfy in both the languages they know. We also need to consider what sort of competence is being measured. Can a user sustain the same level of linguistic performance across all the functions of reading, writing, listening, and speaking? Fluency may not be developed equally in all areas, and indeed it may not be needed at all in some of them.⁹⁹ In fact, identical competence in two languages, or 'symmetrical bilingualism', is unlikely to occur at societal level, for, as Romaine explains, any 'society which produced functionally

96 For in-depth treatment of societal bilingualism, see Hoffmann, *Introduction to Bilingualism*, 157–174.

97 Beardsmore, *Bilingualism*, 12–13.

98 Romaine, *Bilingualism*, 16.

99 Edwards, *Multilingualism*, 2–3.

balanced bilinguals who used both languages equally well in all contexts would soon cease to be bilingual because no society needs two languages for the same set of functions'.¹⁰⁰ Bearing all these points in mind, we use the term bilingualism in this book to mean functional competence in two languages that does not demand full native-level fluency or symmetrical command.¹⁰¹

It is pertinent also to mention here sociolinguists' classification of bilingualism as 'additive' or 'subtractive': that is to say, the learning of another language either represents an expansion of the user's linguistic repertoire, providing an extra tool without adversely affecting command of the first language acquired, or it pushes the first language into the background. Additive bilingualism, John Edwards observes, 'occurs principally where both languages continue to be useful and valued; a classic example is found in the bilingualism of aristocracies and social elites in systems in which it was considered natural and proper that every educated person know more than one variety'.¹⁰² In many cases, as we shall see, Franco-Russian bilingualism was 'additive', although the negative discourse about it, to which we have referred, suggests that it tended to be 'subtractive', with knowledge of Russian supposedly fading as a result of the superimposition of knowledge of French. Finally, the second language, which is added to the mother tongue, may be described as 'untutored' or 'tutored', that is to say it may be acquired through mere contact with users of it or through study, which in turn may either be motivated by personal interest or prescribed as an element in an educational curriculum. The French acquired by members of the Russian nobility was certainly 'tutored' (hence the prominence we give in this study to educational matters).

It is also important that we take a sceptical view of some of the opinions voiced about the effects of bilingualism, such as the belief that it inevitably has a subtractive effect, whether these opinions be expressed by members of the bilingual society in question or by the authors of subsequent studies of it. After all, different communities are prone to evaluate the effects of bilingualism quite differently on a spectrum ranging from beneficial to pernicious. The positive effects sometimes attributed to bilingualism have included cognitive benefits such as mental flexibility, superiority in concept formation, and more diversified mental abilities, as well as the social or even artistic benefit of enhanced sensitivity to other cultures and points

100 Romaine, *Bilingualism*, 19.

101 For a short discussion of what constitutes bilingualism, see also Myers-Scotton, *Multiple Voices*, 38–40.

102 Edwards, *Multilingualism*, 59.

of view.¹⁰³ On the other hand, numerous negative effects have also been attributed to it. Bilinguals learn neither language as well as they might, it has been claimed. The mental effort devoted to learning a second language is supposedly diverted from other important learning tasks. Bilingual children, it has been asserted, are more prone than monolingual children to stutter.¹⁰⁴ At the societal level with which we are concerned in this work, bilingualism has come under scrutiny for supposedly orienting speakers unduly towards a foreign culture and obscuring their true, innate nature. Forgetting or neglecting one's native language skills, it would frequently be alleged in eighteenth- and nineteenth-century Russia, was tantamount to jeopardizing Russia's chances of freeing itself from western influence and blazing a unique trail of its own. Equally, bilingualism may seem to pose a threat to a dominant group: it can be perceived not only as weakening identity but also as legitimating 'an alternative point of view to the mainstream by sanctioning the use of another language and by implication the cultural values it symbolizes'.¹⁰⁵ What has had particular resonance in the Russian context and scholarship on it is the common suspicion, to which we referred earlier, that bilingualism produces split personalities. This is a suspicion which Paul Theroux fans when he presents bilingualism as a sort of disease: being bilingual, he claims apropos of Anglo-Welsh bilinguals (albeit frivolously, one hopes), is 'often a form of schizophrenia, allowing a person to hold two contradictory opinions in his head at once, because his opinions remain untranslated'.¹⁰⁶ A more cosmic prejudice against multilingualism, Romaine has pointed out, is embedded in the Christian foundation myth in the story of Babel in Genesis, according to which linguistic diversity is a divine punishment.¹⁰⁷ Here, however, we take the view expressed by Edwards that multilingualism, *pace* those who are wary of it, 'is not the aberration supposed by many (particularly, perhaps, by people in Europe and North America who speak a "big" language)'; it is, rather, a normal condition and an 'unremarkable necessity for the majority in the world today'.¹⁰⁸

