

6 Social and sociolinguistic change, 1350–1750

Koinéisation in medieval times may have involved the emergence in Paris of a new, relatively stable mixture of dialect features, but it did not entail homogeneity, as we have seen. Persistent and often violent demographic fluctuation in the ‘proto-industrial period’ favoured more variation in language, not less. The first explicit moves to suppress such variation and establish a standard language come with the Renaissance, and it is the process of disentangling standard and vernacular in the speech of the early modern city which will provide the focus for Part 3.

In the fourteenth century, according to Hohenberg and Lees (1985), European cities entered a new stage of development, which lasted until the onset of industrialisation four hundred years later. The feature of proto-industrial development that impacts most on the sociolinguistic situation in Paris is an increase in hierarchical thought, which widens the gulf between the culture and life-style of the elites and those of the population at large. This is compounded in Renaissance Europe by the spread of literacy, which accentuates the divergence between the written culture of the elites and the traditional oral culture of the masses. A new polarity crystallises in the social psychology of the city, setting ‘urbanity’ against ‘rusticity’. In this new cultural setting, Latin is progressively restricted to its religious functions, and variation within the vernacular takes on a social importance that it appears not to have had previously.

The period covered in this Part (fifteenth to eighteenth centuries) is a long one, during which profound transformation took place in the internal structure of the French language. This chronological division is quite unusual in histories of French, for they traditionally subdivide it into ‘Middle French’, ‘Renaissance French’ and ‘Classical French’. Indeed, we ourselves will devote separate chapters to the fifteenth to sixteenth centuries and to the seventeenth to eighteenth centuries. However, the periodisation we are proposing underscores the parallelism between the city’s socio-demographic development in the proto-industrial period and the city’s sociolinguistic evolution. For Hohenberg and Lees (1985), the ‘proto-industrial period’ represents a distinct phase in urban development, as it does for other social and economic historians (see Braudel

1981). We will see that on the sociolinguistic level too, key processes can be observed which begin in the fifteenth century and continue through until the eighteenth.

Following the pattern set in Part 2, we will devote Chapter 6 to an overview of the demographic and social development of the city in the proto-industrial period, before examining the sociolinguistic process which characterises it most strongly, that of ‘reallocation’ (see above, §2.3.2). In Chapter 7 we will first look at the outlines of the city’s sociolinguistic profile in the fifteenth and sixteenth centuries and then at the most salient sociolinguistic variables visible in sixteenth-century data. Chapter 8 will follow a similar pattern for the seventeenth and eighteenth centuries. Chapter 9 will bring together some of the linguistic details of reallocation from the sixteenth to the eighteenth centuries.

6.1 Demography and society in the proto-industrial city

6.1.1 *Demographic change*

The period of sustained demographic growth in Europe which began in the late tenth century came to a rather abrupt end in the fourteenth. Various human factors were involved, including the over-rapid population growth of the earlier period, and the extension of agriculture into less fertile land, but the effects of climatic change need to be brought into the equation too. The years 1314 and 1315 issued in a long series of cold, wet summers which appear to have triggered population decline across Europe even before the Black Death of 1347–9. For three centuries after 1450 Europe experienced what meteorologists have labelled ‘the little ice age’. Whatever the causes, population growth in European towns, between the fourteenth and eighteenth centuries, was in some cases stagnant and in others fluctuating.

In the period up to the seventeenth century, the population of Paris underwent wild fluctuations (see Fig. 1). The effects of famine, plague (which raged sporadically before and for three centuries after the catastrophic epidemic of 1348), and prolonged warfare (the Hundred Years War), reduced the population in the second half of the fourteenth century from its previous 200,000 to about 80,000. Recovery took several generations. By the mid sixteenth century the city had acquired some 300,000 inhabitants, only to see almost a third of them disappear in the second half of the century during the Wars of Religion (1562–94). In the first half of the seventeenth century the city not only made up the gaps left by war and famine, but actually doubled its size from 220,000 to 430,000. In the second half of the century and thereafter till the onset of industrialisation in the late eighteenth century, the city’s population continued to grow, though not at the rates achieved by Amsterdam and London.

thousands

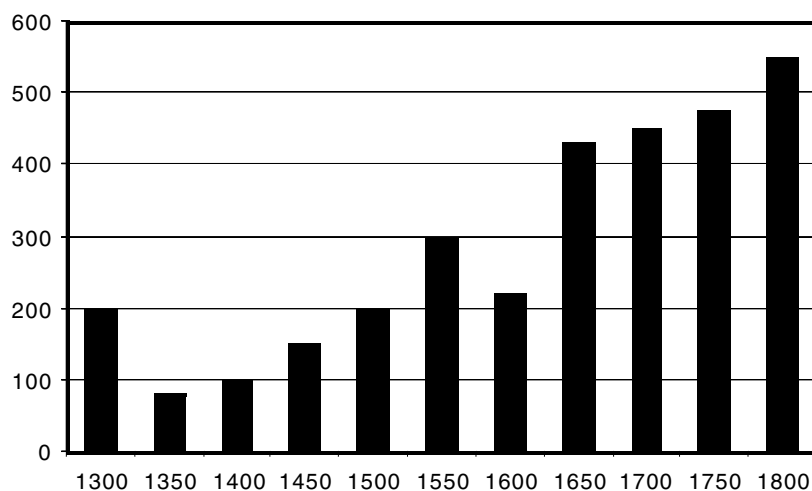


Fig. 1. The population of Paris, 1300–1800

Source: Compiled from data published in Dupâquier 1988 and the various volumes of the *Nouvelle Histoire de Paris* (see p. 25)

Demographic fluctuation on this scale may surprise modern observers. However, as Benedict (1989: 13) points out,

a fundamental characteristic of medieval and early modern cities was the considerable turnover of their population from year to year and generation to generation. A sixteenth-century town could be likened to an accordion, expanding when harvest failures or warfare led inhabitants from the surrounding countryside to seek refuge or charity behind city walls, shrinking when plagues sent the rich fleeing to the safety of their country estates or prolonged economic difficulties provoked the emigration of skilled artisans. Beyond these short-term fluctuations, a constant stream of migration steadily replenished the ranks of the permanently resident population.

