A SOCIOLINGUISTIC STUDY OF THE ORIGINS OF *ne* DELETION IN EUROPEAN AND QUEBEC FRENCH

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We present and discuss the results of a sociolinguistic historical study of variable deletion of the preverbal negative particle *ne* 'not', a phenomenon observable in many contemporary varieties of spoken French, but which has not yet made its way into standard written French. Our study's two main goals are (i) to contribute to the resolution of a debate over the point in time when *ne* deletion became a prevalent feature of nonstandard spoken French, and (ii) to assess the role of the affixal status of subject clitic pronouns in the rise of *ne* deletion.

Our study is based on the analysis of an extensive database comprising a wide range of seventeenth-, eighteenth-, nineteenth-, and early twentieth-century sources providing information on the typical features of nonstandard spoken European and Quebec French. It reveals that *ne* deletion became widespread in nonstandard spoken French only in the nineteenth century and leads us to hypothesize that the affixal status of subject clitic pronouns contributed to the rise of *ne* deletion.*

INTRODUCTION. In this article we present and discuss the results of a historical study of nonstandard spoken French. Our study is focused on variable deletion of the preverbal negative particle *ne*, a phenomenon observable in many contemporary varieties of spoken French but which has not yet made its way into standard written French. Our study has two main goals: (i) to contribute to the resolution of a debate as to when deletion of the particle *ne* became prevalent in nonstandard spoken French, and (ii) to assess the role played by the affixal status of subject pronouns in the rise of *ne* deletion.

As shown below, there is a considerable range of more or less divergent opinions among linguists as to when *ne* deletion became widespread in nonstandard spoken French, some contending that this phenomenon was already prevalent as early as the seventeenth century, others of the opinion that its rise is a much more recent development. This lack of agreement demonstrates that there has not been enough systematic corpus-based research on the evolution of *ne* deletion and hence that those who have debated this issue have often not based their opinion on solid diachronic data. What is needed now is a study that focuses on this phenomenon and attempts to chart its diachronic sociolinguistic trajectory over several hundred years.

The internal factors that may have favored the rise of *ne* deletion have been the object of a number of recent studies. One factor that has received special attention is the transformation of French subject clitics into preverbal affixes. We examine the role of this factor in the light of the findings of our historical study of *ne* deletion and of previous historical studies that have documented phenomena indicating that subject clitics have become preverbal affixes.

1. OVERVIEW OF THE RISE OF POSTVERBAL NEGATION. It should be pointed out at the outset that the primary condition behind variable deletion of particle *ne* lies in the fact that French developed a two-pronged negative construction, whereby the notion of

negation is expressed redundantly via two elements: a preverbal particle *ne* AND postverbal negators (words such as *pas* or *point* 'not' or *jamais* 'never' and *rien* 'nothing'), as in examples 1 and 2.

(1) Ils   ne   travaillent pas le lundi
    they NEG work   NEG on Monday
        'They don't work on Monday.'

(2) Je ne   ferais jamais une chose pareille
    I NEG would do NEG + ever a thing like that
        'I would never do a thing like that.'

Before we review the studies that focused on deletion of particle *ne*, we provide the reader with a brief overview of the chief stages that led to the development of this two-pronged negative construction. Our diachronic presentation focuses on literary French.

According to Foulet 1977 and Price 1984, as early as the thirteenth century, negation was expressed mostly via preverbal negative particle *ne* rather than *non*, a morpheme of Latin origin that is still used in Romance languages such as Spanish or Italian. Negative particle *ne* expressed the generic notion of negation and it could be used either on its own (*il ne vout estre ses amis* 'he does not want to be their friend') or it could be reinforced with postverbal words such as *pas*, *point*, *mie* which added emphasis to that notion (*la femme ne puet pas estre seine* 'the woman can in no way be in good health').[1] *Ne* was also used in conjunction with words like *goute*, *rien*, *mais/plus*, and so on, that specified the scope of negation (*li siècle n'est mais cortois nie jolis* 'the century is no more courteous and beautiful'). Although these words originally had a positive meaning, towards the end of Old French, they underwent several changes leading to their grammaticalization.[2] For some of these words, this entailed a partial or total loss of part of their original meaning (*la poudre fut si grant que l'on n'i veoit goute* 'there was so much dust that one could not see anything' [rather than 'a drop']), and, for all of these words, acquisition of a negative meaning (due to their association with *ne*). An important consequence of this development was that these words had become postverbal negators in their own right and expressed the same negative notion that was expressed by *ne* (Buridant 2000).

According to Chaurand (1999), the trend to express negation via both *ne* and postverbal negators like *pas* or *point* was already well established in the thirteenth century (late Old French). It occurred in about fifty percent of negative sentences. This trend gained further momentum during the Middle French period, fourteenth and fifteenth centuries (see Marchello-Nizia 1979:305), and by the end of the seventeenth century, usage of *ne* on its own had become marginal: it was confined to the works of poets (see Haase 1969:250). The status of this usage did not change substantially during the following centuries. It has remained marginal, limited to a few syntactic contexts and marking a very formal register.

2. HISTORY OF *ne* DELETION

2.1. LITERARY FRENCH. Consulting the main works on the history of literary French reveals that from the period that the two-pronged negative construction became well established (i.e. Middle French) to the present, deletion of particle *ne* has remained

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[1] These words descend from Latin *passum*, *punctum*, and *micam*. In Early Old French they meant, respectively, 'step', 'point', and 'crumb'.

[2] These words descend from Latin *guttam*, *rem*, and *magis*. In early Old French (and even later, in the case of *rien*) these words meant, respectively, 'drop', 'thing', and 'more'.

sporadic. For instance, according to Martin and Wilmet (1980:34), who report on the Middle French period, there were no obvious signs that *ne* could undergo deletion when it was used with postverbal negators: 'on rencontre quelques exemples où ne est effacé, comme c'est possible dans la langue populaire d'aujourd'hui, ce sont là des exceptions rarissimes' ('one comes across a few examples where *ne* is deleted, as it is possible to do in today's popular French, but such instances are extremely rare').[3] Gougenheim (1951:218) reports very much the same situation for the French Renaissance period (sixteenth century). Seguin (1972:255) points to the fact that in eighteenth-century literary French *ne* is maintained near categorically and that its occasional deletion is confined to texts written by 'd'obscurs gratte-papiers qui sont parfois presque illetrés' ('obscure pencil pushers who are sometimes illiterate'). Finally in relation to modern French, Grevisse (1988:1491) notes that while in popular French *ne* is almost systematically deleted, in written French it occurs only when the author reproduces actual speech.

Interestingly, however, in several works on the history of French, authors pointed out that in the special context of negative interrogative sentences particle *ne* was absent. For instance, in relation to sixteenth-century literary French, Gougenheim (1951:218) points to the fact that in that syntactic context, particle *ne* was often absent (*sont ce pas des songes de l'humaine vanité de faire de la Lune une terre céleste?* 'aren't these thoughts of human vanity to look upon the moon as a heavenly earth?'). We use the term ABSENT here, rather than omitted or deleted, to emphasize the fact that this finding does not contradict the general observation that *ne* deletion has remained marginal in literary French. Far from being an early manifestation of a trend to delete particle *ne* in negative interrogative sentences, the absence of *ne* in such a context underscores the fact that this special context remained resistant to the insertion of particle *ne* for a relatively long period in the history of French. The reason for this lies in a development that was examined by Price (1993). As Price, Martin and Wilmet (1980), and Marchello-Nizia (1979) pointed out, during late Old French and Middle French, postverbal elements like *pas* or *point* or *rien* and *jamais* were still used with a positive value in nonnegative sentences and notably in interrogative sentences: *Trovez vous rien?* 'Can you find anything?'; *Puis me ge point fier en toi?* 'Can I rely on you at all?'. As this last example indicates, words like *pas* and *point* were in fact used to add emphasis to the interrogative sentence (see Price 1993). However, as these same words acquired a negative meaning, they were reinterpreted as negative particles in interrogative sentences. Thus, a sentence like *Le voulez-vous point?* was reinterpreted as 'Don't you want it?' rather than as 'Do you want it at all?'. Such reinterpretation did not bring about the insertion of particle *ne* in negative interrogative sentences immediately and the reinterpreted negative interrogative sentences remained without *ne* for an extended period of time. Recall that Gougenheim (1951) found that in sixteenth-century literary French absence of *ne* in negative interrogative sentences was commonplace. Haase (1969) also reports that in seventeenth-century literary French negative interrogative sentences still frequently lacked *ne*. But Haase also points out that there was disagreement among the grammarians of the day as to whether non-use of *ne* was permissible

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[3] Martin and Wilmet (1980:34) go on to say that *ne* deletion was much more frequent in infinitive clauses. Unfortunately, these authors do not give the rate of *ne* deletion in this context and two of the three examples that they provide are not entirely conclusive since they involve use of the negator *rien*, an adverb which, as will be shown below, was still used to convey the positive meaning of 'thing' (*chose*) during the Middle French period.

in both direct and indirect negative interrogative sentences or only in direct ones.[4] This may be taken as a sign that the insertion of particle *ne* in such sentences was beginning to gain acceptance. During the following centuries, the trend to insert *ne* in negative interrogative sentences gained considerable momentum. According to Seguin (1972), in eighteenth-century literary French, negative interrogative sentences used without particle *ne* were already showing signs of having become *une licence poétique* and during the nineteenth and twentieth centuries, they had become quite rare in literary French. Consequently from the eighteenth century onwards, in literary French, *ne* has been almost systematically maintained in negative sentences.

2.2. SPOKEN FRENCH. In contrast to literary French, spoken French has developed a trend to variably delete particle *ne* (as in 3).

(3) Ils (ne) travaillent pas le lundi
    'They don't work on Monday.'

Several recent sociolinguistic studies (Ashby 1981, Coveney 1996, Sankoff & Vincent 1977) have shown that *ne* deletion is quite prevalent in contemporary European and Canadian spoken French in terms of discursive frequency, demographic diffusion, and structural diffusion.[5] But there is considerable disagreement about when the trend to delete *ne* started.

Valli (1983), Blanche-Benveniste and Jeanjean (1986), Hausmann (1992), and Greive (1984) are of the opinion that *ne* deletion is a longstanding feature of nonstandard spoken French. All of these authors point out that one can find instances of *ne* deletion in Héroard's transcript of Louis XIII's speech as a young child (Ernst 1985). This transcript was taken from the years 1605 to 1611 and according to the authors this suggests that *ne* deletion was already prevalent in seventeenth-century spoken French. Greive (1984) also points to the fact that Brunot (1939) found several instances of *ne* deletion in one of the works of Vadé, an eighteenth-century author who produced literary parodies of popular spoken French (see §3.1 below). Greive (1984) also found numerous instances of *ne* deletion in *Les scènes populaires*, a series of plays in popular French produced during the first half of the nineteenth century. According to Greive this reinforces the view that there is 'une tradition ininterrompue de cette forme de la négation dans le langage populaire ('an uninterrupted tradition to use this form of negation [i.e. negation without *ne*] in popular speech'). Valli (1983) suggests that in view of the absence of data on *ne* usage in nonstandard spoken French during the Middle French period (fourteenth and fifteenth centuries), one cannot posit with any certainty that in nonstandard spoken French there has ever been a stage where *ne* was systematically maintained.

In light of the fact that *ne* deletion has been found to be a near-categorical feature

[4] Even in this last context, not all grammarians agreed that it was possible to omit *ne*.

[5] In their study of *ne* in Montreal spoken French, Sankoff and Vincent documented a rate of non-use of *ne* of 99.5%. They hypothesized that in this particular variety of French, occasional use of *ne* may be accounted for by a stylistic rule of insertion (i.e. in the formal register, *ne* is inserted before the verb some of the time). Thus they entitled their study 'The productive use of *ne* in Montreal French'. In all of the other studies of *ne* non-usage, based on a speech corpus that we have consulted, the authors refer to such non-usage with terms like 'loss', 'deletion', 'omission', or 'non-use'. While the use of these terms may be justified by the fact that the rates of *ne* non-use found in these studies are lower than those found by Vincent and Sankoff, this last study underscores the need to characterize the rules adhered to by speakers and to use terms that reflect such characterization. Our study is not based on spoken French corpora and does not attempt to describe the grammar of specific speech communities. We use the terms DELETION or NON-USE of *ne* in keeping with the terminology used in most studies of this phenomenon.

of contemporary casual Quebec spoken French (see Sankoff & Vincent 1977), Posner (1985) also surmises that the trend to delete *ne* in popular French dates back to the seventeenth century (the century during which the bulk of immigration from France to New France took place). Posner points out however that *ne* deletion became fully established in popular French only towards the end of the eighteenth century.[6]

In contrast to the authors who defend the thesis that *ne* deletion is a longstanding feature of colloquial or popular spoken French, several authors have argued that the rise of *ne* deletion is a relatively recent development in this variety of French. In a study devoted to *ne* deletion in seventeenth-century French, Ayres-Bennet (1994) found in the sources she consulted on seventeenth-century nonstandard spoken French (e.g. comedies, fictitious dialogues in popular speech) *ne* deletion was almost completely nonexistent. She concluded that there is little evidence to support the hypothesis that particle *ne* was generally deleted in seventeenth-century popular spoken French. Pohl (1975) is of the opinion that the rise of *ne* deletion is a recent phenomenon and that it gained momentum only during the first half of the nineteenth century. He attributes this to the intensification of interpersonal contacts and mobility brought about by the development of the railroad system and points to the fact that in his study of *ne* deletion in the twentieth-century spoken French of Belgium and France, rural speakers of popular French show very high levels of maintenance of particle *ne* that contrast with the lower rates of urban speakers. In keeping with Pohl's findings, Lüdicke (1982) found that in the rural areas of France, and of Francophone Belgium and Switzerland, there were several regions where maintenance of particle *ne* was very high or categorical. Lüdicke's study was based on data collected at the end of the nineteenth century for the *Atlas linguistique de France* (see Gilliéron & Edmont 1969).[7]

Finally, in an article published in this journal, Ashby (1981) hypothesized that *ne* deletion may have risen in the French of France only recently, since in his sociolinguistic study of Tours spoken French, the older generations exhibited a rate of *ne* deletion that was considerably lower (48%) than that of the younger generations (81%).[8] Ashby (1981:675) remarked that his interpretation was consistent with the step-by-step evolution of the morphosyntax of negation in French that he formulated as follows: stage 1 (Classical Latin): *non* + verb; stage 2 (Old and Middle French): *ne* + verb; stage 3 (Classical French, i.e. seventeenth-century French): *ne* + verb + *pas*; stage 4 (Modern French, post-seventeenth-century French): (*ne*) verb + *pas*; and stage 5 (Future French): verb + *pas*.