103 Romaine, *Bilingualism*, 112, 114; see especially Chapter 6 (241–287), on bilingualism as a positive or negative force in cognitive, social, or academic development. See also Valian, 'Bilingualism and Cognition'.

104 Research over the past 50 years, far from bearing out warnings about the dire consequences of bilingualism for children's cognitive development, has revealed its positive developmental effects: see Bialystok, 'The Impact of Bilingualism on Cognition'.

105 Romaine, *Bilingualism*, 251.

106 Paul Theroux in *The Kingdom by the Sea*, quoted by Edwards, *Multilingualism*, 225.

107 Romaine, *Bilingualism*, 321, referring to Genesis, 11:1–9.

108 Edwards, *Multilingualism*, 1. We see no reason to modify this view some twenty years after Edwards expressed it.

Opinions about bilingualism, then, express certain linguistic ideologies, by which we mean ‘cultural conceptions of the nature, form and purpose of language, and of communicative behaviour as an enactment of a collective order’.¹⁰⁹ Here it is helpful to call to mind Pierre Bourdieu’s concept of the linguistic market-place, where different ways of speaking have different values. In a multilingual market-place the choice of language depends on what value a language has in a certain context, and those who lack the legitimate competence are excluded where it is required. This value is ascribed to the different languages available on the basis of notions that have been constructed about what the languages are like and what they are suitable for rather than on the basis of any inherent features in them.¹¹⁰ And yet, language choice does have real social consequences, notional though the perceptions of the worth of a language might be, and speakers must adhere to the rules prescribed by cultural convention if they wish to gain cultural capital through their language use.

When two or more languages coexist in a speech community, one language is likely to be considered more adequate or appropriate than others for certain purposes or in certain situations. We must accordingly keep in mind the concept of diglossia, which describes this state of affairs. Charles Ferguson wrote a much-cited article on this subject, with the Arab-speaking world in particular in mind,¹¹¹ and it has attracted more recent scholarly attention.¹¹² Franco-Russian bilingualism, however, cannot easily be classified as diglossia as Ferguson defines it, that is to say as

a relatively stable language situation in which, in addition to the primary dialects of the language (which may include a standard or regional standards), there is a very divergent, highly codified (often grammatically more complex) superposed variety, the vehicle of a large and respected body of written literature, either of an earlier period or in another speech community, which is learned largely by formal education and is used for most written and formal spoken purposes but is not used by any sector of the community for ordinary conversation.¹¹³

109 Gal and Woolard, ‘Constructing Languages and Publics’, 130.

110 Bourdieu, *Language and Symbolic Power*, 55, 57, 107.

111 Ferguson, ‘Diglossia’.

112 For brief introductions to diglossia, see relevant sections in the works by Edwards (2009) and Coulmas (2013) that are cited in our bibliography. Hudson (1992) provides a bibliographical review of the subject that is still useful. For a fairly up-to-date account of the debate on Ferguson’s work, see Snow (2013).

113 Ferguson, ‘Diglossia’, 336 (the passage quoted is in italics in the original).

We might more readily describe the Russian situation as diglossic if we accepted the classification of Fishman, who is inclined to regard bilingualism as individual and diglossia as societal and who considers societal normification of bilingualism as ‘the hallmark of diglossia’.¹¹⁴ However, we do not think our findings bear out a view of imperial Russia as a clearly diglossic society even in Fishman’s terms, partly because the conventions determining language choice do not seem to have been as rigid as is often suggested. At least, they were not inflexible in the male sphere: our evidence suggests that breaches of linguistic etiquette by noblewomen – for example, in using Russian to men to whom they were not married – may have been more strongly discouraged.¹¹⁵

We allude, finally, to the notion of language loyalty, which may come into play when more than one language is available in a speech community. Uriel Weinreich, in his classic study of languages in contact, likens the relationship between language and language loyalty to the relationship between nationality and nationalism, which we discussed in the previous section.

