

PRESENTATION

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The French language in Québec, so aptly designated by the term “langagement”¹ coined by Lise Gauvin, cannot be understood without regard for the moral, ethical, social, political, historic, linguistic, literary and identity issues with which it is interwoven. The language defines the collective identity of Québec through its difference with the rest of North America, but also with France : “The

1. *Langagement. L'écrivain et la langue au Québec*, Montréal, Boréal, 2000. “Langagement” is a blend in French of “langue” or “language” and “engagement” or “commitment”.

illusion of the language. Neither the same, nor another. ANOTHER IN THE SAME”² writes Régine Robin. The language has been and continues to serve as an instrument of social change (through the feminization of vocabulary and creation of new words), an area of commonality in diversity (through the concept of common public language), a formal literary playing ground (through Joual, the use of different registers and accents), an urban laboratory (through plurilingualism and language planning), and a political reserve which, beyond partisan and patriotic differences, still elicits profound public interest.

This volume features texts by four authors, who present and analyze the history of and positions taken on the French language as a social, political and identity-related tool. Ian Lockerbie (University of Stirling, Scotland)

2. *La Québécoise*, Montréal, XYZ éditeur, “Romanichels poche” series, 1993 [1983], p. 183.

looks at the “aménagement” of French in Québec, focusing on complex choices bound up with questions of norms, lexical variations and anglicisms, and reflecting on Québec’s ambiguous relations with French spoken in France. Ines Molinaro (University of Cambridge, England) presents a remarkable synthesis of the language and identity-related policies promoted by the Québec and Canadian governments. She underscores the contradictions such policies create in the management of bilingualism and multilingualism. She observes how the language choices made by allophone immigrants in Québec influence the possibility of securing French as the common language spoken by the population. Karim Larose (Université Laval, Québec) traces the emergence of the concept of unilingualism in Québec, which took shape at the end of the 1950s and was responsible for a veritable social and political revolution, the epilogue to which would be the adoption in 1977 of the *Charter of the*

French Language. Finally, Leigh Oakes (University of London, England) questions whether it is possible to “de-ethnicize” a language entirely, as the concept of French as a common public language suggests, and seeks means of making French acceptable and attractive to immigrants settling in Québec.