The high proportion of immigrants in towns stemmed in part from the basic inability of proto-industrial cities to reproduce themselves. Rates of mortality were particularly high among infants, as a result both of the notorious insalubrity of town life, and of the widespread habit, prevalent among town-dwellers of all classes, of placing infants in the care of rural wet nurses. At the same time, some of the immigration into cities served to replace city-dwellers who had left for other communities, for migration from city to city or back and forth between city and countryside was widespread. Up to the middle of the seventeenth century the proportion of non-natives in the city was particularly high. Thereafter, it gradually fell.

6.1.2 *Functional change*

It is not possible to detect major evolution in the religio-educative function in Paris during the proto-industrial period. The city remained a prime centre for the Catholic Church, and, outside intellectual circles, French Protestantism was a largely provincial affair. In the sixteenth century, Paris was the scene of perhaps the most chilling event in the Reformation conflict, the Massacre of Saint Bartholemew (1572), and in the following century it was the spearhead of the Counter-Reformation movement in France, with the establishment of some eighty new religious houses within its walls. At the same time, between the sixteenth and the eighteenth century, the medieval University with its collegiate structure languished in seemingly irreversible decline, being finally abolished by the Revolution in 1792. However, as a centre of learning and intellectual innovation Paris was unrivalled in Europe (see Martin 1999). The city remained one of the greatest centres of the European book-trade and levels of literacy were much higher there than elsewhere in France.

Few dramatic changes took place in the sphere of manufacturing. Although the fourteenth and fifteenth centuries saw significant technological developments (for example in the invention of gunpowder and of printing; see Friedrichs 1995: 93–100), the modes of production remained essentially artisanal, and the technology and size of individual units of production underwent little change. In seventeenth-century Paris the state, through the agency of Colbert, became actively involved in the development of certain industries producing luxury goods like tapestry and porcelain. We are dealing, however, with the ‘proto-industrial’ developments rather than with ‘industrial’ ones.

The volume of European trade expanded greatly in the period from 1450 to 1750, not only at local and regional level, but also over long distances, including to other continents. This required expansion in the facilities for banking and credit which could only develop in towns. In the long run, Paris did not participate in the development of an imperial mercantile system as successfully as Amsterdam or London, but it benefited greatly from it even so. The prosperity of Paris depended above all on its location at the top of the French Central Place System, whereby goods and services flowed up and down the hierarchy of towns and villages linked politically and economically to it. During the proto-industrial period the relationship between city and hinterland gradually changed. The medieval town had been heavily dependent on its rural hinterland, developing as a centre of exchange and transformation of primary agricultural products. The land was controlled by the great feudal land-holders: the Church and the nobility. Now the balance of land-ownership shifted as the wealthy urban merchants bought into land themselves, controlling the growth of rural industry and reversing the traditional order of dependence. At the same

time, nobles began identifying more and more with the city and spending more time there.

With the shift in power from the feudal land-holders towards the urban merchants, we find a significant shift in the nature of the French state. During the fifteenth century, the feudal monarchy began to be replaced by a bureaucratic one, and from this time we can see a progressive expansion of the administrative elite based in Paris. The main institutions of the kingdom remained in the capital: the old *parlement* of Paris, the *Chambre des Comptes*, the *Grand Conseil*, whose role grew in the sixteenth century, plus some of the services of the *Chancellerie*. This institutional presence in Paris implied a concentration not only of office-holders but also of an extensive auxiliary personnel of court clerks, officers, procurators and lawyers. The administrative framework is estimated to have required 5,000 royal officers in 1515 (see Jacquart 1996: 107). This movement culminated in 1528 with the declaration by François I of his intention to establish his permanent residence within the city of Paris.

Tres chers et bien amez, pour ce que nostre intention est doresnavant faire la plus part de nostre demeure et sejour en nostre bonne ville et cité de Paris et alentour plus qu'en aultre lieu du royaume: cognoissant nostre chastel du Louvre estre le lieu le plus commode et a propos pour nos loger; a ceste cause, avons delibere faire reparer et mettre en ordre ledict chastel . . .¹ (quoted from Babelon 1986: 45)

Although this was part of a wider European trend, it is important to emphasise the novelty of François I's move in the French context (see Hauteceur 1961: 105 and Jacquart 1996: 107). The medieval kings had always needed to control the wealth of Paris, but rarely resided there in person on a long-term basis. After the failure in 1527 of his Imperial ambitions in a series of extravagant Italian adventures, François I determined to consolidate his power at home, seeking to establish himself in the eyes of Europe as the perfect Renaissance prince, with Paris as the ideal city. This attracted into the city large numbers of the aristocracy who had previously resided principally on their country estates. As the city moved from being simply the administrative and economic centre of the kingdom to being a capital in the modern understanding of the word, the monarchy began to redesign the city to make it a symbol of its power. The architecture of absolutism, inspired by that of ancient Rome, was designed for glory and spectacle rather than profit and comfort, and is plainly visible in the redesign of the Louvre, the Tuileries and what was eventually to become the Place de la Concorde and the Champs Élysées. The most extraordinary

¹ 'Dearly beloved friends, because our intention henceforth is to make the greatest part of residence and stay in our goodly city of Paris and its surrounding area, rather than any other place in our kingdom, recognising that our castle of the Louvre is the most suitable for our accommodation, for this reason we have determined to repair and put in good order the said castle.'

expression of this urge to overawe the spectator with the sight of a huge planned townscape was of course Versailles, to which the royal court retreated in the second half of the seventeenth century.

