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Gender Performance in Seventeenth-century Dramatic Dialogue: From the Salon to the Classroom

by
Theresa V. Kennedy

As early as the Renaissance, the dialogue served as an important forum for debating questions related to the female condition: “the issues of women’s equality with men; the appropriate education for women; and the ways that men and women should imagine and treat each other, in marriage or in other relationships” (Smarr 106). Yet, even into the seventeenth century, the majority of dialogues continued to exclude female interlocutors.¹ Steeped in the erudite, humanist culture of antiquity, the dialogue employed rhetoric or debate as a strategy to dismiss women participants, who were discouraged from learning the art of rhetoric (Smarr 11).² Madeleine de Scudéry redirected the dialogue genre with the publication of her conversations, featuring both male and female interlocutors with equal opportunities to express their views on a variety of different topics.³ Other women authors beginning with Marguerite de Navarre, Marie Le Gendre, Helisenne de Crenne, and Catherine des Roches found their voice in the convergence between dialogue and drama.⁴ The dramatic dialogue, exemplified by Plato and Erasmus, was written in a simple dialogic form, and intended to be acted aloud by male pupils. Female authors, who had been intimidated by the traditional, highly ornamental forms of the dialogue, found a fruitful ground for their writing in the dramatic dialogue. The dramatic dialogue was particularly successful in the seventeenth-century salons. Unlike Scudéry’s conversations, the narrator did not

¹ The Chevalier de Méré’s conversations for instance feature exchanges between the Mareschal de C. and the Chevalier. In fact, the *dames* present are not considered worthy participants of their exchange. See the very first conversation in *Œuvres complètes* in which the Mareschal expresses to the Chevalier his desire to converse with him without the distraction of women: “J’ai mieux aimé vous entretenir [...], que de jouer avec ces Dames. Nous discourons de certaines choses, qui ne s’apprennent point dans le commerce du monde” (8). It is suggested that the women would have little to contribute to their exchange.

² According to Alain Viala, seventeenth-century writers of this category of literature began to disassociate themselves with overly rhetorical or obscure language (See 63, 55 respectively).

³ Scudéry published ten volumes of conversations between 1680 and 1692: *Conversations sur divers sujets* (1680); *Conversations nouvelles sur divers sujets* (1684); *Conversations morales* (ou *La Morale du monde*) (1686); *Nouvelles conversations de morale* (1688) and *Entretiens de morale* (1692).

⁴ Anne Larsen describes Catherine des Roches’ second volume of dialogues as “proches du théâtre lu” (40).

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interrupt the characters' exchanges, and dialogues could be read aloud or dramatized in a shorter period of time. Since the *salonniers* did not always have access to a private stage or costumes in order to put on a full-fledged professional production, the dramatic dialogue proved to be an enjoyable source of entertainment for both male and female participants. Thus, by re-appropriating the dialogue, Scudéry and her female predecessors directly questioned the exclusivity of a genre traditionally associated with masculine voices and allowed the female interlocutor to join the conversation.⁵ Yet, these female writers continued to write with both men and women in mind.

Catherine Durand, a prolific writer of dramatic texts, and the Marquise de Maintenon, *institutrice* of Saint-Cyr, were among the first to exclusively express a woman's point of view in the dramatic dialogue. Their writing followed two strategies: first, both Durand's and Maintenon's dialogues feature only female interlocutors; secondly, they emphasize how women should conduct themselves. Thus, by exploiting the dramatic dialogue as a means of expression, Maintenon and Durand provided a forum in which women were able to discuss and rehearse their roles for the stage of life.

At the same time, Durand's and Maintenon's dialogues teach us about the shifting codes of conduct for women at the end of the seventeenth century. As these dramatic dialogues move from the salon to the classroom, one is made distinctly aware of a cultural battle between a secular, *mondaine* society that rejects morality, and the State, which subscribes to more traditional, Christian values. They both seek to make women more aware of the importance of safeguarding their reputations in a society that privileges men.

Yet, while Durand does not discourage women from engaging in *galanterie*, Maintenon—who supports the State's objectives⁶—claims that women remain above reproach only by rejecting the *vie mondaine* and embracing domesticity. The language used in their dialogues reflects their divergent interests: The informal and at times uncouth language in Durand's dialogues is intended to entertain. On the other hand, the more polished, formal speech featured in Maintenon's dialogues reveals a

⁵ Claire Cazanave demonstrates that the dialogue, which favors the strongest voices, is essentially masculine in nature (44).

⁶ "Society's elites have an obligation to set an example for the lower classes, and the state-sponsored education of future aristocratic mothers will not only help to instill the nobility with virtues beneficial to the crown, but it will also tie them more closely to the king" (Qtd. in Goldsmith 66).

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moral, didactic purpose. Maintenon's dialogues reject the life of ease and pleasures to which young aristocratic women had formerly been accustomed. The worsening economic conditions were forcing young women to reconsider their priorities, and thus gallantry as a way of life became less of an option for women.

Catherine Durand

Although there is little known about the life of Durand, she was a prolific and celebrated author of her time. The printer of a collection of her works published posthumously under the title *Oeuvres de Madame Durand* (1757) refers to Durand in his *avertissement* as one who "s'est distinguée par ses écrits et dont l'auteur de la Bibliothèque des Romans parle avec éloge." The variety of works in this collection—including the dramatic dialogues in question, the libretto for her opera *Adraste*, a poem entitled "La Vengeance contre soi-même," a short story taken from *Cent Nouvelles nouvelles*, and an ode dedicated to the King which won an award from the French Academy in 1701—demonstrates that Durand, like other writers of gallant works, experimented with hybrid literary genres.⁷ The author also published a number of novels and semi-historical works.⁸ In the eighteenth century she is credited with having invented the genre of the dramatic proverb by the Comtesse de Genlis in her introduction to Carmontel's proverbs and comedies.⁹ Catherine Durand's *Comédies en*

⁷ Alain Viala states that the blending of genres is characteristic of writers who contributed to *la littérature galante*: "Plutôt que de séparer les genres, elle les réunit, voire rêve de les fondre ensemble" (51). Also see Allison Stedman who argues that Durand, who incorporates various salon pastimes into her hybrid novels, is a major contributor to the rococo period's "aesthetic apex" (12).

⁸ *La Comtesse de Mortane* (Paris, 1699); *Mémoires de la cour de Charles VII*, 2 vols. (Paris, 1700); *Oeuvres mêlées* (Paris, 1701); *Le comte de Cardonne, ou la Constance victorieuse, histoire sicilienne* (Paris, 1702); *Les Belles Grecques, ou l'Histoire des plus fameuses courtisanes de la Grèce* (Paris, 1712); *Henri, duc des Vandales* (Paris, 1714); and *Les Petits soupers d'été*, 2 vols. (Paris, 1733).

⁹ In her introduction to Carmontel's *Proverbes and comédies* Genlis states: "Cette idée [de prendre pour base de ses petites pièces un proverbe qu'il mettait en action] n'était point de son invention; très-longtemps avant Carmontel, une personne nommée Mme Durand avoit fait imprimer un petit recueil de Proverbes dramatiques, mais qui tomba promptement dans l'oubli, parce que toutes ces petites pièces étoient de la plus grande insipidité." While Genlis is critical of them, it would appear that Durand's plays hadn't entirely been forgotten since Genlis knew of them and perhaps had even read them.

proverbes were printed as an appendix to the Comtesse de Murat's novel *Le Voyage de Campagne* (Paris, 1699).¹⁰

Like many of Scudéry's conversations, Durand's *Dialogues des galantes modernes* imitate an agonal model in which interlocutors discuss their opposing viewpoints. In the end, the interlocutors either maintain their initial positions or one interlocutor succeeds in convincing the other to change her viewpoint.¹¹ It is significant that Durand's dialogues are diphonic as opposed to polyphonic. While Scudéry's interlocutors must choose their words carefully according to the "bienséance" of their polite company,¹² Durand's female interlocutors may speak without reserve in the company of women. Durand exploits this formerly pedantic genre to discuss women's role in the art of gallantry, all the while intentionally excluding male interlocutors.¹³ As we shall observe, without a distracting male presence, her female interlocutors can speak more frankly.

Like Scudéry's conversations, Durand's *Dialogues des galantes modernes* reflect the salon culture which "demonstrated a blatant contempt of heterosexual sex and marriage" (Legault 128)—both obstacles to *la vie mondaine* and the pursuit of loftier goals such as cultivating one's mind. Yet, gallantry, loosely defined as the art of courtship,¹⁴ is permitted within the context of polite society. Throughout her dialogues, Durand maintains that women may engage in gallantry as long as they do not risk their reputations. The voice of reason, or the *porte-parole*, is the *dame galante* who remains in control of her male suitors and enjoys a pleasant and active social life. Her foil, on the other hand, is foolishly willing to ruin her reputation for an amorous conquest or an undeserving lover. Durand pat-

¹⁰ For a recent edition of this work in translation see *A Trip to the Country by Henriette-Julie de Castelnau, Comtesse de Murat*, ed. and trans. Perry Gethner and Allison Stedman (Detroit: Wayne State University Press, 2011).

¹¹ See Cazanave 81–83 for more information on categories of interlocution. The agonal model is initially associated with the writings of Aristotle, but would be imitated by authors in other centuries. Although Scudéry's conversations were polyphonic, many of them employed the agonal model. See also Smarr 27.

¹² Delphine Denis states that *l'air galant* is directly associated with *la bienséance*: "conduit par le jugement," il "doit être partout proportionné à ce qu'on est et à ce qu'on fait" (48).

¹³ Her dialogues respond to those of her male counterparts, such as the conversations of the Chevalier de Méré in which the two interlocutors discuss among other things the ways in which a *galant homme* might court a young lady. For instance, see 20–21. There are few dialogues that examine the various situations in which a *dame galante* might respond to or refuse a young man's attempts to engage her.

¹⁴ Furetière describes galanterie as "Ce qui est galant; & se dit des actions et des choses" and as "l'attache qu'on a à courtiser les Dames" (138).

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terns her foil of the model *dame galante* after that described by Sapho in Scudéry's conversation "De l'air galant":

Mais le mal est que les femmes qui se mettent la galanterie de travers dans la tête, s'imaginent qu'à force d'être indulgentes à leurs galants, elles les conservent: et toutes celles dont j'entends parler ne songent ni à leur réputation, ni même à l'avantage de leur propre galanterie, mais seulement à ôter un amant à celle-ci; à attirer celui-là; à conserver cet autre; et à en engager mille si elles peuvent. Il y en a même, ajouta-t-elle, qui font encore pis: et qui par un intérêt avare font cent intrigues au lieu d'un. (Scudéry 56)

In this passage, Sapho criticizes women who become obsessed with pursuing lovers. These women not only jeopardize their reputations, but also their self-respect. Durand's dialogues put Sapho's lessons into practice. The reader is made to identify with the *dame galante*, who practices restraint and good judgment with regard to her potential suitors. Her foil, on the other hand, who makes poor choices, instructs as well as amuses the reader.

In the first dialogue, Amarante, the voice of reason, attempts to correct her foil, Julie, a married woman who risks her reputation by indulging in innocent flirtations with men other than her husband. Julie complains to Amarante that she cannot escape her doting husband whom she married solely for financial security:

JULIE. Ah, que j'ai bien un plus grand sujet de douleur! Ce mari que j'ai pris pour faire ma fortune, & pour avoir de la liberté, s'avise d'avoir une passion à ne me laisser aucun repos....

AMARANTE. Je ne m'étonne plus de votre affliction: Un mari qui vous aime! C'est un prodige dans la nature: il faut le faire cesser.

JULIE. Vous riez impitoyablement de mon état; je voudrais vous y voir. Quoi, depuis le matin jusqu'au soir, & depuis le soir jusqu'au matin, ne cesser de voir un homme toujours empressé, toujours amoureux! Je ne puis faire un pas sans lui! Il me suit au Bal, à la Comédie, à l'Opéra.... (30)¹⁵

¹⁵ All quotations will be taken from the 1757 edition of *Oeuvres de Madame Durand*.

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While Amarante identifies with Julie's desire to "se divertir avec liberté" and to "suivre le torrent" (32), she scolds Amarante's complete disregard of her marital status. Amarante reminds her friend that if she were to make her husband jealous and if they were to separate, society would quickly find fault with the woman's actions. Just as Sapho warns, a woman who jumps headlong into a passionate love affair without thinking of her reputation risks losing the esteem of others:

AMARANTE. A la fin, la tête tourne, la crainte du blâme est déjà levée, on n'en dira pas davantage quand l'embarquement sera sérieux; ainsi, de degrés en degrés, on se jette dans l'abîme où chacun vous accable de mépris.
(33)

Amarante depicts the worst case scenario in which Julie may find herself if she continues down her treacherous path. In the end, Amarante's pessimistic vision surprises Julie, since she has "encore bien du chemin à faire avant que d'en venir là" (33). The intimate setting of this private discussion between women is what permits Amarante's brutal honesty. Through Amarante, Durand transmits a serious warning to married women who compromise their reputations by indulging in love affairs.

Likewise, in Dialogue VI, Araminte, a *dame galante*, plays the voice of reason by warning her friend Clarice of the double standards that restrict the behavior of a married woman. While Araminte spends her time gallivanting, her friend Clarice compares her own life of solitude to that of an Anchorite. Clarice bemoans her overprotective husband who confines her to the home. When Araminte asks her why her husband is so strict, Clarice explains that he wishes to honor his mother's recommendations for the proper household. Araminte accuses Clarice's husband of perhaps using his mother as an excuse to keep her under his thumb:

ARAMINTE. Ils sont ravis, les maris, d'avoir un prétexte pour tenir leurs femmes éloignées du monde.... (52)

Note that, once again, the privacy of their exchange allows Araminte to comment negatively about tyrannical husbands—observations that she would less likely voice around male interlocutors. The openness of their discussion leads Araminte to ask her friend more intimate questions. When Araminte asks what Clarice would do if she discovered that her husband was unfaithful to her, Clarice shockingly replies that she would take a lover herself. Araminte is surprised that her friend would abandon her reputation in order to seek vengeance. She reminds Clarice that society

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is quick to judge a woman who is unfaithful to her spouse, even if he is unfaithful himself:

ARAMINTE. La moindre chose ternit notre réputation; tandis que nos maris n'en font pas moins estimés, pour nous contraindre ou pour nous tromper. (56)

Note that, although Araminte is truthful, she sympathizes with Clarice. In fact, Araminte is happy to realize that her friend is of a similar mindset and has not withdrawn from *la vie mondaine* because of a desire to live a life of inimitable virtue, but because she has been made a prisoner in her own household. Through Araminte's foil, Durand paints a dismal picture of married life, which may negatively affect one's ability to maintain a *mondaine* lifestyle.

Unmarried women are less restricted in their movements, but they are likewise advised to be selective in their interactions with men. In Dialogue VII, Dorimene describes her freedom as a *dame galante*:

DORIMENE. Coquette si vous voulez, c'est un joli métier que celui que je fais. Je dors, je mange, je me réjouis, mes yeux sont toujours brillants, mon humeur toujours égale; je recois tout ce qui se présente, je ne cours point après ce qui fuit.... (59)

While Dorimene never pursues men, Cephise, her foil, consistently pines away after a cruel lover who leaves her void of any pleasure in life:

CEPHISE. Sensible jusqu'à l'excès, je pleure, je gémis, je veille; le trouble me saisit, le cœur me bat, sitôt qu'il s'agit de Dorilas; mais aussi, que je goûte de véritables plaisirs quand j'ai lieu d'en être contente! Qu'un moment de calme me paye libéralement de toutes mes agitations! (60)

In the end, Dorimene cannot convince Cephise that throwing herself at the feet of her lover is a wise choice. Dorimene leaves her in mid-sentence:

CEPHISE. Arrêtez; encore un petit mot. Quoi! Vous ne voulez pas m'entendre? (61)

Similarly, in Dialogue VIII, Celinde, a *dame galante*, criticizes Doris, who pursues an indifferent lover rather than allow herself to be wooed by as many suitors as possible. Celinde believes Doris would be more in control of her situation if she took a less aggressive stance:

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CELINDE. C'est une étrange personnage que celui d'une femme qui se jette à la tête! Prenez une autre voye; montrez-vous souvent suivie de vos anciennes conquêtes. (65)

Yet Doris insists upon chasing the object of her affections, stating: "J'aimerois mieux aimer toute seule, que d'être poursuivie par un homme difficile à rebuter, pour qui je n'aurois aucune inclination" (68). Once again, the voice of reason fails to convince her friend that she is running towards destruction.

In addition to resisting men who do not return their sentiment, other *dames galantes* discourage their female friends from pursuing men who do not appreciate them for their wit and intelligence. In Dialogue V, Constance tries to talk Orphise, her foil, out of obsessing over an unworthy lover, especially since he does not respect Orphise. Orphise, however, believes that women can only gain the affections of men through beauty:

ORPHISE. Mais telle est notre condition. Livrées à la bagatelle dès notre enfance, on ne nous admet à rien de sérieux; plaire est notre grande affaire. (47)

Constance condemns this attitude, affirming that women should be judged by their minds: "Mais pourquoi ne faisons-nous pas nos efforts pour nous rendre souhaitables par notre esprit" (48)? Through Constance, Durand encourages women to reject unworthy suitors who do not admire them for their intelligence and wit. Women who value themselves as intelligent, independent beings, live more satisfactory lives.

Dialogue III portrays the financial problems that plague single women of aristocratic families and the ruses to which they resort in order to maintain their lifestyle. It features a young woman, Mariane, who brags to her friend Hortense about how she exploited an older gentleman who was in love with her, just to have money to buy the latest styles in clothing. Hortense, unable to convince her friend of her wrongdoing, has the last word:

HORTENSE. Tu as raison. Dès qu'on a franchi les bornes de la pudeur, rien ne coûte que l'indigence. (42)

It is clear that the voice of reason, Hortense, does not find Mariane's actions the least bit amusing. Instead, Hortense accuses Mariane of abandoning her self-respect. At the same time, she seems rather unsurprised, as if this was a kind of repeat performance that she had observed often among women of her station.

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The anecdote described above would not have been a suitable conversation topic for a group of both men and women. Through the appropriated dialogic form, women were able to openly discuss their points of view in an intimate setting without the presence of a male interlocutor. Through her female interlocutors, Durand encourages both unmarried and married women who have active social lives to make wise choices if they engage in gallantry. The female interlocutors who act as a foil to the voice of reason serve as a warning to other women who neglect their reputations. They emphasize that, even in polite society, women are judged more harshly than men, and that women should take care not to compromise their reputations for a romantic fling.

Durand's gallant dialogues are reflective of the *mondaine* lifestyle which advocated the art of gallantry. Yet many young women from impoverished families of nobility could no longer pursue this way of life. The Hortense/Mariane dialogue showcases a young woman sacrificing her virtue to maintain an aristocratic lifestyle. This contrasts the lessons found in the writings of Maintenon, who sought to keep young aristocratic women born into poor aristocratic families from making similar choices.

Madame de Maintenon

While Durand makes the argument that women will have more agency in their active social lives when they respect the rules of gallantry, Maintenon claims that women will have more agency and earn the respect of their husbands if they reject *la vie mondaine*. While Maintenon was also quick to point out women's less-than-favorable position in society to the female pupils of Saint-Cyr, she emphasized how to navigate a social system that no longer guaranteed a life of ease to women of noble families. Her own life served as a model for the young *Saint-Cyriennes* in whom she attempted to instill such values as hard work and modesty.

Maintenon, otherwise known as Françoise d'Aubigné, was born November 24, 1635 in the prison of Niort to the son of the great Huguenot poet Agrippa d'Aubigné. Because of their extreme poverty, Maintenon was raised by relatives and educated in an Ursuline convent in Paris. A relative's connections in Paris allowed her to meet the poet Paul Scarron, whose marriage proposal Françoise accepted in 1652. In 1669, Mme Scarron, made a pauper by her deceased husband's debt, accepted a position as governess to Mme de Montespan and Louis XIV's illegitimate children. As the relationship with his mistress deteriorated, the king grew fond of Mme Scarron, and he gave her an aristocratic title, after which she became known as Mme de Maintenon. Following the queen's death in

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1683, Maintenon and the king were secretly married. He and Maintenon built Saint-Cyr, a boarding school for daughters of poor aristocratic families, which she directed until her death there in 1719.¹⁶

Inspired by the conversations written by Mlle de Scudéry, Maintenon's dialogues targeted the older *Saint-Cyriennes* preparing for marriage.¹⁷ Rejecting the gallant nature of Scudéry's conversations,¹⁸ Maintenon wrote to Mme de Montfort, Dame de Saint Louis, in a letter dated September 20, 1691:

Élevez vos filles bien humblement; ne songez qu'à les instruire dans le religion; n'élevez pas leur cœur et leur esprit par des maximes païennes: parlez-leur de celles de l'Évangile. Ne leur apprenez pas les Conversations que j'avois demandées; laissez tomber toutes ces choses là sans en rien dire. (*Lettres* 1: 175–76)

In lieu of Scudéry's conversations, Maintenon wrote her own simple dialogues, able to be dramatized by her female pupils. They were never intended to be performed in public, but on some occasions the King and members of the court were present for private performances.¹⁹ Maintenon referred to her dramatic dialogues as "conversations," a genre Furetière associated not only with Scudéry herself, but also with the act of educating youth.²⁰ Maintenon's goals in writing her dramatic dialogues were not only to entertain her female pupils, but also to give them the occasion to practice their pronunciation (in a society that had traditionally placed such emphasis on their silence):

¹⁶ For more biographical information, see Buckley.

¹⁷ The two volumes of conversations published in the 1688 *Nouvelles conversations de morale* were written specifically for the female students at Saint-Cyr.

¹⁸ Most *salonnières* adhered to the teaching of Saint-François de Sales, who in the *Introduction à la vie dévote* represented "a radical change of position by proposing the compatibility of devout and worldly ways of life" (Craveri 20). This kind of philosophy was much appreciated by many of the *mondaines*. Maintenon would posit the idea that these two lives were not compatible, and thus stopped frequenting the salon altogether.

¹⁹ Gréard writes: "Elles les apprennent de mémoire et les récitent entre elles. Le roi goûtait beaucoup cet exercice. Il aimait à entendre ces conversations; il avait un très grand plaisir à les voir réciter par les demoiselles, et Mme de Maintenon ne manquait pas de les préparer de telle sorte qu'elles servaient même sans affectation à l'instruction des princes et des princesses qui avaient l'honneur de l'accompagner Sa Majesté et des officiers qui formaient sa suite" (100).

²⁰ According to Furetière, the conversation "[...] se dit dans le même sens des assemblées de plusieurs personnes sçavantes & polies. Les conversations des Sçavants instruisent beaucoup: celles des Dames polissent la jeunesse. Mademoiselle de Scudéri, le Chevalier de Méré, ont fait imprimer de belles conversations" (Qtd in Viala 62).

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J'ai cru qu'il était raisonnable et nécessaire de divertir les enfants, et je l'ai vu pratiquer dans tous les lieux où l'on en a rassemblé; mais j'ai voulu en divertissant celles de Saint-Cyr remplir leur esprit de belles choses dont elles ne seront point honteuses dans le monde, leur apprendre à prononcer, les occuper pour les retirer de la conversation qu'elles ont entre elles, et amuser surtout les grandes qui, depuis quinze jusqu'à vingt ans, s'ennuient un peu de la vie de Saint-Cyr.²¹

Maintenon's dialogues, like Scudéry's, feature three to six characters.²² Maintenon's however, only feature female voices as opposed to the mixed company appearing in Scudéry's conversations. Maintenon's dialogues, like those of her female counterparts, imitate an agonal model, in which one female pupil, representing the voice of reason, opposes the viewpoints of her classmates.

While Scudéry's conversations feature lengthy narration and were intended to be read, Maintenon's dramatic dialogues were intended to be memorized and dramatized in the classroom. Maintenon viewed the dramatic arts as a useful and entertaining pedagogical tool. Between "l'oral" and "l'écrit," Maintenon's dialogues were intended to exploit "le plaisir d'un jeu théâtral" and "l'utilité d'une réflexion ou du moins de connaissances morales." In terms of form, Maintenon's dialogues oscillate between "dialogue théâtral" and "le catéchisme;" between "manuel édifiant" and "analyse psychologique..." (Plagnol-Diéval 55). Maintenon's dramatic dialogues mark a significant contribution to female education. Maintenon further develops the dramatic dialogue genre by assigning it a pedagogical purpose. In her book on *théâtre d'éducation* in the eighteenth-century, Marie-Emmanuelle Plagnol-Diéval credits Madame de Maintenon with having invented a genre later taken up by the Comtesse de Genlis and Madame Campan. Yet, let us not forget that the dramatic dialogue first developed in the salon. The fact that Maintenon also wrote dramatic proverbs gives credence to the idea that she may have been introduced to Durand's dramatic writings through acquaintances that frequented the salon of the Marquise de Lambert.²³

²¹ Letter from Madame de Maintenon à Madame Du Pérou dated February 21, 1701.

²² According to Stefano Guazzo, who wrote *La civil conversazione* (1574), there were to be no more than the number of Muses, and no less than the number of Graces. See Fumaroli 13.

²³ Durand's friend, La Comtesse de Murat, attended the salon of the Marquise de Lambert. Her salon, noted for its focus on literature and the arts, was held twice a week at

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Though Maintenon's dramatic dialogues mirror Durand's emphasis on the female point of view, they differ philosophically. Originally used to entertain the *salonniers*, Maintenon later transformed the dramatic dialogue, ironically, to preach against the *mondaine* world. Like Durand, Maintenon notes the double standards that place women at a disadvantage. Yet Maintenon encourages women to embrace the private sphere and find satisfaction in the home rather than in society.²⁴ Throughout her dialogues, Maintenon persuades the young *Saint-Cyriennes* to forgo the diversion that dictates the lives of *mondaines*. For instance, in "Sur le travail," the girls discuss the sense of satisfaction that can only result from hard work:

MLLE CLÉMENTINE. J'aime, à la vérité, à me divertir, mais je trouve plus de plaisir à travailler qu'à jouer.

MLLE ODILE. Oh! quel plaisir peut-on prendre à travailler?

MLLE CLÉMENTINE. Celui de faire quelque chose, de ne pas perdre son tems, de s'accoûtumer à se passer de divertissemens, et de n'avoir rien à se reprocher. (214-5)²⁵

Mlle Hortense states that a woman's sex confines her to the private sphere. At the same time, she emphasizes the satisfaction that may be found in domestic work:

MLLE HORTENSE. En effet, que peut faire une personne de notre sexe qui ne peut demeurer chez elle, ni trouver son plaisir dans les devoirs de son ménage. Il ne lui reste plus qu'à les chercher dans le jeu des compagnies, les spectacles: y a-t-il rien de si dangereux, non seulement pour la piété, mais même pour la réputation? (216-7)

Hortense indirectly criticizes the *mondaines* who damage their reputations by participating in inappropriate activities. This contrasts with Durand, who advocates an active social life as long as one does not risk compromising one's reputation. In the end, Mlle Hortense is unsuccessful in converting Mlle Odile, who is more interested in imitating the *mondaines*.

the *Hôtel Nevers*. Maintenon's niece, the Comtesse de Caylus, and Fenélon also frequented this salon. For a recent study on Maintenon's dramatic proverbs see Kennedy 2010.

²⁴ As John Conley states in the introduction to *Dialogues and Addresses*, "Maintenon's works transfer the empowerment of women to their own distinctive culture....Women must engender a language, a code of virtue, an ensemble of practical skills, and a method of education that bear the irreducible stamp of the feminine sex" (13-14).

²⁵ All quotations have been taken from the 2011 edition of *Les Loisirs*.

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This dialogue illustrates the difficulty that Maintenon had in convincing the *Saint-Cyriennes* to accept work values that they must have more or less associated with the bourgeoisie, and even with their servants.

Unlike her contemporary Durand, Maintenon does not advise women to engage in gallantry or to find pleasure in the company of men. She does however encourage young women to speak wisely and with confidence in their presence. In “*Sur la bonne contenance*,” Maintenon dismisses the notion that women must speak to men with lowered gazes, so as to assume a position of inferiority:

MLLE MARCELLE. Je croyais que la modestie étoit d’avoir les yeux baissés.

MLLE FLORIDE. C’est un effet de la modestie, mais elle doit être encore plus dans l’esprit que dans l’extérieur.

MLLE MARCELLE. Vous permettriez donc qu’on levât les yeux?

MLLE FLORIDE. Oui, certainement, il faut les lever quand on veut voir quelque chose, et c’est même un manque de respect de ne pas regarder ceux à qui on parle.

MLLE VALÉRIE. On peut regarder un homme, si on a envie de le voir?

MLLE IRÈNE. Il seroit à désirer qu’on n’en ait jamais envie, et je vous avoue que je suis toujours choquée quand j’entends dire à une personne de notre sexe: Un tel est agréable, ou affreux, il a les yeux beaux, la bouche grande, le nez bien fait, etc. (255–6)

All four characters conclude that timidity is unadvisable in social situations, and that one should speak with confidence to the opposite sex. At the same time, it is clear that gallantry is strictly forbidden. Addressing these young women of impoverished noble families, Maintenon sets out to remind them that they must hold fast to the only thing that remains—their honor.

In “*Sur la réputation*,” Maintenon warns of young men who seek to seduce young women:

VALÉRIE. Quoi! Si un homme vous dit qu’il est charmé de vous, vous le croirez par charité?