Valli (1983) and Blanche-Benveniste and Jeanjean (1986) disputed Ashby's interpretation of the intergenerational differences in rates of *ne* deletion revealed by his study. They argued that if younger speakers delete *ne* more often than older speakers, it is not because, as hypothesized by Ashby, they are 'participating in an ongoing linguistic change', but because they are less influenced by standard French. In fact, they went as far as to surmise that this age-graded pattern of differential sensitivity to Standard French may go as far back as the early seventeenth century, since, as noted above, in

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[6] However, she does not mention any specific corpus-based studies that demonstrate this.

[7] This is also true for the Occitan-speaking area of France. There are some regions within this area where particle *ne* or *nu* is systematically maintained. The Occitan area, however, was not examined by Lüdicke (1982).

[8] Ashby (1981) also argued that his finding that working-class women displayed the highest rates of *ne* deletion provided additional support for his interpretation since, as pointed out in Labov 1990, working-class women have often been found to be at the leading edge of linguistic change away from the standard.

Héroard's transcript of the speech of young Louis XIII there are many instances of *ne* deletion.[9]

In a reply to Valli 1983 and Blanche-Benveniste & Jeanjean 1986, Ashby (1991) made two main points. First, in the absence of real time data (e.g. data on the frequency of *ne* deletion by younger speakers, two decades before or after the 1976 Tours sociolinguistic survey) neither his thesis nor the antithesis defended by Valli and Blanche-Benveniste and Jeanjean can be proven beyond any doubt. Second, Ashby pointed out that his younger speakers were interviewed under exactly the same circumstances as his older speakers and hence differential sensitivity to standard French on the part of both speaker groups is unlikely to be at the root of the very sizable intergroup differences in frequency of *ne* deletion that he documented. Ashby, however, collected a second corpus of spoken French in Tours in 1995, which enabled him to document a substantial increase in the overall frequency of *ne* deletion in the speech of both older and younger generations. The rate of *ne* deletion of the older generations in 1976 was 48%, compared to 75% in 1995, and the rate for the younger generations in 1976 was 81%, compared to 86% in 1995 (Ashby 2001).[10] These new findings lend considerable support to his interpretation that the intergenerational differences in the frequency of *ne* deletion that he documented with his 1981 corpus were indeed an indication of linguistic change in progress.

To sum up, our review of the literature on the origins of *ne* deletion in popular spoken French reveals that with the exception of Ayres-Bennet (1994), none of the authors mentioned above carried out a systematic analysis of past sources on the evolution of popular French and that these authors often based their conclusions on a limited number of secondhand data on *ne* deletion.[11] In fact, the need for a thorough analysis of past sources on popular spoken French in relation to the history of *ne* deletion is acknowledged by several of the scholars who have debated this topic (Ashby 1991, Ayres-Bennet 1994, Blanche-Benveniste & Jeanjean 1986, and Valli 1983), and this is the primary reason we decided to undertake such a study.

Finally, we point out that the trend to delete *ne* (or first part of the NEG) is not only common to modern spoken French but to some of the Occitan dialects (e.g. Provençal, Gascon), to Romansh, Pyrenean Catalan, the Lombard dialects of Northern Italy and some of the dialects of Portuguese (see Schwegler 1983, 1988, Posner 1985, 1996). As such, it has generated considerable interest among linguists, who have attempted to identify the internal factors that may have triggered the rise of this trend. In addition to the resulting grammaticalization noted above (the necessary condition), several factors have been proposed to account for the increase in the trend to delete *ne* in French (see Posner 1985, Harris 1978, Schwegler 1988, and also Coveney 1996 for a discussion on their explanatory strengths or weaknesses). Among these factors are (i) pragmatic factors favoring use of emphasizers; (ii) towards the end of the Middle French period,

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[9] Coveney (1996:90) also interpreted the intergenerational differences in frequency of *ne* deletion revealed by his own study as: 'a pattern of age-grading, whereby each generation of speakers has virtually a zero rate of *ne* retention as children and adolescents, but then as they become older modify their speech under pressure from and in the direction of the written language'. It should be made clear, however, that in Coveney's study the difference in the frequency of *ne* deletion exhibited by the older and the younger speakers is much smaller than the one documented in Ashby 1981.

[10] Ashby (2001) also found that in 1995 working-class women still displayed the highest rates of *ne* deletion.

[11] Although Ayres-Bennet's study is based on extensive sources of data on popular French, it is centered on the seventeenth century only and thus does not provide an overview of the evolution of *ne* deletion.

the accentual patterns of French changing from word stress to rhythmic group stress and hence *ne* becoming unstressed; (iii) the onset of schwa deletion in the sixteenth century, a development that brought about the phonetic erosion of *ne*; and (iv) transformation of preverbal subject clitic pronouns into prefixes bound to the verb stem with the resulting effect of, so to speak, squeezing negative particle *ne* out, since the latter is used between the subject clitic and the verb.[12]

2.3. GOALS OF OUR HISTORICAL STUDY OF *ne* DELETION. The chief purpose of our study is to attempt to reconstruct the evolution of *ne* deletion in nonstandard spoken French over a period of three hundred years (from the beginning of the seventeenth century to the beginning of the twentieth century).[13] This reconstruction allows us to verify several of the hypotheses proposed by the researchers mentioned above. More specifically, we attempt to document the point in time at which *ne* deletion started to rise and thus we verify whether this is a longstanding feature of nonstandard French or a more recent development. We examine some of the external factors associated with such a rise and notably the social and regional origins of the speakers. Finally, we also identify some of the linguistic contexts associated with the rise of *ne* deletion and this leads us to examine the role of internal, structural factors in the rise of *ne* deletion. Our examination is primarily centered on the role of the affixal status of subject clitic pronouns in nonstandard spoken French, a factor that has been recently discussed by among others Harris (1978), Ashby (1981), and Posner (1985 and 1996). Our examination, however, is exploratory due to or because of two reasons: (i) there are not enough systematic corpus-based studies on the history of the various linguistic phenomena indicating that subject clitic pronouns have become affixes (e.g. subject doubling, resumptive subject pronouns), and (ii) a systematic analysis of these phenomena in our corpora would entail a type of research that is much beyond the scope of the present study.

Our reconstruction of the evolution of *ne* deletion in nonstandard spoken French is based on both European and Quebec French sources. We have chosen to include Quebec French for several reasons. First, the colony of New France, which became later the Province of Quebec, was established in 1608 (foundation of the town Quebec). Therefore, our Quebec sources provide useful complementary data on the evolution of *ne* deletion during the entire period under study. Second, after New France was taken over by the British (1763), the evolution of French in Quebec was less affected by normalizing pressure than the evolution of French in France during the same time period. After the British conquest most of the members of the French elite returned to France and never came back to Canada, and up to the end of the first half of the twentieth century, educational levels among the French-speaking population in Quebec were notoriously low (see Corbeil 1976). The third reason for including Quebec French in the study is the source of the speakers. The immigrants who settled in New France came mostly from three different regions of France (Paris and the surrounding province of Île-de-France, Normandy, and Poitou-Charentes) that have been found in previous studies to have had a special impact on the genesis of Quebec French (Poirier 1994, Chauveau & Lavoie 1993). It will be interesting to see if these three factors that are particular to

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[12] Aside from object clitics, *ne* is the only particle that can be used between a subject clitic and the verb.

[13] Our study is similar to Lodge 2001. Lodge also considered a period of three hundred years (1500–1800), but he focused on the evolution of several phonological variants typical of nonstandard French.

the external history of Quebec French have had a special effect on the evolution of *ne* deletion.

3. METHODOLOGY

3.1. EUROPEAN FRENCH CORPORA. Our reconstruction of the evolution of *ne* usage in nonstandard European French is based on a variety of sources: (i) seventeenth-, eighteenth-, and nineteenth-century plays (comedies, farces, or vaudevilles) that included rural or urban characters from the lower strata of society;[14] (ii) seventeenth- and eighteenth-century mock epistolary or dialogic exchanges between individuals from such social strata;[15] (iii) an eighteenth-century diary by a self-employed glazier;[16] and (iv) data from the dialectological survey of France carried out at the end of the nineteenth century.[17]

For the first two sources, we used only texts in which the authors had attempted to reproduce popular speech, as indicated by the presence of nonstandard lexical or morphosyntactic usages and of altered spellings that denoted nonstandard pronunciations.[18] Obviously, the presence of these features does not mean that the authors of the

[14] The plays that we examined are: *Le pédant joué* by Cyrano de Bergerac (1654, from Lodge's corpus of popular French texts), *Le médecin malgré luy* by Molière (1667), *Dom Juan* by Molière (1665), *La nopce de village* by de Brecourt (1666, from Lodge's corpus), *La vache et le veau* by Gueullette (1756), *Le désespoir de Jocrisse* by Dorvigny (1800), *L'exécution* by Monnier (1835), *Paris la nuit* by Dupeuty (1842), *Les bohémiens de Paris* by D'Ennery and Grangé (1843), *La consigne est de ronfler* by Grangé (1896), and *Madame Sans-Gêne* by Moreau (1912). We wish to thank Anthony Lodge for allowing us to use his edited corpus of seventeenth- and eighteenth-century popular French. The reader can find more information about Lodge's corpus at the following web site: http://ota.ahds.ac.uk/ (The Oxford Text Archive; Paris Speech in the Past).

[15] The texts written in the popular or burlesque genre included in our corpus are: six *Mazarinades* (see *Les Mazarinades* 1641–1652), including *Les agréables conférences de deux paysans de Saint-Ouen et de Montmorency sur les affaires du temps* (from Lodge's corpus)—a more lengthy piece that provides data on the rural varieties of French spoken in the northern surroundings of Paris (Deloffre 1961); *Les Sarcellades* (anonymous, written in 1730–1732, from Lodge's corpus); *Lettres de Montmartre* (by Coustelier (1750), from Lodge's corpus); *Poésies et lettres facétieuses* by Joseph Vadé (written in 1750; see Vadé 1879); *De quelques parisianismes populaires* by Nisard (1980), a glossary of popular French, which includes short extracts in the burlesque or popular genre, mostly from seventeenth- and eighteenth-century texts.

[16] The diary's author is Jacques-Louis Ménétra (1764). We used the version of this diary edited by Anthony Lodge that is part of his corpus.

[17] The survey data were published in *Atlas linguistique de la France* (see Gilliéron & Edmont 1969). This atlas provides useful information on *ne* usage in the rural speech varieties that complements the data from the nineteenth-century plays, which pertain for the most part to Parisan or urban popular French. The data from the *Atlas linguistique de la France* are also of special interest to us because they allow us to focus on the rural dialects spoken in the regions of France from which a substantial number of the New France settlers came.

[18] This may sound like an obvious point, but we feel that it is justified, given that from the beginning of the seventeenth-century onwards, French authors have tended to respect the norms prescribed by the French Academy and the authors of reference works. As a result, there are many more plays that feature characters from the lower class whose speech does not include morphophonetic or morphosyntactic variants typical of popular French than plays whose lower-class characters use such variants. Here is a sample of the features of nonstandard French that we found in our seventeenth- and eighteenth-century sources: *rian* [rjã] for *rien* [rjɛ̃] 'nothing', [ar] for [er] or [ɛr] (e.g. *guari* for *guéri* 'cured', *tarre* for *terre* 'earth'), *biau* [bjo] for *beau* [bo] 'beautiful', *je* for *nous* (e.g. *j'avons*, 'we have'), *ly* [li] for *lui* [lɥi] 'him', use of *goutte* rather than *rien* 'nothing', *je vas* or *je m'en vas* for *je vais* or *je m'en vais*, 'I'm going (to)', and crucially for the present study, cases of deletion or reduction of linguistic material, (e.g. *'ous* for *vous*, 'you', *votte* for *votre* 'your', *vela* [vəla] for *voila* [vwala] 'here is/are', *velez* [vəle] for *voulez* [vule] 'you want', *v'estes* [vɛt] for *vous estes* [vuzɛt] 'you are', *y a* [ja] for *il y a* [ilija] 'there is/are', *faut* for *il faut* 'it is necessary to', *core* for *encore* 'again', *qu'* for *qui* 'who', etc.).

texts included in our corpus have rendered faithfully the totality of nonstandard usages that were typical of popular speech at the time of writing. It does, however, indicate that the authors made more than a superficial attempt to catch the flavor of this variety of spoken French.

Having said this, we formulate two caveats about the use of the above-mentioned sources for linguistic research on the history of spoken French. First, there is a risk that some of the authors of such texts may have caricatured popular speech and exaggerated the frequency of nonstandard usages. For instance, nonstandard features used only variably by the speakers from the lower social strata may have been used systematically by such authors when rendering the speech of such speakers (see Lathuillère 1984).[19] Second, and conversely, there is also the risk that even though a given author attempted to give the flavor of popular speech, he or she may have failed to note the item under study. In particular, one must consider the possibility that certain items are absent or infrequent in the writings of certain authors, because the item in question has not yet become the object of overt stigmatization (that is, it is not strongly sociostylistically salient; see Lodge 2001). Consequently, to lessen such risks, one should try, if possible, to constitute a corpus including a variety of texts from different authors and in genres closely associated with the representation of speech (e.g. comic plays in prose, or dialogues in poems; see Naro 1978) and, if possible, complementary sources on actual (as opposed to fictional) discourse (see Ayres-Bennet 2000). In other words, the larger and the more varied the corpus the lesser the probability of obtaining skewed results.[20]

3.2. QUEBEC FRENCH CORPORA. Our reconstruction of the evolution of *ne* usage in Quebec French is based on the following sources: (i) letters from Martineau's corpus of seventeenth- and eighteenth-century letters;[21] (ii) Sister Marie Morin's seventeenth-century annals;[22] (iii) a diary written during the first half of the nineteenth cen-

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[19] We show below that in the seventeenth- and eighteenth-century texts included in our corpus, *ne* deletion was not such a feature since it is nonexistent or marginal.

