

UNDER IDEAL CONDITIONS: *PROVINCIALIZING* THE ‘FRENCH’ POETIC
CANON WITH AMÉLIE GEX (1835–1883)
VALENTINA GOSETTI, University of New England, Australia

It was to this very journal that, a decade ago, after gathering all my courage, on my own initiative and in secret, I decided to submit my first little English-language manuscript for peer review. The first round of reviews came in. Major revisions. Unfamiliar with the peer-review process as I was, I felt rather heartbroken when reading that some of my points were ‘naïve’ while other parts didn’t ‘smack of a particularly competent professionalism’. The rewriting process felt long and emotional. In the end, the article made it through thanks to the compassionate and patient guidance of the then outgoing and incoming editors, Professors Mary Orr and James Simpson. I persisted because I felt that the topic was more important than it appeared to be. Within studies devoted to the nineteenth century, I was increasingly dissatisfied with acceptance of condescending accounts of the provinces and provincials. It seemed as though the discipline had swallowed the nineteenth-century novel’s mythology of the provincial who must come up to Paris in order to ‘make it’, and adopted it as a critical approach. Through the example of the short-lived, yet culturally crucial, Dijon-based periodical *Le Provincial*, I wanted to provide evidence of the existence of a combative, self-aware, culturally independent and unsubordinated ‘Province’. Such a province did exist, even, and *especially*, during the nineteenth century, the post-Revolutionary, centralizing century of the nation state.¹ We researchers, I thought, needed to come up with new methodologies and approaches to appreciate it in its own terms.

Like the members of *Le Provincial*’s editorial team, I myself was—and am, increasingly—a proud provincial in so many ways. Even when dis- or mis-placed, I still come from a tiny Italian town in the province of Brescia. At the time I was writing on *Le Provincial* in English, I was reading French in the UK, as an Italian, whose first language is not even Italian but Bresciano. *Why not Italian Studies?* I had been asked obsessively during my journey as a ‘French’ scholar in the UK and Australia... I still don’t have an answer. Perhaps Italian is my *métropole*. I had to bypass it first in order to bypass Paris, ‘le centre même de l’humanité’.² And yet, we are our own worst language police.³ That internal monologue often returns, *vous avez quand-même un petit accent...* Even in the twenties of the twenty-first century, after decades of ‘united in diversity’ and advocacies for multiculturalism, few languages remain as centralized, regulated and revered as the French language. A strong nexus between language authenticity and purity (and phenomena such as glottophobia)⁴ have been core to national identity since the French Revolution.⁵ Despite recent important initiatives against language discrimination,⁶ this nexus still persists in the French Constitution, which unequivocally stipulates that ‘La langue de la République est le français.’⁷ My way of fighting the pernicious identitarian risks associated with language purity (beyond practising, now unapologetically, my bad accent on a daily basis),⁸ is to investigate the unjustly neglected provincial poetic voices of

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nineteenth-century France. Poets with an accent, including those who decided to write in the threatened regional languages of the Hexagon. Those ‘idiomes celtiques ou barbares’⁹ that the Revolutionaries had wished to annihilate.¹⁰ My current project, ‘Provincial Poets and the Making of the Nation’,¹¹ is a way of ‘reclaim[ing] the legitimacy of the provinces to represent Frenchness’, to say it with the inspiring and powerful words of Lydie Moudileno.¹² And what is more, not just Frenchness’s past, but also its present and future, as my aim is to move beyond the idea of poetry in the provinces as an archive of *passéiste*, romanticized and easy-to-sell *couleur locale*. French literature is not just (a certain privileged) Paris and its literary scene. In fact, it is not just written in French.

Taking inspiration from ‘regendering’ initiatives, the question underpinning my project has been: how can we go back to the drawing board and effectively (re)provincialize the nineteenth-century poetic canon, one influenced by Paris-based *cénacles*?¹³ Methodologically, I explore the very possibility of bypassing Paris, at least on a theoretical level, in order to be able to analyse nineteenth-century poetry from the provinces comparatively, without the capital’s centralizing force at play. A similar theoretical experiment could be undertaken, for instance, if we wanted to analyse female writers by eliminating the voice of their male contemporaries, which are usually used as a yardstick of value, whereby this or that female poet is worthy of reading because praised by her male contemporaries, the usual Lamartines or Chateaubriands. To redress this bias, we should operate, instead, as in a scientific experiment, under ideal conditions:

The concept of ideal conditions [...] provides for the analysis of situations which have not occurred or which cannot occur, but which it seems fruitful to investigate. Thus ‘ideal conditions’ are conditions specifiable by an investigator, which do not obtain, but under which, if they did obtain, the changes, motions, or situations which the investigator wants to consider would be unhampered or uninterrupted by factors which he wishes to omit from his considerations.¹⁴

If historically it is hard to ignore the seemingly all-pervasive Parisian gaze—the views of a privileged milieu of Paris-based editors, writers, critics and newspapers—under ‘ideal conditions’, we may find it useful to analyse provincial poets for themselves, by themselves, among themselves.¹⁵ In other words, we may allow ourselves to read them, at last, as *poets tout court*. With bypassing Paris as our mantra, we shall find pathways that bypass the core–periphery framework and reveal networks of transregional exchange both within and beyond the Hexagon. We may move beyond what Caroline Levine has called ‘the logic of autochthony’ and embrace ‘a reorientation of literary studies around the network rather than the nation’, as ‘The network allows us to understand vital aspects of literary history that the nation obscures, including [...] the nation itself.’¹⁶