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ANASTASIE. Il faut que je le croie ou que je l'accuse de mensonge.

VALÉRIE. Oui Mademoiselle, c'est un mensonge; il n'est point charmé de vous; il vous le dit pour vous gagner et pour vous perdre ensuite.

PLACIDE. Vous faites les hommes bien méchants.

VALÉRIE. Ils le sont en effet...(321)

While Durand depicts a successful society woman as one who engages in gallantry, here Maintenon proposes that women will always fall prey to ill-intentioned men.

Whereas many of Durand's female interlocutors promote the idea that marriage should give them a license to gallivant, Maintenon constantly reminds the *Saint-Cyriennes* of their station and the fact that they cannot afford the same freedoms enjoyed by their male counterparts. In "Sur la lecture," Maintenon stresses the fact that married women should attempt to please their husbands, rather than entertain themselves. She discourages those *Saint-Cyriennes* who wrongly associate marriage with freedom:

LUCIE. En quoi consiste ce soin de plaire à son mari? Faut-il passer son temps à s'ajuster?

GABRIELLE. Le mariage est quelque chose de plus sérieux: Les moyens de plaire à son mari sont d'étudier ses goûts et de s'y conformer, de faire sa volonté et jamais la nôtre. (357)

Yet Maintenon softens the blow in "Sur le murmure" by reminding the *Saint-Cyriennes* that everyone is subject to someone else:

ANTOINETTE. C'est la dépendance qui porte au murmure; on est libre quand on a atteint un certain âge.

ZOÉ. Et qui est-ce qui est libre? non seulement notre sexe dépend toujours, mais les hommes même dépendent les uns des autres. (361)

As emphasized in "Sur le bon esprit," the ideal married woman does not develop her reputation in society, but instead finds contentment in the home:

MLLE CÉLESTINE. Ah! Comment pouvez-vous vous plaire à travailler depuis le matin jusqu'au soir à un ouvrage où l'on fait toujours la même chose....

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MLLE AGATHINE. Et moi, Mademoiselle, j'y prends beaucoup de plaisir: lorsque je suis à mon métier je n'ai point l'esprit inquiet des affaires d'autrui, j'ai le contentement de voir avancer mon ouvrage, et la satisfaction quand il est achevé, d'avoir fait quelque chose: je ne suis point exposée à des conversations satyriques, qui me pourroient faire offenser Dieu; je ne suis point dans une oisiveté qui me causeroit de l'ennui, et lorsque je repasse dans mon esprit ce que j'ai fait, je suis tres contente de n'avoir ni la paresse, ni les discours inutiles à me reprocher: je me couche contente et je dors sans inquiétude. (93)

In the end, Mlle Agathine fails to convince Mlle Célestine that domesticated life makes one happy. Mlle Célestine represents the attitude of most *Saint-Cyriennes*, who clung to the notion that marriage offered financial stability and the freedom to pursue the pleasures of *mondaineté*—a misconception perpetuated by some of Durand's female interlocutors. While Durand depicted marriage as a stumbling block for *mondaines*, Maintenon believed that women would find a sense of peace and a sense of self-worth only in their domestic lives. Maintenon's ideas support the goals of the state, namely strengthening the familial structures of the aristocracy.

Conclusion

Maintenon and Durand merit our attention as the first women writers to use the dramatic dialogue to address the question of women's behavior from an exclusively female point of view. The dramatic dialogue offered women an intimate forum in which they could discuss the female condition. Their dialogic format allowed women to discuss and rehearse the codes of conduct. These women writers also merit our attention since they participate in the development of new genres. Both Durand's and Maintenon's appropriation of the dramatic dialogue represent a significant contribution to women's writing in the context of the salon at the end of the seventeenth century. As Delphine Denis states, there is a need in the university and academic settings today to understand the *culture mondaine* and acknowledge its collaborative contribution to the belles-lettres (11). Maintenon's writings represent a major contribution to female education. Her use of salon-inspired dialogue and role play would continue as a tradition well into the eighteenth century, moving such women as Madame

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de Genlis to write educational plays for use in the home.²⁶ Young women thus continued to benefit from a more engaging instructional experience. Yet, as the dramatic dialogue on female comportment was translated from “salon” to “classroom,” it became a vehicle for increasingly conservative notions of female behavior that dominated the eighteenth century. Maintenon’s pedagogical drama advocating bourgeois values such as domesticity signals the end of gallantry both as a form of literature and as a way of life for aristocratic women.

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²⁶ See for instance *Théâtre à l’usage des jeunes personnes en quatre tomes* (1779–1780) and *Théâtre de société* (1781).

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***Métissage* and Crossing Boundaries in the Seventeenth-Century Travel Narrative to the Indian Ocean Basin**

by
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Seventeenth-century France saw the production of a considerable number of travel narratives, which reflected the increasing level of European presence and interest in Africa, Asia, and the Americas. These popular texts testify to levels of crossover between personal experience and intertextual tradition. They emphasize the dramatic nature of travellers' adventures, while also representing—or offering explanations for—the cultural and physical particularities of human populations.

The settlements around the Indian Ocean Basin received diverse levels of attention by travellers, some of whose journals and travel narratives have only recently been (re)published. The Indo-Portuguese city of Goa inspired the greatest quantity of testimony. Despite the restrictions of a competitive colonial context, French visitors throughout the seventeenth century left accounts of the diverse population of this settlement. These include the popular early-century accounts of the apothecary Jean Mocquet and of François Pyrard, the latter of whom spent a decade in the *Indes*.¹ Lesser-studied mid-century visitors to Goa include François La Boullaye Le Gouz or the Discalced Carmelite Philippe de la Très-Sainte Trinité.² As the seventeenth century advanced, the increasing Dutch presence in the *Indes* is reflected in accounts of Batavia by two Protestants, the mercenary Jean Guidon de Chambelle and the better-known jeweller Jean-Baptiste Tavernier.³ Peripheral figures, such as the corsair François

¹ Jean Mocquet [1575–1616?], *Voyages en Afrique, Asie, Indes orientales et occidentales* (Paris: Chez Jean de Heuqueville, 1617), repr. (Rouen: Jacques Cailloué, 1645); Fourth part reprinted as *Voyage à Mozambique & Goa*, ed. by Xavier de Castro & Dejanirah Couto (Paris: Éditions Chandeigne, 1996); François Pyrard de Laval [1570–1621], *Voyage de François Pyrard de Laval...*, 2 vols (Paris: Chez Samuel Thiboust, 1619); repr. as *Voyage de Pyrard de Laval aux Indes orientales (1601–1611)*, ed. by Xavier de Castro, 2 vols (Paris: Éditions Chandeigne, 1998).

² François La Boullaye Le Gouz [1623–1668], *Les Voyages et Observations du Sieur de La Boullaye Le Gouz* (Paris: Gervais Clousier, 1653); Philippe de la Très-Sainte Trinité [1603–1674], *Voyage d'Orient...* (Lyon: Antoine Jullieron, 1652; repr. 1669).

³ Jean-Baptiste Tavernier [1605–1689], *Recueil de plusieurs Relations & Traitez singuliers et curieux de J. B. Tavernier, Escuyer, Baron d'Aubonne, Qui n'ont point esté mis dans ses six premiers Voyages. Divisé en cinq parties...* (Paris: Gervais Clouzier, 1679); the voyage of Jean Guidon de Chambelle has been published by Dirk Van der

Cauche, whose voyage to Madagascar is related in a 1651 account, testify to the trade networks encompassing the Indian Ocean Basin.⁴ There were also French expeditions—and therefore large-scale encounters with indigenous populations—during the seventeenth century; these inspired the *Histoire* left by the governor of the one-time French colony on Madagascar, Etienne de Flacourt, or a *journal de voyage* left by Robert Challe on a French expedition to the *Indes* in 1690-91.⁵ The increasing French interest in advancing France's economic role in the East is reflected in the travels to India of the ill-fated Abbé Barthélemy Carré, recently published by Dirk Van der Cruysse.⁶

To judge from these texts, the French presence in the East gives an impression of fragmentation, and this corpus, taken as a whole, often testifies to fleeting encounters with competitive political and economic systems from which many French witnesses were excluded. This was the case with Mocquet, who found himself living in poverty in Goa at the beginning of the seventeenth century, or his contemporary Pyrard, who arrived in Goa while grievously ill, and was lodged at the Hospital before being imprisoned. Of course, some French testimony, like François Bernier's account of his travels in the Mughal Empire, testifies to a comparatively deep knowledge of Asian societies.⁷ Ecclesiastics who travelled to Asia might do so as part of supra-national (although themselves potentially competitive) networks. However, the political and economic nature of French presence means that within this corpus of texts are hints at the possibility of isolated, often marginal, encounters with societies perceived as dynamic, and undergoing considerable transformations.

Cruysse as *Mercenaires français de la VOC: le récit de Jean Guidon de Chambelle (1644–1651) & autres documents* (Paris: Chandeigne, 2003).

⁴ François Cauche [1615?–?], *Relation de Voyage que François Cauche de Rouen a fait à Madagascar, Isles adjacentes & Coste d'Afrique: Recueilly par le Sieur Morisot* (Paris: Augustin Courbé, 1651).

⁵ Etienne de Flacourt [1607–1660], *Histoire de la Grande Isle Madagascar* (Paris: Alexandre Lesselin, 1658); Robert Challe [1659–1721], *Journal d'un voyage fait aux Indes orientales* (Rouen: Jean-Baptiste Macheuel, 1721), repr. as *Journal d'un voyage fait aux Indes orientales (1690–91)*, ed. by Frédéric Deloffre & Melâhat Menemencioglu (Paris: Mercure de France, 1979).

⁶ Abbé Barthélemy Carré [1636?–1699?], *Le Courrier du Roi en Orient: Relations de deux voyages en Perse et en Inde 1668–1674*, ed. by Dirk Van der Cruysse (Paris: Fayard, 2005).

⁷ François Bernier [1620–1688], *Histoire de la dernière Révolution des États du Grand Mogol; Événements particuliers; Suite des Mémoires* (Paris: Barbin, 1670–1671); repr. in *Un Libertin dans l'Inde Moghole: les Voyages de François Bernier, 1656–1669*, ed. F. Tinguely, A. Paschoud, C. –A Chamay (Paris: Chandeigne, 2008).

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The present study, then, is intended to dwell on those regions of the text that can be considered as *marginal*, and in particular through focus on reflections in this corpus of another potentially marginal group, the *métis*. With the exception of several valuable pages of Sophie Linon-Chipon's *Gallia Orientalis* (2003), the topos of *métissage* in first-hand accounts of settlements in coastal Africa and Asia has traditionally received less attention than in the *Antilles* (or, with Sara E. Melzer's recent *Colonizer or Colonized*, seventeenth-century Brazil and *Nouvelle France*).⁸ Mentions of the *métis* in the Indian Ocean Basin are infrequent and often fleeting, but nonetheless indicate the distinct place of the entity in proto-colonial societies, sometimes in ways which hint at the reflection of problematic hierarchies. In approaching this subject, the present article will attempt to remain alive to the multiple social, religious and textual currents influencing the representation of the *métis*. Beginning with a study of the question of *race* and the classification of populations, it will then explore French representations of unfamiliar socio-economic hierarchies in Asia. This will be followed by analysis of the *métissage* resulting from new European settlements in the Indian Ocean Basin. The dramatic manifestations of this phenomenon—in cautionary anecdotes—will be the object of the last section.

In the early modern period, the increasingly frequent encounter between Europeans and numerous populations both East and West inspired much debate on the nature and extent of the differences between peoples. Giuliano Gliozzi's *Adamo e il nuovo mondo* has demonstrated, for example, how the question of the origins of indigenous Amerindian peoples might reinforce or undermine various colonial pretensions; Gliozzi's account of the diverse fortunes of theories (and theorists) of polygenesis shows the subversive import of interrogations of the biblical narrative of the shared origins of humanity.⁹ While the texts bequeathed by French

⁸ Sophie Linon-Chipon, *Gallia Orientalis: Voyages aux Indes Orientales (1529–1722): Poétique et imaginaire d'un genre littéraire en formation* (Paris: Presses de l'Université de Paris-Sorbonne, 2003); especially the section « *La rencontre de l'autre et la figure du métis* », 448–453; Chantal Maignan-Claverie, *Le métissage dans la littérature des Antilles françaises: Le complexe d'Ariel* (Paris: Karthala, 2005); Sara E. Melzer, *Colonizer or Colonized: the Hidden Stories of Early Modern French Culture* (Philadelphia: University of Pennsylvania Press, 2012). Melzer furnishes an interesting study of the apparent promotion of French-Amerindian marriages, 91–121.

⁹ Giuliano Gliozzi, *Adamo e il Nuovo Mondo: la nascita dell'antropologia come ideologia coloniale: dalle genealogie bibliche alle teorie razziali, 1500–1700* (Florence:

travellers devoted much attention to what would now be termed “cultural” phenomena such as law, religion, or culinary habits, the physical differences between Europeans and non-Europeans also received considerable attention. Those who had travelled far outside Europe reflect curiosity about the reasons for this visible physical diversity. Descriptions, as well as illustrations, of the differences in physiognomy and colour abound in travel narratives, and authors often resorted to comparisons with known *topoi* to this end. In these texts, reactions could take the form of aesthetic terms of appreciation. These might consist of comment on physical traits considered displeasing, or indeed, as with the traveller and physician François Bernier, of considerable attention to the perceived beauty of the women of the *Indes*.¹⁰

However, observers also formulated these differences of appearance into distinct categories such as *nation*, *peuple*, or indeed, *espèce* or *race*. The use of such terminology demonstrates a shifting, somewhat problematic, signifying potential of language confronted with new forms of difference. The connotations of the term *race* during the seventeenth century are illustrative of this. *Race* might encompass “Lignée, Extraction, Descendance, Famille” as César de Rochefort’s 1685 *Dictionnaire* makes clear.¹¹ Furetière’s *Dictionnaire Universel* (1690) and the later *Dictionnaire de Trévoux* both similarly restrict the use of *race* to terms synonymous with “Lignée, generation continuée de pere en fils,”¹² or “Lignée, lignage, extraction” respectively.¹³ It is Bernier, however, who is

La Nuova Italia Editrice, 1977); trans. by Arlette Estève and Pascal Gabellone as *Adam et le Nouveau Monde: la naissance de l’anthropologie comme idéologie coloniale: des généalogies bibliques aux théories raciales (1500–1700)* (Lecques: Théétète Éditions, 2000). All references are to the French translation. On, for example, Isaac de la Peyrère’s *Prae-Adamitae* (n.p.: n. pub., 1655), see Gliozzi, 440–457.

¹⁰ François Bernier, *Nouvelle Division de la Terre, par les différentes Espèces ou Races d’hommes qui l’habitent...Journal des Sçavans*, vol. 12 (lundi 24 avril 1684), 148–155, 152. Reprinted in facsimile in Robert Bernasconi, ed., *Concepts of Race in the Eighteenth Century*, vol. 1, ‘Bernier, Linnaeus and Maupertuis’ (Bristol: Thoemmes Press, 2001). See also Bernasconi, ed. *Race* (Oxford: Blackwell, 2001), 13, 25. On the possibility that Bernier’s ‘futile’ conclusion on female beauty is intended to limit the ‘explosive’ potential of the rest of his text, see Gliozzi, 478–9.

¹¹ César de Rochefort, *Dictionnaire Général et Curieux contenant les Principaux Mots et les plus usitez en la Langue Française* (Lyon: Pierre Guillimin, 1685), entry *race*, 620. Punctuation and spelling has not been modernized in French texts consulted in their seventeenth-century editions.

¹² Antoine Furetière, *Dictionnaire Universel*, vol. 3 (The Hague-Rotterdam: Arnout & Reinier Leers, 1690), entry *race*, non-paginated.

¹³ *Dictionnaire Universel François et Latin*, 2nd edition, vol. 4 (Trévoux: 1721), entry *race*, 974.

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supposed to be the first author to have used *race* as “a classificatory label for identifying human varieties organized according to physiognomy and skin colour,” as Robert Bernasconi writes.¹⁴ In his *Nouvelle Division de la Terre, par les différentes Espèces ou Races d’hommes qui l’habitent...* (1684), Bernier uses *race* as a synonym of *espèce*.¹⁵ However, while he did postulate that it could be useful towards categorizing, and “dividing” the earth, he was aware of the subjective nature of his classification.¹⁶

Les Geographes n’ont divisé jusqu’icy la Terre que par les differens Païs ou Regions qui s’y trouvent. Ce que j’ay remarqué dans les hommes en tous mes longs & frequens Voyages, m’a donné la pensée de la diviser autrement.¹⁷

While Bernier certainly considered that those differences between the “races” he identifies were of some significance, the reinforcement by some immutable order—such as later “scientific” classification—is notably absent. The term *espèce*, without its later overtones, seems to have referred as much to physical form or appearance as to some other, insurmountable category.¹⁸ Nevertheless, skin colour was among the characteristics enumerated by Bernier which led him to classify Africans as a separate *espèce*. Rather than attribute this trait directly to climate (a conclusion which, Bernier implies, was common at the time), he assumed that this was due to some *essence*.

La noirceur qui leur est essentielle, & dont la cause n’est pas l’ardeur du Soleil, comme on le pense; puis que si l’on transporte un noir & une noire d’Afrique en un Païs froid, leurs enfans ne laissent pas d’estre noirs aussi bien que tous leurs descendans jusques à ce qu’ils se marient avec des femmes blanches. Il en faut donc chercher la cause dans la contexture particulière de leur corps, ou dans

¹⁴ Bernasconi, ed., *Concepts of Race...*, vii.

¹⁵ Ibid.

¹⁶ On the lack of precision in Bernier’s division, and the equation of *espèce* and *race*, see Bernasconi, ed., *Race*, 12–13.

¹⁷ Bernier, *ibid.*, 148.

¹⁸ *Espece* n.f. (XIe s., *Alexis*; lat. *species*, vue, regard). *Dictionnaire du moyen français: la Renaissance*, ed. by Algirdas Julian Greimas & Teresa Mary Keane (Paris: Larousse, 1992), 259. On *espèce*, see also Tzvetan Todorov, *Nous et les autres: La réflexion française sur la diversité humaine* (Paris: Éditions du Seuil, 1989), 19. See also section *Races*, 111–196.

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la semence, ou dans le sang qui sont néanmoins de la même couleur que par tout ailleurs.¹⁹

For Gliozzi, Bernier's tone, "[réussissant] presque à présenter la théorie de la race comme une innocente curiosité érudite," disguises the extremely subversive overtones of polygenesis in his text.²⁰ While such overtones are somewhat implicit in Bernier's suggestion that *semence* is at the root of physical diversity, a distinct *essence* or *contexture*—even without a conclusive or authoritative definition of its origin or composition—clearly has significant divisive potential.

The manifestations of diversity in the Indian Ocean Basin might be accompanied by assertions of the radical, essential difference of its peoples. These include occasional suggestions that certain non-European populations might be descended from "la race corrompue d'Adam," the lineage of Ham, the cursed son of Noah.²¹ As Gliozzi has indicated, such suggestions, while ultimately maintaining the monogenesis of humanity, still implied an insurmountable difference between human groups (the same author writes that African peoples were consistently ascribed a Bible-based genealogy that promoted their enslavement).²² In early modern sources (sometimes far removed from the often unsophisticated observations of mariners), similarly divisive manifestations of the distinctive essence of peoples were thought to coincide with what would now be considered "ethnic" origin. These might be manifested in assertions on character traits which were linked to colour. In the early eighteenth-century *Dictionnaire de Trévoux*, for example, the entry *Nègre* ascribes reputed traits such as ignorance and cowardice, and practices such as selling one's own family to vast human populations based on skin colour.²³

¹⁹ Bernier, 150. On the heritage of the reference to *semences*, see Bernasconi, ed., *Race*, 13.

²⁰ Gliozzi, 478–479. This, as the same critic points out, entails hiding 'les liens qui unissent étroitement au préadamisme la théorie raciale,' *ibid.*

²¹ Jean de Léry, *Histoire d'un voyage fait en terre de Brésil*, ed. by Frank Lestringant (Paris: Librairie générale française, 1994); repr. of 2nd edn (Geneva: Antoine Chappin, 1580), 420–422 and footnotes. See Lestringant's introduction, 37. See also Lestringant, *Le Huguenot et le Sauvage* (Paris: Aux Amateurs de Livres, 1990), 50, 119–122. For an example in Madagascar, see Cauche, 122; in Pondicherry, see Challe, 1979, 296. On the necessity of treating Challe's evocation of biblical explanations with caution, see Chantale Payet-Meure, 'Robert Challe: La Bible à l'épreuve du voyage', in Sophie Linon-Chipon and Jean-François Guennec, ed., *Transhumances divines: Récits de voyage et religion* (Paris: PUPS, 2005), 181–197, 185.

²² Gliozzi, 481–482.

²³ *Dictionnaire Universel François et Latin*, vol. 4, entry *Nègre*, 64.

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This may give some hint of the potential of ethnicity to reflect the socio-economic or religious distinctions between Europeans and indigenous peoples which existed, or were developing, in the Portuguese, and later, Dutch sea empires. However, the lexicon had also evolved to denote the populations originating from mixed ethnic groups. European conquests and settlements led not only to the transportation of non-European populations as a source of labour, but also to marriages or sexual encounters between Europeans and people of African, Amerindian or Asian origin. To the offspring of what is now called *métissage*, various classificatory terms were employed to explain both the origins of those of mixed parentage, and the extent to which they were mixed. As Robert Chaudenson has indicated in an article analyzing the origins of terms describing *métissage* in both French and Creole, the French term *mulâtre*, appearing from the sixteenth century, referred to a child born to black and white parents.²⁴ However, the term *métis* appeared initially to designate people of mixed European and Asian or Amerindian parentage. Nevertheless, as the same author points out, *métis* was used in at least one travel narrative as a synonym of *mulâtre*, that is, to designate the children of “hommes blancs et de femmes noires.”²⁵ Other texts hint at a conception of ethnicity in certain quarters in the seventeenth century, which demonstrates a radical fluidity; in several other travel narratives, the indigenous peoples of the Indian subcontinent are referred to as *nègres*, or *noirs*.²⁶

Seventeenth-century dictionaries reflect the problematic associations of terms describing *métissage*. While Furetière’s *Dictionnaire Universel* (1690) does not refer to the classification of ethnic groupings in its six definitions of *race*, a definition of the *métis* is furnished which demonstrates that the term could refer to the offspring of unions between two different *races* of animal.²⁷

²⁴ Robert Chaudenson, ‘Mulâtres, métis, créoles’, in *Métissages: Linguistique et Anthropologie*, vol. 2 (Saint-Denis (Réunion): L’Harmattan, 1992), 23–37.

²⁵ See François Martin de Vitre, *Description du premier voyage fait aux Indes Orientales par les François en l’an 1603* (Paris: L. Sonnius, 1604), 11. See Chaudenson, 25.

²⁶ Claude-Michel Pouchot de Chantassin, *Relation du voyage et retour des Indes orientales...* (Paris: Coignard, 1692), 136, 143; in translation to French from Dutch in Frans Jansszon Van der Heiden, *Le Naufrage du Terschelling sur les côtes du Bengale (1661)*, ed. by Henja Vlaardingerbrock & Xavier de Castro (Paris: Chandeigne, 1999), 45; Challe, 284–285; La Boullaye, 194.

²⁷ On the evolution of terms designating *métissage* through the following century, see Sylviane Albertan-Coppola, ‘La Notion de métissage à travers les dictionnaires du XVIIIème siècle’, in Jean-Claude Carpanin Marimoutou and Jean-Michel Racault, eds,

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METIS. Adj. Masc. C'est un nom que les Espagnols donnent aux enfans qui sont nez d'un Indien & d'une Espagnole, ou d'un Espagnol & d'une Indienne. On appelle aussi chiens *metis*, ceux qui sont nez de differente race, comme d'un Levron & d'une Epagneule.²⁸

Of the definition of *mulat* [*mulâtre*], the same volume notes: “ce mot est une grande injure en Espagne, & est derivé de *mulet*, animal engendré de deux differentes especes.”²⁹ While Furetière does not write that human beings can be divided into *espèces*, in turn, according to their ethnic origin, it would appear that the offensive potential of the insult derives from this animal association.³⁰ The *Dictionnaire de Trévoux* defines the adjective *métis* in the same terms as Furetière, although the term *mestif* could designate “figurément des hommes qui sont engendrez de père & mère de différente qualité, païs, couleur, ou Religion.”³¹ The children born to unions between Europeans and *Môres*, or *sauvages*, or *Indiens* were all *mestifs*,³² while the term *mulat* is reserved for those of Afro-Amerindian parentage.³³

In other words, while the term *mulâtre* applied to the children of Europeans (or Amerindians) and Africans, and *métis* applied to those born to unions between Europeans with Amerindians or Asians, a certain amount of fluidity existed within these definitions. This is demonstrated, as Sylviane Albertan-Coppola writes, by “[l’]insistance sur la polysémie des termes désignant le métis ou sur les cas de proximité sémantique.”³⁴ Both

Métissages: Littérature-Histoire, Vol. 1 (Saint-Denis (Réunion): L’Harmattan, 1992), 35–50.

²⁸ Antoine Furetière, *Dictionnaire Universel*, vol. II (The Hague-Rotterdam: Arnout & Reinier Leers, 1690), entry *métis*, non-paginated. On this extract, see Albertan-Coppola, 43.

²⁹ Furetière, entry *mulat*. Absent from 1727 edition of Furetière (The Hague: 1727), though appears as *mulato* in *Dictionnaire Universel François et Latin*, vol. 3 M-MYU (Trévoux: 1721), entry *mestif*, 357; *mulat*, *mulaistre*, ou *mulate*, 542. See Albertan-Coppola, 44.

³⁰ On the offensive potential of these terms as illustrated by early modern dictionaries, see Albertan-Coppola, 41–42.

³¹ Entry *métis* in *Dictionnaire Universel François et Latin*, vol. 3 (Trévoux: 1721), 373; *Ibid.*, entry *mestif*, 357.

³² ‘On appelle aussi *métif*, un enfant né d’un Indien & d’une Espagnole, ou au contraire: dans le païs on appelle *crioles*.’ *Ibid.* This would imply that the *Indien* father here is of Amerindian origin.

³³ *Dictionnaire Universel François et Latin*, vol. 3 (Trévoux: 1721), entry *métis*, 373; entry *mulat*, *mulaistre* ou *mulate*, 542.

³⁴ Albertan-Coppola, 44.

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terms were associated with the crossing of animal species, and this allowed one of them to be used as an insult.

In the sources examined in the present study, the suggestions of an essential difference between human groupings are thus to be situated within a corpus which reflects new movements of populations, as well as the response of language—with varying levels of success—to capture this difference. Bernier's interrogations about the *noirceur* of *les noirs d'Afrique* are justified by observations of the consequences of the transportation of such peoples into distant lands. In the Indian Ocean Basin, the echoes of the perception of some *essence* of human beings were not only mediated through proto-racial or biblical discourses, but through encounters with indigenous or developing hierarchies inseparable from new economic networks. French accounts demonstrate varying levels of interaction with these networks, and reflect the perspective of the peripheral observer on the cultural manifestations of hierarchies.

Stratification and divisions in the Indian Ocean Basin

Despite attempts to gain a greater share in the commercial exploitation of the Indian Ocean Basin, France played a relatively minor role within its economies throughout the seventeenth century. The ambitious mid-century settlement on Madagascar ended violently with the departure of its surviving colonists to l'île Bourbon (later La Réunion), while small *comptoirs* such as Pondicherry paled in importance before the growing might of the Dutch and English East India Companies.

Frequently writing from the perspective of outsiders to the socio-economic systems of the Indian Ocean Basin that they describe, French travellers furnish testimony on the divisions between ethnic groups, and often, the accordance of superior privilege to members of certain groups. Pyrard divides up the “peuples de Goa” into “deux sortes, ou naturels, ou étrangers.” He divides the former *sorte* into “brahmanes, canarins et curumbins, tous gentils,” with the *brahmanes* as the “maîtres & supérieurs entre les idolâtres,” and the *curumbins* the *inférieurs*. For the two lower orders, he describes the divisions in terms which stress economic roles; the *canarins* are sub-divided into two further *sortes* according to whether they carried out trade, or “métiers honnêtes,” or rather fishing, mechanical trades, or “autres choses basses.” The lowest order, the *curumbins*, however, live “comme des sauvages” and carry out “[des] choses fort viles.”³⁵

³⁵ Pyrard, 1998, vol. 2, 568–569.

