



New Pronouns in France

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ASSISTANT EDITOR

The pronouns they/them used for nonbinary people have become commonly used and discussed in Massachusetts. Is that the case everywhere? Taking it across the Atlantic and all the way to France, the answer is no. They/them/theirs pronouns are used by non-binary people, or people who don't identify as female or male. Recently, *Le Petit Robert*, a prominent French dictionary, chose to add the pronoun "iel" (pronounced "yell") to the existing il (masculine) and elle (feminine) pronouns. This was met with significant backlash from French lawmakers to the competing *Larousse Dictionary* to the First Lady.

From a political standpoint, there are very few who agree. The education minister, Jean-Michele Blanquer, thinks of the new "iel" as a part of what the French call "wokisme" (simply translated, wokeness). Many French citizens view "wokisme" as an "assault on France aimed at spreading racial and gender discord over French universalism." The first lady, Brigitte Macron, agrees with Blanquer that "iel" is an attack on the French language and culture, and declares that there are only two genders. The Académie Française is against it, as is the *Larousse Dictionary*, whose lexicographer states, "pronouns have not changed since the fourth century." Another example is when center-right lawmaker Francois Jolivet appealed to the Académie Française to take action against the addition of "iel." He writes, "These *Robert* lexicographers are introducing a word that barely exists in our country. That is militancy, that is not doing their jobs." However, director-general of *Le Petit Robert* Charles Bimbenet, is thinking along different lines. He says, "The mission of the *Robert* is to observe the evolution of a French language that is in motion and diverse, and take account of that. To define the words that describe the world is to aid better comprehension of it."

The concept of American woke infiltration is the root of all criticisms of the new pronoun. The French language is protected by a centuries-old Académie Française, and they see "iel" as a threat to the centuries-old language. For instance, a similar situation occurred when many advocated for "inclusive writing," which attempted to clear up gender bias in the French language.

For example, when a group of people includes multiple genders, the masculine pronoun "ils" is used to describe the group. Inclusive writing would mean leaning away from this bias. The Académie resisted fiercely, arguing that changing this would affect the intelligibility of the language. To many citizens, their anti-feminist and anti-"iel" movements are personal. Gwenaëlle Perrier, a gender studies teacher, says, "To attack inclusive writing, and the pronoun 'iel', is an easy way for anti-feminists to express themselves. Much more discreet than attacking women or trans people directly."

From the citizen's point of view, no one really knew what "iel" was until the blowup with *Le Petit Robert*. The event has sparked much debate among officials. But what do the common people say? Through Facebook connections in France, I got some information. Videographer Carola Elsner says that her coworkers had no idea about the "iel" discussion. Some citizens claim that the general public seems to be okay with it, despite very varied data. Becca Davis, who lives in Paris, says that her daughter uses they/them pronouns for her nonbinary friends. Those friends are anglophone, so they use the English they/them, but this shows that young people especially are aware of the pronoun debate. Paris-based opera singer Zachary Wilder says that people are generally accepting despite an initial bristle at the change. He thinks the hesitation is the same as the Académie's; the French culture and language is very based on gender, and people don't want to change because of American ideas. He writes, "...perhaps an Anglocentric solution might not always be the best one for a francophone society."

However, awareness of the pronoun debate depends on generations and age groups, similar to what it's like here. Davis's daughter had more knowledge about it than Elsner's coworkers. But actress Valerie MacCarthy says "...there is quite a divide in that age group [millennials/gen z] depending on where you live: big city like Paris or other. In their case [her 16 year old children in the suburbs] they are indifferent about it and do not apply it."



The Onset of Winter and SAD

Miranda Connolly, Senior
EDITOR-IN-CHIEF

"All the leaves are brown, and the sky is grey. I've been for a walk on a winter's day..." As you look around, you notice how miserable your surroundings have become, for it is winter in New England. Not only does the landscape become more miserable in the winter, so do the people. Becoming more depressed over the winter is a nationwide phenomenon. Dr. Norman Rosenthal was interviewed in the NPR article, "How to cope with SAD, or seasonal affective disorder" (Cardoza), which discussed the subject of seasonal depression. Rosenthal has done research on seasonal depression, and has coined a term for it; seasonal affective disorder, or SAD for short. 5% of Americans suffer from SAD, and you are more likely to be affected by this syndrome if you live in the Northern Hemisphere, and women are also more likely to experience it than men.