In such reorientation, poetry anthologies such as Adolphe Van Bever’s *Les Poètes du terroir* have emerged as key sources for identifying myriads of hubs and uncharted networks that emerge from every corner of the Hexagon and often expand beyond it. Exploring this anthology ‘under ideal conditions’, for instance, shows that spaces and voices once considered liminal can surface, instead, as the hubs of wider zigzagging networks of poetic exchange. Take for instance Amélie Gex (1835–1883), known by her male pseudonym Dian de la Jeâna, the *poète patoisante* who closes Van Bever’s anthology, where she is introduced as ‘la Muse de Chambéry’.¹⁷ She is someone who, except for some short trips, lived in the mountains of Savoie her whole life.¹⁸ Sitting between France and what would become the Kingdom of Italy, Savoie was annexed by France only in 1860, during Gex’s lifetime. Nineteenth-century Savoie is thus a hybrid space that undoes Parisian political, cultural and linguistic centrality. Amélie Gex, who wrote in Franço-Provençal—or *patois*

savoyard as she called it—is considered the poetic spokesperson of Savoie: ‘Gex mérite bien sa gloire locale. Nul écrivain n’a célébré mieux qu’elle les vertus domestiques, les mœurs simples, les légendaires et pittoresques coutumes de ses compatriotes.’¹⁹

But there is more than this local recognition. Working ‘under ideal conditions’ led me to pay particular attention to Gex’s poem ‘A lo quinçons de Provênce’:

Bonzor, lo quinçons provênços!
 Pe vo contâ se z’ariettes
 Vaica veni u pays sauds
 Le frâre de le z’aluëttes;
 Le sansons de noutra Savoé
 Comme le voûtre ont de z’âles
 [...]
 Tié no si vo veni’na fâi,
 Quinçons, d’èn gardo l’espérance,
 Vo varrai qu’icé, chu ma fê,
 On sante et on bâi comm’èn France!²⁰

[Bonjour, les pinsons provençaux!
 Pour vous conter ses ariettes,
 Voici venir aux pays chauds
 Le frère des alouettes:
 Les chansons de notre Savoie,
 Comme les vôtres, ont des ailes;
 [...]
 Chez nous, si vous venez une fois,
 Pinsons, j’en garde l’espérance,
 Vous verrez qu’ici, sur ma foi,
 On chante et l’on boit comme en France!]²¹

Reading this northern invitation to the southern chaffinches, I initially suspected a reference to the Félibrige cultural hub.²² I thought that Gex too, like many other *poètes patoisants*, must have looked to Frédéric Mistral (1830–1914) when hoping for recognition, and to Occitan poetry when looking for inspiration. This is itself a route that bypasses Paris (and French) while, at the same time, still wishing to contribute to the French literary tradition (‘On sante et on bâi comm’èn France!’). Digging into Gex’s biography, however, a much richer picture of this transregional network emerges. Gex’s main interlocutors in the south were in fact the *Félibre rouge* Louis-Xavier de Ricard (1843–1911),²³ his wife the *Félibresse rouge* Lydie Wilson de Ricard (1850–1880), and their friend, the *Félibre rouge* Auguste Fourès (1848–1891).²⁴ The *Félibres rouges*, the Languedoc fringe of the literary fellowship, vehemently distanced themselves from the politically moderate and Catholic views typical of the main group. They were anticlerical, fervent republicans, had socialist tendencies, and saw in the federation of independent provinces the only way of forming a genuine, just, *patrie*. Gex and the de Ricards entertained a significant correspondence,²⁵ which mutually enriched each other’s poetic, political and linguistic journeys.

Louis-Xavier de Ricard saw much more in Gex’s poetry than the stereotypical identification of the female provincial poet with ‘une définition passiste et désuète de la poésie’, one rooted in a traditional, bucolic past and far from the progress of urban modernity and its political turmoil.²⁶ In a review of *Le Long de l’An* for his periodical *L’Alliance*

latine, de Ricard praised Gex's forward-looking vision: 'Dian de la Jeanna est républicain et patriote; il est tout moderne [...] et, sentant son dialecte bien vivant, il ne veut pas l'emballoter et l'ensevelir dans le linceul des idées mortes qu'on va enterrer.'¹⁷

The exploration of this and other nineteenth-century poetic networks 'under ideal conditions' allows us to move beyond the homogenization of all the French *terroir* as a monolithic identity and its relegation to a traditionalist past, while also allowing us to appreciate the extent of different political, poetic and linguistic tendencies and tensions. Through this decentralizing and decentralized process, the multifaceted and multilingual poetic heritage of the nineteenth-century emerges as an essential component of France's pre-revolutionary past, its Republican present, and its increasingly globalized future. In fact, the very perimeters of the Hexagon become more porous once Paris, and with it an unattainable ideal of pure French(ness), is bypassed.

¹ Valentina Gosetti, 'Le Provincial of Dijon: French Romanticism and Provincial Cultural Awakening', *French Studies Bulletin*, 34 (2013), 53–57.

² Victor Hugo, 'Rentrée à Paris', in *Actes et paroles. Depuis l'exil. 1870–1876* (Paris: Calmann Lévy, 1876), pp. 5–7 (p. 6).

³ We are 'just as hampered by language ideology as the rest of the population': Rosina Lippi-Green, *English with an Accent: Language, Ideology and Discrimination in the United States* (London: Routledge, 2012), p. 61.

⁴ Philippe Blanchet, *Discriminations: combattre la glottophobie* (Limoges: Lambert-Lucas, 2019).

⁵ Recent books such as Nabil Wakim's *L'Arabe pour tous. Pourquoi ma langue est taboue en France* (Paris: Seuil, 2020) demonstrate how current ideological monolingualism still is in France.

⁶ These include the bill 'visant à promouvoir la France des accents' adopted by the Assemblée Nationale on 26 November 2020.

⁷ Amendment added on 23 June 1992.

⁸ For more on the ideology of monolingualism, see Rachel Gilmour, *Bad English: Literature, Multilingualism and the Politics of Language in Contemporary Britain* (Manchester: Manchester University Press, 2020).

⁹ As termed by Bertrand Barère de Vieuzac in his *Rapport du Comité de salut public sur les idiomes*, presented at the National Convention on 27 January 1794.

¹⁰ I am here hinting to the Abbé Grégoire's (in)famous *Rapport sur la nécessité et les moyens d'anéantir les patois et d'universaliser la langue française* (4 June 1794).

¹¹ I am the recipient of an Australian Research Council Discovery Early Career Award funded by the Australian Government, <<https://dataportal.arc.gov.au/NCGP/Web/Grant/Grant/DE200101206>>.