A language, like a nationality, may be thought of as a set of behavior norms; language loyalty, like nationalism, would designate the state of mind in which the language (like the nationality), as an intact entity, and in contrast to other languages, assumes a high position in a scale of values, a position in need of being ‘defended’.¹¹⁶

The defence of which Weinreich speaks may be conducted with the aid of various mechanisms, which are also much studied by sociolinguists and which we shall find in abundance in the Russian case. These mechanisms include heightened interest in standardization, eulogies to the language being defended (often bolstered by an assumption which sociolinguists generally reject, namely that languages have inherent qualities or defects), linguistic purism (reflected, for example, in complaints about pollution of a language by loanwords or other foreign elements), and ridicule of code-switching (that is to say, alternation between languages or varieties within a single utterance or text). For sociolinguists, these mechanisms ‘are phenomena of major importance requiring systematic treatment’.¹¹⁷

114 Fishman, *Sociolinguistics*, 81–83, 88.

115 On differences between male and female usage, and also for a survey of the literature on diglossia, see Dmitrieva and Argent, ‘The Coexistence of Russian and French in Russia’.

116 Weinreich, *Languages in Contact*, 99.

117 *Ibidem*.

Furthermore, we must bear in mind that these mechanisms are connected to questions of power, because

language choice and attitudes are inseparable from political arrangements, relations of power, language ideologies, and interlocutors' views of their own and others' identities. Ongoing social, economic, and political changes affect these constellations, modifying identity options offered to individuals at a given moment in history and ideologies that legitimize and value particular identities more than others.¹¹⁸

In studying such phenomena, mechanisms, and connections, we recognize that language choice and attitudes to languages and their functions are intertwined and that language ideologies themselves are linked to other ideologies which have currency at any given time.¹¹⁹

Methodological considerations

As is evident from preceding sections of this introduction, our examination of the history of the French language in Russia is interdisciplinary, falling both in the field of historical scholarship and in the field of sociolinguistics. We need now to consider to what extent the approaches of these two disciplines are compatible and can be combined within a single study. In the process, we shall touch upon a few other methodological questions.

It may no longer be true that the history of language is usually kept rigidly apart from conventional political, economic, and social history, as Seton-Watson complained it was in the 1970s.¹²⁰ Many historians have taken a keen interest in the social or political history of language over the last forty years.¹²¹ Indeed, a relatively new discipline, historical sociolinguistics, has emerged, which benefits from an inherently multidisciplinary approach.¹²² However, it probably remains the case that historians, when they touch upon

118 Pavlenko and Blackledge, 'Introduction', 1–2.

119 Ricento, *Ideologies, Politics and Language Policies*, 4.

120 Seton-Watson, *Nations and States*, 11.

121 See especially the pioneering works written or edited by Burke and Porter (1987, 1991, and 1995), Corfield (1991), Robert Evans (1998), and Burke (2004). Language has also necessarily featured in the writings of various students of nationalism, including Seton-Watson (1977), Anderson (first published in 1983), Barbour and Carmichael (2000), and Kamusella (2009).

122 On the problems and opportunities presented by this discipline, see Steffan Davies *et al.*, 'Language and History, Linguistics and Historiography'.

linguistic matters, do not routinely draw on sociolinguistic literature which could provide a firm framework for the study of the history of language as a social, political, and cultural phenomenon. They may find themselves in difficulty as a result of this omission, or may for other reasons speak loosely about linguistic matters.¹²³

Historians, admittedly, cannot conduct their research in the same way as sociolinguists who deal with contemporary usage and who take a synchronic approach rather than the diachronic approach that historians tend to prefer. After all, sociolinguists are able to devise their own tools, such as questionnaires and recorded interviews, which by their nature are unavailable to historians (and to historical sociolinguists as well, come to that), in order to elicit answers to the questions they pose. They can collect copious, firm, factual data of the sort prized by social scientists. That is not to say, of course, that statistical information is unavailable to historians and historical sociolinguists, or that it cannot be compiled. We use some information of this sort in this study in order to illuminate certain areas of the history of French in Russia. We draw, for instance, on figures compiled by Vladislav Rjéoutski on the numbers of pupils studying foreign languages in the Noble Land Cadet Corps and on the quantity of articles in different languages in publications of the St Petersburg Academy of Sciences. It is also possible to gain some idea of the number of books in

