

Lafayette Rewrites History, Murat Rewrites Lafayette: the Novel and the Transfiguration of the Social Sphere in Old-Regime France

by

Allison Stedman

Scholars agree that two of the French Enlightenment's most radical examples of intellectual innovation and modernization—the eighteenth-century transfiguration of the public sphere and the rise of the concept of individual identity—are intricately linked to the evolution of reading and writing practices during this same period. As Jürgen Habermas describes in *The Structural Transformation of the Public Sphere*, the evolution of the public sphere from an extension of state-governance into a public composed of private individuals making collective use of their reason, was only able to occur because “the public sphere in the world of letters [was] equipped with institutions of the public and with forums for discussion.”¹ Likewise, as Geoffrey Turnovsky has shown in *The Literary Market: Authorship and Modernity in the Old Regime*, the impact that the structural transformation of the public sphere had on the modernization of intellectual identities in general was only made possible because of changes initially effected on *authorial* identities. As the literary field transformed from a patronage economy to a market economy at the end of the eighteenth century, so also high Enlightenment authors transformed the way they self-fashioned and self-presented. This shift in turn modeled a new way for all individuals to conceive of identity, self-hood and place in society.²

The transformations in the public sphere and in notions of modern identity that scholars observe during the eighteenth century were not only visible during the French Enlightenment, however. Similarly, during the reign of Louis XIV, a diverse community of authors and readers relied in-

¹ Jürgen Habermas, *The Structural Transformation of the Public Sphere: An Inquiry into a Category of Bourgeois Society*, trans. Thomas Burger (Cambridge, MA: The MIT Press, 1991), 51. See also, Roger Chartier's chapter “The Public Sphere and Public Opinion,” in *The Cultural Origins of the French Revolution*, trans. Lydia G. Cochrane (Durham, NC: Duke University Press, 1991) 20–37.

² Geoffrey Turnovsky, *The Literary Market: Authorship and Modernity in the Old Regime* (Philadelphia: University of Pennsylvania Press, 2009), 1–23. See also Roger Chartier, *Culture écrite et société: L'ordre des livres (XIVe–XVIIIe siècle)* (Paris: Albin Michel, 1996) especially pages 45–106.

TRANSFIGURATION OF THE SOCIAL SPHERE

creasingly on the production, consumption and circulation of literary texts both to create individualized social identities, and to engage one another on important social issues. As such, one can say that by the turn of the eighteenth century, the spatially mediated social field—in which social interaction took place primarily through face to face conversation and which required individuals to be physically present in the same space—was already ceding important socio-political influence to a rapidly expanding textually mediated social field—where social interaction took place primarily through the production, reception and circulation of literary texts, and where common physical presence in a given locale was no longer necessary.³

Louis XIV's attempts to dominate the social field by increasing the importance of spatially mediated modes of social interaction have been widely studied.⁴ Less well-known is the degree to which, during the same period, a dialectic resistance to the king's policies was also taking place as authors frustrated with the crown's increasing monopolization of physical space began to explore alternative modes of social interaction. This exploration simultaneously gave way to new definitions of social identity and rules of decorum. While in the spatially mediated social field, one's identity and capacity for interaction were limited by such external signifiers as rank, age, gender, religious affiliation and regional origin; in the textually mediated social field, individuals of diverse backgrounds could interact with one another irrespective of such differences. Provided that they had access to a common corpus of literary texts, artisans could engage aristocrats, Protestants could engage Catholics, and young, unmarried women could interact with older, married men. The increasingly centrifugal na-

³ For a description of this phenomenon in the eighteenth century, see Roger Chartier, "Do Books Make Revolutions," in *The Cultural Origins of the French Revolution*, 67–91, and *Culture écrite et société*, *Ibid.*

⁴ Louis XIV's most innovative absolutist political policies relied on the perception that the social field was spatiotemporally constructed. In moving the entire court to Versailles, for example, the king exerted control over the social field by making social visibility synonymous with one's ability to "appear" at court. Similarly, he exploited the premise that physical banishment was equal to social annihilation by making use of exile as one of his most effective and prominent political tools. For more on the king's social policies at Versailles, see Norbert Elias, *The Civilizing Process: Sociogenetic and Psychogenetic Investigations*, trans. Edmund Jephcott (Oxford: Blackwell, 1982) 344–447; Norbert Elias, *The Court Society* (Oxford: Blackwell, 1983); and Louis Marin, *Portrait of the King*, trans. Martha Houle (Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press, 1988) especially pages 180–205. For more on the king's use of exile, see Juliette Cherbuliez, *The Place of Exile: Leisure Literature and the Limits of Absolutism* (Lewisburg, PA: Bucknell University Press, 2005).

