Commencing

by Trevor Huxham

Today I had a conversation in
The language of the Franks. Don’t bother me
About it being question and response;
A message was communicated, and
It was received. What’s more important is:
This was my first attempt at speaking French,
The tongue not only of my ancestors,
Those Québécois, but also daughter of
The way-the-Romans-speak, or, Romance. I
Had studied Latin since a little boy,
And spoke long after its Hispanic child.
So French came easy, reading it at least.
A French for Dummies, “French phonology”
On Wikipedia, and phrasebooks helped
This English-Spanish speaker wet his feet
In Lourdes, or set his feet on the first step
Of Eiffel’s Tower, or—begin to move
Beyond cliché and into verité:

And so today in my first class for French
When my professor questioned me in French
And I replied, San Fran—she’s in the west!
Sweet pigment from the Tricolore dripped down
And fell upon a black-and-white rosebud,
Which time-lapse style unfurled its crimson flags.
The silent S in “Arkansas” awoke
To ask me now to join the Francophone.
An organ blasted some Camille Saint-Saëns
As all the départements from metropole
To Réunion basked in the sun and said,
“Bienvenue.”