Divisions between peoples also, unsurprisingly, had a strong religious component. In an overview of the *admirable* population of Goa, Pyrard divides it into “Portugais [...], métis, Indiens, chrétiens, et grand nombre d’autres Indiens infidèles, mahométans, ou gentils, banians de Cambay, canarins de Goa, brahmanes et autres de telle condition...”³⁶ The text reflects a conception of human groupings based on both religion and ethnicity. Portuguese Christians had superior privileges; Pyrard recounts that non-Christian “étrangers indiens” who inhabited Goa were obliged to pay tribute to the Portuguese, and that (excepting “les gens des ambassadeurs”), *infidèles* did not bear arms.³⁷

However, mid-seventeenth century, François La Boullaye Le Gouz indicates the importance of divisions which appear to be based essentially on *race* (according to a conception of this term reminiscent of Rochefort and Furetière’s previously indicated definitions). La Boullaye relates that those of the “race des Bramens” who had converted to Christianity saw other Christians (Portuguese included) as *immondes*, and that they restricted their marriages to converts of the same tribe (*tribu*).³⁸ Seventeenth-century observers in Goa depict a society heavily stratified according to criteria based on birth.³⁹ Pyrard had described the “grande différence d’honneur” among the Portuguese community in Goa. The “Portugais de Portugal” are most esteemed, followed by those born in India to Portuguese parents, who are called “*castiços*, c’est-à-dire de leur caste et race.”⁴⁰ Pyrard is not alone in treating the term *caste* as a synonym of *race*, though one must again be circumspect in the use of the latter term, which refers principally to parentage.⁴¹ Below the *castiços* came those born to a Portuguese and an Indian parent, the *mestiços*, or “métis, mêlés,” (Pyrard calls them “les moindres”) while the *mulatos* “sont en pareil honneur que les métis.”⁴²

La Boullaye devotes a chapter to describing the *diversité* of the vassals of the Portuguese crown, and “leur employ suivant l’ordre de la generation.”⁴³ Reinols, or “Portugais venus du Royaume de Portugal,” had

³⁶ Pyrard, 1998, vol. 2, 597.

³⁷ Pyrard, 1998, vol. 2, 567–569.

³⁸ La Boullaye, 205.

³⁹ On the diverse perceptions of this classification, see C. R. Boxer, *Race Relations in the Portuguese Colonial Empire (1415–1825)* (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1963), 62–68.

⁴⁰ Pyrard, 1998, vol. 2, 570.

⁴¹ See also La Boullaye, 209.

⁴² Pyrard, 1998, vol. 2, 570–571.

⁴³ La Boullaye, 209.

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superior privileges to *Castissos* (*Castiços*, born in India of Portuguese parents):

Les Mestissos sont de plusieurs sortes, mais fort mesprisez des Reinols & Castissos, parce qu'il y a eu un peu de sang noir dans la generation de leurs ancestres, d'autant qu'un Reinol prenant pour femme une Indienne, les enfans en naissent jaunastres, puis ces jaunastres se marians avec des personnes blanches, les enfans en naissent blancs, & à la troisieme & quatrieme generation, ils sont aussi blancs que les Reinols & Castissos, mais la tache d'avoir eu pour ancestre une Indienne, leur demeure jusques à la centiesme generation: ils peuvent toutefois estre soldats & Capitaines de forteresses ou de vaisseaux, s'ils font profession de suivre les armes, & s'ils se jettent du costé de l'Eglise ils peuvent estre Lecteurs, mais non Provinciaux.

Les Karanes sont engendrez d'un Mestis, & d'une Indienne, lesquels sont olivastres. Ce mot de Karanes vient à mon advis de Kara, qui signifie en Turq la terre, ou bien la couleur noire, comme si l'on vouloit dire par Karanes, les enfans du païs, ou bien les noirs: ils ont les mesmes avantages dans leur profession que les autres Mestis.⁴⁴

La Boullaye's depiction of the visible manifestations of origin through skin colour may in part be considered alongside his other *observations* as essentially curious manifestations of human diversity. However, his focus on the determination of one's place in the socio-economic hierarchy according to bloodline hints, again, at the potentially problematic nature of *métissage*. While physical difference between the *métis* and the Portuguese settler or the descendent of Portuguese parents might disappear after several generations, those "stained" by non-European blood could not aspire to the highest positions in Goa.

Such accounts of the importance of factors of birth or *race* in the early modern colonial economies of the Indian Ocean Basin accompany depictions of various types of human servitude, frequently in the form of slavery. In the first decade of the seventeenth century, Pyrard vividly describes the slave market in Goa, where slaves are led "comme on fait [en France] des chevaux," and writes that there was "un nombre infiny, et de

⁴⁴ La Boullaye, 209.

toutes [les] nations Indiennes.”⁴⁵ Studies by M. N. Pearson and Sanjay Subrahmanyam testify to the large-scale use of slave labour; it has been reported that during the early modern period, while Portugal had a higher percentage of slaves than any other European country, Goa had even more.⁴⁶ Pyrard’s description of the display of servitude when a Portuguese gentleman would pass through the streets of Goa vividly reflects this. The gentleman, on horseback or carried in a palanquin, and shaded by a parasol carried by a slave, would be followed on foot by pages, lackeys, and a great number of slave *estafiers* wearing livery.⁴⁷ In a voyage made from 1617 to 1627, the Swiss captain Élie Ripon claims to have observed numerous slaves (“esclaves noirs”) in Macao, who had been brought through the seat of the Portuguese empire in Goa; it is unclear if these slaves were of African or Indian origin.⁴⁸

Certain texts hint at the association between the use of terms indicating servitude and those indicating ethnic origin. In a text published in 1651, Cauche mentions encountering the members of a Dutch slaving expedition on Madagascar, who had been left there by their captain “pour y achepter des Negres, & les transporter en l’Isle Maurice, & au Bresil.”⁴⁹ This also appears to have been reflected in the future La Réunion which, by the start of the eighteenth century, was becoming dependent for its successful exploitation on slavery. A text bequeathed by the administrator Antoine Boucher lists instances of *possession* of a multitude of *noirs* and *négresses* (themselves apparently also “possessed” by *mulâtres* and even *négresses*).⁵⁰

While the notions of *achat* and *possession* unambiguously constitute enslavement, Europeans who wrote about their encounters with unfamiliar

⁴⁵ Pyrard, 1998, vol. 2, 590–591; 571.

⁴⁶ M. N. Pearson, *The New Cambridge History of India*, I: 1, *The Portuguese in India* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1987), 15; 95. Subrahmanyam gives a seventeenth-century estimate of approximately ten slaves per *casado* household. Sanjay Subrahmanyam, *The Portuguese Empire in Asia, 1500–1700: a Political and Economic History*, 2nd ed. (Chichester; Malden, MA: Wiley-Blackwell, 2012), 240.

⁴⁷ Pyrard, 1998, vol. 2, 598.

⁴⁸ ‘Ils tiennent grande quantité d’esclaves noirs qu’ils amènent de Goa.’ Élie Ripon, *Voyages et aventures aux Grandes Indes, 1617–1627*, ed. by Yves Giraud (Paris: Les Éditions de Paris, 1997), 93.

⁴⁹ Cauche, 37. On the colonial project in Madagascar, see M. Harrigan, *Veiled Encounters: Representing the Orient in Seventeenth-Century French Travel Literature* (Amsterdam; NY: Rodopi, 2008), 219–224; Linon-Chipon, *passim*.

⁵⁰ Antoine Boucher, *Mémoire pour servir à la connoissance particulière de chacun des habitans de l’Isle de Bourbon*, notes by Père Jean Barassin, Collection Mascarin, (Saint-Clothilde (Réunion): Éditions ARS Terres Créoles, 1989), 80, 86, 97.

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societies elsewhere recount the existence of hierarchies which curiously reflect existing, familiar hierarchies. When Cauche, on Madagascar, is asked to carry out tasks such as the sacrifice of animals, his reflex is to interpret this as a deference which is directly related both to religion and to skin colour:

S'il y a un Chrestien parmy eux, ils le prient de faire cet office, je ne sçay par quelle defference, mais ils m'ont fait faire souvent ce mestier, je croy que c'estoit parce que je n'y prenois aucune part, ou parce que les blancs sont les maistres de l'isle, & que ceux-là mesme qui sont blancs, qui se disent venir des Indes Orientales, respectent les Europeans, comme estant plus blancs qu'ils ne sont. A cette cause ils appellent le Chrestien, *Vaza*, c'est-à-dire tres-blanc, defferant tant à ce mot, qu'ils appellerent une petite fontaine que j'avois fait passer par des cors dans ma maison à Mannhale *Rame Vaza*, qui veut dire la fontaine du Chrestien, ou du blanc.⁵¹

Here, Cauche depicts *blancheur* as the marker of authority, as well as being a phenomenon subject to its own internal hierarchy (to judge by the respect he claims Europeans were afforded). Whiteness is also synonymous with Christianity, itself a source of indigenous deference. The later governor of Madagascar, Etienne de Flacourt, claimed that its inhabitants were distinguished by categories, the black-skinned inhabitants being divided into four and the white-skinned into three such *sortes*, respectively.⁵² The iconography of Flacourt's account reinforces the representation of such hierarchy, with one illustration depicting "*Un Rohandrian avec sa Femme portée par ses Esclaves Lors qu'elle va en Visite par le País.*"⁵³ Such depictions of a stratified Malagasy indigenous society must be read with some caution, as they reflect different, potentially problematic, levels of contact—and sometimes conflict—with indigenous peoples. They also reflect the ordering or classification of peoples in budding colonial systems, both East and West, which were to be subject to varying levels of infringement of that classification.

⁵¹ Cauche, 122.

⁵² Flacourt, 47.

⁵³ Non-paginated illustration in Flacourt.

Encountering *métissage*

The French observers who are the focus of the present study were witnesses to the development of dynamic coastal settlements and economies, and often testify to the mutations, or the potentially fragile political equilibrium, of these societies. The socio-economic hierarchies they describe were subject to the mixing of populations, which generated a variety of cultural responses. Over time, Creole society would develop diverse responses to such mixing of populations, as evinced for example, by the social and economic connotations of those terms indicating colour or ethnic origin.⁵⁴ In the seventeenth century, the status of the *métis* might allow them to share many of the privileges of the white population; the *métis* might, for example, act as a source of authority in settlements with a numerically superior black slave population.⁵⁵

Texts describing servitude bear witness to the potential tensions within an order built on a problematic social stratification. As part of a large French expedition in the early 1690s, Robert Challe encounters a large black (as well as a *métis*) population on the islands of Cape Verde. An often unsympathetic observer, Challe claims that the black population were characterized by “un esprit [...] servile”; deriding their “bassesse d’âme,” he writes that they were barely distinguishable from brutes.⁵⁶ His account of his own experience of the servitude of a *nègre* over two days hints at the tensions inherent in such servitude. He is informed, for example, that had he paid his servitor upon demand, he would have been promptly deserted (and not having seen the same individual once payment was made constitutes proof of this for Challe).⁵⁷ There is a somewhat uneasy tone in Challe’s brief account of the coexistence of Europeans, *métis* and *noirs*:

Les Européens [...] sont en fort petit nombre, n’étant au plus que quarante, tant officiers de justice que d’épée, les

⁵⁴ See Chaudenson’s 1974 article for the nuances of vocabulary to describe colour in three colonies previously dominated by the French. ‘Le Noir et le Blanc: La Classification Raciale dans les Parlers Créoles de l’Océan Indien’, *Revue de Linguistique Romane*, janvier-décembre 1974 [no. 149], 75–94.

⁵⁵ On white-*métis* economic competition in eighteenth-century *Saint-Domingue* see Yves Benot, *La Révolution française et la fin des colonies* (Paris: Éditions La Découverte, 1988), 60–61. On the *métis* as an ‘esclave civilisé et robuste’ see Linon-Chipon, 452.

⁵⁶ Challe, 138.

⁵⁷ ‘Il semble que ces noirs n’ont que la figure humaine, qui les distingue de la brute, une bassesse d’âme dans toutes leurs actions que je ne puis exprimer. Le gain fait sur eux ce qu’un morceau de pain fait sur un chien affamé.’ Challe, 138.

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créoles ou métis étant presque tous soldats & les autres de métier; auxquels tous il importe de maintenir l'autorité du gouverneur, puisque c'est elle qui fait leur sûreté contre les noirs, qui sont en bien plus grand nombre, mais à la vérité d'un esprit si servile & si abject qu'ils ne sont pas à craindre.⁵⁸

The last affirmation is curiously ambiguous; the assurance that the *noirs* were *not* to be feared nonetheless hints at the presumption of a notion of *crainte* in such a society. Despite Challe's reassurance, this extract hints at some assumption, among observers and perhaps readers, of an undercurrent of tension in the relationship between peoples in this community.

Elsewhere in the Indian Ocean Basin, settlement patterns parallel those Chantal Maignan-Claverie has described in the case of the *Antilles*, with a great shortage of families—and of marriageable women—willing to make the voyage to the colonies, even years after their initial settlement.⁵⁹ In the East, European settlement was also predominately a masculine affair; Pearson writes that the “vast majority” of Portuguese settlers took their wives from among local women.⁶⁰ Charles Boxer writes that in the early days of Goa, marriage with converted women of Aryan origin had been encouraged by the conqueror Albuquerque.⁶¹ For Pearson, this initial Portuguese pattern of marriage follows a different pattern to later European settlements in the East.⁶² However, with some estimates putting forward annual figures of perhaps two thousand Portuguese leaving for sixteenth-century India (“mostly for Goa”) and between six and eight thousand men leaving for Asia in the service of the Dutch VOC during the years of its existence (to speak of only two European countries), other forms of alliance between autochthons and male Europeans are reflected in contemporary texts.⁶³

Portuguese culture in the Indian Ocean Basin itself became subject to a considerable amount of acculturation concerning alimentary habits or ap-

⁵⁸ Challe, 138.

⁵⁹ Maignan-Claverie, 130–131; 220–221.

⁶⁰ Pearson, 104–105.

⁶¹ Boxer, 64.

⁶² Pearson, 104.

⁶³ The statistics for Portuguese departures are from Pearson, 92; those concerning the VOC in Dirk Van der Cruysse, ed., *Mercenaires français de la VOC: le récit de Jean Guidon de Chambelle (1644–1651) & autres documents* (Paris: Chandeigne, 2003), 21. See Pyard, 1998, vol. 2, 591 and La Boullaye (209–210; 262) on master-slave relations in Goa. See Boxer, 60–62 on the situation in the sixteenth-century Portuguese possessions.

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pearance, even becoming predominantly Indian in “racial terms,” according to Pearson in the case of Goa.⁶⁴ The French texts which were generated from the encounter with this Indo-Portuguese composite culture reflect its *métissage*, as well as its divisions.⁶⁵ They recount the ambiguous social status of those who crossed European and Asian cultures. This social status is illustrated by Leonard Y. Andaya, writing of the cities of Southeast Asia in which the *métis* constituted a sizeable presence by the late seventeenth century:

These mestizo children were socially located between the cultures of their foreign fathers and their Southeast Asian mothers, and not totally accepted by either. Yet their very presence half-way between these societies made them ideal intermediaries in trade, diplomacy, and in the transmission of ideas between the two cultures.⁶⁶

This lack of acceptance, at least by European cultures, is demonstrated by the most fleeting of references testifying to their “mixed” status.⁶⁷ The vague assertion made by the Abbé Carré is representative:

Je m'embarquai sur la galiote du capitaine Salvador George, Portugais indien, homme bien fait, de cœur, mais un peu bohémien de visage et de naturel indien.⁶⁸

Clearly, Carré's host was irreproachable, *except for* his appearance (his dark skin) and his vaguely Indian *naturel*, or character. The gipsylike (*bohémien*) appearance indicates that Carré's host was in fact a *castiço*, as Dirk Van der Cruysse points out, or a *métis*.⁶⁹ Acculturation, displayed by the Indian *naturel*, is accompanied by a hint of physical difference reminiscent of a distinct ethnic group familiar to the French reader (the

⁶⁴ Ripon, 93; Pearson, 101.

⁶⁵ ‘Le géolier et sa femme étaient métis.’ Pyard, 1998, vol. 2, 540.

⁶⁶ Leonard Y. Andaya, ‘Interactions with the Outside World and Adaptation in Southeast Asian Society, 1500–1800’, in *The Cambridge History of South-East Asia*, vol. 1 (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1992), 345–401, 371.

⁶⁷ Linon-Chipon quotes the *Docteur* Dellon, and the ambassador Chaumont who, while noting the considerable numbers of *métis* in late-century Goa and Siam respectively, distinguish them from the *véritables Portugais*. Charles Dellon, *Nouvelle Voyage aux Indes Orientales* (Amsterdam: Paul Marret, 1699), 208; Alexandre de Chaumont, *Relation de l’Ambassade de Mr le Chevalier de Chaumont à la Cour du Roy de Siam* (The Hague: Isaac Beaugard, 1733), 84. See Linon-Chipon, 450.

⁶⁸ Carré, 505.

⁶⁹ *Ibid.*

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Bohémiens), one which was itself perceived as socially problematic.⁷⁰ Elsewhere, the *Abbé's* text reflects a difference in social status, determined by birth, which had been described by La Boullaye. Carré perceives a *bas-sesse* which further distinguished the characters of *Portugais indiens* and *Portugais européens*:

Le sieur Gaspar de Sousa, Portugais européen [...] était sans contredit le plus honnête Portugais que j'eusse connu dans les Indes, homme d'honneur, généreux, et qui n'avait rien de bas ni qui ressentît les Portugais indiens.⁷¹

As Carré's description of the captain Salvador George has demonstrated, however, the mention of the colour of the *métis* reflects concerns which transcend manifestations of social divisions. The appearance of the *métis* in the text might, of course, also be considered as another element of the diversity of the *Grandes Indes*, a diversity which was the *raison d'être* of the travel narrative. For example, Ripon's description of the Portuguese in Macao focuses on a physical particularity of *métissage*:

[Les Portugais] trafiquent tous les jours ensemble, et se marient avec des femmes chinoises, aussi sont-ils la plupart camus comme les Chinois.⁷²

However, there is evidence in certain French texts of a concern with the transmission of *sang* through *métissage* which reflects the question of *race*. La Boullaye praises the appearance of the Parsi population in India precisely because of their tradition of only marrying within their community, thus conserving the traits of their *sang*:

Ils ne s'allient qu'avec ceux de leur loy & nation, qui est la raison pourquoy ils ont conservé la blancheur & la beauté de leur sang dans les Indes, & autres lieux où ils ont fuy, parce que la blancheur ne vient nullement du climat, mais de la semence des parens.⁷³

Another mid-century author, the ecclesiastic Philippe de la Très-Sainte Trinité, writes that the constant arrival in Goa of young Portuguese men, who marry *Mistice* women, means that "peu à peu les races se purifient."⁷⁴

⁷⁰ See for example the entry *Bohémien*, in *Dictionnaire Universel François et Latin*, vol. 1 (Trévoux: 1721), 1085–1086.

⁷¹ Carré, 1032.

⁷² Ripon, 93.

⁷³ La Boullaye, 189.

⁷⁴ 'Tous les ans arrivant aux Indes des jeunes Portugais, qui se marient avec les filles *Mistiques*, peu à peu les races se purifient.' Philippe de la Très-Saint Trinité, 1669, 134.

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This *purification* of the *métis* population consists of a progressive dilution of the *noirceur* which is inherited, he states, from Indian mothers.⁷⁵ The conservation of the bloodline or the gradual attenuation of *métissage* are considered laudable in these two mid-century texts.

The encounter with the East also reflects a concern with the effects of climate and environment on human beings. In the late seventeenth century, Challe's account of the early settlement of Pondicherry describes a *métis* population which had preserved its *blancheur*.

Il y a plusieurs Français mariés à des filles portugaises, qui ne sont pas noires, mais métisses ou mulâtres, & dont les enfants sont blonds & d'une peau aussi blanche que les Européens les plus délicats.⁷⁶

This *délicatesse*, in the context of La Boullaye and Philippe's previously-mentioned observations, must surely have been considered a positive result of *métissage*. However, Challe also claims that the majority of the French officers and soldiers in the settlement had been irredeemably corrupted to the point of being unable to return to Europe. The reason for this was a frequentation of prostitutes which left them, he claims, "salés & poivrés". Weak, thin and *hideux*, the paleness of their skin, which made them resemble "des nouveaux Lazares, ou du moins des moines de Notre-Dame de la Trappe," is in this instance the visible sign of a physical corruption.⁷⁷ While Challe does furnish some remarkable, apparently first-hand, testimony of prostitution, his "nouveaux Lazares" may also reflect an association between European residence in the Orient and physical degradation, or the loss of what Europeans considered to be their superior level of vigour.⁷⁸ Given the survival of the belief in a link between climate and character, this would imply that *métissage* consisted of the mix of European with the product of an environment supposed to impart weakness and other negative traits.⁷⁹

⁷⁵ Ibid.

⁷⁶ Challe, 288.

⁷⁷ Challe, 287.

⁷⁸ See La Boullaye, 257. On La Boullaye and links between climate, vigour and *valeur*, see my *Veiled Encounters*, 207–208. However, John Fryer reports in the 1670s that children born in India to English mothers were 'a sickly generation' and that, according to the Dutch, '[children] thrive better that come of a *European* Father and *Indian* Mother.' John Fryer, *John Fryer's East India and Persia*, vol. 1, ed. by William Crooke (Hakluyt Society: 1909), repr. (Millwood, NY: Kraus Reprint, 1967), 179.

⁷⁹ On climate and character, see Charles-Louis de Secondat de Montesquieu, *De L'Esprit des lois*, in *Œuvres complètes*, vol. II, ed. by Roger Caillois, Éditions de la Pléiade (Paris: Éditions Gallimard, 1951), 478. For one curious (and briefly, positive) depiction of

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Seventeenth-century reflections of *métissage* also circulate in texts which inspire questions on the claim to first-hand testimony, or on the role of intertextuality. A notable and frequent topos is that of the receptivity of the Asian population to the sexual favours of European men.⁸⁰ These might be claimed to be the result of first-hand experience; Mocquet, for example, claims that an Indian woman brought her daughter “pour coucher avec [lui],” and that his refusal caused the girl considerable upset.⁸¹ The extremely influential and near-contemporaneous account of the East Indies by the Dutchman Linschoten includes a passage which recounts the desire of servants to give birth to white-skinned children:

Les meres de tels enfants quelque grande que soit leur povreté & servitude, ne voudroyent pas avoir pensé à les meurtrir ou estouffer, ains tiennent pour gloire non petite d’avoir esté engrossies d’un homme blanc, & pourtant gardent soigneusement leurs enfants, & ne les lairroyent pas mesmes à leurs propres peres quand ils les voudroyent avoir pour argent.⁸²

Pyrard, depicting the market at Goa, claims that slaves acted as *maquerelles* for their mistresses. The alliance with a European would be considered honorable:

Toutes ces Indiennes, tant chrétiennes qu’autres ou métisses, désirent plutôt avoir la compagnie d’un homme de l’Europe vieux-chrétien que des Indiens, et leur

métissage, see Flacourt’s depiction of a mixed French-Malagasy Christian population in the *dédicace* of his *Histoire* (non-paginated), and my article ‘*Trahsion* and the Native: Flacourt’s *Histoire de la Grande Isle Madagascar* (1658)’ in *Reverberations: Staging Relations in French since 1500. A Festschrift in Honour of C.E.J. Caldicott*, ed. by P. Gaffney, M. Brophy, & M. Gallagher (Dublin: University College Dublin Press, 2008), 315–326.

⁸⁰ Ripon, 148; L’Estra, 77, 84; Pouchot, 174; see Linon-Chipon, 477–495.

⁸¹ ‘Il y eut une Indienne qui m’amena sa fille pour coucher avec moi, comme le mainate l’avait avertie; mais cette fille âgée seulement de treize ans, voyant que je ne la voulais pas toucher, se prit à pleurer et gémir, voulant à toute force que j’eusse affaire avec elle, et sa mère faisait ce qu’elle pouvait pour l’apaiser, moi ne sachant pourquoi se faisait tout ce mystère.’ Mocquet, 1996, 102. Footnote in 1996 edition: ‘*Mainate (mainato)*: membre de la caste des blanchisseurs, laquelle est exclusivement chargée du lavage et empesage du linge.’

⁸² Annotation by Bernard Paludanus in Jan Huyghen Van Linschoten, *Histoire de la navigation de Jean Hugues de Linschot Hollandois, aux Indes Orientales* (Amsterdam: Henry Laurent, 1610), 87.

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donneraient plutôt de l'argent, s'en tenant bien honorées: car elles aiment fort les hommes blancs de deçà, et encore qu'il y ait des Indiens fort blancs, elles ne les aiment pas tant.⁸³

According to Pyrard, skin colour alone cannot justify the preference for Europeans; the choice of the European may indeed, as Sophie Linon-Chipon writes in relation to this extract, be determined by religious confession.⁸⁴ However, while not as flagrant as in Linschoten, there may also be a suggestion that it is the origin of the European—some inherent essence distinguishing him from Indians—that determines this preference. Both extracts dismiss any hint of economic interest in the desire for the *compagnie* of a European, and in Linschoten, the *métis* is a source of glory in having inherited the essence of the *homme blanc*.

Linschoten and Pyrard's assertions are also at the cusp of fiction and must surely demonstrate the potential for the encounter between diverse cultures to fascinate, even to generate fantasy among the male authorship. The coexistence of stratified groups within these colonial societies was recognized by certain authors to be the site of tensions, and of unresolved and possibly emergent conflicts. Others hint at the value of preserving an essence conceived of, at times, in an apparently fluid manner, and encompassing lineage, colour, and religion. *Métissage* was clearly encountered, but as the following section will demonstrate, was also reflected in the development of more elaborate narratives in which the promise and the perils of breaching divisions were reflected.

***Métissage* and cautionary tales**

The textual provision of supposedly empirical evidence in travel narratives to the Indian Ocean Basin was often accompanied by anecdotes recounting dramatic and violent occurrences or sexual transgressions.⁸⁵ Figuring alongside descriptions of the political organization or the religion of eastern cultures, these tales reflect hearsay, or hypotexts from a corpus which included other travel narratives.⁸⁶

⁸³ Pyrard, vol. 2, 592. On this extract, and on the Occidental as a 'produit de choix', see Linon-Chipon, 490.

⁸⁴ Linon-Chipon, 490.

⁸⁵ The theme of these 'oriental' anecdotes is discussed in greater detail in my *Veiled Encounters*, esp. 237–252.

⁸⁶ I use Genette's definition of the *hypotext*. See Gérard Genette, *Palimpsestes: la littérature au second degré* (Paris: Seuil, 1992), 13. See for example Tavernier, *Recueil de plusieurs Relations...; Histoire de la Conduite des Hollandois en Asie*.

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Manifestations of *métissage* within such anecdotes demonstrate a strong moral focus. Like other popular European anecdotal forms, they are often explicitly cautionary, and demonstrate the inevitable punishment of sin, or astonish the reader by their outlandishness.⁸⁷ In such forms, the phenomenon of *métissage*, when it is encountered, sometimes retreats into the background as one more detail in a curious, or cautionary, tale. Pyrard, for example, furnishes a vivid account of the physical suffering endured by a *mulâtre* as punishment for his crimes, in a chapter alongside “justices diverses” or the “humeur amoureuse des femmes indiennes.”⁸⁸ However, this anecdote is notable as an account of exceptional human courage, but makes no explicit link between this trait and ethnic origin.⁸⁹ In another case, the tragic fate of a young *métis* shipwrecked in the Maldives who rises in the esteem of the people by his bravery, is considered by Pyrard as a lesson on the dangers of rising above one’s station both in those islands and elsewhere.⁹⁰ So, while the constant indication of a character’s status as *métis* indicates that it is an inescapable, distinct, category, the principal dramatic or moral value of some tales cannot be attributed with certainty to this status.

Nevertheless, *métissage* also features as an element in cautionary anecdotes which invite a reading in the context of the existing proto-colonial order. A number of French accounts refer to the druggings of Europeans by Orientals either to permit infidelity or to take revenge on lovers who wish to leave them.⁹¹ Pyrard warns against the terrible jealousy of *métisse* and Indian women, and Mocquet attributes deceit and drugging to the *métisses* in particular (the fact that both travellers had the same ghost writer, Pierre Bergeron, is no doubt not indifferent).⁹² La Boullaye (who had read

⁸⁷ French forms include those of François de Belleforest, *Histoires Tragiques...*, 7 vols (Rouen: Pierre L’Oyselet, 1603), or of Jean-Pierre Camus, *L’Amphitheatre Sanglant...* (Paris: Joseph Cottereau, 1630); repr. (Rouen: Jean de la Mare, 1640); repr. ed. by Stéphan Ferrari (Paris: Champion, 2001). See also Christian Biet’s *Théâtre de la cruauté et récits sanglants en France (XVI^e–XVII^e siècle)* (Paris: Robert Laffont, 2006).

⁸⁸ Chapter XXII, *Justices diverses faites pour adultères, paillardises & autres péchés. Humeur amoureuse des femmes indiennes. Du grand pandiare, & de la résolution étrange d’un mulâtre*, Pyrard, 1998, vol. 1, 282–289.

⁸⁹ Pyrard, 1998, vol. 1, 287.

⁹⁰ Pyrard, 1998, vol. 1, 241.

⁹¹ On the heritage of these accounts, see editor’s note (111, footnote 1) in Mocquet, 1996, 215–218; On ‘oriental’ drugging see also my *Veiled Encounters*, 244–248.

⁹² Pyrard, 1998, vol. 2, 645. For this and other examples of *amour exotique dangereux*, see also Linon-Chipon, 499–500; Mocquet, 1996, 111. On Bergeron’s editing of Mocquet and Pyrard, see Grégoire Holtz, *L’Ombre de l’auteur: Pierre Bergeron et l’écriture du voyage à la fin de la Renaissance* (Geneva: Droz, 2011), 277–320; on the datura

both Pyrard and Mocquet) vividly depicts similar intrigues in Goa between Portuguese soldiers and “les femmes des autres Portugais, ou mestisses, qui aiment à faire l’amour au dessus de toutes les femmes du monde.”⁹³ All three narrators repeat the topos of the amorous temperament of Orientals (and indeed, of the Portuguese women in the East), and in this, the *métisse* inherits traits attributed to her sisters of other origin. Indeed, for Mocquet and La Boullaye, she supersedes others both in her level of skill in carrying out her deceit, and/or in her amorous temperament. This may, as Linon-Chipon writes, be as much a condemnation of women as of the *métis(se)*, in which “la femme métisse, [...] avant d’être métisse, est femme.”⁹⁴ However, the *métisse* is also an intermediary accessing the products of the East to harm the European world of which she too is, in part, a member.

