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Écrire, régner, (se) faire admirer : dérives exhibitionnistes au Grand Siècle?

par
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Ils s'imaginent que tous ceux qui verront leurs palais, concevront des mouvements de respect & d'admiration pour celui qui en est le maître, & ainsi ils se représentent à eux-mêmes au milieu de leurs palais environnés d'une troupe de gens qui les regardent de bas en haut, & qui les jugent grands, puissants, heureux, magnifiques. (Arnaud et Nicole, I, 10)

Le mot *admiration* au dix-septième siècle, s'il a déjà le sens moderne d'*estime*, a également celui de *surprise*. On voudrait ici, en s'interrogeant sur les effets de cette polysémie, examiner comment s'effectue dans certains textes un jeu entre la surprise et l'estime, entre le moment de l'éblouissement et ce qui pourrait le justifier. Car c'est peut-être dans l'éblouissement de la surprise que naissent certains débordements, certaines transgressions d'un siècle trop souvent considéré comme corseté dans le moule classique. L'admiration au sens classique, c'est, suggère Geneviève Rodis-Lewis, le sentiment de nouveauté (et non nécessairement de perfection). Descartes en fait la première des *Passions de l'âme* (II, 53), qu'il définit ainsi : « L'Admiration est une subite surprise de l'âme, qui fait qu'elle porte à considérer avec attention les objets qui luy semblent rares & extraordinaires » (II, 70), Comme elle se situe au-delà du bien et du mal, « n'ayant pas le bien ny le mal pour objet, mais seulement la connaissance de la chose qu'on admire » (II, 71), rien n'interdit d'admirer un Attila. Dans l'Avertissement de *Nicomède*, pièce écrite deux ans après *Les Passions de l'âme* et qui marque un tournant de son théâtre, Corneille transgresse les principes qui selon Aristote sont les ressorts de la tragédie : terreur et pitié; au delà, il veut peindre « la fermeté des grands cœurs, qui n'excite que l'admiration dans l'âme du spectateur ». En ces temps de Fronde, cette importance accordée à l'admiration ne reflète-t-elle pas, pour paraphraser l'heureuse expression de Rodis-Lewis dans son introduction aux *Passions de l'âme*, l'idéal d'une société qui donne sur sa carte amoureuse la place d'honneur à Tendre-sur-Estime ?

Dès les premiers vers du *Cid*, on retrouve l'équivalence aimer/estimer : « Il estime Rodrigue autant que vous l'aimez » (I, 1). L'Infante dit sur le même mode :

Je n'aime plus Rodrigue, un simple gentilhomme

 Si j'aime, c'est l'auteur de tant de beaux exploits,
 C'est le valeureux Cid, le maître de deux rois. (II, 4)

De même, dans *Suréna*, « aimer » rime avec « estimer » (IV, 3). De même encore, dans *Sertorius*, Viriate ne veut point un amant, mais un « héros » (IV, 2) pour époux :

Sa mort me laissera pour ma protection
 La splendeur de son ombre et l'éclat de son nom. (II, 1)

L'amante, et particulièrement l'amante reine ou Infante, celle qui est la plus proche du pouvoir, est la première spectatrice de l'éclat du héros. Ce qu'elle aime, c'est un nom. Ce sentiment d'admiration passe de l'amante aux sujets sur lesquels le héros exerce son pouvoir, en devenant une servitude involontaire; dans *Sertorius*, le héros et Pompée font échange d'estime en circuit fermé devant le « spectateur ébloui »¹ :

SERTORIUS :
 Vous ne me donnez rien par cette haute estime
 Que vous n'avez déjà dans le degré sublime

 Et si l'on m'obéit, ce n'est qu'autant qu'on m'aime.

POMPEE :
 Et votre empire en est d'autant plus dangereux,
 Qu'il rend de vos vertus les peuples amoureux,
 Qu'en assujettissant vous avez l'air de plaire
 Qu'on croit n'être en vos fers qu'esclave volontaire. (III, 1)

Ce spectateur est autant celui de la scène que de la salle et du parterre :

En vain contre *Le Cid* un Ministre se ligue.
 Tout Paris pour Chimène a les yeux de Rodrigue.
 L'Académie en corps a beau le censurer,
 Le Public révolté s'obstine à l'admirer. (Boileau, vers 231-234)

Il appartient au héros d'éblouir par la représentation de sa gloire les autres personnages de la pièce, et dans le même mouvement de les faire consentir à son pouvoir, de provoquer leur assentiment à celui-ci en les frappant d'admiration; le même peuple qui admire Sertorius, emporté par son admiration pour Nicomède, oublie sur son chemin sanglant pitié et terreur, comme l'auteur dans son Avertissement; mais il suffit que le héros paraisse pour que le peuple révolté demeure immobile, frappé d'admiration et de stupeur, du fait que l'« Etonnement est un excès d'admiration » (Descartes, II, 73):

Tout est calme, seigneur : un moment de ma vue
A soudain apaisé la populace émue. (*Nicomède*, V, 9)

Car, ajoute Descartes,

[...] cette surprise a tant de pouvoir, pour faire que les esprits, qui sont dans les cavitez du cerveau, y prennent leur cours vers le lieu où est l'impression de l'objet qu'on admire, qu'elle les y pousse quelquefois tous, & fait qu'ils sont tellement occupez à conserver cette impression, qu'il n'y en a aucun qui passe de la dans les muscles, ny mesmes qui se detournent en aucune façon des premières traces qu'ils ont suivies dans le cerveau : ce qui fait que tout le corps demeure immobile comme une statue (II, 73).

Un tel résultat est apparemment paradoxal si l'on tient que tout pouvoir politique repose sur la force; mais comme le pouvoir politique est toujours pouvoir de peu sur beaucoup, il faut un consentement ; ici, c'est cet éclat qui le provoque, le fait que le héros réalise les actes qu'il annonce. Le héros est privilégié « car nous n'admirons que ce qui nous paroist rare et extraordinaire » (Descartes, II, 75). D'ailleurs le pouvoir qui se passe du consentement n'est pas un véritable pouvoir (c'est le cas de Prusias), puisqu'il en est dépendant. Dès lors, le consentement, s'il correspond tout de même à une situation d'interdépendance objective qui rend les rapports de soumission indispensables, serait cette fiction sur laquelle le pouvoir repose et grâce à quoi il se repose; fiction justement entretenue et élaborée dans l'écriture qui appelle aussi une reconnaissance. Ainsi c'est le moment du ravissement de l'admiration qui emporte la soumission au pouvoir. Le vouloir-être du héros ne se résout que dans l'assentiment universel à son paraître, dans l'admiration et le regard d'autrui, dans ce mouvement de projection qu'appellent sa parole et ses actes. Pourtant, ne doit-on pas se méfier de ce ravissement, dans

la mesure où « l'Étonnement ne peut jamais estre que mauvais » ? (Descartes, II, 73).

En fait, passé ce moment de ravissement où l'âme est surprise, passé le comble de l'admiration « qui peut entièrement oster ou pervertir l'usage de la raison [...] nous devons toutefois tascher par après de nous en délivrer le plus qu'il est possible » (Descartes, II, 76). L'étonnement engendre la réflexion,² sinon la pratique de la philosophie ; un doute réflexif conduirait donc à rechercher, dans le rapport qui anime l'être et le paraître, le moi et son image projetée, le décalage où se manifestent une écriture et une élaboration, et d'où peut naître une inquiétude du héros. Les héros de Corneille, depuis les Stances du *Cid* en passant par la crise d'indécision momentanée d'Auguste jusqu'à la fascination de la mort chez Suréna, ne sont pas exempts de cette inquiétude réflexive et de cette élaboration ; la quête de l'assentiment est élaborée en vue d'un éclat où le paraître semble coïncider avec l'être. Avant tout, il s'agit de se faire admirer ; pour ce faire, il s'agit de passer, comme Retz, des spectateurs du « parterre » aux badinages avec les « violons », pour enfin « monter sur le théâtre », se faire voir, donner une image idéale de soi issue des lectures des *Vies Inimitables* ; à cette fin, Retz dit accomplir un exploit extraordinaire en calmant le peuple (comme Nicomède) lors de la première Fronde (I, 310-315). Mais cet « exploit » est-il vraiment du domaine de ce que Corneille appelait « l'in vraisemblable possible » ? Si l'on analyse le détail des pages des *Mémoires* d'où sont extraits ces propos, on s'aperçoit que la Reine, loin d'être admirative, n'est pas dupe, et « se mit à sourire » ; dans la perspective de Retz, il reste donc à entreprendre une escalade risquée vers la gloire ; la première marche, c'est de devenir « chef de parti », et par là même de faire coïncider sa destinée avec un modèle littéraire illustre : « je permis à mes sens de se laisser chatouiller par le titre de chef de parti, que j'avais toujours honoré dans les *Vies* de Plutarque ». On a affaire à une conception intériorisée de la gloire, dans une lecture rétrospective des événements destinée à s'élever un « monument imaginaire »³. Seconde marche de cette fuite dans l'escalade : Retz affirme à ses amis : « je serai, demain devant midi, maître de Paris ». Pourtant, l'assentiment extérieur n'existe plus, comme le montre la réaction des auditeurs qui ne se font pas faute de lui donner des « leçons de modération » : « mes deux amis crurent que j'avais perdu l'esprit ». L'assentiment extérieur est remplacé par l'assentiment intérieur caractéristique du genre des mémoires. C'est ainsi que sans admiration le candidat à l'héroïsme devient un être baroque de feinte et de fuite, un *trickster* parfois ridicule empêtré dans les manœuvres continues de la Fronde (tel Saint-Simon et ses « cabales »). C'est alors

qu'il devient nécessaire d'écrire l'histoire de sa vie pour se faire admirer.

En somme, l'écriture reste le seul champ où il soit possible de se faire admirer. D'ailleurs, que fait Corneille, sinon susciter l'admiration pour lui-même avant tout? *Le Cid* n'est pas seulement un poème où apparaît un héros extraordinaire ; c'est aussi « cet heureux poème si extraordinairement réussi » (Avertissement), tant il est vrai que « depuis cinquante ans qu'il tient sa place sur nos théâtres, l'histoire ni l'effort de l'imagination n'y ont rien fait voir qui en ait effacé l'éclat » (Examen). On retrouve le même souci de se faire admirer comme un miroir exemplaire dans l'écho glorieux que lui renvoie « l'admirable lettre » que Guez de Balzac « a écrite à ce sujet » ; et Corneille de renchéris, tel un de ses héros : « maintenant que mon nom est assuré de passer jusqu'à elle [la postérité] dans cette lettre incomparable [...] ». Pour « trouver quelque chose de nouveau » (*Nicomède*, Avis au lecteur) qui puisse susciter la surprise admirative et faire « une pièce d'une constitution assez extraordinaire », il n'hésite pas à transgresser les règles de l'autorité que représente Aristote en instaurant prudemment avec l'admiration une nouvelle voie de catharsis (à propos du héros controversé qu'est Flaminius) : « Dans l'admiration qu'on a pour sa vertu, je trouve une manière de purger les passions, dont n'a point parlé Aristote, et qui est peut-être plus sûre que celle qu'il a prescrite à la tragédie par le moyen de la pitié et de la crainte » (*Nicomède*, Examen). Le langage même de l'auteur se confond avec celui de ses héros : « Je sais ce que je vaudrais, et crois ce qu'on m'en dit [...] / Pour me faire admirer [...] / Je ne dois qu'à moi seul toute ma renommée » (*Excuse à Ariste*). Pascal lui-même, qui dénonce la vanité et l'imagination, n'en est peut-être pas moins fasciné par le pouvoir de l'imagination et par une admiration qui se réfugie dans l'écriture :

« La vanité est si ancrée dans le cœur de l'homme, qu'un soldat, un goujat, un cuisinier, un crocheteur se vante et veut avoir ses admirateurs; et les philosophes même en veulent; et ceux qui écrivent contre veulent avoir la gloire d'avoir bien écrit; et ceux qui les lisent veulent avoir la gloire de les avoir lus; et moi qui écris ceci, ai peut-être cette envie, et peut-être que ceux qui le liront [...] » (Pascal I, série XXIV, N° 627-694, 381)

Et pourtant Pascal, comme La Bruyère, sait qu'une telle « envie » est préhensible ; car

un auteur cherche vainement à se faire admirer par son ouvrage. Les sots admirent quelquefois, mais ce sont des sots. Les personnes d'esprit ont en eux les semences de toutes les vérités et de tous les sentiments, rien ne leur est nouveau; ils admirent peu, ils approuvent (*Des Ouvrages de l'esprit*, N° 36, 79).

Le danger, c'est que l'admiration n'existe plus que dans l'écriture, qu'elle soit perçue comme un aveuglement coupable qui prélude au fatal désenchantement, comme une passion trompeuse. C'est certes déjà le cas chez Corneille — ainsi dans ces vers désabusés prononcés par Suréna où la gloire posthume du héros et de son nom sont mises en question : « Quand nous avons perdu le jour qui nous éclaire, / Cette sorte de vie est bien imaginaire » (I, 3) —, mais l'on atteint avec Saint-Simon le comble du désenchantement. Comme le dit la citation du mémorialiste que Spitzer met en exergue de son fameux article, « de ce tout il résulte qu'on admire et qu'on fuit » ; et effectivement, chez Saint-Simon, le panégyrique du Roi ne se dissocie pas de la distanciation critique, et l'admiration se renverse inlassablement en révolusion devant « sa faiblesse, sa misère, son néant » (506). S'il rend « hommage à la 'grandeur' d'un Roi comme à la splendeur des trois premiers quarts d'un règne dont les étrangers furent 'justement éblouis' », ⁴ en même temps il les dénonce. Il est certes des personnages « admirables » chez Saint-Simon, à commencer par [...] l'auteur et par cet « admirable Dauphin » (315), cet « incomparable Dauphin » (318) qui écouta religieusement ses conseils. Mais la gloire des puissants est transgressée par le « scandaleux éclat » d'un Mazarin (296), sans parler de « ce roi de carton pâmé d'effroi et d'embarras » qu'est M. du Maine (420). Comme dans le portrait de Le Brun et sa caricature par Thackeray qui en fait le premier « fonctionnaire » du royaume⁵ — après tout, l'objectif de Mazarin n'était-il pas de « ne laisser au roi que la figure de monarque » ?(296) —, le roi est pris, comme l'écrit Leo Spitzer, dans un double mouvement d'admiration et de révolusion. On sait que Bernanos disait sur de Gaulle : « au fond, c'est quelqu'un qui habite sa statue » ; lorsque pour sa part Saint-Simon enlève sa « statue » au roi, il lui dérobe en même temps, pourrait-on dire en jouant sur les mots, sa stature. Si le mémorialiste reconnaît sa majesté, s'il compare son siècle à celui d'Auguste (472), avec il est vrai des nuances qui atténuent la portée de la comparaison,⁶ s'il est « admirable [...] à cheval » (530), le grand s'inverse en petit et en condamnable, les admirateurs devenant des « sujets adorateurs » (507). A force de vouloir être admiré, il se rend coupable de « plaisirs inconnus au Juste, au héros digne fils de Saint Louis, qui bâtit ce petit Versailles [...] » (522). De plus, « l'idée de se rendre

plus vénérable en se dérochant aux yeux de la multitude, et à l'habitude d'en être vu tous les jours » (522) le fait de façon sacrilège ressembler à un Dieu paradoxalement caché, lui que la postérité connaît sous le nom de Roi-Soleil et qu'on représente traditionnellement au milieu d'une cour choisie ; « ce plaisir superbe de forcer la nature » (536) fait de cet « homme immortel » (506) une sorte de dieu sacrilège qui, à l'instar de Nicomède, n'aurait plus que le ciel comme horizon et comme spectateur admiratif : « J'en laisse le ciel juge [...] » (IV, 2).

Saint-Simon fustige à maintes reprises cette « déification » de Louis XIV ; ainsi écrit-il que « le poison abominable de la flatterie la plus insigne [...] le défia au sein même du christianisme » (486). De là, cette contrefaçon que devient l'admiration de la part des « sujets adoreurs » ; loin d'être un ravissement, elle est entretenue avec art, sinon avec artifice, selon ceux qui, comme le mémorialiste, se font fort de voir au-delà des apparences : « la souplesse, la bassesse, l'air admirant, dépendant, rampant, plus que tout l'air de néant sinon par lui, étaient les uniques voies de lui plaire » (480).

Ainsi l'admiration est-elle prise dans un double mouvement : éblouissement de la surprise devant l'extraordinaire, et distance réflexive. Où est le lecteur dans tout cela ? Qu'en est-il de la réception de telles œuvres ? Peut-être y aurait-il en définitive au moins deux types de lecteurs, ou plutôt deux attitudes de lecture, deux rôles qui ne s'excluent nullement. D'une part, lire habilement ces œuvres comme des textes de jouissance. D'autre part, les lire moins habilement, mais de façon plus divertissante, comme textes de plaisir. Si ils sont restés des « classiques » dans la mémoire collective, c'est que dans les deux cas, et particulièrement aux yeux de « l'idéal-type » de lecteurs qui forme leur public privilégié, l'admiration reste un miroir exemplaire qui fonctionne. Et l'on retrouve Descartes qui, selon une apparente gradation, divisait le public potentiel des admirateurs en trois états :

Au reste encore qu'il n'y ait que ceux qui sont hébétéz & stupides, qui ne sont point portez de leur naturel à l'Admiration, ce n'est pas à dire que ceux qui ont le plus d'esprit, y soient toujours le plus enclins; mais ce sont principalement ceux qui, bien qu'ils ayent un sens commun assez bon, n'ont pas toutefois grande opinion de leur suffisance. (II, 77)

NOTES

¹Rappelons le contexte de ces mots dans la conclusion de l'étude de Jean Starobinski, « Sur Corneille », in *L'Oeil vivant* : « L'individu a beau déployer la plus véhémement énergie, il n'est rien sans l'écho que lui renvoie l'admiration universelle. Que l'assentiment extérieur lui soit refusé, que le secours du spectateur ébloui vienne à manquer - reste alors une ombre qui s'agite vainement sur un tréteau où seule la mort est certaine ». Cette conclusion a été remarquablement analysée par J.-P. Vivet, dans le rapport qu'il a établi pour le concours externe de l'Agrégation de lettres modernes, session de 1989. Cet essai doit beaucoup à cette analyse de J.-P. Vivet, ainsi qu'aux précieux commentaires de Pierre Force.

²Cf. Aristote, *Métaphysique*, trad. de J. Tricot (Paris: Librairie Philosophique J. Vrin, 1933), Tome I, A, 982b, 12, page 9; Platon, *Théétète*, in *Œuvres complètes*, tome VIII, deuxième partie (Paris: Les Belles Lettres, 1924), 155d, page 177.

³Voir le chapitre que Michael Riffaterre a écrit sous ce nom sur les *Mémoires d'outre-tombe*, in *La Production du texte*, (Paris: Seuil, 1979).

⁴Expression d'Yves Coirault dans la préface d'*Approches textuelles des Mémoires de Saint-Simon* de Spitzer et Brody, 9.

⁵Sur ce point, voir l'analyse de Louis Marin dans *Food for thought* (Baltimore: Johns Hopkins U.P., 1989).

⁶« [...] en siècle si fécond et si admirable pour lui qu'il a pu en ce sens être comparé à celui d'Auguste » (507).

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Extravagances temporelles chez Béroalde de Verville et Clovis Hesteau de Nuysement.

par
Denis Augier

Le *Moyen de parvenir* de Béroalde de Verville et les œuvres de Clovis Hesteau de Nuysement témoignent d'une conception inhabituelle voire extravagante du temps. Dans son œuvre majeure, le *Moyen de parvenir*, Béroalde nous décrit un gigantesque banquet philosophique, qui est aussi un dialogue des morts, auquel participent les personnalités d'époques les plus diverses. Défiant toute rigueur chronologique, nous voyons Platon dialoguer avec Luther, Erasme avec Hésiode, Sapho avec Rabelais, Ronsard avec Macrobe ou encore Marot avec Ovide. Ce texte, de plus, présente une narration discontinue, non linéaire, où priment le coq à l'âne et les interruptions. La structure générale du texte repose aussi sur un paradoxe temporel. L'un des chapitres introductifs du livre (le chapitre 11) s'intitule « Pause dernière » et débute, alors que nous en sommes à peine aux premières pages du livre, par les mots « Or commençons de conclure » (24)¹, tandis que le chapitre 13 se nomme « conclusion » et, inversement, le chapitre final, trois cents pages plus loin, s'intitule « argument ».

Si le *Moyen de parvenir* nous présente l'image d'un temps non linéaire qui défie toute rigueur chronologique, la réflexion sur le temps occupe aussi une place centrale dans l'œuvre d'Hesteau de Nuysement. Cet auteur, dans les trois livres de ses *Œuvres poétiques*, se situe bien dans la lignée des poètes de la Renaissance qui se lamentent sur le temps impitoyable qui emporte tout. Dans le sonnet XXX de ses *Amours*, Hesteau se plaint que « tout est fauché par le temps moissonneur » (*Œuvres poétiques* 1: 240)². Une certaine angoisse de la mort revient avec insistance dans ces sonnets d'inspiration pétrarquiste. Hesteau déplore la courte durée de la vie : « Je sçay que de noz ans les courses sont bornées [...] Tout est sujet au temps et le temps à la fin » (*Œuvres poétiques* 1: 264). Cette déploration s'accompagne, bien sûr, d'une réflexion sur la nature mortelle de l'homme. Dans le sonnet LXXXII, il évoque, par exemple, « le mal-heur qui grave dans mon âme / La fin, la soif, la peur, la mort et le tombeau » (*Œuvres poétiques* 1: 295). Cette litanie se retrouve presque telle quelle dans le « Chant pastoral » : « Oyez pour-quoi je porte, empreinte en mon visage, / De la peur, de la faim, et du tombeau l'image » (*Œuvres poétiques* 2: 40). Dans les « Stances »

l'univers entier semble conspirer contre le poète pour le vouer irrémédiablement à la mort :

Mon destin me réduit au pouvoir de la Parque,
 Mon désir et ma foy me guident en sa barque,
 Le cruel desespoir m'enchaîne sous sa loi,
 Chacun des Ellemns en ma peine s'obstine,
 Les Dieux jurent ma mort, bref toute la machine,
 Jalouse de mon bien, conjure contre moy

(*Œuvres poétiques* 2: 323).

A cette tyrannie du temps et de la mort, il oppose l'immortalité qui apparaît comme la récompense suprême. Hesteau convie sa maîtresse, dans le sonnet XLII de ses *Amours*, à une quête dont l'immortalité est l'enjeu : « De l'immortalité faisons donc un trophée » (*Œuvres poétiques* 1: 252). Dans le sonnet LXIII, s'adressant aux « bien-heureux bessons » (la constellation des Gémeaux), il les supplie d'accorder éternité à lui et à sa maîtresse : « Hélas, rendez le cœur de ma dame animé, / Nous muant comme vous en planète immortelle » (*Œuvres poétiques* 1: 274). Dans la « Plainte de Telie à Eco » on lit cette formule frappante qui sonne résolument comme un défi : « malgré le destin, / Je ne seray jamais de la mort le butin » (*Œuvres poétiques* 2: 163). De même, dans le sonnet XC, alors qu'il développe le thème de l'amant qui, assoiffé de revanche, voudrait ne pas vieillir afin de pouvoir constater les ravages du temps sur les formes de son ingrate maîtresse, Hesteau laisse percer cet aveu : « Je voudroys comme un Dieu dans le Ciel avoir place / Affin de vivre là exempt d'affections, / Affin de refréner toutes mes passions, / Et bref ne sentir rien de la mortelle race » (*Œuvres poétiques* 1: 303).

Or, ces deux auteurs - Béroalde et Hesteau - ont en commun d'avoir été fascinés par l'alchimie, d'avoir écrit sur cette science et peut-être même de l'avoir pratiquée. Béroalde de Verville est en effet l'auteur d'un texte alchimique intitulé *Recherches de la Pierre Philosophale, et du moyen qu'il faut y tenir, si elle existe ou peut exister : avec une préface contre les souffleurs et imposteurs et sophistes, et quelques sentences contenant tout l'art*. Il écrit un roman, *L'Histoire véritable ou le Voyage des Princes fortunez*, que certains commentateurs décrivent comme une sorte de *Quart livre* qui mettrait les préoccupations alchimiques au premier plan³. C'est aussi Béroalde qui est en partie responsable de la réputation alchimique du *Songe de Poliphile* de Francesco Colonna dont il fait imprimer une édition en 1600 rebaptisée *Tableau des riches inventions Couvertes du voile des feintes amoureuses, qui sont représentées dans le*

Songe de Poliphile Desvoilées des ombres du Songe, et subtilement exposées par Béroalde et qu'il accompagne d'ailleurs d'un opuscule intitulé *Recueil stéganographique contenant l'intelligence de ce livre*. Enfin, si l'on en croit Gagnon dans son étude récente *Nicolas Flamel sous investigation*, c'est peut-être Béroalde qui serait l'auteur véritable d'un des ouvrages les plus célèbres de la littérature alchimique : le fameux *Livre des figures hiéroglyphiques* traditionnellement attribué à Nicolas Flamel.

Hesteau de Nuysement, quant à lui, est l'auteur de poèmes alchimiques tels que le *Poème philosophic sur l'azoth des philosophes*, le *Poème philosophic de la vérité de la phisique minérale* et, en prose, des *Traictez du vray sel secret*. Hesteau a côtoyé des alchimistes. Il mentionne notamment dans le *Poème philosophic de la vérité de la phisique minérale* les noms de Vanguelle, Inderoure et du Cosmopolitain parmi ceux qui ont joué un rôle important dans son développement intellectuel : « J'ay veu des deux premiers les deux preuves premieres / Qui ont illuminé mes confuses lumieres, / Et benis le premier de m'avoir conseillé, / Le second, et le tiers, de m'avoir dessillé » (*Visions* 63-64. 617-620).

Hesteau affirme avoir assisté à des transmutations effectuées par le premier de ces alchimistes : « j'ay veu par Vanguelle, avec un grain de poudre / Douze gros d'argent vif sans fraude en or muez » (*Visions* 39). Non seulement Hesteau a assisté à de telles opérations, mais il a lui-même effectué des transmutations. Il nous apprend, dans l'adresse aux lecteurs de son *Poème philosophic de la verite de la phisique minérale*, qu'il profite même régulièrement des résultats de sa pratique : « du plomb calciné, extrait de bonne veine / De l'or (mais sans profit) je tire tous les jours » (*Visions* 39). Guillot confirme qu'Hesteau possède la réputation de fabriquer de l'or alors qu'il est, à partir de 1591, receveur du comté de Ligny-en-Barrois - réputation qui ne manque pas de sel pour un collecteur d'impôts⁴.

Cet intérêt de Béroalde et d'Hesteau pour l'alchimie étant posé, nous nous proposons de montrer que les conceptions particulières du temps que nous trouvons chez ces auteurs sont en grande partie influencées par les théories alchimiques.