6.1.3 *Social stratification*

Under the pressure of changing patterns of production and marketing, and with the increasing movement into the towns of members of the aristocracy in the early sixteenth century, urban communities became more stratified and a widening gap – cultural and political as well as material – divided rich and poor.

Proto-industrial development accentuated the divisions between men of property and proletarians lacking both economic and political privileges, as well as the disparities of wealth and power among burghers. (Hohenberg and Lees 1985: 131)

Urban elites throughout western Europe, in the late fifteenth century, began distancing themselves from the masses, culturally, and eventually spatially.

We derive a useful insight into how Parisians saw their own urban community at the beginning of the seventeenth century from Loiseaux' *Traité des Ordres* (1614). Here, social stratification is perceived not in the terms of wealth more familiar to modern observers, still less in terms of social class, but in the medieval terms of 'orders' and 'estates'. This was a highly conservative vision, with members of each estate jealously guarding their status vis-à-vis upward-moving members of lower estates – estate-membership implying modes of living, dressing and, presumably, speaking which were appropriate to each rung on the social ladder.

A different social analysis is to be found in the pattern of wealth-distribution across the city. Information from the early period is sparse, but François Furet (1961) examined fiscal material from the eighteenth century in the form of the poor-law tax of 1743, and was able to distinguish five social categories according to official estimates of their wealth (see Table 12). Below these five groups of permanent residents there existed a large tranche of population who, by definition, were excluded from the poor-law tax, the Paris poor themselves. By all accounts, the number of paupers and marginals in Paris continued to be very large, even in the eighteenth century.

If we allow for demographic fluctuation, the social structure of the city evolved only slowly across the proto-industrial period. Roche (1981a: 57–8) visualises it in three tiers. At the top he sees an extremely rich elite striving to distance itself culturally from the bulk of the population. Medieval cities had seen the emergence of a small network of bourgeois families who dominated urban affairs. These families were not only extremely wealthy in comparison with the rest of the population, but they were often successful in transmitting their privileged status from one generation to the next. Patrician power was

Table 12. *Distribution of wealth in eighteenth-century Paris*

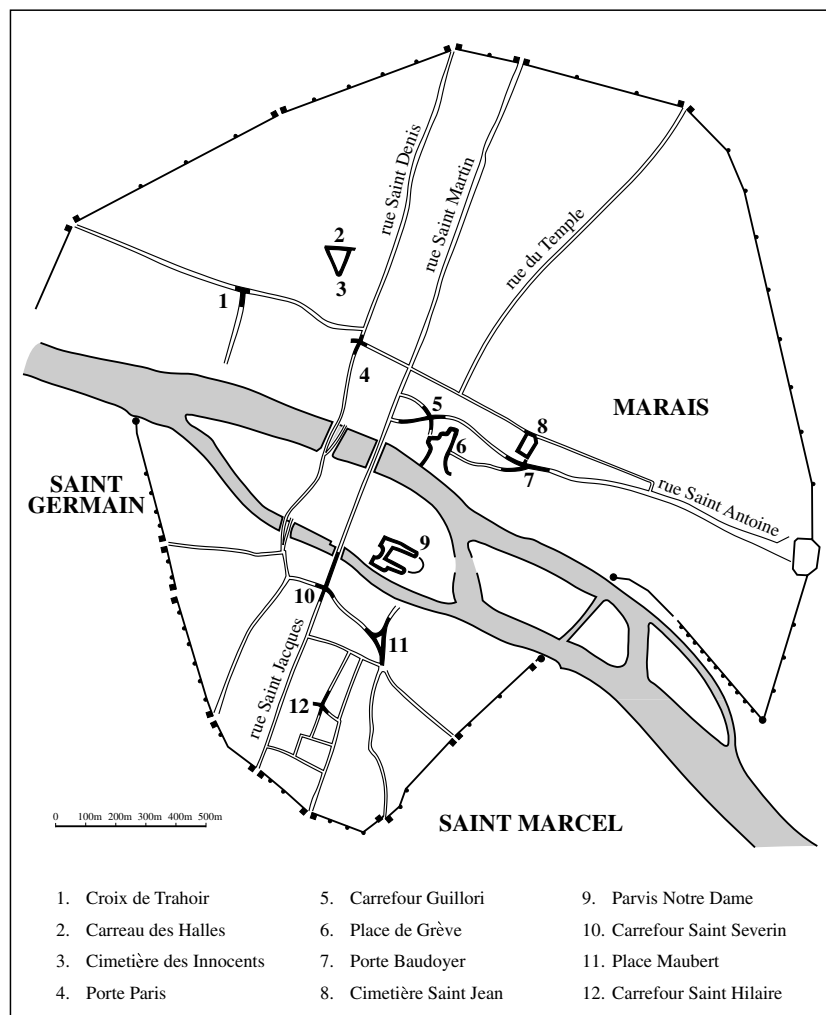
		Proportion of the population	Per capita units of wealth
I	Haute noblesse, aristocratie	1.5%	29.0
II	Grands officiers civils	3.8%	9.0
III	Avocats, professions libérales	8.1%	4.5
IV	Maîtres artisanaux, marchands	33.2%	2.3
V	Gens de métier	53.4%	1.0

increased by the development of the bureaucratic state in the fifteenth century, though it was challenged shortly afterwards by the arrival in the city of important sections of the landed aristocracy.