Mocquet’s narrative also implicates the *métisse* in vivid descriptions of the brutality of the Portuguese colonial empire, and of great abuses carried out on the slaves in Goa. The barbaric punishment inflicted by one *métisse* on a slave for her lack of promptitude in waking up, proves fatal, and the “horribles châtements” of another “fait mourir de la sorte cinq ou six esclaves qu’elle faisait enterrer en son jardin.”⁹⁵ The implication of the *métisse* in such graphic excess appears to reflect on her status in the colony. When this part-European, part-Oriental occupied the position of authority that owning slaves implied, she is strikingly depicted as unable to restrain herself and temper its reasonable use.

Mocquet’s narrative contains two other tales which are representative of another reason why such tales could fascinate. Among the many unfortunate characters the narrator met in his travels was the son of an “Ethiopian king,” whose skin colour aroused suspicion in his father: “Il était fils d’un Noir et d’une Noire, et néanmoins était blanc et blond.”⁹⁶ The apothecary Mocquet speculates that this anomaly was caused by *la fantaisie*: through the mother “imagining” the whites who she had heard lived in Mozambique, or some other vivid psychological impression.⁹⁷ In a

druggings see 415; on Bergeron’s critiques of Portuguese colonial policy in Asia, see 167; 291.

⁹³ La Boullaye, 279.

⁹⁴ Linon-Chipon, 450. The condemnations of Pyrard, Mocquet and La Boullaye do, nonetheless, predate the early eighteenth-century voyager Lullier who, Linon-Chipon suggests, is among the first to condemn *métissage* [ibid.].

⁹⁵ ‘Il y avait une métisse qui avait par ces horribles châtements fait mourir de la sorte cinq ou six esclaves qu’elle faisait enterrer en son jardin.’ Mocquet, 112–113.

⁹⁶ Mocquet, 1996, 72.

⁹⁷ Mocquet, 1996, 73.

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second tale, Mocquet recounts the consequences of a Genoese woman giving birth to a black child after suffering another psychological impression; this time her anger at a black female slave falling pregnant by another slave. Her husband's belief that he is the victim of adultery gives rise to numerous peripeteia, such as the exposure of the child in the wilderness, an eventual chance encounter of father and son in a market in Algiers, and their tragic end.⁹⁸ The great dramatic interest of Mocquet's tales must be considered within the overall context of the thematic and moral preoccupations of the *histoires tragico-maritimes*, and they depend on the early modern conception of the power of the imagination to mark the unborn child.⁹⁹ Yet, both also demonstrate an important implication of *métissage*. The suspected infidelity from which both derive their dramatic interest is actualized by the ineffaceable sign of colour. Moral transgression—even if falsely imputed—is assumed to have been made visible.

This visibility and exposure of moral transgression is a theme adopted in French accounts of the Dutch East Indies, but in forms which also reflect contemporary perceptions of socio-economic hierarchies. Jean-Baptiste Tavernier's account of *La Conduite des Hollandois en Asie* contains a chapter entitled *De l'Orgueil des femmes de Batavia, de leur credit & de leurs amourettes*. Tavernier depicts Batavia as a site of considerable and undesirable social mobility, a place to which "des filles de la lie du peuple" were principally brought.¹⁰⁰ Once married, Tavernier claims, these women, bejewelled and "servies par plusieurs esclaves de l'un & de l'autre sexe" developed an excessive pride and insolence. The *amourettes* which Tavernier claims they embark on with young men recently arrived from Holland reflects the promiscuity attributed by Mocquet and Pyrard to their Portuguese sisters nearly three-quarters of a century previously. Tavernier sets the scene for an anecdote with a moral assertion which frames the story in a cautionary manner:

Le plus souvent quand les femmes s'imaginent que
leurs amours sont fort secrètes & qu'on n'en peut rien sça-

⁹⁸ Mocquet, 1996, 73–74.

⁹⁹ As Jean Céard writes: 'qu'est-ce que l'imagination de la femme enceinte, sinon la faculté de projeter dans le corps de son enfant l'image d'autres créatures?' Jean Céard, in Ambroise Paré, *Des Monstres & Prodiges*, 4th edition (1585), repr. ed. by Jean Céard (Genève: Droz, 1971), XXXIX. See also Paré's chapter *Exemple de Monstres qui se font par Imagination*, 35–37.

¹⁰⁰ Tavernier, 148.

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voir, c'est alors que Dieu permet qu'elles sont plutôt découvertes & mesme avec beaucoup d'infamie.¹⁰¹

He recounts that the Dutch wife of the secretary of the Hospital in Batavia had been childless for several years, and, despairing of ever having children, turns her attention to a slave who was "bien fait mais fort noir." Her eventual pregnancy is greeted with great, but short-lived joy by her husband:

À l'accouchement toute cette joye fut changée en deuil,
& l'on fut fort surpris de voir un enfant noir qu'elle mit au monde....¹⁰²

The child, in this tale, bears the visible mark of the deceit of the mother, a deceit which transgresses both socio-economic and ethnic boundaries, and which is severely punished; the father is dispatched on the galleys afterward. Here, a multiple transgression is made irrevocably visible in a form reminiscent of what Robert J. C. Young characterizes as the *subversive* body of the child born from "hybrid" sexual unions.¹⁰³

However, in the case of a transgressive union in which the father was European, Tavernier presents a notably less subversive outcome. He suggests that one of those who attempted to have the secretary take back his wife, may have related a *conte* concerning a *noir* and a *noire*. In this tale, the wife gives birth to an "enfant blanc," the father probably being "quelque soldat Portugais."¹⁰⁴ The great anger of the cuckolded husband is appeased by the arrival of a priest, who comforts him simply by recounting how a black hen might lay white eggs:

Par cette comparaison la colère du Cafre s'appaisa, il fut embrasser la mère & l'enfant, & il ne se parla plus de la chose.¹⁰⁵

The resolution of this tale differs greatly from that preceding it in verging on the comic, either by the facility of the priest's explanation, or by the ease with which it is accepted by the husband.

¹⁰¹ Tavernier, 151.

¹⁰² Tavernier, 152.

¹⁰³ 'The identification of racial with sexual degeneracy was clearly always overdetermined in those whose subversive bronzed bodies bore witness to a transgressive act of perverse desire.' Robert J. C. Young, *Colonial Desire: Hybridity in Theory, Culture and Race* (London; NY: Routledge, 1995), 26.

¹⁰⁴ Tavernier, 153.

¹⁰⁵ Tavernier, 154.

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Tavernier's first anecdote hints not only at the seriousness of the transgression of adultery in the new European settlements in Asia, but also of the dramatic potential that narratives of such *métissage* might have. This potential is developed in another anecdote, which features in the account of the service of the mid-seventeenth-century mercenary, Jean Guidon de Chambelle, with the Dutch East India Company. Introduced by the title *Histoire d'une femme hollandaise qui eut affaire avec son esclave, & de la justice qu'on en fit*, the cautionary nature is made immediately clear. In the absence of her husband, a young and high-born European woman in the colony calls one of her slaves, "un des plus contrefaits de la nature et le plus sauvage, ni autrement avait quelque esprit" into her room.¹⁰⁶ Her expressions of affection astonish her slave, who initially refuses her advances, which include the following affirmation of the superiority of the colonist:

Regarde comme je suis blanche et toi noir, et quel honneur je te fais, dont tu devrais être glorieux. Oui, je te promets (mets la main dans la mienne), pourvu que tu sois secret, de t'affranchir et te donner des esclaves qui te serviront, te faisant riche.¹⁰⁷

In this case, the transgression of the boundaries of colour is conceived of as an honour for which the slave must be grateful (as Linschoten wrote of slaves in Goa).¹⁰⁸ Yet the result of this confusion of existing limits is that the previous submission of the slave is turned into scorn for the master who was encouraged to free him: "Cet esclave, étant en franchise [...] commença à se méconnaître et à mépriser celui qui l'avait affranchi."¹⁰⁹ The bestowal of social mobility, enabled by deceit and adultery and blurring ethnic divisions, clearly brings confusion to the colonial order.¹¹⁰ The text places the transgression alongside the most serious and hidden of all, and promises that punishment must surely follow: "Comme les choses les plus cachées se découvrent avec le temps, Dieu ne laisse jamais rien impuni."¹¹¹ Indeed, the sentences initially received—death for the wife, and a symbolic mutilation and re-enslavement of the *Noir*—demonstrate the seriousness of this crossing of boundaries. This is finally commuted to a

¹⁰⁶ Chambelle, 157.

¹⁰⁷ Chambelle, 158.

¹⁰⁸ Linschoten, 1610, 87. Quoted above on page 37.

¹⁰⁹ Chambelle, 158.

¹¹⁰ Dellon also writes that the 'servitude plus douce' of slaves at Goa causes them to become insolent, and even to engage in robbery. Dellon, 209–210.

¹¹¹ Chambelle, 158.

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severe punishment which, for the woman, includes a symbolic execution, the annulment of her marriage, and her exclusion from society.

Elle serait mise pour toute sa vie au *spinus*, qui est un lieu où on met les femmes de mauvais gouvernement. Et pour cet affranchi, qu'il demanderait pardon à son maître, disant qu'il avait été forcé; après serait fouetté, et esclave pour toute sa vie de la Compagnie.¹¹²

A short report immediately follows this tale of, this time, a *femme mestive* who deceives her Dutch husband with a *Noir*.¹¹³ While the considerable dramatic interest and the dialogues of the first tale are absent, it demonstrates the abhorrence with which this combined infringement of race, marriage, and class was viewed. The fate of this second couple, while devoid of certain elements of the first, includes a severe physical punishment for both.

Elle fut démariée d'avec son mari, eut le fouet et la marque, et condamnée trois ans au *spinus*, et le Noir eut le fouet et la marque, et fait esclave pour sa vie à la Compagnie.¹¹⁴

Ultimately, despite their differences, the cautionary thread in these tales is apparent. While Mocquet's anecdotes are in some cases simple transpositions of the theme of (supposed) adultery made visible by skin colour, others testify to the ambiguous perception of *métissage* and the *métis(se)*, situated between cultures and the hierarchies of the colony. For Chambelle and Tavernier, the theme of adultery is accompanied by vivid demonstrations of the consequences of the disruption of the colonial order. When European women infringe its barriers with the same sexual licence traditionally attributed to European males in the Indies, an inevitable punishment dramatically reaffirms the existing hierarchy.

Conclusion

The travel narratives examined in the present study reflect the attempt to encapsulate difference in recognizable forms of text, and the interactions of contemporary—potentially widely disseminated—formulations of

¹¹² Chambelle, 159. On this voyage and the 'conclusion du pur style "colonial"' of this extract, see François Moureau, *Le Théâtre des voyages: une scénographie de l'Âge classique* (Paris: Presses de l'Université Paris-Sorbonne, 2005), 111–112.

¹¹³ Chambelle, 159.

¹¹⁴ Chambelle, 159. The *spinus* was a 'Maison de correction pour femmes', note by D. Van der Cruysse in Chambelle, 269.

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human difference with intertextual tradition. As the panorama of the *Indes*, they are depictions of the composition of societies through the encounter with difference and, in this, can be said to convey an inherently problematic, even conflictual dynamic. In early modern colonial societies, they testify to the importance of religion in constituting identity, as well as of other constructions of diversity which reflect socio-economic status as well as birth and *race*.

These texts are also composed of the residue of testimonies gathered by individuals who occupied transient positions within the societies of the *Indes*. In their edited form, they often testify to the re-use of *topoi* of the printed corpus. Nonetheless, the reader is often faced with the testimony of travellers who skirted the edges of cultures and of languages, and is led to ask in what it might reflect the echoes of the lost oral traditions of early colonies. The notoriously unreliable traveller-narrator, recounting unlikely anecdotes on the margins of experience, reflects a curious mix of European and colonial preoccupations.

French travellers, as has been seen, often themselves occupied a place on the margins of colonial societies. One is led to question how the encounter with *métissage* reflects or even interrogates their own often uneasy existence, and the extent to which their affirmations of rigid difference constitute assurances of belonging, faced with the often threatening diversity of the *Indes*. In addition, in these texts generated from the encounter, and often the conflict, between European, African and Asian peoples, the problematic place of *métissage* is hinted at. The phenomenon, ever on the margins of developing socio-economic, racial and even religious systems, occupies uneasy territory in the margins of this corpus. Within, perhaps, can be glimpsed the reflection of the confrontations, fears and desires of the developing colonies.

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**Pringy's *Les Differens caracteres des femmes*:
The Difficult Case of Female Salvation**

by
Karen Santos Da Silva

Introduction

In 2002, an excerpt from the fifth and sixth chapters of Jeanne-Michelle de Pringy's 1694 *Les Differens caracteres des femmes du siècle* was included in a collection of feminist texts by women writers of the seventeenth century. This inclusion aligns her with authors who were outspoken—at times subversively so—about the social reality women faced, despite the fact that Pringy's position is far less progressive than that of her contemporaries. The reasoning justifying Pringy's presence in the anthology, according to the anthology's editor Colette Winn, is that Pringy's is a subtle but radical form of feminism: "Particulièrement éclairante est encore la déclaration qui suit. Mme de Pringy, comme G. Suchon, a l'air de s'accommoder des règles en vigueur, des limites imparties à la femme, mais sous l'approbation, l'ombre de la révolte se profile déjà" (Winn 17).¹ Beneath Pringy's ostensible instruction to behave within the norm, Winn argues, lie the seeds of a call for women to find their emancipation in their own self-empowerment. Such a reading is certainly warranted in the sense that any text championing women's rights would have been likely to face criticism and rebuke, and not just from those on the *anti* side of the *Querelle des femmes*. Pringy's proto-feminism, like that of her contemporaries, would have had to be indirect and insinuate emancipation without ruffling feathers, justifying a kind of Straussian interpretation of her professed compliance regarding the weakness and moral fragility of women as a mask behind which an actual agenda of female emancipation could be detected by a discerning reader.

Could Mme de Pringy have had such readers in mind? A readership on the lookout for the silhouette of revolt against a backdrop of deference for the doxa? It may be that such an optimistic reading would induce, if not a certain amount of teleological revisionism, at the very least a simplifica-

¹ Winn's anthology begins with Marie le Gendre's *L'Exercice de l'ame vertueuse* from 1597, and Pringy's text closes the collection. Also included, chronologically, are excerpts from Charlotte de Brachart's *Harengue*, Marguerite de Valois' *Discours docte et subtil*, Suzanne de Nervèse's *Apologie en faveur des femmes*, Jacqueline de Miremont's *Apologie pour les Dames*, Jacquette Guillaume's *Les Dames illustres*, and Gabrielle Suchon's *Traité de la morale et de la politique*.

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tion of the debate surrounding women's place, rights and emancipation in seventeenth century France. I propose a more modest goal: to understand the meaning and import of the *Caracteres* given its complex integration of moralist, theological, and feminist influences. What does this treatise on the various vices of women reveal about the genre of proto-feminist literature at the end of the seventeenth century, and how are we to interpret the fraught path to salvation that Pringy carves out for women?² Which of its various complexities and contradictions result from esthetic and philosophical concerns exerted onto the text from the literary landscape out of which it emerged, and which are internal tensions that require resolution on the part of the reader? Finally, what can we learn about the fashioning or conceptualization of female interiority, of the female soul, this emerging fecund realm that would become the central topoi of sentimental fiction in the next century?

Jeanne-Michelle de Pringy's *Differens caracteres des femmes*, followed in the same volume by *La Description de l'amour propre*, was first anonymously published in 1694.³ Through her first publication, the public was already familiar with Mme de Pringy's panegyric discourses lauding the military prowess of the King. The attribution of many of her works remains problematic due to the scarcity of biographical information. Literary records indicate that after her *Caracteres* she wrote a half-dozen treatises and religious texts, the novel *Junie, ou les sentimens romains*, and finally the text which accounts for the majority of secondary references to Pringy in academic scholarship, her biography of famed Jesuit preacher Louis Bourdaloue: *La Vie du père Bourdaloue*.⁴

² The term "proto-feminist" has, with some reservation on the part of certain scholars, come to designate texts addressing feminist concerns before feminism became a political or literary movement. To some extent, many of these "proto-feminist" texts should be considered feminist texts regardless. However, the author whom I analyze here does not share the same goals as either modern feminists or as her outspoken contemporaries, justifying the use of term "proto-feminist."

³ Pringy would affix her name to the 1699 edition, however the monthly periodical *Le Mercure de France* identified her as the author as early as December 1694.

⁴ According to Constant Venesoen, an earlier work, *Les Diférens caracteres de l'amour* (1685) was falsely attributed to Pringy. Venesoen's analysis of the *Mercur*'s announcement of the text convincingly shows that this attribution was highly improbable, as it was supposedly written by an "Auteur [...] de l'Académie Française" (from the *Mercur galant*, November 1684, 310–311). For a more detailed view of Pringy's bibliography, see Venesoen's critical edition of *Les Differens caractères des femmes avec la description de l'amour propre (Edition de 1694)*, Honoré Champion, 2002, 13–26.

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The year 2002 may have seen the re-emergence of Pringy on the academic landscape, but with the exception of Venesoen's critical edition and Pringy's inclusion in Colette Winn's anthology, as far as I can tell, little attention has been given to the *Caracteres*. This is probably due to a variety of reasons, including the familiar marginalization of texts for and about women in the processes of canonization. This was also in part due to timing. The *Caracteres*, whose generic characteristics identify it as in large part a moralist text, was published at the end of the century, well after the majority of moralist productions of the *Grand Siècle*: twenty-four years after the posthumous publication of Pascal's *Pensées*, sixteen years after the definitive edition of La Rochefoucauld's *Maximes* as well as Madame de Sablé's *Maximes*, a decade after the bulk of Saint-Evremond's literary activity, and six years after La Bruyère's *Les Caracteres ou les moeurs de ce siècle*, the apogee of the moralist "genre."⁵

Moralist literature—particularly in the 1670s and 1680s—was timely, tied to oral Salon culture and to high society's definitions of *honnêteté*, *politesse*, and *galanterie*. Literary activity in this milieu was intimately linked to repartee and rhetorical dazzling. Pringy herself was critical and suspicious of the use of eloquence and wit, and despite the strong moralist tone of her work, the esthetic central to moralist literature was at odds with Pringy's didactic ends, which were to favor contemplation and retreat over seduction and imitation. In short, she participated too late in a genre many of whose worldly concerns, moreover, she rejected. This not only detracts from the potential "modernity" of her work,⁶ but also makes her text difficult to classify and thus difficult to compare to a particular literary tradition. However, these two difficulties are what make Pringy's text a rich object of study. First because, as I will show, it can be aligned with a particular cluster of other proto-feminist works with which it shares salient characteristics. Secondly, and as scholars have increasingly been showing, focusing on a text's "modernity" or obvious legacy is itself an act of marginalization that does a disservice to a more accurate and true understanding of its import.

⁵ Whether moralist writing is considered a "genre" is up for debate. See Daniel Acke's *Vauvenargues, moraliste* in which he attempts to define this genre he called "la moralistique" (Acke 81–84).

⁶ By which I mean anticipating concerns, approaches, strategies or goals that were to be taken up in later incarnations of feminist or moralist literature.

A double influence

That *Les Differens caracteres des femmes du siècle* was re-edited five years after its original publication points to a certain level of popular appeal, yet little is known about Pringy's links to other authors or artistic milieus, and less even about the text's reception.⁷ Her name appears most often in the pages of the monthly French gazette, *Le Mercure galant*, which announced both the text's initial publication in 1693 and again its second edition a few months prior to publication. If nothing can definitively be asserted regarding Pringy's readership, we can gather, from the fact that the *Mercure* was instrumental in disseminating (some might say advertising) and thus determining trends and fashions, that Pringy enjoyed some attention for her works. Though we may never know the extent to which the *Caracteres* was given to young girls with the intent of correcting or preventing these vices, Pringy's treatise is unique in comparison to most contemporaneous moral analyses of women by women because of its ostensible pedagogical goal. Whereas moral observations were customarily embedded in a variety of literary forms by Mme de Sablé, Mme de Lafayette, Mme de Villedieu, or Madame de Scudéry, moral prescription is the *Caracteres*' unique goal and unifying principle. This twelve-part text, composed of six vices and six corrective virtues, was written before there was any substantial body of literature about women's education (be it moral or otherwise) that was also directly addressed to them.

Pringy's *Caracteres* is divided into two distinct but interweaving parts: six vices in the form of portraits of women who embody them, followed respectively by a description of each vice's corresponding virtue. The first character to be derided is that of coquettes (*les coquettes*) and it is followed by a praise of modesty (*la modestie*). Next, Pringy criticizes zealots (*les bigotes*), after which she describes true piety (*la piété*). Those obsessed with the superficial display of wit (*les spirituelles*) are paired with a portrait of true knowledge (*la science*). Women consumed by their thriftiness (*les économes*) are urged to follow balance or moderation (*la règle*).

⁷ On the occasion of the death of a certain Mr Villémarechal, the 1705 January issue of *Le Mercure galant* references Pringy as one of the regulars at his Thursday Salon: "Me de Pringi y brilloit beaucoup. Vous sçavez qu'elle a un discernement fort juste pour la découverte des veritez les plus abstraites, & que dans la recherche qu'elle en fait, elle procede avec une précision qui fait juger de la netteté & de la profondeur de son esprit" (258–259). This mention, along with some evidence that she was friends with Louis Bourdaloue's sister, are as of yet the only known references to her worldly connections.

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Women addicted to gambling (*les joïeuses*) should find a cure in occupation (*l'occupation*). And finally women entirely devoted to judicial disputes (*les plaideuses*) are countered by Pringy's description of the pursuit of inner peace (*la paix*).⁸

As this outline suggests, we will see that the *Caracteres*' two major literary influences are moral literature and theological literature. These two didactic traditions intersect at various points, but also compete, as each focuses on opposite concerns: the former revolving around human behavior in society, the latter on God. Further down, unpacking the fraught relationship between the two parts of the text will reveal Pringy's complicated participation in proto-feminism.

The moralist influence: the social aspects of vice

The sections on vice in the *Caracteres* share unmistakable characteristics with secular mundane moralist literature, among the literary spearheads of the *Grand Siècle*. This included, among others, the writings of Saint-Evremond, Mme de Sablé, La Rochefoucauld, La Fontaine, and La Bruyère, whose famous work shared the same title as Pringy's text. The exploration of human interiority undertaken by the moralists focused on its relationship to social behavior rather than on humans' relationship to God. The moralists were working towards a *universal* definition of man (*qua man*, not *qua species*) through a kind of representatively exhaustive classification of behavior, with varying degrees of systematization.

Pringy's portraits of the vices are indeed an effort at a systematic categorization of the various types of women: coquettes, zealots, *précieuses* (though she never uses the term), misers, gamblers, and meddlers. Moreover, the secular side of her moralism is exhibited in her use of tropes that belong to the collective discourse of the late seventeenth-century moralists. Of course, in this *Siècle Moraliste*, such tropes were not confined to strictly moralist texts. They were part of any discourse that focused on the description and policing of sociability, and discussions of *politesse* or *galanterie* were equally found in texts by La Rochefoucauld and La Fontaine as in those by Molière, Scudéry, Lafayette, and so on. High society and the expectations it produced for its members form the backdrop against

⁸ Her description of *amour-propre*, a second text printed within the same volume, is a unified treatise-like text that thematically repeats this progression of the six character vices. It aims to show that at the heart of each vice is a disordered and excessive self-love, present in all of mankind but magnified to the point of affliction in women due to their inherent weakness. The *Différens caracteres des femmes* is the central focus of this article, and not the ensuing *Description de l'amour propre*.

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which Pringy paints her vices. Human behavior is not the simple exteriorization of inner qualities. The human soul is beset by an unquenchable and perverting self-love, socially manifest in a ubiquitous hypocrisy that it is the moralist's duty to unveil.

Pringy's rhetorical tactics are what most underscore the moralist influence in her treatise. If her portraits always exceed the familiar anecdotal, aphoristic, or even fragmentary nature of the classical moralists, sections of her text have sententious elements. In many passages, she engages in the seductive prosody and flavor of the moralist pique. The examples that follow, taken from the chapters on vice which seem to contain the majority of them, show Pringy's sense of repartee. Many of these excerpts could conceivably belong to a book of maxims:

Une fille à peine commence-t-elle à parler qu'on lui apprend de jolies choses et non pas d'utiles, ses premières démarches sont pour la dance, et sans s'embarrasser d'en faire une femme forte, on en veut faire une fille aimable, et on ne lui montre qu'à plaire sans songer à lui apprendre à vivre. (*Caracteres* 70)⁹

Une fille ne connoît sa religion que par son Cathéchisme, les sciences que par le nom, et toutes les bonnes choses qu'en idées (*Caracteres* 71).

L'orgueil leur fait usurper l'autorité sur des personnes qu'ils ne connoissent pas, la dissimulation leur fait obtenir une approbation qu'ils ne méritent pas, et la cruauté leur fait exercer une tyrannie qui ne se doit pas. (*Caracteres* 77–78)

Une femme effleure les sciences et ne les approfondit jamais. (*Caracteres* 85)

Une femme, à qui la galanterie et la vanité n'ont point touché le cœur, doit appréhender l'intérêt, et il est bien rare qu'elle s'exempte d'aimer les richesses lorsqu'elle méprise l'ambition. (*Caracteres* 92)

⁹ All Pringy quotations are taken from Constant Venesoen's annotated edition, *Les Differens caracteres des femmes avec la description de l'amour propre (Edition de 1694)*, Honoré Champion, 2002. Included in the edition are the 1699 variants. I could not take into account the variants without going beyond the scope of this project, but they are at times revealing and I encourage readers to consider their implications.

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The *Caracteres* are often punctuated by gnomic passages such as these containing rhythmic repetitions, as well as parallel, oppositional, and chiasmus structures. The stylistic similarities with classical moralist texts are striking, and, as in the case of the moralists, lend to her assertions a kind of world-engendering authority.

Finally, the text's darkness also aligns her with the moralist tradition. The *Caracteres* pulsate with pessimism, with the dark realization that human sociability is in its very nature corrupt, and that if there is any salvation from vice, it lies in the recognition of this ubiquitous corruption, in self-abnegation and retreat. Despite the edifying and didactic aim of the treatise, it more often than not conveys hopelessness rather than guidance, not only for those seeking out their own salvation but also for those readers who may have been or might now be in search of a redemptive description of female nature.¹⁰

A corrective theology

Pringy's pessimism is also a function of the theological influences at work in her text, and is most felt in the irreconcilability of the work's dual didactic function: moral (social or worldly) and theological. As Constant Venesoen shows in his annotations of the *Caracteres*, Pringy's writing is infused with traces of her pious readings. She makes numerous allusions to passages from the Bible (particularly in the section dedicated to piety), and adapts—at times to the point of plagiarism—the religious doctrines of the most influential theologians and orators, notably Sénault, but also Bérulle, de Sales, Bossuet, and of course Louis Bourdaloue. In contrast with the vices, which are mostly descriptive, her virtues are prescriptive and their didacticism often carries the heavy (and at times fanatical) tone of sermons and religious treatises. And while her theological influences are overtly Jesuit, her exhortations seem to carry Jansenist undertones. Often berating women's "superbe" (an archaic term meaning hubris), Pringy does not tire of reminding her readers that true piety means humility to the point of abjection, and that to combat *amour-propre* one must combat any

¹⁰ "Mon dessein étant de concourir à la perfection de celles dont je décris les véritables Caracteres," begins her Preface, "j'ai crû les dédomager de la peine qu'elles auront à se reconnoître dans un Portrait qui leur ressemble, par les moyens que je leur donne de corriger leurs défauts" (*Caracteres* 69). Thus, unlike the classical moralists whose profound pessimism is emphasized by the fact that their prescriptive contribution to moral conduct is merely implied in the immoral counter-examples, Pringy, taking her cue from religious sermons and treatises, actually provides concrete solutions to combat vice. In other words, the presentation of the text explicitly seems to promise education and redemption.

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inclination for self-love that so easily slips into complacency. “Le même zèle qui l’élève [le cœur de l’homme] à Dieu par amour, qui l’unit au prochain par charité, l’abaisse aussi jusqu’à lui-même par une humilité profonde, et lui fait voir le néant et le peché qui lui sont propres” (*Caracteres* 84), writes Pringy in her description of piety.

La Querelle des Femmes — emancipation or salvation

Pringy’s text is a hybrid of two approaches that are at once in contradiction and inextricably linked. Part moralist treatise, part theological exhortation, on the one hand the text promises to edify women and on the other does so in ways that seem demoralizing and debasing (certainly from the perspective of a 21st-century reader). And yet one of the major differences between Pringy’s treatise and the forms of discourse that it brings together is that, though it is at times a universal discourse, it is also self-consciously a text about and for women. The *Caracteres* have as their subject the analysis and correction of human nature, but adapted to the needs and idiosyncrasies of women, written from the perspective of a woman. As such, it must inevitably be understood in the context of the *Querelle des femmes*, in which it participates.