123 The sort of weakness in treatment of linguistic subject-matter in historical writing that we have in mind is exemplified in a description by Figes of the undeveloped state of the Russian literary language up until some not very clearly specified moment in the early nineteenth century. According to Figes's account, eighteenth-century Russian had 'no set grammar' (this statement overlooks the work of eighteenth-century grammarians, including Lomonosov) and 'no clear definition of many abstract words' (although by 1794 a six-volume dictionary produced under the aegis of the Russian Academy had begun to address the need for lexical codification). Written Russian was 'a bookish and obscure language' (students of the poetry of Lomonosov, the drama of Fonvizin, or the prose fiction of Karamzin may disagree!). The 'spoken idiom of high society' was '*basically* French' (our italics; it is not clear what is meant by 'basically' here). There were 'no terms in Russian for the sort of thoughts and feelings that constitute the writer's lexicon'. (Were there really no such terms? For an explanation of how a part of this lexicon was created in Russian from the end of the seventeenth century onwards, see Zhivov, 'Love à la mode'.) No basic literary concepts 'could be expressed without the use of French.' (What is meant by 'the use of French'? If Figes means French loanwords were introduced, then it might be pointed out that lexical borrowing is a commonplace linguistic phenomenon, that a loanword itself becomes a part of the language that borrows it, that Russian borrowed words from other languages too, and that the practice of calquing was much used in addition to direct borrowing.) '[V]irtually the whole material culture of society had been imported from the West', and consequently there were 'no Russian words for basic things' such as articles of western clothing. (In fact, there were words for these things: many of them were loanwords, like the English words 'samovar' and 'sputnik', and 'intelligentsia' come to that.) See Figes, *Natasha's Dance*, 50.

various languages that were published in Russia over particular periods and of the numbers of readers who subscribed to particular periodicals there. Nonetheless, historians and sociolinguists do not have access to so much reliable quantitative information as sociolinguists who work on present-day practice. As they must make do with 'imperfect data',¹²⁴ they cannot precisely define the number or calculate the proportion of nobles in imperial Russia who used French in the drawing-room or the nursery, or determine what proportion of their utterances were in one language or another. They are bound to fall back on the more impressionistic data provided by such sources as memoirs and travellers' accounts, making due allowance in each case for the more or less transparent intent or prejudices of the author of the source in question.

It is very important also to note that whereas sociolinguists investigating contemporary usage are able to produce an accurate description of spoken language and measure competence in it, historians and historical sociolinguists are at a disadvantage in this regard. Using the limited number of documents that have fortuitously survived, they can evaluate Russians' written competence in French, provided that they can be sure that a document was produced without the aid of a native speaker of French. For information on oral usage and competence, on the other hand, they are dependent on the opinions of observers of the sort mentioned above, for we cannot take written language as an accurate reflection of spoken language. Those opinions, moreover, may be highly subjective and amount only to hearsay. Nor do we know, as a rule, on what criteria or how much evidence observers based their judgements. In some cases, observers may not have been well qualified to evaluate Russian linguistic achievement in languages that were foreign to both parties.

Thus, for reasons which relate to the methodology that can be used and the types of evidence that are available for the study of historical phenomena, some subjects that are commonly examined by sociolinguists who are interested in contemporary usage are distinctly unpromising from the perspective of historians, if not altogether impossible for them to investigate. Such subjects – to give examples only from the particular sociolinguistic field, plurilingualism,¹²⁵ which is of greatest interest to us in this study – include the cognitive consequences of bilingualism, evaluation of the

124 Joseph, 'Historical Linguistics and Sociolinguistics', 70.

125 Although the term 'plurilingualism' is often used as a synonym of 'multilingualism', it seems to us to have a use to denote competence in more than one language but not necessarily in as many as the term 'multilingualism' might imply.