¹² Lydie Moudileno, 'The Postcolonial Provinces', *Francosphères*, 1 (2012), 53–68 (p. 68).

¹³ The prominence of Paris is tangible in Anthony Glinoe and Vincent Laisney, *L'Âge des cénacles: confraternités littéraires et artistiques au XIXe siècle* (Paris: Fayard, 2013).

¹⁴ Robert Lincoln Harder Jr, 'Copernicus, Galileo, and Ideal Conditions' (Unpublished thesis, Columbia University, 1956), p. 94 <<http://search.proquest.com.ezproxy.une.edu.au/dissertations-theses/copernicus-galileo-ideal-conditions/docview/89275747/se-2>> [accessed 12 September 2022].

¹⁵ For a nuancing of the idea of Paris, see our overall introduction to this special issue, 'Bypassing Paris? Se passer de Paris?'

¹⁶ Caroline Levine, 'From Nation to Network', *Victorian Studies*, 55 (2013), 647–66 (p. 649).

¹⁷ Adolphe Van Bever, 'Amélie Gex', in *Les Poètes du terroir: Du XVe au XXe siècle*, ed. by Adolphe Van Bever, 4 vols (Paris: Librairie Ch. Delagrave, 1909–11), IV (1911), p. 521.

¹⁸ See F. Vermale, *Un poète savoyard. Amélie Gex (1935–1883)* (Chambéry: Librairie Dardel, 1923).

¹⁹ Van Bever, 'Amélie Gex', p. 521.

²⁰ From her first main poetic collection *Le Long de l'An*: Dian de la Jeanna, *Le Long de l'An. Sansons. Rime et Fianfourne, Chansons en patois savoyard, avec la traduction française en regard* (Chambéry: Imprimerie Ménard, 1878), pp. 60–63.

²¹ *Ibid.*

²² For an overview of 'Le Félibrige', see Philippe Martel, 'Le Félibrige', in *Les Lieux de mémoire*, ed. by Pierre Nora, 3 vols (Paris: Quarto Gallimard, 2013–2017), III: Les France (2017), pp. 3515–53.

²³ Many would recognize Louis-Xavier de Ricard's name from his previous life as one of the key figures of the Parnassian movement. See Louis-Xavier de Ricard, *Petits mémoires d'un Parnassien*, ed. by Michael Pakenham (Paris: Minard - Lettres modernes, 1967).

²⁴ See Jean-Marie Carbasse, *Louis Xavier de Ricard, Félibre rouge* (Montpellier: Mireille Lacave, 1977) and Julian Wright, 'Charles-Brun and the Félibrige: Mistral or Louis-Xavier de Ricard?', in *The Regionalist Movement in France 1890–1914: Jean Charles-Brun and French Political Thought* (Oxford: OUP, 2003), pp. 43–75.

²⁵ The bulk of Gex's correspondence is catalogued under MSS C 394 and can be consulted at the Médiathèque Jean-Jacques Rousseau in Chambéry, France.

²⁶ 'Introduction' in Christine Planté, *Femmes poètes du XIXe siècle: Une anthologie* (Lyon: Presses universitaires de Lyon, [1998] 2010), (p. 37).

²⁷ Quoted in Vermale, *Un poète savoyard*, pp. 125–26.

APPENDIX

Documents from the archives of Amélie Gex (1835–1883) in Chambéry, an exchange with Auguste Fourès (1848–1891), *Félibre rouge*

Digging in the archives of the Bibliothèques municipales de Chambéry, the historical capital of the États de la maison de Savoie and now the *chef-lieu* of the département de la Savoie, we can read numerous letters, manuscripts and documents belonging, or related, to Amélie Gex, also known as Dian de la Jeanna,²⁸ one of the most prominent and celebrated poets of nineteenth-century Savoie. In Gex's correspondence,²⁹ we find a message dated 17 October 1881 signed by Auguste Fourès, a poet of Castelnaudary (or Castèlnau d'Arri) in Languedoc, containing one of his poems written in Occitan entitled 'Las Iroundos', as well as his (self-)translation into French, 'Les Hirondelles'.³⁰ In that same year, Fourès—who, with Louis-Xavier de Ricard and Lydie Wilson de Ricard, was one of the main representatives of the so-called *félibres rouges*—was elected as a *majoral du Félibrige* in recognition of his poetry and promotion of Occitan language and culture. The note opens with a dedication in Languedocien (see [Figure 1](#)):

A'n Dian de la Jeanna,
troubaire de Savoio,
'En Auguste Fourès,
troubaire del Lauragués,
mando aicestis bourdounets.
AF
C^{ri}, le 17 d'Outobre, 81.

[To Dian de la Jeanna, | *trouvère* of Savoy, | From Auguste Fourès, | *trouvère* of Languedoc, | I send these little lines of verse. Castelnaudary, 17 October 1881.]³¹

The poem itself, which is dated 16 October 1881 and comprises nine octosyllabic quatrains, is then dedicated 'A 'n Dian de la Jeanna après abé legit le Long de l'an' [To Dian de la Jeanna, after reading *Le Long de l'An*]. The last three stanzas read:

Es alavès que le tieu libre
Coumoul de poulidis bourdous
M'es arribat, valent felibre
Qu'aimos toun païs mountagnous.

E dire qu'aqueles auselos
Cresion m'empourta tout le gauch
E toutos las cansous nouvelos
E me daiss'aqui, coumo bauch.

Vengue la tor! Aurè de joio.
Qun boun-ur! Que m'es assoulant!

Tas z'*hirandelle* de Savoio
Cantoun bé tout *le long de l'an!*

The original self-translation by Auguste Fourès reads:

C'est à ce moment que ton livre – plein de jolis vers – m'est arrivé, vaillant félibre – qui aimes ton pays montagnoux.

Et dire que ces oiselles – croyaient emporter toute la gaîté – et toutes les chansons nouvelles – et me laisser là comme idiot.