Béroalde, d'une part, met en jeu dans le *Moyen de parvenir* des alchimistes célèbres (Geber, Blaise de Vigenaire, Paracelse, le Trévيسان) et fait volontiers porter le dialogue sur cette science. Il soutient en effet qu'une révélation d'ordre alchimique est dissimulée dans ce roman. Au chapitre « Synode », un des personnages du banquet nommé L'Autre apostrophe ainsi, de manière indiscutablement paro-

dique, ses lecteurs : « O vous trois fois pleins de béatitude! qui, accomplissant votre félicité, venez lire, étudier et méditer ici nuit et jour pour trouver la pierre philosophale, que j'ai caché [sic] en ces traits plus finement, occultement, clairement et pattepeluement que ne firent oncques Geber, Théophraste, Bonus ou autres affineurs » (Béroalde 136). Au chapitre « Doctrine », L'Autre précise d'ailleurs que « c'est la grande dignité de cet ouvrage, plein de l'intelligence de la pierre philosophale, pour ce que tous s'y transmue » (Béroalde 296). Mais, d'autre part, le *Moyen de parvenir* s'inspire sans doute, dans sa forme et ses anachronismes, de dialogues alchimiques célèbres comme la *Turba philosophorum* - c'est l'hypothèse de Tournon qui s'inscrit en cela à la suite de Saulnier. Ce texte alchimique arabe célèbre, datant du X^e siècle, qui pourrait être le « modèle structural » du *Moyen de parvenir*, se présente en effet comme un dialogue entre des philosophes et des alchimistes grecs sur le sujet de la pierre philosophale. Mais ce texte subit, au fil de ses traductions, d'étonnantes transformations. Comme l'a noté Tournon, « Les noms grecs des interlocuteurs, transcrits en arabe, puis retranscrits d'arabe en latin, y prennent des formes étranges : Empédocle devient 'Pandolfus', Archelaos, 'Arisleus', Xenophanes, 'Acsubofes' [...] D'autres noms restent intacts : Pythagoras, Anaxagoras, Parménide » (Tournon 219). Ainsi, Béroalde se serait inspiré de cette impression d'accumulation hétéroclite et anachronique de personnages où, à la suite des traductions successives, des noms célèbres et familiers voisinent avec des personnages inconnus, énigmatiques et tout à fait inattendus.

Béroalde réclame aussi, pour le *Moyen de parvenir*, un type de lecture non linéaire qui peut être vu comme un écho des méthodes de déchiffrement préconisées par les alchimistes dans leurs écrits. Béroalde, à propos de son texte, déclare : « Donc, soit que vous le lisiez ou non, ou que vous commenciez ici ou là, n'importe : ce livre est partout plein de fidèles instructions et sens parfait, tellement que c'est tout un par où vous le lisiez » (Béroalde 21) et c'est justement l'une des caractéristiques principales des traités hermétiques que de nécessiter une lecture non linéaire et non chronologique⁵. Ce type de lecture particulier nous permet aussi de mettre en lumière l'aspect ludique du *Moyen de parvenir* - aspect ludique qui est typique des jeux de patience que sont les textes alchimiques - parce que le lecteur se voit obligé de travailler au puzzle du texte, se voit forcé d'accepter le défi qui consiste à assembler de manière cohérente les segments épars de la narration.

Afin de parvenir à bien comprendre le *Moyen de parvenir*, il s'agit aussi, au dire de son auteur, d'utiliser une méthode de relec-

ture continuelle, sélective et active semblable à celle qui est requise pour le déchiffrement des traités alchimiques. Celui-ci, qui est aussi un des personnages du banquet, nous avertit en latin de nous concentrer sur notre lecture : « notate verba et colligite signa » (Béroalde 130) et plus loin L'Autre réitère des mises en gardes semblables : « notate verba et ponderate mysteria » (Béroalde 341) afin de parvenir au sens véritable du texte. De plus, dans une injonction analogue à la formule « Ora, lege, lege, lege, relege, labora et invenies » (Prie, lis, lis, lis, relis, travaille et tu trouveras) qui figure dans le fameux *Mutus Liber* (Altus 14), L'Autre recommande : « prenez-y garde de près [...] et vous trouverez » (Béroalde 296-297).

Enfin, de même que le microcosme hermétique se veut un abrégé du macrocosme, de même que l'alchimiste doit mettre en jeu dans son creuset - mais en petit, dans un espace de temps beaucoup plus court - les mêmes forces et les mêmes principes que ceux qui présidèrent à la création du monde, le *Moyen de parvenir* se présente comme une sphère contenant et concentrant toutes les connaissances : « Il est un globe d'infinie doctrine ; il y a autant à apprendre en un lieu qu'en l'autre, en cette sorte-ci qu'en celle-là » (Béroalde 21). Ce texte se présente donc comme le « livre qui fournit de tout » (Béroalde 27). Cette idée de la somme des connaissances et du savoir total accumulé en un seul volume se retrouve principalement dans ce qui est peut-être un des passages les plus spectaculaires et les plus justement célèbres du livre. Il s'agit du passage où l'hôte de ce banquet, au chapitre « Vidimus », nous déclare en majuscule (ce sont les seuls mots en majuscules de tout le texte) : « je vous dirai le secret des secrets; mais je vous en prie, afin qu'il soit secret, de vous embéguiner le museau du cadenas de taciturnité : et écoutez : CE LIVRE EST LE CENTRE DE TOUS LES LIVRES. Voilà la parole secrète qui doit être découverte au temps d'Elie, artiste, ainsi que disent les alquemistes » (Béroalde 30). Ainsi, au lieu d'un déroulement linéaire, le *Moyen de parvenir* nous propose l'image d'un point focal, creuset, centre immobile et trou noir à partir duquel rayonne la pluralité des savoirs.

Chez Hesteau de Nuysement, les thèmes somme toute traditionnels de la lutte contre le temps et du désir d'immortalité sont pris rigoureusement, et incroyablement, au pied de la lettre et acquièrent une résonance nouvelle au contact des doctrines alchimiques - principalement celles concernant la possibilité d'élaboration par l'alchimiste d'un élixir de jouvence ou médecine universelle qui est censé prolonger indéfiniment son existence. En effet, l'alchimiste qui aboutit dans sa recherche peut, grâce aux vertus particulières de la pierre philosophale transformée en élixir, prolonger sa propre vie et

peut-être même défier la mort. L'immortalité fait d'ailleurs partie de la légende des alchimistes dont s'est emparée l'imagination populaire. Muni de son élixir de longue vie, l'alchimiste peut impunément défier les siècles. Figuiet, dans son étude sur l'*Alchimie et les alchimistes*, rapporte par exemple que, dans le cas de Flamel qui mourut en 1418, « beaucoup d'écrivains affirment que, plein de vie à cette époque, il ne fit que disparaître de Paris pour aller rejoindre Pernelle [sa femme], laquelle, cinq années auparavant, avait disparu de son côté pour se rendre en Asie » (Figuiet 195). D'ailleurs, l'alchimiste Paul Lucas, au dix-septième siècle, prétend avoir rencontré, dans un de ses voyages, Flamel en Asie Mineure.

Hestau se fait fidèlement l'écho de cette croyance en la quasi-immortalité des fils d'Hermès. Dans ses « Stances », il mentionne cette récompense accordée aux alchimistes qui ont atteint leur but : « Ceux cy guidez au port, francs de crainte et d'envie, / Vinquirent toute angoisse, et presque le tres pas » (*Visions* 109). Dans le *Poème philosophic de la vérité de la phisique minérale* il donne plusieurs exemples pour justifier cette croyance :

On lit d'Artephius qu'il s'est glorifié
 D'avoir mille ans, et plus, la Parque défié.
 Et Trismegiste escrit que le fréquent usage
 De sa grand Médecine accomplit un long age,
 Conservant la jeunesse en sa verte vigueur,
 Et repoussant des ans l'importune rigueur

(*Visions* 51. 251-256).

Plus loin, il revient au témoignage d'Hermès qui se consacrait à « Ce bel art qui pouvait presque immortel le rendre » (*Visions* 56. 418). Après avoir compilé ces exemples des propriétés miraculeuses de l'élixir, Hestau va nous livrer son ambition sans détour : « Pour moy j'ayme ce monde, et fais prière aux Dieux / Qu'eux j'y puisse vivre un pauvre siècle ou deux, / Puis chanter en mourant quelque himne de liesse / D'avoir peu si longtemps combattre la vieillesse » (*Visions* 57. 423-426). Or, Hestau est conscient que c'est seulement par l'Art d'Hermès qu'on peut espérer aboutir à un tel résultat car la prolongation de la vie est le plus grand de tous les secrets que découvre l'alchimiste. Celui-ci, en effet,

a entrepris de monter par l'eschelle de la Philosophie au plus haut estage des secrets naturels, à sçavoir à la restauration et prolongement de la vie, outre les communes bornes de leur espèce. Car en cela gist la fin et principal but de tous les Philosophes, qui ne sceurent

jamais rien trouver de plus grand parmi la spacieuse forest de l'investigation des arcanes du monde, duquel sans doute cette Philosophie est l'heur, l'honneur et la gloire (*Visions* 296).

Ce prolongement des bornes naturelles est directement lié à l'idée d'élixir obtenu à l'issue des transmutations comme Hestean l'indique dans le huitième des sonnets qui accompagnent les *Traictez du vray sel secret* : « L'industrie de l'art peut seule séparer, / Et par nouvelle vie après régénérer / Tout en tout, de tout vice exemptant l'âme pure » (*Visions* 137). Hestean parle de cet élixir comme d'« une drogue précieuse, ou plutôt un trésor inestimable que la pieuse nature nous donne pour l'entretien et prolongation de notre vie » (*Visions* 274). Plus loin, apostrophant directement l'Alchimie, Hestean la loue pour ce bienfait que rien ne saurait égaler ou dépasser :

sçauroit-on imaginer pour le bonheur de l'homme quelque bien égalable aux deux que tu eslargis à tes favoris, les rendant assurez d'une saine et longue vie, et d'une abondance inespisable de trésors, que rien ne peut oster ny seulement diminuer, si tost qu'une fois tu les as faits possesseurs de cette suprême et miraculeuse médecine (*Visions* 300).

L'originalité de l'œuvre d'Hestean de Nuysement se manifeste particulièrement dans cette recherche passionnée d'une immortalité qui ne serait pas seulement figurée ou symbolique (immortalité par l'art, par les écrits, par le souvenir) mais aussi littérale. Voici un auteur qui entend littéralement défier la mort, faire échec aux ravages du temps et qui nous expose sans détour, dans ses œuvres, comment il espère aboutir à un tel résultat.

Nous avons essayé de montrer brièvement, dans cet essai, comment une familiarité avec la littérature et les doctrines alchimiques entraîne un traitement original, dans le cas de Bérolde, de la forme narrative et, dans le cas d'Hestean, du thème du temps - thème certes traditionnel dans la poésie du seizième siècle, mais qui va trouver une expression nouvelle au contact de l'alchimie. Que l'influence de la science hermétique soit avant tout sensible, chez ces deux auteurs, à propos de la problématique du temps ne devrait pas nous surprendre si l'on se souvient que le *Grand Œuvre* est volontiers nommé, par les alchimistes, *Œuvre de Saturne ou de Chronos*.

¹ Pour le *Moyen de parvenir* nous utilisons la transcription de Moreau et Tournon qui occupe le deuxième volume de leur édition de cette œuvre.

² Pour les œuvres d'Hestean de Nuysement, nous utilisons l'édition de Roland Guillot pour les poèmes et recueils non alchimiques qui forment les trois livres des *Œuvres poétiques* et pour les écrits alchimiques, nous utilisons l'édition de Sylvain Matton intitulée *Les Visions hermétiques* qui comprend *Les Visions hermétiques* proprement dites, le *Poème philosophic de la vérité de la phisique minérale*, le *Poème philosophic sur l'azoth des philosophes* ainsi que les *Traictez du vray sel secret*.

³ Voir à ce sujet l'article de Schiffman, "Dimensions of Individuality: Recent French Works of the Renaissance" 120-121 et l'étude de Zinger, "Les Signes de la quête et la quête des signes ou *Le Voyage des Princes fortunes* de Béroalde de Verville".

⁴ Voir l'introduction des *Œuvres poétiques* 1: 20-25.

⁵ Voir par exemple l'article de Catharine Randall Coats, "Two Suggestions for a New Reading of the *Moyen de parvenir*." *Neophilologus* 72 (December 1988) 10-15. Elle souligne, par exemple, que "Certain apparently hermetic or disruptive texts need not necessarily be read in the customary beginning-to-end mode" (13).

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Conversion Through “Reductions”: the Missionaries at Work in 17th Century New France as Described in their Yearly Relations

**by
Vincent Grégoire**

A certain number of Christian villages for Indians, known as “residences,” “reserves” or “reductions” were built during the 17th century. They were St-Joseph de Sillery, St-François, Jeune Lorette (created when Ancienne Lorette was moved to a more secure site), Bécancour and Sault St-Louis (created by moving the Indian village of La Prairie in order to escape the “corrupting” influence of the city of Montréal). St-Régis is the only reservation built during the 18th century (but by the Sulpicians this time, who imitated the Jesuits). The reasons for creating these centers evolved over the years, as we will see.

In the early years of the colony, the Jesuit missionaries thought that an in-depth evangelization of the Amerindians had to involve their “reduction.” An attempt to educate Montagnais and Algonquin boys by means of a “boarding-school” at the seminary of Notre-Dame de St-Ange between 1635 and 1639 had completely failed. As a result, as Father Vimont recognized, it was impossible to evangelize adults by educating their children. In addition, Father Superior Le Jeune quickly came to realize, after having spent the winter of 1633 among the Montagnais, that it would be very difficult to convert the semi-nomadic Montagnais and Algonquins if the missionaries tried to do this while living in their midst.

Le Jeune came to the conclusion that “reduction” would be the most promising method. But what does this practice consist of? What do the words “reduction” and “reduce” mean in the cultural context of the 17th century? To what extent were these methods of concentrating and segregating the Indians (in order to convert them) influenced by other contemporary and prior experiences? After answering these questions, we will consider a specific example of reduction which is particularly well documented: the

St. Joseph de Sillery residence, the first reduction in New France and the one to be used as a model for later reductions.

First of all, let us define what a “reduction” or “reserve” is, as it applies to New France at the time. George Stanley writes in his study “The First Indian ‘Reserves’ in Canada” that:

In its broadest sense, the Indian reserve is an area of land and its inhabitants, set aside from the general European community, within which exist a code of laws and way of life differing from those in the dominant community. (207-208)¹

We should not confuse reductions, reserves, or residences, and missions, which are, very broadly, settlements (Indian settlements originally).

The aim of the first colonizers, Cardinal Richelieu in France and Champlain in New France, was to implement a politics of “métissage” — racial mixing — by means of inter-ethnic marriages which would result in an increase in the French population of Canada. But it would first be necessary to “stop” (“arrêter”) and settle the semi-nomadic Indian populations in areas where they would be “francisés,” “Frenchified” and evangelized. Father Le Jeune explains in 1633: “These people, where we are, are wandering, and very few in number; it will be difficult to convert them if we cannot make them stationary;” (*Jesuit Relations*, vol. 6, 83)²; then in 1637: “If once they can be made to settle down, they are ours.” (*J.R.*, vol. 11, 147); and again in 1640: “He who civilizes one family converts all of its descendants, and makes a miniature Christian people.” (*J.R.*, vol. 18, 117)

Not only political and religious powers are going to try in concerted fashion to “stop” and settle the Indians, but economic powers as well. This is evident from the deed in which the *Compagnie de la Nouvelle-France* (the Company in charge of the Trade between France and New France) and the *Communauté des résidents* (Community of Residents), the two organizations

responsible for developing the colony, grant the land surrounding the Sillery

residence to the Indians. While the letters patent signed by the king in 1656 are drawn up in the following terms: “We, Louis, by granting this permission, wish, on Our part, to cooperate as much as possible in the reduction of these peoples,” (Rochemonteix, 468; my translation) the *Compagnie de la Nouvelle-France* in its deed of concession written 5 years earlier, explained that “our desire is to gather the wandering people of New France into certain reductions (“en certains réduits”) so that they may be instructed in the faith and the Christian religion.” (Rochemonteix, 466) To “reduce,” “reduction,” we must now turn our attention to the intrinsic meaning of these terms that, in fact, are all part of a multi-faceted concept.

Let us start by considering the origin of the word, from the Latin “reducere,” meaning “to carry back, to return, to lead back.” An important Jesuit text regulating the missionary practice in South America used the word and concept in the following context: “Ad ecclesiam et vitam civilem essent reducti” (Mousnier, 437) (That they be reduced to civil life and to the Church). The “pagans” must therefore be “returned” to civilization, to civil and civic life but also to civility, to proper manners. In addition, they must be brought to the “true faith.” The desire to impose a new culture, a new way of living and a new religion is clearly reflected in this Latin definition. This is hardly surprising for the times. If indeed in the Papal bull “Sublimis Deus” written in 1537, Pope Paul III had clearly stated that Amerindians were wholly human and thus in full possession of their souls and worthy of eternal life, the 3rd Council of Lima, in 1583, had also declared that, although they were completely human, they remained in a state of childhood, and thus had to be perpetually protected, like minor children. To “reduce” means, pragmatically, for the Jesuits in New France, to lead the Indians to Catholicism and to a civilized manner of life as if they were French children.

In general, the Jesuit missionaries respected the Amerindians as human beings and granted them a certain intelligence and a real,

natural goodness, as James Axtell explains and quotes: “Unlike the majority of the countrymen and most of their religious competitors in Canada, they saw in the natives, ‘the fine remains of human nature which is entirely corrupted in civilized nations.’” (Axtell, *The Invasion Within*, 65) But the Jesuits thought, in accordance with the times, that they were dealing with children, which explains the authoritarian approach that they adopted in attempting to round up and group the Amerindians together in reductions: to isolate them for better protection, but also to control them more effectively, and to protect them from, among other threats, the nefarious influence of the French colonials—alcohol dealers, for example.

It is interesting to note that Julius Caesar, in the *Gallic Wars*, uses the term “reducere” in a military sense, meaning to “fall back,” in order to better reinforce the lines of defense. The notion of retreat, of a strategic regrouping for both protection and preservation is thus inherent to the term reduction.

The practice of reductions was applied by the Jesuits in South America to the Guarani Indians in villages that they labeled “oppida christianorum” or “Christian fortresses” on their first maps of the region. It was not used, however, in other parts of the world like China, India or Japan. Soon after the foundation of their order, in 1540, the Jesuits were known for being exponents of “évangélisation douce,” soft evangelization, accommodating the customs, mores, and cultures of the converted countries (we can think of François-Xavier, Ruggieri, Ricci in the second half of the 16th century for Japan and China, and Nobili at the beginning of the 17th century for India). The Jesuits were also specialists in acculturation, assimilation and the use of religious syncretism, the essence of which is expressed in the following text issued by the “Sacred Congregation for Propaganda for the Use of Apostolic Missions in Tonkin and Cochinchine”:

Never ask nor try in any way to make these people change their rituals, usages and beliefs unless they be manifestly contrary to religion and honesty. What could be more absurd than trying to transport

France, Italy, or some other part of Europe into China. This is not what you are bringing, but rather the Faith, the Faith that does not destroy the customs and behavior of any people but seeks, on the contrary, to preserve and protect them.³

This text, which dates from 1659, does not discuss the means of colonizing the Amerindians whose culture, in the minds of the missionaries, was lacking in morality and whose religion was nothing but a collection of superstitions. Different standards were needed for different cultures. Reductions flourished in North and South America but were absent in China and Japan.

The Jesuits in New France certainly learned the languages of the Amerindians and adapted to their customs and behavior in the missions that they organized.⁴ But in the case of the first reduction that they built in Sillery, they sought above all to “erase” the indigenous culture by converting the Indians to farming and forcing them to adopt French beliefs and practices while renouncing their own. Their aim was to kill two birds with one stone: “franciser et évangéliser”: to Frenchify and convert as soon as settlement seemed well underway.⁵ Increasing the population of the new colony and converting the souls of the Indians would proceed side by side under this plan.

Before analyzing in more detail the case of St. Joseph de Sillery, we would first like to consult the definition of “réduire” in Furetière’s *Dictionnaire universel* published in 1680, which will complete the Latin meaning of the word. “To change the nature or shape of a particular object...” The word “réduire” also signifies “to tame, to vanquish, to subjugate.” It also means “to reform.” (vol. 3; my translation) All of these verbs describe rather well the authoritative manner in which the Jesuit missionaries tried to conduct Indians towards “civilization” and the “true faith” within the confines of their first reduction.

Between 1634 and 1635, Father Superior Le Jeune conceived the project of creating a Christian village inhabited by Montagnais men and women in Trois-Rivières. The plan was not implemented.

However, a rich aristocrat who had left the world and the court, Noël Brûlart de Sillery, provided the funds necessary for the creation, near Quebec, of a small reduction and the tilling of the soil around it. In 1637, before the foundation of St-Joseph de Sillery, the Father Superior described, in the *Jesuit Relations*, the reduction project that he imagined:

If this plan were to succeed, it would be a great and very important event for the glory of our Lord, and even for the good of Messieurs the Directors and Associates [reference to the members of the *Compagnie de la Nouvelle-France*] who are Lords of these countries. First, in a few years there would be here a village of Christian Hurons, who would help in no slight degree to bring their compatriots to the faith, through commerce with each other; and our wandering Montagnez would, little by little, become stationary through their example and through alliance with them. Secondly, Messieurs the Directors and Associates would have hostages here to assure the lives of our French in the country of the Hurons, and to maintain the commerce they have with all the more distant peoples and nations. (*J.R.*, 1637, vol. 12, 79)

We can see that the aims of colonization and the aims of the mission are closely linked in the mind of Father Le Jeune.

The Jesuit Father suggests here that the Sillery residence could serve as a camp for hostages. We can enumerate the diverse additional functions of the reductions during the first decades of their existence, in addition to their role as a site for the Frenchification and conversion:

1. a refugee camp during the Iroquois massacre of the Hurons
2. a safety zone against the bad influence of certain French colonials who sold alcohol
3. a family residence in case of war or during the hunting season

4. a center for charity and welfare which was distributed generously by the missionaries during famines; but also
5. a staging area for Indian soldiers who worked for the French in their wars.

The function of the reductions thus turned out to be multiple, according to the context and the needs of the moment.

If Father Le Jeune considered geographic, climatic, human and cultural realities in New France in his plans for the relocation and settlement of the Native Americans in his “villages pour Indiens,” he was also influenced by priests of his own order who had created the reductions in Paraguay and the “aldeas” in Brazil, as well as by the Franciscans, Dominicans and Augustinians who had founded the “doctrines” (by definition places where the Indians were “indoctrinated,” were taught the Christian doctrine) in New Spain. Above all, Father Le Jeune had in mind the Guarani reductions, as he explained himself in 1637:

...if he who wrote this letter has read the Relation of what is occurring in Paraquais, he has seen that which shall some day be accomplished in New France. The Christian Religion (through the grace of God) will flourish in this country as it does in that, especially among the Hurons. These peoples where we are, are exactly like those other Americans, called Paraquais, who not long ago were eating each other... Cruelty has changed to gentleness, and wolves to lambs. We may expect the same favor from heaven. But, in the name of God, let us have patience... [O]ur Fathers worked for more than forty years to subdue them, and it is more than eighty years since those nations began to hear about our faith. (*J.R.*, 1637, vol. 12, 221)

These were great expectations on the part of the Father Superior that would not come to pass because the two different institutions, in New France and in Paraguay, despite a few

common characteristics, would turn out very differently. They were, after all, quite different from the start.

The size of the two undertakings is a first distinction which shows the superiority of the South American installation: in Paraguay, there were as many as thirty reductions totaling between 100,000 and 200,000 Indians for more than a century (between 1640 and 1750), staffed by 200 Jesuit priests, as opposed to a handful of “Indian villages” in New France, which served as a temporary home for a few thousand Amerindians from many nations during the 17th and 18th centuries. There was also a different method of organizing the natives in the two institutions. The Guarani accepted the constraints that were imposed upon them in the reductions: forced labor, submission to the priests in order to avoid the brutal and humiliating regime of the “encomienda.” In New France, the “encomienda” did not exist, thus the newly converted did not have to flee such an oppressive system. If they moved into the reductions, they did so largely according to their own free will.

To conclude, we are now going to turn our attention to the case of the Sillery residence, the first reduction in New France and the one that would serve as a model for other Indian reservations built in this part of America. As we have already indicated, it was built in 1637 thanks to the generosity of Brûlart de Sillery. It housed two Montagnais families, around twenty people in total, beginning in 1638. According to James Ronda, these twenty people lived in a single one-room house during the first summer.⁶ As a matter of fact, the shortage of houses would turn out to be a chronic problem for the duration of the Sillery village, and the Native Americans were often forced to live in bark cabins, in Indian fashion. It was difficult to Frenchify under such circumstances.

All the Indians living at Sillery (Montagnais and Algonquins at first, Hurons and Abenakis afterwards) who benefited materially from the reduction were not very willing to convert and abandon their customs and beliefs. In fact, especially during the first years, their resistance turned out to be greater than the Fathers had foreseen. Two parties thus found themselves at odds within the

community: the traditionalists and the newly converted. The traditionalists were almost always in the majority, and they continued to cling to their beliefs in secret. During the first years, the new converts governed the reduction in extremely authoritarian, if not tyrannical fashion, with the support of the Jesuits.

Intransigence, intolerance and coercion were condoned by the missionaries in charge of the "proper functioning" of the residence and were means used by the neophytes, people very often full of zeal, in order to "reduce" (in the modern sense of: to eradicate) the beliefs and practices of the traditionalists. This policy resulted in cases of exile from the village, public humiliation, the construction of a prison whose first client was a woman, whipping, and even the threat of an execution.⁷ All of this was carried out to make the pagan Indians renounce their traditions and customs such as the "reading" of dreams, the healing rituals or the "eating feasts" ("les festins à tout manger") for example, and to force Indian women to give up the considerable sexual freedom they enjoyed in their traditional culture.

On the subject of sexual liberty, it was the women who suffered the most, as the historian Denys Delâge points out: "The freedom of women in Amerindian society is well known. Sexual liberty and the right to divorce which they enjoy is incompatible with patriarchal society." (Delâge, 300; my translation) In this case, the patriarchal society set up by Sillery Jesuits was fundamentally repressive of female existence. It is thus not surprising that Amerindian women were seen as the adversary "par excellence" in the eyes of the missionaries of New France and that they did in fact resist more strenuously than men. After many upheavals, illnesses and attacks by the Iroquois, Sillery was finally abandoned by the Indians in 1688. The land was turned over to French colonists, land which, in unprecedented fashion, had been legally transferred to the Indians in 1651.

The missionary practice, which consisted in settling the Indians on Sillery reductions in order to Frenchify and Christianize them was, in the end, a failure. Between 1635 and 1640, the French

Jesuits, carried away by their optimism, had thought that it was humanly possible (with the aid of God, of course) to reduce or, as Furetière had defined the word: “to change the nature of” a certain number of Native Americans. James Ronda writes that the moral of the Sillery experience was the following: “The Jesuits and their converts demanded what was unthinkable to most Native Americans—that they cease being Indians.” (Ronda, “The Sillery Experiment,” 15) The lesson would be retained when other reductions were built. While the effort at evangelization and conversion continued, the practice of “francisation” was abandoned in spite of persistent requests by the French authorities (Louis XIV, Colbert) during the years 1665 to 1670 that such measures be aggressively pursued.

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NOTES

¹ The historian Denys Delâge explains in *Le Pays renversé. Amérindiens et Européens en Amérique du nord-est (1600-1664)* that, in the 17th century, the word “reduction” is used over the word “reserve” (cf. 296).

² *The Jesuit Relations and Allied Documents*. I will now use the abbreviation *J.R.* in the rest of the study.

³ “Instruction à l’usage des vicaires apostoliques en partance pour les royaumes chinois de Tonkin et de Cochinchine.” Text quoted by Jean Lacouture in *Les Jésuites*, vol. 2: *Les Revenants*, 305 (my translation).

⁴ James Axtell explains in *The European and the Indian: Essays in the Ethnohistory of Colonial North America*: “While they [the Jesuits], like all missionaries, sought to replace the Indians’ cosmology with their own, they were more willing than their Christian counterparts to adopt the external life-style of the Indians until their goal could be realized. Rather than immediately condemn and destroy what they found, they carefully studied native beliefs and practices and tried to reshape and reorient them in order to establish a common ground on which to begin conversion [...]. In large measure, whatever success the Jesuits

enjoyed was gained not by expecting less of their converts, as the English accused, but by accepting more.” 70.