[20] Another potential problem associated with the use of such texts is that their authors do not always provide sufficiently precise information about the regional origins of the characters in the play.

[21] Martineau's corpus of seventeenth- and eighteenth-century letters was drawn from two sources, the National Archives of Quebec in Montreal and the Archives of the University of Montreal (Fonds Baby). For this study we selected from Martineau's corpus a total of sixty-three letters written by forty-four different authors. These letters were written from 1666 to 1800 and were sent to members of the authors' families. These particular letters were selected because they contained clues that their authors did not have a high level of education or that they had chosen an informal register of written French. These clues included: informal address pronoun *tu* 'you', nonstandard and/or phonetic spellings (e.g. *portra* for *portera* 'will carry', *faudera* for *faudra* 'will be necessary', *mes safer* for *mes affaires* 'my things', *sette otonne* for *cet automne* 'this autumn'); informal or nonstandard phonetic, morphological, or lexical variants (e.g. *je va* for *je vais* or *je vay* 'I go', *couverte* for *couverture* 'blanket', *asavoir* for *savoir* 'to know', *capau* for *capot* 'coat'); and informal markers of oral interaction (e.g. use of *bon* 'well'). It should be pointed out that our corpus of sixty-three letters includes considerably fewer letters written between 1666 and 1749 (the French colonial period), but substantially more letters written during the second half of the eighteenth century. This reflects the rarity of letters in the archives that date back to the French colonial period and the still-limited size of the population of New France during that period.

[22] Sister Morin was in charge of *L'Hôtel-Dieu de Montréal* (Montreal Hospice) from 1659–1725. Her annals were edited by Legendre (1979). The inclusion of these annals in our sources is motivated in part by the fact that Martineau's corpus of letters includes only a limited number of letters written during the seventeenth century (see n. 21) and hence provides only a small number of negative sentences. Another important reason for using these annals for our study is that Sister Morin received only a few years of formal education. This accounts for the presence of many spelling errors, for instance, *les difficultée furent aplanie* for *les difficultés furent aplanies* 'the difficulties were smoothed out', *couvand* for *couvent* 'convent', *sesy*

tury;[23] (iv) plays written during the second half of the nineteenth century;[24] and (v) another corpus of letters (written in the early twentieth century).[25]

As can be seen the bulk of our Quebec French sources is mostly nonfictional data. During the seventeenth and eighteenth centuries and the first half of the nineteenth century, almost no comedies or literary texts in the popular genre were written in Quebec. This means that our sources on Quebec French broaden our historical sources on popular French and allow us to compare actual written discourse—the letters, the annals, and the diary—with fictional discourse—the speech of the characters in the plays or in the parodies of popular speech.

3.3. DATA ANALYSIS. In order to chart the evolution of *ne* deletion, we calculated rates of *ne* deletion for each of the texts included in our corpora. These rates are based on all of the negative sentences where one would expect the negative particle *ne* to be used before the verb. These are sentences where the verb is used with one of the following postverbal negators: *pas* and *point* 'not', *rien* 'nothing', *jamais* 'never', *aucun/personne* 'nobody', *plus* 'no longer' and, more rarely, with archaic postverbal negators such as *goutte* 'nothing'.

for *ceci* 'this', *quorectement* for *correctement* 'correctly', *extrordineres* for *extraordinaires* 'extraordinary', and *supstance* for *substance* 'substance'.

[23] The diary included in our sources was written by Jean-Maurice Lepailleur (1842–45). Lepailleur's diary is a text of more than a thousand pages. For the present study we used the first volume (189 pages), drawn from the original archive and edited by Martineau. Lepailleur was the illegitimate son of a public notary. He received limited formal education, which is reflected in the unusually high number of nonstandard usages and nonstandard phonetic spellings that we found in the extract used for our study (e.g. *et apprès maitre recouché* for *et après m'être recouché* 'and after having gone back to bed', *on fait senblanc de vousloire lasisté* for *on fait semblant de vouloir l'assister* 'and we pretend that we want to help him', *ils sont crace* for *ils sont crasses* 'they are devious', *aucune arjent* for *aucun argent* 'no money', *je vas* for *je vais* 'I go', *être après* for *être en train de* 'to be in the process of').

[24] Our corpus of nineteenth-century comedies includes: *Une partie de campagne* by Petitclair (written in 1856), *La conversion d'un pêcheur* by Labelle (1876), *Les cousins du député* by Massicote (1896), *Consultations gratuites* by Roy (1896), *On demande un acteur* by Roy (1896), *Nous divorçons* by Roy (1897), *L'auberge du Nᵒ3* by Roy (1899). Most of these plays are out of print and are not available in our respective university libraries. We used the extracts from these plays that are included in Duval's (1978) anthology of nineteenth-century Quebec French drama. These particular plays were chosen because their authors included in the speech of characters from the lower social strata features typical of vernacular Quebec French (*moé* [mwe] and *toé* [twe] for *moi* [mwɑ] and *toi* [twɑ] 'me' and 'you'; *su'* for *chez* 'to/at one's home'; *a* [a] for *elle* [ɛl]; *itou* for *aussi* 'also'; *ben* [bɛ̃] or *bian* [bjã] for *bien* [bjɛ̃] 'well'; *marci* [marsi] for *merci* [mɛrsi] 'thank you'; *justemint* [-mɛ̃] for *justement* [-mã] 'certainly'; *j'cré* [ʒkre] for *je crois* [ʒkrwa] 'I believe'; and *je pouvions* or *j'avions* for *nous pouvions* or *nous avions* 'we could' 'we had').

[25] This corpus includes letters written to Father Léo Bernier by his parishioners when he worked as an itinerant priest. These letters have been edited and are now available in two corpora: the Portelance corpus, which includes the entire set of letters gathered by Father Bernier, but which does not provide information on the social status of the authors; and Faribault's corpus, which includes only a subset of Bernier's letters, but which provides such information. The Faribault corpus contains mostly short letters written by 'ordinary' Quebeckers who lived in newly settled areas of Northern Quebec and a few letters written by members of the clergy or local officials. The usefulness of these letters for linguistic studies has already been shown by Simard and Bélanger (1992). The letters written by the ordinary parishioners include various nonstandard or archaic usages (e.g. *C'est le comité qu'administre* for *qui administre* 'It's the committee that manages', *caniste à l'huile* for *canistre d'huile* 'oil cans', *un terrain plus planche* for *un terrain plus plat* 'a flatter plot of ground', *un spéculeux de bois* for *un spéculateur de bois* 'a wood speculator', *Au cour d'Août je me suis rencontré avec l'Abbé Bernier* for *Au mois d'août j'ai rencontré l'Abbé Bernier* 'I met father Bernier in August'). The reader can find more information about the Portelance and Faribault corpora at the following web site: http://www.ling.uqam.ca/Forum/corpus/messages/3.html/ (Un corpus de Témiscouata).

Sentences where adverbs *jamais* and *rien* retained their etymological positive meaning, and hence where *ne* would not be expected (e.g. *diable emporte si j'entends rien en médecine* 'I will be damned if I know something about medecine') were excluded. Like other researchers, we also excluded negative sentences where clitic pronoun *on* precedes a verb with an initial vowel (*on n'entend pas* 'we cannot hear') or precedes an object clitic pronoun with an initial vowel (*on n'en veut pas* 'we don't want any', *on n'y va pas* 'we don't go there'). In such a context, speakers of French apply the rule of LIAISON with linking, which places the final /n/ of the clitic pronoun on the initial vowel of the verb or the object clitic, where it merges with elided negative particle *n'* (*on n'entend pas* [ɔ̃nãtãpɑ]). Because of this, even educated writers tend not to write *n'* and hence its absence in a given sentence is not a reliable indicator of its deletion in speech.

We excluded interrogative sentences from our analysis on the grounds that they constitute a special context. As we pointed out earlier, studies on the history of negation based on literary French show that in seventeenth- and eighteenth-century French (and even in the nineteenth and twentieth centuries) *ne* was not used categorically in negative interrogative sentences. This variable use of *ne* was the remnant of an earlier period (Old and Early Middle French) where *ne* was often absent in such sentences. This opened the possibility that in our seventeenth- and eighteenth-century corpora (and perhaps in our more recent corpora as well), we would also find instances of *ne* non-use that would be relics of the period when *ne* was almost systematically absent rather than genuine instances of *ne* deletion. In other words, by excluding negative interrogative sentences, we were able to focus on the syntactic contexts where *ne* usage had been solidly entrenched for many centuries and where instances of *ne* non-use would be bona fide cases of *ne* deletion.[26] Finally, we also excluded negative imperatives where the clitic is postverbal (*écoutez la pas* 'don't listen to her' instead of (*ne*) *l'écoutez pas*), since, as shown by Muller (1991) and Hirschbühler and Labelle (2001), *ne* is never used in that context. We retained negative imperatives where the object clitic precedes the verb (*vous boutés pas en peine* 'don't go to any trouble') or with no object clitic (*faites donc pas ça* 'don't do that then').

4. RESULTS

4.1. *Ne* DELETION IN EUROPEAN FRENCH. We examine first the seventeenth-century data. The data in Table 1 reveal that *ne* deletion is extremely infrequent in our seventeenth-century corpus: it occurred in only two of the 765 negative sentences included in the corpus. The two examples of *ne* deletion that we documented occurred after subject clitic pronoun *je* 'I' (see Appendix A).

TEXT	NEGATIVE SENTENCES	*ne* DELETION	PERCENTAGE OF *ne* DELETION
Les Mazarinades (1650)	40	1	2.5
Les agréables conférences (1650)	146	0	0
Le pédant joué (1654)	103	0	0
Le médecin malgré luy (1655)	131	0	0
La nopce de village (1667)	32	1	3.1
Dom Juan (1667)	313	0	0
TOTAL	765	2	0.2

TABLE 1. *Ne* deletion in 17th-century texts.

[26] This does not mean that a separate diachronic investigation of the emergence of *ne* DELETION in negative interrogative sentences could not be undertaken. But in view of the complexity of the history of *ne* usage in this special context, we have chosen to tackle it in future research.

While these data constitute substantial evidence suggesting that *ne* deletion was quite rare in seventeenth-century spoken French, they are at variance with the attestation of numerous instances of *ne* deletion in Héroard's transcript of the speech of Louis XIII as a child (1605–1610, from age 3.25–9.25). The reader will recall that in light of such attestation, Valli (1983), Greive (1984), Haussman (1992), and Blanche-Benveniste and Jeanjean (1986) suggested that *ne* deletion was a typical feature of the speech of the king's entourage and by extrapolation of seventeenth-century casual spoken French.[27]

To bolster our analysis, we therefore need to discuss an alternative hypothesis to the one proposed above, namely, that the instances of *ne* deletion found in Héroard's transcripts could be the manifestation of a developmental stage in the acquisition of French by the infant king, rather than a reflection of seventeenth-century spoken French. Ayres-Bennet (1994) considered this alternative hypothesis in light of Pohl's (1972) study of *ne* deletion in the speech of two children. Pohl found very high rates of *ne* deletion in the speech of these children: age 5–6 (81.5%), 6.5 (75.3%), and 12 (60.6%). But in his study, he also found that the children's parents deleted *ne* 33% of the time. Thus while it is reasonable to assume that the instances of *ne* deletion found in the children's speech were largely developmental, it is possible that such instances could, to some extent, reflect the speech that the children were (presumably) most consistently exposed to. To strengthen the alternative hypothesis, we can turn to Grégoire's study (1947 and 1979) of the acquisition of French by two young children (from 11 months to 6 years). In his study Grégoire examined the acquisition of negation and he discovered that even though the children had been raised in a home where they were not exposed to *ne* deletion, from the age of about three to four, they systematically deleted *ne*.[28] This led him to conclude: Les enfants n'ont pas été soumis à l'influence de ce langage. Il sont donc RESPONSABLES du changement. ('The children were not exposed to this speech [i.e. speech that features *ne* deletion]. They are therefore RESPONSIBLE [our emphasis] for this development.')

To sum up, the studies by Pohl (1972) and Grégoire (1947 and 1979) suggest that frequency of *ne* deletion in young children's speech is not a reliable indication of frequency of *ne* deletion in the input of such children. Further, the findings of Grégoire's study lead us to hypothesize that like the two children he studied, young Louis XIII frequently deleted *ne* because he had not yet acquired the negative construction even though *ne* deletion was not a typical feature of the speech of his entourage.

Let us turn to the data from our eighteenth-century texts.

Table 2 shows that the overall proportion of *ne* deletion in the eighteenth-century texts is still quite low although not as close to negligible as in the seventeenth-century corpus. The table also reveals that there is not much variation in the frequency of *ne* deletion across the five texts, with the exception of Vadé's *Poésies* and *Les Sarcellades* that feature rates of *ne* deletion somewhat higher than the overall average.

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[27] Ayres-Bennet (1994:72) reports that she found an overall rate of 62% of *ne* deletion in Héroard's transcripts. In his own analysis of Héroard's transcript, Greive (1984) found a rate of *ne* deletion of 52.5%.

[28] Grégoire concluded that the children were not exposed to *ne* deletion at home for two main reasons. The children's parents did not delete *ne* and they were occasionally spoken to by the housemaids in Wallon, a dialect, which at the time the corpus was gathered, featured categorical maintenance of *ne*; see Lüdicke's (1982) map of *ne* deletion based on the *Atlas linguistique de la France*. Interestingly, Grégoire (1947) also discovered that the stage of systematic *ne* deletion was preceded by a stage where *pas* is used without *ne* but before the verb (*pas papa s'en va* 'daddy is not going').

TEXT	NEGATIVE SENTENCES	*ne* DELETION	PERCENTAGE OF *ne* DELETION
Les Sarcellades (1730–1732)	263	9	3.4
Lettres de Montmartre (1750)	168	1	0.1
Poésies de Vadé (1750)	261	11	3.8
La vache et le veau (1756)	89	1	1.1
Ménétra's diary (1790)	850	2	2.3
TOTAL	1631	24	1.4

TABLE 2. *Ne* deletion in 18th-century texts.