In the middle Roche sees the bulk of the population, for whom the focus of communal life remained as it had always been, the *quartier*, and their principal means of support the ties of family and trade. Economic life for the majority of inhabitants was organised around the numerous trade-guilds and corporations. Particular trades continued to be exercised in particular streets and in particular *quartiers*, fostering the maintenance within the various neighbourhood communities, of dense and multiplex social networks (see Garrioch 1986).

Perhaps what distinguishes most conspicuously the social structure of medieval and proto-industrial cities in Europe from that of modern cities was the presence at the bottom of society of a large but unknowable number of paupers, marginals and transients (see §§3.5 and 6.1.1). For Roche this group is impossible to pin down, not just because their lives have left little trace in the historical record, but also because of the permeability of such social categories as the workless, the drifter, the hawker, the prostitute, the beggar, the thief. The frontier between vagrants and criminals, on the one hand, and less threatening groups of temporary or recent migrants, on the other, was fluid. The authorities were constantly in search of devices for distinguishing the ‘false’ or criminal poor from the ‘true’ or deserving poor.

Migrants from the countryside who eventually found work and settled in the city on a permanent basis were to be found in the greatest concentrations in the eastern part of the city and, *extra muros*, in the *faubourgs* Saint Antoine and Saint Marcel. A sixteenth-century description of the life of such people is to be found in N. du Fail’s *Propos rustiques* (1547) (quoted in Sainéan 1912: 295–9). Those who failed to settle and remained as transients were referred to by the resident population as *gueux* and viewed with deep fear and suspicion (see Roch 1992). Contemporary police records indicate the high proportion of rootless provincials among the city’s wrong-doers (see Chagniot 1988: 127–50, 223–5). Such people congregated in large numbers in open spaces within the



Map 18. The main meeting-points in proto-industrial Paris (adapted from Favier 1974: 49)

city walls (for example, in the cemeteries of the Innocents and of Saint Jean, in the Place de Grève and on the Parvis Notre Dame) and at the city's main cross-roads (for example, in the 'carreau des Halles' and at the Place Maubert). The Halles and the Place de Grève became the emblematic meeting-points between town and country (see Map 18).

In medieval times, vertical stratification in Paris society was not accompanied by residential zoning. During the proto-industrial period, spatial segregation of the classes begins to appear. Descimon (1989: 99) notes that as early as

the sixteenth century the rich were forsaking the high densities of the Ile-de-la-Cité and the areas of the Left and Right Banks immediately facing it. He observes that

two cities had begun to coexist within the confines of the capital, as they would continue to do for centuries to come: the antiquated Paris of the central parts of town, where artisans and merchants squeezed tightly amid one another; and a newer Paris just inside and outside the walls, where the fashionable residential neighbourhoods of the rentier classes alternated with the working quarters and *faubourgs* dominated by an artisan and labouring population. Both of these cities, however, appear to have been marked by similar patterns of social behaviour, for in both the members of different corporate groups chose to live in locations nearer other members of their group, thereby reinforcing the associative links of the group.

The dense, petrified world of central Paris was no longer the most attractive part of town for the wealthiest inhabitants of a city increasingly dedicated to the theatrical display of power. Typical of this was the construction of expensive residences on reclaimed land in the Marais, on the Ile-Saint-Louis and in the *faubourg* Saint Germain in the first quarter of the seventeenth century. This movement was accentuated in the eighteenth century with the large-scale development of the land situated to the west of the city wall as residential accommodation for the well-to-do. The poorest *quartiers* were situated east of the Rue Saint Denis on the Right Bank, and east of the Rue Saint Jacques (focusing on the Place Maubert) on the Left. Writing about the *faubourg* Saint Marcel at the end of the eighteenth century, L.-S. Mercier declares:

C'est le quartier où habite la populace de Paris, la plus pauvre, la plus remuante & la plus indisciplinable. Il y a plus d'argent dans une seule maison du fauxbourg Saint-Honoré, que dans tout le fauxbourg Saint-Marcel, ou Saint-Marceau, pris collective-ment. (Mercier 1782:I, 268)

6.1.4 Social conflict

The proto-industrial city was the arena of permanent competition for resources between the established population and the human mass which moved in and out of the city following the rhythm of the economic cycle. Public order was difficult to maintain, and food-riots were a regular occurrence whenever the harvest failed (as it did once every eight years, according to one estimate). The Valois saw fit to make their residence permanently in Paris, but their Bourbon successors had strong personal reasons for distancing themselves from the city's huge and turbulent population. Henri IV was assassinated in the Rue de la Ferronnerie in 1610 and the ten-year-old Louis XIV was forced by the mob to flee the city in the dead of night in 1649. It is not surprising, therefore, that after the troubles of the Fronde (1648–52) we find the monarchy residing increasingly rarely in Paris itself, and preferring the safer and more congenial environments of Saint-Germain en Laye, Fontainebleau and, finally, Versailles.

A second, less visible, arena of conflict is that between the Paris merchant and administrative class, whose power was based in the law, finance and trade, and the landed aristocracy which moved in large numbers into the city at the beginning of the sixteenth century. The issue must not be over-simplified, for the two groups were not distinct. Many urban capitalists bought into land and sought (and gained) ennoblement, just as many nobles engaged heavily in the financial and commercial markets. The sale of offices brought ennoblement to numerous members of the administrative and judicial class. However, the underlying conflict of interest existed, and contemporary observers were very aware of it, encapsulating the opposing sides in the short-hand terms *la Cour* and *la Ville*.