⁵ George Stanley, in *The Policy of ‘Francisation’ as Applied to the Indians during the Ancien Régime*, explains why, in the mind of the first French colonizers, the Amerindians must be “Frenchified:” “The aboriginal was never regarded as an alien in New France; he was looked upon as a subject. He was not to be liquidated; he was to be civilized. From the outset, it was intended that he should become an integral part of the colony as it developed. He was to become a French man in manners, language and religion if not in blood; in short, he was to become francisé.” 338.

⁶ For the last part of this study, we are indebted to James Ronda’s excellent article entitled *The Sillery Experiment: A Jesuit-Indian Village in New France, 1637-1663*.

⁷ James Axtell explains in *The European and the Indian*: “‘Pagans’ who dared to resist their authority [of the neophytes] were imprisoned, chained, whipped, and starved until they learned to obey ‘a peremptory command’ and to submit humbly to ‘any act of severity or justice.’ Even the death penalty was seriously considered as a ‘perpetual’ deterrent to moral turpitude.” 64.

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**From Revolt into Servitude:
The Conflict Between Noble and King
in Molière's *Amphitryon***

by
William O. Goode

The long-standing conflict between the French king and nobles culminated with Louis XIV in the seventeenth century when the feudal warrior class lost its independence and took on a new identity as court nobility dependent upon the monarch.¹ In light of Molière's close association with Louis and his court, it is not surprising that this incursion upon traditional noble identity in favor of the king appears at the heart of one of the playwright's comedies. This is *Amphitryon*, in which, as I intend to demonstrate, the eponymous hero, a victorious Theban general—"des Thébains le glorieux appui" (III, v, 1657), represents the feudal nobleman as warrior and in which Jupiter represents Louis. Critics have long suggested an analogy between Molière's Jupiter, the "souverain des dieux" (Pro., 34) and Louis XIV, but they have usually read this in terms of the latter's amorous pursuit of Mme de Montespan.² I would argue, however, that Molière uses Jupiter's pursuit of Alcmène and the god's usurpation of Amphitryon's identity to reflect a much more significant aspect of contemporary life than the monarch as adulterous lover. Indeed, Jupiter's deliberate invasion of the warrior-aristocrat's identity endows Molière's comedy with a historical/sociological subtext, a meditation upon the process by which Louis XIV was subduing the French nobility and turning them into courtiers at the mercy of his authority, a process that the playwright was witnessing personally at court festivities in which he and his troupe participated.³ The vast separation between Molière's trickster gods and deceived mortals in this play serves, then, to reflect what Elias calls the new "balance of forces" between Louis XIV and the noble class, where "between him [Louis] and the rest of the nobility there was now an immense distance" (150).

An aristocratic system in turmoil, one in which, as La Nuit explains, "le *décorum* de la divinité" (14), "cette sublime qualité" (16) must be defended against Mercure's unseemly lassitude and lowly vocabulary, which threaten to erase the distinction between the gods and humankind, is markedly visible in the "Prologue" to *Amphitryon*. La Nuit is particularly distressed by Jupiter's indecorous propensity to leave behind "ce sublime étage" (93) of his divinity to take on lowly human form, or worse, bestial form: "de voir Jupiter taureau, / Serpent, cygne, ou quelque autre chose, / Je ne trouve point

cela beau” (99-101). Mercure, whose ideas differ significantly from La Nuit’s insistence upon a harmonious, decorous, and immutable aristocratic system, justifies his master’s behavior, indicating that Jupiter has unlimited right to move in and out of a system that at times he must find tedious:

Je le tiendrais fort misérable
 S’il ne quittait jamais sa mine redoutable,
 Et qu’au faite des cieux il fût toujours guindé.
 Il n’est point à mon gré de plus sotté méthode
 Que d’être emprisonné toujours dans sa grandeur. (81-85)

This system, then, is one in transition, not unlike the one Molière was witnessing at Louis’ court. For example, Mercure later bids defiance to a value that had always been invoked as the very heart and soul of feudal aristocracy—virtue: “J’aime mieux une vice comode/ Qu’une fatigante vertu” (I, iv, 681-682). This iconoclasm signals a changing view of the aristocracy by reflecting the disappearance in seventeenth-century French thought of virtue as a basis for nobility.⁴ It would thus seem that Molière has assigned to Mercure the function of undermining the notion of an aristocratic system based upon irrevocable, universal laws and proposing in its place an order that Jupiter can manipulate at will, one that he can change.

Change in the aristocratic social stratum, of course, is precisely what Louis XIV, was imposing upon his recalcitrant feudal nobility, those who would find La Nuit’s viewpoint more congenial than Mercure’s; and it is the drama of this forced change to the will of the King that we may read, then, in Jupiter’s transgressions against Amphitryon and his wife, Alcène. This conflict depicts in large measure the metamorphosis that Elias traces, occurring both in the nobility, as “the majority of the nobility were transformed from knights into court *seigneurs* and *grands seigneurs*” (148), and in the monarch himself, as Henri IV “embodied the transition between the late-chivalrous type of king and the court-aristocratic type that was to find its first perfect representative in Louis XIV” (149). Thus, Elias concludes, “The knightly mode of life and its specific ethos... gradually became... more and more unrelated to reality, condemning those holding [these attitudes] increasingly to failure” (194). Like a seventeenth-century French nobleman, then, Amphitryon, even as a victorious warrior, can no longer depend upon heroic actions on the battlefield to assure his “renown and success” (Elias, 194). Despite the fact that Amphitryon, as the result of “sa victoire” (I, i, 164), appears momentarily “couvert de gloire” (I, i, 159), he is not allowed to taste this glory during the course of the action. Instead, he is

forced, because of Jupiter's usurpation of his identity, to contend with what he believes at first to be "sottises" (II, i, 839) on the part of his valet and then "un songe" (II, ii, 899) on the part of his wife, nuisances which defer and deny the celebration of "Amphitryon vainqueur" II, ii, 851). Then, as he listens to Alcmène's unwitting account of her time spent with another Amphitryon, the valiant warrior, instead of celebrating with Alcmène his honor and good fortune, is reduced to laments: "Le déshonneur est sûr, mon malheur m'est visible" (II, ii, 1052). Essentially he is being forced to recognize that his reputation is not solely in his own hands; it is dependent rather upon a power exterior to him. Later, when Amphitryon finds himself surrounded by comrades who want to celebrate his glorious victory, he is compelled to realize that his conquest has now become meaningless: "Ah! qu'on est peu flatté de louange, d'honneur, /Et de tout ce que donne une grande victoire, /Lorsque dans l'âme on souffre une vive douleur!" (III, i, 1457-1459). Finally, upon his second return home, when he is informed by the scandalously insolent Sosie-Mercure that Alcmène and the other Amphitryon "goûtent le plaisir de s'être rajustés" (III, ii, 1555), he exclaims: "Où vois-je réduits mon honneur et ma flamme!" (III, iii, 1562). Jupiter has robbed him of much more than just his outward name and appearance; the god has destroyed Amphitryon's independent sense of self as well, much as Louis was forcing his courtiers to "renounce being anything in themselves" (Elias, 149). The proud identity that he had created for himself has evaporated. Indeed Sosie's observation seems particularly relevant: "on vous des-Amphitryonne" (III, vii, 1861).

Yet Amphitryon remains unaware of the force that is subjecting him and consequently believes that he can defeat his rival. To attempt to reestablish his honor, consequently, he has recourse to the outmoded feudal response of revenge and attack: "Et toute mon inquiétude / Ne doit aller qu'à me venger" (III, iii, 1569-1570). Therefore, when he finally confronts the other Amphitryon, he assaults him verbally, calling him "un fourbe" (III, v, 1629), "un imposteur" (1632), and "en scélérat" (1643). But when Amphitryon takes his sword to strike down the impostor, he is stopped by Naucrètes: "Nous ne souffrirons point cet étrange combat / D'Amphitryon contre lui-même" (1644-1645). Still, Amphitryon cannot be appeased, and he vows to return with allies to destroy his adversary in combat:

Allons, courons...
 Assembler des amis qui suivent mon courroux;
 Et chez moi venons à main forte
 Pour le percer de mille coups. (1732-1735)

Like rebellious members of the feudal French nobility, Amphitryon attempts to reestablish his independence and his former identity through recourse to arms—his own mini-Fronde.

However, this effort comes to naught when his rival reveals himself as the king of the gods. Amphitryon learns that his identity has been taken, manipulated, and confused by Jupiter himself. Furthermore, he is reminded that it is this god alone who can bring order back into Amphitryon's existence:

Regarde, Amphitryon, quel est ton imposteur;
Et sous tes propres traits vois Jupiter paraître.
A ces marques tu peux aisément le connaître;
Et c'est assez, je crois, pour remettre ton cœur
Dans l'état auquel il doit être,
Et rétablir chez toi la paix et la douceur.
Mon nom, qu'incessamment toute la terre adore,
Etouffe ici les bruits qui pouvaient éclater. (III, x, 1890-1897).

This mortal must now confront the fact that Jupiter is, as Elias says about the French king, “the social peacemaker, the only guarantor of peace and relative security” (176). Having experienced the god's power to humiliate him, Amphitryon thus finds himself in a state of subjugation, not unlike one of Louis XIV's courtiers, “deprived of all independence while being provided for and maintained in constant dependence on the king” (Elias, 181).

This subjection is made manifest by Jupiter's compensation to the couple whose marriage he has seemingly torn asunder. First, the god promises them a son, Hercule. It is interesting that Jupiter announces this “gift” as “un fils” (III, x, 1916), not “mon fils” nor “ton fils,” thus underlining the ambiguity of this reward for Amphitryon and at the same time suggesting a permanent tie between the mortal couple and the god. Also, since Hercules had become in seventeenth-century France a familiar image in the iconography of Louis XIV,⁵ Jupiter's victory serves at the conclusion of the play to attach Molière's fictional world to the real world of the playwright's monarch and benefactor.

There is, however, another significant link in the chains with which Jupiter is binding Alcmène and Amphitryon to himself, and that is the promised “éclat d'une fortune en mille biens féconde” (III, x, 1918), a visible sign of Jupiter's “support” (1919). “Money distributed by the king... made it possible, and often compulsory, to

stay in his proximity” (155), Elias notes; thus, this final bondage of Amphitryon and Alcmène to Jupiter again parallels the situation of seventeenth-century French nobles, this time their submission to Louis’ distribution of monetary pensions and gifts.

The extent of this historical submission by Louis’ subdued nobles might help us, then, to interpret the ambiguous conclusion of Molière’s play. When Elias asks rhetorically how the nobles managed to bear their humiliation, his answer focuses on the ultimate passive acceptance that results from royal compensation: “They could compensate for the trouble and humiliation they had to endure in the king’s service by consciousness of their influence at court, by the opportunities of gaining money and prestige that it offered them, to such an extent that their antipathy towards the king and their desire for release from his oppression receded even within their own minds” (199). Thus, we may read the play’s conclusion, I think, as a silent acceptance by the mortals, and in particular by Amphitryon, of the compensation mentioned by Elias and as a recognition of the impossibility of “antipathy towards” and “release from” the superior power in which they firmly believe. Marking this silence, Molière has Alcmène absent from Jupiter’s recognition scene, and the playwright gives the humiliated Amphitryon, who is there, no lines at all in which he might comment upon Jupiter’s revelation of his divine identity and his claim that “Un partage avec Jupiter/ N’a rien du tout qui déshonore” (III, x, 1898-1899). For Amphitryon, therefore, silence seems to be the only appropriate response to his humiliation, as Sosie suggests in the final lines of the play:

Mais enfin, coupons aux discours,
 Et que chacun chez soi doucement se retire.
 Sur telles affaires toujours
 Le meilleur est de ne rien dire. (III, x, 1940-1944)

Interpreting silence as tacit submission depends, of course, on recognizing the strength of the belief which encourages this ultimate silence. Throughout the play Molière is careful to delineate Amphitryon’s and Alcmène’s deep-seated faith in the gods. Thus, Sosie notes, while rehearsing his announcement to Alcmène of her husband’s victory and imminent arrival, the battle began only “après avoir aux dieux adressé les prières” (I, i, 250). Alcmène herself is so in thrall to the gods that even after her first seduction by Jupiter, she is convinced that her universe is orderly thanks to them:

Allons pour mon époux, Cléanthis, vers les dieux,
 Nous acquitter de nos hommages,
 Et les remercier des succès glorieux
 Dont Thèbes, par son bras, goûte les avantages.

(II, ii, 847-850)

Amphitryon, too, recognizes the gods as all-powerful in the universe with an invocation: "O dieux, dont le pouvoir sur les choses préside" (II, ii, 973); and his appeal to "le ciel équitable" (III, I, 1487) underscores his belief that they are responsible for the world's orderly functioning. Thus, when he becomes painfully aware that Jupiter has powers far beyond his own, ones he had never dreamed of, he is subdued like Louis' courtiers for whom "every possibility of outward resistance is closed" (Elias, 199). Because his independence has been destroyed by Jupiter's transgressions, Amphitryon (and presumably Alcmène, as well—if and when she learns the truth) has no choice but to recognize the god's authority. Amphitryon, like Louis XIV's nobles, is not ready to face the vacuum of authority that further challenge might bring. He can be viewed as cowed by Jupiter's final words in the play: "C'est un crime que d'en douter: / Les paroles de Jupiter / Sont des arrêts des destinées" (III, x, 1924-1926). Although his deception of the mortals might appear to cast doubt upon the god's words as "des arrêts des destinées," the mortals themselves express no such doubts; hence we must conclude that their silence, the silence underscored by Sosie's admonition, despite the irony that we might want to read into the servant's words, represents their own willing complicity in their subjugation to Jupiter in order to avoid further disorder in their lives. After their oppression by Jupiter, they are invited to recognize in him their protector, leaving Amphitryon and Jupiter in a final situation like the one which Elias describes for Louis XIV and his court nobility: "All these mutual dependences were so carefully weighed and so ambivalent that mutual antagonism and mutual dependence were more or less in equilibrium" (207).

That this equilibrium might nonetheless be precarious is at least hinted in the text by what may be read as a subversive commentary upon the nature of kingship itself. In the prologue Mercure suggests to La Nuit that the gods themselves are merely the invention of poets and are thus merely conventions:

Et je ne puis vouloir, dans mon destin fatal,
 Aux poètes assez de mal
 De leur impertinence extrême,
 D'avoir, par une injuste loi
 Dont on veut maintenir l'usage,
 A chaque dieu, dans son emploi,
 Donné quelque allure en partage... (24-30)

As conventions, then, we can assume that these gods lack any divine essence to ratify their power. Outside the text Molière participated actively in what Burke terms the fabrication of Louis XIV; consequently he must have been at the very least vaguely conscious that Louis' majesty, rather than being based on some transcendent essence, was itself a work that the image-makers in collaboration with the King himself were constantly refining. Of course because the image-makers, like the court nobility, had surrendered their independence to Louis as the guarantor of an order which served their own best interests, like *Amphitryon* they, too, were reduced to silence.⁶ Nevertheless, it is possible to believe that consciously or unconsciously, Molière breaches this silence within the text with *Mercure's* comments and with *Alcmène's* confrontation with *Jupiter*. For when *Jupiter* requests that *Alcmène* separate lover from husband, I would suggest that he is attempting to force her to recognize a vital part of his hidden self that would distinguish him from *Amphitryon*, despite the total physical resemblance. Superior lovemaking should be recognized, he is ostensibly proposing, but on another level he is insisting that his divinity be acknowledged: divinity should exude a divine essence and this essence must be honored. (The corollary for Louis would be that his glorification results necessarily from a divine royal essence.) But despite *Jupiter's* attempts to persuade her to respond to him only as a lover, that is, to respond instinctively to his divinity, *Alcmène*, unwittingly and ironically, delivers him his only defeat in the play: "Je ne sépare point ce qu'unissent les dieux" (I, iii, 620).⁷

Although I do believe, then, that Molière may very well posit the illusory nature of Louis XIV's image in terms applied by Lionel Gossman to *Mercure's* exposure of "the existing social order", "illusory in the sense that it cannot be rationally justified" (17), I cannot agree, however, with Gossman's conclusion that *Jupiter's* "'divinity' is seen to be a hoax, a mere disguise for the inner weakness that he shares with the other characters of the play" (28).⁸ For ultimately there is nothing dramatically to indicate in terms of the drama itself that the absence of a recognizable and immutable divine essence diminishes *Jupiter's* power. After all, *Alcmène* remains un-

aware of her victory, and the god's defeat is only partial and seems but a minor blow to his vanity. In the longer run Alcmène has served his pleasure, and his seed has been planted. Furthermore, Amphitryon, having been challenged in his hero's identity, has been humbled. Jupiter's attacks on the Amphitryon-Alcmène marriage have indeed established his authority, especially his authority to define new roles for his inferiors.

Thus, what we especially witness in this play is the manifestation of Jupiter's (and Mercure's) magic powers and the comic futility of those (Amphitryon, Alcmène, and especially Sosie) who insist upon resisting this power. Everything—and everyone—ultimately revolves around—and serves—Jupiter. And is this not the ultimate goal, too, of Louis XIV's struggle with the nobility? Elias comments that “in the minds of the most influential functionaries of the society, the kings and their representatives, there was no such thing as a ‘nation’ or a ‘state’ as an end in itself.” Instead, “according to Louis XIV's concept, this whole social field culminated in the kings as its real purpose, and . . . he saw all the other elements of his regime only as means to this end of glorifying and maintaining the king” (205).⁹

It is fitting, therefore, that Molière dedicated this play to the Grand Condé. Condé is, of course, a central, heroic figure in the struggle between nobility and monarch in seventeenth-century France; and his and his family's fate marks the simple, but dramatic trajectory we see in action with Amphitryon: “the Condés fell from revolt into servitude” (201).

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NOTES

¹ This phenomenon has been studied in depth by historians. See, for example, Schalk and Elias. I have particularly based my comments here on Elias's analysis in his chapter entitled “The sociogenesis and development of French court society as functions of power shifts in society at large” (146-213).

² Typical is Jacques Scherer's comment about the play: “Les dieux y sont peints comme des sortes de super-nobles et l'on peut presque partout y lire Louis XIV entre les lignes” (195). The further analogy between Jupiter and an adulterous Louis XIV is underscored, for example, by Ronald Tobin, who remarks that “it seems evident to me that Louis XIV's liaison with Madame de Montespan

was the original source for this representation of the sacrifices the host (or husband) must make to satisfy an aggressively avid *con-vive*" (67).

³Discussing the role that such seventeenth-century French courtly spectacles themselves played in this transformation, Jean-Marie Apostolidès notes: "L'aristocratie désarmée, dépossédée de ses coutumes, privée de ses prérogatives militaires, se mue alors en une caste spectaculaire Toujours privilégiée, elle trouve d'imaginaires compensations dans des cérémonies où elle figure aux côtes du roi" (46).

⁴Ellery Schalk, who has studied the decline in France of the notion of nobility as virtue, remarks that by the beginning of the seventeenth century "virtue is just a quality, certainly excellent but no longer synonymous with nor required for nobility" (115).

⁵Peter Burke points out: "The cycles of mythological paintings in the Louvre, Versailles, the Tuileries and other royal palaces were designed to be read allegorically, with Louis in the place of Apollo, Jupiter, Hercules or Neptune" (28).

⁶J. D. Hubert writes: "*Amphitryon* is precisely the sort of comedy that a skeptical genius would write about identity in a period when social positions had become momentarily crystallized In order to play their parts, the courtiers and even the King himself unavoidably required a minimum of complacency, or suspension of disbelief, on the part of their far-flung and teeming audiences" (188-189).

⁷Harriet Stone also recognizes a subversive stance in Alcène's refusal to separate husband and lover: "Alcène exposes the instability of the god's rule; she reveals him as imposing an order of things that is no more precise for being Other, for being his" (108).

⁸Nor can I completely agree with Stone's conclusion about Jupiter's failure in his encounter with Alcène: "There is nothing omnipotent in this impotence" (110).

⁹Tobin emphasizes the "lack of reciprocity" (81) in the play "between sovereign and subordinates" (82) and suggests that the mortals who might expect such reciprocity are "as naive as Sosie believing he could enter Mercure's kitchen with impunity" (83).

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**Dom Juan in the Country:
The Self-Fashioning Individual as Itinerant Fraud**

**by
Larry Riggs**

Molière's Dom Juan embodies the early modern intensification of mobility, circulation, calculation, and equivalence. The *grand seigneur méchant homme* is what happens when the "archaic" idea of the just price gives way to the modern definition of value as whatever the market will bear. It is difficult for us to perceive, but must have been clear to many early moderns, that the conceptual and ethical distance from paying debts with printed money to paying them with words and gestures is not great. After all, a currency is a language made from proliferating copies of representations of value. It is a kind of text which, purporting to represent everything of value and to be *exchangeable for* everything of value, gradually replaces what it represents. The "sign" of value comes to be misread as the truly valuable substance. Thus, money is at the core of a society of pretense, since it is of value only because it is accepted or recognized as having value. Molière's play enables us to perceive the *costs* of some modernist imperatives,© such as individual emancipation, unfettered manufacture and exchange of commodities, mathematical rationalism, and the replacement of cooperation with competition as the basis of social and economic relationships.

By "modernity," I mean the period beginning with Gutenberg's establishment of the first printing shop, in roughly 1456, and extending to the present. It is during the early part of this period that truth and knowledge begin to be associated with accurately reproducible text; that folkloric, oral culture is devalued, while literate culture is institutionalized and professionalized; and that literate skills and products, as well as the knowledge they constitute, come to be regarded as property. Let's remember that Dom Juan speaks like a book.

Along with other mechanically reproduced textual information, standardized, comprehensively exchangeable money is of

increasing importance in this time of newly efficient and centralized printing, stamping, and coining. Control over coinage and currency was a key element in absolutist programs and a reflection of the will to erase the particularities of local places and small-scale social and cultural entities

The fear that motivates most of Molière's *ridicules* and which underlay the absolutist drive of the early modern monarchies and the formulation of scientific epistemology reflects the fact that early modern ideology was a response to bewildering change. Anthony Cascardi describes this situation rather well: the collapse of epistemological and social certainties yields a vision of the world as open to transformations. However, it simultaneously raises the fear that this *alterable* world is governed by *no* stable, authoritative truth. (6) Alasdair MacIntyre convincingly connects individual autonomy and the modern State as twin artifacts of modernization. He argues that the State is a product of the displacement of authority from dense webs of related but somewhat autonomous groups, defined by mutual obligations, to an autonomous sovereign who oversees relations among dissociated, competitive, increasingly interchangeable individuals. These individuals claim emancipation from *mutual* obligations. The release of individual identity from the bounds of corporate society was achieved at the price of individuals' treating each other in objective, instrumental, competitive terms. (Harvey 26) Carolyn Merchant, along with other feminist commentators, connects the will to control a dangerously unstable world and to escape from limitations and obligations with the paranoiac demonization of women; this same fascinated fear is exemplified by Molière's would-be tyrants, as well as by many real ideologues of emerging modernity.

Also characterizing both the dramatic "world" of Molièresque comedy and the cultural world of his time is a double paradox: the Autonomous Subject of modern epistemology and economics, who is also the *literally sovereign* Subject of absolutist monarchy, was invented as a response to a perceived crisis of disorder. However, the post-Renaissance individual, whom Stephen Greenblatt

famously described as “self-fashioning,” existed *precisely because* the stable society made up of networks of mutual obligations was disintegrating. So, the release of individuals from limiting entanglement *both* created the idea of a Transcendent Subject capable of achieving unconstrained mastery in epistemology and economics *and* exacerbated the disorder perceived as needing to be controlled. The absolute monarch aspires to be *the* Subject of desire in his realm, controlling the ambitions of the other would-be self-fashioning individuals who are his “subjects,” that is, the *objects* of his power. This is precisely what each of Molière’s *ridicules* wants, too.

The modern, autonomous individual is modeled on the absolute monarch, and *vice versa*. Every would-be Sovereign Subject is inevitably the *rival* of everyone else. Dom Juan’s unquenchable lust for conquests is within the logic of political absolutism and economic individualism. Louis XIV and Dom Juan are both wedded to obsessive reiteration of their spectacular self-representations. Val Plumwood sees modern culture as making what she calls this “master model” synonymous with true Humanity. (23) Since mastery is also gendered as “masculine,” the master model denies full humanity to women.

The idea of self-fashioning can be understood as a realization of the Oedipal wish to engender oneself. This accords rather well with the weakening of kinship-ties and other ethical constraints, with the ideological assertion that such constraints and the cultural formations associated with them are “archaic,” and with Francis Bacon’s promise that modern science would inaugurate an epoch of “masculine birth.” Also important here is social theorist Ernest Becker’s observation that the “narcissistic self-inflation” which denies man’s connection with the other animals also entails rejection of dependency on the female body, since that body is equated with a lack of control over one’s origins and fate. (119) Legal control of women and epistemological and technological control of nature, conceived as female, are pillars of modernity.

The other half of this double paradox is the fact that, though born out of and to a significant degree profiting from the *loss* of

certainty about the order of things, the theoretically autonomous Subject needs to be grounded and legitimated by association with *some kind* of alleged truth or necessity. This necessity turns out to be a combination of mythic assertions: the inevitability and positive value of change or "progress"; the new knowledge supposedly capable of discovering and elucidating universally valid natural Laws; and, in the short run, the "absolute" but ultimately ungrounded authority of the monarchy. Competitive, theoretically emancipated individualism and growing authoritarianism are the Siamese twins presiding over modernization.

Molière's authoritarian buffoons are tortured by just this contradiction. They all claim a degree of subjective autonomy completely at odds with traditional ethical constraints while trying to prevent others from doing the same. They disguise this egocentric rejection of ethics by identifying with some allegedly legitimating authority. However, modernity's linkage of progress and enlightenment with the rejection of "archaic" traditions leaves power without any truly credible pretense of authority or legitimacy. If change is the inevitable and essentially progressive legitimating characteristic of modernity, then how can the disorder that accompanies change be *legitimately* controlled?

Dom Juan is an inveterate borrower who "believes" only in mathematics and who tries to buy with a coin the good conscience of a religious hermit (III, ii). He echoes Galileo and the other founding fathers of modern epistemology, by the way, in this mathematical rationalism. Dom Juan also reduces women to abstract equivalence, destroying their particularity by using them as pretexts for bookish rhetoric and by marrying them, or promising to marry them, indiscriminately. In the process, he empties marriage of its ethical significance, which depends on its ability to constrain individualist desire. By claiming special sexual privileges, by using his high social status as a tool of his unfettered desire, and by *flaunting* his success in living above the rules, Dom Juan mirrors the absolute monarch. (Wine) The fact that the Don Juan figure is so familiar in modern literature and so often

regarded as a hero of individualist freedom (see especially Dumoulié) supports my reading of Molière's version as a meditation on modernity. Most specifically, Dom Juan represents the modern identification of both individual liberation and social progress with the contemptuous rejection of "outdated" constraints. (see Horkheimer and Adorno)

Like the other *ridicules*, but more clearly than any of them, Dom Juan embodies the self-maximizing individual so dear to modern theories of progress. Like the other major plays, *Dom Juan* explores the consequences of the modern assumption that the competitive opposition of self-seekers will effectively replace traditional ethical constraints (Berry 22). It might be said that Dom Juan practices *laissez-faire* sexuality. In fact, if the necessity legitimating modern man's self-conception is the "progress" resulting from the rejection of tradition, then, like Dom Juan, modern man must eternally reject not only the past in general but also his own past self-affirmations. By this logic, modernist progress is just the kind of eternal *fuite en avant* that is lived by Dom Juan. Coherent selfhood, social stability, and the physical world as systems of limits or constraints must be endlessly rejected and renovated. The hyper-production of signs that Dom Juan exemplifies serves this imperative. The creation of this "world" of words or of signs is just what Molière warns against in the preface to *Tartuffe*: "Et, en effet, on doit discourir des choses et non pas des mots."