Looking at the twenty-four instances of *ne* deletion included in Appendix A, the reader can see that we found no instances of *ne* deletion in sentences whose subject is a full NP. *Ne* deletion is confined to sentences whose subject is a clitic pronoun or that lack an overt subject. More specifically, we found ten cases of deletion after subject clitic pronoun *ce* (i.e. in the presentative construction *c'est* 'it is'), eight cases of deletion in the modal construction *(il) faut* 'it's necessary' whose clitic subject is absent,[29] three cases of deletion after subject clitic *je* 'I', two cases in imperative sentences, and the remaining case after subject clitic pronoun *tu* 'you'.[30]

Interestingly, in their studies of *ne* deletion in contemporary spoken European French, both Ashby (1991) and Coveney (1996) found that the rate of *ne* deletion for subject NPs was much lower than that for subject clitics (respectively 78% vs. 28% and 67% vs. 15%). Ashby found the highest rates of *ne* deletion in the constructions *(il) faut* and *c'est* (84% and 93%). Coveney found that among all the personal subject clitic pronouns, *je* had the second highest rate of *ne* deletion (89%). In other words, it is noteworthy that the contexts in which the trend to delete *ne* is most advanced in contemporary spoken French are contexts in which this trend seems to have emerged three centuries ago. Conversely, the context where *ne* deletion is least frequent (full NP subject) is a context where *ne* was retained categorically three hundred years ago.[31]

To better assess the favorable effect of *(il) faut*, *c'est*, and *je* on *ne* deletion, we calculated rates of *ne* deletion for each of these contexts (see Table 3).

CONTEXT	NEGATIVE SENTENCES	*ne* DELETION	PERCENTAGE OF *ne* DELETION
Je	389	3	0.7
Ce + est	40	11	27.5
faut	12	8	66.6
Il faut	86	0	0

TABLE 3. *Ne* deletion in three different contexts.

When construction *il faut* is used without its subject pronoun *il*, it is the context that has, by far, the most favorable effect on *ne* deletion. It is noteworthy, however, that

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[29] In our corpus, subject clitic *il* is also often absent when the modal construction *(il) faut* is used in the affirmative. The absence of *il* in *il faut* and *il ne faut pas* is likely a relic from an earlier stage in the history of French (Old French) when subject clitic pronouns were not expressed in sentences where the subject was impersonal and indeterminate (Buridant 2000:427); see discussion below and n. 26.

[30] France Martineau recently gathered a small corpus of informal letters written in the eighteenth-century in Normandy by individuals with a low level of education. We found a total of two cases of *ne* deletion out of twenty-two negative sentences. Interestingly *ne* was deleted after subject clitic *je* and before *faut*.

[31] In both Ashby's and Coveney's corpora negative imperatives are very infrequent. Consequently, the comparison with our eighteenth-century data is unreliable.

when *il faut* is used with its subject, *ne* is never deleted. This latter finding probably reflects a sociostylistic constraint, namely that maintenance of *il* in *il faut* was a feature of formal style and/or the speech of the elite and hence its natural assocation with the retention of *ne*.

The high level of *ne* deletion found for *faut* (*il faut* without its subject pronoun) is interesting since, in the same context, in Old and Middle French, *ne* maintenance was the norm. In fact, one can still find instances of *ne* retention with *faut* in sixteenth- and seventeenth-century texts (*ne faut outrepasser icy un autre mystere* 'one must not overlook another mystery').[32]

Consequently, the high level of *ne* deletion with *faut* in our eighteenth-century corpus may constitute an early manifestation of a rule that has become categorical in contemporary spoken French; *ne* is always deleted when the subject clitic pronoun has been deleted. Indeed, both of us, native speakers of Quebec French (Martineau) and European French (Mougeon), find the use of *ne* with *faut*, or with verbs with null subjects, ungrammatical (**ne faut pas parler* 'one must not talk' **ne connais pas ça* '(I) don't know that').

Concerning context *ce + est*, we note that in affirmative sentences the subject clitic *ce* [sə] is reduced to *c'* [s] and is bonded to the verb giving *c'est* [sɛ]. It can be argued that such bonding has the effect of, to use Ashby's term, squeezing *ne* out of its position between the subject and the verb. In other words, the favorable effect of *c'est* on *ne* deletion revealed in our corpus is consistent with Harris (1978) and with Ashby's (1981) hypothesis that the bonding of subject clitic pronouns on the verb has been favorable to the rise of *ne* deletion (this is discussed more fully in the next section).

As regards the effect of *je* on *ne* deletion, we note that it is quite weak and that the trend to delete *ne* has not yet spread to the other clitic pronouns (with the exception of *ce* in *c'est*).[33]

We now turn to the data from our nineteenth-century corpus. Since all but one of the comedies included in our corpus feature characters from both the upper and lower echelons of French society, we calculated separate rates of deletion for characters from the lower social strata and those from other social groups. The first category of characters includes peasants, vagabonds, street vendors, doorkeepers, apprentices, army privates, domestics, and the like. The other category includes storeowners, business people, financiers, magistrates, army officers, and members of the lower or upper aristocracy. The setting for all of the plays included in this corpus is urban, mostly Paris.

As shown in Table 4, the two social groups display markedly different rates of *ne* deletion. In the speech of characters from the lower social strata, we found an overall rate of *ne* deletion of 33%, whereas in the speech of the other characters, *ne* deletion is virtually nonexistent. This finding may be taken as an indication that during the nineteenth century, the trend to delete *ne* became a salient feature of the speech of members of the lower strata of Paris society and that such a trend was comparatively

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[32] The retention of *ne* with *faut* reflects the more general trend to maintain *ne* in sentences whose subject pronoun has been deleted. Such sentences were commonplace in Old and Middle French especially when the subject pronoun was impersonal. In Old and Middle French, the retention of *ne* was due to the V2 constraint: *ne* can sometimes fill the first position and the verb appears in second position.

[33] Branca-Rosoff and Schneider (1994) found cases of *ne* deletion after object clitics in letters written by ordinary citizens during the French Revolution (*nous lavons pas reçeu* 'we did not receive it'). In Ashby's (1981) study *ne* is deleted less often when it is preceded by an object clitic (64%) than by a subject clitic (72%).

TEXT	NEGATIVE SENTENCES		*ne* DELETION		PERCENTAGE OF *ne* DELETION	
	LOWER SES	MIDDLE & UPPER SES	LOWER SES	MIDDLE & UPPER SES	LOWER SES	MIDDLE & UPPER SES
Les désespoir de Jocrisse (1800)	66	51	8	0	12.2	0
L'exécution (1835)	52		47		90.3	
Paris la nuit (1842)	109	130	28	2	25.6	1.5
Les bohémiens de Paris (1843)	119	28	20	0	16.8	0
La consigne est de ronfler (1866)	49	37	32	0	65.3	0
Madame Sans-Gêne (1896)	101	61	56	0	55.4	0
TOTAL	496	307	191	2	38.5	0.6

TABLE 4. *Ne* deletion in 19th-century texts.

less advanced in the speech of the upper social strata.[34] The variation in the rates of *ne* deletion found across the different texts is interesting. In addition to suggesting that the frequency of *ne* deletion increased during the course of the century, it also suggests that in the early part of the century, the frequency of *ne* deletion was already quite high in the speech of the younger members of Paris's lower social strata, as indicated by the rate of over 83% of *ne* deletion found in *L'exécution* (ibid.), a play that consists almost exclusively of an extended dialogue between two *titis parisiens* (youngsters from Paris working class quarters).[35]

If we look at the many examples of *ne* deletion from the corpus of nineteenth-century comedies, listed in the appendix, we can see that in keeping with the increase in the overall discursive frequency of *ne* deletion, the trend to delete *ne* has spread to an even wider variety of contexts than was the case in the eighteenth-century corpus. These contexts include (i) all of the subject clitic pronouns (not just *je*), and even polite address pronoun *vous* 'you' and formal pronoun *nous* 'we' (this was found only in *Madame Sans-Gêne*, a play written at the end of the nineteenth century); (ii) personal or impersonal verbs with a null subject, other than *faut* (*connais pas* 'dunno'); and (iii) infinitive clauses. In relation to the first context, the subject clitics are often reduced and bonded on the verb (*t'as pas* for *tu n'as pas* 'you don't have'; *a pèse pas lourd* for *elle ne pèse pas lourd* 'she is not heavy'; *y a pas* for *il n'y a pas* 'there is/are no'; and many instances of *c'est pas*). We should also point out that *ne* deletion has still not spread to sentences where the subject is a full NP.

Let us now examine the data on *ne* deletion collected at the end of the nineteenth century for the *Atlas Linguistique de la France* (ALF). These data, which were gathered among rural informants with a low level of education, allow us to verify if the high rates of *ne* deletion found in the late nineteenth-century plays were also observable in popular rural spoken French. The ALF data on *ne* deletion were analyzed by Lüdicke (1982) who drew a composite map based on the answers of the ALF informants to eleven questionnaire items that included a negative sentence. Lüdicke's map revealed

[34] Greive (1984) examined some excerpts from Monnier's *Les scènes populaires* and he also found a contrast between the rate of *ne* deletion of one high-class character (a doctor: 20% (3/15)) and the rate of *ne* deletion of three lower class characters: 77% (35/45), 96% (49/51), 87% (36/41).

[35] According to the *Le Robert* dictionary (Robert 1990), the word *titi* came from child speech into popular French at the beginning of the nineteenth century. In *L'exécution* this word is used as a name given to one of the two youngsters. The word *titi* is still used today in France.

that Paris and its surroundings were probably an important center of diffusion of *ne* deletion since the informants from Île-de-France (the province surrounding Paris) exhibited rates of *ne* deletion as high as 70% (or higher), and not that much different from the rates we found in the late nineteenth-century plays we analyzed (see Table 4). Similar rates were found in regions located south of the Loire River (i.e. Vendée, Poitou, Charentes, Berry) or immediately north of it (Nivernais).[36] However, Lüdicke's map also revealed that there were regions where *ne* deletion had either made more moderate progress (its frequency was 30–60% in Maine, Orléanais, and Contentin) or had not progressed at all (it was systematically maintained in Britanny, Normandy's hinterland, Picardy, Artois, Champagne, Ardennes, Lorraine, Burgundy, Franche-Comté, all of Francophone Switzerland, and all of Francophone Belgium).[37]

To complete our diachronic study of *ne* deletion in nonstandard European French, we examine the data contained in Nisard's (1980) dictionary of popular Parisian usage. Nisard's dictionary provides an alphabetical listing of lexical entries that include illustrating sentences, or short extracts, drawn from about three hundred texts written in popular speech or in a variety of French intended to provide a flavor of popular speech—farces, burlesque poems, mock letters, transcripts of court proceedings, and so on. These texts were written from the beginning of the seventeenth century to the middle of the nineteenth century. We chose this source of data chiefly for two reasons. First, it is based on a higher number of texts than those that make up our own corpora. Second, since it can be safely assumed that Nisard was not particularly interested (if at all) in the trend to delete *ne* (there are no entries on *ne* or on postverbal negators in his dictionary), it can be argued that the sentences and extracts that are included in his dictionary were not chosen to prove or disprove any thesis about *ne* deletion and hence that they constitute an independent means to verify our findings.

The results of our analysis are as follows. In the twenty-two negative sentences that are drawn from texts written in the seventeenth century, particle *ne* is never deleted. In the fifty-two negative sentences from texts written in the eighteenth century, we found only two cases of *ne* deletion (see Appendix A). In the ten negative sentences from nineteenth century texts we found three cases of *ne* deletion (see Appendix A). These results are in line with the findings of the analysis of our own corpora and lend additional support to the diachronic patterns that we have documented.

4.2. *Ne* DELETION IN QUEBEC FRENCH. The results of the analysis of our seventeenth- and eighteenth-century corpora are presented in Table 5.

As pointed out above (n. 21), our corpora include very few letters dating back to the seventeenth century. The nil rate of *ne* deletion found for the seventeenth-century letters based as it is on a limited number of negative sentences should therefore be considered with caution. Still, it is consistent with the very low rate of *ne* deletion

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[36] The high rates of *ne* deletion found in these regions are not what one would expect since they are located relatively far from Paris. The explanation may be that the dialects spoken in these regions shared some features (including *ne* deletion) with Occitan dialects spoken in areas located immediately south, in Bordelais, for example. Note, however, that further south, several of the Occitan dialects featured categorical *ne* retention.

[37] Bear in mind that if the informants were old rural males with a low level of formal education, the data on their dialects were elicited via a method that probably led to an underreporting of dialect forms (informants were asked to translate standard forms into dialect equivalents). Consequently, the rates of *ne* retention revealed by the *Atlas linguistique de la France* cannot be taken to be accurate measures of the frequency of *ne* usage in the informants' informal variety of their dialects.

CORPUS	NEGATIVE SENTENCES	*ne* DELETION	PERCENTAGE OF *ne* DELETION
17th-century letters	12	0	0
Sr. Marie Morin's annals	559	0	0
18th-century letters	424	2	0.5
TOTAL	995	2	0.2

TABLE 5. *Ne* deletion in 17th- and 18th-century Quebec French corpora.

found in our corpus of seventeenth-century European French texts and with the nil rate of *ne* deletion found in Marie Morin's annals, a text that we used to make up for the lack of seventeenth-century letters and that includes considerably more negative sentences.

There was no shortage of negative sentences in our corpus of eighteenth-century letters and hence the very low rate of *ne* deletion found for these letters (0.5%) can be taken with more confidence. Once again, we note that this finding is consistent with the results of the analysis of our corpus of eighteenth-century European French texts. The contexts where particle *ne* is deleted are (i) after subject pronoun *tu*, and (ii) after a full NP subject (see Appendix B). These findings are not consistent with our findings on the contexts associated with *ne* deletion in seventeenth- and eighteenth-century European French, which, as the reader will recall, were *faut*, *c'est*, and *je*. This divergence may, in part, reflect differences in the frequency of occurrence of specific contexts in the Quebec French and European French corpora. For instance, pronoun *tu* occurred more frequently in the corpus of letters than in our corpora of seventeenth- and eighteenth-century texts. This is not true, however, for pronoun *je* and full NP subjects. They occur about as often in our European corpora as in our Quebec French corpora. To confirm that these differences are indicative of differential contextual effects, we would really need a higher number of instances of cases of *ne* deletion in our seventeenth- and eighteenth-century corpora of letters.