Que la glace vienne! J'aurai de la joie. – Quel bonheur! Que cela m'est consolant! – Tes hirondelles de Savoie – chantent bien tout le *Long de l'an!*

In Fourès's dedication, Amélie Gex is elected 'troubaire de Savoio'; in the poem itself she is termed a 'valent felibre', in a display of transprovincial solidarity that transpases the borders of what would be considered Occitania. The incorporation of the words 'z'hirandelle', meaning swallows in *patois Savoyard* (as Gex's would have termed her own language), is a translingual sign of hospitality within a poetic fellowship that has ambitions to extend beyond the Occitan language and embrace a wider panlatinist identity.³² The mention of 'z'hirandelle' within a poem entitled 'Las Iroundos' also indicates Fourès's genuine engagement with Gex's first poetic collection in patois, *Le Long de l'An*. In this volume, swallows are the protagonists of a key patriotic poem entitled 'Ah! qu'y fâ bon revaî la France!...' ['Ah! qu'il fait bon revoir la France!'], which is set to Béranger's 'Air des *Hirondelles*'.³³ In this composition, which was previously supposed to be entitled 'Sên que diont le z'hirandelle' ['Ce que disent les hirondelles'],³⁴ upon returning to France, the birds bring back news of conflict and unrest, and ultimately elect their motherland as the only possible haven. As an example, here are two short excerpts taken from the first and the fifth stanzas respectively:³⁵

Daïpoé voui zors le z'hirandelle
Tapageont zo noutro coverts;
Le diont, dièn leu réjouissance:
- "Bonzor! no cognechévo pas?
"Ah! qu'y fâ bon revaî la France,
"Pouro z'amis, quand on vint de lé-bas!"

[...]

Lo Prince creusont leu sarvelle
Pe betâ le mondo à l'ênvers;
[...]
Iora qu'on a l'espérance,
Tiez leu on ne tornera pas.
Ah! qu'y fâ bon revaî la France,
Pouro z'amis, quand on vint de lé-bas!...

Here are the same lines, from the published parallel self-translation by Amélie Gex:

Depuis huit jours les hirondelles
Bavardent sous nos toits;

Elles disent dans leur contentement:
“Bonjour! ne nous-connaissiez-vous pas?..
“Ah! qu’il fait bon revoir la France,
“Pauvres amis, quand on vient de là-bas!”

[...]

Les princes se creusent la cervelle
Pour mettre le monde à l’envers;
[...]
Maintenant que nous avons l’expérience,
Chez eux nous ne retournerons pas...
Ah! qu’il fait bon revoir la France,
Pauvres amis, quand on vient de là-bas!...³⁶

As with many other poems by Amélie Gex—but we could also include many compositions by the *félibres*, including the *félibres rouges*—a strong patriotic sentiment is here expressed in patois and *not* in French. Similar ideals can be traced through different texts written in various minoritized languages by poets based around the Hexagon. This multilingual production can be read as a challenge to a post-Revolutionary mindset based on a ‘one nation, one language’ ideology.

The French version of Auguste Fourès’s poem ‘Las Iroundos’ is published in a chapter entitled ‘Louis-Xavier de Ricard et les Félibres Rouges’ within Vermale’s 1923 study on Gex. In the same chapter, Vermale also includes the French version of Gex’s poetic response, a composition entitled ‘Au temps de Framboises’ dedicated to Fourès.³⁷ The archives in Chambéry, among fragments of various poems,³⁸ preserve the manuscript of Gex’s original version in *Savoyard* as well as her original self-translation, dated 19 October 1881 and probably written shortly after receiving Fourès’s letter. The *Savoyard* version remained unpublished until 1942, when it was printed by the *Revue de Savoie*.³⁹ The French versions of Gex’s poem found in Vermale’s study and in the *Revue de Savoie* differ slightly from each other and both display a number of different wordings from the original manuscript I have consulted in the archives. I am here re-transcribing both versions directly from the original document (see [Figures 2](#) and [3](#)):⁴⁰

U têtîm de le-s Ampe
A Monchu Gust Fourès
Lé n’haut diên la taillà que rônne
Comm’onn’ orr que se fâ d’ennuî
De sé de coên cojû d’embrônne
Et grelandâ de tièvrafouî
De sé Mèie on violet que rampe
Le long du nant ênmorséyâ
On violet tot ourlâ de-s ampe

Que le soulâi a rosèyâ
De sé zo ‘na grand pèisse naïre
A la poênta de Tornaloû
On roçat trebordâ de lerre
Yeu n’y a de place que pe doûs
Dis, Minna vou-te onna demênge
No-s émodâ no dous solets

No dous solet fâre vedênge
De le-s ampe du p'tiou violet

Drâi comme onn' âveille badaûda
Te bèquerez lo-s ébronnié
Fadrà tot on zor de maraûda
P'amassâ plêin tou'tiou panié
En débrotênt çaquon sa brance
Sarà pas poué si toût fornî
No faut compta dê l'arba blanche
Minna, moên tant qu'à l'ênbronî

Alin... T'ouù vouà?... Faut-ouù t'attêndre
A la cruâija du plôt-fêndû
Miette... on paut-ouù se défêndre
D'allâ colli le biên pardû
T'ouù pas p'êmpler le cavagne
Que lo blondo font gancelié
Que diên lo boës le Bon Dio vague
Le-s embronn' et lo-s ampelié

From the manuscript translation by Amélie Gex in the same folder (see [Figures 4](#) and [5](#)):⁴¹

Au temps des framboises

Là-haut dans la taillée qui gronde
Comme un ours qui se fait de l'ennui
Je sais des coins cousus de myrtilles [*sic*]
Et enguirlandés de chèvrefeuille
Je sais Mie un sentier qui grimpe
Le long du ruisseau enmousselé
Un sentier tout ourlé de framboises
Que le soleil a rougies.