positive or negative effects of bilingual education, and measurement of individuals' relative oral competence in different languages. All the same, historians and sociolinguists do have much in common. Social, political, and cultural historians, when they examine communities where some degree of plurilingualism can be observed, may benefit just as much as sociolinguists if they keep in mind Fishman's question about the functions of different languages and the circumstances in which choices about language use are made. Staple concepts used by sociolinguists (for instance, bilingualism, diglossia, language consciousness, purism, and code-switching, to list only those we have already mentioned) can help historians to organize their discussion of texts in this or that language or in a mixture of languages. Historians and sociolinguists may find it equally illuminating to study the provision made for foreign-language teaching in a country's educational system and the timing and nature of a pupil's exposure to a second language. They share an interest in relations between classes and between men and women. The work of both types of scholar may bear on the real or perceived social, intellectual, and psychological consequences of bilingualism, be they positive or negative, such as individuals' increased social influence, greater access to wealth and power, and enlarged cultural horizons, on the one hand, and social exclusion, sense of grievance, cultural disorientation, anomie, and conflicting loyalties, on the other. Within their respective disciplines, historians and sociolinguists examine phenomena, such as nationalism and language loyalty, which may turn out to be analogous. In any case, language use and language choice, we emphasize, are inseparable from the social and cultural processes in which historians are interested. Linguistic elements, Viktor Zhivov has argued, exist in the consciousness of speakers and writers 'not as abstract means of communication but as indicators of social and cultural positions'.¹²⁶

When we consider the social or cultural implications of language use and language choice, as opposed to the purely practical imperative of finding a medium in which one's utterances can be understood, it is useful, finally, to bear in mind Mikhail Bakhtin's reflections on speech genres. In an essay published in the 1970s, before the discipline of sociolinguistics had developed very far, Bakhtin held it against specialists in linguistics that they reduced the active role of the other in speech communication to a minimum.¹²⁷ In fact, Bakhtin argued in a spirit quite in harmony with the sociolinguist's concern to relate language use to a social or cultural context, any concrete

¹²⁶ Zhivov, *Language and Culture*, 4; see also 7.

¹²⁷ Bakhtin, 'The Problem of Speech Genres', 70.

utterance should be seen as ‘a link in the chain of speech communication of a particular sphere’. Utterances, he maintained,

are not indifferent to one another, and are not self-sufficient; they are aware of and mutually reflect one another [...] However monological the utterance may be (for example, a scientific or philosophical treatise), however much it may concentrate on its own object, it cannot but be, in some measure, a response to what has already been said about the given topic [...] The utterance is filled with *dialogic overtones* [...] After all, our thought itself – philosophical, scientific, and artistic – is born and shaped in the process of interaction and struggle with others’ thought [...] The speaker is not the biblical Adam, dealing only with virgin and still unnamed objects, giving them names for the first time [...].¹²⁸

Being part of a dialogue, each utterance possesses a quality which Bakhtin classified as ‘addressivity’. That is to say, it is inevitably directed, if only implicitly, at some actual or imagined reader or listener.

Bakhtin was not concerned, in the essay to which we have referred, with language choice, and the principal subject-matter of his writings as a whole was literature rather than social life. Nevertheless, his remarks on the inter-relatedness of utterances, past, present, and future, in a particular sphere and on speakers’ or writers’ conception of their addressee also have a bearing on our discussion of Russian plurilingualism and plurilinguals’ language choice. For one thing, what is said or written in French reverberates in a lasting way both in the cultural and intellectual content of Russian discourse and in linguistic borrowing, especially in lexical and phraseological loans. Bakhtin’s remarks are also of obvious applicability when it comes to the choice of French as the conventional vehicle for certain types of written expression, such as noble correspondence and amateur personal documents, including the diary and the *récit de voyage* (travel account), or as the vehicle of choice for international debates. What he has to say about the linguistic manifestations of class consciousness and social differentiation is apposite for our discussion of the role of French in the construction of noble social identity, especially since Bakhtin himself underlines the particular applicability of his notion of the ‘concept of the speech addressee’ to a society dominated by an aristocracy. Lastly, we shall come across instances where the use of French quite clearly implies a conception of the addressee on the part of the author of the utterance, or