We now turn to the analysis of our nineteenth-century corpora. As shown in Table 6, we found a rate of *ne* deletion of almost 40% in Lepailleur's diary. This finding constitutes significant evidence suggesting that the trend to delete *ne* rose during the nineteenth century in Quebec French. If we examine the instances of *ne* deletion found in Lepailleur's diary (see Appendix B), we can see that *ne* was deleted (i) after subject pronouns (in particular after *je* and *on*); (ii) before an infinitive or a gerundive; and (iii) after a full NP subject. We found no instances of *faut* in negative contexts in this corpus and hence were not able to evaluate the influence of this context.

	NEGATIVE SENTENCES		*ne* DELETION		PERCENTAGE OF *ne* DELETION	
		MIDDLE &		MIDDLE &		MIDDLE &
	LOWER	UPPER	LOWER	UPPER	LOWER	UPPER
TEXT	SES	SES	SES	SES	SES	SES
Les cousins du député (1896)	12	13	8	2	66.6	15.3
Consultations gratuites (1896)	4	7	4	0	100	0
Une partie de campagne (1856)	17		3		17.6	
La conversion d'un pêcheur (1876)	13		13		100	
On demande un acteur (1896)	8		3		37.5	
Nous divorçons (1897)	10		8		90	
L'auberge du N°3 (1899)	26		22		84.6	
TOTAL	110		63		57.2	
Lepailleur's diary	258		102		39.5	

TABLE 6. *Ne* deletion in 19th-century Quebec French comedies and in Lepailleur's diary.

Does the analysis of our nineteenth-century plays confirm these findings?

Due to the small size of the excerpts, the full range of characters included in the comedies was not always represented in each excerpt, with the consequence that characters from the lower social strata largely outnumbered those from the upper echelons of society. This explains why we found an overall rate of *ne* deletion of 60.1% and very high rates of instances of *ne* deletion in *Nous divorçons*, *La conversion d'un pêcheur*, and *L'auberge N⁰3* (the excerpts from these comedies do not include speech produced by characters from the upper social strata). Still, our findings are consistent with the result of the analysis of Lepailleur's diary and they provide further support for the hypothesis that *ne* deletion rose during the nineteenth century in Quebec French.

Two of the excerpts included in our corpus (*Les cousins du deputé* and *Consultations gratuites*) contained negative sentences used by a variety of characters from both ends of the social spectrum. We were thus able to calculate separate rates of *ne* deletion for both social groups. Table 6 shows a clear pattern of social stratification reminiscent of the pattern revealed by the analysis of our corpus of nineteenth-century European French comedies discussed earlier. Interestingly, in the excerpt from *Une partie de campagne* we also found evidence that variable *ne* deletion was associated with style shifting. In this excerpt, Flore and Baptiste, who are both country folks, are having a verbal exchange with Guillaume. Guillaume is originally from the village where Flore and Baptiste reside, but he now lives in Montreal, where he has become a social snob. Guillaume, who insists on being called William, talks down to both Flore and Baptiste.[38] Flore and Baptiste react differently to Guillaume's uppity speech and manners. Flore accommodates upward to Guillaume. She uses features indicative of careful speech and maintains *ne* categorically. Baptiste refuses to accommodate to Guillaume. He uses several features of vernacular Quebec French and deletes *ne* systematically.

An examination of the instances of *ne* deletion found in our corpus (see Appendix B) indicates the contexts associated with *ne* deletion. Many of the same contexts associated with *ne* deletion in our corpus of European French comedies, or in Lepailleur's diary, are also found in the corpus of Quebec plays: (i) almost all of the subject clitics, two of which (*je* and *il*) are often noted as having undergone morphophonetic reduction and being bonded on the verb, or on the following clitic (*j'sus pas* 'I'm not'; *i'sait pas* 'he doesn't know'; *si j'l'épousais pas* 'what if I didn't marry her'); (ii) verbal constructions *c'est*; and (iii) *faut*.

Still, the corpus of nineteenth-century Quebec comedies and Lepailleur's diary reveal an important difference (already noted for our eighteenth-century Quebec corpus) in the contextual diffusion of *ne* deletion. They include sixteen instances of *ne* deletion that occurred after a full NP subject, whereas in the European French comedies, we found no instances of *ne* deletion in this syntactic context. This difference may be an indication that in the nineteenth century, the trend to delete *ne* was more advanced in spoken Quebec French than it was in European spoken French.

Turning to the results of our analysis of the Portelance and Faribault corpora of early twentieth-century letters (Table 7), the reader can see that the rates of *ne* deletion found in both corpora are significantly higher than those for our corpus of seventeenth- and eighteenth-century letters. Thus we have yet another indication that the trend to delete *ne* rose substantially after the eighteenth century. Faribault's corpus also indicates that at the turn of the century *ne* deletion was still socially stratified in Quebec, since the

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[38] This play was written at a time when the socioeconomic domination of Anglophones over French Quebeckers was particularly strong in many urban settings.

	NEGATIVE SENTENCES		*ne* DELETION		PERCENTAGE OF *ne* DELETION	
	SETTLERS	PRIESTS/ CLERKS	SETTLERS	PRIESTS/ CLERKS	SETTLERS	PRIESTS/ CLERKS
Faribault	107	21	37	3	34.5	14.2
Portelance[a]	1627		501		30.7	
TOTAL	1755		541		30.8	

TABLE 7. *Ne* deletion in the Portelance and Faribault corpora (early 20th-century letters).

[a] Rates of *ne* deletion in Portelance corpus based only on negative sentences including postverbal negator *pas*.

settlers deleted *ne* more frequently than the authors from the upper social strata. It should be noted, however, that the pattern of social stratification revealed by Faribault's corpus is more graded than the one revealed by the excerpts from *Les Cousins du député* and *Consultations gratuites* (see Table 6) and the nineteenth-century French plays (see Table 4).

That the rates of *ne* deletion found in the corpora of letters are lower than those found in the corpus of nineteenth-century comedies may reflect the fact that speech produced by characters from the lower strata was overrepresented in the small excerpts we used for our analysis. And since the letters written by the settlers were addressed to a priest, it is possible that the settlers would have deleted *ne* more frequently in private letters written to persons equal to them in social status or to members of their family.

The syntactic contexts that we found to be associated with *ne* deletion in both corpora (see Appendix B) are (i) after a pronominal subject, mainly *je* and *il*; (ii) with verbal constructions *c'est*, *faut*, (*il*) *y a*; (iii) with infinitives; and (iv) with a full NP subject. These results are similar to those we arrived at in our analysis of the nineteenth-century corpus of plays. That *ne* deletion occurs after full NPs provides an additional indication that the structural diffusion of *ne* deletion was more advanced in Quebec French than in Parisian popular French at about the same time period.

5. DISCUSSION. In this section we provide an overview of the main findings of our study and discuss them in relation to the issues we mentioned in the introduction. We discuss the role of internal factors in the rise of *ne* deletion, with a special focus on the affixal status of subject clitic pronouns. We base the discussion on data on the history of pronoun usage in French and on some of the data on pronoun usage in our corpora of letters.

5.1. OVERVIEW OF THE FINDINGS. Our analysis of our corpora of seventeenth-century European French has yielded highly convergent results that confirm the findings of Ayres-Bennet's analysis of her own extensive seventeenth-century sources (1994). More specifically, like Ayres-Bennet, we found that in all of the literary texts that we analyzed, characters from the lower strata of rural or urban society exhibited extremely low rates of *ne* deletion. Unlike the sources examined by Ayres-Bennet, ours included discourse produced by characters from the upper social strata. They, too, very rarely or never deleted *ne*. Finally, the analysis of our admittedly limited corpus of informal letters written by ordinary Quebeckers in the seventeenth century has also arrived at similar results. These 'writers' practically never deleted *ne*. Since this latter corpus provides data on actual discourse, as opposed to fictional discourse, it is an interesting complement to the literary sources we used.

Obviously, we cannot claim that these very low rates of *ne* deletion are an accurate measurement of the frequency of *ne* deletion in actual speech, since they were established for the most part on literary texts. And it is possible that additional sources on other varieties of French might yield different results. After all, the literary texts we analyzed provide mostly data on Parisian French. Still they represent a substantially more extensive body of data than the sources that Valli (1983), Greive (1984), Blanche-Benveniste and Jeanjean (1986), and Hausmann (1992) used to defend their thesis that *ne* deletion was a prevalent feature of seventeenth-century popular speech. In light of our results we are inclined to echo Ayres-Bennet's interpretation of the findings of her study (see introduction) and to hypothesize that deletion of particle *ne* was infrequent in seventeenth-century popular spoken French.[39] If the infrequency of *ne* deletion in seventeenth-century popular spoken French is confirmed by the analysis of additional sources on seventeenth-century and pre-seventeenth-century popular spoken French, then one will have obtained a confirmation of Ashby's hypothesis (1981:675) that nonstandard spoken French went through stage 3 (maintenance of particle *ne* before the verb) before moving to stage 4 (variable deletion of this particle).

The analysis of our eighteenth-century corpora brought to light the following facts:

(1) The rates of *ne* deletion found in these latter corpora are fractionally higher than those found for our seventeenth-century French corpora.

(2) The rates of *ne* deletion found across the various literary texts are consistently low.

(3) The rates of *ne* deletion found in the literary texts are consistent with the rates of *ne* deletion found in our corpus of informal letters written in Quebec.

Just as is the case with our seventeenth-century corpora and for the reasons mentioned above, we cannot claim that these very low rates of *ne* deletion are an accurate reflection of the frequency of *ne* deletion in actual speech. But the fact that the rates of *ne* deletion found in the literary texts are consistent with the rates found in our corpus of letters suggests that our literary sources did not provide a distorted measure of the frequency of *ne* deletion. Finally, it is worth repeating once again that the data contained in our eighteenth-century literary sources pertain mostly to popular Parisian French.

Our analysis of the eighteenth-century corpora also revealed that *ne* deletion had started to spread to a few linguistic contexts, which by and large are consistent with the contexts in which researchers like Ashby or Coveney have found *ne* deletion to be most advanced in contemporary spoken French. More specifically, we found that *ne* deletion was associated with impersonal construction *faut*, subject clitic *ce* in the construction *c'est pas*, and subject clitic *je*.

In sum, our findings for the eighteenth-century corpora lead us to hypothesize that in eighteenth-century popular spoken French the rate of *ne* deletion rose only modestly and that it started in sentences with a clitic subject. In other words, if we consider, along with Schwegler (1988), that deletion of the preverbal negator is the final stage in the cyclical evolution of negation in Romance languages, our findings suggest that, as far as French is concerned, the starting point of this ultimate stage is sentences with a subject clitic. The fact that clitic subjects can be phonetically weakened and are unstressed may be the reason for this.

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[39] A more cautious hypothesis, suggested to us by Anthony Lodge, is that *ne* deletion was already present in seventeenth-century popular French, but had not yet reached a level of sociostylistic salience that would cause writers to place this feature in the speech of characters from the lower social strata. Given that we found extremely low rates of *ne* deletion in both our literary and nonliterary sources, we do not believe that the formulation of our hypothesis is overly bold.

One noteworthy aspect of our nineteenth-century sources is that they include data that allow us to compare popular Parisian French with rural popular French, and, as far as Quebec French is concerned, to compare data from a corpus of plays with data from a diary written by a Quebecker with a low level of education and from two corpora of letters (letters gathered at the beginning of the twentieth century).

Analysis of the European French sources revealed several interesting patterns. In all of the literary texts providing data on (popular) PARISIAN French the rates of *ne* deletion were substantially higher than in comparable seventeenth- and eighteenth-century texts; the rates of *ne* deletion seemed to have increased throughout the course of the century; and the rates of *ne* deletion were stratified along social class lines (*ne* deletion was largely confined to the speech of individuals from the lower strata of society).

In contrast, the data on *ne* deletion in RURAL popular French gathered towards the end of the nineteenth-century revealed that there was considerable variation across the different regions of Francophone Europe, ranging from high or categorical *ne* deletion rates to low or nil ones. In other words, there were regional dialects where the trend to delete *ne* was as highly advanced as it was in Paris popular French and other regional dialects where, in contrast, such a trend was incipient or had yet to emerge.

Analysis of our Quebec French sources also revealed that rates of *ne* deletion were markedly higher in our corpus of plays, the diary, and the corpora of letters than they were in the seventeenth- and eighteenth-century sources.[40] Our analysis of the corpora of plays and letters revealed that the social stratification of *ne* deletion was much more graded than that documented in the nineteenth-century literary sources on European French. The corpus of plays also revealed an interesting association between *ne* deletion and style shifting.

In relation to the structural diffusion of *ne* deletion our analysis found that (i) in both our European and Quebec French corpora *ne* deletion had spread to all subject clitics and the latter were often phonetically reduced and bonded on the verb, and (ii) that *ne* deletion had only spread to lexical subjects in our Quebec French corpora.

In light of these results we can hypothesize that in the nineteenth century the trend to delete *ne* rose substantially in popular French on both sides of the Atlantic, but the trend was less advanced in European French than in Quebec French, as suggested by the data on the geographical diffusion of *ne* deletion in European French and on the social and structural diffusion of *ne* deletion in both European and Quebec French. The hypothesis that the social and structural diffusion of *ne* deletion has proceeded at a faster pace in Quebec than in France is consistent with the fact that in the late twentieth century, *ne* deletion was found to be almost categorical in all syntactic contexts and in the speech of different social groups in Quebec French, but was still associated with differential patterns of structural, social, and geographic diffusion in European French, (see Pohl 1975, Sankoff & Vincent 1977, Ashby 1981, and Coveney 1996).[41]

We propose two main factors to explain the fact that the diffusion of *ne* deletion developed at a faster pace in Quebec French than in European French. The first is the

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[40] It would be interesting to try to determine if a corpus of informal letters written in France at about the same time or even later would also reveal a significant trend to delete *ne*. If this was the case, we would have an indication that modern written French is not completely impervious to *ne* deletion, as is commonly believed.