Je sais sous un grand sapin noir
A la pointe de Tournalou
Un rocher rebordé de lierres
Où il n'y a de place que pour deux
Dis, Mienne, veux-tu un dimanche
Nous en aller nous deux seuls
Nous deux seuls faire vendange
Des framboises du petit sentier

Juste comme une abeille badine
Tu becquetteras les myrtilles
Il faudra tout un jour de maraude
Pour amasser plein ton petit panier
En dépouillant chacun sa branche
Ce ne sera pas puis si tôt fini
Il nous faut compter dès l'aube blanche
Mienne au moins jusqu'à la brume

Allons!... est-ce oui? Faut-il t'attendre
 Au carrefour du Tronc-Fendu?
 Miette, peut-on se défendre
 D'aller cueillir le bien perdu?
 N'est-ce pas pour remplir les corbeilles
 Que les amoureux font balancer
 Que dans les bois le Bon Dieu sème
 Les myrtilles et les framboisiers?

In the archives, in the same folder as this composition, there is a little blue notebook of manuscript French poems entitled *Au jour le jour*. On the corner of one page, we find stranded a short rhyming dedication in *Savoyard*, written in pencil, for 'Monchu Gust Fourès' [à Monsieur Auguste Fourès], written by Dian de la Jeanna, from 'le fond de la Savoué' [du fond de la Savoie] (see Figure 6). This perhaps indicates that Gex was working on a note to accompany the poem, sent as an 'hommage sympathique de l'auteur'.

Through concrete, specific, and archive-based, multilingual poetic and epistolary exchanges that bypass Paris, such as those between the Languedoc-based *félibres rouges* and Savoie-based Amélie Gex, in my current work I aim to promote a more inclusive remapping of the nineteenth-century 'French' poetic landscape. In doing so, the hope is also to diversify and challenge such ideas as 'national poetry' and the 'national poet', and with them the very idea of a monolingual nation itself.

²⁸ Her pen name is spelled differently in various sources and studies. Other spellings include Dian de la Jeanna, Dian de la Janna, and Djan de la Djanna. Her name is sometimes misspelled as Amélie Jex.

²⁹ The bulk of Gex's correspondence is catalogued MSS C 394 within the Collection Bibliothèques municipales de Chambéry. The documents can be consulted at the Médiathèque Jean-Jacques Rousseau in Chambéry.

³⁰ This poem and its translation into French would later be included in Auguste Fourès, *Les Chants del Soulelb. Poèsiôs del Lauraguès/ Les Chants du Soleil. Poésies du Lauraguais* (Carcassonne: Imprimerie G. Servièrre, 1891), pp. 260–64.

³¹ Collection Bibliothèques municipales de Chambéry, MSS C 394. This document comes as a surprise as it is placed in a folder containing correspondence between Amélie Gex and Antony Dessaix (1825–1893), the author of *Légendes et traditions populaires de la Savoie* (Annecy: Aimé Perrissin et cie, 1875).

³² For more on the panlatinist ambitions of the *félibres rouges*, especially with reference to Louis-Xavier de Ricard, see Jean-Marie Carbasse, *Louis-Xavier de Ricard. Félibre rouge* (Montpellier: Éditions Mireille Lacave, 1977).

³³ It was common for Amélie Gex to compose her poems in patois by thinking of famous songs, rather than concentrating on matters of versification. The rhythm of the poem would thus be dictated by that of the song.

³⁴ This manuscript can be found among many other fragments of poems catalogued within the Collection Bibliothèques municipales de Chambéry, MSS C 466-2.

³⁵ The poem comprises six eight-line stanzas.

³⁶ Dian de la Jeanna, *Le Long de l'An. Sansons, Rime et Fianfourne, Chansons en patois Savoyard, avec la traduction française en regard* (Chambéry: Imprimerie Ménard, 1878), pp. 14–15.

³⁷ F. Vermale, *Un poète savoyard. Amélie Gex (1935–1883)* (Chambéry: Librairie Dardel, 1923), pp. 134–36.

³⁸ Collection Bibliothèques municipales de Chambéry, MSS C 466-2, 'poésies diverses'.

³⁹ 'Poésie patoise inédite d'Amélie Gex', *Revue de Savoie*, 1 (1942), 46–47.

⁴⁰ Amélie Gex's *patois Savoyard* did not (and still does not) have an established orthography. Looking at Gex's manuscripts, especially her constant corrections, as well as some of the main topics in her correspondence, Gex's soul-searching about how to write in her language becomes apparent. This aspect of many endangered languages, together with Gex's handwriting, makes all transcriptions somewhat tentative. It is for this reason that the transcription proposed here differs slightly from that in the *Revue de Savoie*. I have tried to remain as close as possible to the original manuscript in terms of writing and punctuation. I am extremely grateful to Pierre Grasset's consultancy on these points. All remaining errors are my own.

