



The French Language in the Seventeenth Century: Contemporary Opinion in France

Peter Rickard

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The sixty French texts edited here are all direct commentaries, by contemporary authors, on the French language in the 17th century. By this time, French had begun to assert its independence; in its written and printed form it was being used for a wide variety of literary, technical and administrative purposes. Its practitioners not only successfully challenged the hitherto dominant position of Latin, but also began, for the first time, to discuss and analyse for its own sake the language which was now their preferred medium for expression — hence, in the first half of the seventeenth century, a growing number of publications on the nature and characteristics of French. The texts demonstrate the sustained critical preoccupation with the welfare of the French language in the 17th century, and illustrate the various ways in which the writers of the age contributed to its development as an instrument of literary expression and social intercourse.

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