[41] In a very recent paper Saint-Amand and Poplack (2002) presented data on *ne* deletion in the speech of old rural Quebeckers recorded at the end of the nineteenth century. These speakers deleted *ne* almost categorically. This finding reinforces the idea that the rise of *ne* deletion in spoken French has proceded at a much faster pace in Quebec than in France.

departure of most of the members of the elite during the second half of the eighteenth century, after the colony of New France was taken over by the British. The second factor is the persistence, up to the end of the first half of the twentieth century, of low educational levels among the French-speaking population in Quebec (see Corbeil 1976). These two factors have reduced the demographic diffusion of Standard French and consequently may have catalyzed the rise of *ne* deletion in the nineteenth century. Also worth mentioning is that most of the immigrants who settled in Quebec came from Île-de-France, Poitou-Charentes, and Normandy (see Charbonneau & Guillemette 1994), three regions where one finds high rates of *ne* deletion in the ALF (see Lüdicke 1982). This finding suggests that in the speech of seventeenth- and eighteenth-century settlers from these regions, *ne* deletion was perhaps somewhat less infrequent and that this has added some momentum to the rise of *ne* deletion in Quebec French.

As to why the spread of *ne* deletion was slower in France, two factors can be mentioned. First, the regional dialects of French have survived as coherent and distinctive varieties for a much longer period of time in Europe than in Canada. This would explain why, towards the end of the nineteenth century, there were still regional dialects where *ne* deletion had not spread. Second, during the second half of the nineteenth century the education system in France underwent significant growth, which culminated in the establishment of compulsory universal primary education in the last quarter of the nineteenth century (see Lodge 1995). It is plausible to assume that this development slowed down the upward sociological diffusion of *ne* deletion.

Finally, we briefly return to the debate over the interpretation of the sizable differences in *ne* deletion rates evidenced by the younger and older informants in Ashby's corpus of Tours spoken French (1981). As we pointed out, Ashby's recent analysis (2001) of his new 1995 corpus of Tours spoken French supports the idea that such differences were not a pattern of age-grading but instead were an indication of ongoing linguistic change. Our study has shown that the trend to delete *ne* underwent a significant rise only in the nineteenth century and that, at the end of that century, there were still many regions of French-speaking Europe where the trend had not yet emerged. Ashby's (1981 and 2001) findings and our findings, therefore, provide considerable support to the thesis that the rise of *ne* deletion is a relatively recent case of linguistic change and has proceded at a slower pace in Europe than in Quebec, in terms of discursive frequency, structural, social, and geographical diffusion.

5.2. THE ROLE OF STRUCTURAL FACTORS IN THE RISE OF *ne* DELETION. We will now discuss some internal factors that may have triggered the rise of *ne* deletion in nineteenth-century French, notably morphosyntactic phenomena that have been attested both during and before the three-hundred-year period under study. We caution the reader however, that our discussion of the role of these phenomena is only exploratory. The history of these phenomena in popular spoken French has rarely, if ever, been the object of systematic corpus-based research and this is also true, to a large extent, for their history in literary French. Because of the magnitude and complexity of such research, we were not able to carry it out in depth in our own corpora.

The reader should recall that in our corpora sentences with a subject clitic were the main context associated with the rise of *ne* deletion and that in the nineteenth- and early twentieth-century corpora we found many instances of *ne* deletion where the clitic subjects were phonetically reduced and bonded on the verb stem. This finding is consistent with Harris 1978 and with Ashby's (1981) hypothesis that the transformation of subject clitics into affixes has played a role in the rise of *ne* deletion. And we can

also look for other syntactic clues that subject clitics were becoming affixes when *ne* deletion was on the rise: (i) obligatory retention of the subject pronoun; (ii) subject doubling; and (iii) resumptive subject pronouns. These three syntactic phenomena have been documented in contemporary varieties of Quebec French (Auger 1994, Roberge 1989), New Brunswick French (Beaulieu & Balcolm 1998), Ontario French (Nadasdi 1995), and nonstandard European French (Harris 1978, Koch 1993, Gadet 1989, 1999).[42] Examples 4–6, taken from Auger's and Nadasdi's studies, illustrate these three phenomena:

(4) Subject doubling and retention of the subject pronoun in a coordinated clause
Tout le monde il parle le français mais il parle l'anglais
'Everybody they speak French but he speaks English'
(5) Subject doubling
Toute la famille elle se rassemblait aux mêmes places
'The whole family they would get together in the same places'
(6) Resumptive subject pronoun
J'étais pas une personne que j'avais beaucoup d'amis
'I was not a person who I had many friends'

Subject doubling can occur both in sentences where the subject is topicalized (as in 7–9 below) and in sentences where the subject is not topicalized (as in 5 above). Since topicalization of the subject NP leads naturally to the insertion of a subject pronoun (Nadasdi 1995, Koch 1993), only cases of subject doubling occurring in sentences with nontopicalized subject constitute evidence that subject clitics are becoming affixes.

(7) Mon père, il est gravement malade
'My father, he is seriously ill'
(8) Ce type, avec sa barbe, il fait peur à ma fille
'This guy, with his beard, he frightens my daughter'
(9) Moi, le poisson, j'adore ça
'Me, fish, I love that'

We found numerous instances of subject doubling and resumptive subject pronouns (without topicalization) in the Portelance and Faribault corpora of early twentieth-century letters (see 10–13); however, we did not calculate rates of frequency for these two phenomena in these corpora.[43]

(10) nous-autres on en a pas eut
'us we did not get any'
(11) parsque moi j'ai pas la santé de commencé
'because me I don't have the health to start'
(12) il en a un qui il va peut-être raculer
'there is one who maybe he will step back'
(13) deux filles quel ne sont pas habillier
'two girls that they are not properly dressed'

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[42] Since these phenomena show some differences both in terms of frequency and usage in these different dialects of French, we focus our examination mainly on Quebec French.

[43] We also found frequent instances of negative concord (*mais il peut pas rien faire* 'but he cannot do nothing'), a development that is consistent with the weakening of *ne*. During the nineteenth century when *ne* weakened in Quebec French but was not categorically deleted, we found instances of *ne* with double negation, particularly in Lepailleur's diary.

Several corpus-based studies (Auger 1991, Montreal spoken French; Nadasdi 1995, Ontario spoken French; Koch 1993, European spoken French), however, provide rates of frequency for resumptive subject pronouns and subject doubling. These studies reveal that both phenomena are frequent in contemporary nonstandard spoken French and notably that subject doubling is categorical or quite frequent after the strong subject pronouns of French: *moi* 'me', *toi* 'you', *lui* 'him/her', *nous-autres* 'us', *vous-autres* 'you', and *eux-autres* 'them'.[44]

As for obligatory retention of subject pronouns, we found that in the Portelance and Faribault corpora subject-pronoun deletion is quite rare and occurs only in contexts where subject reference can be easily recovered from the preceding NP or subject clitic.

> (14) et comme chez nous (ils) non pas eut de nouvelles
>   'and as in our family (they) did not receive any news'
> (15) je suis âgé de 18 ans et (je) suis le fils
>   'I'm 18 years old and (I) am the son'

In a recent corpus-based study of Manitoba spoken French, Hallion (2000) arrived at similar results. Outside the special contexts of verbal constructions like *faut* 'it is necessary' or *m'as* 'I'm going to', subject-pronoun deletion is marginal.

All in all, then, there is significant evidence that subject doubling, resumptive subject pronouns, and compulsory maintenance of subject pronouns are characteristic features of twentieth-century nonstandard spoken French. It is therefore reasonable to hypothesize that these three phenomena were also present in nineteenth-century nonstandard spoken French and that the transformation of subject pronouns into preverbal affixes may have played a role in the rise of *ne* deletion during that century.

We now try to adduce additional converse evidence that when *ne* deletion was rare or nonexistent, subject pronouns had not yet become affixes. The syntactic clues that subject pronouns were free morphemes are the reverse of the three phenomena mentioned above, that is, (i) nonobligatory use of the subject pronouns; (ii) absence of subject doubling; and (iii) absence of resumptive subject pronouns.

Dupuis (1988) and Vance (1988), among others, have found that subject-pronoun deletion was frequent in Old French and Middle French.[45] Although the frequency of subject-pronoun deletion decreased in Classical French (seventeenth and eighteenth century), subject pronouns were still often deleted in coordinated clauses. For instance, Martineau (2002) found numerous instances of subject pronoun deletion in Robert Challe's writings (late seventeenth and early eighteenth century) in embedded clauses and in coordinated structures.[46]

> (16) Il comptait que la France serait victorieuse, et (il) avait envoyé ordre à M.
>   de Tourville d'entrer dans la Manche et de livrer combat aux annemis partout
>   où (il) pourrait les trouver.
>   'He expected that France would be victorious, and (he) had sent an order
>   to Sir de Tourville to enter the Channel and to fight the enemy wherever
>   (he) could find them.'

[44] The compound strong pronouns *nous-autres*, *vous-autres*, and *eux-autres* are typical of Canadian varieties of spoken French. After *moi* and *toi* subject doubling is categorical. Subject doubling is less frequent when the subject is a full NP than when it is a strong pronoun.

[45] The subject pronoun could also be separated from the verb by nominal or prepositional phrases.

[46] In this coordinated context, the deleted subject pronoun is often not referential to the subject pronoun of the preceding clause.

(17) et là-dessus je vous donne le bonsoir, et (il) sortit sans attendre de réponse
    'on that, I bid you good night, and (he) went out without waiting for an
        answer'

(18) cette fille lui dit ce qu'elle en savait, et (il) lui résolut de faire expliquer le
    cavalier
        'that girl told him what she knew and (he) convinced the horseman to
            explain'

In our seventeenth- and eighteenth-century Quebec corpora, instances of subject
deletion are also frequent. They occur mostly in coordinated main clauses and occasion-
ally in embedded clauses (19–21).

(19) Il m'est toujours present et (je) ne l'oublierai de ma vie
    'I still feel his presence and (I) will never forget him as long as I live'

(20) Vous m'obligeré d'autant que moy mesme (je) Seré a porté de me faire
    remedier
        'I will be obliged to you all the more so that (I) for one will be inclined
            to be replaced'

(21) Je seu pair Mon cher graisyver que (vous) vou dres bien mon don naire de
    nouvelle preve
        'I hope my dear Graisyver that (you) would like to give me new evidence'

The fact that, during the seventeenth and eighteenth centuries, subject-pronoun dele-
tion became restricted to coordinated and embedded clauses may be interpreted as the
beginning of a change in the morphosyntactic status of subject pronouns during that
period.

Let us now turn to subject doubling. One can find examples of sentences with doubled
subjects in the literary sources on the history of French. But it is significant that in all
the works on the history of French that we consulted subject doubling occurs in sen-
tences where the subject NP has been topicalized and thus they do not constitute exam-
ples of subject doubling per se. These works include Kunstmann 1990 and Valli 1983
for Old French, Marchello-Nizia 1979 and Valli 1983 for Middle French, Gougenheim
1951 for Renaissance French, and Haase 1969 for Classical French. In fact, the con-
straint on subject doubling is explicitly mentioned by several of these authors, for
instance Marchello-Nizia: 'A topicalized subject can occur with a co-referential per-
sonal or demonstrative pronoun: it should be pointed out that in all the cases that I
have found the topicalized subject is separated from the verb by a relative clause, a
clefted phrase or a complement' (1997:419; our translation of the French original).
Examples 22 and 23, taken from Marchello-Nizia 1979, illustrate this constraint.

(22) ces souliers, en ma conscience, ils me garderont ja d'aller
    'these shoes, to my mind, they will stop me from going'

(23) la disme que nous devez et que nous vous demandons, elle n'est pas des
    biens temporelz
        'this tax you owe us and that we are asking from you, it is not a temporal
            asset'

There has not been much research on the history of subject doubling in nonstandard
spoken French. According to Remacle (1960) the Wallon dialects do not have subject
doubling. This fact is quite pertinent, since, as the reader will recall, in the Wallon
dialects particle *ne* is maintained. Auger (1994:128–31) points to the fact that in seven-
teenth-century Picardy, all but one of the dialects had no subject doubling and that

'subject doubling began showing up in texts as a regular feature of Picard only during the nineteenth century'.[47] We found no instances of subject doubling or topicalization in our seventeenth- and eighteenth-century corpora of letters. These findings suggest that the clitic subject pronouns became affixes only after the Classical French period.

We can now turn to the phenomenon of resumptive subject pronouns. This construction goes as far back as Old French, where sparse occurrences are found (Kunstmann 1990). Examples of sentences with resumptive subject pronouns can also be found in literary sources on Renaissance French (Gougenheim 1951) and seventeenth-century French (Haase 1969). However it is noteworthy that the examples of resumptive subject pronouns that are mentioned by these last two authors occur only in sentences where the relative clause has been focalized (*qui rit ce jour*, *il rit toute l'année* 'he who laughs today, he laughs during the whole year' [Haase 1969:69]).

The history of resumptive subject pronouns in nonstandard spoken French has also not been well researched. Remacle (1960) points out that the Wallon dialects do not have resumptive subject pronouns (an expected finding since, as just mentioned, these dialects do not have subject doubling or *ne* deletion). Auger (1994:133) points to the fact that large-scale usage of subject resumptive pronouns in the Picard dialects is observable only in nineteenth- and twentieth-century sources on these dialects. Before that, resumptive subject pronouns were either infrequent or absent.[48] In keeping with this finding, in our corpora of seventeenth- and eighteenth-century letters, we found only one example of resumptive subject pronoun usage (24).

(24) ille vous prie da Voire pitier de La mer didit mort quil vas charché Sont fils
'he begs you to have mercy on the mother of the said deceased that she fetches his son'

This example is somewhat doubtful, however, since during the classical period, *qu'il* could be used as a graphemic variant of *qui* (and vice versa) before a consonant (see Haase 1969:68, 69).[49]

It appears then that resumptive subject pronouns had not yet become frequent in nonstandard spoken French in the seventeenth and eighteenth centuries. However, more historical research on the use of resumptive pronouns in nonstandard spoken French needs to be carried out in order to confirm this hypothesis.

To sum up, our examination of studies that documented subject doubling, resumptive subject pronouns, and obligatory use of subject pronouns suggests that these three phenomena became established only after the eighteenth century, that is, the period during which *ne* deletion rose. Also, and interestingly, in the Wallon dialects, which did not develop subject doubling and resumptive subject pronouns, *ne* deletion did not take place. This lends support to the hypothesis that the transformation of subject-clitic pronouns into affixes and the rise of *ne* deletion were parallel developments and that such a transformation has played a role in the rise of *ne* deletion.