¹²⁸ *Ibidem*, 91–93; italics in the original.

at least places on the addressee an imagined obligation to respond to the author in a certain way.¹²⁹

We argue, then, that social, political, and cultural historians and theorists, on the one hand, and sociolinguists, on the other, have many overlapping interests. Sociolinguists, to be sure, are able to use certain tools and methods favoured in the social sciences that are unavailable to historians, or that can be deployed by historians only to a limited extent. Nonetheless, there are enough theories, findings, and insights that are relevant on both sides of the disciplinary boundary for us to be able to integrate subject-matter and themes in a single work that straddles this boundary. The sub-title of our work implies that our findings may be couched primarily in the terms of historical studies rather than sociolinguistics, if indeed such a distinction needs to be made. And yet, any study of language as a dimension of social, political, cultural, or intellectual history must, we believe, pay attention to the categories and debates of sociolinguists, and, if it does, then it may also claim a place within the now developing sub-field of historical sociolinguistics.

Literature as a primary source

We have already commented on the need to bear in mind the obvious fact that whenever we examine language use in a speech community that existed in a period beyond living memory we are entirely reliant on written sources. However, we need also to remember that the written language itself – which is not to be taken as a mere record of spoken language, incidentally, but as a medium with its own independent existence¹³⁰ – has many varieties. One broad variety is used for largely practical purposes (for example, in administrative documents or diplomatic correspondence¹³¹). Another has literary purposes. It is shaped by aesthetic considerations and is perpetuated by texts which have become canonical and create collective memory, national narrative, myth, and tradition. Between these two extremes there is a whole intermediate band of types of text which may no longer be felt to belong to the category of belles-lettres but did to some extent fulfil an artistic function in the period, or part of the period, with which we are

129 See, e.g., our discussion of a letter by Andrei Rostopchin in the third section of Chapter 4 below.

130 Romaine, *Socio-Historical Linguistics*, 14–15.

131 We focus on such texts in Chapter 5 below, on the use of French in the diplomatic world.

concerned. Private correspondence was a significant element in this band: the common noble habit of writing drafts before sending a letter to its addressee attests to the partly aesthetic function of some texts which were neither of a wholly practical nor an exclusively literary nature. Written sources of these various types may not have equal value as evidence for both threads of our investigation, that is to say, for our account of language use, on the one hand, and language attitudes, on the other.

For our account of language use, it may be prudent, on the whole, to attach more weight to documents which *exemplify* it than to documents which purport to *describe* it. There is, after all, an enormous corpus of extant sources written by subjects of the Russian Empire in French. The corpus includes a wide range of documents of the more practical kind, such as teaching materials, library catalogues, and police reports, besides diplomatic materials. It also includes literary works and many types of writing that are in the intermediate zone between the non-literary and the literary to which we have referred, especially various forms of ego-writing, such as the personal diary and the *récit de voyage*.¹³² It also contains a prodigious quantity of personal correspondence. This is a particularly valuable source for the study of usage, for several reasons. Either French or Russian may be found in individual letters, or some combination of the two languages, depending on who is writing to whom, the nature of the relationship between writer and addressee, the context, and the type of subject discussed. The range of possible topics is very wide, from conventional social situations, the character of acquaintances, and the health of friends or relations to political questions and practical matters such as estate management. So too is the range of relationships between correspondents, who could be members of the same family, friends, colleagues, equals in social rank, or superiors and inferiors, and so forth. Private letters may therefore provide insight into the factors governing language choice and code-switching, differences within individual families and between generations, and differences between the linguistic habits of men and women. As documents that were not written for publication, they also have the merit that their authors were likely to be writing in a relatively spontaneous and unguarded way (although account also needs to be taken of the constraints dictated by epistolary etiquette).

When we come to sources which are of a literary or semi-literary nature and which were written in Russian,¹³³ then we shall need to bear in mind

¹³² We deal with Russian texts of these sorts in Chapter 6.