ALLISON STEDMAN

ture of the textually mediated social field during the second half of the seventeenth century was arguably the foundational impulse behind the rise of generically heterogeneous novelistic production during this same period.⁵ As Henri Coulet has observed, the “period of confused searching” that characterized the novel during the final decades of Louis XIV’s reign (1690–1715) constitutes an anomaly in the history of the French novel where overall trends between 1650 and 1850 move from long, digressive, anecdotal and action-oriented to short, linear, analytical and psychologically realistic.⁶

In the emerging textually mediated social field, authors and readers used generically heterogeneous novelistic production to communicate with one another in a variety of ways.⁷ Sometimes they used prefaces to address one another directly. Other times they dialogued with one another through the plots of their texts using metaphor, synecdoche and intertextuality to call up associations between their own texts and those of their predecessors. At the turn of the eighteenth century, Henriette-Julie de Castelnau, Countess de Murat provided a notable example of this kind of intertextuality in her travel narrative, the *Voyage de campagne* (1699), re-writing both the famous “avowal” and “reverie” scenes that had earlier taken place in Marie-Madeleine Pioche de la Vergne, Countess de Lafayette’s seminal historical novel *La Princesse de Clèves* (1678).⁸ In

⁵ For a survey of generically heterogeneous literary production during the 1600s, see Allison Stedman, *Rococo Fiction in France, 1600–1715: Seditious Frivolity* (Lewisburg, PA: Bucknell University Press, 2012). As Maurice Lever’s bibliography of seventeenth-century French prose fiction reveals, the publication of French novels during the 1690s would increase by at least 22% from the 1670s, from approximately 136 novels during the 1670s to 175 during the 1690s. See Maurice Lever, *La Fiction narrative en prose en XVIIe siècle* (Centre National de la Recherche Scientifique, 1976), 529–58. These figures do not include novels published in Jean Donneau de Visé’s contemporary literary magazine *Le Mercure galant*.

⁶ Henri Coulet, *Le Roman jusqu’à la Révolution* (Paris: Armand Colin, 1967–8) I: 288. For more on the “identity crisis” of the late seventeenth-century novel, see also English Showalter, *The Evolution of the French Novel 1614–1782* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1972), 5; René Godenne, *La Nouvelle française* (Paris: Presses Universitaires de France, 1974), 29; Frédéric Deloffre, *La Nouvelle en France à l’âge classique* (Paris: Didier, 1968), 53.

⁷ See Stedman, *Rococo Fiction in France*, chapters 3 and 4.

⁸ According to Maurice Laugaa, eighteenth-century readers were so familiar with Lafayette’s *La Princesse de Clèves* (1678) that the novel could be said to represent an item of common cultural currency for the Enlightenment literary public. As such, during the eighteenth century, *La Princesse de Clèves* can be said to have provided a similar narrative function to that of history during the 1650s, 60s and 70s with respect to the rise of the short novel in the decades following the mid-century aristocratic rebellion known as the Fronde (1648–1653). See Maurice Laugaa, “Réception des romans et nouvelles de

TRANSFIGURATION OF THE SOCIAL SPHERE

doing so, Murat capitalized on a technique that earlier novelists, and even Lafayette herself, had used during the 1660s when they rewrote history in the form of the *nouvelle historique*. As we shall see, when Murat's re-writing of Lafayette is read against Lafayette's own rewriting of sixteenth-century history, the degree to which the old-regime social sphere was evolving from a reliance on spatial mediation to a reliance on textual mediation at the turn of the eighteenth century is apparent on the level of plot.