In exploiting some of his victims' fantasy of becoming noble by marrying him, Dom Juan permits Molière to explore another aspect of early modernity: the growing desire for social mobility. This desire is quite explicitly thematized in some of the other plays. Monsieur Jourdain is the most obvious example of individualism as manifested in social ambition. However, Arnolphe, Orgon, Monsieur de Pourceaugnac, and the *femmes savantes* also exhibit this desire. The proliferation and devaluation of titles of nobility (Cascardi 42) and their use by the monarchy for rewarding serviceable commoners and supplementing revenue are concrete early modern developments. The desire for social mobility is linked by the plays with other manifestations of

unfettered desire. Monsieur Jourdain would like to *use* wealth and the higher status he hopes to buy with it to gain sexual access to the Marquise, Dorimène. His hunger for transformed social status is thus linked with sexual desire. Also, the same will to power and control that motivates Arnolphe's hyper-patriarchalism causes him to begin calling himself "Monsieur de la Souche."

As an object of others' desires and fears, Dom Juan is a catalyst for social ambition, patriarchal possessiveness and rage, narcissistic gullibility, and an interestingly caricatural divine punishment. He arrogates unlimited sexual privilege to himself, and he attempts to function as an irresistible display of social, discursive, and erotic power. As Louis Marin makes clear, the absolute monarch himself is also created by a system of representations. Therefore, he has much in common with Dom Juan, whose ability to manipulate others is dependent on his dexterity with signs and on his own function as a mobile signifier of authority and status. The absolute monarch also resembles Dom Juan in his increasing recourse to *borrowing* from wealthy bourgeois to finance his pretensions.

Dom Juan preaches an ideology purporting to legitimate his depredations. He embodies the effort to make bookishness and mathematical rationalism the basis of a *new aristocracy*, even as he exploits his membership in the old aristocracy. He possesses the high social status that most of Molière's characters would like to have, and he uses it just as they imagine doing: he "pays" his debts with gestures and words; he marries whomever he pleases, making sexual use of his social power; he gives orders and says whatever he wants; he moves freely and immobilizes others; and he flouts the authority of his father, of the past, of his class, and of religion. He thus embodies the wishes and fears that haunt the hallucinated worlds of all of Molière's would-be despots. Moreover, by exploiting his social status as if it were an exchange-commodity, he authorizes commoners to think of nobility as a set of signs that can be acquired and displayed. By seeking purely individual advantage in a marketplace of competitive desires and ambitions, Dom Juan exemplifies the early modern erasure of social and

ethical boundaries and constraints. He is the fantasy at the core of bourgeois ambitions.

Dom Juan ruthlessly and self-destructively follows the contradictory modern "logic" defining progress as the ever-freer circulation of signs of status which *lose* their power to confer distinction even as they intensify the desire for it. Modernity relativizes social status without eliminating it and, in the process, releases a huge appetite for the now-transferable signs of prestige. This appetite figured in the economic plans of Jean-Baptiste Colbert, who made the manufacture and marketing of what amounts to an aristocratic veneer a central feature of the French economy. The aristocracy becomes both obstacle and ideal in this process. Dom is playing the game that will destroy his class. His systematic corrosion of belief and traditional exchange steadily undermines the basis of his power and influence. Aristocracy will be a victim of rationalism's critique of conventions; perhaps the belief in reason itself, as modernity defines it, will be the last victim.

So, the *grand seigneur méchant homme*, whose desire is unlimited and whose privileges are themselves the objects of unlimited desire, is the archetypal phantasm of both Molière's theater and modernizing culture. Because he is an aristocrat who flaunts himself as a model and an object for the desires of all, he is also the threatening lust that the absolutist monarchies, and then the modern post-monarchical Economy-States, sought and still seek both to exploit and to control. Dom Juan embodies what modern societies need to understand about themselves, and he activates their resistance to that understanding. He lives the progressive marginalization of ethics from individualist self-seeking. He makes explicit the desires and temptations that motivate competitive individualism, thus posing a challenge to the modern socio-economic order, insofar as that order encourages and profits from the urges that moralizing institutions try to temper or condemn. In fact, like Tartuffe, Dom Juan shows, by playing the religious hypocrite, that even those moralizing institutions have been invaded by the search for personal advantage and material profit.

The Don Juan figure, particularly Molière's version of him, is fascinating and leads to serious thought about modernity because we are always of at least two minds about him. As the history of critical commentary on the play shows, Dom Juan is a figure whom we can neither absolutely condemn nor approve wholeheartedly. Our ambivalence about him is the unmistakable sign of our implication in the *amour-propre* and the "liberating" mobility which he enacts. He is a hero of resistance to arbitrary social and moral authoritarianism, but he is also exploitative sexism incarnate. He undermines culturally imposed limits on *female* sexuality, or perhaps he merely exploits those limits with special cleverness. He is the hero of existential rebellion, freedom, and authenticity, and he is also the epitome of dishonest manipulation. He is unconstrained subjectivity alienated from its own desires by purely technical virtuosity. I myself, even while seeing him as the archetype of what I deplore about modernity, have in other writings noted his service as a revelation of the "bad deal" imposed by compulsory entry into the Symbolic Order. Dom Juan is a hypocrite and a liar who, through his very lies and hypocrisies, tells the *truth* about language and *its* eternally broken promises. So, he is the archenemy of ordinary, paltry, "respectable" hypocrisy. At the same time, his character can be interpreted as a warning about the supposed consequences of any loosening of authority's grip. He is a scapegoat, sacrificed in order to disguise modernity's delusive contradictions, and he is also a self-seeking sociopath who richly deserves his fate.

The story of Dom Juan is a peculiarly modern myth. In my view, Dom Juan is a modernized Promethean figure, in that his behavior reflects the uniquely modern combination of a desacralized natural world no longer seen as having subjectivity; a conception of women that associates them closely with that less-than-fully-alive natural world, and an increasing confinement of ethics to an emphatically *other* world. When nature and women are viewed as not having full-fledged subjectivity, they can no longer embody any limit on the operations of self-actuating *masculine* subjectivity. In this world of dead matter and dehumanized women, it is possible for men to suspect that all limits on *their*

thought and action are merely arbitrary. The denial that society's ethical and ecological contexts legitimately limit human action implies that all such limits have been formulated and imposed by other humans. The power of the social Law thus stands naked, without any legitimating authority. It appears to be guaranteed only by the consent of the seduced or the coerced. So, as I see him, Dom Juan represents the modernist rejection of supposedly archaic constraints and the justification of that rejection by the idea that the constraints are arbitrary human contrivances. These limits are denounced on the basis of the *already modern* assumptions that such constraints are nothing but impositions on some people by and for other people and that the individual can and should be entirely autonomous.

Having no referent outside the increasingly slippery semiotics of social prestige, Dom Juan *circulates* as if he were a piece of currency. Like money, Dom Juan's prestige can have value only in transactions. He aspires to circulate endlessly in the wide-open, undifferentiated social, epistemological, and ethical "spaces" created by the erasure of borders and constraints. Thus, Dom Juan's false promises, his use of flattering words and gestures to "pay" debts, and his refusal to take his place within a traditional ethos all undermine meaning and communication. In the short run, Dom Juan's semiotic virtuosity gives him a great advantage over those who assume that his words and gestures signify engagement in a network of obligations. In the long run, this "clever" recognition that exchange and communication are based only on convention or shared delusion will empty society of the only ethical substance it ever had and definitively reduce status to style.

Like many other Molière characters, who "swallow" seductive language and allow narcissistic fantasy to be substituted for natural perception, Dom Juan's victims wind up lost in a world of words. Consuming signs that seem to flatter their pretensions, they themselves become mere signifiers of gullibility. Appropriately, given his militant anti-traditionalism, Dom Juan is also an arch-rationalist who believes only in mathematical Truth. He is, in my view, Molière's most complete dramatization of modernity's unavowed implications. He is the repressed shadow of progress and

of the Enlightenment. He is the apotheosis of *amour-propre*, self-maximization, and “economic man,” emancipated from entanglement in ethics. Dom Juan understands that his own identity as an aristocrat is a function of representation and a commodity within the system of cultural circulation. By constituting himself as language, *by speaking like a book*, Dom Juan becomes infinitely mobile. He is *made out of language*, including his clothes and gestures, and his style of communication converts the old patchwork of locally rooted meanings into an abstract open market where value is eternally negotiable, and where the buyer had better beware. Dom Juan is as mobile as mechanically printed and commercially distributed information, and as dangerous to naïve, narcissistic “readers.” Having encouraged others to consume him as a product of self-representation, he himself will be consumed by the flames of a generalized desire to emulate him, a desire which Molière thinly disguises as divine retribution.

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**Catherine Biheron and Mme du Coudray:
The Economics and Spectacle of Maternal Ideology**

by
Pam Lieske

Two gendered histories of early modern childbirth practice exist. The first centers on female midwives and their roles as respected community elders and skilled practitioners. In place of formalized training, female midwives learned their craft through informal apprenticeships with older female midwives, verified the legitimacy of birth to church and state authorities, and likely maintained infant mortality rates equal to, or less than, those in lying-in hospitals that were run by men (Gelis 108, Harley 35-8). In Britain this history of female midwifery typically focuses on women's uneven, yet gradual, exclusion from the profession through the encroachment of male midwives, the increasing use of forceps, prohibitions against women using instruments, and women's lack of equal access to professional training (Schnorrenberg 400, Towler and Bramall 77-81, Wertz and Wertz 41-2). Depending on the motives (and gender) of those telling this history, female midwives can also be seen as superstitious, uneducated, and drunken fools who routinely administer dangerous and unnecessary folk remedies that endanger the health of mother and child. Whether derogatory, celebratory, or somewhere in-between, what is seldom mentioned is that midwifery was difficult work, and, unless they served the aristocracy or royalty, most women did not grow rich birthing babies. Midwives such as Catherine Schrader in Germany and Martha Ballard in the United States worked alone, received little pay, and traveled large distances to the homes of poor women so they could then spend many more hours assisting them through labor and delivery (Towler and Bramall 66, Ulrich, Schrader).

Concurrent with this history of female midwives is one centering on men midwives and the professionalization of medicine. While national differences exist, men midwives in the 17th and 18th-C generally had more extensive and specialized training than their female counterparts. Men of financial means could travel to Paris, Leyden, and London to train with respected male midwives or male anatomists. Scientific study of the maternal body was also prevalent during the 17th and 18th-C, and most of these studies were conducted by scientific men and men midwives (Schiebinger, Lieske "Cyborgs"). Measuring pelvic size and angles, injecting wax into female reproductive organs and blood vessels, and constructing obstetrical teach-

ing machines made of female tissues and organs, were fairly routine during this period (Lieske “Smellie” 72). Small and large anatomical models of the maternal body used for scientific display were also produced. Workshops in 17th and 18th-C France, Germany, and Italy made replicas of pregnant women out of ivory, wax, bronze, and other materials—these replicas were used for medical display or for teaching women basic facts about pregnancy. While some women helped to make these models, most notably the Italian Anna Morandi-Manzolini who made large-scale anatomical waxes, most, if not all, workshops were run by men (Schnalke 35-43).

For the rest of this essay, I want to focus on two eighteenth-century French women, Madame du Coudray and Marie Catherine Bihéron, who do not fit neatly into either of the histories just presented. Both of these women constructed anatomical models of pregnant women, but because of their gender, their unique social and economic conditions, and the audiences for whom they made their models, neither woman successfully integrated herself into the elite realm of male science. What is of particular interest to me is how social and economic conditions influenced the types of models they produced and how their models were received by society.

Scant, but poignant information exists about Bihéron (1719-1786) (Boschung 60-1, Schnalke 31, Ritter 139-40). Daughter of a French pharmacist, Bihéron knew at an early age that she wanted to construct anatomical models of pregnant women that could be used for scientific display and the training of midwives. To accomplish these goals, she took drawing lessons as a child, and, at the age of sixteen, sought and gained access to the dissecting rooms in Paris. How much dissecting she did on her own and her reception by male colleagues is not known, though because of her gender and young age, she probably was not encouraged in her efforts. I say this because when she later attempted to give anatomical instruction on her models to a scientific audience, the Parisian physicians stepped in and stopped her efforts. Forced by financial need to make a living with her models, she then exhibited her work to a commercial audience, charging an entrance fee of three francs. This commercial enterprise, however, was largely unsuccessful, and she took her exhibit to London where her efforts were also unsuccessful (Schnalke 31).

During the five decades of her life that Bihéron made anatomical models, she worked, either by choice or by necessity, alone. This is important to note because during this period, collaboration with an anatomist was a crucial component for success for those making anatomical wax models. Waxes produced through the joint effort of

an established artist and a male anatomist legitimated the work, making it more palatable to a scientific community which craved science that skillfully fused aesthetics and empiricism. The relationship between the Sicilian artist and priest Giulio Gaetano Zumbo (also Zummo) and the Parisian surgeon Desnoues (1650-1735) is illustrative of this point (Schnalke 29). As head surgeon and teacher of anatomy at the hospital in Genoa, Desnoues taught vascular anatomy through the use of injections on cadavers. One particular cadaver was of special interest to him: a woman and baby who both died in childbirth with the baby's head crowning at the cervix. When this cadaver began to deteriorate, Desnoues approached Zumbo with the request that he reproduce this figure in wax, and thus their short-lived, but highly successful collaboration began. Between 1717 and 1729 Desnoues brought his wax models to London and Paris for exhibition and sale, and there is evidence that his exhibit was present in London as late as 1746. Albrecht von Haller, saw the collection in Paris and said it consisted of "realistic models of the whole body, from which inner organs could be partially removed" (Schnalke 29). The title of a 1739 brochure published in London describes Desnoues' waxes in this way:

Syllabus pointing out every Part of the Human System. Likewise the different Positions of the Child in the Womb, etc., as they are exactly and accurately shewn (sic) in the Anatomical Wax-Figures, of the late Monsieur Denoue [sic]. To which is added, a Compendium of Anatomy, Describing the Figures, Situations, Connexion, and Uses of all the Parts of the Human Body. (qtd. in Glaister 100)

In addition to her lack of collaboration with an anatomist, another likely reason that Biheron's work gained little success with both scientific and lay audiences was that it was so different. From the description of Desnoues' work, it is clear that his models were entirely made of wax and their goal was to accurately and passively represent internal anatomy. In contrast, Biheron's models were only partially made of wax and her aim was to animate internal human anatomy and physiology. This can be seen in the obstetrical model she presented to the Académie Royale des Sciences in 1770, near the end of her life. Academy records describe the model in this way:

This phantom represents the lower abdomen and half the thighs; it is built on a pelvis with a mobile coccyx; the womb and its appendages, the bladder, and the rectum are situated in it as they would be in

the natural state, the entrances of the rectum, that of the labia majora, the opening of the womb, can be closed or dilated at will; the main body of the womb and its base are tilted to one side or the other as desired; they can contract, coming together gradually, moving in the direction of the opening: making use of this structure, and placing a phantom of a child in the womb with its cord and its placenta ... [with] the bladder and the urethra ... in their natural positions, it is possible to practice on this phantom the catheter operation” (qtd. in Ritter 149).

When scholars describe Biheron’s work as fragile innate waxes meant only for aesthetic display, they clearly aren’t attending to this model (Schnalke 31). While the work she produced for commercial audiences may have been similar to the anatomical-aesthetic figures made by Ruysch, Denoues, and Chovet, the model just described is more reminiscent of the obstetrical machines made by male midwives such as William Smellie and Richard Manningham in England, Gregoire in France, van Hoorn in Sweden, and Georg Freidrich Mohr in Germany (Boschung, Ritter). These men produced durable models intended for the practical teaching of midwifery, though parts of machines must have decomposed quickly because of the use of human tissues and organs. Still, students observed the contractions and tilting of the womb on these machines, as well as a cervix that opens and closes. They also practiced “turning” the child in the womb, delivery, and the use of instruments during difficult births. Biheron’s model or machine even allows practitioners to catheterize the bladder, an addition that, to the best of my knowledge, is found only in one other obstetrical machine: that of Madame du Coudray.

Male midwives began constructing obstetrical teaching machines in western Europe at the turn of the eighteenth-century. While a fetus and pelvic cavity were common features in all machines, their construction varied widely. Some machines were little more than a female pelvis with a canvas bag inside, while others were extravagantly built with pulleys, levers, shifting fluid, and orifices that opened and closed. Despite these variations, machines in general became much more elaborate and technically sophisticated as the century wore, due in large part to knowledge gained from the meticulous study and testing of maternal anatomy and physiology (Schiebinger, Lieske “Cyclops”). Detailed empirical study led male midwives to understand the micro dynamics of labor and delivery, including the thinning of the uterine wall, strength and pliability of pelvic bones and the fetal head, movement and strength of uterine contractions, dilation

of the cervix, and rotation of the fetal body as it passed through the birth canal, and these insights help to explain why the obstetrical machines they constructed became increasingly focused on replicating minute changes in, and the relationship between, reproductive organs and the fetus. It also explains why most men-midwives made very few machines, why they commonly used human tissues and organs as materials, and why the more practical matter of catheterizing the mother's bladder would not interest them.

Keeping this overview of male midwives' obstetrical machines in mind, I now want to turn to the work of Madame Angelique Marguerite le Boursier du Coudray (1712-1789), a French midwife who is a contemporary of Biheron. Unlike Germany, where political fragmentation prevented the formation of national programs to improve midwifery training, eighteenth-century France placed maternity and birth on its national agenda by developing state sponsored programs for wet nursing and for the training of midwives (Sussman). Recognizing du Coudray's reputation as a skilled midwife, the French government commissioned her to teach midwifery to the rural poor. For twenty-five years, she worked for the government, traveling to various provinces where she taught midwifery classes and demonstrated labor and delivery on her machines. She made her first machine in 1756 and is estimated to have made hundreds of them during her long career, teaching approximately 4000 students on them (Boschung 60, Gelbart *King's* 60).

Nina Radner Gelbart's recent biography details du Coudray's travels throughout France and her relationship with French authorities, and while du Coudray is shown to be a skilled and dedicated midwife, one cannot help but realize that she was also a shrewd business woman interested in commercial gain. (She even started a mini-dynasty of sorts by passing her business on to her niece and her niece's husband when she retired). Realizing that her largely uneducated female audience only needed to know basic information about labor and delivery, she mass produced her machines, and repeatedly tried to sell them and her midwifery text to local authorities and those few male male-midwives interested in her work (Gelbart "Delivering" 468).

The only known extant model of one of du Coudray's machine is in Rouen. Made of wicker, fabric, leather, stuffing, and sponges, the most striking feature of this midriff to thigh manikin is its softness and puffiness; it looks very much like an inflatable doll. At times she may have used a partial skeleton for a frame, but most times she appears to have used wicker. The most prevalent material

in her machines is cloth—not human organs and tissues—and machines made out of common cloth, which were the most prevalent, sold for less than those made out of silk (Gelbart *King's* 173). Her use of cloth suggests that du Coudray was interested in making obstetrical machines that were both durable and practical, and as such she likely consulted with doll makers, seamstresses, and millinery workers, and not scientific men or male anatomists, about how best to construct her devices. In 1773, upon learning that the city of Metz has bought machines from Parisian manufacturers of dolls and automata, du Coudray vows to go there: “I know they [the machines] are not worth much . . . but if there is something good about them, and that I don't know, I swear to you I will always take it. That's the purpose that drives me there” (qtd. in Gelbart's *King's* 165). Rather than striving to duplicate detailed motion and sensation in the maternal body, as many men midwives did, du Coudray seemed more concerned with improving her machines to meet market demands. Around 1766, she made machines that included liquid filled sponges, and she aimed this product toward a strictly male audience, knowing that male surgeons and midwives wanted more detailed information than the uneducated women she usually taught. After teaching this male audience, she then tried to sell these more advanced machines with “supplements” for extra money (Gelbart's *King's* 127).

The preface of du Coudray's textbook, describes her obstetrical machine in this way:

The machine that I invented . . . represents the pelvis of a woman, the uterus, its orifice, its ligaments, the canal called the vagina, the bladder, and the rectum. I added to it a model of a child of natural size, the joints of which I made flexible enough so that it is possible to place it in different positions on its back, with the membranes, and the demonstration of the waters that contain them, the umbilical cord composed of its two arteries and the vein, leaving half shriveled and the other swollen, to imitate—to a certain extent—the cord of a dead child and the cord of a living child, in which one feels the beating of the vessels of which it is composed. I [also] added a model of the head of a child, separated from the torso, in which the bones of the skull overlap (qtd. in Ritter 139).

For du Coudray, childbirth was not mysterious or unknowable. Unlike male midwives, who routinely made few machines, du Coudray felt no apparent need to perfect her models or agonize over their composition or mechanization. In 1780, near the end of her career, she even agreed to teach midwifery to veterinarians at the royal veterinary school (Gelbart's "Delivering" 471). Voicing no complaint about the work in her letters, suggests that du Coudray saw the birthing of babies and animals to be analogous.

In choosing "The Economics and Spectacle of Maternal Ideology" for the title of my paper, I wished to highlight how social and economic factors prevented Biheron and du Coudray from participating in larger scientific and aesthetic debates about maternal ideology. If scientific audiences had been receptive to her work, Biheron's comprehensive and practical representation of the mechanical and processional nature of labor and delivery might have helped stem the diverse and, at times, elaborate material models of maternity that existed in the second half of the eighteenth-century, including plaster castes of cervixes, glass uteri that opened and closed like books, models that titled and levitated, whole or partial infant cadavers and female skeletons, and reclining wax models of pregnant women that eroticized birth through the use of jewels, clothes, and provocative poses (Boschung, Ritter, Jordanova 50). Biheron's career, however, floundered, as her work was seemingly too empirical for her lay audience, and without midwifery audiences, the assistance of a male anatomist, and/or the use of human tissues or organs, too aesthetic for scientific audiences.

Whether du Coudray ever attempted to have her work seen in male scientific circles seems unlikely. Some men of stature did come to see her work, most notably Levret, and some of her pupils were men, but it is clear that her work did not influence patriarchal medicine (Gelbart's *King's* 63, 117). No male midwife of any stature ever consulted with her on the design and construction of her obstetrical machines. Her working life was controlled by the French government and her male superiors, and the battles she fought centered on maintaining and extending the territories within which she taught and the rural markets to whom she sold her machines and midwifery text. Thus like Biheron, du Coudray's vision of childbirth as a natural, practical, and universal process never influenced larger scientific circles. And without their feminine perspective on childbirth, cultural anxiety about sexual difference and the relationship of maternity to female identity continued largely unchecked.

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**“What’s a Mother to Do?”:
Maternal Advice from a Wise Woman**

**By
Kirk D. Read**

I. Introduction: Mothers, daughters and midwives.

This essays aims to explore the ways in which literary women of the late 16th and early 17th centuries spoke of childbirth and midwifery within the mother-daughter context. The centerpiece of my study is the case of Louise Bourgeois (dite Boursier), the renowned midwife to many of the Parisian elite of her day, including, on six occasions, Marie de Médicis. She wrote at length of her experiences in several books; the work that most closely addresses issues of maternity for Louise Bourgeois as both mother and midwife is *The Observations diverses sur la stérilité, perte de fruits, fécondité, accouchements et maladies des femmes et enfants nouveau-nés suivi de Instructions à ma fille* of 1609. The book is a gold mine for interdisciplinary scholarship: the work begins with Petrarchan liminal poems in honor of the many luminaries who have helped her along in her career, and ends with the most pedestrian, though sincerely-rendered concluding remarks entitled *Remède pour apaiser le vomissement*.

The Observations is clearly and explicitly conceived as addressed to Louise Bourgeois’s daughter. The manual will help others surely, but the first and most important designated reader is her daughter whom she is training to follow along in her profession. The material is poignant and rich, both scientifically and literarily. As a midwife and mother with literary pretensions, Bourgeois is at the nexus of an array of issues concerning the co-opting of midwives’ livelihood by the university-trained male medical establishment and the persistent suspicion of women’s published self-expression. The children of the flesh issuing from women’s bodies increasingly fell into the hands of men. Children of the spirit continued to be the acceptable, privileged offspring of the male literati. What, indeed, was a mother to do? Given the odds against finding an audience, Bourgeois’s persistence and success are a marvel worth scrutiny.

While the case of the Bourgeois household is unique, the issues pertaining to literature and the politics of gynecology, as it were, were not. A most fruitful comparison can be found in a sixteenth-century example from Poitiers, Madeleine and Catherine des Roches, mother and daughter, who inscribed their loving familial relationship

into their published works and did so with particular attention to their status as mothers, both literal and literary. Early contemporaries of Louise Bourgeois (for twenty years at least), the Des Roches pair can help us read *The Observations* with a particular regard for the ambient anxiety at the time over women's bodies, birthing and care-taking. It is a story about touching and not touching; speaking and not speaking; of revealing and of dissembling.

II. Mythologizing Obstetrics: the case of Madeleine and Catherine des Roches.

Thanks to the editorial acumen and persistence of Anne Larsen, the life and works of Madeleine and Catherine des Roches are now richly re-presented and documented. A summary sketch must suffice here to leave room for comparative study. After the death of her second husband, Madeleine des Roches renounced all notions of future marriages and lived in a highly productive literary ménage with her only daughter, Catherine, who, to many a suitor's frustration and or bewilderment, chose never to enter into marriage in the first place. The content of their poetic works is decidedly domestic, or is inspired by Biblical or classical texts which illuminate women's concerns. For this discussion, it is the embedded attitudes about child-bearing that are most pertinent. Madeleine's *Ode 1* is a remarkable poem, at once polemical, despairing and edgy—ever the moreso for its primary position in their first works. In the following stanzas, Madeleine is defending her choice of subjects and introducing what will become a recurring theme of writing in the face of adversity:

Le Ciel a bien infuz dedans nostre âme	17
Les petits feux, principes de vertu,	
Mais le chaud est par le froid combattu,	
Si un peu bois n'alimente la flame....	
Noz parens on de loûables coustumes,	25
Pour nous tollir l'usage de raison,	
De nous tenir closes dans la maison	
Et nous donner le fuzeau pour la plume.	
Trassant noz pas selon la destinée,	29
On nous promet liberté et plaisir:	
Et nous payons l'obstiné desplaisir,	
Portant le dot sous les loix d'Hymenée.	
Bientost après survient une misère	33
Qui naist en nous d'un désir mutuel,	
Accompagné d'un soing continuel,	
Qui suit tousjours l'entraille de la mère.	
Il faut soudain que nous changions l'office	37

Qui nous pouvoit quelque peu façonner,
 Où les marys ne nous feront sonner
 Que l'obéir, le soing, et l'avarice.
 Quelcun d'entr'eux, ayant fermé la porte 41
 À la vertu, nourrice du sçavoir,
 En nous voyant craint de la recevoir
 Pource qu'ell'porte habit de nostre sorte....
 Mon Dieu, mon Dieu combien de tolérance 49
 Que je ne veux icy ramente'voir!
 Il me suffit aux hommes faire voir
 Combien leurs loix nous font de violence....
 Dames, faisons ainsi que l'amarante 69
 Qui par l'hyver ne pert sa belle fleur;
 L'esprit imbu de divine liqueur
 Rend par labeur sa force plus luisante. (Des Roches
 1578; pp. 86-89)

Aside from the obvious lament of the onerous tasks of womanhood and wedlock, it is interesting to note the extent to which Madeleine des Roches couches her intellectual dampening or, conversely, awakening, in terms of insemination and birth (see my emphases). Madeleine des Roches's frank and despairing talk about the unglamorous side of motherhood, "le soin continuel qui suit les entrailles de la mère," is rather remarkable. For all that her daughter Catherine is now a beautiful, cherished companion, the burden of childbirth and early infant care cannot be denied (Catherine is assumed to be the only surviving child of three born to Madeline des Roches.). With regard to birthing in *Ode I*, there appears a clear distinction—which will become important later—between real birth and babies ("des entrailles de la mère") and metaphorical ("divines liqueurs" and so forth). We find numerous other examples in the collected works of these two, most directly when the mother compares her publications to the children of Eve (Des Roches 1586; pp. 84-87). Responses couched in a similar metaphorical vein abound equally in the works of her daughter who repeatedly offers her written works to her mother as children of the spirit, the only grandchildren Madeleine will ever know! As she says to her mother at the end of her dedicatory epistle from the same tome: "J'ay seulement pensé de vous monstrier comme j'employe le temps de ma plus grande oisiveté, et vous supplie humblement (ma mère) de recevoir ces petits escrits qui vous en rendront tesmoignage; si vous en trouvez quelques-uns qui soient assez bien nez, avouez-les s'il vous plaist pour voz nepveux (the term "nepveux" is a play on words meaning "descendants" but also evoking Madeleine's maiden name "De Neveu" [Des Roches 1578; p. 185]).