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[47] This exceptional dialect was spoken in and around Valenciennes, a city located in the Département du Nord.

[48] In the seventeenth-century sources on Picard that she examined, Auger (1994) found two exceptional texts in which there were instances of resumptive subject pronouns. One text was in the dialect spoken in Valenciennes and the other in the dialect spoken in Belgian Flanders.

[49] The origin of this spelling variant lies in the rule of /l/ deletion in subject pronoun *il*, which had not yet been stigmatized by grammarians. The spelling of *quil* without an apostrophe in this particular example is probably an othographic error.

OLD/MIDDLE FRENCH	CLASSICAL FRENCH (17th–18th)	MODERN QUEBEC FRENCH
pronoun **ne** I VP	Ø **ne** I (clitic) VP	Ø I clitic + V
subject pronoun deletion	subject pronoun deletion restricted to coordinated and embedded clauses	subject pronoun deletion restricted to coordinated clauses?
no subject doubling	infrequent subject doubling	very frequent subject doubling
no resumptive pronoun?	infrequent resumptive pronouns?	frequent resumptive pronouns?
exceptional *ne* deletion	infrequent *ne* deletion	categorical *ne* deletion

TABLE 8. Parallel evolution of subject-clitic pronouns into affixes and rise of *ne* deletion.

The parallel evolution of these phenomena is illustrated in Table 8.[50]

In Old and Middle French, the subject pronoun was a free morpheme under DP. It could be deleted and other material could intervene between the pronoun and the verb. *Ne*, as a clitic, was not bonded to the verb. In Modern Quebec French and other dialects, such as Acadian French in New Brunswick, as Beaulieu and Balcolm propose (1998), the subject pronoun is a morphological affix; it triggers 'doubling' with a subject DP and *ne* deletion is categorical. In an intermediate period between Old/Middle French and Modern Quebec French, the subject pronoun was probably a syntactic clitic under a functional category (I). Thus, it was neither a free morpheme nor an affix. We hypothesize that this change started during the Classical French period, since, as we pointed out above, subject-pronoun deletion decreased and became restricted to certain types of clauses. We also hypothesize that this change accelerated after the eighteenth century and had a catalytic effect on *ne* deletion.

Since our discussion of the role of the affixal status of subject clitic pronouns in the rise of *ne* deletion has shown that there is limited research on the history of subject doubling and resumptive subject pronouns in nonstandard spoken French, the evolutionary cycle we just outlined is presented merely as a hypothesis.

Further, the reader should bear in mind that the transformation of subject pronouns into affixes is not the only factor that may have contributed to the rise of *ne* deletion (e.g. schwa deletion). One should consider the possibility that the affixal status of subject-clitic pronouns has reinforced, rather than triggered, the rise of *ne* deletion in certain varieties of French. This seems to be the case in the variety of Newfoundland French described by King and Nadasdi (1997). In this variety the subject clitic pronouns have not become affixes (subject doubling and resumptive subject pronouns are absent and PRO drop still occurs in coordinated clauses) and yet *ne* deletion is near categorical.[51] In other words this particular dialect of Canadian French is unlike the Wallon dialects described by Remacle (1960); subject doubling and subject resumptive pronouns are also absent in Wallon dialects, but *ne* is maintained. The exact relation between subject doubling and maintenance of *ne* is a topic beyond the scope of this article, but it would not be surprising if these two phenomena were related in French, since they both rely on a weakening process of affixation. Still, as Schwegler (1983) notes, other factors could also have been involved in French, or in other languages. In Brazilian Portuguese, for instance, affixation is not an issue.

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[50] We use Quebec French as our point of reference for the final stage in the evolutionary cycle of particle *ne* and pronoun usage since in this variety of French both subject doubling and *ne* deletion are very much advanced.

[51] Schwegler also points out that several Occitan dialects that feature *ne* deletion 'never had obligatory subject clitics' (1988:31).

Change in the position of the adverbs of negation, notably *pas*, may have been another factor that reinforced *ne* deletion. As Hirschbühler and Labelle (1994) and Martineau (1994) show, until the end of the sixteenth century, leftward movement of the infinitival verb was frequent.

(25) car elle . . . commencea a ne le chercher pas
'because she started to not look for him' (Navarre)

The fact that both the adverb of negation and the infinitival verb could move leftward independently increased the distance between *ne* and the postverbal negators. This may have had two consequences: (i) the possibility of giving a positive reading to negative adverbs such as *point*, *pas*, and *jamais* in some contexts, as in 26, and (ii) reinforcement of speakers' perception that in the discontinous morpheme *ne . . . pas*, *ne* was the primary negator.

(26) par toutes les rues de Paris qui point aient de renom
'in all the streets of Paris which had a certain fame' (Journal d'un bourgeois de Paris)

During the seventeenth and eighteenth centuries, leftward movement of the infinitival verb decreased and the adverbs of negation became more closely associated with *ne*.

(27) de ne la pas tourmenter davantage
'not to torment her more' (LaFayette)

Inasmuch as it brought *ne* and the postverbal negators together, loss of leftward movement in infinitives may have reinforced the transformation of words such as *pas*, *point*, and so on into postverbal negators and hence hastened the demise of *ne*.[52]

6. CONCLUSION. Through a corpus-based study of the history of *ne* deletion in non-standard French we charted the evolution of the trend to delete this particle in terms of both discursive frequency and social and structural diffusion during a period of over three hundred years. Obviously, since our study is based on corpora of letters and literary texts, we cannot claim that the rates of *ne* deletion we found provide an exact indication of the actual frequency of *ne* deletion in the casual speech of social groups at different points in time. But it is noteworthy that over the period under study the rates of *ne* deletion in these two types of corpora reveal the same pattern of evolution: (i) no or marginal *ne* deletion (seventeenth century); (ii) infrequent or incipient *ne* deletion—mostly associated with clitic subject pronouns (eighteenth century); and (iii) rise of *ne* deletion—associated with a broadening of its structural diffusion and a pattern of social and stylistic stratification (nineteenth century). To these three stages, we can add a fourth, namely, generalization of *ne* deletion, in terms of both social and contextual diffusion (twentieth century)—as revealed by recent sociolinguistic studies based on speech corpora.

Based as it is on a comparison of corpora of Quebec and European French, our study reveals an interesting difference in the speed at which the rise of *ne* deletion has taken place on both sides of the Atlantic. Here again the difference is consistent with the findings of recent sociolinguistic studies of *ne* deletion. In most varieties of current European French that have been studied, the rate of *ne* deletion still varies as a function

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[52] Yves-Charles Morin pointed out to us another interesting syntactic feature of the Wallon dialects and of Wallon French. Up to the beginning of the nineteenth century they had not yet undergone loss of leftward movement of the object clitic and infinitive in infinitive clauses. Thus, in those varieties a clause like *je veux le voir* 'I want to see him' would be expressed as *je le veux voir*. Recall that in these dialects *ne* deletion is not categorical. We can surmise that leftward movement of the verb may have been another factor that hindered the rise of *ne* deletion in the Wallon dialects.

of age, social class, sex, and linguistic context. In contemporary Quebec French, however, *ne* deletion is almost categorical in the speech of all age groups, social classes, and both sexes, and in all linguistic contexts. It will be interesting to see if future comparative research on these two varieties of French reveals again that Quebec French is ahead of European French in the propagation of sociolinguistic change.

Establishing the four stages in the evolution of *ne* deletion contributes to the debate over how far back in the past *ne* deletion goes. As a result of our study, the thesis that *ne* deletion was already a prevalent feature of early seventeenth-century French has been thrown into doubt. The extent to which we have succeeded in disproving that thesis rests on extensive corpus-based research going back to the early seventeenth century (a time at which it was assumed that *ne* deletion was already prevalent). Thus our study underscores the usefulness of this type of research in moving forward the still largely embryonic investigation of the evolution of nonstandard French.

Finally, we can place our results in the broader time framework of the negation 'cycles' discussed in Schwegler 1988 (i.e. as far as French is concerned: *ne* > *ne* . . . *pas* > *pas*). In light of what we found, we hypothesize that in nonstandard French, the 'negation cycle' has gone through periods of relative stability followed by periods of instability (i.e. variation).

(1) **9ᵗʰ to 13ᵗʰ** centuries: **stable** period (*ne* is used alone or is reinforced by words like *pas* or *point* that do not have yet a negative meaning; subject clitics are optional)

(2) **14ᵗʰ to 16ᵗʰ** centuries: **unstable** period (*ne* is vying with *ne* . . . *pas*/*point* to express negation; PRO drop is on the decrease)

(3) **17ᵗʰ and 18ᵗʰ** centuries: **stable** period (*ne* . . . *pas*/*point* is firmly established as the expression of negation; PRO drop is exceptional)

(4) **19ᵗʰ and 20ᵗʰ** centuries: **unstable** period (*ne* . . . *pas* and *pas* are vying with each other, with *pas* eventually winning out; affixation of subject clitics is firmly established).[53]

Besides what it tells about the specifics of the French developments, this tracing of the different variants and types of variation reinforces the view that simple comparisons between two widely separated linguistic periods—the twelfth and twentieth centuries, for example—in the absence of consideration of the intervening stages can yield a skewed picture of the actual course of a change, what Andersen (1989:12–13) has called a 'diachronic correspondence' (as opposed to real change). Further microstudies of such intermediate stages—for French negation and for (all) other changes—are clearly called for in order to gain a better understanding of the dynamics of language change in general.

APPENDIX A: *Ne* DELETION IN CORPORA OF EUROPEAN FRENCH

17ᵗʰ CENTURY TEXTS
Les Mazarinades (1641–1652) **je penci pas** passer le pas
La nopce de village (1666) [de Brecourt 1666]: faut qu'il le confesse ou **je feron rien**[54]

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[53] This is a simplified presentation of the cyclical evolution of *ne* use > *ne* drop. It is simply meant to underscore the fact that the negative cycle of French has unfolded in the manner predicted by Schwegler (1988) for that language and for other Romance languages. Our mention of subject-clitic affixation as a factor in the final stage of the cycle does mean that we believe that this is the only internal factor that has triggered the rise of *ne* deletion. But as we pointed out in the previous section, the striking parallels we found in our corpora, and in the literature on the history of French, between the evolution of subject clitics and the various stages of the evolution of *ne* lead us to posit that this factor may have played a key role.

[54] The curved brackets include the original date of publication of a given text. The square brackets include the reference to the source for a given text.

18th CENTURY TEXTS

Les Sarcellades (1730–1732): vous savez fort bian, Monsigneur que **c'est pas** faire la vie; **faut plus** être étonné; mais **c'est pas** nan plus notre affaire; eh!; Pargui **faut pas** être très Chréquian pour faire le rebours; **c'est pas** chose aisiée et facile; **c'est pas** le tout que de seiner; car **c'est pas** ici c'est là; **c'est pas** là notre compte; c'est que **faut point** mentir

La vache et le veau (1750) [Gueullette 1756]: si **tu me dis pas** tout à s'theure

Lettres de Montmartre (1750) [Coustelier 1750]: **faut pas** en rire da

Les œuvres poétiques de Vadé (1750) [Vadé 1879] **je me suis pas** fait de mal; **cest rien** tu a lair d'un bon garson

Les mémoires de Ménétra (1764) [Ménétra 1764] **faites donc pas** comme ça; **faut pas** tant les magnier; **dis donc pas** ça toi; **c'est pas** par là; **faut pas** s'arrêter à langue d'un moqueux; pour la cause que **j'vous ai pas** consenti; **j'en peux pû; falloit pas** ly bailler du r'gout; **c'est pas** l'tout faut zun compliment; **faut pas** tant fair la capab'mais **c'est pas** ben difficile

19th CENTURY TEXTS

Le désespoir de Jocrisse (1800) [Dorvigny 1800]: **j'ai pas** encore jamais pu en contenter un seul; **c'est toujours pas** moi qu'a mangé; que **c'est pas** ici ta place; **j'irai pas** vous chercher pour répondre; **c'est pas** le tout de me chasser; mais **c'est pas** pour obéir que j'y vas; **c'est pas** comme moi; i m'a défendu **de laisser entrer personne**

L'exécution (1835) [Monnier 1835]: **j'en sais rien**; filons qu'**on nous voit pas**; **vous pouvez donc pus** tenir sus vos jambes; c'est-y ma faute **si peut pus** se bouger?; des voitures, **y l'en manque pas**; **j'l'ai pas fait** exprès n'en parlons plus; **c'est pas** ma faute, pourquoi **qui s'rangent pas**; **t'inquiète pas; a pas** peur; **ayez pas** peur gendarme; **je tomberai pas; y a pas** de danger; **c'est pas** vot' place, en Grève; **ça vous regarde pas; j'aurai pas** c'bonheur-là; **vous fachez pas; j'ai pas** peur de vous; **vous avez pas** seulement la croix; **y z'en ont pas; y sont pas** à plaindre; **j'vois pas** monsieur Sanson; quand on vous dit qu'**y est pas**; comme si **je l'connaissais pas; on le sent pas; c'est pas** l'embarras; **il a pas** peur celui-là, **il embrasse pas** son prêt'; **a peut pas** monter les escaliers; **alle a rien** dit à son prêt'; **on guillotine pas** n'en bonnet; **a pèse pas lourd; faut pas** moins qu't'y passe; **alle a pas** de sang! **ça va pas** encore commencer; **j'vois rien; peux pas!; peux pas!; j'vois rien; j'vois toujours rien; peux pas!; ça va pas** tarder; **j'peux pas!; y a pas** de place; **c'est pas** ici ta place paresseux; j'dis qu'**ça doit point** être encore eux; **poussez done pas**