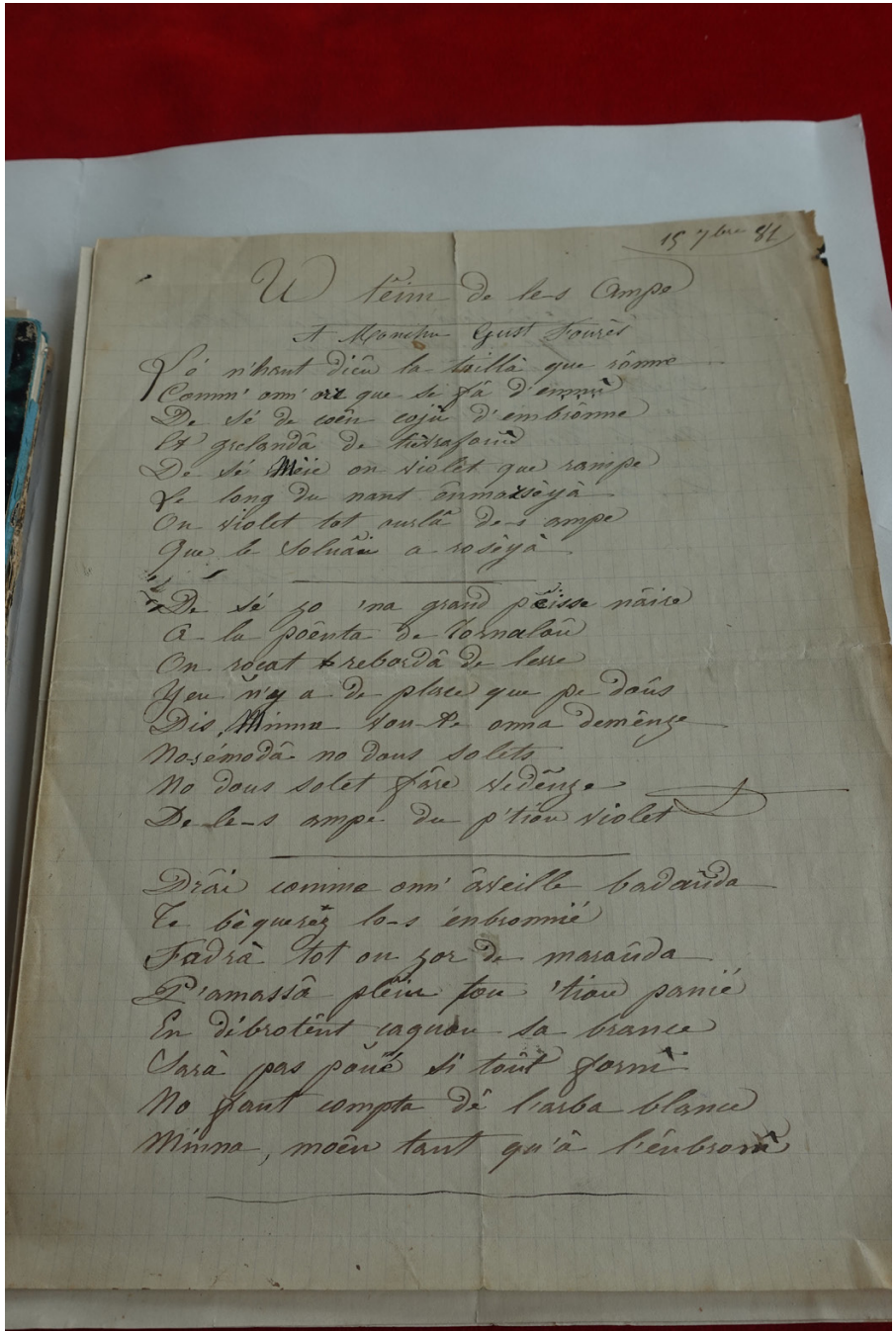
⁴¹ For readability, I am here omitting some corrections that are visible in the image.

*A^m Dian de la Scanna,
troupaire de Savoie,
M^{re} Auguste Fourès,
troupaire del Lauraguès,
mando aicesti bourdounets,*

CH

C^{re}, le 17 d'Octobre, 81.

Figure 1: Collection Bibliothèques municipales de Chambéry, MSS C 394.



18

W teim de les ompa

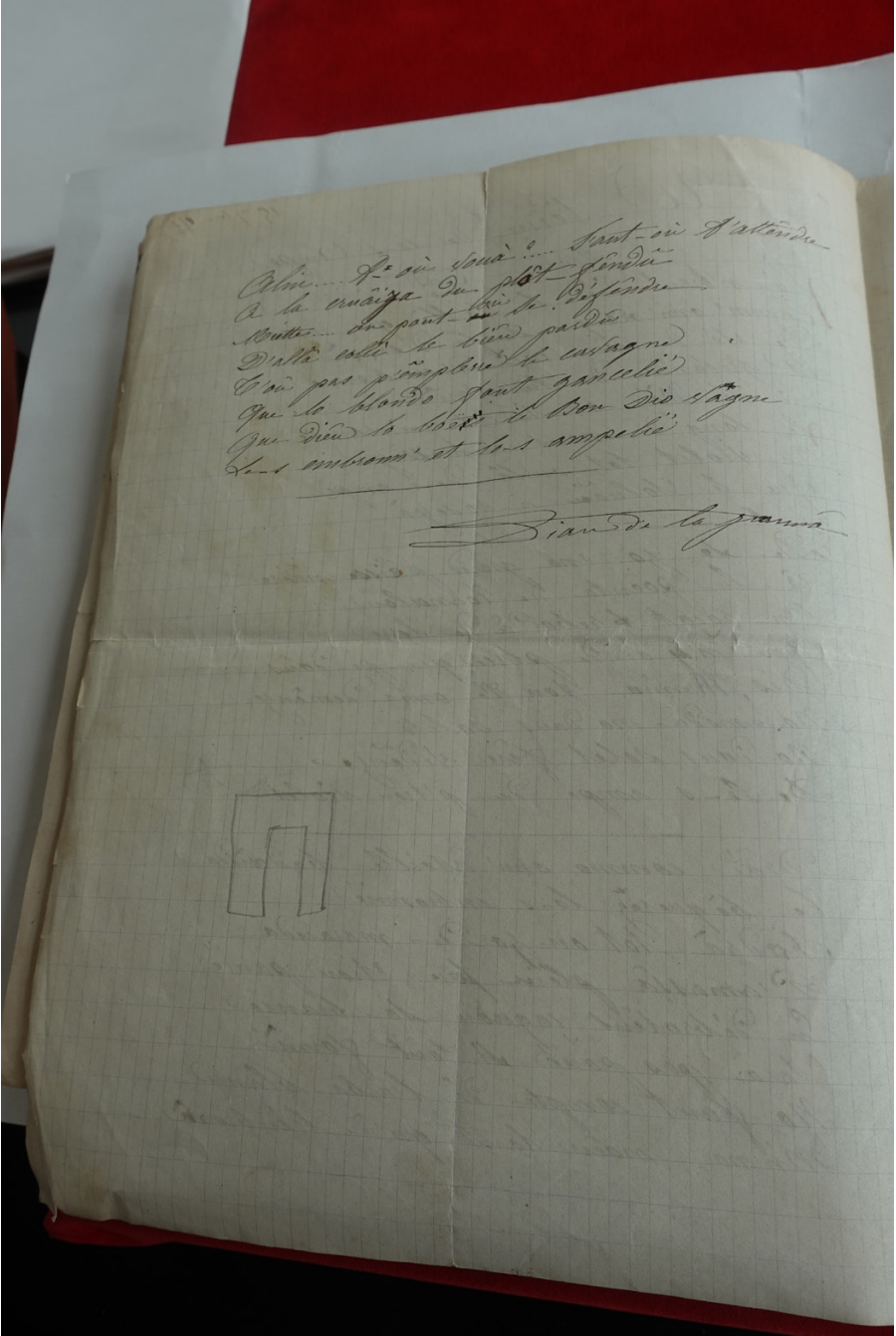
A Munchu Gust Sauré
Ya n'brut diéu la tailla que s'omme
Comm' om' ore que se ja d'empé
De si de cain coje d'embriome
Et g'elavida de hidrafané
De si Mice on violet que rompa
Ye long du nant armadéja
On violet tot rusta de s' ompa
Que le soluan a roséja