The presence of Pringy in Winn’s survey of feminist texts remains rather surprising when one examines the entirety of the *Caracteres*. Extracted from the others, the single chapter on erudition (“La Science”) that Winn chose to incorporate in her anthology is indeed a less damning prescription for women than Pringy’s chapters on the other corrective virtues. Yet, overall, Pringy’s heavy theological perspective espouses her century’s most reactionary and repressive views on women.

Women are described as limited by their physical and mental nature and thus unsuited for a variety of jobs, an idea that Pringy inserts in her description of *la science* aimed at encouraging women to seek out true knowledge: “Et si les hommes sont destinez à des emplois laborieux pour lesquels il faut de la science et de l’application, les femmes que l’usage a exclües de ces emplois avec justice, leur delicatesses ne permettant pas qu’elles en pussent soustenir le poids, ne sont pas exclües de l’érudition” (*Caracteres* 89). Women are vain and fickle: “La galanterie est un goût du monde et des plaisirs en général, et cet esprit de bagatelle naît avec le sexe” (*Caracteres* 70). They are excessive, superficial, prone to idleness, and essentially vulnerable to the effects of *amour-propre*, as in this passage from the beginning of “Les Bigotes:” “Les hommes l’ont [la fausse devotion] quelquefois par de grandes raisons de fortune, mais les femmes l’ont Presque touÿjours par orgüeil et par amour propre” (*Caracteres* 76).

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Pringy does not merely replicate the commonplace observations on the inferiority of women that underlie texts such as Fénelon's *Traité de l'éducation des filles* (1687), but develops the consequences of failing to recognize and contain the foibles of the feminine soul.¹¹ The most salient example connecting Pringy's appraisal of women to the late seventeenth-century zeitgeist remains the striking similarities between her *Caracteres* and Nicolas Boileau's *Satire X*.¹²

Still, Pringy would not have been alone had she chosen a less repressive approach to her moralist treatise. When the *Caracteres* appeared in 1694, the century was no stranger to feminist protestations emerging in France as well as in England. Marie de Gournay had written *L'Égalité des Hommes et des Femmes* in 1622. Jacqueline Guillaume had published *Les Dames illustres: où, par bonnes et fortes Raisons, il se prouve que le Sexe féminin surpasse en toute Sorte de Genre le Sexe masculin* in 1665. Poullain de la Barre consecutively—and anonymously—had put forth treatises on the equality of men and women and on women's education (*De l'Égalité des deux sexes, discours physique et moral où l'on voit l'importance de se défaire des préjugés; De l'Éducation des dames pour la conduite de l'esprit dans les sciences et dans les mœurs; De l'Excellence des hommes contre l'égalité des sexes*, respectively published in 1673, 1674, and 1675). Bathsua Makin in England had written *An Essay To Revive the Antient Education of Gentlewomen* in 1673. Also in England, the same year as Pringy's *Caracteres*, Mary Astell wrote *A Serious Proposal to the Ladies for the Advancement of their True and Greatest*

¹¹ "Les femmes ont d'ordinaire l'esprit encore plus faible et plus curieux que les hommes; aussi n'est-il point à propos de les engager dans des études dont elles pourraient s'entêter: elles ne doivent ni gouverner l'état, ni faire la guerre, ni entrer dans le ministère des choses sacrées; ainsi, elles peuvent se passer de certaines connaissances étendues qui appartiennent à la politique, à l'art militaire, à la jurisprudence, à la philosophie et à la théologie. La plupart même des arts mécaniques ne leur conviennent pas: elles sont faites pour des exercices modérés" (*Traité de l'éducation des filles* 3–4). With the important exception of the reference to theology and philosophy, Fénelon's notions about women's flaws are also deployed throughout Pringy's text, not as the starting point for finding other avenues of excellence (as it is for Fénelon, who goes on to praise them for their domestic capabilities) but as the justification for their moral weakness and passage into vice.

¹² The choice and progression of character vices in Pringy's *Caracteres* are almost identical to those Boileau's *Satire X*, starting with the coquettes and ending with the "plaideuses." As Venesoen points out, Boileau wrote his satire of women 30 years prior to its publication, but refrained from publishing it until 1694, the year the *Caracteres* were published. Given the lack of biographical information on Pringy, there is little to explain this uncanny similarity, except perhaps to suggest that this had become a meme circulating among men and women of letters.

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Interest. Finally, Gabrielle Suchon, an ex-nun who, like Pringy and Astell, highlighted her investment in theology and religion, wrote two philosophical treatises focusing on the rights of freedom, authority, and education that have been denied to women. Suchon's first text, *Traité de la morale et de la politique*, was published one year prior to Pringy's text.¹³

As there is little in common between many of these earlier proto-feminist writers and Pringy, it is not surprising that in his introduction Constant Venesoen raises the question of "La 'Mysogynie' de Madame de Pringy." Pringy's moralist treatise turns its back on the social realities women faced, concentrating instead on a conservative commitment to restricting women's movements in the social sphere. Where de la Barre, for instance, underscores the qualities that show women's potential for being successful theologians and orators, doctors and lawyers, Pringy chastises her sex for seeking to enter into these professions. She further methodically criticizes each and every possible avenue of action available to women *outside* of the confines of convent life: gallantry (*les coquettes*), erudition (*les spirituelles*), financial management (*les économes*), leisure (*les joïeuses*), and judicial knowledge (*les plaideuses*).¹⁴ Her complete denial of any true accession by women to the kinds of arenas that may have brought them recognition as positive contributors to society leaves very little room for women's fulfillment. Love, charity work, knowledge, the successful management of a household, leisure, and the participation in social justice, are described as always perverted into corrupt impulses.

To de la Barre's and Suchon's Cartesian call for a dismantling of misogynist prejudice based on tradition rather than reflection, Pringy gives damning portraits of women based on hackneyed views of women's vices, platitudes common to both theological morality and the secular *moralistes*. Her critique of women's education is an implicit disparagement of *préciosité* and Salon culture, and therefore not simply of secular, but also of worldly, education.¹⁵ This double rejection (both of *femmes savantes* and

¹³ We could add to this list Charlotte de Crachart's *Harengue* (1604); Marguerite de Valois' *Discours docte et subtil* (1618); the long list of rebuttals to Alexis Trousset's polemical *Alphabet de l'imperfection et malice des femmes... dédié à la plus mauvaise du monde* (1617); Suzanne de Nervèze's *Apologie en faveur des femmes*; and Jacqueline De Miremont's *Apologie pour les Dames*.

¹⁴ Consider Barre's statement that "C'est un plaisir d'entendre une femme qui se mêle de plaider" (Barre 61) and Pringy's chapter against "Les Plaideuses."

¹⁵ "... toute l'érudition ne sçauroit luy plaire sans politesse; parce que la sagesse et la verité n'est pas son étude, mais la delicatesse et l'usage: et pourveu qu'elle observe une pureté d'expressions qui l'exempte de pecher contre les loix du beau langage, elle se

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femmes mondaines) shows the extent to which Pringy's condemnation is both unique and inescapable: to be a *femme mondaine* is to make a mockery of true erudition, since it means paying more attention to fashion than to truth. Yet the accession to a state of erudition (being a *femme savante*) can never be attained, for "c'est ignorer le point de la science parfaite que de se reposer dans le chemin de la vérité..." (*Caracteres* 90).

In this respect, Pringy's conservatism even surpassed that of her contemporaries, for if there was one thing on which feminists, educators, and Counter-Reformation theologians agreed, it was that, as mothers, women were responsible for educating future generations. Pringy does not mention, even in passing, women's role as educators of others, nor any aspect of their familial identity. The women caricatured in her taxonomy of female vice are completely bereft of familial ties. They are never described as wives, daughters, sisters, or mothers. Nor does Pringy offer family as a source of support or strength; aside from the bond a woman should create with Jesus Christ, salvation is a solitary endeavor.¹⁶ Pringy's desire to constrain and isolate women is not only part of her socio-theological agenda, it is also reflected in the fabric of this text, which, mute about women's ties to the various social systems to which they might belong, also cuts them off from any potentially supportive system.

Thus Pringy's participation in proto-feminist literature is more problematic than her inclusion in an anthology on "protestations féminines" would have us believe. Pringy does not share the optimism and extolling rhetoric of many proto-feminists (the most famous being Marie de Gournay, Jacqueline Guillaume, and Poullain de la Barre). Her prose does not sing the praises of women, nor does it point an accusing finger at society's misogyny. It is not a demonstration of the virtues of women, brought to challenge the opinions or ideas of a mixed readership. Pringy's text, which might seem to gladly provide men with the weapons to further in-

repose du surplus et ne s'embarrasse guere de penser comme une autre pourveu qu'une autre ne parle pas comme elle" (*Caracteres* 85-86). Their emphasis on appearance, on the desire to shine, rather than on the substance of true knowledge, is of course a common criticism of the *précieuses*.

¹⁶ The absence of any reference to marriage should however be considered in the context of the century's complicated relationship to the institution. It was seen as necessary to ensure the survival of estates and wealth, as well as to create political alliances, but as being at odds with personal happiness. Marriages were commonly recognized by moralists, theologians, and women themselves as joyless, trying affairs that challenged men's virtues and attracted further disdain to women. The explicit advocating of celibacy was common in proto-feminist texts, but marriage was condemned by more worldly personalities as well. The trope of the "*mal-mariée*," present in European fiction since the Middle Ages, continued to be a popular theme often discussed in *Salons*.

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culpate the “fair sex,” is in fact not addressed to men at all. “Si je peux inspirer à chaque état le juste sentiment de se blamer, je serai contente” (*Caracteres* 69), she writes in her Preface. True, “voilà la suite d’une jeunesse mal employée, qui n’a eu d’instruction que celle qu’il falloit pour s’aimer davantage et se connoître moins” (*Caracteres* 71). In other words, social institutions have done nothing to discourage women’s natural vanity and self-love. Yet the burden to correct behavior lies on women rather than on society. The text’s aim is to generate self-awareness in its female readers, as well as a realization of their responsibility and their role in their own salvation.

Metaphysics and proto-feminism

Pringy shares a few important characteristics with Gabrielle Suchon and Mary Astell, two important (though neglected) participants in the *Querelle des femmes*. Both were philosophers whose works are directly informed by the philosophical debates of their time. Pringy, Suchon, and Astell all published their works in the same couple of years: Suchon, her dense 700-page philosophical text entitled *Traité de la morale et de la politique* in 1693, and the first volume of Astell’s *A serious proposal to the Ladies* in 1694. Though Pringy’s *Caracteres* engages less in philosophical reflections than the other two texts, the three authors share a point of view or attitude regarding the question of women that may have contributed to their relative absence in current scholarship. All three articulate their ideas about women’s emancipation through the lens of salvation. They see it as a *function* of theological and metaphysical discourses, rather than as a result of social ones.

Some critics’ use of the term “proto-feminist” rather than “feminist” for these texts is due to the obvious anachronism that such nomenclature would entail. The prefix “proto” nevertheless does not prepare someone unacquainted with this literature for its telos. Indeed, though all three authors aim to help women, their ultimate goal is neither emancipation nor a fundamental shift in political and social structures that would further include women. Their goal is instead to provide women with the resources to become better Christians and improve their relationship to God. In other words, women’s happiness in this world (be it formulated as freedom, inner peace, moral fortitude or access to education) is inseparable from metaphysical fulfillment arrived at through constant introspection.

Given the strong social component of modern feminism in its fight against misogynistic social institutions, attitudes, ideologies, jurisdiction and so on, it is not surprising that the metaphysical and religious facets of

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proto-feminist literature are often overlooked by those compiling and annotating anthologies of early feminist literature. However it behooves us to adapt our perspective to accommodate the fact that theology and metaphysics were not considered by proto-feminist writers as a tool of their oppression, represented instead the conditions of possibility of their liberation. Such a shift in critical perspective is already at the center of one anthology of articles about Mary Astell, which focuses on the metaphysico-theological side of her thought. As one contributing scholar put it, “to miss the spiritual orientation here is not only to miss something necessary about pre-enlightenment organization of religion and state, but also to miss something about early feminism” (Achinstein, *Reason, Gender, Faith* 28).¹⁷

One element common to Pringy, Suchon, and Astell, in addition to the strong theological goal of their texts, is their adoption, with various degrees of transparency and adherence, of a new approach to metaphysics: that of Descartes, whose methods and concept of a two-substance world provided these thinkers with the tools with which to rationally refute prevailing ideas about women.

Descartes had a strong female following and enjoyed conversations with women, whom he found less influenced by prejudice than men. He wrote that he had chosen to compose his *Discours de la méthode* in French rather than Latin so that “les femmes mêmes pussent entendre quelque chose” (*Correspondance* 30). The impact of Descartes on Pringy, Suchon, and Astell can help to explain some of what may seem to modern readers as a contradiction inherent in feminist texts whose telos is not in fact woman, but God. Even while the primary legacy of Cartesian thought for modernity is Descartes’ foundational rationalism—rather than his argument for the existence of God, now given as proof of circular logic—the emphasis he put on the intellect and free will as constitutive of the human

¹⁷ Though this extends beyond the scope of the present study, further attention should be given to the primary role of theology in women’s quest for happiness and fulfillment in seventeenth century France, particularly given the importance of certain monastic institutions as communities of women. Port-Royal is an important example of this. Now all too easily conflated with Jansenism and the male figures that both defended Cornelius Jansenius’ *L’Augustinus* against papal law, and relied on Port-Royal as a spiritual sanctuary, Port-Royal was first and foremost a successful Abbey for women. Its dismantling and the dispersion of its nuns by Louis XIV in 1709 saw the end of this self-sufficient community of women who valued inner vocation, retreat, and most importantly, a relationship to God free of mediation. For further reading on the subject of Port-Royal, see Laurence Plazenet’s anthology *Port-Royal*, Paris: Flammarion, 2012.

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soul, was (as much for his contemporaries as for him) in line with, and not opposed to, faith.

For Suchon and Astell, the impact of Descartes' dualism on a claim for the intellectual equality of women is probably the most salient influence of rationalism on feminism. By insisting on the duality of two distinct substances—one being Mind, whose property is thought, and the other being Body, whose property is extension—Descartes really implied the first feminist argument to be taken up repeatedly by the proto-feminists: *the mind has no gender*. Gender being tied to the body, the resulting argument is that any deficiencies or shortcomings in women's rational capacities must come not from a deficiency of their minds (the mind as God gave it to humans is perfect) but from the physical, social, political, and historical constraints to which women are subject. Gender inequality, Suchon and Astell remind their readers, is the consequence of prejudice reinforced by custom: "Thus Ignorance and a narrow Education lay the Foundation of Vice, and Imitation and Custom rear it up" writes Astell (27). Women are led to believe by the force of cultural habit that they are limited in their arenas of action, thus are squandering the use of their rational minds. The solution for both Suchon and Astell is to map out the conditions necessary for women to be able to focus inward, and ultimately on God.¹⁸

¹⁸ For Suchon, this means a very concrete analysis of the deprivations that women face in all aspects of their lives (deprivation of freedom, education, power), and a reasoned demonstration that freedom, rationality, and the ability to express one's will are inalienable rights, gifts given to us by God that it is our duty to cultivate. Among many of the freedoms that Suchon claimed was a woman's ability to choose when, if ever, to enter religious life; serving God can take many forms, and is never successfully achieved through coercion. In England, Descartes was primarily read through the works of Nicolas Malebranche, who sought to synthesize Cartesian rationalism and Augustinian theology in his "vision in God." For Astell, whose engagement with Descartes is politically tied to a defense of the traditional Monarchy and of the Anglican Church against Lockean empiricism and liberalism, providing women with the means to have a religious education will form their capable minds to be able to access God and the one True Religion: the Church of England. In the case of both Astell and Suchon, the importance of viewing the mind as separate from the body has a double consequence. It liberates women from essentializing statements about their capacities, and it restores the body to its just and valued place. The body is not an extension or a translation of the qualities of the mind, but without proper treatment of the person as body, as social subject, the mind is denied the opportunity to fulfill its potential.

Pringy's dualism : the paradox of didacticism

Pringy opens her chapter entitled "La Science" with the following statement: "L'Esprit est de tout sexe. L'ame est un être spirituel également capable de ses operations dans les femmes comme dans les hommes" (*Caracteres* 88). The idea mirrors almost exactly what Poullain de la Barre writes, and what both Suchon and Astell imply: namely that separating the mind from the body grants women the paradoxical freedom of being liberated by shedding their womanhood. However Pringy does not fully take advantage of the emancipatory possibilities of such a belief in the rest of her text. Her particular implementation of this dualism highlights instead the *incompatibility* of a socially viable salvation and a metaphysical salvation. Pringy's Cartesianism emerges quickly as a less optimistic, as well as less obvious, influence in the text. Its impact on the text's mechanism is nonetheless crucial. What appears as a philosophical attitude regarding rational methods of inquiry in Suchon and Astell (as well as de la Barre) expresses itself in the *Caracteres'* form rather than in its content. In other words, it is constitutive of the text's dualistic structure.

As I mentioned earlier, the text is clearly demarcated into two types of chapters: embodied vices and descriptions of virtues. The *Caracteres'* separation into vices and virtues is not only spatial: it affects the rhetoric, the images, and even the lexical field of both parts. The term "repos," for instance, that is used throughout the text, has a different connotation depending on what type of chapter it belongs to. Translated as quiet, rest, or peace, it is a sought-after state of being when taken in the context of the vices, because in this case it signifies retreat, extraction from the constant social demands that pervert virtue into vice. In her description of miserly women, Pringy writes "Comme son désir l'inquiète, elle prend moins de repos qu'une autre" (*Caracteres* 96). Or again about gambling women: "Le jeu est une dangereuse passion, quelquefois il fait perdre en un jour, plus qu'on ne peut dépenser en une année, et la maison la plus riche et la mieux réglée ne sçauroit tenir contre la dissipation d'une joëuse, qui pour son plaisir perd son repos..." (*Caracteres* 97). Conversely, in the context of the virtues, "repos" negatively connotes self-satisfaction: one's pursuit of true knowledge, or of a life aligned with the path of Jesus Christ, should be tireless, constant work. In the section on piety Pringy writes: "On ne suit pas le Seigneur en s'arrêtant, c'est une course sans interruption qu'il faut que fasse la volonté, le moindre repos l'éloigne..." (*Caracteres* 83). Or again, in the section on knowledge: "C'est ignorer le point de la

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science parfaite que de se reposer dans le chemin de la vérité...” (*Caracteres* 90).

These two distinct halves of the text can to some extent be superimposed onto (and thus explained by) the previously described dichotomy between social moralism and religious moralism. As the list of section titles shows (Les Coquettes/La Modestie; Les Bigotes/La Piété; Les Spirituelles/La Science; etc.), the *Caracteres* bears the influence of two antithetical attitudes towards moral discourse. The vices are corporeal character types that are attached to bodies (social bodies, gendered bodies). They are inseparable from the particular social—and particularly female—being that incarnates them. The virtues, by contrast, are placeless, sexless ideals. The religious language that pulsates in them to the rhythm of religious sermons highlights the virtues as concepts presented to the reader, as objects of contemplation rather than as examples to follow. They are objects for the rational mind and can only be arrived at through the operations of the soul (judgment, imagination), and not through observation. They belong to the metaphysical world of ideas, and not to the world of extended substances. In Cartesian terms, truth, which is attained through intellectual certainty, cannot be of the body, but must be a function of the mind. Pringy’s refusal to provide imitable examples for her readers is thus an adaptation of the Cartesian tenet, though hers is not only a metaphysical question but an ethical one. For her, only moral perfections are the objects worthy of the soul’s judgments. It is noteworthy that her text is based on a value judgment absent from Descartes but pervasive in theology: vice is intertwined with the body; virtue transcends it.

Pringy’s decision to deny her readers virtuous examples is thus a deliberate consequence of this dualism, and her reticence to paint virtue through the use of concrete specimens, the way she does for the vices, is evident even before the beginning of the text proper, as early as the Dedication and Preface of the *Caracteres*.

The goal of the preface is to establish the *Caracteres*’ nature as an intended moral guide for women. The preface reads, referencing the unfavorable descriptions with which Pringy will begin her portraits:

J’espere que ces premieres démarches leur feront sentir le plaisir de la perfection, les éloigneront de l’Amour propre que je dépeins, et leur donneront le goût pour la sagesse. (*Caracteres* 69)

The first step in Pringy’s didactic method is to put off her readers to such a degree that they will seek perfection, hungry for it as an antidote to the

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vices they have just seen described, in which they may or may not recognize themselves. The second step, the correction, reveals the exact nature of Pringy's method. Dedicating her *Caracteres* to La Princesse Madame d'Orléans,¹⁹ Duchesse de Nemours who is glorified as a paragon of virtue, Pringy announces women's foibles with ease, but seems tongue-tied when it comes to depicting any virtue. In the dedication, she writes:

Je suis bien-heureuse de commencer à marquer à Vôte
Altesse mon profond respect, en publiant que vous êtes
digne de celui de tout le monde, et je ne sçauois trop
m'applaudir d'avoir trouvé l'occasion de vous apprendre en
public la vénération que j'ai toujours eue en particulier
pour V.A. (*Caracteres* 67)

Yet despite this promise of a public laudation, a few lines later she continues:

Je craindrois cependant, Madame, en parlant de vos
vertus, que vôtre modestie ne s'allarma(st) contre la vérité,
et que vous me fissiez le juste reproche d'en avoir trop peu
dit, par rapport à ce qui en est, et trop dit par rapport à ce
que vous voulez qu'on en die. (*Caracteres* 68)

Pringy will say nothing more about these virtues to which she alludes: the Duchesse de Nemours may incarnate virtue, but it escapes description, as though the very act of describing might soil virtue's perfections by giving it body. Hidden behind the rhetoric of familiar praise present in all the literary dedications of the seventeenth century, Pringy's refusal to expound upon the very virtues she seeks to inspire in her readers places the text, from its inception, in a difficult relationship to its own didacticism. She is not going to provide her readers with imitable examples. She will not lead her readers to virtue through emulation.

This initial refusal helps to frame the paradoxical position Pringy will take with regard to the dualist model. For Suchon and Astell, rhetorically divesting women of their corporeal shackle enables them to reveal women's rational mind, the same mind they share with men. But they also recognize that women, as women, are caught in the tethers imposed upon

¹⁹ The Duchesse de Nemours (1625–1707), born Marie d'Orléans-Longueville, had for a long time been a patron to women writers, particularly those who wrote about inequalities between the sexes. She was also known for helping women who had suffered from forced marriages or neglectful husbands. She herself, after the death of her mother, was disinherited and then married against her will by her father and stepmother, who wished to favor their own children.

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them by the misconceptions of popular opinion, that they are fettered by the law, and hobbled by their lack of education. To exalt women's rational mind, very concrete and real changes have to be implemented in the lives of women, hence Astell's *A Serious Proposal to the Ladies* that outlines the creation of an educational establishment for women.

Pringy seems to take a hardline Cartesian approach to this issue. To embody virtue would be a travesty of it. It would mean trapping virtue in the attributes of the wrong substance. Had Pringy described virtuous characters instead of concepts, had she expounded upon the Duchess de Nemours' virtue, her readers would not be exhorted to contemplate virtue as an idea to be judged by the soul, but would be forced to perceive the virtue in its embodied form. Vice described is vice perceived through imagination, and imagination is not any more reliable in the quest for the truth than are our senses. On the contrary, throughout the text imagination is portrayed as a source of misconception. Pringy writes:

Voilà l'usage des femmes spirituelles. Une grande idée d'esprit qu'elles ont dans l'imagination. Ce n'est point une connoissance, une regle, ni un sçavoir, c'est une idée ; c'est à dire une spacieuse étendue qui comprend toutes les grandes choses. Un vaste lieu en elle-mêmes, où elles imaginent voir l'assemblage de toutes les différentes beautez de l'esprit. Elle font un mélange confus de tout ce qu'elles sçavent, et cet amas, de sciences imparfaites, remplit leur cœur aussi injustement que leur esprit.
(*Caracteres* 86)

Since our senses are fallible, it is no wonder that vice, malleable like Descartes' piece of wax, could trick us into appearing as a virtue. In Pringy's text, the vices are plural (*les coquettes, les bigotes*, and so on) as they do not have one self-evident manifestation, but instead their essence is incarnation. Virtue, however, contemplated in its purest form—that is, as a virtue rather than as the sum of the actions of a virtuous character—appears clearly and distinctly to us through our contemplation of it. Thus what she offers to her female readers is not “La Modeste” but “La Modestie,” “La Piété” rather than “La Pieuse” (and certainly not “Les Pieuses”).

Perhaps the biggest difference between Pringy's approach and that of the other two proto-feminists is that Suchon and Astell focus by and large on the external constraints that affect women's choices. Pringy zeroes in on something that significantly complicates her aim: women's own sins. In order to lift the shackles imposed upon women by virtue of their being

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women, Pringy has to combat part of women themselves. The enemy is within, not without. In her text, women are encouraged to engage in a constant self-criticism that could have, on the surface, imitated the self-abnegation prescribed to men by the most pessimistic Christian faiths of the time. Yet part of Pringy's dualistic structure reveals that her pessimism is not simply due to theological beliefs about our role in our own salvation, but is caused by the impossibility of actually locating the site of femininity, an impossibility that permeates all reflections pertaining to the *Querelle des Femmes*. Is it in the body or in the mind? Female interiority for Pringy is corrupted by imagination. It takes the place of an ideal interiority, a pure mind capable of perceiving truth. The question of the emancipation of woman, not yet formulated as such, pivots around a concept of a feminine interiority to be either celebrated or trained into a more universal concept of humanity as directed towards God.

Impossible salvation

Earlier, I stated that through her vices Pringy systematically attacks the range of social activities associated with, or available to, women. There is one social sphere in which women were deeply and necessarily involved that Pringy seems to ignore: the family. Pringy's text does not make any mention of women's familial responsibilities as mothers, nor even as wives, daughters, or sisters. Even though it is in keeping with most moralist texts, which rarely point their scrutinizing gaze towards interactions within the family, the omission is curious given the didactic goal of the text. It could be interpreted in two ways. First, it serves to discourage women from turning to external structures as a source of support, as a morally positive influence, or as a source of fulfillment. The relationship to God and thus the path to spiritual fulfillment is a solitary experience, and Pringy's textual strategy is to isolate women from these external structures.²⁰

Second, it implies that in the case of familial bonds, there is no vice to be unveiled, for family relationships do not "count" as social relationships.

²⁰ Venesoen hypothesizes that Pringy was educated either at Port-Royal, or more likely, at Saint-Cyr. Both schools advocated forging an individual and unique relationship to God through direct reading of the scriptures and contemplation. Saint-Cyr in particular became known for its ties to Madame de Guyon, who brought Quietism (and thus controversy) to the school. Quietism encouraged complete passivity, silent prayer—so as to be as receptive as possible to God's grace—and complete retreat from the world, which included participation in pious actions. The similarities with Quietism in Pringy's text are fairly salient.

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This is relevant because imbedded in the fabric of Pringy's text, particularly in her use of examples, is the recurrent idea that the locus of women's sin *is* their sociability. It is by default sinful to be social. Vice is inherent to sociability the way original sin is inherent at birth:

Une femme élevée avec de bons principes, née avec [de] bonnes inclinations, qui cependant veut se conserver la liberté d'une société agréable, et la réserve d'une sagesse entière, ne trouve qu'un moyen pour y parvenir ; c'est l'hypocrisie qui lui fait trouver un accord pour concilier Dieu et le monde, et pour satisfaire son amour propre sans blesser la dévotion. (*Caractères* 76–77)

Hypocrisy is the inevitable price to be paid for any attempt, be it well-intentioned or not, to conciliate God and the world, self-interest and devotion. The use of chiasmus in the sentence creates a syllogism: God is to devotion as the World is to *amour-propre*. The pitfall of sociability is that it leads to an idolatry of the self.

Sociability's sinfulness is the first idea of the text, established in the very first vice that Pringy describes; coquetry is first and foremost a broken social relationship, a flawed mode of sociability (in this case, seduction). To underscore her point, Pringy does not describe a static coquette, stilled for the portrait, but coquettes in action:

On les estime autant qu'elles aiment, pour un moment.
La beauté nous arrête, l'esprit nous fixe et les défauts nous chassent. Mille agréments les font chercher, mille raisons les font fuir. La volupté fait qu'on y retourne, et la sagesse fait qu'on n'y reste pas et qu'on leur parle toujours avec plus de flatterie que d'attachement. (*Caractères* 72)

This is not so much a portrait as it is a scene depicting a (failed) social interaction, presumably with the intent of demonstrating to the coquette the error of her calculations. What is primarily coquettes' sin? That they exist in and for social interaction; that they are a blur of superficial relations; that they exist *only* socially. This is not only evident in the frenzied rhythm and contradictory movements that characterize coquettes' world ("for a moment," "arrests us (...) entraps us (...) chase us away," "search," "retreat," "return," etc.), but it is also supported by the accompanying virtue. Had Pringy intended to valorize a kind of ideal love (platonic, for instance) over coquetry, the corrective virtue might have been "l'estime" (respect). The corrective virtue that accompanies coquetry, however, is modesty, which calls for the woman to retreat into

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herself, rather than for her to reform her social desire. Coquetry, the first vice, is the sin of sociability.