The most relevant text for my purposes here is the narrative poem *Agnodice* written by the daughter. This work is a long narrative poem, based loosely on a fable by Hyginus, about Agnodice, a brave heroine who arrives as a stranger to rescue the Athenian women who are condemned to a life robbed of learning as a consequence of the death of Phocion and the anger of Envy. Envy induces all husbands to become tyrants, forbidding their wives to read books thereby sapping them of the desire or force of will to live. To one such victim she growls (Des Roches 1578; pp. 335-340):

Car en despit de toy j’animeray les ames 61
Des maris, qui seront les tyrans de leurs femmes,
Et qui leur défendant le livre et le sçavoir,
Leur osteront aussi de vivre le pouvoir.

This decree causes a physical malaise that soon afflicts the spiritually bereft women:

Les dames aussitost se trouvèrent suivies 73
De fièvres, de langueurs, et d’autres maladies ;
Leur faisoit supporter incroyables tourmens.

Ayant trop mieux mourir que d’estre peu honteuses
Contant aux Médecins leurs peines langouereuses,
Les femmes (o pitié !) n’osoient plus se mesler
De s’aider l’une l’autre ; on les faisoit filler.

It is this convergence of physical and spiritual unease that I wish to underscore in Catherine des Roches’s work—that there is a keen connection between the life of the mind and the life of the body, and that she makes the connection with regard to birthing. The “incroyables tourmens” and “peines langouereuses” are quite clearly references to the women-and-knowledge boiler-plate text from Genesis, that the torments of labor are a reminder of woman’s original sin, the sin of desire for knowledge whose consequences are likewise linked to her reproductive capacities.

Agnodice to the rescue. A daring, compassionate “dame gentille”, she disguises herself and finds a way to attend to her sisters in need by gaining entry into the male medical establishment.

Ceste Dame, cachant l’or de sa blonde tresse, 92
Arist la médecine, et s’en fait grand maistresse.
Puis se resouenant de son affection,
Voulut effectuer sa bonne intention, 95

Et guérir les douleurs de ses pauvres voisines

Agnodice returns, but, as she is still in disguise, the women are still too embarrassed and wary to trust her: “Mais les Dames pansant que ce fut un garso,/Refusoient son secours d’une estrange façon.” The scene of *dévoilement* is one of the most intense descriptions of female bonding imaginable; the exploitation of the senses of sight and especially touch are startling and most relevant to my argument:

Agnodice, voyant leur grande chasteté, 106
 Les estima beaucoup pour ceste honnesteté;
 Lors descouvrant du sein les blanches pommes ronds,
 Et de son chef doré les belles tresses blondes,
 Monstre qu’elle estoit fille, et que son gentil cœur
 Les vouloit délivrer de leur triste langueur.
 Les Dames admirant ceste honte naisve,
 Et de son teint doüillet la blanche couleur vive,
 Et de son sein poupin le petit mont jumeau,
 Et de son chef sacré l’or crepelu tant beau, 115
 Et de ses yeux divins les flammes ravissantes,
 Et de ses doux propos les grâces attirantes,
 Baisèrent mille fois et sa bouche et son sein,
 Recevant le secours de son heureuse main.

The narrative here is exquisitely gentle and careful: Agnodice admires their “grande chasteté” and is moved by their “honesteté”; the women, in turn, are comforted by Agnodice’s “honte naisve”. Such mutual respect and admiration leads to an intensely rendered “group hug” as it were, in language evocative of love lyric of the most impassioned sort: witness the ecstatic amplification embodied in “Et de son teint, et de son sein, et de son chef, et de ses yeux...” The eroticism of such poetry is noteworthy; for the more limited purposes of my discussion here, I would draw attention most basically to the physical, to the woman’s body as touchable or un-touchable as befits the healer-wounded scenario. Agnodice arrives and is given this excited welcome by women thanks to the fact that they have at last a healer who, with no sense of impropriety or shame, can touch them. When word gets around that Agnodice is attending to these women to their obvious well-being and delight, the same scene of revelation is enacted for the male authorities who, in a fantasy of stunning conversion, stand in mute, awed acceptance (Des Roches 1578; p. 339):

Depuis qu'elle eut parlé, oncq une seule voix 155
 Ne s'esleva contre elle; ainsi toute l'assistance
 Monstroit d'esmerveiller ceste rare excellence ;
 Ils estoient tous ravis, sans parler ny mouvoir,
 Ententifs seulement à l'ouyr et la voir.
 Comme l'on voit parfois après un long orage,160
 R'asserener les vents, et calmer le rivage...

Agnodice, midwife to the Athenians, transforms the Envy-tainted society that has banished women from books and learning and begins the work of repairing wounded minds and bodies. Agnodice is the midwife of children of both the body and the spirit. The labor is difficult and noble and cherished for women in a society suspicious and highly proscriptive; a society that links women's unworthiness constantly to the messiness, the shame and the mutable nature of their bodies. And so Agnodice arrives to dispel such mythologizing and indeed to turn such opinion on its head: perhaps women are worthy and capable because of this ability to reproduce.

The example of Louise Bourgeois can now be seen as a living example of this beautifully-rendered myth. Agnodice in living color.

III. Louise Bourgeois dite Boursier: Writing to Save Women's Lives

While the bulk of Louise Bourgeois's work is about conveying advice on midwifery through anecdotal evidence and astute observation, she does carve out significant space in her prefatory space to show off her poetic erudition. Significantly, and not surprisingly, her poetry is very bound up in the rhetoric of humility and apology that she is not erudite enough—though her persistence in this mode through twenty-one poetic offerings belies perhaps a hint of false modesty! From the sonnet to her mother-in-law (Bourgeois 1609; p. 34):

Que n'ai-je maintenant ainsi que je désire, 1
 D'un Desportes mignard langage affînté,
 Que ne suis-je un Ronsard, ou bien que n'ai-je été
 Sur le mont d'Hélicon, où Phœbus se retire.
 Afin qu'ayant appris la façon de bien dire, 5
 Plein de sainte fureur et de divinité,
 Je pense ce jour d'hui à toute éternité
 Marier tes vertus aux chansons de ma lyre...

And in the same vein to Monsieur Du Laurens, primary physician to the king (Bougeois 1609; p. 34):

...Ses vertus ce sont mers, où quiconque s'embarque,
 5
 Doit bien considérer, avant que d'y cingler
 S'il a pour avirons le tout divin parler
 D'un Bellay, d'un Bartas ou de quelque Pétrarque.
 N'ayant rien de ceux-là, si sens-je toutefois
 Je ne sais quelque dieu, qui me hausse la voix,¹⁰
 Et inspire ma plume heureusement féconde
 À écrire aujourd'hui, que ton savoir divin...

A fecund pen indeed. And she is quick to name the “je ne sais quelque dieu” who is Lucina, the goddess of childbirth (whom we will come back to). Bourgeois shows herself to be highly conversant in the poetic strains of her day, and more than willing to participate. It is the complimentary evidence in this midwife's epistles and prose that underscore the poignancy of these apologetics and reveal the highly self-conscious nature of her birthing enterprise writ large and small.

Bourgeois's two prefatory epistles, most especially the “Au Lecteur” are indeed shot through with the birthing metaphor in a manner not unlike her contemporaries Ronsard, Montaigne, Rabelais and others. Her book is “cet enfant de mon esprit, créature des mérites de la plus grande Reine que le ciel ait fait naître”; she later expounds upon “la naissance donc de ce livre” (Bourgeois 1578; pp. 31-32). The child of the spirit is an old chestnut that she is happy—and so conveniently poised—to exploit. The elaboration of this theme is made most explicit and is most highly developed, however, not here in the prefatory works, but in the embedded text, the Instructions à Ma Fille, where her daughter is presented with some important directives not only regarding the practice of midwifery in the testy social and political scène of Paris, but in the context of a classical, literary tradition as well.

It may serve well to juxtapose two sections from the opening of the Instructions, the first of which witnesses the decidedly privileged status of Bourgeois with regard to the medical establishment. She confides to her daughter:

Vous n'en manquerez nullement, d'autant que vous êtes enfant de famille, un docteur en médecine est mari de votre sœur, votre mari fait son cours pour l'être, l'un de vos frères est pharmacien, votre père est chirurgien, et moi sage-femme : le corps de la médecine est entier dans notre maison (Bourgeois 175).

It is important for Bourgeois to establish for her daughter the true connections and the ancestry that she has in the work of healing and childbirth. Bourgeois's husband was a student for many years of Ambroise Paré, and she herself speaks of reading in his works and of consulting with her husband about them. The weight of influence is not negligible.

A concomitant agenda, however, is the inscribing of her daughter into a literary tradition, one allied with child birthing, that she seems keen on reclaiming in order to justify her present and any future literary endeavors. Again from the beginning of the Instructions:

Je vous dirai donc d'où vous êtes et moi aussi, afin que vous suiviez mes préceptes, et connaissiez votre pays. Me trouvant embarquée dans un ménage, chargée d'enfants, accablée de guerre et de perte de bien, la sage Phanerote, mère de ce grand philosophe Socrate, prit pitié de moi, me consola et conseilla d'embrasser ses sciences, me représentant que toutes choses concourraient à bien, pour moi la croyant. Que, à cause d'elle, dont je serais fille adoptive, tous les disciples de son fils Socrate me seraient favorables. Que mon mari qui exerçait les oeuvres manuelles de chirurgie me guiderait. Comme Lucine, déesse des accouchements, jalouse d'honneur, vit que Phanerote m'avait départi de si grandes faveurs, à l'envi me départit des siennes, m'apprit de quel pied il faut marcher en telle affaire, et à l'imiter en ses vêtements.

Avisez, ma fille, ce que vous pouvez être plus que moi, étant petit-fille de Phanerote, disciple de Lucine, maîtresse de Mercure, à cause que Lucine l'a assujetti

à votre mère. Vous êtes née dans l'exercice que cette sage m'a montré... (Bourgeois 174-175)

It is clear that this geneology is as important to Bourgeois's plan of "instruction" as is her display of the family full of doctors and midwives that surround her. She's done her homework and arrayed an impressive cast of characters in her opening remarks to her daughter. The reference to Socrates and Phaenarete is a classic text of perfect relevance to Bourgeois's construction of a female sphere of influence previously appropriated by her Greek male "ancestors." From the *Theaetetus* of Plato:

THEAETETUS: ...but I can neither persuade myself that I have any satisfactory answer, nor can I find anyone else who gives the kind of answer you insist upon; and yet, on the other hand, I cannot get rid of a feeling of concern about the matter.

SOCRATES: Yes, you are suffering the pangs of labour, Theaetetus, because you are not empty, but pregnant.

THEAET: I do not know, Socrates; I merely tell you what I feel.

SOC: Have you then not heard, you absurd boy, that I am the son of a noble and burly midwife, Phaenarete?

THEAET: Yes, I have heard that.

SOC: And have you also heard that I practise the same art?

THEAET: No, never...

SOC: Just take into consideration the whole business of the midwives, and you will understand more easily what I mean. ...So great, then, is the importance of midwives; but their function is less important than mine. For women do not, like my patients, bring forth at one time real children and at another mere images which it is difficult to distinguish from the real. For if they did, the greatest and noblest part of the work of the midwives would be in distinguishing between the real and the false. ...All that is true of their art of midwifery is true also of mine, but mine differs from theirs in being practised upon men, not women, and in tending their souls in labour, not their bodies. But the greatest thing about my art is this, that it can test in every way whether the mind of the young man is

bringing forth a mere image, an imposture, or a real and genuine offspring (Plato).

This is surely Louise Bourgeois's source text and a prickly one it is for her. While Bourgeois does go on in the passage to align herself with Phaenarete "dont je serais fille adoptive" one cannot help but balk at Socrates's supposition that women do not bring forth both real and imaginary children. What has Bourgeois done if not just that? Neither can one think of the Greek precedent as divorced from the increasingly daunting realities of midwives such as Bourgeois who, precisely at this time, were witnessing the rapidly increasing distaste for and indeed condemnation of the profession of midwifery as a women's practice and its takeover by the male medical establishment. Bourgeois's final poetic selection which serves as a sort of envoi, puts the challenge concisely (Bourgeois 38):

Un honneur me fit entreprendre
 Un affronteur presque étouffer ;
 Un médisant m'a fait reprendre,
 De trois me faisant triompher

Bourgeois is indeed triumphing against several odds: a literary tradition hostile to her publishing and a medical establishment engaged in the banishing of women from the newly-redefined field of obstetrics—a male community intent on legally banishing women from participating.—

Before arriving at Bourgeois's most crucially comparative moment in *The Observations*, an appreciation of Lucina is perhaps in order. Lucina, the goddess of childbirth makes a number of appearances in Ovid's *Metamorphoses*, the text Bourgeois would have known and had in mind as she penned this advice. The reference I find most relevant would be in the story of Alcmene who is tortured in childbirth by the envious Juno. Juno calls upon Lucina to sit outside the birthing room and by her charms and magic powers, arrest the progress of Alcmene's labor. From Ovid:

Nay, even now as I tell it, cold horror holds my limbs and my pains return even as I think of it. For seven nights and days I was in torture; then, spent with anguish, I stretched my arms to heaven and with a mighty wail I called upon Lucina and her fellow guardian deities of birth. Lucina came, indeed, but pledged in advance to give my life to cruel Juno. There she sat upon the altar before the door, listening

to my groans, with her right knee crossed over her left, and with her fingers interlocked; and so she stayed the birth. (Ovid Vol. II, p. 23-25)

The image of Lucina on the doorsill, on the margins, as it were, of this scene is most poignant. She is a figure of immense power, able to hold sway over the progress of labor and delivery. Only when the clever handmaid comes along is the spell released:

...and as she was passing in and out the house, she saw the goddess seated on the altar holding her clinched hands upon her knees, and said to her: 'Whoever you are, congratulate our mistress: Argive Alcmena is relieved; her prayers are answered and her child is born.' Up leaped the goddess of birth, unclined her hands and spread them wide in consternation; my bonds were loosed and I was delivered of my child. (Ovid Vol. II, p. 25)

Women's bodies by charm and by calling are inextricably bound together in the throes of labor. Clearly, the role of Lucina is not entirely exemplary here—but she is not a deplorable figure, ensnared as she is in the Ovidian scheme of more powerful gods and mutable situations.

It is perhaps Lucina's marginalized status in this tale which is most telling. This final illustration, Louise Bourgeois's own recounting of a difficult labor, speaks eloquently of the struggle for power and for a sisterhood of "sage-femmes" that were slowly slipping away. In this story Louise Bourgeois attends the birth of a family unsure of her presence and capabilities; a strange scenario ensues:

...je me trouvais un jour à l'accouchement d'une honnête demoiselle de mes bonnes amies, de laquelle le mari était absent; elle était assistée de trois ou quatre de ses amies, lesquelles me demandèrent l'état de son accouchement, je leur dis que l'enfant veait mal, mais que je l'aurais, aidant Dieu, sans danger de la mère ni de l'enfant; elles me prièrent d'avoir agréable de la faire voir au chirurgien; pour leur décharge, je leur accordai, pourvu qu'elle ne le vit point, d'autant que je savais que cela était capable de la faire mourir d'appréhension, et de honte. Je la persuadai de se glisser aux pieds de son lit. Je mis le chevet au milieu

du lit et abattis le tour du lit du cité qu'il devait passer, et aux pieds: il la toucha comme je parlais, elle ne le vit point, et accoucha sans artifice ni aide, que de Dieu et de la nature (Bourgeois 187).

The arrangements are elaborate and, for Bourgeois, perhaps humiliating, though somewhat comical in the game of deception. Having coaxed her client to the edge of the bed and hidden the surgeon from view, he touches, she talks—a heartrending scene of ventriloquism in which Bourgeois is given the power to speak but not touch. What would Agnodice and her Athenian mothers have made of this? Recall the modest, fearful outcasts who, in the end, delight in their savior's ability to touch. Recall their gathering around Agnodice and kissing her mouth and breast “mille fois” in turn “Recevant le secours de son heureuse main.” What could it have meant for Bourgeois at this moment to be banished from touch, to be left with only words?

IV: Conclusion: What's a mother to do?

Madeleine and Catherine des Roches are certainly “in touch” with the literary midwifery that assists the births of their many children of the spirit—two long volumes of poetry, a collection of occasional poems and another volume of the “Missives”. Louise Bourgeois is to me all the more remarkable for her role as both literal and literary midwife. She commerces in both the “entrailles de la mère” and in its sometimes lyrical, sometimes pedestrian rendering in literature. Louise Bourgeois is a pains to shepherd her daughter into a world of service to women's bodies and spirits; her example seems, indeed, close to the best a mother could do.

I would refer the reader to Wendy Perkins's excellent study of Bourgeois for particulars of the medical milieu and the challenges to midwives of the period: *Midwifery and Medicine in Early Modern France*: Louise Bourgeois (Exeter, UK: Exeter UP, 1996)

Bates College

Pour une approche interactive de l'enseignement des textes littéraires au niveau intermédiaire: Les *Contes* de Perrault.

**par
Jean-Marc Poisson**

Grâce aux progrès de la linguistique et de la pédagogie, l'enseignement des langues étrangères s'est considérablement amélioré ces quinze dernières années dans les universités américaines. Nombreux sont aujourd'hui les départements de langues qui pratiquent des approches interactives de l'enseignement visant à encourager la participation active des étudiants dans la salle de classe.

Or cette évolution de l'enseignement de la langue semble avoir eu assez peu d'incidence sur les cours du niveau intermédiaire. Je veux parler des cours d'introduction à la littérature ou des cours avancés de langue dans lesquels des textes littéraires sont présentés. Bien souvent, en effet, ce genre de cours reste principalement centré sur l'enseignant dispensateur du savoir contenu dans le texte et ne favorise guère une réelle interaction entre le texte, l'étudiant, et l'enseignant.

Faute d'avoir pris en compte les intérêts, les désirs et les besoins des étudiants, ce premier contact avec la littérature se réduit alors parfois à un ennuyeux soliloque face à une classe passive, inattentive et se sentant complètement dépassée.

Il est en effet important de rappeler que la plupart des « sophomores » ou des « juniors » qui s'inscrivent dans nos cours de troisième année n'ont ni les ressources linguistiques ni les outils analytiques et critiques nécessaires pour lire, comprendre et discuter d'un texte littéraire comme peuvent le faire des étudiants de maîtrise ou de doctorat, par exemple. Certains découvrent la littérature pour la première fois, tous manquent de confiance et se croient incapables de venir à bout d'un texte littéraire.

* * *

Un récent article de Betsy Keller (*q.v.*) rappelle qu'une lecture unique d'un texte littéraire est souvent insuffisante, même pour un lecteur averti, et présente l'opération de re-lecture comme le seul moyen de réellement apprécier l'œuvre dans sa globalité et d'en explorer les différentes couches de sens--des détails insignifiants au

premier abord ne prennent parfois tous leur sens qu'à la dernière page d'un livre.

En m'appuyant sur ces conclusions, j'aimerais donc présenter et promouvoir une approche de l'enseignement des textes littéraires au niveau intermédiaire encourageant la prise de parole et la participation active des étudiants. Cette approche reposera sur différentes stratégies de lecture permettant une plus grande production de sens en mettant les étudiants dans une situation de « relecture » de l'œuvre. Je parlerai de l'activité de prélecture, de la préparation à la discussion en classe, et de la discussion elle-même.

J'illustrerai mon propos en utilisant l'exemple des *Contes* de Perrault. Perrault est en effet le candidat idéal pour qui aborde pour la première fois la littérature française, et, a fortiori, celle du dix-septième siècle. D'abord les contes de Perrault sont relativement courts (une dizaine de pages environs) et leur prose se lit sans trop de difficulté. Ensuite, et surtout, l'univers du conte de fées est un univers familier, contrairement à celui du drame classique, par exemple, et l'intrigue du *Petit chaperon rouge*, de *Cendrillon*, ou de *La Belle au bois dormant* est connue de tous nos étudiants, ou presque.

Cette familiarité est importante, car elle permet, d'une part, a) de briser le mur invisible qui rend l'œuvre littéraire inabordable aux yeux des étudiants, et d'autre part, b) de mieux isoler ce qui constitue l'originalité de Perrault (le fait que ses contes ne s'adressent pas tant aux enfants qu'au public plus adulte de la cour, par exemple) et d'apprécier la différence entre la vision du monde ou la sensibilité d'un auteur français du dix-septième siècle et celle des frères Grimm ou des studios Disney. Mes étudiants ont ainsi été surpris ou choqués, mais ont aussi beaucoup aimé la cruauté, ou disons la "différence de sensibilité" de Perrault; le fait, par exemple, que la mère-grand et le petit chaperon rouge soient vraiment dévorés par le loup, au lieu d'être finalement sauvés par un chasseur, comme dans la version de Grimm. De même, ils ont trouvé particulièrement réjouissante (« politiquement incorrecte », mais réjouissante) l'histoire de *Riquet à la houppe*. Le court passage qui suit a été jugé particulièrement "méchant", mais nous a tous fait éclater de rire:

La cadette enlaidissait à vue d'œil, et l'aînée devenait plus stupide de jour en jour. Ou elle ne répondait rien à ce qu'on lui demandait, ou elle disait une sottise. Elle était avec cela si maladroite qu'elle n'eût pu ranger quatre Porcelaines sur le bord d'une che-

minée sans en casser une, ni boire un verre d'eau sans en répandre la moitié sur ses habits.

Le simple fait qu'un verbe comme « enlaidir » puisse exister en français a ouvert, je crois, de nouveaux horizons à mes étudiants.

L'activité de prélecture.

L'activité de prélecture est organisée en classe avant même d'aborder le texte. Elle a plusieurs fonctions. Elle permet d'exciter la curiosité des étudiants et de créer un certain nombre d'attentes ou de formuler certaines hypothèses par rapport au texte. Elle permet également de remettre en mémoire ou d'introduire le vocabulaire, ainsi que de fournir divers renseignements (sur le genre, l'auteur, le mouvement littéraire, etc.) ou de clarifier certains concepts nécessaires à la bonne compréhension du texte. Bref, elle doit permettre d'optimiser cette première lecture en recréant l'intertexte nécessaire à un décryptage fructueux du texte.

Avant même d'aborder les *Contes* de Perrault, on pourra donc par exemple demander aux étudiants de citer quelques titres de contes de fées (que l'on traduira pour eux au besoin), puis de dresser une liste a) des personnages récurrents (la jeune fille, le prince charmant, le loup, l'ogre, la sorcière, la fée, etc.), b) des lieux (le château, la forêt, la rivière, etc.) et c) des événements traditionnels (naissance, sortilège, quête, mariage, etc.) ; et de relever enfin des éléments plus « structurants »--comme l'ouverture (« Il était une fois [...] ») et la clôture (« Ils se marièrent et eurent beaucoup d'enfants ») ; la présence d'une moralité, etc. On pourra ainsi engager les étudiants à construire deux ou trois types ou archétypes de conte de fées auxquels ils pourront comparer les contes qu'ils liront ensuite.

D'un point de vue pédagogique, l'intérêt de ce genre d'activité de prélecture est qu'elle encourage la participation active de tous les étudiants et autorise un effacement quasi total de l'enseignant, qui se contentera d'un rôle de meneur de jeu discret.

La préparation à la discussion

Si après quatre ou cinq semestres de français la majorité de nos étudiants connaît assez bien le passé composé, l'imparfait et même le plus-que-parfait, bien peu sont en fait capables de les utiliser correctement dans une phrase. Ce manque de maîtrise de la langue est une source importante de frustration et de blocage pour les étudiants dont les idées n'arrivent pas à s'exprimer. Il importe donc que

l'enseignant prenne en compte ce handicap en préparant ses étudiants à la discussion en classe. On pourra par exemple soumettre aux étudiants une série de questions leur permettant de concentrer leur effort de lecture sur tel ou tel aspect particulier du texte que l'on voudra aborder ensuite en classe.

On pourra, dans le cas du *Petit chaperon rouge* par exemple, demander aux étudiants de relever au cours de leur lecture les éléments marquant l'aspect oral du conte: répétitions, redites, onomatopées, dialogues, changement des voix, etc. On pourra ensuite faire interpréter le conte à plusieurs étudiants et discuter de l'« oralité » des contes de fées (le fait qu'ils nous sont lus plus que nous ne les lisons), du rôle de Perrault comme "fixateur" d'un folklore, d'une tradition orale, etc.

La discussion

Les questions de l'enseignant devront avoir été préparées avec soin de sorte qu'elles soient vite et bien comprises et qu'elles n'exigent que des réponses courtes donnant suffisamment de latitude à l'étudiant. On évitera à la fois les questions trop précises, qui transforment vite la discussion en interrogatoire, et les questions trop vagues du style: "Qu'avez-vous pensé de 'Cendrillon'?" qui n'amènent souvent que des réponses tout aussi vagues: "C'était bien". On leur préférera des questions appelant une explication ou une description, du type: "Décrivez la vie de Cendrillon"; "Pourquoi Cendrillon ne peut-elle aller au bal?", etc.

Finalement, je crois important de faire faire à l'étudiant un travail écrit de synthèse pouvant faire l'objet d'une double correction. L'enseignant souligne les fautes de grammaire, de syntaxe, etc. et donne une note provisoire à un premier brouillon que l'étudiant corrige et récrit chez lui. C'est la seconde version qui reçoit la note finale.

* * *

En conclusion, je dirai que dans le monde de l'image et de l'interactivité qui est le nôtre, le rôle de l'enseignant est moins de transmettre un Savoir à des sujets passifs que de favoriser un dialogue producteur de sens entre une œuvre et son lecteur en faisant de celui-ci un sujet interagissant avec plaisir avec l'écrit. Initier par l'approche que je vous ai présentée nos étudiants aux plaisirs de la lecture est, j'en suis convaincu, le meilleur moyen de les inciter à poursuivre leurs études de littérature à un niveau plus avancé.

Exemple d'activité de prélecture

- En petits groupes, répondre aux questions suivantes:
 - * En général, à qui s'adressent les contes de fées?
 - * Pourquoi les lit-on?
 - * Est-ce de la Littérature?

- Brève explication des titres "Monsieur" (aîné des frères du roi), "Madame" (épouse de Monsieur), "Mademoiselle" (fille aînée des frères ou oncles du roi; ici nièce de Louis XIV) et de la fonction de la dédicace au dix-septième siècle. Explication de quelques mots de vocabulaire: ("hardiesse", "dédaigner", "bagatelles", etc.)

- Lecture en groupes de la dédicace, "A Mademoiselle" (1 page) avec les questions suivantes au tableau:
 - * A Perrault adresse-t-il ses contes?
 - * Pourquoi et de quoi Perrault s'excuse-t-il?
 - * Pourquoi est-il utile que Mademoiselle lise ces contes?