De si fo ma grand péise naïce
A la poénte de l'ornalau
On récat & rebardâ de lere
Yeu m'y a de place que pe dous
Dis Minna hou & oma deméze
Nosémotâ no dous solite
No dous solet fure si déze
De le-s ompa de p'tiou violet

Diâi comme om' aselle badânda
Le bêgureq lo-s embriomé
Fadriâ tot ou for de marânda
L'amassâ pleu fou t'iau panie
En dibrotent raguou sa brance
Chasâ pas paûé si tant formé
No faut compte de l'arba blancé
Minna, moen tant qu'à l'embroré

Figure 2: Collection Bibliothèques municipales de Chambéry, MSS C 466-2.

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Alors... Je suis sous... tout ou l'attente
à la croix de la... fondée
Nuit... au point de la...
D'atta... le bien...
C'est pas... le...
Qui le... font...
Qui... le... son...
Les... et les...

Bien de la...

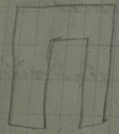


Figure 3: Collection Bibliothèques municipales de Chambéry, MSS C 466-2.

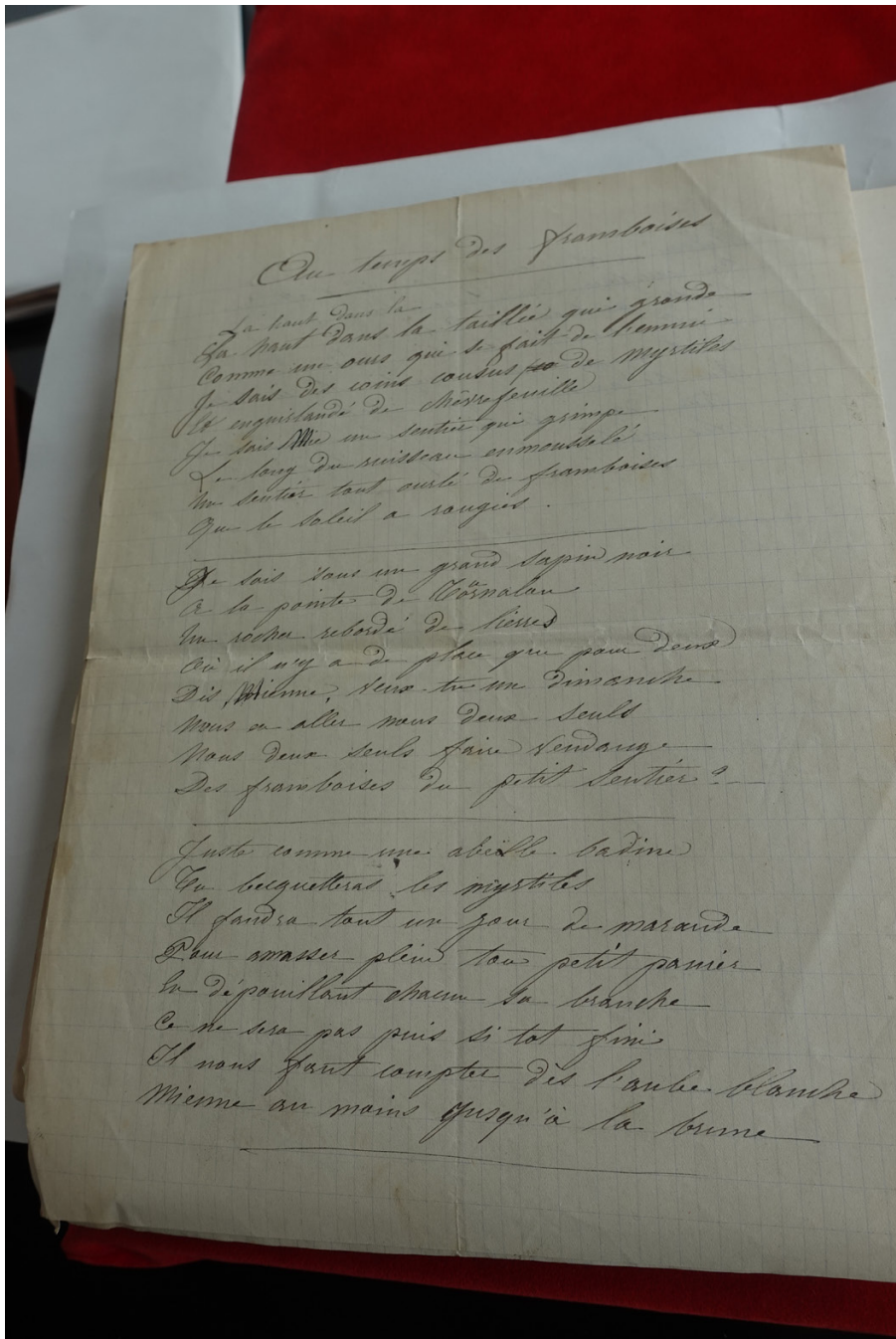
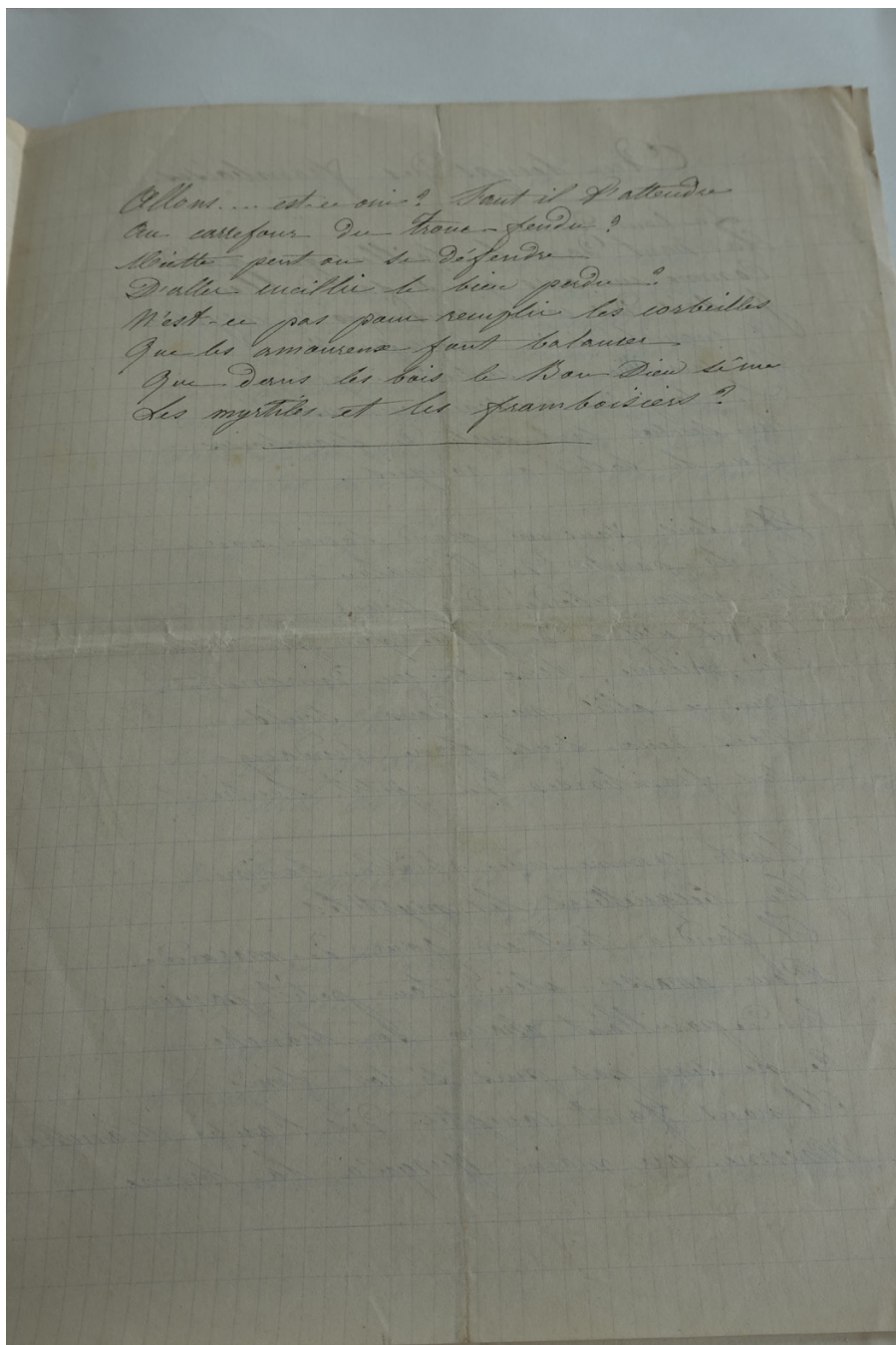