In a similar move, the *bigotes*' sin is framed in terms of the social, and not of false devotion, since their zealotry most profoundly affects the social relationships around them. It is significant that Pringy here focuses less on the effects of false devotion on the salvation of women's souls than on the repercussions of false devotion on a woman's performance of devotion in the world:

Voilà l'exercice des devotes du temps, la recherche des emplois qui leur assujettissent le plus de malheureux, et qui les élevent au dessus d'une conduite ordinaire. Le soin de cacher leur dessein, afin de parvenir plus aisément à leurs projets, et de s'exprimer en termes humbles pour se faire estimer davantage, et l'application continuelle à supposer des crimes à ceux qui ont du malheur, et à nourrir de larmes et d'ignominie ceux que la providence leur envoie pour les nourrir de pain. (*Caracteres* 79)

The consequences of this vice are social, not spiritual. The social expression, or the exteriorization of religious devotion, is charity, but in Pringy's vision, "voilà l'exercice des devotes du temps." She does not distinguish between good charity and bad charity, or even between authentic charity and hypocritical charity (good actions with sinful motives), but says that *any* charity is inevitably corrupted: thus the corrective virtue is piety, not charity. It is not a call to better perform pious acts, but to reform the self.

The social aspect of the vice is repeated for all of the vices. The *spirituelles* are, like coquettes and zealots, sinful in that they limit themselves to the social dimension of their endeavor, to the play and associations of words in accordance with the rules of salon eloquence rather than with the organization of ideas in accordance to logic, wisdom, and the search for truth. And at the forefront of Pringy's attack on misers, gamblers, and litigious women is her condemnation of these women's deplorable attachment to the vain echoes of social life: money devoid of the value of things it is capable of acquiring (since misers do not buy), busyness without accomplishments, and engagement with superfluous legal proceedings. Pringy's text recognizes women's desperate efforts to participate *in* the world, but only insofar as these efforts are ultimately perverted.

Pringy's aim, by giving her readers abstract notions to contemplate rather than embodied portraits of virtues to perceive, is to help extract them from the very arena that is participating in their spiritual bankruptcy.

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One of her rhetorical tactics to help make possible this extraction is to further de-corporealize the virtues. In addition to inciting women to remove themselves from social activity, she textually erases their gender. While women are clearly the subjects (thematically and grammatically) of the vices, in the chapters dedicated to the virtues, the grammatical subjects often revert to a neutral masculine: it is the heart, the mind, or the soul that feels, acts, or should act. Her text oscillates between female and male gender pronouns, ultimately serving to make the concept of gender itself meaningless. Parsimonious with the terms “man” and “woman,” Pringy will instead insist that the actors in her portrayal of the virtues are parts of the psyche rather than whole people: the mind (*l’esprit*), the soul (*l’âme*) and the heart (*le coeur*) are much more often the agents in this half of the text. The choice of these “organs” is in contradistinction to the inherent social component of the vices (specifically incarnated by women) and indicates the extent to which virtue is intrinsically incompatible with sociability. By choosing to concentrate on humans’ agency in metonymical symbols (the mind, the heart, and the soul) that are not socially readable in the way that a “man” or a “woman” would immediately be, Pringy ensures that virtue exists only for pure entities, unsoiled by the world’s projections of identity.²¹

Mais, quand la foi a succédé au soin de son instruction, qu’il est seur d’avoir trouvé la voie, la vérité et la vie, qu’il goûte une paix merveilleuse que la vérité répand dans son ame, que son cœur rempli de charité n’a plus de mouvemens qui ne le portent à la joye de l’éternité, son esprit se trouve convaincu, son ame est remplie d’onction et la pratique de la vertu devient facile quand l’esprit connoît avec seureté ce qu’il doit, et que le fruit de cette connoissance est le zele de la volonté. (*Caracteres* 81–82)

The use of the subject pronoun “il” introduced at the beginning of this paragraph without any established antecedent is destabilizing for the reader. Obviously Pringy is not referring to men, since they are rarely addressed, except in comparison to women. The exact nature of this “il” is

²¹ The gender-specificity of a couple of Pringy’s virtues is linked to the history of the concepts. Indeed, both *modestie* and *occupation* have a long history in anti-women literature: the two recurrent charges against women in the anti camp of the *Querelle des Femmes* is that women’s sexuality is dangerous, and a bored woman is up to no good. This helps explain that, given Pringy’s incorporation of circulating moralist commonplaces, Pringy addresses herself much more to women throughout those two chapters than in other chapters.

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not explicitly revealed, though through the meaning of the sentence we can infer that it refers to “l’esprit” (the mind). Again, through metonymical association, “l’esprit” comes to represent the entire being, replete with a heart (“son coeur rempli de charité”) and a soul (“son ame est remplie d’onction”), but a consciousness denied of any kind of social readability. These organs, these parts of the psyche, can be conceptualized, but not seen. They are at the core of human identity, and yet referenced as they are, separated from a physical shell, they escape any discrete manifestations of existence.

The effects of this de-corporealization are ambiguous, and point to, as I mentioned in passing earlier, a problematic repercussion of what is ostensibly one of the liberating aspects of dualism: the freedom of dualism is that women are not reduced to their gender. In Pringy’s version, in order for women to improve themselves, to become fulfilled humans, they must divest themselves of any characteristics that define them as women. They must strip themselves of their womanhood. Pringy’s text enacts this repeatedly by condemning all of women’s social identities (sexual, domestic, religious, professional, leisurely), and then by denying them any identificatory relationship to the virtues. The virtues remain ideals that can only be accessed inwardly, through the soul, and not through embodiment.

As the quotation above showed, not just the virtues are disembodied in this half of Pringy’s text. She also works to dissociate the human subject from its body by depicting it through synecdochal representations that have us conceptualize (rather than “perceive”) the subjects of her moralist text. Exemplarity itself is vice because it belongs to the unreliable world of appearance and perception. Though Pringy does punctuate the virtues with sentences distinguishing femininity from masculinity (and the moral consequences of these differences), for the most part she attempts to completely peel virtue away from the gendered body. The genderless organs that I mentioned above, and moreover the absence of any gender (in stark contrast with the spirited attack on women) would seem to indicate, in the lexical choices Pringy makes, that for the most part women can only be saved when their womanhood is stripped away, when they do not appear or live as women. Given the text’s specific address to women, the question a reader might ask Pringy is whether a woman, qua woman, can be saved. To a modern reader, it is perhaps the most disturbingly “anti-feminist” aspect of the text, and more frustratingly, we may never know how this text was received by the readers it intended to influence.

Pringy’s insistence, in the half of the text dedicated to vices, that women often cannot help themselves from acting sinfully because their

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womanhood naturally leads them into vice, induces her to focus on the habit of moral action as a corrective tool. Again, in the Preface she writes: “Et je voudrais que toutes les femmes que je censure par ma description m’aprouvassent par une metamorphose de moeurs...” (*Caracteres* 70). While both the virtues and the human subject are represented as abstract objects to be thought of rather than perceived in their physical incarnations, this practical aspect of Pringy’s didacticism confuses the clean binarity of her dualism. If a woman is in the habit of acting correctly, if she is in the habit of doubting her hubris, for example, or of performing good acts of charity, then “c’est à la constance des oeuvres que la modestie impose ses loix” (*Caracteres* 74). In other words, despite the implicit injunction to contemplation that Pringy’s rhetoric implies, some of her prescriptive directives belong to the realm of *action* and *not* contemplation.

The logic of her text induces a kind of aporia: women are prone to vice and sin because their constitution makes them prefer extroversion (“il est difficile à une femme de ne jamais sortir de soi-même” (*Caracteres* 74), and thus sociability. Sociability is the breeding ground of sin, as it is opposed to an authentic contemplation of God. Yet a corrupt relationship to divinity is described by Pringy as having mostly social repercussions, not spiritual ones. Pringy does not take the opportunity to introduce the concept of grace. Consequently, women are left to their own contemplation without any mention of divine intervention, meaning that their only avenue towards salvation lies either in complete isolation or in the social realm of the habit of good actions.

On the one hand, Pringy’s text respects the distinction between the two substances (mind and body) by doing what it can to keep them separated, and protecting the objects of the mind from being contaminated by the perceptions of the body. On the other hand, Pringy’s text short-circuits any salvation when it sends the reader to the sphere of action for improvement. Salvation must happen on both levels, the text seems to say, in these two spheres that are linked but also constituted as mutually exclusive. Where is woman’s salvation, and thus emancipation, to be found then? Is it in the conditioning of the social body, even though this body is negated throughout her text and rejected for its social readability? Or is salvation to be found inward, in a retreat from the world, a concentrated contemplation of virtue whose purity is safeguarded by its lack of expression? In what sphere should women actualize themselves? In the mind-substance or in the body-substance?

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In the end, what seems to emerge in Pringy's text is not so much a form of rebellion, as Winn would have us believe, as much as a conception of emancipation and freedom that both requires self-reliance and is interior. The modernity of her text lies in that it exposes, through its internal tensions, the insolubility at the heart of the question of gender, still relevant today, as to whether or not gender is tied to an essence. In the course of this, something else emerges that has perhaps more influence on the moral aspects of literature than questions of gender ever would: in Pringy's version of the female soul, the relationship between the interior self and the social self is neither one of transparency nor of causality. For Pringy, these two selves coexist, but their link to each other is effectively severed by the text. Pringy's unique type of proto-feminism reflects, in the realm of the moral treatise, what *La Princesse de Clèves* did in the realm of fiction: it shows that henceforth, interior experience has importance beyond the mere exteriorizing of it because it is not its supplement or explanation, but rather the site of an irreducible disjunction between self and world. It is not, I think, a coincidence that the eighteenth century novel increasingly focuses on interior experience and sentiment as a method of fictionalizing moral philosophy and negotiating the complex ways that interiority and action are linked. Furthermore, if the novel does so more than ever from the vantage point of female protagonists, it is because, as Pringy's text shows, the problem of both women's freedom and women's salvation in early-modern French society cannot help but reveal the disconnect between an epistemology based on interior experience and one born out of one's actions in the world.

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**“The Truth about Reasoning”: Veiled Propaganda and the
Manipulation of Absolutist Authority in Eustache Le
Noble’s
La Pierre de touche politique (1688–1691)**

by

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**I. Introduction: The Political Stakes of Eustache Le
Noble’s *Pasquinades***

In a letter dated August 5, 1694, French chief of police Gabriel Nicolas de la Reynie confesses his incapacity to prevent the publication of satirical pamphlets penned by then-imprisoned aristocrat Eustache Le Noble:

Ce n’est pas la première fois qu’il a été défendu à cet auteur de mettre au jour des écrits de sa composition, ni la première fois qu’on a enlevé d’entre ses mains, pendant sa prison, les ouvrages de sa façon qu’il y vendait avec beaucoup de scandale. Il a toujours trouvé des protecteurs et des partisans qui ont cru qu’il était utile de laisser à cet homme la liberté d’écrire sur toutes sortes de matières. On ne saurait dire combien de manières il en a abusé, et à quel excès il ne s’est porté, ni répondre non plus qu’il se contienne à l’avenir. (Reynie)

This is not the first time that this author was forbidden from bringing to light his writings, nor the first time that someone removed from his hands, during his imprisonment, his works that he was scandalously selling there. He has always found protectors and supporters who found it useful to grant this man the freedom to write on all sorts of subject matters. One cannot say how many ways he has abused this freedom, and to what excess he has taken it, nor whether he will control himself in the future. (Reynie)

Even from the confines of his jail cell in the Conciergerie, Le Noble remained as elusive and subversive as his texts—an author whose “abuse of freedom” and penchant for “excess” paradoxically earned him both the contempt of royal authorities as well as the respect of high-powered pro-

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tectors such as the Marquise de Maintenon (Godenne XII; Mangeot 73).¹ In this regard, it would seem that he upheld a family tradition initiated by his great-great-grandfather, Pierre I, who had also found ingenious ways to use the French throne to his own advantage (Hourcade 79). Beginning with his short career as *procureur général* in the Parliament of Metz in the 1670s, where he acquired a reputation as a reckless spender and a “dishonest adventurer,” Le Noble quickly became a politically rebellious figure, penning subversive poetry and serving several prison sentences before being banished in 1693 (24, 55).² Despite his notoriety and complicated relationship with the monarchy, Le Noble managed to earn a living from his pen during a period in which he was not only imprisoned, but also one in which authorship was only beginning to become a financially viable career (Cherbuliez 476; Mangeot 76). Le Noble was an extremely prolific, well-known author in his time, who published works in a wide variety of literary genres until his death in 1711.³

¹ Given Le Noble’s reputation, it is unclear how this relationship was forged. The publication of *Charenton, ou l’Hérésie détruite* (1686), which praised the Revocation of the Edict of Nantes in 1685, may have earned Le Noble the graces of Madame de Maintenon, a relationship that he only solidified by dedicating his *Traduction nouvelle en vers des Pseaumes de David* to her in 1692 (Hourcade 52). Le Noble may have benefited from other protectors in high places, such as French magistrate Toussaint Rose, reportedly a friend of Le Noble’s father, as well as the lieutenant-general of police Marc-René de Voyer de Paulmy d’Argenson, who provided a small weekly allowance to Le Noble at the end of his life (116). Some have suggested that Le Noble was a distant relative of Secretary of State for Foreign Affairs Charles Colbert de Croissy. However, the fact remains that the degree of his protection was inconsistent, as some of his texts were authorized while others condemned or seized. See Hourcade (115–120) for several hypotheses regarding these “Approbations et protections masquées.”

² He was imprisoned at three different junctures: in the Bastille and For-l’Évêque prisons from 1683–1684 for having forged signatures to swindle his creditors; in the Châtelet and the Conciergerie prisons from 1690–1695 for having falsified documentation pertaining to the inheritance of territories; and in the Conciergerie from 1703–1704 for adultery (Hourcade 45–66; Godenne VIII; Funck-Brentano 73; Ravaisson 246–247). Le Noble escaped from prison in 1695 and lived in hiding with his mistress, Marie-Gabrielle Perreau, until their capture in 1697. Although he had been banished in 1693—a sentence which was reaffirmed in 1697—Le Noble was nevertheless allowed to live discreetly in Paris (Hourcade 60). My study relies heavily on Philippe Hourcade’s monograph *Entre pic et rétif: Eustache Le Noble (1643–1711)*, to date the only comprehensive critical study of Le Noble’s oeuvre. Unless otherwise noted, all biographical references are taken from Hourcade’s work.

³ Although best known as the author of the pasquinades, Le Noble published in nearly every literary genre, penning historical novellas, psalm-paraphrases, astrological treatises, theatre, fairy tales, poetry, treatises on religious doctrine, and fables. His *Oeuvres complètes* appeared in 19 volumes between 1718 and 1726, and his works were translated

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Although Nicolas de la Reynie remarks Le Noble's extraordinary capacity to "bring to light" subversive publications from the place of marginality *par excellence*, few literary scholars have attempted to elucidate the political and ideological stakes of Le Noble's *pasquinades*.⁴ A collection of 142 satirical dialogues published anonymously between 1688 and 1694 and 1702 and 1709, these polemical texts achieved then-enormous press runs of up to six thousand (Klairs 146) and analyzed the *affaires du temps* with a combination of wit and historical accuracy.⁵ If satire is a "perennially elusive, often paradoxical and contradictory, literary phenomenon" (Rosen 4), the *pasquinade*, by definition an anonymous lampoon, permits a more transgressive form of ridicule precisely because of the author's capacity to figuratively hide behind his words. Named after Pasquino, a witty and sarcastic tailor who lived in Rome during the fifteenth century, the *pasquinade* tradition developed after Italians began to affix satirical placards onto a statue later discovered under the defunct tailor's shop. The term *pasquinade* would later come to signify any kind of satirical attack, especially those against political authorities, whether posted to the statue of Pasquino or circulated as a manuscript ("Pasquinade"). It is the *pasquinade's* particularly scathing nature that distinguishes it as a form of satire. Though written more than half a century after the texts in question, Diderot's entry on "Pasquin" in the *Encyclopédie* encapsulates the complicated status of the *pasquinade* during the *ancien régime*: "Cette licence qui dégénere quelquefois en libelles diffamatoires, n'épargne personne pas même les papes, & cependant elle est tolérée" (This license that sometimes degenerates into defamatory li-

into English, German, and Italian. See Hourcade (150–152) for a chronological bibliography of Le Noble's works.

⁴ Le Noble's works have typically been featured within general studies (see Seifert) and have usually attracted attention on ideological grounds (see Martin). Recent scholarship, however, has emphasized both the literary interest of his novels as well as their potential influence on eighteenth-century works such as *Manon Lescaut* (see Cherbuliez). Philippe Hourcade's exhaustive study draws upon meticulous archival research, but it is first and foremost a work of literary history that overlooks the subversive political content of Le Noble's *pasquinades*.

⁵ Le Noble published five collections of *pasquinades*, the titles of which are listed below: *La Pierre de touche politique ou dialogues sur les affaires du temps* (29 dialogues; 1688–1691), *La Fable du rossignol et du coucou* (1 dialogue; 1692), *Les Travaux d'Hercule* (21 dialogues; 1693–1694), *L'Esprit d'Esopé* (4 dialogues; 1694), and *Nouveaux Entretiens politiques* (87 dialogues; 1702–1709). While his name did not appear on the manuscripts of the *pasquinades*, Le Noble was presumed to have been their author by his contemporaries and his engraving appeared with these works.

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bels does not spare anyone, not even the popes, and yet it is tolerated) (“Pasquin”).

How are we to understand the “toleration” of Le Noble’s *pasquinades* within an increasingly centralized absolutist state that censored publications? True to the inherent license afforded by the *pasquinade* genre, Le Noble’s political dialogues derisively mock the enemies of French monarch Louis XIV, but they do so in a fundamentally dissimulative manner. Although *La Pierre de touche politique* dialogues deride the king’s rivals, the character traits for which these enemies are lambasted echo criticisms of Louis XIV advanced by the late seventeenth-century worldly intelligentsia. As we shall see, these pamphlets are readable as supporting *and* subverting the French crown, operating as propaganda on two levels: on the first level, they promote Louis XIV’s interests against England, the House of Austria, and the papacy. However, on a second level, the *pasquinades* question absolutism and examine the viability of other political organizations. The *Pierre de touche politique* pamphlets necessitate a careful analysis precisely because they operate on two levels of meaning, as we are reminded in a passage from one pamphlet that metonymically functions as a *mise en garde* for Le Noble’s dissimulative practices: “Conçois bien ce que je vais te dire, & tu verras que tu n’entres point dans le fond essentiel, mais que tu prends seulement la superficie des choses” (Hear what I’m telling you, & you will see that you do understand the heart of the matter, but that you are only grasping the superficial level of things) (*La Fable* 33). It is through this constant interplay between “*le fond essentiel*” and “*la superficie des choses*” that the *pasquinades* demonstrate satire’s particular effectiveness as a mode of critique in a politically repressive regime, as well as the specificity of Le Noble’s satirical techniques within the body of late seventeenth-century pamphlet literature. As we shall see, these works exploit dialogism both as a form *and* as a function, putting into place an interpretive structure which models the type of active reading practice required to ascertain their meaning and ultimately demonstrating pamphlet literature’s importance as a space for critical reflection in *fin-de-siècle* France.

II. *La Pierre de touche politique* (1688–1691): Propaganda as a Double-edged Sword

Written during the early years of the controversial War of the Grand Alliance (1688–1697), the 29 pamphlets that compose *La Pierre de touche politique* shed light on the complexity of the publicity wars between Louis XIV and his foreign enemies. After evoking Lucian’s “prose satirique” as

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a model (*La Bibliothèque* 4), Le Noble explains the collection's name through a simile claiming that his texts function like a "touchstone" that exposes the "truth" about European affairs:

[L]'on a jugé à propos de donner au corps entier de l'Ouvrage le titre général Pierre de Touche Politique, parce que comme cette Pierre par son attouchement découvre la pureté ou la fausseté de l'Or, aussi ces petits Dialogues tout en badinant découvrent toute la Politique sur laquelle roulent les affaires de l'Europe, & en démêlent le faible & le solide. (4)

One judged in this regard to give to the entire corpus the general title Political Touchstone, because like this Stone that through its touch reveals the purity or falseness of Gold, so also these little Dialogues, while bantering, reveal the Politics driving the affairs of Europe and separate the weak and the solid therein. (4)

Even as he invokes tradition and his imitation of Lucianic "satirical prose," however, Le Noble also aligns with the modern values of innovation and emulation, immediately distinguishing his project from that of the Greek satirist by insisting on the political and historical importance of the "vérités secrètes" revealed in his dialogues (3). Just as early authors of the *nouvelle historique* claim to reveal "a secret history" of political events as a pretext to rewrite and undermine the royal historiographers whose works they supposedly imitate, Le Noble likewise insists upon the veracity of his texts and exalts his dialogues as "une Boussole pour les Historiens futurs" (a Compass for future Historians) (*Le Cibisme* 4–5).⁶ Furthermore, as if to signal the imperative to question authority within his satirical enterprise, the epigraph preceding each pamphlet reformulates an element of the Horatian *utile dulci* principle. Whereas Horace famously defends his own literary practices through the expression "Ridendo dicere verum quid vetat" (What forbids telling the truth with a smile) (*Satires* 1.1.24–25), Le Noble's epigraph replaces the word "quid" with "nil": "Ridendo dicere verum/Nil vetat?" (Does nothing forbid telling the truth with a smile?). By transforming Horace's assertion into a more audacious interrogative, Le Noble emphasizes the fact that one can tell the truth with a smile in any circumstance—that is, even when it is told only inadvertently. As Helen

⁶ Hourcade has noted that Le Noble's ambition to write "un Essai Historique" (*Le Cibisme* 4) belies an attempt to compete with the periodical *Le Mercure historique et politique* (227).

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Harrison has argued, Le Noble's reformulation likewise seems "to point to the lack of control over unauthorized texts [in circulation] or to ask what limits, if any, will be placed on his mockery" (np). In these ways, the paratext to the *Pierre de touche politique* dialogues not only emphasizes the relative truth-value of historiography, but also underscores the "slippery" nature of satire and the dissemination of such works in late seventeenth-century France and Europe.

Each dialogue in *La Pierre de touche politique* adopts a particular polemical tone, which, on a first level, attempts to influence public opinion in Europe and France by promoting the French crown's interests against England, the House of Austria, the papacy, and other members of the Grand Alliance. Indeed, the majority of the *Pierre de touche politique* dialogues ridicule Louis XIV's two most significant religious and political rivals: Pope Innocent XI, against whom the French monarch struggled for spiritual authority within his borders (Ott 21), and William of Orange, who ruled as both Stadtholder of the Dutch Republic and King William III of England after the Glorious Revolution of 1688–1689 (Israel 646, 849–852).⁷ Throughout the collection, Louis XIV is universally depicted as the victim of Pope Innocent XI's "pernicious hatred" (*Le Cibisme* 23) and William III of England's "consuming ambition" (*La Fable* 26), a pawn in a "universal political conspiracy" orchestrated by his enemies against him (*Le Cibisme* 3).⁸ The pope is treated as a heretic and a false Christian (16)

⁷ As Michael Ott writes, "The whole pontificate of Innocent XI is marked by a continuous struggle with the absolutism of King Louis XIV of France" (21). In 1687, Louis XIV seized papal territory, imprisoned the papal nuncio, and threatened to separate France from the Roman Catholic Church in response to papal decisions with which he disagreed, prompting his excommunication by the pope (Ott 21–22).

William III, Prince of Orange became the Stadtholder, or provincial governor, of the provinces of Holland, Zeeland, and Utrecht in 1672. Preoccupied with strengthening the power of the United Provinces against France, which had invaded the Dutch Republic in 1672, William of Orange aspired to the British crown to establish "an anti-French, and anti-Catholic, parliamentary monarchy" (Israel 849). Dutch forces invaded England in November 1688, and William deposed his uncle and father-in-law, James II, in December of the same year, officially becoming joint sovereign of England, Scotland, and Ireland with his wife Mary II in February 1689 (849–852).

⁸ Each pasquinade was published with its own clever, original title. Le Noble explains the rationale behind his first pamphlet's title in these terms: "[je l'ai] nommé Cibisme, parce que le Népotisme ayant été proscrit sous le Pontificat d'Innocent XI le Cardinal Cibo y a tenu la place de neveu & de premier ministre" ([I named it] Cibisme because Nepotism having been proscribed under the Pontificate of Innocent XI Cardinal Cibo assumed the rank of nephew and prime minister) (*Cibisme* 4). The pope's decision to side with William of Orange (a Protestant) in the War of the Grand Alliance is most notably

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who does not have “un grain de Catholicon dans le cœur” (an ounce of Catholicon in his heart) (26), whereas William of Orange, alternately dubbed “Guillemot” and “Jus d’Orange,” is repeatedly criticized for having usurped the British crown (*Le Festin* 12) and for the “absolute authority” with which he governs (*La Fable* 23). Whether or not the French crown financially endorsed Le Noble’s *pasquinades*, as some have speculated, it is clear that Louis XIV would have benefited from Le Noble’s humorous and scathing depictions of his political rivals.⁹

At moments, however, the lampoons against Innocent XI converge with criticism of Louis XIV’s own abuses of authority, and the figure of the pope is deployed to criticize forms of absolutism in general. In *Le Cibisme* (1689), for example, two fictional interlocutors, Pasquin and Marforio, analyze conciliarism—a doctrine that upholds the supremacy of an ecclesiastical council over the pope’s authority in spiritual matters (Örsy 56)—completely rewriting Catholic dogma and critiquing the papacy at its foundations. After arguing that papal infallibility is a falsehood (*Le Cibisme* 16), Pasquin questions the divine source of pontifical authority in terms that resonate with the universality of a maxim: “il n’est pas croyable que Dieu donne à un seul homme la droiture des décisions, & qu’il la refuse à un nombre innombrable de Pères assemblés en un Concile” (It is not plausible that God gives to only one man fairness in decision-making, & and that he refuses it to an innumerable number of Fathers assembled in a Council) (32). While the praise of conciliarism throughout *Le Cibisme* would have supported Louis XIV’s struggle with the Holy See, this in fact veils the underlying critique of all forms of gov-

denounced in *La Chambre des comptes d’Innocent XI*, in which Innocent XI must answer to Saint Peter for his crimes against the Church.

⁹ Hourcade has suggested that the controversial nature of Le Noble’s political dialogues explains their complicated publication history, as well as the government’s ambiguous role in approving them, if only tacitly. Some government officials saw in the *pasquinades* an opportunity to garner support for State policy, while others feared explicitly approving the dialogues’ ridicule of European leaders. On several occasions the approval of the *pasquinades* was superficially revoked only to be promptly reinstated by royal authority (Hourcade 108–112). In *Livre, pouvoirs et société à Paris au XVIIe siècle*, Henri-Jean Martin maintains that the French crown clandestinely supported Le Noble’s *pasquinades* to increase support for the war against the League of Augsburg (669–670; 899–900). Others have speculated that Le Noble was hired as a propagandist by British Jacobites, those who sought the restoration of James II. In the January 1852 edition of the scholarly journal “Notes and Queries,” for instance, the anonymous author argues that the deposed King of England James II may have partially financed Le Noble’s *Pierre de touche* dialogues in order to turn public opinion against William of Orange, who had forced his abdication (5: 52–54). See also Harrison’s unpublished conference paper “The Follies of Notre Bon Homme,” which I have listed in the Works Cited.

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ernment that rely on the supremacy of a divinely-appointed leader. By blurring the line the between papal and monarchical authority through the derision of “infallible” rulers who reign “alone,” Le Noble’s pamphlet reads as an accusation against all leaders invoking the sacred origin of their power to command the absolute obedience of their subjects. In these respects, the mockery of papal authority undermines the French king’s own claim to “divine right to rule,” with the universality of the anti-absolutist criticism overshadowing the anti-papal content.

A later passage more closely evokes absolutist theory by ridiculing political structures based upon the primacy of the head of state over the body politic. Perhaps more significantly, this critique of the absolutist model redeploys the very terminology used to denounce Louis XIV in anti-monarchical pamphlets from the same period. In *Les Soupirs de la France Esclave* (1689), for instance, the anonymous author defends the original “Aristocratic” form of the French government in which the monarch would consult his Estates General before all important decisions (95–96),¹⁰ arguing that the king’s sovereignty is lesser than that of the assembled *États*: “les Rois ne pouvaient rien sans [les États]; & au contraire...[les États] pouvaient tout sans les Rois” (Kings cannot do anything without the Estates; & on the contrary... the Estates can do everything without Kings) (96). In strikingly similar language, Le Noble’s characters uphold the supremacy of an assembled council in religious matters:

Le Concile assemblé est le véritable Corps entier de l’Église, l’Évêque de Rome n’en est que le Chef, & il est ridicule de prétendre que le Chef, soit lui seul plus que le Corps entier qui comprend tout ensemble & le Chef & les membres: le Pape ne peut être sans l’Église ni hors l’Église, mais l’Église à chaque mutation de Pontificat subsiste sans Pape. (Le Cibisme 33, emphasis added)

The assembled Council is the true Body of the Church, the Bishop of Rome is only its Leader, & *it is ridiculous to contend that the Leader, should be himself more than the entire Body which includes both the Leader and the members*: the Pope cannot exist without the Church nor outside

¹⁰ The fifteen “mémoires” composing *Les Soupirs de la France esclave, qui aspire après la liberté* were originally published anonymously, but have been attributed to Pierre Jurieu and Michel Le Vassor. Antony McKenna has questioned both attributions in a chapter published within Pierre Bonnet’s edited volume *Littérature de contestation : pamphlets et polémiques du règne de Louis XIV aux Lumières* (2011).