- Réponse aux questions

Exemples de questions de lecture:

- En quoi la fin du "Petit chaperon rouge" est-elle différente de la version que vous connaissiez déjà?

- Quelle a été votre réaction en lisant la fin du conte?
- Comment pensez-vous qu'un jeune enfant réagirait à cette fin?

N.B. Le thème principal de la discussion en classe était de savoir sur quelles émotions l'on peut jouer pour enseigner une leçon aux enfants: curiosité, imagination, humour, peur, etc.. Comment, par exemple, apprendre aux enfants à ne pas suivre des inconnus, à ne pas toucher à la drogue, etc.? Efficacité, inconvénients de ce type d'enseignement.

(à propos de la moralité du "Petit chaperon rouge")

- Qu'est-ce qui montre dans le texte que Perrault ne pense pas seulement au loup? A qui pense-t-il en fait?
- Pourquoi les "loups doucereux" sont-ils les plus dangereux?

Thème principal de la discussion repris comme sujet d'un travail écrit: Les "loups doucereux" sont-ils les mêmes aujourd'hui? En existe-t-il d'autres? [réponses des étudiants: problème alcool/drogues + publicités et vendeurs de voitures!]

Ouvrages cités ou consultés

Keller, Betsy "Rereading Flaubert: Toward a Dialogue between First- and Second-Language Literature Teaching Practices," *PMLA* 112 (1997): 56-68.

**The Triumph of Artifice:
Marketing Authenticity in the *Lettres portugaises* and the
Lettres et billets galants de Mme de Villedieu**

by
Jin-Lei Chang-Augst

The publication of the *Lettres et billets galants* de Mme de Villedieu and the *Lettres portugaises*, the latter within a year's span from the former, presents us with an intriguing paradox: while the real letters of Mme de Villedieu circulated only briefly among an elite public, the fictitious *Lettres portugaises* enjoyed an international reputation and longevity beyond anyone's expectation, and that, precisely in the name of authenticity! What is more baffling, given that the *Lettres et billets galants* have much in common with the *Lettres portugaises*, especially in terms of thematic material, is that the voice of Mme de Villedieu, a woman who dared to challenge and defy convention, a feminist avant la lettre, have proved to be less stirring and enduring than a fictional version based on the same theme, namely, that of a woman in love abandoned by her lover. The fact that a counterfeit production purporting to report the intensity of a woman's passion could have been more persuasive, more eloquent, than the true record of a woman's real life experiences raises the question of the relation between art and life. If art has always been held, since antiquity, to be an imitation, or mimesis, of life, then how do we explain the fact that here, art is taken to be more believable, more authentic, than life itself? Due to the complexity of the circumstances that surround both the publication and the reception of these letters, I shall limit my inquiry to a particular aspect of this question, which is: what constitutes "authenticity" in the reading experiences these letters offer? How do the debates over "authenticity" and "artificiality" shape notions of "feminine experience" and do these notions explain why a counterfeit version should more effectively set the tone for "feminine writing" than the real one?

In May of 1667, a captain of the royal regiment, Antoine de Bœsset, sieur de Villedieu, made a business proposition to the Parisian bookseller Claude Barbin: it was the sale of more than 80 letters written to him by Mlle Marie-Catherine Desjardins, a celebrated poet and novelist of her time. The liaison between Mlle Desjardins - who later called herself Mme de Villedieu - and Villedieu was no secret to their acquaintances, and the fact that Desjardins' writings had well established her as a literary figure in the eyes of the public made these letters even more precious (Démoris 285-319, Goldsmith *Actes de Wake Forest* 439-450, Pelous [q.v.]). But to expose to public

scrutiny what was reserved for the intimacy of a private affair, this implied a callousness that made even the business minded Barbin hesitate. Upon some deliberation, Barbin decided to contact the author of these letters directly. Mlle Desjardins learned with stupefaction the cruel betrayal of her lover and begged Barbin not to make public the capitulations of her heart and not to ruin the reputation of Villedieu, if not for his sake, at least for hers. At the same time, anticipating Barbin's merchant instincts, Desjardins points out:

Il y a une grande différence entre le style des romans et des nouvelles et celui des lettres. Quand on fait un livre, qu'on sait qui doit être vu de tout le monde, on tâche d'y traiter de matière générale dont le public puisse être satisfait. Mais lorsqu'on écrit à ses amis, comme on n'écrit que pour eux, on leur parle dans des termes qui ne sauraient convenir à nul autre, et qui perdraient toutes leurs grâces, si on leur ôtait celles de l'application et de la conjecture [...] Quand il serait possible que le seul homme qui a des lettres tendres de moi en fut si mauvais ménager qu'il vous fût aisé d'en faire imprimer sans mon consentement, croyez-vous qu'une lettre qui est belle aux yeux d'un amant parût telle aux yeux des gens désintéressés? Non, Monsieur, il y a de certaines fautes dans les lettres d'amour qui font leurs plus grandes beautés, et l'irrégularité des périodes est un effet des désordres du cœur qui est beaucoup plus agréable aux gens que le sens froid d'une lettre raisonnée (Desjardins 92).

What Desjardins argues here, in effect, is that the publication of such letters would not be a profitable enterprise. The distinction between the public and the private, between what is intended for the public and what is reserved for the private, demarcates also for Desjardins what is commercial and what is authentic. In particular, she warns Barbin that the "lettres amoureuses" differ from the "lettres galantes" in that the authenticity and sincerity of expression which distinguish these letters from mere "jeu d'esprit," are not meant for publication and will not appeal to the public; for true passion transgresses the boundary of reason and decorum, and the beauty of passionate sentiments can only seem irregular and disorderly to a cold and indifferent reader. In spite of all, Barbin went ahead with the publication of these letters. The *Lettres et billets galants* had a total of two printings. The name of the author did not appear until the second printing. The edition did not sell many copies, nor were these

letters much remarked upon in the literary circles. In all likelihood, Barbin did not make a big profit selling these letters. Mlle Desjardins' warnings proved prophetic: authentic letters do not transform easily into commercial sensations.

Two years later, in January of 1669, Barbin embarked on another publishing venture: this time it was a thin volume entitled *Lettres portugaises traduites en français*. This was presented as a "rare find" by the editor, and accompanied by an "avis au lecteur".

J'ai trouvé les moyens, avec beaucoup de soin et de peine, de recouvrer une copie correcte de la traduction de cinq Lettres portugaises qui ont été écrites à un gentilhomme de qualité, qui servait en Portugal. J'ai vu tous ceux qui se connaissaient en sentiments, ou les louer, ou les chercher avec tant d'empressement, que j'ai cru que je leur ferais un singulier plaisir de les imprimer...(62).

The "avis," rather than informing the reader of any factual circumstances, seems to be an exercise in ambiguity: these letters, as the "Avis" suggests, have no clearly designated author because they are literary foundlings, discovered by some curious collector. Their literary and sentimental merit maybe incontestable; but then, who can be sure of their actual content since these are, after all, translations! What effect, a literary critic might wonder, should these suspicions produce in a reader, a prospective buyer of this volume? Well, these letters were greeted with an immediate and immense enthusiasm. Moreover, not satisfied with the overwhelming success that these five letters have brought him, Barbin pulled out a "seconde partie des *Lettres portugaises*" that same year, accompanied by another "avis au lecteur".

Le bruit qu'a fait la traduction des cinq *Lettres portugaises* a donné le désir à quelques personnes de qualité d'en traduire quelques nouvelles qui leur sont tombées entre les mains. Les premières ont eu tant de cours dans le monde que l'on devait appréhender avec justice d'exposer celles-ci au public ; mais comme elles sont d'une femme du monde qui écrit d'un style différent de celui d'une religieuse, j'ai cru que cette différence pourrait plaire, et que peut-être l'ouvrage n'est pas si désagréable qu'on ne me sache quelque gré de le donner au public (62).

This second “avis,” no less vague than the first one, involves the reader in yet more circumstantial riddles: we are not told whether these letters issue from the same writer, but are translated by someone else, or whether they are written by someone else altogether. The “avis” suggests both possibilities but confirms neither.

Soon after its first printing, a series of replies to the *Lettres portugaises*, written from the vantage point of Mariane’s French lover, began to trail after the initial five letters in the numerous new editions that followed.¹ There were also insinuations that Mariane’s French lover was a certain “Chevalier de Chamilly” and some foreign editions included notices that a certain “dame religieuse de Lisbonne” was the author. In 1888, a French scholar Boissonade revealed that the name of the Portuguese nun is Mariana Alcoforada; this claim was soon authenticated by a Portuguese scholar Luciano Cordeiro, who confirmed that a sister Mariana Alcoforada was indeed in the convent of Bêjá when Chamilly was stationed in Portugal with the forces of Louis XIV.² Throughout the centuries, the *Lettres portugaises* continued to fuel debates among major literary figures concerning its authenticity or artificiality. Rousseau lay the wager on their artificiality³ whereas Rilke, who translated the letters into German, saw in the passion of Mariane a transcendental quality which convinced him of its authenticity. Rilke writes in the Notebooks of Malte Laurids Brigge: “For centuries now, women have undertaken the entire task of love... played the whole dialogue, both parts... Men have only echoed them, and badly... the women rose above their men... grew beyond him when he did not return, like Gaspara Stampa or the Portuguese nun, who never desisted until their torture was transmuted into an austere, icy splendor which nothing could confine.” The first American edition of the letters in 1890 reflected a general international consensus: “The poor nun of Bêjá has painted with such fire, with so contagious an emotion, the state of her wounded heart... that we eagerly read and read again a correspondence whose ardent and touching pages remain ever fresh because they are absolutely true.” It was not until the early twentieth century that the authorship of the *Lettres portugaises* again came into question, when the American scholar F.C. Green unearthed the “privilege” accorded to Barbin for the *Lettres portugaises* (Green 159-167). The “privilege” was for a book entitled “*Les Valentins lettres portugaises épigrammes et madrigaux de Guilleragues.*” This led Green to conjecture that this Guillerague was perhaps none other than the courtier and “bel esprit” known as a friend of Boileau and Racine, Gabriel de Lavergne, sieur de Guilleragues. In the 1960s, Deloffre and Rougeot continued Green’s pioneering work with

research of their own elucidating Guilleragues' role in the gallant circles, as well as his literary sensibilities. Deloffre, Chupeau and others also presented further evidence indicating Guilleragues' involvement with the *Lettres portugaises*.⁴ In 1982, Jean-Pierre Lassalle et Thérèse Lassalle discovered a seventeenth-century manuscript containing twelve letters, the first seven letters are what is now known as the "seconde partie des *Lettres portugaises*" and the last five are the *Lettres portugaises*.⁵ This manuscript had been in the possession of Guilleragues' only descendant. As of today, even though no definitive evidence exists to certify that Guilleragues had composed these letters, substantial documentary and circumstantial evidence offer convincing proofs of Guilleragues' relation to the text, and gives credence to his role as the father figure behind this fiction of feminine desire.

The attribution of the *Lettres portugaises* to Guilleragues casts in a different light its most salient feature: authenticity. After all, Guilleragues was a man more noted for his wit and gallantry than his inclination for the tragic. The success of the *Lettres portugaises* shows that it is artifice, and not experience, which makes passionate discourse ring true. As Mme de Villedieu reminded us earlier on: authentic letters do not make good sales because they cannot appeal to the public. As we have seen, it is the forgery, rather than the real thing, that has captured the audience. Moreover, I will argue, what made the *Lettres portugaises* "authentic" are strategies that have everything to do with artificiality, and nothing to do with authenticity. The convoluted turns in the reception history of the *Lettres portugaises* witness the fact that the performance of authenticity is what gives enduring life to this text, and this performance begins with anonymity. Anonymity is perhaps the greatest attraction of the *Lettres portugaises*. From an initial "avis au lecteur" which posed its anonymity, to various re-editions and several centuries of commentaries, the fascination and publicity generated by the *Lettres portugaises* have always centered on its dual identity of anonymity and authenticity. Being anonymous, it was therefore authentic. As Elizabeth Goldsmith puts it: "Mariane herself, if she existed, would no doubt have wanted her identity to remain unknown and her letters unpublished" (Goldsmith *Writing the Female Voice* [q.v.]). Anonymity is the very condition of feminine writing.

The impossibility of assigning to the *Lettres portugaises* any definitive author, far from discouraging interpretations of the text, facilitated its engagement of readers on several levels.⁶ Besides engendering several male authors, whose "réponses" to the letters enabled them to share vicariously the "inimitable" passion of the

Portuguese nun, the *Lettres portugaises* was also the very model of passion living off of itself. The self-feeding passion of Mariane, as Spitzer calls it, seemed to have found a perfect medium in letter-writing ([q.v.]). The exoticism of the Portuguese nun writing from her lonely cell both enclosed the reader within its confinement and distanced them from the prospect of its real terrors and despairs. As we follow the course of her autarchic passion, its paroxysm and loss of consciousness, “Je suis au désespoir, votre pauvre Marianne n’en peut plus, elle s’évanouit en finissant cette lettre...” we also admire the tone of high tragedy and the précieux sensibility that underlie its emotional torrent. The passionate and sometimes irrational cries of an abandoned woman, even as it is ripping at the seams of bienséance, are still contained by the rigor of the classical style. Perhaps feminine experience is most desirable as that: an open book that offers itself to literary appreciation. Mme de Villedieu struggled with the demands of her own passion (Venesoen [q.v.]). The conflict between passion and reason is visible in her *Billets galants*. At a time when her audacious poetry and gallant fiction were the rage of the ruelles, Mlle Desjardins also found herself writing the *Billets* in exchange for visits from her lover. But the idea that the most prized part of her was her intellect made Marie-Catherine hesitate in capitulating to Villedieu. In one of her letters she writes:

Mon âme est si partagée entre ma douleur et mon amour, qu’elle n’a jamais été dans de plus grandes agitations. Ma douleur veut que je vous fasse des plaintes et des reproches, ou que je tâche au moins à vous montrer de l’indifférence, si je ne puis vous faire paroître de la haine. Et mon amour me sollicite à vous témoigner plus de bonté que jamais, et à vous dire tout ce qu’elle m’inspire de plus tendre. Mais pour ne donner l’avantage ny à la douleur ny à l’amour, je les laisseray dans le combat jusques à ce que vous les sépariez. Je souhaiterais que ce fût bientôt et que votre lettre eût le pouvoir de bannir celle qui me fait tant souffrir depuis hier (in Venesoen [q.v.]).

It is said that, in Mme de Villedieu’s novels, love rules all human relations. Here again, we catch a glimpse of how love rules and even tyrannizes her personal life; but that tyranny, far from stimulating and nourishing the blossoming of passion, constrains and even ravages her prose. The language of tormented love, uttered at the moment of its suffering, does not wax eloquent but echoes the pain which inflicted it. Diderot, meditating on the art of the comedian,

remarked tellingly: “Une femme malheureuse, et vraiment malheureuse, pleure et ne vous touche point: il y a pis, c’est qu’un trait léger qui la défigure vous fait rire; c’est qu’un accent qui lui est propre dissone à vôtre oreille et vous blesse... c’est que les passions outrées sont presque toutes sujettes à des grimaces que l’artiste sans goût copie servilement, mais que le grand artiste évite.” What does Diderot’s insight have to offer for the triumph of artifice over artlessness?

The authenticity of the *Lettres portugaises*, the effects of its “passions outrées,” is the result of a carefully crafted theatricality.⁷ In an article on gender and rhetoric in seventeenth-century love letters, Gabrielle Verdier demonstrates that the drama of l’amour-passion in the *Lettres portugaises* follows the trajectory of the Petrarchan love torment, but with a twist (45-57). In the Petrarchan and Neo-platonic tradition, the idealized silence and distance of the lady provokes the pain and longing of the unrequited lover. In the *Lettres portugaises* however, the gender roles are reversed: it is no longer the lady who dominates, but the seducer who has abandoned her. As Verdier points out: “the rhetoric of tears, swoons, hot and cold flashes when expressed by a woman - especially a deflowered nun - recovers a titillating literal quality.” But here is Mariane herself:

Je suis résolue à vous adorer toute ma vie, et à ne voir jamais personne ; et je vous assure que vous ferez bien aussi de n’aimer personne. Pourriez-vous être content d’une passion moins ardente que la mienne? Vous trouverez peut-être, plus de beauté (vous m’avez pourtant dit autrefois que j’étais assez belle), mais vous ne trouverez jamais tant d’amour, et tout le reste n’est rien. Ne remplissez plus vos lettres de choses inutiles, et ne m’écrivez plus de me souvenir de vous. Je ne puis vous oublier, et je n’oublie pas aussi que vous m’avez fait espérer que vous viendriez passer quelque temps avec moi. Hélas! pourquoi n’y voulez-vous pas passer toute votre vie? S’il m’était possible de sortir de ce malheureux cloître, je n’attendrais pas en Portugal l’effet de vos promesses : j’irais, sans garder aucune mesure, vous chercher, vous suivre, et vous aimer par tout le monde.¹⁸

Mariane's strength and perseverance elevates erotic passion to the realm of the sublime and the transcendent. But for suffering to be self-sufficient and love, immortal, that is precisely the privilege of representation.

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NOTES

¹ For a sample of the "Réponses" see "Réponses [de Paris] and "Réponses" [de Grenoble] included in the Clin-Lalonde edition (129-196).

² For a detailed discussion of the reception history of the *Lettres portugaises*, see Mary McAlpin (27-44).

³ Rousseau's skepticism that the *Lettres portugaises* could not have been the work of a woman was based on his opinion that women had no genius:

"Les femmes, en général, n'aiment aucun art, ne se connaissent à aucun, et n'ont aucun génie. Elles peuvent réussir aux petits ouvrages qui ne demandent que de la légèreté d'esprit, du goût, de la grâce, quelquefois même de la philosophie et du raisonnement. Elles peuvent acquérir de la science, de l'érudition, des talents et tout ce qui s'acquiert à force de travail. Mais ce feu céleste qui échauffe et embrasse l'âme, ce génie qui consume et dévore, cette brûlante éloquence, ces transports sublimes qui portent leurs ravissements jusqu'au fond des cœurs, manqueront toujours aux écrits des femmes: ils sont tous froids et jolis comme elles; ils auront tant d'esprit que vous voudrez, jamais d'âme; ils seraient cent fois plutôt sensés que passionnés. Elles ne savent ni décrire ni sentir l'amour même. La seule Sapho, que je sache, et une autre, méritèrent d'être exceptées. Je parierais tout au monde que les *Lettres portugaises* ont été écrites par un homme."

Cited in *Lettres portugaises* suivies de Guilleragues par lui-même, Frédéric Deloffre, ed. (20ss.)

⁴ The Du Marteau edition, which came out in Cologne in 1669, designated a certain "Cuilleraque" as the translator. The 1672 Barbin edition specifically named Guilleragues, "secrétaire du cabinet et ambassadeur à Constantinople", as translator. In 1721, Bruzen

de la Martinière, while re-editing Richelet's *Les Plus belles lettres françaises*, inserts a note to the *Lettres portugaises*: "On les attribue à M.de Guilleragues, secrétaire du cabinet du roi." Vanel also hinted in the *Journal galant* that the *Lettres portugaises* were written at the request of Henriette d'Angleterre, by a gentleman of the court. Finally, Boissonade's note mentioned both Guilleragues and Subligny as possible translators of the text. In a recent monograph, Alain Niderst has made a case for Subligny as the translator and editor of the *Lettres portugaises*, *Essai d'histoire littéraire: Guilleragues, Subligny, Challe: des Lettres portugaises aux Illustres françaises*. (SaintGenough: Nizet, 1999).

⁵ This discovery justifies previous claims that the "seconde partie" and the original five letters are written by the same author and that the *Lettres Portugaises* are a French, and not a Portuguese, production.

⁶ See also Goldstein (571-590).

⁷ See also Muratore (289-301).

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BOOK REVIEWS

Charnley, Joy.

Pierre Bayle: Reader of Travel Literature. Bern: Lang, 1998. 201 pp.

Paul Hazard observed in *La Crise de la conscience européenne* (1935) that Pierre Bayle often looked to *récits de voyage* for corroboration of his views. Joy Charnley confirms Bayle's extensive debt to travel literature by examining each reference in his works, both in relation to its source and to Bayle's use of that source. Although she focuses primarily on the *Dictionnaire historique et critique*, Charnley expands her analysis to include Bayle's use of *récits* in his various other works. She discusses the contribution of such *relations* to an understanding of previously unknown peoples and customs and eventually to Enlightenment relativism. Charnley notes in her introduction that "as other countries and continents became known, it became clear that although different they were not necessarily inferior and indeed often had positive features which compared favorably with Europe", adding that "the influence of *récits* was thus vital in bringing about the changes in mentality which were such an important part of the preparation for the eighteenth century". Once she has reviewed the importance of *récits* in general, she states the primary goal of the study: to render the reader "aware of the debt [Bayle] owed to travel literature and its contribution to making his writings what they are."

This is a book that will prove most useful as a solid reference work. Scholars interested in a provocative thesis concerning the author of the *Dictionnaire* will likely be disappointed by this study. Much of the development of the aforementioned argument is tautological. Qualitatively, this volume does not add a great deal to Hazard's earlier statement. In his few comments are contained much of what this book maintains: that travel literature influenced both Bayle's writings and European thought in general. However, Charnley's research will further the study of both Bayle and *récits de voyage* through her careful indications of all sections in his works treating travel literature. Scholars will find the organized index of references to travel literature in the *Dictionnaire* and other works (Appendix B) quite helpful.

For the non-specialist, the book will serve as an introduction to many European travelers of the sixteenth and seventeenth centuries. After a first chapter on travelers and travel literature, Charnley's analysis is organized geographically. Chapter two addresses the exploration of the Americas, focusing primarily on Bayle's use of Jean

de Léry. The major arguments support her original assertion that Bayle borrowed heavily from *récits* in order to endorse his general concerns such as tolerance and historical accuracy. This thesis is demonstrated quite early, and her development of it is the least effective aspect of these sections. Instead, Charnley's investigation is most engaging when introducing explorers who might now only be known to experts, but whose writings fascinated the wide readership of travel literature at the time.

This is equally true for chapters three through five. Though the general thesis remains the same, each of these chapters introduces an even wider range of travelers than the first two. The most captivating portions of these sections come when Charnley discusses one of the numerous travelers that influenced Bayle. In these chapters which treat the Middle East, The Orient, and mentions outside the *Dictionnaire*, the reader is introduced to travel writers boasting varied national and personal backgrounds. An example is Ogier Ghislain de Busbecq (1522-92). This author was born illegitimate in Flanders, promoted to the rank of Ambassador to Constantinople by King Ferdinand, and inspired sufficient interest to justify more than five editions in several languages of the 1582 Latin *récit* of his adventures. It is through the portraits of such eclectic figures that Charnley's book holds the reader's attention.

Despite her rather cursory analysis, Charnley offers a basic synthesis of many major and minor writers of travel literature. This statement must be qualified, however, by adding that as a result of Bayle's own tastes, certain significant figures are not treated. In sum, this study can serve as a useful introduction to the *récits de voyage* of the late sixteenth and seventeenth centuries and as a reference work for more in-depth projects.

Brian Brazeau

Assaf, Francis and Andrew H. Wallis, (eds.).

Car demeure l'amitié: Mélanges offerts à Claude Abraham. (Paris-Seattle-Tübingen: Biblio 17/PFSCL, 1997). Pp. 182. Paper.

This volume is a delightful collection of articles dedicated to Claude Abraham whose works inspired them. Their subjects vary, ranging from studies of Molière and comedy-ballets to analyses of language and rhetoric in Tristan's *La Mariane*. Abraham's works provided a particularly important background for some of these articles, specifically those dealing with the comedy-ballets, as the subject had largely been ignored prior to his studies of them. Many of the contributors mention Abraham's influence on them and express gratitude toward him for his role in inspiring them in their own efforts at furthering seventeenth century studies.

As mentioned above, Abraham's works played a primary part in influencing Ackerman's, Sweetser's and Fleck's articles on comedy-ballets, yet all three articles approach the subject differently. In her article, Ackerman focused on the historical background of the comedy-ballet while highlighting the influence that some of the works from that period had on later plays. While not neglecting Lully, she also explains the evolution of Molière's relationship with Louis XIV and the significance of his role and that of ballet in establishing the king's "*persona solaire*." Sweetser, however, focuses more specifically on Molière and examines the genius with which he composed the script for his first comedy-ballet, *Les Fâcheux*. Through her analysis, we are able to see how, though pressed for time, Molière was able to incorporate dance and music into his play in order to have them be functional in contributing to its plot, esthetic appeal, and political implications. In his article, Fleck, like Sweetser, considers the different elements of the comedy-ballet and how they contribute to the success of the play. His study, however, is an entertaining yet insightful five-part examination of the comic elements of *Monsieur de Pourceaugnac*. It not only reflects those found within the text itself but also emphasizes the roles that music, dance, and Molière's physical appearance as Pourceaugnac would have played for the spectator in contributing to the play's overall comic effect.

Other authors, such as Nies, Hilgar, and Viala analyze different aspects of Molière's theater. In an attempt to determine whether or not there is a universal appeal of classical plays, for example, Nies examines statistics showing modern Germany's reception of Molière's comedies by publishers, on stage, and in schools where

they are studied as literary works. He concludes his study by briefly discussing not only variations in their appeal within the German environment but also differences in their reception in Germany compared to France. Hilgar branches away from a purely *moliéresque* study and illustrates his influence on Dancourt's theater, ranging, for example, from borrowed passages to the prominent use of disguise. Nevertheless, in her final analysis, she gives credit to Dancourt for his originality as a playwright by showing how many of his characters, especially females, share very little in common with Molière's and how his plays, unlike his counterpart's, do not attempt to teach a moral lesson. Viala takes a completely different approach to Molière in his fascinating semiotic and structuralist analysis of *galanterie* in his works. After explaining the differences in the early and modern meanings of the term *galanterie*, he demonstrates the existence of a common personality type that is consistently associated with Molière's "*faux galants*". These traits, for example, include their powerlessness to change their situation, their lack of satisfaction with themselves, and their misguided sense of their own social status. He further demonstrates the role of *langage galant* in these plays by illustrating its (dis)function in the socialization of these characters as well as its esthetic appeal to the spectator.

As with Viala's article, Muratore's is a rhetorical study, only rather than analyzing a play by Molière, she appropriately chose to use Tristan L'Hermite's *Mariane* as her subject as any collection of works dedicated to Claude Abraham would be incomplete without articles focusing on Tristan l'Hermite. In her unusual work, Muratore examines the role that language plays in distinguishing between *true* reality as Mariane presents it and Herod's idealized scenario of reality which he wishes to impose as truth. She also discusses the role that rhetoric plays in determining various events in the play, including, for example, Herod's falsely accusing Mariane and Soesme of adultery and his metamorphosis into a truly tragic character in the final scenes.

In this volume, Muratore's article is accompanied by those of Carriat and Dalla Valle. Carriat's study briefly recounts the curious history of the discovery and ultimate recognition of Tristan l'Hermite's works and focuses on those individuals such as Bernardin who contributed to their increasing popularity, the latter's primary critic, Antoine Thomas, and Fernande Autourde who defended him. Dalla Valle, however, takes a new approach to Tristan in her study and offers a modern and very credible explanation for aspects of *Osman* criticized, particularly by Bernardin himself, as being poor in terms of dramatic technique. In her analysis, she dis-

cusses three of Tristan's sources, his attempt at constructing a somewhat true-to-life portrait of the characters, his innovation in using surprise and *le merveilleux* before they became popular during the baroque period, and the purpose for which he portrays Osman as perpetually unsuccessful.