Throughout the seventeenth century the Crown deployed strenuous efforts to bring into line non-compliant members of secular society, the most notable of whom were to be found among the great feudal barons on the one side and in the Paris merchant class on the other. In the long term it found it easier to accommodate the barons than the merchants. A moment of crisis came during the minority of Louis XIV with the troubles of the Fronde (1648–52). This uprising brought together disaffected members of the aristocracy, members of the judicial and mercantile elite of Paris, and the bulk of the townsfolk in an unlikely alliance against the first minister Mazarin. The rebellion was eventually suppressed, and absolute royal power was fully reasserted at the beginning of the 1660s.

However, tension between the aristocratic and merchant classes remained a constant of Ancien Régime society until the Revolution. The definitive move of the Court and government services to Versailles in 1682 no doubt facilitated both the exercise of royal power and the indulgence of the monarch's appetite for spectacular display. These advantages were evidently bought at the price of the Crown's links with the vital economic and cultural forces at work in the metropolis, whose elites became increasingly frustrated by the spectacle of the political and economic advantages denied to them being enjoyed by their counterparts and commercial rivals across the Channel, and who, in consequence, were increasingly attracted by the rationalist, libertarian ideas of the 'Enlightenment'. The eighteenth century saw a progressive tilting of the balance of power between *la Cour* and *la Ville* in favour of the latter.

For much of the period this conflict was overlaid, up to a point, with a religious one. With the triumph of Catholicism at the end of the Wars of Religion Paris became an important centre for the Counter-Reformation, notably through the activities of the Jesuits. Religious dissent in the capital did not disappear, however. It was driven underground and in time Jansenism replaced Calvinism as its main vehicle. The original focus of this movement was the Abbey of Port-Royal, better known to linguists through the so-called *Grammaire de Port-Royal*, published in 1661 by Lancelot and Arnault. It would appear

that Jansenist ideas took root very extensively in the Paris population, first among the elites and later among a wider section of the community. Royal attempts to suppress these ideas through the Bull *Unigenitus* (1713) led to decades of conflict, adding a further dimension to the hostility between the dissenting, if not outright humanist *Ville* and the more orthodox *Cour*. The former eventually triumphed with the expulsion of the Jesuits in 1762.

6.1.5 *Cultural change*

Changes in the function and demography of cities in the early modern period were accompanied by significant cultural change. The model was provided by the cities of northern and central Italy – Venice, Milan and, especially, Florence – whose wealth and technological advancement incited the towns of northern Europe to emulate their achievements from the fifteenth century until well into the seventeenth.

Although in 1500 the elite may already have had a loyalty to the ideas and customs of the high tradition, we can say . . . that at that time popular culture was everyone's culture. Then, as the intellectual currents we group under the labels humanism, Counterreformation, and Enlightenment diffused, the elite began to reject what it saw as vulgar or superstitious popular culture. The affirmation of civilized values over folk culture was not a simple matter of city versus country. While urban elites decried local folkways, they partially adopted those of the rural gentry. Horse races and indoor balls for the rich joined the theater as substitutes for civic pageants. Although increasingly urban in taste as well as residence, the aristocracy retained its commitment to virile pursuits, above all hunting. Within the city, the upper classes first contracted out of popular celebrations and then moved to suppress rowdy and licentious spontaneity. The people were offered instead sanitized and passive festivities, generally for the greater glory of the sovereign. (Hohenberg and Lees 1985: 150)

The Renaissance gave birth to what we now regard as the classical notions of 'culture' and 'civilisation' (see Williams 1976). Implicit in them is a set of oppositions segregating high culture (associated with *urbanitas*) from the low, popular culture (associated with *rusticitas*). Elites had of course existed throughout the Middle Ages, but in the earlier period they had been located in seigneurial castles (*cortois* versus *vilain*) and in cathedral chapters (*clerc* versus *lai*). Now they were increasingly located in towns.

Popular culture and the home-grown were rejected in favour of the cosmopolitan. Traditional wisdom and folk medicine were downgraded. The heritage of the elders was no longer a model but a gauge of ridicule. The stylised art-forms of opera and ballet came to be preferred by the elites to popular song and dance, which they regarded as brutish and artless. Ancestral traditions were renounced and new codes of politeness were developed, regulating the behaviour of the *Cortegiano* (in Italy), the Gentleman (in England) and

Table 13. *Levels of literacy in
seventeenth-century Paris*

	%
Notables	100
Marchands	80
Maîtres	60
Domestiques	50
Tisserands	30
Compagnons	25
Ruraux	10

Source: Chartier 1981

the *Honnête Homme* (in France). Such codes covered matters of dress, social etiquette and, most particularly, language. The development of printing and the spread of literacy downgraded the culture of orality and attributed high value to the written word (see Lohisse 1981). Rates of literacy are always higher in towns than in the countryside, but when we find fairly reliable evidence about them in seventeenth-century Paris, they are surprisingly high, though of course they did not reach universality until the twentieth century. With the usual caveat concerning variation by sex, Chartier (1981) provides figures for levels of literacy in Paris (see Table 13). Linguistic hierarchies developed in towns which mirrored social hierarchies, giving rise to the whole set of beliefs referred to as ‘the ideology of the standard’ (see above, §1.1.2). This was to be central to the codification of the new standard languages and to the ‘reallocation’ of linguistic variants.