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of the Church, but the Church subsists without the Pope in every variation of the Pontificate. (*Le Cibisme* 33, emphasis added)

Here, the denunciation of papal authority masks the implicit criticism of *all* forms of absolute power, with the satirized object vacillating between the particular (the organization of the Catholic church) and the universal (all absolutist political structures). Far from operating in a unidirectional manner, the propaganda in *La Pierre de touche politique* is a double-edged sword, lambasting the absolutist tendencies of a specific sovereign while also echoing the condemnation of Louis XIV's own abuses of power.

Just as the Church and the State formed a two-sided edifice of power in the *ancien régime*, Le Noble's *pasquinades* take aim at the spiritual domain of the papacy and the temporal realm of monarchy, using satire as a vehicle for political theorization. Even if the dialogical form and satirical nature of the *pasquinades* resist a straightforward interpretation of the author's political beliefs, the discussion of socio-political regimes within Le Noble's texts nevertheless resembles the typological analyses found in early modern political philosophy. In *La Fable du Renard* (1690), for example, the allegorical dialogue between the two "puissantes Républiques" of Switzerland and Holland assails William of Orange's "usurpation" of the British crown and the enslavement of his subjects (8). Indeed, the "fortunes" of the populace may be inherently more unstable in a monarchy because they are vested in and literally *subjected to* the ever-changing personal inclinations of the king (32–33), but the interlocutors draw a distinction between standard monarchical governments and tyrannical states ruled by a "usurper" who has "no right" to the throne. From the outset of the pamphlet, Switzerland warns Holland of the dangers of William III's tyrannical impulses, insisting that the Stadtholder would like to reign as king within Dutch borders as well:

Tu ne dois pas douter qu'il ne soit ennemi né de ta liberté; il ne fait en cela que marcher sur les traces de ses Pères, & comme eux dévoré d'ambition, il n'a d'autres soins n'y d'autre but que d'abolir ton Gouvernement, pour arriver à la Souveraineté absolue de tes Provinces. (26)

You should not doubt that he is the born enemy of your liberty; in this respect he merely follows in the footsteps of his Forefathers, & like them devoured by ambition, he has neither other cares nor other goal but to abolish your Government, in order to arrive at the absolute Sovereignty of your Provinces. (26)

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Later, Switzerland's words pronounce the enslavement of the Dutch to "Tiny Will" as a rhetorical strategy to render its advice more compelling, even as they (incorrectly) predict William III's ultimate fall in England by deploying maxim-like phrases regarding the abuse of authority:

Toute l'Europe ne te regarde plus que comme l'esclave d'un Tyran qui t'a mise aux fers... mais je suis bien trompée si dans peu tu ne vois tomber ce Pygmée qui a marché à pas de Géant à l'Usurpation d'un Trône sur lequel il n'a aucun droit. Plus un homme acquiert d'autorité plus il en abuse, & l'abus que cet Usurpateur fait déjà de celle qu'il s'est donnée sur un peuple fier, volage & impatient, ne peut manquer de le renverser bien tôt de la place qu'il a perfidement envahi: *Qui habitat in caelis irvadebit & subsannabit, & adhuc pussillum, non erit.* (44, emphasis in original).¹¹

All of Europe now considers you the slave to a Tyrant who has put you in chains... but I am indeed mistaken if in a short time you do not see the fall of this Pygmy who has walked in Giant steps to the Usurpation of a Throne to which he has no right. The more a man acquires authority, the more he abuses it, & the abuse that this Usurper has already committed of the authority that he has taken over a proud, fickle, & impatient people cannot fail to reverse him soon from the place that he perfidiously invaded: *He that sitteth in the heavens shall laugh & shall have them in derision, & in just a little while, will be no more.* (44, emphasis in original)

This humorous critique of "William the Pygmy" functions as a general warning to monarchs who have misused their political clout, thereby playing on the threshold between satire and political theory. Switzerland's insistence that the Dutch have been "enslaved" by Tiny Will functions as a general warning against kings who have misused their political clout, who have crossed the line from monarchy into tyranny, or worse, into the realm of the despotic.¹²

¹¹ The Latin citation combines Psalms 2:4 and 36:10 from the Bible.

¹² The sixteenth-century religious wars produced a rich body of pamphlets that accuse the monarchy of tyranny in the aftermath of the St. Bartholomew's Day Massacre in 1572. The *Vindiciae Contra Tyrannos: or, concerning the legitimate power of a prince over the people, and of the people over a prince* (1579), for instance, charges the French crown with having degenerated into tyranny and contends that subjects have the right to resist a

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This ambiguity between monarch, tyrant, and despot occurs elsewhere in the *Pierre de touche politique* collection, although the distance between William III and Louis XIV is here blurred even further. Throughout *Le Festin de Guillemot* (1689) and *Le Couronnement de Guillemot et de Guillemette* (1689), Pasquin and Marforio mock the extravagant baroque coronation ceremony organized by the “tyrant” William of Orange, as well as the paintings he commissioned to commemorate his so-called heroism (*Le Couronnement* 14) in terms that recall Louis XIV’s own self-aggrandizing propaganda.¹³ In claiming that the English have fallen victim to a monarch who has “bankrupted” his nation’s treasury and infringed upon his subjects’ religious beliefs (34–35), the interlocutors warn against the concentration of power in the hand of the monarch and the corresponding weakening of parliamentary structures. As Pasquin and Marforio argue, the English—particularly the aristocrats—have been “put to sleep” by the usurper “Tiny Will”:

Pasquin: Toutes les Soupes dont [la Table] était couverte, ne consistaient qu’en une infinité de différents déguisements d’un fin *Jus de Pavot* artificieusement médicamenté, & très propre pour endormir les *Mulots*.

Marforio: Dis-les *Mylords*: car le proverbe est à présent changé, & au lieu de dire *Endormir le Mulot*, on dit *Endormir le Mylord*, pour exprimer qu’on fait ses affaires aux dépens du sot qui se laisse amuser. (*Le Festin* 26, emphasis in original)

king who disobeys the laws of God— arguments that would resurge in the second half of the seventeenth century after the Revocation of the Edict of Nantes in 1685. My dissertation focuses on anti-monarchical pamphlet literature from the late seventeenth century, but highlights the extent to which these works draw on tropes from previous generations of *libelles* and indeed increase their rhetorical force through the imitation of *lieux communs* deployed in preceding texts.

¹³ In *Coronations: Medieval and Early Modern Monarchic Ritual*, Bak acknowledges William III’s effective use of spectacle to strengthen his political authority: “Macaulay wrote ‘If pageantry is to be of any use in politics, it is of use as a means of striking the imagination of the multitude.’ The Stuarts never grasped this essential principle of modern politics, but their successor did: William III set out to dazzle the citizens of London with a magnificent and carefully planned progress in order to enhance his shaky claims to the throne” (225). For more on this topic, see Lois G. Schworer ‘The Glorious Revolution as Spectacle: A New Perspective’ in *England’s Rise to Greatness, 1660–1763* ed. Stephen B. Baxter (Berkeley, Los Angeles, London: University of California Press, 1983) 109–149; and ‘Propaganda in the Revolution of 1688–89’ *The American Historical Review* 82 (1977): 843–874.

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Pasquin: All the Soups covering [the Table], consisted only of an infinity of different disguises of a fine, artificially medicated *Poppy Juice*, very appropriate to put the *Fieldmice* to sleep.

Marforio: Call them *Mylords*: because the proverb is presently changed, & instead of saying *To put the Fieldmice to sleep*, one says *To put the Mylord to sleep*, to express that one does his business at the expense of the fool who lets himself be amused. (*Le Festin* 26, emphasis in original)

In these respects, the dialogues within *La Pierre de touche politique* warn against the total erosion of liberty within states governed by “arbitrary and supertyrannical” rulers in which “duped” subjects are “enslaved” to their tyrannical leaders (*Le Couronnement* 45).¹⁴

In the same way that the denunciation of Pope Innocent XI’s unilateral authority recalls similar critiques of Louis XIV’s brand of absolutism in other pamphlets from the period, the mockery of William of Orange’s despotic tendencies is particularly subversive in light of the intellectual climate of the *pasquinades*. As Melvin Richter has argued, the term “despotic monarchy” was coined to condemn Louis XIV’s arbitrary political policies and interference in the religious realm: “After the revocation of the Edict of Nantes, French Huguenots in Holland and England began to use the term *despotique* for the polemical purposes of comparing the absolutism of Louis XIV to that of the Turkish Grand Seigneur” (18).¹⁵ *Les*

¹⁴ *La Pierre de touche politique* dialogues differ, however from the works of sixteenth- and seventeenth-century political theorists, which separately analyze tyrannical, traditional, and despotic monarchies. For example, Jean Bodin separately treats tyrannical, royal, and despotic monarchies in his *Six Books of the Commonwealth* (1576). Although the semantic equivalence of tyranny and despotism in Le Noble’s political dialogues differs from Bodin’s treatment of despotism within the specific context of conquered territories, it remains that the *pasquinades* often consider the subtleties of different forms of government in the manner of political theory.

¹⁵ The semantic resonances of the word “despotic” have been well documented by historians. Initially deployed in France to criticize the perceived threat posed by the concentration of the crown’s political power at the time of the Fronde, the term “despotic” assumed an even more pejorative connotation by the final years of the seventeenth century, evoking a system once associated with the Turks in which subjects of an absolute monarch were rendered slaves to a despot through their dependence on the impulses of the self-interested monarch (Koebner 299; Smith 28–29). Koebner has argued that this criticism reached a high point during the late 1680s, the period during which Le Noble was drafting his *Pierre de touche politique* pamphlets: “Louis by the onslaught on the Palatinate had opened his most high-handed war in the winter 1688–89.

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Soupirs de la France Esclave, for one, is unequivocal in its condemnation of the state's undue meddling in religious affairs. After lamenting the bellicose French monarch's capacity to send his subjects to death on a battlefield, the author summarizes the nefarious effects of the "monster" of "Absolute Power" (10) in the following manner:

Toutes ces preuves font voir que la Puissance Despotique & Arbitraire du Gouvernement de France s'étend sans réserve & sur nos biens & sur nos vies. Je ne vois donc plus rien qui soit à couvert. Disons-nous qu'au moins la conscience & la Religion sont à Dieu & à nous? Point du tout... *Le Roi est maître non seulement de la vie & des biens, mais aussi de l'extérieur de la Religion: tellement qu'il n'est permis à personne de faire profession d'aucune Religion que de celle qu'il plaît au Roi.* (43–44, emphasis in original)

All of these proofs make it clear that the Despotic & Arbitrary Power of the French Government sprawls without reserve over our goods and our lives. I do not therefore see anything that is safe. Will we say that freedom of conscience and Religion exists between ourselves and God? Not at all... *The King is master over not only our life and goods, but also over the exterior manifestations of Religion: such that it is not permitted to anyone to profess any Religion other than the one that pleases the King.* (43–44, emphasis in original)

Unlike *Les Soupirs* and other political pamphlets circulating at the same historical moment in which Louis XIV's reckless ambition is unequivocally denounced,¹⁶ however, Eustache Le Noble's *pasquinades* once again

This war was certain to expose France to the enmity of all Europe; it was certain to jeopardize the economic recovery of the country, already made precarious by the exodus of so many Huguenots. Such national dangers were, it appeared, incurred only to satisfy the boundless personal ambition of the king" (297).

¹⁶ For further information on libels written against Louis XIV, see Van Malssen's seminal study *Louis XIV d'après les pamphlets répandus en Hollande* (A. Nizet & M. Bastard 1936) or Schillinger's more recent monograph *Les Pamphlétaires allemands et la France de Louis XIV* (Peter Lang 1999). Hans Bots's article "L'écho de la Révocation de l'Edit de Nantes dans les Provinces Unies à travers les gazettes et les pamphlets" analyzes in particular the pamphlets written in the aftermath of the Revocation of the Edict of Nantes. The collection *Espaces de la controverse au seuil des Lumières* (1680–1715), published in 2010, explores the polemical battles incited in the theological, political, literary, and scientific domains in Europe during the "crise de la conscience européenne." Clandestine

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straddle the line between support and criticism of the French absolute monarchy. In this respect, if one can argue that the critique of William III simply mobilizes a late seventeenth-century rhetorical trope to denounce the abuses of monarchical authority, the interest of Le Noble's particular brand of subversion stems from the double readability of his texts. By evoking the figure of a sovereign who considers the property of his subjects "[ses] Biens...propres" (*Le Couronnement* 41), who "bankrupts" his nation's "Religion" and "Riches" (34–35), and whose extravagant *divertissements* aim to "put to sleep" the aristocracy, the *Pierre de touche politique* pamphlets recall criticisms of Louis XIV's own arbitrary policies, from his mismanagement of the State's finances, to the revocation of the Edict of Nantes, to his excessive *fêtes* at Versailles. While the rhetorical force of Pasquin and Marforio's mockery of the English king's despotic qualities results from the paronymic relationship between William and his alleged political mantra ("*Iwil*") (33), the literary and political significance of the *pasquinades* as a whole derives from the complexity of their satirical system. Even as they denounce the French monarch's rivals, Le Noble's dialogues exploit the instability between the particular satirized object and the general satirical content, vacillating between surface-level ridicule and the deeper anti-monarchical undertones. Profiting from the fact that the king's immediate frame of reference were his own political vendettas, Le Noble was able to draw the royal censors' attention away from the salient denunciation of French absolutism implied in his critique of various late seventeenth-century political figures.

III. Prescriptive Politics: From the Denunciation of Absolutism to the Theorization of Republicanism:

In addition to condemning the abuses of absolutism, the *Pierre de touche politique* pamphlets also examine the viability of non-monarchical forms of political organizations in a subversive manner. Whereas the former type of critique manipulates the boundaries between satirized object and satirical content, the same mechanism is elsewhere applied to slightly different ends. Throughout *La Fable du Renard*, for instance, Louis XIV is consistently lauded as an ideal diplomatic protector, a "bridle" against the

publications and pamphlet literature were the focal point of a 2009 colloquium in Tours, France, the contributions of which were published under the title *Littérature de contestation: Pamphlets et polémiques du règne de Louis XIV aux Lumières*. My dissertation will consider in detail the fascinating complexity of the intertextual relationships between Eustache Le Noble's *pasquinades* and contemporary political pamphlets.

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territorial ambitions of William III (18). According to Switzerland, Holland has been enslaved to the absolute monarch Guillemot (30), an untenable situation that can only be remedied by purging itself of the poisonous “Orange juice” it had swallowed (32) and by forging an alliance with France (10, 13–15, 18, 21, 23, 36). In this way, the text seemingly reverses the attacks on Louis XIV’s ambitions for a “universal monarchy” and attempts to accuse other European sovereigns of that very aim (22).¹⁷

Yet the conversation shifts in a significant manner towards the end of this dialogue, with the general discussion of diplomacy turning towards a comparative analysis of monarchies and republics. After claiming that the French are both naturally predisposed and culturally conditioned to a form of submission that is incompatible within a republic (32–33),¹⁸ Switzerland maintains that Holland’s most serious political mistake was allowing French exiles into its borders:

Ainsi ces serpents que tu as retirés et réchauffés dans ton sein, ont été des fléaux aussi funestes à ta liberté, qu’ils ont été utiles au Prince d’Orange pour la consommation de ses pratiques ambitieuses. Et si tu pouvais lire à nue dans tous les replis du coeur de ces réfugiés, tu verrais qu’il n’y en a pas un seul qui ne désire avec une passion violente de voir ton État Républicain détruit, et le Prince d’Orange souverain absolu de tes Provinces. (33–34)

Thus these serpents that you have secluded and warmed in your bosom, have been scourges as fatal to your freedom as they were helpful to the Prince of Orange for the consummation of his ambitious practices. And if you could see into the deepest recesses of these refugees’ hearts, you would see that there is not one of them who does not desire with a violent passion to see your Republican State destroyed, and the Prince of Orange absolute sovereign of your Provinces. (33–34)

Given that a republic’s “first” and “unique” goal should be the preservation of its freedom at any cost (9), the only “cure” to Holland’s enslavement to “Roi Guillemot” is to reclaim its lost liberty by expelling

¹⁷ See Burnard’s “Les pamphlets contre la politique belliciste de Louis XIV” for a succinct analysis of pamphlets denouncing Louis XIV’s territorial ambitions.

¹⁸ The notion that the exiled French refugees were born with a “proposition naturelle à l’État Monarchique” (natural inclination for the Monarchical State) (33) is also related to other passages which draw on the Aristotelian notion, later developed by Bodin, that the form of government corresponds to a country’s natural geography (8–9).

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its “king” (45–46).¹⁹ The use of a medical lexicon in these passages is significant (*poison, remède, émétique, vomitif, intestins, médecin, purger, humeurs*) (32), as it both underscores the severity of the disease (enslavement to an absolute monarch) as well as the urgent need for its remedy (purging the monarch).

In this respect, the interpolated fable allegorizing William’s ruse of the Dutch only heightens the subversive nature of this pamphlet. Although it conceals the attack within a second narrative layer, the fact that Switzerland gives the “key” to unlock the fable’s meaning to Holland before its told—(“tu as la clef de cette Fable avant que je te la dise”) (you have the key to this Fable before I tell it to you) (37)—encourages the reader to appreciate the parallels between the presentation of William as “renard rusé” and similar representations of Louis XIV as “renard rusé” in interpolated fables in other pamphlets from the same period.²⁰ More significantly, the inscription of the fable frames the need for revolt as a moral and even religious imperative, as seen in the following citation:

Ne sais-tu pas le vieux proverbe, *Aide-toi & Dieu t’aidera*: Est-il possible qu’entre tant de bons Républicains qui gémissent en secret de l’état auquel ils te voient réduit, pas un seul n’ait le courage d’animer les autres à rompre d’indignes liens. Ah brutes Brebis, esclaves d’un Renard, République réduite à la seule qualité de Trésorière de Guillemot, renvoie les Léopards dans leurs tanières, rappelles tes Dogues, & qu’une fois ils montrent les dents à ce ruse Renard. Laisse-le parmi ses Léopards démêler sa fusée, & rends-toi cette liberté si précieuse pour laquelle tu as répandu tant de sang, consommé tant d’armées, & souffert tant de travaux. (45, emphasis in original)

Do you not know the old proverb, *Help thyself & God will help thee*: Is it possible that among so many good Republicans who secretly lament the state to which they see you reduced, not one has the courage to motivate others to break unworthy ties. Oh crude Sheep, slaves of a Fox, Re-

¹⁹ In a similar fashion, critics of Louis XIV’s absolutism insisted on the fact that the French monarchy was elective in order to justify the people’s right to depose the king. See *Les Soupirs de la France esclave*, especially the Sixth Memoir (79–94): “Il est indubitable que ceux qui pouvoir d’élire, ont aussi celui de déposer” (It is irrefutable that those who have the power to elect also have the power to depose) (84).

²⁰ See especially the anonymous publication *L’Esprit de la France et les maximes de Louis XIV découvertes à l’Europe* (Cologne: Pierre Marteau, 1688).

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public reduced to the sole occupation of Tiny Willy's Treasurer, send back the Leopards to their dens, bring back your Mastiffs, and for once may they show their teeth to this cunning Fox. Leave him among his Leopards to clear up his business, & take back this precious freedom for which you have shed so much blood, consumed so many armies, & suffered so much hardship. (45, emphasis in original)

In positing an alternative to monarchy in the form of a lesson, this *pasquinade* indeed seems to shift from the satirical mode to a prescriptive call to arms—a rhetorical move signaled within the text not only by the accumulation of imperatives (*renvoie, rappelles, rends-toi*), but also by Holland's "shocked" reaction to the moral: "Quoique ton discours m'ait un peu choquée, je ferai néanmoins de sérieuses réflexions sur tout ce que tu m'as dit" (Although your speech shocked me a bit, I will nevertheless reflect seriously about everything that you told me) (45–46). If the majority of the satire in *La Pierre de touche politique* functions due to the generalizability of the criticism of particular political leaders, it is through the glorification of republicanism that the texts are most strikingly transgressive. What is more, in engendering both shock and "serious reflections," Le Noble's *pasquinades* point to late seventeenth-century pamphlet literature's significance as discursive spaces for critical inquiry—spaces in which readers are invited, and indeed encouraged, to dialogue with the text to move beyond "la superficie des choses" to arrive at "le fond essentiel" (*La Fable* 33).

IV. Conclusion(s): The Poetics and the Politics of Dissimulation under Louis XIV

Despite its inherent instability, the satirical mode is often described through the use of an archery lexicon: a given text "takes aim" at a given "target" by ridiculing the satirized object. According to this logic, late seventeenth-century Dutch and English pamphleteers "targeted" Louis XIV's despotic aspirations for a universal monarchy, a charge against which the French crown retaliated by launching its own publicity war denouncing the tyranny of his political enemies. If this interpretation is conceptually useful, it masks the ways in which satire can operate in a more elastic manner, with the ridicule figuratively "ricocheting" between and among several disparate targets. Indeed, as we have seen through our analysis of Eustache Le Noble's *La Pierre de touche politique*, it is perhaps this complexity that lends the satirical mode to evasively dodge the

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bullet of censorship. Unlike other examples of political pamphlets circulating at the turn of the eighteenth century, the *pasquinades* manipulate the divergent frames of reference of their readers, appealing effectively to two ideologically opposed audiences: the royal censors, the *pasquinade*'s immediate readers, and the general reading public.²¹ As Pasquin suggests in *Le Festin de Guillemot* (1689), the question of point-of-view is paramount: "Par-là tu connaîtras facilement qu'il est bien aisé de se tromper, & de prendre des vessies pour des lanternes lorsqu'on a la vue mauvaise, & qu'on se sert de Lunettes fausses" (By this you will easily understand that is very easy to make mistakes, & to get the wool pulled over one's eyes, when one has poor vision & uses false Glasses)(43–44). By exploiting precisely the monarchy's "poor sight" and "false glasses," Le Noble managed to publish texts that denounce absolutism and laud the emancipatory potential of republics. It is perhaps this utility that Le Noble claims his texts will hold for "les Historiens futurs" in the preface to *Le Cibisme*.

In addition to their political and historical importance as examples of early modern propaganda and proto-journalistic rapportages, however, the *pasquinades*' literary features are equally critical. Despite their discursive complexity, we have seen that the pamphlets often announce the narrative game that they are playing, inscribing the key to their political significance into the fabric of the text. In the same way that the aforementioned evocation of "skewed vision" and "surface-level" reading renders the dialogues' subversive contents more easily decipherable, these metaleptic moments throughout the *Pierre de touche politique* collection clarify their textual construction as they contribute to their literary complexity. Holland's response to Switzerland's wisdom in *La Fable du Renard* is again

²¹ Further research is needed to hypothesize about the precise readers of the *pasquinades*. As previously mentioned, Klaitis insists upon the "wide readership" of Le Noble's pamphlets (146), but their publication history complicates these questions of circulation. Interestingly, there are several intratextual references to the translation and censorship of the *Pierre de touche politique* dialogues. In *La Fable du renard*, for instance, Holland states: "Si je savais qui est l'impertinent qui s'amuse à me traiter de la sorte, je m'en plaindrais à mon Statoûder, qui par Arrêt de son Parlement le ferait pilorier comme on a fait le Chapelain de l'Evêque de Durham pour avoir traduit en Anglais cette misérable pièce intitulé le Couronnement de Guillemot, où le Sermon du saint homme & bon Apôtre le Docteur Burnet est si sottement tourné en ridicule" (If I knew the impertinent one who amuses himself by treating me this way, I would complain about it to my Stadtholder, who by Arrest of his Parlement would have it pilloried like one did the Bishop of Durham's Chaplain for having translated into English this pathetic piece entitled the Coronation of Tiny Will, where the Sermon of the saintly man and good Apostle the Doctor Burnet is so foolishly derided) (42, emphasis added). Likewise, the exchange between Marforio and Pasquin at the close of *Le Festin de Guillemot* references the censorship of the *pasquinades*.

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revelatory. At the close of the pamphlet, Holland summarizes the consequence of his dialogue with Switzerland in terms that recapitulate the general interest of the dialogic function in the pasquinades: “Tu m’ouvres les yeux sur des choses auxquelles je n’aurais jamais pensé, et cependant je m’aperçois bien de la vérité de ton raisonnement” (You are opening my eyes to things about which I never would have thought, and yet I clearly perceive the truth in your reasoning)(34–35). Indeed, the relevance of the *Pierre de touche politique* pamphlets at the dawn of the French Enlightenment resides in this incessant vacillation between interlocutor and reader, between historical fact and authorial invention, and between monarchical praise and monarchical denunciation. Even as they playfully “banter” about current events (*La Bibliothèque* 3), *The Political Touchstone* pamphlets theorize republicanism and encourage readers to question blind submission to authority, employing an early enlightenment-style reader manipulation that fosters critical inquiry. Rather than dismissing these texts as propaganda spreading “lies” to a passive, gullible audience, I would like to suggest they be considered as active in constructing new frameworks for debates (Onnekink 150).²² In addition to “shocking” readers, the *Pierre de touche politique* dialogues analyze the distinctions between monarchy and despotism, between traditional and “absolute monarchies, and between monarchies and republics. They invite the reader into a discursive space of critical inquiry even as they attempt to construct “new interpretative frameworks” for that space. They function collectively as ekphrastic machines, transporting readers into the chaos of the past and resurrecting history before our own eyes. Most importantly, they show us that Enlightenment, cognitive or cultural, does not emerge from a vacuum, but surfaces slowly as a product of dialogic exchange. Le Noble’s *pasquinades* merit further consideration by contemporary scholars precisely because, as Pasquin puts it, whoever dislikes these “harmless divertissements” is not a “Français,” but a “franc-sot” (Le Festin 43–44).

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²² Here, Onnekink draws upon Sheryl Tuttle Ross’s analysis of propaganda as “epistemically defective,” in that its message cannot be authoritatively verified or refuted, in order to comment upon the early modern Dutch pamphlet tradition (150). As reflected in my Works Cited, there is a great deal of recent historical scholarship on the role of pamphlets in spreading political and religious heterodoxy in France and in a larger European context.

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La Motte, Antoine Houdar de. *Les Originaux ou L'Italien*. Édition établie par Francis B. Assaf. Tübingen: Narr Verlag, 2012. ISBN 978-3-8233-6717-8. Pp. 76.

La Motte is best remembered today for his role in the second round of the Quarrel of the Ancients and the Moderns. But he was also a prolific and gifted playwright who tried his hand at virtually every dramatic and operatic genre, as well as dramatic theory. *Les Originaux*, his first very work for the stage, composed at age 21, is a very entertaining comedy that gives us glimpses of his future potential. In addition, this play, destined for the Italian troupe, provides a fairly typical example of the type of comic entertainment they were providing Parisian audiences in the final decades of the century. It also shows how far from the original *commedia dell'arte* model this company had moved by 1693: only about one-third of the scenes are improvisations (in Italian), while the vast majority of the play consists of written-out scenes in French. At the same time, the comedy incorporates episodes of singing and dancing, sometimes combined with machine effects.

Arguably the comedy's most original feature is the abundance of dramatic and musical satire. Some of the allusions constitute a celebration of the great masters of the preceding generation, especially Molière, who is repeatedly named and imitated. One surprising touch is that the heroine, Colombine, not only displays a passion for drama and claims Molière as her favorite author, but also composes comedies and displays real ability. Although she is not a *bas-bleu* and admits that she is exaggerating her passion for wit in order to discourage her father in his attempts to marry her off, she may well signal La Motte's appreciation for the women writers of his day. At the same time, La Motte's spokespersons in the play, who, startlingly, include Colombine's tyrannical father, criticize both the lack of talent on the part of current playwrights and the lack of interest from audience members, who either spend their time in the theater flirting with the opposite sex or spend long periods away fighting in the war. References to opera focus on the poor quality of the libretti and on the sameness of the recent works—a point Assaf underscores by listing the new operas produced in the three-year period preceding La Motte's comedy. Although La Motte feels that composers and poets working in the decade following the deaths of Lully and Quinault are sticking too closely to the consecrated models, that does not stop him from quoting directly from two of those masters' operas.

Assaf provides a wealth of useful information that helps to explain the historical and cultural context, while identifying many of the numerous

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literary and musical allusions and explaining their pertinence. However, there are some that he fails to identify. These include the direct quoting of the hymn to liberty from Lully and Quinault's *Isis* (III.5) at the start of the comedy's final *divertissement*, and there are interesting structural and thematic parallels between the two works. The expression "la folle enchère" (III.12) must have been intended as a reference to the comedy by Mme Ulrich and Dancourt, performed just three years earlier. And the series of theatrical allusions in I.4 needs elucidation. As Lancaster noted, the recently deceased actor and playwright was probably Raymond Poisson, and the authors of two comedies dealing with the Phaëton myth were Boursault and Palaprat. I suggest that the playwright who, after a series of tragedies set in Rome, chose a Byzantine subject is Campistron. The reference to a "prodigue Boisset" in the passage from Colombine's comedy that she reads aloud presumably was a topical reference, as well. If, as Assaf suggests, Colombine's compositional activity was meant to refer to Mme de Villedieu, who had died ten years earlier but whose novels still retained their popularity, this could conceivably allude to her lover, Antoine de Boësset de Villedieu (whose name she would adopt, though they were never married).