Paris la nuit (1842) [Dupenty 1842]: **j'veux pas** en parler; **c'est pas** de la probité; **faut pas** laisser refroidir; **j'comprends pas** ça; **a pas** peur; **j'veux point** y casser un membre; si **c'était pas** lui; **faut pas** dire ça; **c'est pas** lui; **j'ai pas** de bonheur; **c'était pas** lui; **j'ai pas** pu le saisir; **c'est pas** la peine; **c'est pas** ta faute; **c'est pas** à toi que je parle; **c'est pas** moi; **qui t'manque jamais** rien; **j'sis pas** ton père! **j'sis pas** ton père! **c'est pas** ta place; **j'pourrai** pas; **qu'est pas** trop catholique; **j'te connais pu; t'auras pas** un sou; **j'peux pas** tuer; **connais pas; connais pas; j'tai pas** dit ousqu'il est; **c'est pas** du courage; **connais pas** le café au lait

Les bohémiens de Paris (1843) [D'Ennery & Grangé 1854]: **connais pas; faut pas** plaisanter; **j'veux pas** m'habituer; **t'es pas** comme moi; **c'est d'avoir pas** de rideau; **c'est pas** un filou; **y a pas** cher de loyer; **j'ai pas** compté; **c'est pas** une raison; **y a pas** d'affront; **connais pas; j'ai jamais** pu le gagner; **j'peux pas; sois pas** longtemps; **c'est pas** un café d'ouvriers; **c'est pas** que la société; **c'est pas** tout ça; **c'est pas** tout ça; **c'est pas** moi; **y a pas** de mal

La consigne est de ronfler (1866) [Grangé 1896]: **j'veux rien**; je te trouve pas; **y a rien** de nouveau; **il voulait pas; j'peux pas** boire; **j'peux pas** boire; **j'bois pas; on sait pas** la faire; **j'ai pas** d'amoureuse; **on peut pas** vivre tranquille; **j'répondais pas; on peut pas** vivre tranquille; **j'sais pas; j'veux pas** me déshabiller; **je le peux pas; j'comprends pas; j'comprends pas**; si **c'est pas** des bêtises; **faites pas** ça; je suis pas un somnambule; **je suis pas** un voleur; **j'peux pas** dire; **j'peux pas** dire; **j'ai pas** mes habits; **je suis pas** coupable; **j'connais pas; je comprendrai rien**; je connais pas cette jeunesse; **tu bougeras pas; j'sais pas; je suis pas** à mon aise; il avait dit **de pas bouger**

Madame Sans-Gêne (1896) [Moreau 1912]: **j'défaille pas** assez comme ça; **vous pouvez donc pas** l'enmener; **t'as pas** besoin de crier; **j'ai rien** vu; **j'en sais rien; j'ai pas** eu le temps; **c'est pas** une raison; pour qu'**nous fassions pas** la nôtre; si **y est pas; y a pas** pus d'une semaine; **j'nous étions** jamais vu; **c'est pas** tout; **j'étions pas** pus tôt; **il s'cache pas; y a pas** trois jours; si **faut pas** qu'y soie fou!; **tu refuseras pas** une lampée; **il y a pus** de danger; **j'peux pas** vous blâmer; **c'est rien**; non **j'ai rien** senti; **faut pas** non plus être avare; **j'ai pas** mordu; **t'en prends pas** l'chemin; qu'**tu répondais pas; j'suis pas** libre; **c'est pas** vot' place; **j'sais rien** de plus; **j'peux pas** le souffrir; **cest pas** tout ça; **y s'raient pas** inquiets; **j'les avais pas** plutôt mis; **j'les paye pas; j'les paye pas; c'est pas** tout ça; **j'en veux pas; c'est pas** quand on aime; **j'me**

gène pas; y a pas de cérémonies; pour que **ça soye pas** plus sérieux; **je vous demande pas** votre secret; **j'veux pas** vous laisser; **j'srais pas** femme; **j'grillais pas** d'envie; **elle vous a pas** dit de venir; mais **qu'a pas** l'droit; **c'est pas** utile; **c'est pas** honnête; **j'aurais pas** fermé l'oeil; **c'est pas** à dire en société; **faut pas** qu'elles m'asticotent; **j'men cache pas; y'a pas** de sot métier; **y a pas** de honte; **j'les lâche plus**; il m'a demandé **de pas y aller**

Nisard's *Dictionary of Popular Parisianisms* [Nisard 1980]: Ah, çà Cadet **c'est pas** le tout (1755); mais mam'zelle, **sont pas** des politesses pour un enfant (1756); c'est égal, **t'as pas** l'œil comme ça (1836); le lendemain il me dit **c'est pas** tout ça, **c'est pas** un héritage que j'ai c'est deux (1863).

APPENDIX B: *Ne* DELETION IN CORPORA OF QUEBEC FRENCH

17ᵗʰ AND 18ᵗʰ CENTURY LETTERS
Mr La Madelinne vous **oubli point** (August 1751); de ce que **tu es pas** encore ysy (March 1763)

19ᵗʰ CENTURY
Diary of Lepailleur (1842–45): **S**es bien annuyanque De**pas**aller plus vite; **Nos amériquin** on **pas** attiré Boucoups de grace Si ma femme & mes enfants son Bien & savoir **si** patis **pas**; Beau temps aujour D'hui **le vent** Est **pas** Bien favorable; & **je** pu **pas** sa-voir aucune Nouvelle; Dans bec affair de **poin** gater la peau; on lui a répon que **nous** fesion **poin** travaillier le malade; **Nous** feson **plus** rien que De Ballancé; & je lui demandais de **jamais** aitre faché contre moi à Lavenier; **jamais on** puis aitres recompencé par; & **poin** avoir aucune conversation ansamble; & **poin & poin** [sic] selever de son lits pour sasoire sur les banc; **nous** voyon **poin** de chemine depasser les couverture; & nous santon **aucune** aire dans Batiment; qu'ar **je** fait **aucun** Jeux; **nous** avont **aucune** nouvelle raporre à notre Débarquement; **on** recois **aucune** Dession aujour D'hui sur notre débarquement; **on peu Rien** savoir de sertin raporre à la distance; **on peu rien** voir de plus beau; de **jamais** rien faire margueriez elles; Et **nou** avont **pas** pus dormire du tou; **nous** savont **pas** pourquoi; ce que **nous** savon **pas**; chause que **je** doit **pas** james aublié; J'ai été bien mortifié de **pas** avoir hu une lettre de paré à renvoyer a ma femme; & **je** suit **pas** a la moitié du chemin; Le ten est beau **le ciel** est **pas** bien Claire; dont **nous** connesson **pas** les noms; **je** connais **pas** ses deux bible velle 15/chaque; **vent** etais **pas** bien forre pour sortire; **on peu pas** exprimé avec des termes assez fort la peine; Boucoups de personne sont mortifié de **pas** arreter au Cappe; **je** perdrais **pas** un seul Intan; c'est que **je** croix **pas** avoir le bonneur d'aitre; Si peu d'expériance pour croire que l'**on peu pas** passer; s'il **on** fait **pas** plus; & **nous** avont **pas** été; Il cregne, de **pas** Etres ausibien traité; de ce **qui** vont **pas** dans la meme place que les Canadien; si **nous** feson **pas** plu les houle; & **je** puis **pas** avoir le ten de me cacher; **on peu pas** decouvrire d'établissement; **sette demande** lui paru **pas** lui faire plaisir; **ce qui** manque **pas** dans le lieu ou je suis; **ses ce qui sera pas** ca; **on peu pas** avoir une Bonne pension; **qui** se randrès **pas** à de parrelle grace; Et **je** serais **pas** surpris; **Je** me défie **poin** de la providance; **Les Nouvelles de son mariage** nous appren **rien; Nous** savont **pas; Mr Baddeley et les Commandan du Buffalo** nous on **pas** aten menasé; **qui** veul **pas**; **je** croix **pas** avoir; **je** suit **pas** plus savant; **Je** sier **pas** combien de ten; **je** connais **pas**; **on peu pas** ce consoler; **on** sier **poin** si notre temps; si **je** me trompe **pas**; quand **il** sont **pas** ancorre capable; **on** le siez **pas; on** se plais **pas; je** pas **pas** 5 minute sans penser à ma femme; **je** pas **pas** 5 minute dans la journée sans penser à ma famil; **je** me suit **jamais** ennuiez; **nous** serions **jamais** rapelier; **nous** serion **pas** mie an liberté; **qui** voules **pas** travaillier; **qui** le trouva **pas** malade; **Il** nous a **rien** die; **Je** puis **pas** aller; **nous** somme **pas** plus Savant; **nous** soyons **pas** mie en liberté; **Messire Brady** a **aucune** nouvelle; **nous** voyon **rien** de nouveaux; **on peu jamais** se limaginé; que ceux qu**il** y a **pas; on** vie **jamais** plus trens; **Nous** pourons jamais les remersier; **Je** suis **pas** bien déficile; **on** lave **pas** les pots; **sa** me consol **pas; nous** somme **pas** plus; qu**il** y a **pas**; de lesser rantré **aucun** etrangée; **Nous** somme **pas** plus avancé; **lon** sez **pas**; **je** connais **pas** le propriétaire; **nous** savont **pas**; de **pas** savoir; **qui** lui appartien **pas**; et pour **pas** travaillier; ses **pas** asé; sie **je** prenais **pas** sur moi; **nous** le somme **pas** d'esprit; **sa** plai **pas** à Mr Bordon; s**il** donnes la **pas** à une autre; **Notre mauvais** a **pas** voulu; **nous** apprenon **aucune** nouvelle; **un homme** en faut **pas** moin; **on** dirais **pas** deux

19ᵗʰ CENTURY PLAYS
Une partie de campagne (1856) [Duval 1978]: **vous r'connaissez pas** Baptiste; **j'aime pas** beaucoup la chamaille; **y a pas** d'bon sens

La conversion d'un pécheur (1876) [Duval 1978]: **j'aurions jamais** souffert ça; **c'est pas** pour nous vanter; **le racc'modage vaut pas** mieux qu'la blague; **tout le cirage là en met pas** plus dans not'e poche; **ça répare pas** les malheurs de mon pays; quequ'chose qu'**on peut pas** maîtriser; **c'est pas** pour nous vanter; que **vous** laisseriez **pas** vot' pays; **vous-y pensez pas; soyez pas** en peine; **ça s'peut pas; c'est pas** ben important; i paraît qu'**c'est pas** nécessaire

On demande un acteur (1896) [Duval 1978]: **vous** l'savez **pas; vous** m'avez **jamais** essayé; **j'sus pas** un tourne-capot

Consultations gratuites (1896) [Duval 1978]: **L'p'tit Daniel est pas** mal monté; **l'office sera pas** aussi rempli de monde; **personne** viendront pour vous consulter; l'père créra qu'**on fait pas** de s'fameuses affaires

Les cousins du député (1896) [Duval 1978]: **je serais pas** faché de lui parler; mais que **je voudrais pas** qu'on y mette des taxes; **ce sera rien** pour toi; **c'est pas** sa mort que je veux; si **c'était pas** pour vous déranger; **c'est pas** le ministre; **c'est pas** une grosse affaire; **c'était** donc **pas** le Ministre; moi, **j'aime pas** qu'on me tienne en supension; **il faut pas** se ruiner le tempérament

Nous divorçons (1897) [Duval 1978]: **c'est pas** à la cour; si **j'**l'épousais **pas; vous** trouvez **pas** ça beau; mais **c'est pas** raisonnable; **les affaires vont pas**; qu'**on** dit **pas** toujours à la femme; **j'**aime **pas** trop ça moé; **j'**en sais **rien**

L'auberge N⁰ 3 (1899) [Duval 1978]: **j'srais pas** fâché; **ils ont pas** l'air à r'prendre; **j'sus pas** fâché; **les places** de toutes sortes **manquent pas**; on sai qu'**c'est pas** pareil; **j'comprends pas** plusse; **c'est pas** moé; **y r'viendra pas** avant huit jours; **j'sus pas** pour le manger cru; et **vous aurez pas** le temps; qu'**vous en voudrez pas; vous** en avez **pas** des œufs; **ça couve jamais; j'sais pas** c'que ça veut dire; **i'sait pas** encore ça; si **c'est pas** un vrai guignon; **vous** avez donc **pas** aut' chose; **i'est** pas possible que dans une aubarge; **j'ai pas** l'temps d'attendre après; **j'veux pas** vous laisser; **c'est pas** de refus; **y a rien** à manger

20ᵗʰ ᴄᴇɴᴛᴜʀʏ ʟᴇᴛᴛᴇʀs (ꜰᴀʀɪʙᴀᴜʟᴛ's ᴄᴏʀᴘᴜs)

ᴄʟᴇʀᴋs: **je suis pas** riche; **je suis pas** capable de payer ça moi-même; bien **qu'il me l'aient pas dit**

sᴇᴛᴛʟᴇʀs: si **nous avons personne** pour s'occuper des femmes; et **il m'ont pas encore donné** des nouvelles; et **qu'il les reverrait plus**; et **il on pas** de formule; et **ils m'ont rien donné**; vous savé que **nous avont rien** à gagné; **nous avons plus** de secours; come **il a pas** beaucoup d'ouvrage; et quand **il a pas** d'ouvrage; **il a pas faite** aucune ouvrage cette année desu; et **il reste pas** desu non plus; et **il est pas patanté**; J'èper que **vous me refuseré point** cette demende; mais **je me décourage pas**; desquelles numero **qui sont pas** pret; Ici à Estcourt **il y a pas** beaucoup d'ouvrage; et ils ont décidé de **pas le prendre**; parce qu'**il y a pas** de chemins; **Sa me surprend pas** de voir que [H1] veut avoir le lot; si **il y a pas** de demande ou bien aucun lot de ce rond de Bédor; s.v.p. **de pas m'oublier**; Alors je croi que **vous m'obiré pas**; puis **selui-là y est pas**; Mes **j'avait pas vue** cela; **ge c'est pas** s'il faut que ge remplisse tout les deux; si **je les peygne plus**; si en cat **qui fait pas** ses devoirs, vous lui oterai; **j'es auqune** établisement; Si **vous me croiés pas,** vous informeré à Monsieur le curé de ma paroisse; puis asteur **il l'achète plus**; je me trouve que **j'ai pus rien** gagner; **Je suis pas** capable de les envoyer à l'école; **ils sont pas** chausser et non habiller; mais **il peut pas** rien faire pour nous-autres sans votre permission; **J'é jamais** eu l'atancion de lessé mon lot; **j'ai pas pu** m'occupée pour suivre mes amis; Ayant une femme **qui a aucune santé.**

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