6.2 Reallocation

The processes of dialect-mixing and koinéisation that look to have occurred in medieval Paris produced a mixture of dialect-forms which was stable and structured but at the same time subject to variation and change. At the end of the Middle Ages, predictably enough, there persisted in Parisian speech a large number of variants left over from any original mixture. Trudgill (1986: 126) observes that in situations of dialect contact the phase of koinéisation is commonly followed by another, which he labels ‘reallocation’. Variants left over from koinéisation are recycled as *social-class dialect variants*, *stylistic variants*, *areal variants*, or, in the case of phonology, *allophonic variants* (see above, §2.3.2). Consciously or not, speakers seek to maximise the communicative value of residual variants, instead of leaving them floating in free variation. Reallocation is akin to ‘exaptation’ (see Lass 1990: 316–24), that is,

recycling old linguistic material into new uses. We will argue in this section that it is a process such as this which characterises the sociolinguistic development of Parisian speech in the proto-industrial period.

Over the medieval centuries the Parisian speech community might be said to have acquired a ‘uniform structural base’, but in the subsequent period, sub-groups within the community sought to distinguish themselves by finding new ways of expressing these shared linguistic resources. How were these resources to be shared out or ‘reallocated’? In the dialect situations examined by Trudgill (in twentieth-century Norwich and Belfast), reallocation takes place unconsciously, and we may assume that this is how it normally happens. However, in early modern Paris we can see it at work consciously and explicitly, in the movement of linguistic codification which was such a feature of social life in the capital at this time (sixteenth to eighteenth centuries):

All communities properly so called have a social structure. This implies a hierarchy of persons, and it is a short step thence to a hierarchy of behavior, with certain persons regarded as admirable, then as preferable, and ultimately as right. Any alternative patterns are excluded; in our society this is achieved by labeling them substandard. The projection of hierarchical evaluations on to dialects thus has strong roots in general behavior, but it comes into full form upon the increase of hierarchical thought and in awareness of language engendered by writing and the onset of standardisation. (Joseph 1987: 58)

Codification involves, among other things, the explicit reallocation of variable parts of the community’s linguistic resources to different functions or to different styles, normally on the basis of the usage of its most powerful and most prestigious members.

6.2.1 *Sources of data*

In medieval Paris finding data to inform us about social variation in the language, and indeed about attitudes to it, is exceptionally difficult. In the proto-industrial period, the data remain ‘inherently bad’, but the situation becomes easier, thanks to the development of printing and the survival of a greater number of written records. Predictably enough there survives only a tiny amount of relatively *direct* evidence about variation in the city’s speech. The bulk of our evidence comes from *indirect* sources, metalinguistic works and literary representations of everyday speech. Although these sources provide reliable information about the variants in circulation, they automatically channel it through the prism of the observers’ subjective evaluations. In some respects this reduces the contribution such indirect material can make, but it does not destroy it completely, for subjective evaluations are what drive the whole reallocation process forward. We saw earlier (§1.3) that the community is to

be defined not in terms of any marked agreement in the use of language elements but in terms of participation in a set of shared evaluative norms. In a forthcoming paper Katia Ploog observes:

Les situations de contact génèrent des représentations – souvent conflictuelles, toujours différenciées – chez les locuteurs, représentations qui se répercuteront dans les pratiques linguistiques, avant d’affecter le système lui-même.

A quantity of vernacular data have survived from this period which are of a relatively direct type. We find them, for instance, in the direct notation of the everyday speech of the young Dauphin made by Jean Héroard in the early seventeenth century (see Ernst 1985). This is an extraordinary one-off. A more normal source is provided by the writings of inexperienced writers (e.g. personal correspondence (see Ernst 1996), and the *Journal* of Menétra (see Seguin 1992)). Precious as such material is, it is preserved in the most accidental and fragmentary way and provides only momentary glimpses of the real-life sociolinguistic situation.

Most of the surviving material on everyday speech is of the indirect type, that is, data which come down to us through the writings of contemporary observers. Into this category we must place, first of all, the large corpus of metalinguistic works produced in Paris during this period. The works in question include not only systematic grammars and dictionaries, but also the recommendations of orthoepists, polemical pieces about the state of the language, and the whole genre of *remarques* (unstructured collections of linguistic comments) which came into vogue after the publication of Vaugelas' *Remarques sur la langue françoise* (1647). The richness of this material may be gauged by inspecting the two volumes of comments from orthoepists and lexicographers on French pronunciation compiled by Charles Thurot (1881, 1883). Into this category we could also place the corpus of pedagogic grammars produced for foreign learners of French analysed by Radtke (1994). This metalinguistic material provides useful evidence not only about high-status forms which prescriptive authors recommend, but also on the low-status colloquialisms they reject.

It is easy to over-estimate the influence of prescriptive grammarians and lexicographers at this time, and to see them dictating the whole process of codification and reallocation (see §1.1.3). Glatigny (1992) and Trudeau (1992) have provided us with a clear account of the evolving discourse of metalinguistic commentary in France in the sixteenth and seventeenth centuries. They show how the language attitudes of linguistic commentators were a faithful reflection of more general social concerns. The grammarians did not stand outside society: they participated in the community's evaluative norms like everyone else. The importance of their work for linguistic historians is less its direct social impact than the explicit evidence it provides about the language variants in competition and about their social value at a particular time. Reallocation involves the

development of a new consensus in which the whole community is involved, consciously or not.