¹³³ i.e. the sort of sources discussed in Chapters 8 and 9 below in which Russians debated their use of French and its effects.

that discussion of language use in them is coloured by language attitudes. We do not at all mean by this to say that we shall find no valuable information on Russians' use of French in documents of this kind, especially in such non-fictional texts as memoirs and diaries. While some such texts make only occasional reference to language use, others (for example, the memoirs of Filipp Vigel,¹³⁴ which cover the period from Vigel's childhood in the 1790s to his retirement from government service in 1840) contain numerous passages describing and shrewdly commenting on it. Again, the voluminous diary of Petr Valuev, who occupied major ministerial posts in the 1860s and 1870s, continuously exemplifies the practice of code-switching.¹³⁵ Nevertheless, we do need to remember that such texts, as examples of self-conscious ego-writing produced for posterity, are a form of self-presentation and self-justification and are therefore likely to reflect personal biases and prejudices.

However, it is when we use Russian literature (by which we mean here, for instance, satirical articles, drama, and prose fiction) that we have to consider most carefully how reliable this source can be as evidence of social, cultural, or linguistic practice. Literary products of these kinds are highly crafted forms of writing, in which the narrator is not necessarily to be identified with the author and in which – especially in the nineteenth century – elaborate frames were often constructed around narratives, so that readers may have to decide whose words in the text should be considered most authoritative. Furthermore, we cannot be sure that the words placed by writers in the mouths of fictional characters approximate to actual linguistic usage: writers might invent or exaggerate certain linguistic habits, such as the use of loanwords and code-switching, if it suits their artistic or polemical purpose. At the very least, we need to explore the context in which a literary text was produced, in order to satisfy ourselves that we have understood its author's position in a contemporary debate. These qualifications about the value of literary sources as evidence of language use are important, because the critical narrative about Russian francophonie to which we have referred unfolds chiefly in sources of this sort, from plays by Aleksandr Sumarokov and Denis Fonvizin in the mid-eighteenth century to novels by Lev Tolstoi and Fedor Dostoevskii in the late nineteenth.¹³⁶

134 Vigel, *Zapiski*. Vigel's memoirs were first published posthumously in the 1860s.

135 Valuev, *Dnevnik P.A. Valueva*.

136 We should add that literary texts can represent reality only within the limits within which authors are permitted to write for public consumption in a particular state. It was considerably easier under the conditions of censorship that obtained in the Russia of Nicholas I, for example, to explore in depth the cultural tensions and personal foibles to which the westernization of the elite gave rise than it was to analyze the social, economic, and moral effects of serfdom.

The point we have just made needs to be underlined, moreover, because many commentators, while approaching their subject from quite different theoretical angles, have treated literary sources as if they faithfully reflected reality. Readings of literary texts as social commentary were commonplace in Soviet scholarship. Thus the doyen of Soviet *dix-huitiémistes*, Georgii Makogonenko, interpreted Fonvizin's play *The Brigadier*, an early example of satirical treatment of Russian Gallomania and francophonie, as an 'unmasking' of the 'parasitic life' of the Russian nobility.¹³⁷ Likewise, Kirill Pigarev asserted that when Fonvizin denounced 'gentry cosmopolitanism and servility towards things foreign' he was stigmatizing an 'everyday social phenomenon that had become typical of the gentry class'.¹³⁸ Some western and post-Soviet scholars, for all their differences with Soviet scholars, have used literary texts in a similar way. David Welsh, for instance, sees a straightforward connection between drama and cultural reality when he asserts that Gallomania of the sort Fonvizin was mocking 'was so widespread in Russia that there is hardly a comedy between 1765 and 1823 which does not contain satirical references to it'.¹³⁹ Much more recently, Alexander Etkind has relied on Pushkin's *Eugene Onegin* and Tolstoi's *War and Peace* as the sole basis for sweeping assertions about language use in nineteenth-century Russia: that the Russian of ladies of high society was typically 'worse than' their French, that 'French was the language of women and family life', and that 'Russian was the language of men, of the military service and the household economy'.¹⁴⁰ Lotman, while approaching the literary text from a point of view different from that adopted by scholars who observed the pieties of Marxism-Leninism, also treated literary characters as illustrations of 'real norms of behaviour', facts of Russian life predating the texts in which they are situated and living beyond those texts. The boundary between the text and the 'extratextual empirical reality' which the semiotician wishes to reconstruct (and which is itself perceived as a text that must be decoded) may therefore seem blurred in his scholarship too.¹⁴¹

137 Makogonenko, *Denis Fonvizin*, 142. Quoted by Hamburg, *Russia's Path toward Enlightenment*, 439.

138 Pigarev, *Tvorchestvo Fonvizina*, 94.

139 Welsh, *Russian Comedy*, 49. See also May Smith, *The Influence of French on Eighteenth-Century Literary Russian*, 377.