There are several ways for someone to identify they may be suffering from SAD, as well as many ways to prevent a person from experiencing SAD. The article provided five different strategies to combat SAD: recognizing the symptoms to help cope, buying lamps that imitate sunlight, consistent eating habits, making movement a part of your daily routine, and reducing stress. The article also recommends speak-

ing with a doctor if you truly believe you are suffering from SAD.

Although the stigma around mental health has been overturned over the past few years, many people refuse to accept that they themselves may have a disorder. I believe the more we talk about and normalize mental health, the more people will be able to recognize their own symptoms and ultimately seek out help.

Different age groups have different rates of depression, and teenagers in America suffer from depression at much higher percentages than any other age. It is necessary for us to continue the conversation about mental health and educate students about symptoms of depression and teach several healthy coping mechanisms.

Several studies have been conducted about mental health and its correlation to mindfulness. According to the studies, meditation and other mindfulness activities can help the brain regulate emotion, and can even increase the memory potential of the subjects. I think it is critical for schools to educate their students about mental health. Spreading awareness on this subject and ways to help improve it will make people feel less alone, and maybe even make them feel happier in the long run. So the next time you go on a walk, remember, the sun is still shining, even if it is behind clouds.

5 Accessible Ways To Cope With Seasonal Affective Disorder (SAD)

- 1. Seek Professional Help**
 - talk to your doctor
 - connect with a mental health professional (counselor, therapist etc.)
 - join group therapy
 - look into family therapy
 - seek specialized therapy (CBT)
- 2. Work On Self-Compassion**
 - keep a journal or jot notes of your feelings and behaviours
 - develop a routine to get you up and moving
 - try guided meditations (selfcompassion.org)
 - commit to activities that bring you joy
 - avoid alcohol and drugs
 - limit caffeine and screen time
- 3. Seek More Vitamin D**
 - consult with your doctor about vitamin D supplements
 - get outside as much as you can
 - take a sunny vacation if you can afford it
 - rearrange your home or office to let more sun in
 - eat more Vitamin D-rich food
- 4. Reach Out For Support**
 - confide in someone you know
 - attend peer support groups
 - join online support communities
 - try volunteering
 - try not to isolate
 - be honest about your needs
- 5. Light Therapy**
 - fluorescent white light boxes have the most extensive research
 - use in the morning or evening for up to 2 hours depending on SAD symptoms
 - could take 2-4 days, up to 3 weeks
 - can have side effects, consult with your medical professional
 - found at local drug marts

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Khruangbin - Mordechai

Benjamin Burns, Junior
Reporter

This week, I am reviewing the album "Mordechai" by the band Khruangbin. The album was released under record labels Dead Oceans and Night Time Stories. Khruangbin, which translates to "airplane" in Thai, is a band that consists of Donald Johnson, Jr., Laura Lee, and Mark Speer. They have put out multiple albums before "Mordechai," with "Con Todo El Mundo" releasing in 2018 and "Hasta El Cielo" in 2019.

The album was entirely recorded in a barn in rural Texas. The album lasts about 43 minutes and has 10 songs, so the band has clearly focused more on quality than

quantity, and it shows. The themes of the songs range from an old friend who has passed away on "Connaissais de Face," to letters written by one of the band member's grandfather and grand uncle to each other on "Dearest Alfred." In fact, the lyrics of this song are made entirely from those letters.

Another highlight of the album is "One to Remember." Although the lyrics on the song are fairly sparse, the overall upbeat tone of the song makes it very enjoyable to listen to. If you like Funk or Rock, I would highly recommend this album.

Headlight Staff 2021-2022

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