Another type of indirect evidence is to be found in literary and semi-literary representations of everyday Parisian speech. The proto-industrial city brought into existence a tradition of burlesque writing which used low-class speech as a vehicle for satire and humour. Texts written in this tradition frequently embody modifications to conventional spelling, which makes them valuable sources for non-standard phonetics as well as grammar and phraseology. A corpus of seven specimen texts is published in the Appendix. Texts like these cannot be read as transcriptions of naturally occurring speech. They are pieces of written language posing as speech, and they are written by people whose personal language was much higher up on the standardisation scale than the literary characters in the piece. These texts do not give equal treatment to all parts of the linguistic system: they focus particularly on variants located at the bottom of the socio-stylistic spectrum. Writers of this time rarely manipulated sociolinguistic variation for the sake of greater ‘realism’, they were most often concerned with the social symbolism of the varieties involved. They concern themselves almost exclusively with those variants that impinged most strongly on the consciousness of contemporary speakers.

What these texts offer us is a ‘folk’ view of the world based on what was perceivable and available to everyone. In the past, this has led linguistic historians to ignore them more or less completely. We will argue that they were wrong to do so. Not only do texts like this provide reliable evidence on the forms circulating in colloquial Parisian speech, but, like the grammarians, they offer valuable insights into the community’s shared evaluative norms and precise details about the changing social values ascribed to particular variants.

6.2.2 *Reallocation and salience*

The working of reallocation depends less on the objective characteristics of linguistic variants than on social evaluations placed upon them by speakers and on subjective factors like relative ‘salience’ (the level of awareness associated with particular variants). Trudgill (1986: 11) attributes salience to a number of factors – overt stigmatisation, linguistic change, phonetic distance and phonological contrast – which we can exemplify here with data found in sixteenth-century Parisian French.

As an example of a high-salience variant which attracted overt stigmatisation in the sixteenth century we could quote the variable [o] ~ [jo]:

Vitanda est autem vitiosissima vulgi Parisiensis pronunciatione in hac triphthongo, nempe *l’iaue*, et *siau* pro *seau*, *beau*, *ruisseau* et similia.² (Bèze 1584: 53)

² To be avoided, however, is the highly defective pronunciation of this triphthong found in the Parisian populace, namely *l’iaue*, and *siau* for *seau*, *beau*, *ruisseau* and so on.’

The indigenous variant [jo] found itself increasingly in competition, from the fourteenth century onwards, with a diphthongal variant [əo] > [o] (see above, §5.2.2). The form [əo] > [o], lacking the consonantalised first element, seems to have been adopted early by upper-class speakers, leading to strong stigmatisation in the sixteenth century of [jo].

As an example of a highly salient variant undergoing a process of linguistic change during the sixteenth century we can quote the complex shifting between [we], [e] and [wa] in the speech of Paris:

Pour *voirre* ou, comme d'autres l'escrivent, *verre*, on prononce vulgairement a Paris et on escrit tres mal *voarre*.³ (Bèze 1584: 52)

Certain variables were salient because the variants involved were phonetically radically different. This was the case with the [er] ~ [ar] variable. In the sixteenth century the [ar] variant came to be construed in Paris as a rural form, and very early on this led speakers to hypercorrect, with women apparently leading the way:

Les dames de Paris, en lieu de A prononcent E bien souvent, quant elles disent *Mon mery est a la porte de Peris ou il se faict peier*. En lieu de dire *Mon mary est a la porte de Paris ou il se faict paier*.⁴ (Tory 1529: f.33v)

An example of a high-salience variable where loss of phonological contrast was involved is Parisian nasal-lowering:

Phase I	Phase II
[ɪ̃]	[ɛ̃]
[ɛ̃]	[ã]

Speakers were evidently very aware of this:

Le Parisien prononce tous les mots terminez en *in* en *ain* . . . Autres y a qui prononcent à la parisienne *in* comme *ain*. Exemple, *J'ay beu de bon vain a la pomme de pain*, pour dire *j'ay beu de bon vin a la pomme de pin*.⁵ (Tabourot 1588: 92v)

Kerswill and Williams (2002) highlight potential circularity in Trudgill's notion of salience, and point out that it is ultimately difficult to know why some variants come to be avoided and others favoured. However, they conclude that Trudgill's idea of salience remains a useful one: in contact with speakers of other varieties, speakers tend to modify those features of their own varieties of which they are most aware, that is, the most 'salient' ones. Labov (1994: 300–1) views the

³ 'For *voirre* or, as others write *verre*, people in Paris pronounce (and write) in a very vulgar way *voarre*.'

⁴ 'The ladies of Paris very often pronounce E instead of A when they say *Mon mery est a la porte de Peris ou il se faict peier*. Instead of *Mon mary est a la porte de Paris ou il se faict paier*.'

⁵ 'The Parisians pronounce all the words ending in *in* as *ain* . . . There are others who pronounce *in* for *ain* in the Parisian manner.'

trajectory of a sound change across the community in the following way. At an early stage in the process an opposition of two linguistic forms may come to symbolise an overt opposition of social values. This association of linguistic and social values may remain below the level of social consciousness and result in an unconscious ‘indicator’, or, alternatively, it may rise above that level and result in a ‘marker’ or even a ‘stereotype’. At a later stage, one of the two forms of the marker wins out and there follows a long period when the disappearing form is heard as archaic, a symbol of a vanished prestige or stigma, and is used as a source of stereotyped humour until it is extinguished entirely.