140 Etkind, *Internal Colonization*, 16. Some of the shortcomings of comment on linguistic matters that we have already mentioned are again apparent here. It is not clear, for example, whether we are dealing with the spoken or written form of language or what it means to say that someone's Russian was 'worse' than their French. If French was the 'language of family life', moreover, then it was presumably the language of men as well as women.

141 'Authors' Introduction', in *SRC*, x; Lotman, 'Gogol's Chlestakov', *ibidem*, 178.

Our practice in this book will be to take due account of the type of text with which we are dealing in any particular instance, the circumstances in which the text was written, the attitudes that authors probably had towards their material, and the aims they may have had when they wrote the work in question. Awareness of such factors helps us to understand how social reality is refracted in a text. In the case of literary texts, we ought also to take account of their sheer literariness and their relationship with other texts, a relationship in which Russian Formalists such as Boris Eikhenbaum and Viktor Shklovskii took great interest. 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.¹⁴² We thus concur with the more cautious view of the relationship between art and reality that is taken by Figes at certain points in his history, as when, for example, he counsels against treatment of art as 'a window on to life' or 'a literal record of experience'.¹⁴³

In sum, we do not dispute that classical Russian literature is an extremely valuable source for our study of the history of French in Russia. The reflections of the literary elite on language use, as our final chapter will show, are woven into this literature and have become part of the larger, authoritative narratives about national culture and destiny that Russian writers of the golden age created. At the same time, we may have to accept that the evidence with which this corpus of literary sources furnishes us is more useful for our account of language attitudes than for our enquiry into linguistic, social, and cultural practice.¹⁴⁴ We shall certainly need to contextualize literary sources, viewing them against an ample social and cultural background and historical circumstances at the time when they were written. Broadly speaking, the perceptions about language use that

142 We discuss this subject in more detail in the section on comic drama in Chapter 8.

143 Figes, *Natasha's Dance*, xxvi, 104; see also 101, where Figes rightly points out that we cannot take Tolstoi's observations in *War and Peace* as 'an accurate reflection of reality', however much the novel 'might approach that realist ideal'.

144 Language use is not the only subject of study in which it is dangerous to attach too much credence to literary evidence. As Priscilla Roosevelt has suggested, social and cultural historians have also been unduly influenced by the powerful negative stereotypes established by literary portrayals of 'the hedonistic, cruel, or improvident aristocrat, the ignorant, coarse, or helpless smallholder, or the "superfluous man", as Russian intellectuals dubbed the many eccentric or aimless nobles to be found in the provinces' (Roosevelt, *Life on the Russian Country Estate*, xv).

found expression in mid-nineteenth-century Russian literature reflected the development of an essentialist view of language as an attribute of ethnic and national identity and the passing of cultural authority in Russia from courtiers and nobles of cosmopolitan outlook to a literary community and intelligentsia affected by the rising cultural nationalism we have mentioned.

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We have tried in this introduction to describe some of the features of the negative discourse about the use of French by the Russian nobility that has come down to us through major works of Russian literature and some scholarship on Russian culture. We have associated the predominantly negative treatment of Russian francophonie with a highly influential contrastive conception of Russian national identity. According to this classic paradigm, Russia is defined in opposition to 'the West'. A corollary of it is the assumption that imperial Russia itself was internally divided into a westernized elite and a mass that cleaved to different, native values. We have also considered the relevance of certain political ideas, notably conceptions of empire and nation, to our enquiry. In particular, we have drawn attention to the effect of the growth of national consciousness and cultural nationalism on language choice and perceptions of language use at certain historical junctures. It has been our aim to set the scene for a nuanced picture of the use of French in imperial Russia that will look beyond received wisdom and generalizations which conform to social and national stereotypes. Our next step will be to outline in more detail the historical background against which we believe this picture should be seen.