The well-researched introduction combines relevant background information (about the author, the history of *commedia dell'arte* companies in France, the makeup of the Italian troupe in 1693, the play's initial reception) with a detailed, scene-by-scene analysis of the play. It could have been expanded to relate this dramatic debut to La Motte's dramatic career as a whole. *Les Originaux* is in many respects a first draft of his *Moderne* position, especially given the praise of liberty, originality, and preference for contemporary writers and taste.

The text, presented in original spelling, is carefully presented and annotated. Typos are rare, but three of them risk confusing the reader: a speech attributed to a wrong character (II.5), a faulty listing of characters in a scene heading (III.5), and a stage direction that is centered and printed in all capital letters (III.9). The bibliography is short but helpful, and the illustrations, showing the frontispieces and some of the original music, are a delight.

Francis Assaf is to be commended for reintroducing this charming and historically significant comedy to modern readers. The volume definitely belongs in every university library.

Perry Gethner, Oklahoma State University

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Delehanty, Ann T. *Literary Knowing in Neoclassical France: From Poetics to Aesthetics*. Lewisburg, PA: Bucknell University Press, 2013. Pp. ix + 209. \$80.

The great merit of Delehanty's book is to challenge a pervasive myth responsible for the *grand siècle's* monolithic isolation from the general flow of French cultural history: the notion of the era's near universal subscription to *la doctrine classique*. Whether articulated in terms of neo-Aristotelian unities, the system of *bienséances*, or the rigid separation of "higher" and "lower" genres, the French seventeenth century's poetic output and the critical apparatus deployed to describe and evaluate it are said to have been the subject of fixed rational rules grounded in the putatively objective properties of the poetic work of art. It sufficed to set a given work alongside the timeless archetypes of the ancient past and apply the infallible laws those archetypes teach in order to determine its character and worth. True, especially dating from the *querelle des anciens et des modernes* touched off by Perrault's "Siècle de Louis le Grand" of 1687, the discourse of classical rules was increasingly confronted by the emergent, sentiment-based discourse of taste: an enigmatic organ of appreciation possessed of an ineffable *je ne sais quoi* impervious to rational legislation. The rise of taste is nonetheless said to have marked the beginning of the end of classical doctrine, ushering in a defiantly modern, unapologetically *anti-classical* culture whose triumph coincides with the transition to the *siècle des Lumières*. Where, then, *les classiques* asserted the primacy of a rational poetics of objective rules, enlightened *modernes* explored an aesthetics rooted in private feeling that licensed the eighteenth-century rejection of eternal verities in favor of the contingencies of empirical experience.

Delehanty opens her counter-narrative by showing how the discourse of feeling was decisively at work at the very moment classical culture reached its apogee with the inauguration of Louis XIV's personal reign in 1661. As she notes in her introduction, on "mimesis and transcendence" in neoclassical France, the noontime of the poetics of rules is largely confined to the decades from 1630 to 1660, when the order of the day was perfection of the dramatic and especially tragic *vraisemblance* required to achieve a fully convincing imitation of affecting human action. So long as poets focused on the representational technologies needed to create the emotional impact associated with a well-wrought tragic plot, the discourse of rules held sway. However, even at this stage the rules aimed not simply to convince but above all to *please*; and the pleasure involved was consciously emotional—a pleasure, moreover, that, as the tragedies of Pierre

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Corneille in particular demonstrate, was readily described as *sublime*. As Delehanty remarks, the emphasis on mimesis, creating a persuasive representation of human action, inevitably constrained dramatic poetry's reach: "Tragedies present the human condition, allow us to see ourselves, and move us to reform ourselves, if necessary. They do not go beyond the limits of our world or our understanding" (16). Nevertheless, especially in the *vraisemblance extraordinaire* that Corneille claimed for his own productions, poetic mimesis could and did strain the confines of ordinary experience by inducing readers and spectators to swallow feats of self-sacrificial nobility they would have choked on in the natural course of things.

It is, though, only in the years following Louis XIV's seizure of personal power that the ersatz transcendence in which Corneille specialized became a dominant public theme. As Delehanty puts it, "In the late 1660s and early 1670s, the aspirations for the literary work changed significantly. No longer was the goal of the literary work only to show us the human condition, but also it aspired to something beyond that condition. Literary criticism took a turn toward the transcendental realm" (18). In making this turn, poets and their critics laid claim to a mode of knowing as transcendental as poets' newfound aspirations. Where the rule-based poetics of mimesis set limits roughly coincident with those of ordinary experience, the self-conscious transcendentalisms of the nascent Ludovican age pushed beyond; and the vehicle of transcendence was the *je ne sais quoi* of aesthetic feeling.

The most obvious signal of this change is the publication of Boileau's 1674 translation of Longinus's *On the Sublime*. In the perspective of the traditional interpretation of *la doctrine classique*, this presents an apparent paradox. For, on the basis of the simultaneous publication of *L'Art poétique*, Boileau is conventionally identified as the very embodiment of the theory of classical rules. The turning point in Delehanty's counter-narrative is accordingly chapter 3, "Boileau and the Sublime," in which she not only argues for the emergent role of transcendence in *L'Art poétique* itself but goes on to discuss Boileau's increasing abandonment of a poetics of rules throughout the rest of his career, culminating in his last three *Réflexions*, where analysis of the objective properties of literary works yields to talk about the effects the sublime produces on readers in the domain of transcendent feeling.

What gives Delehanty's ground-breaking reading of Boileau still greater weight is the way she anchors that poet's evolving transcendentalist speculations in the antecedent writings of Pascal and Bouhours. Pascal

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supplies at once the warrant and model for the story the book tells. As Delehanty argues in chapter 1, Pascal captures not only the underlying conflict between the human condition on which literary mimesis fastens and the transcendence of God but also the key appeal to inchoate feeling, the famous Pascalian “heart,” as the one true means of achieving knowledge of the absolute. As Delehanty subtly demonstrates, Pascal’s model poses problems. If the chief organ of literary knowing is the heart, enabling poets and readers to escape the confines of mere mimetic reason in the way Pascal urges it does in our relation to the divine, then literature arrogates creative powers reserved for God alone. Moreover, as Pascal sees it, the only means of provoking the conversion of flesh-bound creatures like us is the kind of direct, personal teaching modeled by Jesus Christ in the gospels and provided by private reading of scripture conceived as the living word of God. Whence, in chapter 2, Delehanty’s analysis of Bouhours’s efforts to thread the needle of “divine and human creation” in order to grant the latter the power of adducing sacred truths without falling into the sacrilege of assigning human beings a divinity they cannot possess. What Boileau finds in the sublime, then, is a creative power authenticated precisely by what Longinus had already called the more than merely human origin for which the sublime serves as the medium. In the encounter with the sublime we discover both truths that transcend ordinary human experience and our own equally transcendent power to do so. The *je ne sais quoi* of sublime feeling thereby enables us to have our cake and eat it, too, in that what sublime poets create and readers feel is our own only insofar as we become vehicles of the transcendence sublimity presents.

In a sense, Delehanty’s story reaches its high point with Boileau: the rest reads like a tale of inevitable decline. With chapter 4, on Rapin, the rigorous transcendence Pascal, Bouhours, and Boileau aim for fades into the sentimentality of moral emotion. What had given access, however imperfectly, to knowledge of the divine becomes a means of teaching virtue; and while virtue makes us better beings, it does not change our natures as carnal inhabitants of the world of lowly mimesis. Rapin’s disenchanting emphasis on virtue grows still more limiting in his English successor, Dennis, the subject of chapter 5. For though Dennis seeks to ground literary experience in scriptural religion, he can only do so on the basis of a theory of mind that reduces both literature and scripture to an empty occasion for the manifestation of mental powers that have, in the end, nothing to do with either. A distinctively literary mode of knowing ceases to be literary at all, opening the way for the aesthetic theories of Du Bos, where, as Delehanty argues in chapter 6, the focus on the psychology of human

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emotion drives out not only detailed analysis of the works of art that prompt it but transcendence as well.

In one sense, Delehanty's version of the shift from classical poetics to Enlightenment aesthetics brings us back to what has always seemed its retrospective moment of inception, namely the emergence of eighteenth-century aesthetics seen as at once a triumph and consequence of Enlightenment secularity. To the absolutism of classical rules enlightened moderns oppose the relativisms of human experience; and a prime articulation of this contrast is the doctrine of the aesthetic and the primacy it awards pure private feeling. However, by showing both how deeply the antecedents of Enlightenment aesthetics reach back into the neoclassical age and how the proto-aesthetics of the sublime are linked to a thirst for transcendence Pascal's and Boileau's early eighteenth-century descendants reject, Delehanty enables us to begin to think about the underlying historical dialectic by which, in the aesthetic writings of Kant and the Romantics if not of Burke and Hume, transcendence makes a comeback. What I most heartily recommend in the book is thus the renewed sense of dynamism it brings both to the *grand siècle* and to its contribution to the larger patterns of French and more broadly European intellectual and artistic culture.

Christopher Braider, University of Colorado, Boulder

McLeod, Jane. *Licensing Loyalty: Printers, Patrons, and the State in Early Modern France*. University Park, PA: Pennsylvania State UP, 2011. ISBN 978-0-271-03768-4. Pp. 312. \$74.95

Jane McLeod's *Licensing Loyalty* is a clearly written and cogently argued study of state-media relations in the *ancien régime*. Tracing the evolution of the French state's regulation of the printing industry from 1667 through the Revolution, McLeod examines the "mutually beneficial" relationship existing between royal authorities and provincial printers through a presentation of case studies and archival data (8, 123). Whereas previous scholars have analyzed printers as operating outside of and in opposition to the state, McLeod convincingly demonstrates their agency in lobbying government officials for favorable policies. In their dealings with royal officials, printers adopted five distinct but overlapping identities: as university men, as clients engaged in patronage networks, as businessmen,

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as guildsmen, and as loyal officers of the king. The latter role constitutes the central focus of the book (35), as McLeod meticulously investigates the ways in which printers self-fashioned an identity as “pillars of monarchy” and thereby positioned themselves as loyal subjects of the crown as they vied for the limited number of printing licenses permitted in the kingdom. Far from advocating for freedom of the press, McLeod maintains that the printers themselves—initially in Paris but ultimately throughout the countryside—clamored for increased regulation of their industry by insisting upon the dangers presented by those who would seek profit from the publication of seditious works. While provincial printers favored regulation in order to reduce competition, to protect the dignity of their art, and to solidify their own wealth, royal officials considered the use of licenses, quotas, and permissions as a means to limit the subversive potential of the printed word in the aftermath of the Fronde and the rise of religious heterodoxy. Beginning with the 1667 order in council requiring a license to print in provincial towns, the French government expanded its regulation of the book trade throughout the eighteenth century, creating a *Bureau de la Librairie* with its own inspectors and enhancing the role of the chancellor, lieutenants of police, and *intendants* in enforcing the quotas that limited the number of printers in France. As McLeod argues at several junctures, the interaction between the provincial press and the French crown was the site of endless lobbying and bargaining, and in highlighting the state’s struggle to license loyalty, McLeod demonstrates that absolutism was “negotiated rather than imposed” (8).

The first comprehensive evaluation of the French state’s licensing policy, McLeod’s study shifts the field of the history of the book in two important ways. First, *Licensing Loyalty* centers on the network of printers in the French provinces, rather than emphasizing the book trade in Paris or the importation of forbidden books from abroad. In this respect, McLeod both challenges and complements work by Henri-Jean Martin, Robert Darnton, and others who have overlooked the complications arising from the government’s efforts to establish its authority throughout French territory. Second, McLeod diverts attention from the clandestine “literary underground” and sheds light instead on the authorized, state-sanctioned press. By analyzing the ways in which provincial printers alternately cooperated with *and* subverted royal officials, McLeod’s work paints a more complete picture of the public sphere in early modern France. In this regard, one wonders why McLeod waits until Chapter 7 to examine the reality “Behind the Rhetoric”—the extent to which licensed printers were responsible for the production and distribution of clandestine texts. Characterizing the printers’ allegiance to the crown as a “grudging and

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contingent loyalty” in the study’s final pages (210), McLeod ultimately qualifies her own assessment of provincial printers as “pillars of monarchy” in a pretty significant manner. The fact that France’s own elite printing houses disseminated texts previously believed to have originated from Grub Street merits fuller consideration, and McLeod could have integrated this material throughout the study to add further nuance to one of her book’s central arguments.

McLeod’s social and political history evokes the fascinating characters populating the world of book production in early modern France, emphasizing the material concerns driving their motivations and the complexity of their interactions with royal officials. Well-researched and written with verve, *Licensing Loyalty* is a valuable contribution to the history of the book, to the study of state-media relations, and to the history of French administration.

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Krüger, Annika Charlotte. *Lecture sartrienne de Racine: Visions existentielles de l'homme tragique*. Tübingen: Narr Verlag, 2011. ISBN: 978-3-8233-6620-1. Pp. 275. 74€

In the introduction to *Lecture sartrienne de Racine*, Krüger indicates that her goal is to juxtapose Sartre’s and Racine’s “conceptions de l’homme et de la condition humaine” as well as “leurs stratagèmes dramaturgico-psychologiques” (11), in order to demonstrate the modernity of Racine. More concretely, this comparatist study has two objectives. First, Krüger demonstrates the similarities between Sartre’s ideas and those emanating from Racine’s circle, primarily Pierre Nicole and Pascal. Second, the author traces in great detail the manifestation of these ideas in Racine’s *Britannicus*, *Bajazet*, and *Andromaque*. The ideas in question come primarily from several of Sartre’s philosophical texts (above all, *L’Être et le néant*) and from two of his plays, *Huis clos* and *Les Mouches*. Major points of contact between Sartre and Racine include the importance of the other/*autrui* for both, the close tie between Racinian *amour-propre* and Sartrian *mauvaise foi*, and the proclivity that both demonstrate for closed spaces in their plays. She works through these ideas with great care and perseverance. The notion of the *regard* is extremely important for both, and Krüger discusses numerous variations: “le regard d’autrui,” “le

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regard supérieur” (for example Amurat in *Bajazet* and Agrippine in *Britannicus*), and “le regard regardé.” Other subjects include role-playing, hatred of the other turned against the self, the urge to possess the other, and the effect of death on how one is judged. As my listing indicates, there is considerable breadth in subject matter.

While the author presents careful, thoughtful work, and shows great promise as a future scholar, the *Lecture sartrienne de Racine* exemplifies why a dissertation should not be published without revision. Many dissertations have been turned into books, but in order for the gap between the two to be bridged, certain important adjustments need to be made. There are four areas in this study where the absence of such modifications is problematic. The first concerns the audience for the book. Since a dissertation is above all a demonstration of one’s intellectual accomplishments, thought is given to impressing the public with one’s erudition, rather than to drawing in and engaging the reader. This 252-page book contains 1,118 footnotes and literally hundreds of quotes from Racine’s plays. It is virtually impossible to read a paragraph without the flow of the argument being repeatedly interrupted by footnotes and quotes. The second dissertation-like feature, while not as off-putting for the reader, instead compromises the value of the study as a whole: discussion is limited to only a few texts by each author. Krüger examines only three of Racine’s twelve plays and only two of Sartre’s eleven. Similar limitations are placed on Sartre’s philosophical texts. Such a strategy makes perfect sense for a dissertation, but a book that contains only two tiny mentions of *Phèdre* should not be entitled *Lecture sartrienne de Racine*. It is never made clear whether the ideas expressed would function equally well in discussions of other plays by both playwrights. The author makes two half-hearted attempts to justify her choices among Racine’s plays, but one does not apply well to *Andromaque* (the centrality of the struggle for freedom [21]) and the other—the conception of love—is in no way limited to *Britannicus*, *Bajazet*, and *Andromaque*. Third, there is a decided tendency to include tangential work, so that we find all of Pascal’s mentions of flies; a lengthy and ill-fitting examination of the baroque that includes Dionysius, melancholy, the camp, and cross-dressing; and an exposition of Sartre, Calderón, and Pirandello that excludes Racine entirely. Chapter IV, in particular, reads like a grab bag of tangentially related material. The fourth problem with the book is its structure. As is typical of dissertations, the first chapter deals with the scholarly and theoretical background, but no concrete reference is made to Racine’s theater until page 100, and none to Sartre’s theater until page 129. All four of these areas should have been addressed before publishing this

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dissertation as a book, and all four make the book less engaging for the reader.

I would like to emphasize that whatever problems there are here, Annika Krüger shows enormous promise as a scholar. The careful manipulation of detail in conjunction with wide-ranging abstract thought is impressive. The patient intelligence and care that went into producing this study are evident on every page. In conclusion, this is a careful study by a young scholar who shows much promise for the future, but the book should have been reworked before publication.

Nina Ekstein, Trinity University

Racevskis, Roland. *Tragic Passages: Jean Racine's Art of the Threshold*. Lewisburg, PA: Bucknell University Press, 2008. ISBN 978-0-8387-5684-3. Pp. 221. \$47.50.

Racevskis's excitingly fresh interpretation of Racine's secular tragedies focuses on their "liminary esthetics"—that is, their exploration of "identity in suspension. . . . the human predicament of being caught in between states of being" (15). Drawing insights from Derrida, Nietzsche, and especially Heidegger, the author identifies a "poetics of the threshold" in Racine's plays and convincingly argues that the tragedies' distinctive quality lies in their illumination of the psychological anguish of characters self-consciously poised between past and future, action and inaction, subjection and sovereignty, life and death.

The book's nine short chapters analyze Racine's nine secular tragedies from *La Thébaïde* to *Phèdre*, examining their dramatization of characters poised at the thresholds of power, love, and existence itself. These thought-provoking readings exemplify Racevskis's call for a flexible approach to Racine's work that recognizes each play's singularity while exploring their shared engagement with the problem of liminality. Among the book's rich and varied discussions, Chapter 3's exploration of "temporal construction" in *Andromaque* is one of the stand-outs. Here, Racevskis breaks from traditional interpretations emphasizing the way characters are haunted by the past and shifts his focus, subtly but crucially, to how they express the "paltriness of the present" (81) and the "radical ambiguity of the future" (90). In addition to teasing out *Andromaque's*

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complex temporal structure, this reading brilliantly analyzes how the play imparts feelings of terrifying uncertainty to its spectators. Indeed, throughout the book, Racevskis makes the case that “in-betweenness” not only serves as a major fictional theme but also generates the plays’ emotional effect on audiences. For example, he usefully compares *La Thébaïde* with *Rodogune* to illustrate, by way of contrast with Corneille’s depiction of power’s dangers, how Racine derives terror from its revelation of the throne as an unresolved void. Other readings elegantly synthesize analyses of Racine’s poetic language with attention to the plays’ inscription of dramatic space, time, and movement; this is especially true for the chapters devoted to *Britannicus* and *Bérénice*, which demonstrate how the idea of the threshold permeates all aspects of Racine’s dramaturgy up to and including set design.

Racevskis’s stated ambition in tackling all of Racine’s tragedies in this streamlined book is to articulate a new basis for understanding the coherence of the playwright’s work. While the book accomplishes this goal, one drawback to its comprehensiveness is that it sometimes leaves the reader wanting more on a particular play. For example, Chapter 4’s skillful reading of Néron’s court in *Britannicus* as a Foucauldian panopticon concludes with a tantalizing gesture to the thresholds occupied by an excluded Britannicus and imprisoned Junie (103), leaving the reader eager to know how Racevskis would interpret the play’s expression of these characters’ suspended states of being. In other respects, the completist approach is a strength. By proceeding chronologically through the tragedies, Racevskis succeeds in demonstrating the evolution of Racine’s liminary aesthetics throughout his career. The thresholds structuring earlier plays often delimit a space of worldly power. By the later tragedies (*Mithridate*, *Iphigénie*, and *Phèdre*), the characters’ articulation of their suspended state points toward the “ontological threshold” between existence and non-existence. In these chapters, the book also returns to a Heideggerian interrogation of poetic language, as when Chapter 9 considers *Phèdre*’s sustained examination of language’s failure to communicate innermost truths. The book concludes with a brief analysis of the resolution of the liminary aesthetic in sacred tragedies *Esther* and *Athalie*, where ambivalence dissolves under the certainty provided by an omnipotent Judeo-Christian god. This coda effectively throws into relief the secular plays’ reliance on the aesthetic of the threshold, which, Racevskis argues, is especially compelling for today’s audiences who are grappling with the biological and ecological limits of existence.

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Precisely by setting aside well-worn, more narrowly historical concerns for Racine's relationship to Jansenist theology or the development of French national consciousness, *Tragic Passages* succeeds in articulating the play's relevance for modern audiences and opens new lines of inquiry without foreclosing the ambiguity of the plays' meanings. Very occasionally, the desire to liberate the plays from narrow historicism goes a little too far. For example, I wonder whether "self-actualization" is really the best term to designate the state to which Racine's characters aspire, loaded as it is with the particular assumptions of twentieth-century American psychology. Yet such a minor anachronism is a small price to pay for *Tragic Passages*' refreshing point of view on Racine's tragic *œuvre*. Throughout the book's pages, Racevskis articulates theoretically sophisticated readings with such lucidity that they could be employed in many undergraduate classrooms. This is no small advantage for a book that aims and succeeds at offering richly insightful new ways to appreciate Racine's works in our era.

Ellen R. Welch, University of North Carolina at Chapel Hill

Woshinsky, Barbara R. *Imagining Women's Conventual Spaces in France, 1600-1800. The Cloister Disclosed. Great Britain: Ashgate Publishing Limited, 2010. ISBN 978-0-75466754-4. Pp. 344. \$119.95.*

Barbara Woshinsky has authored a thoroughly researched and fascinating study of how early-modern conventual spaces figure in contemporary culture and literature. While other scholars have studied the convents themselves or the literature their communities produce, Woshinsky instead examines works that reference enclosure but were written by those who live outside convent walls. Her objective is "to illuminate the unique place the convent occupies in the early modern imaginary, in the context of space, gender and power" (6), and she fulfills this objective through an analysis of a broad spectrum of both canonical and rare literary works published in France between 1600 and 1800. At the same time, her study is truly intermural in its approach to chronology and geography with references to Michel de Certeau (13, 24), the Shinto religion (33), Sue Monk Kidd (84), Humpty Dumpty (243), Norman Rush (245), Jane Austen (247), Nathalie Sarraute (257), Typhoid Mary (277) and Jean-Philippe Rameau (295), among others.

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The metonymic readings that serve as a framework for the book's organization render the latter somewhat forced in places, but this attests to the complexity of the subject matter and its theoretical underpinnings. In the first chapter, Woshinsky focuses on the allegorical images of the body in Counter-Reformation writings and its imprecise relationships to gender and the soul. (For some reason, this chapter has a decidedly different feel from those that follow, as though it were not part of the same thesis.) In the second, she addresses Jean-Pierre Camus's conflicted attitude toward the female body and the sensuality associated with it that leads him to advocate for its enclosure in his stories. Following these initial chapters devoted to religious writings that feature metonymic and allegorical readings of the female body, Woshinsky guides us ever deeper into the convents themselves, beginning with more secular and feminocentric representations of thresholds (Chapter 3), parlors (Chapter 4), cells (Chapters 5 and 6) and, finally, tombs (appropriately, Chapter 7). This well-written analysis weaves in and out of convent grilles, gates, corridors, chapels, and cells and demonstrates that the convent of early-modern France, like the female body and its coverings (veils, gowns, bed sheets) that it contained, were considered alternately hermetic and penetrable.

Woshinsky deftly guides the reader through this labyrinthine reading with a healthy dose of humor. I would often find myself blindsided by a sly aside ("And what does it mean for a soul to have nipples?" (55)), ("Finally, what is accented by the title is...the fact that the narrator is...*Portuguese*: hence doomed—or free—to enjoy a degree of southern and female unreason not properly displayed in the country of Descartes, even by women" (247)); dry sarcasm ("However, there is a consistency in the women's treatment, in that both Deucalie and Nerée are seen most positively once they are dead" (90)); a play on words ("Resurrected for the wedding, he fails to come up to conjugal expectations" (179)); or an honest criticism of her subject ("The next morning, he writes a triumphant (and bad) poem" (227)). Woshinsky is obviously having fun with her subject, and her readers cannot help but do the same. When she declares in exasperation that "[t]he vulgarity of the ending [of a poem written by a monk] taxes the translating skill of this scholar" (231), we should not be surprised that her subsequent translation is just as double-edged and naughty as the original.

Another unexpected quality of this book is its bibliography. While Woshinsky engages with seminal works by senior scholars, she does not limit herself to these studies. Instead, she also demonstrates a broad collegiality infrequent in published academic works. Her bibliography includes

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conference papers and unpublished dissertations as well as other references to works by less-established academics. This approach, combined with the intertextual citations throughout, creates an overall impression of a current and well-balanced study.

I have very few criticisms of this work. There are some errors of proofreading: the Revocation of the Edict of Nantes occurred in 1685 and not in 1696 (162); there is no English translation for two quotations on the bottom of page 92; the English translation should precede the French original in the middle of page 270. Content-wise, I was surprised not to find a discussion of Mlle de Scudéry's "Histoire de Sapho" in the section on feminitopias (124-34) nor a reference to Daniella J. Kostroun's work on the Port-Royal nuns in Chapter 5. Finally, there is no mention of the *Querelle des femmes* which deserves at least a *clin d'œil* from the author. Nevertheless, these minor points do not detract from what is otherwise an excellent analysis and a thoroughly enjoyable read.

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Siefert, Lewis C. and Domma C. Stanton (Eds and Transl). Enchanted Eloquence: Fairy Tales by Seventeenth-Century French Women Writers. The Other Voice in Early Modern Europe: The Toronto Series, vol. 9. Toronto: CRRS, 2010. ISBN: 978-07727-2077-1. Pp. 362. \$32.

The purpose of this volume is to translate a sample of eight seventeenth-century French fairy tales into English. All the fairy tales included are authored by women, none have previously been made available in English, and all are representative of fairy-tale production during the late 1600s and of the authors' unique styles. The volume is divided into a comprehensive introduction and five sections for each fairy-tale writer and her tales. It is followed by two sample critical texts of the period, introduced briefly, as a way of exemplifying the contemporary debate on the genre. At the end of the book, the reader will find a useful appendix listing the *conteuses* and their tales (the ones included in the volume are in bold-face), a comprehensive editor's bibliography, and an index.

In their introduction, the editors start with an accurate background of the production of literary fairy tales in the late seventeenth century, contextualizing these tales within the long historical and critical contexts of

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women's history from ancient Greece to modern feminism. They then retrace the role of women in the production of the literary fairy tale, revealing the intertexts of these stories as proof that the fairy tale tradition was created and dominated by women who promoted themselves as individuals within a growing literary field, legitimizing themselves in the process as authors. As the editors reveal, these fairy tales share significant references and motifs not only with Greek and Roman mythology, but also with medieval romances, with the pastoral and heroic novels of the early seventeenth century, and with the short novellas of their Italian predecessors, Straparola and Basile. Despite these influences, however, late seventeenth-century French *conteuses* distinguish their works both by refusing the restrictions imposed upon the novel after 1660, and those of the "compact" fairy-tale model of Perrault—rejecting the imposition of verisimilitude and instead relying heavily on the marvelous. As such, the late seventeenth-century *conte de fées* reveals itself as a predominantly "feminine" genre, one whose relationship to "modern" literary aesthetics is predicated on ideas that "natural," intuitive eloquence is uniquely reserved for women.

The editors also offer a lengthy explanation for how this corpus of late-seventeenth-century French fairy tales has been received from the moment of their production to the present. Between 1690 and the eve of the French Revolution, women authors dominated the *conte de fées* genre; in addition to being widely read throughout France, England, Germany, and North America, their fairy tales were imitated and parodied in eighteenth-century chapbooks. But after the late eighteenth-century *conteuse* Marie-Jeanne Le Prince de Beaumont began to compose fairy tales in accordance with the "compact" Perraultian model, the dominant fairy-tale aesthetic began to shift. As a result, during the nineteenth-century, the long and complicated plots composed by earlier women authors were excluded from the genre until the 1980s and 1990s when North-American feminist critics and literary historians renewed the interest in the forgotten genre, followed later by French scholars.

The editors have chosen samples of tales from each of the five leading *conteuses* of the 1690s, Marie-Catherine d'Aulnoy, Catherine Bernard, Charlotte-Rose Caumont de La Force, Marie-Jeanne L'Héritier de Villandon and Henriette-Julie de Murat. The tales were selected to be—and are—a representative sample of the most prominent thematic and narrative features of each *conteuse*, while simultaneously showcasing the variety of approaches each writer adopted with respect to length and tone. The tales are chosen with particular attention to the plots, characters and situations,

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all of which complicate many stereotypical assumptions about the fairy tale as a genre.

Each section focuses on a particular author, starting with an accurate biography and overview of the individual's writing strategies. Each tale is carefully annotated in the footnotes, which include clarifications about the specific meanings of certain words, as well as explanations of social, cultural, and literary norms and ideals relevant to the time period. The tales' translation itself is precise, and apart from the repunctuating of long sentences and paragraphs, the original text is rendered meticulously.

In conclusion, this book, with its ample introduction and its interesting and relevant choice of tales, is of extreme value not only for scholars and students, but also for any lover of fairy tales wishing to rediscover and understand the origins of the French literary fairy tale tradition. I hope that the editors will consider more translations of this kind in the future.

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