Figure 4: Collection Bibliothèques municipales de Chambéry, MSS C 466-2.



Alors... être ouï? Tout il s'attendu
Au casseur du trou-fendu?
Niente peut on se défendre
D'être incillie le sein perdu?
N'est-ce pas pour remplir les corbilles
Que les amoureux font balancer
Que dans les bais le Non-Dieu s'ouvre
Les mythes et les jamboniers?

Figure 5: Collection Bibliothèques municipales de Chambéry, MSS C 466-2.

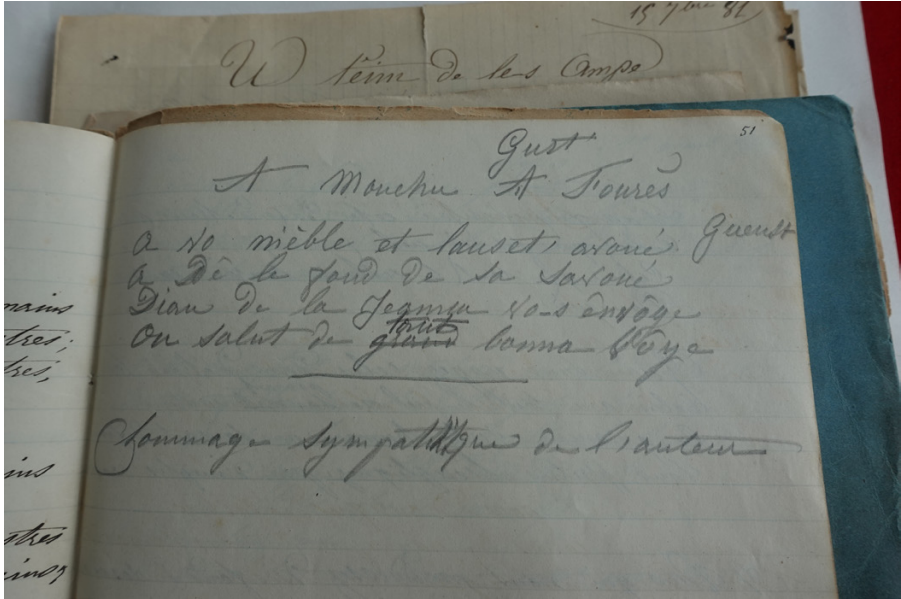


Figure 6: Collection Bibliothèques municipales de Chambéry, MSS C 466-2.

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