The level of salience associated with a particular variable is then an important factor determining its fate: a very high level of salience normally leads to its elimination, lower levels of salience will lead to reallocation of the variants either lexically, or as socio-stylistic markers, or as mere indicators. At all events, the process of linguistic change is not a straightforward mechanical one dictated by internal factors alone. Speakers’ subjective perceptions about the social value of particular variants have a crucial role to play. The difficulty for the historian, at this distance in time, is to find reliable information not just about the socio-stylistic distribution of particular variants in real-life usage, but also about social evaluations of them. On the latter question, the literature of the proto-industrial period which we specified in §6.2.1 offers considerable help.

6.2.3 *Shared norms and prototype theory*

City speech is characterised on the surface by extreme heterogeneity, but beneath it there exists a fundamental orderliness (see §1.3). The inhabitants of a metropolis are not united in their speech habits, which are remarkably diverse, but they are by their linguistic attitudes and prejudices, which are remarkably consistent. The speech of individual speakers may be idiosyncratic, but this idiosyncrasy is constrained by evaluative norms shared with everyone else. Speakers’ attitudes to language variation are known to be more regular and uniform than actual usage within the community, and to be slow to change. In the France of our own day Gueunier, Genouvrier and Khomsî (1983) have shown that less-educated speakers generally share the negative judgements made on their speech by speakers located higher up the social scale.

Is it possible to discern any consistent patterns in language attitudes in proto-industrial Paris? Is it possible, at this distance in time, to gain access to the community’s shared evaluative norms, for it is these that are likely to have determined the various selections and de-selections involved in reallocation? We saw earlier (§6.1.5) how, at the time of the Renaissance, a new polarity began to crystallise in the social psychology of the city, setting the concept of ‘urbanity’ against its negative counterpart, ‘rusticity’. In their drive for

identity and status, the urban elites used all aspects of cultural life (such as dress, domestic furnishing, art, entertainment and, of course, language) to distinguish themselves from people below them. Their desire to draw lines around acceptable speech prompted the emergence of an army of prescriptive grammarians. The representations of metropolitan speech which we find in the metalinguistic writings and in the literature of this period are dominated by a polarity between Good and Bad. We frequently find, alongside idealised images of the Gentleman (*Honnête Homme*), equally idealised images of the Peasant (*Paysan*). In the one, high, socially approved variants regularly co-occur with one another and are associated with genteel, upper-class speakers, and in the other low, stigmatised variants regularly co-occur in a sort of implicational scale (see Rickford 2002), and are associated with peasants and low-life Parisians.

The authenticity of linguistic portraits of the Gentleman produced at this time is rarely questioned. The images of the Peasant, on the other hand, are generally dismissed as ‘literary stereotypes’ and caricatures with no linguistic value, the authors who produced them being slaves to convention and literary tradition. This underestimates their significance. Social typing is not just a literary phenomenon but a general feature of cognitive information processing. It is probably a necessary part of our procedures for coping with the outside world (see Saville-Troike 1989: 195). We have no means of knowing for certain, of course, but the pervasiveness and long-standing nature of the stereotype of the Urban Peasant (and of the Gentleman) in proto-industrial Paris suggests that the authors who activated it were not engaged in a simple *salon* exercise in intertextuality, but were articulating subjective views of language variation which were widely, if not universally, held across the city over a long period. The fact that speakers generally agree on the evaluation of the very linguistic norms that symbolise divisions between them suggests that these authors were not articulating a limited upper-class view of the sociolinguistic scene, but were responding to a broader set of sociolinguistic pressures moving like tectonic plates below the surface of society.

Perhaps the recurrent groupings of sociolinguistic variants such as those we find in those images are best considered not so much as ‘stereotypes’, which are fairly superficial, but as ‘prototypes’, which are more deep-rooted:

Prototype theory . . . offers us a possible way of looking not only at how concepts may be formed . . . but also at how we achieve our social competence in the use of language. We judge circumstances as being typically this or typically that, and we place people in the same way. (Wardhaugh 2002: 236)

In a period of sociolinguistic uncertainty prototype-based concepts are essential: when speakers hear a new linguistic item, they associate it with those who typically seem to use it and what, apparently, is the typical occasion of its use. What we find emerging in proto-industrial Paris is a pair of antithetical

sociolinguistic ‘prototypes’ of the good and the bad speaker, encapsulated in the figures of the Gentleman (*l’Honnête Homme*) and the Peasant (*le Paysan*). It is the presence of these contrasting prototypes, embedded in the social psychology of the city and embodying the most salient sociolinguistic variables of their day, which reflected the social evaluation of particular variants and largely dictated the process of reallocation.

6.3 Summary

In this chapter we looked first at changes in the socio-demographic structure of Paris which we suspect conditioned sociolinguistic developments over the proto-industrial period. We then examined what may have been the dominant sociolinguistic process at work (‘reallocation of variants’), paying particular attention to the notion of ‘salience’. Reallocation can be seen to underpin much of the codification of French that took place at this time. Codification was not, however, a matter simply for the grammarians: it involved the development of a new consensus in which the whole community participated, knowingly or not (see Keller 1992). We have only tiny fragments of contemporary evidence that give us glimpses into reallocation in real-life Parisian usage. However, we have plenty of information in literature and in metalinguistic comment which indicates what the most salient variables were. Social information of this kind is essential if we are to chart the reallocation of variants between standard and vernacular. There is always a danger of interpreting contemporary representations of the spoken language as direct embodiments of real-life speech. Extreme caution needs to be exercised with material of this sort, for the relationship between ‘representation’ and ‘reality’ was far from simple and direct. On the other hand, it is too simple to believe that there was no relationship between them at all. The prototypes we are postulating here are abstractions to which the behaviour of individual speakers approximated more or less, according to his or her social characteristics and the situation of utterance.