Although most of the works in this volume focus entirely on the seventeenth century, by comparing an eighteenth-century operatic remake of *Phèdre* to the original tragedy, Buford Norman branches out to include in his article the eighteenth century as well. His study gives examples of late seventeenth and early eighteenth century criticisms of the simplicity of *libretti* and, by presenting a comparison of Racine's *Phèdre* and Rameau's *Hippolyte et Aricie*, justifies the lack of complexity of such texts. He successfully illustrates how in opera, sentiments evoked through music replace those inspired by poetic and figurative language, as found in classical tragedies.

Like Norman, Dubu and Gutwirth also discuss Racine in their articles. Despite the title of his article, "Faut-il marier Antiochus avec L'Infante du *Cid*?" Dubu is really only addressing the important question of Antiochus's purpose in the outcome of *Bérénice* and focuses on his ability *as a king* to serve as a rival to the emperor's son for Bérénice because her rank is not high enough for the people to accept her, a mere queen, as empress. While Dubu mentions Corneille in his study only briefly, Gutwirth fully discusses both Racine and Corneille. His article offers a new explanation for the failure of Corneille's *Pertharite* in comparison to the success of Racine's *Andromaque*, whose subject was taken from the second act of the former, through examining the association between each author's dramatic techniques and the public's sense of esthetics at the time. Bertaud also discusses Corneille in her article "*Jamais un tendre amour n'expose ce qu'il aime: sur quelques héroïnes de Corneille*", but she focuses on analyzing one aspect of Cornelian theater rather than comparing him to another author as did Dubu and Gutwirth. She examines the relationship that exists between *générosité* and *tendresse* in Cornelian heroines through examples such as *L'Illusion comique*'s Lyse, *Suréna*'s Eurydice, *Cinna*'s Chimène, and others as well.

Although most of the studies included in this collection are primarily literary, several of them, including Ackerman's article on the background of the comedy-ballet, are both literary and historical. In addition to Ackerman, Saba, Tobin and Grimm have taken an historical approach to their studies. Saba's article, for example, is a well-supported, chronological overview of the reception of *Pyrame et*

Thisbé which examines the evidence of its popularity, Théophile's critics, and his influence on other authors over the century.

While Saba's article is largely based on analyses of seventeenth-century statistics, Grimm makes a very different use of history in order to explain the significance of La Fontaine's *Conte d'un paysan qui avait offensé son seigneur*. Leading his readers through a series of questions and answers, he performs a very interesting study of this unusual *conte* which, despite the author's declaration that his stories are meant to "faire plaisir", appears to disgust its reader. By analyzing the story's background and its impact on the reader and comparing it to the events of the time, Grimm arrives at the same conclusion as did Collinet: The "Conte d'un paysan..." is an example of "littérature 'engagée'" and was meant to be a discreet criticism of Louis XIV's behavior in the Fouquet trial. As a more general conclusion, he proposes that in order to revive the force of literary works, especially the classics, philologists who study them should attempt, as he has, to reconstruct their primary meaning.

Not unlike Grimm, who emphasizes the author's role as a social critic, Tobin examines Pascal's critique of the Jewish faith as stated in the *Pensées*. Although he briefly mentions Pascal's opinion of all non-Christian religions, he specifically focuses on explaining his views on Judaism and Jews. Tobin emphasizes Pascal's awareness of the significant role that they played in Christianity's history as well as his interest in and compassion for Jews despite his belief that they are destined to be condemned.

In conclusion, the articles presented in this volume complement one another, not only through their themes but also through their indebtedness to Claude Abraham as the source of their inspiration. The quality and originality of these articles show the significance of Abraham's work, which continues to serve others as a doorway to new insights into these subjects.

Michelle L. Brown

Schröder, Volker, (ed.).

Présences de Racine. Oeuvres et critiques XXIV, 1 (1999).

Présences de Racine is one of several collections inspired by the tricentenary of the dramatist's death in 1999. Edited by Volker Schröder, this volume focuses on past and current reception of Racine's tragedies and addresses many of the questions raised by Racinian theatre as we read and view it today.

With his usual erudition and finesse, Emmanuel Bury illustrates the depth and eclecticism of "Les Antiquités de Racine." Careful intertextuality is also the basis of Solange Guénoun's defense of psychoanalytic readings of Racine. In "La Passion Racine—sous le lierre de la psychologie et la résistance à la psychanalyse," she argues for a renewed emphasis on Racinian passion, insisting upon the need to consider the dramaturgical, political and psycho-sexual (including biographical) dimensions in any analysis of the passions.

The passions are also the starting point for Franziska Sick's "Dramaturgie et tragique de l'amour dans le théâtre de Racine." Sick redefines Racine's rhetoric, emphasizing the originality of his "discours affectif": while Cornelian lovers deliver rhetorical set pieces to each other, Racine's victims of passion spontaneously let spill their emotion, thereby undermining the very foundations of classical dramaturgy even as he fulfills the formal criteria of tragedy. Catherine Spencer also highlights the subversive nature of Racinian tragedy in "Impasse du discours: Racine, Port Royal et les signes." In her analysis of *Bajazet* in the light of *La Logique de Port Royal*, she notes that power emanates from the mastery of representation, but in Racinian theatre, "le jeu de langage et les pièges de la représentation" (187) make mastery impossible—for the characters, and, ironically, for the playwright. Michael Hawcroft joins in the emphasis on "Le langage racinien" as he examines the poetic and dramatic qualities of Racine's rhetoric thanks to a comparison with Pradon.

A more thematic approach characterizes Jean Emelina's study of "Les Tragédies de Racine et le mal." Emelina discusses the relativisation of the term *tragique* in Racine's œuvre, and links it to the notion of evil. Evil is never absent, but presents itself in various guises and degrees, in a context where metaphysics remain subordinate to human relations. Pierre Ronzeaud considers "Racine et la politique," concluding that in the tragedies, the absolutism of Louis XIV is celebrated directly, but also indirectly through the denuncia-

tion of tyranny and anarchy. The essential topic of religion comes to the fore in Bernard Chédozeau's examination of an evolution in the tragedies from evocations of the *mysterium tremendum et fascinans* of the sacred to a more highly contextualized, augustinian notion of the religious, which serves to actualize and incarnate the sacred, especially in *Esther* and *Athalie*. Marie-Odile Sweetser provides a panorama of the role of women in Racine's life and work, illustrating the rich diversity of his female characters. Indeed, the need for nuance and the refusal of one all-encompassing perspective on Racinian theatre characterizes all of these essays.

In the critical tradition established by Harald Weinrich, Michelle Grangaud reminds us of the latent comic potential of Racinian tragedy, which she locates in the ultimately futile pretensions of the tyrants (Pyrrhus, Néron, Mithridate, Thésée). A member of the Oulipo group, Grangaud goes so far as to see the productive tensions of the Racinian alexandrine as the inspiration for Oulipian constraint literature. Charles Mazouer also addresses "Racine et la comédie," but he insists that Racine's comic tendencies are limited to *Les Plaideurs*, whose originality compared to classical and contemporary sources Mazouer demonstrates.

Several of the articles touch upon the problem of teaching and staging Racine at the end of the twentieth century. Particularly piquant contributions include Michel Schmitt's article on the reaction of French *lycéens* of the 1990s to the classical author, and Volker Schröder's two pages reminding us of the clichés that continue to haunt classrooms around the world as well as the pages of learned publications—despite the best efforts of Racine specialists. Perhaps today's students would prefer the "co-decimated" version of *Phèdre* proffered by the eminent *Oulipien* Jacques Roubaud: only one line in ten is retained, each with a strong emotional charge. But of course the pleasure of Roubaud's text is reserved for those who know what is missing.

Critical reception of Racine in three European countries besides France is considered by Cecilia Rizza (Italy), Peter France (Great Britain), and Fritz Nies (Germany). These panoramic studies complement François Lagarde's revealing evocation of Racine criticism in 1939: have we made "progress" in our critical outlook in sixty years? The answer, of course, is yes and no. The juxtaposition of critical perspectives demonstrates clearly that Racine's complex corpus defies unified interpretation.

Claire Carlin

Wolfe, Phillip J. and Kathryn Willis, (ed.).

Humanisme et Politique. Lettres romaines de Christophe Dupuy à ses frères (1646-1649) . Vol. II. (Paris-Seattle-Tübingen: Biblio 17, 1997). Pp. Xi + 258. Paper.

Célébrés dans la première moitié du XVII^e siècle pour leur bibliothèque et leur réunions savantes, les frères Pierre et Jacques Dupuy ont tenu une place de première importance parmi l'élite intellectuelle parisienne. Leur correspondance, comme le rappelle Kathryn et Phillip Wolfe a très rapidement fait l'objet d'études de la part des historiens de la littérature. Plus discret, leur frère Christophe avait choisi l'état ecclésiastique et, protégé par le cardinal Antoine Barberini, il était devenu procureur général de l'ordre des Chartreux et prieur *in urbe* à Rome.

L'édition présente des lettres de Christophe Dupuy à ses frères parisiens offrent un rare intérêt quant aux relations entre la France et Rome. La Fronde, les Barberini et leur influence tant en France qu'en Italie, les entreprises militaires de Mazarin en Toscane et à Naples, les mazarinades, la cour papale et ses intrigues sont autant de sujets abordés avec la grâce d'une conversation entre "amateurs." Au détour de cette correspondance on trouve les noms de Peiresc, Hensius ou Gabriel Naudé, recréant ainsi pour nous la communauté savante de la France du XVII^e siècle et la subtile complicité qui unissait ses membres.

Mais un des aspects les plus fascinants de ces lettres réside peut-être dans les rapports de Christophe à ses frères sur les ouvrages publiés en Italie, sur la vente de bibliothèques privées et la possibilité d'achat de tel ou tel volume rare, sur les envois de livres à Paris, en un mot sur la création de la bibliothèque d'un savant au XVII^e siècle. L'acquisition de livres est en effet le sujet de prédilection de cette correspondance.

Ce second volume de la très belle édition de Kathryn et Phillip Wolfe offre la rare opportunité d'entrer de plein pied dans la vie quotidienne des Curieux et autres savants du siècle. Outre les lettres elles-mêmes, choisies dans les fonds Dupuy de la Bibliothèque Nationale, on lira avec intérêt les notes suivant chaque missive, apportant les renseignements nécessaires à la bonne compréhension du texte et du contexte. L'ouvrage se termine sur une bibliographie très complète et un index qui permet de saisir immédiatement la place des frères

res Dupuy et leur importance capitale dans la société française des années 1646-1649.

Mais plus encore qu'une excellente compilation de lettre de savants, l'édition de Kathryn et Phillip Wolfe nous offre une réflexion subtile sur les esprits les plus brillants de l'Europe moderne que pourtant l'on se surprend à trouver si proches de nous.

Didier Course

Clark, Kathleen (éd.)

Réception critique des libertinages au XVII^e siècle. Textes réunis et présentés par Kathleen Clark. *Œuvres et critiques*, XX, 3. Tübingen: Gunter Narr Verlag, 1995: 180-294.

L'histoire du libertinage a elle aussi ses classiques. Théophile de Viau ouvre logiquement ce volume, Louise Godard de Donville démontrant (185-204) comment, polémiquement, Garasse l'a construit libertin. Sa stratégie est définie ici par la mise en relief du "je" libertin, son identification à l'auteur, l'accusation de débauche, le passage de la mélancolie à la folie, ce qui permet de remettre en cause une prétendue "doctrine", diffusée par un Théophile devenu chef de "bande", de "confrérie", voire de "secte" (187). La construction de la profanation libertine se poursuit par l'établissement d'une opposition entre la poétique de Malherbe, lui-même héritier d'une longue tradition de perfection orthodoxe présentée comme seule authentique, et celle des poètes de cabaret parvenus. Sous la plume vitriolique de Garasse, Bacchus (Liber) est le nain d'Apollon (199), et devant cette "énorme machine de guerre" (186) qu'il lance contre Théophile, et dont Godard de Donville démontre les rouages de manière aussi minutieuse que convaincante, on peut en effet se demander quelle part de responsabilité, à court et à long termes, ce jeu de massacre a pu avoir sur la réception longtemps négative d'une œuvre dont la valeur est aujourd'hui incontestée.

Comme Théophile, Saint-Amant connaît depuis peu une réhabilitation que François Lagarde remet partiellement en cause (205-218), dans un essai d'une verve et d'une verdeur corrosives particulièrement adaptées au sujet. Pour lui, Saint-Amant restera ce Soudart de Vénus dont les écrits, plus liés aux jouissances du corps et aux exigences du clientélisme qu'aux raffinements et à une liberté d'esprit, contiennent aussi peu de philosophie que de réflexion politique. Comme en témoignent des railleries xénophobes variées aussi haineuses qu'inexpliquées, le rire diabolique n'aboutit pas ici à une sagesse. Pourtant, l'acharnement à déchirer n'est pas sans intérêt. Marque d'un "ressentiment violent" (211) qui rend le poète émouvant, il dépasse la stratégie défensive d'une poésie pratiquée comme "escrime existentielle" (212), ou dont l'originalité serait due à la disconvenance. Ce poète restera mineur mais c'est dans son "roman familial", conclut Lagarde, dans le fait qu'il s'est entouré de nombreux pères symboliques, tout en rêvant également souvent de mères adoptives, qu'il faudrait plutôt chercher l'unité propre à le réhabiliter vraiment.

Dans une longue analyse remarquablement documentée, Madeleine Alcover passe en revue la réception des œuvres romanesques et théâtrales de Cyrano aux XVII^e et XVIII^e siècles (219-250). Comme Théophile, Cyrano est vite “chef de clan” (220), trop grand amateur d'équivoques et de propos hétérodoxes bousculant la tradition anxieuse des Pères. Si Guéret n'est pas sans humour ni Sorel sans éloges, le Voyage à la Lune ne fait que lentement l'objet de commentaires, généralement peu développés (Daniel, Bayle), enthousiastes seulement à l'étranger (Russen), et dangereusement stéréotypés lorsqu'une “imagination très vive” (Moréri) devient “folie” (Ménage). Ignoré par Baillet, brièvement “biographé” par Titon du Tillet, Cyrano est intégré de manière gênée dans les romans “comiques” puis “divers” (Lenglet du Fresnoy) avant de paraître aussi, à partir des années trente, dans cette catégorie nouvelle des romans “philosophiques” qui fera déjà de lui un “précurseur.” On s'étonne du peu de commentaires qu'il s'est attiré; l'ironie est que ce soit surtout un abbé (Joly) qui l'apprécie -- passage particulièrement intéressant, Alcover y offrant l'analyse d'un manuscrit. La fin du siècle exprime sans doute plus d'admiration, Restif en particulier, mais la surprise ici est bien le silence des “grands” philosophes. Mais comme les inconnus, eux, ont bien acheté les œuvres de Cyrano, une analyse de réception, c'est évident, ne doit pas généraliser hâtivement; Alcover avait eu raison de le souligner immédiatement (219).

Pourquoi, alors que les Fables de La Fontaine ont été si prisées, ses Contes ont-ils été méprisés? C'est sur ce dédain que Martha Houle revient (251-262), montrant d'abord comment, de nos jours mêmes, les Contes brillent plutôt par leur absence, dans les anthologies ou histoires littéraires entre autres, quand ce n'est pas la banalité de leur humour que les critiques tiennent à souligner. Perrault s'était admis réservé uniquement sur leurs sujets. Une remarque de Petit de Julleville -- l'“indécence” de contes s'“oubliant” (curieusement) pour ne laisser place qu'à l'“ennui” (237)-- le laisse penser aussi gêné mais en déni. Semblablement, A. Adam proposera par exemple que “les Contes ne sauraient être une œuvre de très grande classe” (253; je souligne), le prétexte d'une écriture prétendument sans mérite autorisant alors l'oubli. S'opposant à ce jugement, Houle démontre que, tout en imitant Boccace, l'Arétin et Machiavel, ces contes intéressent d'abord par une valorisation du plaisir féminin qui les place aux origines de la pornographie, mais que leur originalité essentielle est l'argument casuistique dont ils font usage. Et cette pratique, l'analyse de trois dialogues le montre, est à relier, entre autres, aux débats sur l'amour dans les salons du moment.

Allen Wood, quant à lui, s'attache à un moment de la vie de Boileau que l'histoire littéraire se garde généralement bien d'évoquer (263-272; texte en anglais). En réaction aux attaques ad hominem des Satires, c'est d'abord l'analyse du portrait (par Cotin surtout) d'un Boileau débauché -- proposition surprenante (pour qui a dans l'esprit une persona officielle plus glacée) mais rendue crédible par sa fréquentation du cabaret de La Croix Blanche *oubien* des libertins se retrouvaient. Wood démontre comment Boileau, très critique du "vice italien" dans une première version de ses Satires -- non autorisée et intertextuellement reliée aux Satires (II surtout) d'un Juvénal particulièrement homophobe -- a modifié, dans la version autorisée, ce passage qui renvoyait implicitement aux mœurs de nombreux proches du roi. Sensible aux effets possibles d'une réception négative, le censeur s'est lui-même censuré; geste que Wood attribue de manière convaincante à un pragmatisme peureux sans doute provoqué par le sort malheureux de Bussy Rabutin, à cette époque même. Critiquer l'aristocratie libertine a des limites pour qui veut réussir. Le futur Législateur du Parnasse choisira d'autres proies, plutôt chez les bourgeois.

Contrairement à Boileau, Anne du Noyer a toujours eu le courage de ses convictions, et c'est de cette "affranchie" qu'Henriette Goldwyn offre une analyse (273-279) dont seule la brièveté est à regretter. De cette protestante à plus d'un égard, première femme journaliste de son temps, Goldwyn retrace excellemment le combat permanent contre l'injustice: son souci de la misère matérielle, son intérêt pour la liberté de conscience et les mœurs plus tolérantes de certains pays étrangers, son opposition affichée au viol du "Droit des Gens" (275), celui, en particulier, des protestants dont elle vivra la diaspora et les tourments, obligée d'abandonner son fils en France, mais luttant contre le droit paternel pour fuir avec ses filles vers la Hollande. Les œuvres comme la vie entière de du Noyer rappellent de manière exemplaire que "libertinus", originellement, renvoie à l'affranchi dégagé de ses chaînes. La discipline de son esprit, ses talents de stratège, son refus de céder aux conventions établies ou à la tyrannie des lois, font bien d'elle "une guerrière" et un "esprit libre" (278).

Libertines, les héroïnes de la Satyra sotadica de Chorier le sont différemment. Comme James G. Turner le démontre brillamment (281-294; en anglais), ce grand classique de la pornographie, en prose néo-latine, a été paradoxalement situé "au centre et sur les marges" (282), scandaleux mais élégamment écrit, l'"extrême de la perversion" mais aussi la source médico-sexuelle où bon nombre ont puisé. Cette crédibilité, Turner le propose, tient à deux autres

facteurs importants: un réalisme soigneusement élaboré, et la fabrication d'une autorité féminine érudite et plausible (en laquelle beaucoup ont cru) agissant autant au niveau des personnages qu'à celui de l'auteur supposé (Louise Sigée). Un (pseudo) féminocentrisme similaire opère dans *Vénus dans le cloître*, qui, envers la *Satyra*, témoigne aussi d'une "dialectique d'émulation et de rejet" (287) également à l'œuvre dans la réception du texte en Angleterre. A ce sujet, suivre Turner chez le poète Oldham est fascinant: d'abord parce qu'il s'agit là d'un écrit rare, en vers néo-latins, et sous forme de fragments manuscrits. Mais aussi parce qu'il témoigne d'une anxieuse admission d'impuissance face à l'autorité sexuelle et discursive d'une femme ("Louise Sigée") -- soucieuse de perte et d'expropriation masculines qu'il est en effet bien tentant d'ériger en paradigme des fictions sexuelles libertines.

Ces sept essais en témoignent, les discours "libertins" sont variés, à l'instar des réactions de répulsion souvent fascinée qu'ils ont provoquées. Bien des textes discutés ici sont encore trop fréquemment délaissés. Riche et stimulant, ce volume prouve à quel point ce mépris est injustifié, et le seul regret des lecteurs sera sans doute que Kathleen Clark, qui annonçait marquer le 400^e anniversaire de la naissance (1595) du libertin Saint-Pavin, n'ait pas pu intégrer ici la réception de ses écrits.

Lise Leibacher-Ouvrard

Michael Bouvier.

La morale classique. Paris: Honoré Champion, 1999. 749 pp.

At first glance, *La morale classique* seems simply like a huge inventory of commonplaces from mostly forgotten writers of the seventeenth century. The effect is akin to that of a visit to the advice or self-help sections of a chain bookstore, where each recommendation is canceled out by another—advice to let out your anger appears next to advice to control your temper, and the pasta diet figures next to the all-protein regimen. Like the chain bookstore, Bouvier aims at the mass-market of ideas, “les penseurs du commun et le peuple des gens de lettres.” *La morale classique* is not about memorable, innovative authors with a particular gift for style but about “la pensée de soubassement sur laquelle est édiflée la Cité classique,” or, in sum, the doxa. There are, to be sure, some writers familiar to most *dix-septémistes*—Nicole, Senault, Bossuet—but many others who are names from catalogues and bibliographies. La Rochefoucault and Pascal are pointedly de-emphasized in favor of Bossuet and Nicole; Bossuet is chosen significantly because he is the official spokesperson of dominant Catholic thought. Bouvier’s research took patience and will, as does reading the result. Limiting himself to works published in France (including translations) after Mazarin’s death and before La Bruyère’s *Les Caractères* (1661-1688), Bouvier studied 175 writers and filled out thirty thousand index cards. The book is organized in two major parts, the first on “L’Homme” and the second on “La Société” each of these is divided into chapters on topics such as reason, passions, virtues or the king, the court, justice, and the church.

Despite the somewhat bland presentation, Bouvier has actually written a very polemical book. Its title, *La morale classique*, is pointedly set against Louis Van Delft’s *le moraliste classique*, and Bouvier has defined his corpus in a way that conveys at the outset an attempt to reclaim the seventeenth century for an orthodox Roman Catholic position. He rejects Van Delft’s definition of the *moraliste* as too broad because it permits inclusion of philosophers. This is a crucial shift and one that is consistent with Bouvier’s aim to center classicism on the Catholic establishment rather than on its critics. Having decapitated the philosophic resistance within the first few pages of his introduction, Bouvier is able quite logically to show in the subsequent six hundred or so pages that for the most of his authors authentic virtues are “vertus chrétiennes.” The “moralist” in Bouvier’s terms is a writer who draws his authority “des Pères de

l'Eglise, des grands philosophes, en dernier ressort du sentiment commun des honnêtes gens”(p.11) for the purpose of teaching readers how to live their lives.

La morale classique will be a useful reminder of how the conservative, established Church, as opposed to dissidents such as *libertins*, Jansenists and Protestants, dominated seventeenth century France. For most scholars and modern readers, the atypical, innovative, gifted, critical authors of the period have, understandably, been more attractive than the modest, even nameless perpetuators of what was officially Christian orthodoxy. Therefore it is valuable, if somewhat startling or scary—depending on one’s ideological orientation—to ponder the *soubassement* with its denigration of pagan, excessively rationalist antiquity, its basic optimism about human nature (properly disciplined by social structures), its attachment to order, its rejection of stoic, perfectionist virtue.

To conclude, here is a vivid sample of Bouvier’s take on seventeenth century French culture: “Les hommes classiques sont des aventuriers, en ce sens que leur être leur advient dans le déploiement de la vie, que leur histoire en ce monde est un pèlerinage vers la Jérusalem céleste, un avent quasi liturgique de leur nativité au Ciel.”

John D. Lyons

Assaf, Francis.

La Mort du roi: Une thanatographie de Louis XIV. Tübingen: Gunter Narr Verlag, 1999 (*Biblio 17* no. 112). 247pp. ISBN: 3-8233-5524-4.

With *La Mort du roi*, Francis Assaf provides a wealth of information on one of the long seventeenth century's most important events, the one that closed off this historical period definitively. It stands to reason, as the author shows, that the discourses surrounding the death of the king prove to be revealing in regard to the writing of history, to the conception that France constructed for itself of Louis XIV's reign, and to the prevailing definitions of kingship as they were articulated in 1715.

After an introduction stating the main points of the book's argument, the first chapter analyzes Medieval and Renaissance conceptions of the king's identity and more specifically of the king's body, a hybrid made up of a physical body on the one hand and a more abstract representation of a political body on the other. Overall, the author tracks an evolution from an assimilation of the king's identity and role to Christ to a more juridical conception. The evolution is also toward a stronger notion of absolutism.

In the seventeenth century, the following chapter argues, thinkers like Charles Loyseau and Toussaint Du Bray further developed the idea of the king's authority, through the notion of absolutism by divine right. Also stressed were France's legitimacy and independence from the Holy Roman Empire. In the writings of Jean-François Senault, Assaf identifies a particularly modern idea, that of the psychological stability of the monarch, who thus becomes a thinking, feeling subject in the seventeenth century, an individual who cultivates a highly personal relationship to God. This is one of the most interesting moments of Assaf's study, where the author might have extended the analysis beyond the level of argument summary and historical exegesis.

The book's second part begins with a skillful reading of the work of Nicole Ferrier-Caverivière, Roland Barthes, Louis Marin, and Michel de Certeau, focusing on the writing of the death of the king as the writing of history. Here Assaf brings out points of contact between the fundamental conditions of historiography and the kind of epideictic discourse developed through the *oraisons funèbres* on Louis XIV.

The author then enumerates the *oraisons funèbres* given in France and discusses their rhetorical characteristics and their major themes. Louis XIV was associated in these discourses with Christ and constructed above all as a religious figure. The defunct king was also repeatedly compared to Old Testament kings. The hardships endured by the king and by France motivated another biblical comparison, this time with Job. The *oraisons* also consistently vilified Protestantism and applauded Louis XIV's anti-Huguenot efforts. Many of the *oraisons* had a decidedly modern orientation, placing the king's accomplishments above and beyond all examples found in antiquity. At the conclusion of this chapter, Assaf brings the reader's attention to the mytho-historical processes of representation through which the dead king is made to live beyond the demise of his physical body, thus ensuring that his power will be transferred to his successor.

In a chapter on elegies and other discourses surrounding the death of the king in France, Assaf shows how funerary ceremonies became simply a pretext for a dispute between the Jansenists, represented by the abbé Guérin and basing their critiques on ancient rhetorical models, and the Jesuits, represented by Charles Porée, who applauded Louis XIV's attacks on Jansenist heresy. The battle of funerary orations thus became a kind of war of Ancients against Moderns, a mix of rhetoric, theology, and politics.

A chapter on eulogies pronounced in foreign lands places emphasis on the political purpose that the commemoration of Louis XIV's reign served in Spain, where the Bourbons were in dire need of a reaffirmation of their power. Also stressed in this chapter is the theatrical nature of the representation of the dead king.

Perhaps the most intriguing part of Assaf's book is the chapter on "Vitupérations," on the "chansons, épigrammes et autres textes de même genre" (161) that vented the frustrations of the French people after years of hardships and financial abuses. Assaf provides an appendix including a number of these, some of which are wickedly funny, along with some of the more official encomia. The major *topoi* of the vituperations, steeped in irony and satire, include the extravagant spending of the reign, the hardships endured by the people, and the excessive influence of Madame de Maintenon. The author's ability to bring to light this kind of little-known commentary on the reign of Louis XIV provides new insights on the Sun King's reign and makes for fascinating reading as well.

Roland Racevskis

Hilgar, Marie-France.

Onze mises en scène parisiennes du théâtre de Molière, 1989-1994. Tübingen: PFSCL-Biblio17, 1997. Pp. 112. Paper.

Marie-France Hilgar's interesting little volume summarizes and comments upon the critical reception of eleven Parisian productions of Molière's plays from the period 1989-1994. The author compares and contrasts press reviews of the featured productions, and also shares her own reactions, which tend to favor the more conservative and traditional approaches to Molière's theater. For instance, on bawdiness and potty humor in Dario Fo's commedia dell'arte-inspired productions of *Le Médecin malgré lui* and *Le Médecin volant* (1990, Comédie-Française), she writes, "On ne va généralement pas à la Comédie-Française pour voir du cirque, et si à notre époque, 'pour s'amuser,' on a besoin de 'gri-voiserie' et de 'scatologie,' notre civilisation est descendue à un niveau si bas qu'elle ne s'en relèvera peut-être jamais." Still, she maintains a certain open-mindedness towards unconventional mises en scène: although she strongly objects to the obscenity in a *Fourberies de Scapin* set in modern-day Marseilles and featuring the popular actor-comedian Smaïn in the starring role (1994, Gymnase), she comments that this is "une mise en scène qui vaut la peine d'être vue...ne serait-ce que pour la critiquer."

Each chapter begins with remarks on the play's performance history (date of premiere, original cast, number of first-run performances, number of times performed at the Comédie-Française). Absent are any photos from the featured productions, or sketches of stage settings: the only illustrations included, mostly frontispieces showing scenes from the plays, date from the seventeenth century. One might wish for more documentation and objective information to complement the subjectivity of the critics' appraisals and to furnish as complete a picture as possible of the productions in question.

The book is at its best when presenting different mises en scène of the same play (there are two chapters each for *L'Avare*, *Le Malade imaginaire*, and *Le Misanthrope*), and more of this

comparative approach would have been welcome. In fact, one regrets that the author chose to cover such a brief period, and to feature only Parisian productions; an expanded version of this book, or perhaps a companion volume, featuring not just Parisian productions, but the most noteworthy recent mises en scène, would be most desirable.

From the beginning, Hilgar makes it clear that she has deliberately chosen to leave aside academic criticism in order to pay homage to the “analyses très fines et justes, jouées et informatives” des “porte-parole de la presse.” The choice of periodicals cited is somewhat puzzling—they range from those one might expect, such as *Le Monde*, *Le Figaro* and *Libération*, to *Le Quotidien du Médecin* and *Budgets*. In the chapter on Jean-Marie Villégier's production of *Le Malade imaginaire*, the author consulted a large number of international periodicals (Italian, Spanish, British, American, even Israeli publications are cited), but this is not the case for the other plays. The author announces rather late in the volume (p. 93) that she considers *Le Figaro*'s Pierre Marcabru the best contemporary theater critic; until that point the reader almost has the impression that all critics (whether from *Le Monde* or *Télérama*, *l'Avant Scène* or *Textes et documents pour la classe*) are being presented as equally respectable and worth reading. Despite her high regard for the critics she cites, Hilgar recognizes the dangers of relying on their judgments: “...les Parisiens se laissent beaucoup influencer par les critiques publiées dans les journaux, et s'abstiennent d'assister à des pièces de théâtre non recommandées par *Le Figaro* ou leur journal favori. Nous, pionnière du far west américain, ne manquons jamais d'aller revoir Molière chez lui.” She expresses satisfaction at having ignored the critics' advice and gone to see Francis Huster's excellent *Misanthrope* (1992, Marigny).

The author does not provide any real conclusion or synthesis: the book ends with a brief paragraph titled “Ceci n'est pas une conclusion” which simply affirms that “la gloire [de Molière] est à l'abri de toute atteinte.” But in her commentary on the plays, Marie-France Hilgar does point out some general trends. In particular, she notes the tendency of late twentieth-century

productions to bring out the tragic in Molière's works, to change comedy into drama: thus the *précieuses ridicules* of Jean-Luc Boutté (1993, Comédie-Française) are presented as misunderstood martyrs to be taken seriously, and the lively Dom Juan is transformed into a morose "cadavre ambulante" by Jacques Rosner (1991, Théâtre de Chaillot).

Given the ephemeral nature of theatrical performance, this book is a useful and convenient reference work that will prove valuable to theater historians, college teachers, and anyone who enjoys Molière's plays. All in all, it is an informative work and a pleasant reading experience made all the more engaging by the author's candor and her evident love and enthusiasm for her subject.

Deborah Steinberger

Lyons, John D.

The Tragedy of Origins: Pierre Corneille and Historical Perspective. Stanford, CA: Stanford University Press, 1996 Pp. xv + 236. Cloth. \$37.50.

In this cogent study of five plays by Pierre Corneille, John Lyons goes one step beyond traditional readings of history in Corneille's theater by positing a fundamental conjunction between history and tragedy as complimentary ways of relating or restructuring human experience. Each of the dramatic works studied here – *Horace*, *Cinna*, *Polyeucte*, *Sertorius* and *Attila* -- stages a moment of origin, a confrontation between the past and the present (of the represented world) which results in the foundation of a new political and social order. Unlike Racine's representation of mythic, circular time, Corneille's plays focus on the singularity of the moment; a tragedy of origins is thus "a drama that illustrates the characters' struggle to act according to a framework of references to the past precisely at the moment when that past is rendered obsolete by a new structure that will itself in retrospect convert their present into a beginning" (76). Such tragedies naturally privilege the events which alter the course of history rather than the hero himself. Yet, most often, only the hero recognizes as the play closes the magnitude of the originary shift which has taken place before his eyes. Any such radical change is of course viewed as transgressive by those who live it; ironically, the hero, who is instrumental in any movement toward change, is, in the end, excluded from the new order established by his actions.

Lyons' critical trajectory takes him from the founding of Rome (*Horace*) to the originary moment of the French nation (*Attila*), and he is particularly interested in episodes of retrospection which take place within each play, for each moment of reflection calls into question the usefulness of history as an explanatory concept, while simultaneously operating a shift in values and value structures within the dramatic world. In *Horace*, for example, Corneille presents the account of the battle between the Horace and Curiace brothers as a text which is constantly revised as new information becomes available; the characters' retrospective interpretation of the events which constitute the origin of Rome points to a revisionist perspective essential to Corneille's tragic vision, a vision based upon the notion of historical relativism and difference. Similarly, the characters in *Cinna* foreground the relationship between the past and the present: Cinna, for example, suggests to Auguste in II,i that the present can shape the value of acts in the past. He later (in II,ii)

disclaims this assertion, yet Auguste, the visionary emperor privileged with multiple viewpoints and historical perspective, will ultimately reject history as a model, focusing instead upon shaping his world in the present. *Polyeucte* presents a similar rejection of past models, but with a religious twist: linking the historical with the visual, Polyeucte destroys icons so as to place himself outside of history and free to benefit from the world-altering force of grace, which is itself extra-historical. Corneille himself seems to have been fighting a related battle here, for *Polyeucte* puts into question not only the usefulness of history, but the very possibility of representing the historical origins of Christianity.

The fourth chapter of Lyons' book, entitled "Sertorius' White Hind," is the shortest and least satisfying of the study. Like his dramatic predecessors, Sertorius finds himself a victim of the very shift he has helped to operate, and is unable to function in a culture according to whose codes he himself is obsolete. Lyons' reading of Corneille against his historical source, Plutarch, is provocative, yet one wishes for more development of the themes which ostensibly link the five plays as tragedies of origin. Fortunately, the chapter devoted to *Attila* returns to the themes in question, elaborating a theory of Attila-as-other with the critical support of Benjamin's work on baroque drama. Lyons posits the moment of origin of the French nation as imbued with mystery and confusion: Attila is the monstrous other beyond history, the outsider against whom France as a nation will be defined. As transgression incarnate, Attila's dramatic function must end in a bloody death, so that social and political order can unite the nation that would be France.

The Tragedy of Origins is illuminating in its examination of Pierre Corneille's historical consciousness. As Lyons explains, Corneille's notion of cultural relativism, the product of this conception of historical difference, is the logical next step following sixteenth-century studies of what was termed "continuous history." Yet it is the linking of the historical with the tragic in an attempt to represent moments of origin which points to a particularly modern conception of historicity on Corneille's part; John Lyons' analysis of the conjunction between history and tragedy in Corneille's theater is a very welcome and thought-provoking treatment of a subject which has long merited further critical development.

Suzanne Toczyski

Zanger, Abby E.

Scenes from the Marriage of Louis XIV: Nuptial Fictions and the Making of Absolutist Power Stanford, CA: Stanford University Press, 1997. Pp. xv + 224. Hardcover, illus.

Abby Zanger's compelling examination of the role of nuptial fictions in the creation of the absolutist state challenges the limits of what might now be called the more "traditional" or monolithic understanding of the function of royal representation in the service of absolutism as presented in the work of Kantorowicz, Marin, Apostolidès and others. Without denying the potency of her predecessors' work, Zanger introduces a new variable into the equation of the king's two bodies, a variable both essential and potentially threatening, namely, the queen, or more precisely, the queen's body. Virginal but also, crucially, fecund, Maria Theresa's own transformation into Marie-Thérèse is essential to the legitimization of Louis XIV's passions and to dynastic continuity. Yet the queen's collaboration in the consolidation of political power around the figure of the king must be de-emphasized, indeed hidden, for the notion of dependence is completely antithetical to the concept of absolutism. In Zanger's powerful study, Marie-Thérèse's existence points to the dialectical nature of the symbolic elements which contribute to the establishment of sovereignty; such elements are fundamental, indispensable, albeit ominous, even menacing.

The nuptial fictions Zanger considers are all a product of what she terms a "liminal event" (3); such periods of flux and transition are characterized by disorder, yet serve as a moment of passage toward greater social stability. Logically, then, a good part of Zanger's evidence for the role of nuptial fictions in royal representation (chapters 1-3) is drawn not from the dominant literary genres, but rather from texts, images, and other media located in the margins of print production: almanac engravings, letters, and occasional pamphlets. Like the queen, these artifacts of the royal wedding are problematic in that they are at once necessary to the king's absolutist project and pose a possible threat to that same project; while they send a powerful message to a public curious for details about the king, they also represent outside forces upon which the king is, to some extent, dependent, forces which must consequently be camouflaged from the public view. According to Zanger's reading, images of the king published in almanacs of the period shape the gaze of the readers, exposing the king's passions while at the same time framing those passions and legitimizing

public curiosity about the king's body. In like fashion, almanac portraits of potential queens point to the kinship exchange necessary to dynastic continuity and social stability, while at the same time masking the political aggression preceding such an exchange as well as the more "disruptive" elements of the queen's body which might engender too much curiosity. Subsequent letters describing the new queen's voyage to France similarly displace the readers' gaze from a more transgressive consideration of her body to the clothes which seductively mask it; Marie-Thérèse's transformation from Spanish infanta to French queen will be operated in part by means of her reclothing, which, as it afforded her no small amount of discomfort, also effected a moment of anxiety manifested in the transgressive substance of sweat. Zanger's close reading of these semiotic clues points to the centrality of the queen's body to the construction of the state. Later still, occasional pamphlets depicting the actual exchange on the border purported to offer multiple perspectives from which to view the private moments in which Louis XIV first came into contact with his bride; Zanger's study demonstrates, however, that this faith in diversity can be misleading, since in most cases, only one viewpoint dominates as the pamphlets constantly slip out of the picture.

The remaining two chapters of *Scenes from a Marriage* examine what we might consider less ephemeral, more enduring examples of nuptial fictions: Menestrier's treatise on fireworks, Pierre Corneille's *Conquête de la Toison d'or*, and the prologue to Madeleine de Scudéry's novella *Celinte*. Again, Zanger highlights the dual nature of each of these. Fireworks are powerful, transformative, even destructive, but their power to destroy must be hidden from the public view, as the public's enjoyment of the spectacles staged to celebrate the king's marriage comes from the containment of chaos and, concomitantly, of the fear experienced before such a display of force. Corneille himself makes reference in his prologue to the status of *La Toison d'or* as a nuptial fiction, and Zanger offers multiple readings of the mythical figure of Médée and her role in such a fiction. But if Corneille's play stages the potentially transgressive force of the female body in the person of Medea, the danger the play could have posed to the construction of sovereignty is mitigated by the play's late arrival on the scene: in 1662, the marriage of Louis XIV and Marie-Thérèse is very much a thing of the past. Similarly, Scudéry's *Celinte*, published in 1660, represents no real threat to absolutism. Rather, Scudéry's prologue is a treatise on curiosity, with the queen herself positioned in the center of the public's admiring gaze, a place constructed for her by the king who, insofar as he himself may be seen as a collector of

curiosities, exploits his queen in the service of his own absolutist construction. Again, the female body is deemed central to absolutist logic, although such collaboration must be concealed from public consideration.

As Zanger notes, “One of the fundamental purposes of nuptial fictions was to stage and contain the anxieties of the treaty marriage. Limbs, frames, fashion and *privilèges* were some of the strategies used to contain the frightening truths about state building, namely that sexuality, passion, foreign women, and even ceremonies of information played a central role in the generation of the absolutist state” (127). Drawing upon a variety of critical perspectives—anthropological, feminist, historical, etc. — *Scenes from the Marriage of Louis XIV* is a rich example of the best kind of cultural studies. The reader’s only regret is that Marie-Thérèse herself didn’t find her way into the title of such a provocative example of literary criticism.

Suzanne Toczyski

Connon, Derek, and George Evans.

Anthologie de pièces du Théâtre de la foire. Surrey, England: Runnymede Books, 1996.

Connon and Evans bring together in this anthology eight plays from Alain René Lesage and d'Orneval's *Théâtre de la foire; ou, L'Opéra Comique* (1721-1737) and a ninth play of Piron's from the same period published some years later in *Œuvres complètes de Piron* (1776). Their choice in plays was dictated by three criteria: "d'abord, celles qui mettent en scène les difficultés causées aux théâtres des foires par les théâtres établis; ensuite, des exemples de l'ingéniosité des théâtres forains; et pour terminer, des exemples de pièces exploitant les différents thèmes principaux du répertoire" (9). Connon and Evans do not wish to give an historical overview of the development of the *théâtre de la foire* so much as to provide a variety of examples of the genre in order to give the reader a general impression of the types of plays making up the repertory of the *foires*. As such, Connon and Evans' anthology is an excellent introduction to the *théâtre de la foire*.

To make the plays more accessible to a broader audience, Connon and Evans include a glossary of unfamiliar technical terms or those terms that have changed in meaning since the eighteenth century. In addition, they have written explanatory notes directed toward the student reader with the result that the texts are very accessible.

The anthology contains some of the best examples of the creativity of the *théâtre de la foire* in overcoming the restrictions imposed upon it by the established theaters of Paris. Connon and Evans begin the anthology with an example of a prologue that typically was performed before the main program of plays and but had little to do with them thematically. Their choice in prologues, *La querelle des théâtres*, not only gives the reader an idea of what a prologue may have been, but also sets up the premise for the rest of the collection. As the title of the prologue indicates, this prologue brings to life allegorically the legal attacks brought against the *théâtre de la foire* by the *Comédie française*, the *Comédie italienne* and the *Opéra*. Thus, the reader is introduced to the tensions present among the different theaters which resulted in different restrictions being placed upon the *théâtre de la foire*.

Connon and Evans have included in their anthology some other important plays of the *théâtre de la foire* that had a lasting

influence on the history of the theater in general. One of these, *Arlequin roi de Sérendib*, is one of the best examples of the *pièces en écriteaux*. When, in 1707, the *Comédie française* succeeded in forbidding the use of spoken dialogue by the *théâtre de la foire*, the *forains* turned to the use of monologues. Then, still not happy with the way in which the *forains* had succeeded in circumventing the law, they imposed the restriction of no speech at all allowed in their plays upon the *théâtre de la foire* in 1710. The *forains'* response to this was to pull from their pockets on stage rolls of parchment on which they had written their lines large enough for the audience to read. Soon, these written lines of prose became lines of popular songs which the audience then sang. Towards 1712, signs or *écriteaux* lowered from the flies replaced the rolls of parchment. And thus was born the *pièce en écriteaux*, of which *Arlequin, roi de Sérendib* is the model. As Alain Viala notes, this type of play is the ancestor of two important theatrical forms. On the one hand, with the use of sung melodies, it prepares the way for the *opéra-comique*. On the other hand, since the written signs and songs produce the text of the play, the actors devoted themselves to creating gestures, thereby leading the way to pantomime and, later, melodrama (Viala, *Le théâtre en France des origines à nos jours*, 291).

Another play that Connon and Evans include in their anthology that demonstrates well the creativity of the *forains* in circumventing the law is Piron's *Arlequin-Deucalion*. This play, first performed in 1722 at the *Opéra-comique*, deals with the interdiction on spoken dialogue by creating a monologue in three acts. Deucalion-Arlequin is the only actor to speak while his wife, Pyrrha, is reduced to expressive gesturing. As Connon and Evans point out so well in their introduction to the play, the author comes within a hair's breadth of legal disaster several times by introducing what first seems to be spoken dialogue. In one instance, what seems to be a dialogue between Arlequin and an actor off-stage proves to remain within the legal confines since that "actor" turns out to be a parrot. Similarly, other actors are able to interact with Arlequin without using dialogue strictly speaking. Apollon expresses himself by song or by melodies played on his flute (melodies to which the audience knew the words). Melpomène expresses herself through traditional exclamations from Tragedy but she never says enough for it to be technically termed as dialogue. In the last act, Arlequin has a real dialogue with Momus, but since the latter is a puppet, this, too, lies outside the provisions of the law.

In the last part of their anthology Connon and Evans include plays that demonstrate the principal themes of the *théâtre de la foire*.

Of these, *Colombine Arlequin; ou, Arlequin Colombine* is an example of the basic comic love plot in which disguises and role reversals play an important part. *Les Animaux raisonnables* is a satire that demonstrates the idea that human beings may be compared to animals and that animals may be in a better position than men. The last play in the anthology, *Le monde renversé*, is an obvious example of the typical theme of an upside-down world in which things become their opposites.

Cannon and Evans give an excellent introduction to the problems faced by the *théâtre de la foire* in the early eighteenth century and the ways in which these authors and actors were able to skirt around the legal interdictions sought by the more powerful theaters. Their anthology is useful for both the student and the scholar as it provides the basic sorts of information, notes and vocabulary that make early eighteenth-century theater accessible to students while at the same time providing the references necessary for the scholar wishing to delve a little deeper into the issues raised here.

Jolene Vos-Camy

Jean Serroy.

Poètes français de l'âge baroque. Anthologie (1571-1677). Paris: Imprimerie nationale, coll. « La Salamandre », 1999. 531 pages. 160F.

Même s'il est indéniable que l'engouement pour le phénomène baroque a eu l'insigne mérite de redessiner le paysage littéraire d'un siècle inféodé jusque-là au présupposé — préjugé — classique, il n'en demeure pas moins qu'il reste encore beaucoup à faire pour mettre sur le devant de la scène des textes et des auteurs victimes de la tradition, et de l'enseignement. C'est précisément à cette entreprise utile, et de longue haleine, que contribue le présent florilège poétique concocté par Jean Serroy. Si, aujourd'hui, les noms de Du Bartas, Saint-Amant, Voiture ou, encore, Scarron et Sponde, ne sont plus tout à fait inconnus du public lettré, il est à parier que ceux de Nuysement, Lasphrise, Selve et autres Esternod et Rampalle, sont pour leur part largement ignorés, même de ceux ou de celles qui fréquentent les quelques anthologies du genre (Schmidt, Rousset, Dubois, Chauveau, Mathieu-Castellani, Rubin) répertoriées dans la bibliographie en fin l'ouvrage.

Récusant une classification thématique qui, comme celle de Jean Rousset (A. Collin, 1968) a parfois l'inconvénient de subordonner « la vérité de l'œuvre » (p. 31) à la mise en évidence de tel ou tel thème, se méfiant d'une anthologie « historique » s'appuyant sur d'évanescents affinités théoriques ou associatives, M. Serroy opte pour l'approche « la meilleure [...] possible, parce que la plus objective » (33) : une présentation chronologique basée sur la date de naissance — avérée ou supposée — des 54 poètes sélectionnés. Perspective, dont le caractère par trop mécanique qui en assure prétendument l'objectivité, se trouve fort heureusement affinée par une classification génétique autour de quelques lignes directrices d'inspiration (27-30), et un *Tableau chronologique de publication* des œuvres (523-525).

Précédés d'une succincte notice biographique de leur auteur, d'un renvoi opportun à l'édition de référence et à quelques études critiques, ces textes sont donnés dans une orthographe modernisée et bénéficient du soin de mise en page aérée et de la qualité typographique légendaire de l'Imprimerie nationale. Respectant la politique éditoriale de la collection de *La Salamandre*, qui revendique un style « dédaigneux des grilles et des gloses » (rabat de couverture), M. Serroy, après une brève introduction,

nous offre ces textes agrémentés de notes dont la parcimonie égale la pertinence.

Synchronique de la Modernité, le baroque correspond certainement à la mise en place d'un nouveau paradigme épistémologique qui induit une sensibilité particulière qu'à juste titre l'on peut qualifier de *baroque*. Persuadé qu'« [i]l y a bien un âge baroque, dont le XVII^e est le cœur » (15), M. Serroy agrée à la conception d'une ère baroque allant de la Renaissance à la Révolution, « avènement de l'ordre bourgeois » (13). Ce seraient les poètes de 1570 à 1670 qui, selon M. Serroy, traduiraient le mieux cette sensibilité ; cet « air baroque » dont l'ostentation et, surtout, le mouvement constitueraient les principaux ingrédients. Après 1670, après qu'auraient triomphé « à la fois les ressources de l'imagination et la virtuosité formelle » (26), M. Serroy décrit le déclin de l'imagination et l'avènement d'une « rationalité toute classique » (27). Justifiant ainsi l'ouverture de son anthologie sur Guillaume Salluste Du Bartas (1544-1590) et Philippe Desportes (1546-1606) et la terminant sur Pierre de Saint-Louis (1626-1684) et François Malaval (1627-1719), dont les méditations sur « La Madeleine au désert de la Sainte-Baume », pour le premier, et « L'Amour de son néant », pour le second, furent respectivement publiées en 1668 et 1671, M. Serroy confesse d'autre part l'arbitraire du nombre et du choix des poètes retenus. L'on pourrait, certes, ergoter quant à l'efficacité des textes choisis pour rendre compte de cet « air du baroque » rapidement défini (19-22), ainsi que de l'épaisseur d'un volume dont les 54 heureux élus en rendent le maniement mal commode, et rédhibitoire toute velléité de l'emporter en promenade dans ses poches ; on regrettera surtout l'absence de la moindre plume féminine. Nonobstant le point de vue de Malherbe : « *La femme est une mer aux naufrages fatale* » (125), il est indéniable — et c'est heureux ! — que l'absence de femme au milieu d'une compagnie de messieurs fait aujourd'hui tache.

Ceci dit, et même s'il n'est pas à la gloire de la parité, ce florilège contribue certainement à la thèse d'une France dans l'air, l'ère et l'aire du baroque, où « la vérité » n'est plus à rechercher dans l'univoque d'une raison souveraine mais, bien davantage, dans l'équivoque des tours et détours d'une imagination à la dérive.

C'est donc folie, amis, d'espérer fermeté,

Puisque notre espérance est sur un vent fondée.

Marc Papillon de Lasphrise [sic, 106]

Jean-Claude Vuillemin

Yvette Saupé.

Les Contes de Perrault et la mythologie, rapprochements et influences. Paris-Seattle-Tübingen:, *Biblio 17* No. 104, 1997. 241 pp.

Ce livre définit les Contes de Perrault comme des « Fables Milésiennes » du XVII^e siècle, qui malgré les déclarations modernistes de leur auteur, renferment des éléments connus de la mythologie grecque. D'après Y. Saupé:

Il est loisible de reconnaître dans les personnages des fées les avatars des déesses antiques et dans ceux du Chat Botté et du Petit Poucet les doublets des héros épiques, tels Ulysse ou Hermès. Ainsi, Perrault s'amuse à transposer malicieusement l'épopée dans le conte, écrivant à sa manière un « Homère travesti » (p. 28).

Ainsi Y. Saupé déclare-t-elle que les Contes marchent sur les traces du Virgile travesti, oeuvre burlesque que Perrault et ses frères aînés avaient débutée quarante-cinq ans auparavant. Elle ajoute que ce retour aux origines greco-latines illustre la parenté entre l'antiquité « gauloise » des contes et la mythologie antique.

L'étude s'organise selon un schéma thématique dont la logique semble dictée par des éléments narratifs plutôt que stylistiques. D'abord la mise en scène : la première partie traite de « L'univers du conte merveilleux », défini comme « Le paratexte significatif » (titres, illustrations et dédicaces), « Les lieux privilégiés » (châteaux, forêts), et « Le bestiaire mythique » (animaux, métamorphoses). Ensuite, dans la deuxième partie, on considère l'intrigue : « Le mythe du héros », « Le romanesque : sérieux ou édifiant ? », « Le Mythe de Psyché ou l'interdit du regard » et « Le mélange des tons » (qui comprend une comparaison de « La Belle au Bois dormant » avec le mythe de Déméter et le lai Eliduc de Marie de France).

Enfin, la troisième et dernière partie, intitulée « Vers l'épanouissement du burlesque », essaie une définition du « Héros burlesque ou Homère travesti » en examinant les personnages du Chat botté et du Petit Poucet.

On ne peut pas nier l'intérêt de ce jeu de trouver des ressemblances entre les Contes et leurs précédents de l'antiquité, ce qu'a déjà fait P. Saintyves [Émile Nourry] dans son livre de 1923, *Les Contes de Perrault et leurs récits parallèles*. D'ailleurs, il est incontestable qu'il existe des éléments « universels » de la psychologie humaine, qui se sont manifestés dans le folklore depuis les commencements de la tradition orale, comme l'ont remarqué des critiques comme J. Zipes.

Mais, même si Perrault était conscient de tous ces parallélismes, et même s'il basait le personnage de Poucet sur le dieu Hermès, comme prétend Y. Saupé, il n'est pas certain que cette connaissance approfondisse notre compréhension du text. Si les intentions déclarées de Perrault étaient de distinguer le patrimoine gaulois de la littérature classique, à quoi nous sert-il de découvrir que l'histoire d'un jeune homme qui surmonte des obstacles épisodiques existe dans ces deux domaines ? Par contre, en soulignant l'aspect présumé imitateur des Contes, Y. Saupé réduit le statut de l'œuvre :

Faire dans le cadre non codifié du conte une parodie de l'épopée, c'était minorer ce grand genre et désacraliser ainsi les mythes. À sa manière, Perrault « travestit » l'épopée, non comme Scarron, modèle inimitable, mais dans la veine de ses œuvres de jeunesse (p. 231).

Y. Saupé prétend donc que le but de Perrault n'était pas de valoriser le conte moderne, mais plutôt de démolir le genre antique, une conclusion que l'analyse du texte ne soutient pas de façon persuasive.

À travers ce livre et sa bibliographie assez longue (194 citations), on s'étonne de trouver des lacunes importantes. Ceci est

difficile à comprendre dans un sujet, c'est-à-dire l'histoire littéraire du conte de fée, dans lequel il existe si peu de titres imprimés. On peut bien se demander si la qualité superficielle de cette étude n'aurait pas été exacerbée par une ignorance des travaux scolaires précédents.

Au premier coup d'œil, il semblait que c'étaient les livres en anglais qui manquaient : par exemple, J. Barchilon, *Perrault's Tales of Mother Goose* (1956) et J. Morgan, *Perrault's Morals for Moderns* (1985). Mais il manque aussi des sources en français, comme l'étude magistrale de M.-E. Storer, de la mode des contes de fées précieux (1928), et même deux titres qui ont paru dans la série *Biblio 17* : J. Barchilon et C. Velay-Vallantin, *Pensées chrétiennes de Charles Perrault* (1987) et C.-L. Malarte, *Perrault à travers la critique depuis 1960, bibliographie annotée* (1989). Celui-ci est indispensable pour toute étude de Charles Perrault et son oeuvre.

Malgré ses recherches approfondies dans la mythologie classique, on ne saurait juger de la contribution scolaire d'un livre qui ne rend pas compte d'une grande partie de la bibliographie qui existe déjà à l'intérieur de ce sujet.

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