Revising History: Lafayette Rewrites Coulommiers

Set at the court of Henri II between October of 1558 and November of 1559, the plot of Lafayette's novel traces the psychological and sentimental evolution of Mademoiselle de Chartres, a wealthy heiress whose widowed mother strives to give her an exemplary education by sheltering her from superficiality and forbidding her to appear at court until she is fifteen years old. At court, the young woman rapidly becomes exposed to the vicissitudes of its treacherous socio-political network and learns the importance of dissimulating one's true feelings. In contradiction to her mother's teachings that "the only thing that can secure a woman's happiness ...[is] to love one's husband and to be loved by him (10)"⁹ ("ce qui seul peut faire le Bonheur d'une femme...est d'aimer son mari et d'en être aimé" [260]),¹⁰ de Chartres finds herself constrained to an arranged marriage with the Prince de Clèves, the second son of the Duke de Nevers, a man several years her senior for whom she feels no particular inclination. She goes on to fall in love with the gallant and handsome Duke de Nemours, receives assurance that he returns her affections, grieves over the death of her mother, and finally, fearing that she will succumb to her extra-marital passion for Nemours, begs her husband permission to retire from court to the country chateau they are in the process of building at Coulommiers. Suspecting that the princess is not completely forthright about the motivations behind her desire for retreat, Monsieur de Clèves presses her unceasingly until his wife responds with an act of unprece-

Madame de Lafayette au dix-huitième siècle," *Œuvres et critiques* XII (1987): 121–32. In *Before Fiction: The Ancien Regime of the Novel* (Philadelphia: University of Pennsylvania Press, 2011), Nicholas D. Paige calls into question the seminal nature of Lafayette's novel.

⁹ All translations of the *Princesse de Clèves* are taken from Terrence Cave's *Madame de Lafayette, The Princesse de Clèves* (Oxford: Oxford UP, 1992) References are to this edition.

¹⁰ Marie-Madeleine Pioche de la Vergne, Countess de Lafayette, *Madame de Lafayette, La Princesse de Clèves*, trans. Terrence Cave (Paris: Bourdas, 1990). References are to this edition.

ALLISON STEDMAN

dented sincerity: kneeling before her husband, she avows to him that she does indeed wish to retire from court to avoid being exposed to dangers to which women her age sometimes fall victim, and which would threaten to make her unworthy of him as a wife.

This singular declaration, which captivated critics and sparked lively debate among Lafayette's contemporaries, drives Monsieur de Clèves to despair.¹¹ Suspecting a connection between the vague "dangers" to which his wife alludes and the Duke de Nemours, Monsieur de Clèves eventually grants his wife permission to return to Coulommiers, all the while having Nemours followed by one of his footmen. Nemours does indeed turn up in the moonlit park surrounding the chateau de Coulommiers on the following evening, and in what Joan DeJean describes as a "Chinese box of voyeurism," the footman spies on the Duke de Nemours who in turn spies on the Princess de Clèves by crouching in the palisades beside the windows of her garden pavilion.¹² They observe the following scene:

She was reclining on a day bed, with a table in front of her, on which there were several baskets full of ribbons. She picked out some of these, and M. de Nemours noticed that they were of the very colours that he had worn at the tournament. He saw that she was tying them into bows on a very unusual malacca cane which for a while he had carried around with him and which he had then given to his sister; it was from her that Mme de Clèves had taken it without showing that she recognized it as having belonged to M. de Nemours. She completed this task with such grace and gentleness that all the feelings in her heart seemed reflected on her face. Then, she took a candlestick and went over to a large table in front of the painting of the siege at Metz that contained the likeness of M. de Nemours. She sat down and began to gaze at it with a musing fasci-

¹¹ For contemporary debate surrounding the *Princesse de Clèves*, see Jean-Antoine, Abbé de Charnes *Conversations sur la critique de la Princesse de Clèves* (1679), ed. François Weil et al. (Tours: Université de Tours, 1973); and Jean-Baptiste Troussel de Valincour, *Lettres à Madame la Marquise de *** au sujet de la Princesse de Clèves* (1678), ed. Jacques Chupeau et al. (Tours: Université de Tours, 1972). For the debate that took place over the *Princesse de Clèves* in the *Mercure Galant* (May 1678), see Gérard Genette, "Vraisemblance et Motivation," *Figures II* (Paris: Seuil 1969).

¹² Joan DeJean, "Female Voyeurism: Sappho and Lafayette," *Rivista di letteratura moderna e comparata* 40, no. 3 (1987): 210.

TRANSFIGURATION OF THE SOCIAL SPHERE

nation that could only have been inspired by true passion (128).

[Elle était sur un lit de repos, avec une table devant elle, où il y avait plusieurs corbeilles pleines de rubans, elle en choisit quelques-uns, et M. de Nemours remarqua que c'étaient des mêmes couleurs qu'il avait portées au tournoi. Il vit qu'elle en faisait des nœuds à une canne des Indes, fort extraordinaire, qu'il avait portée quelque temps et qu'il avait donnée à sa sœur, à qui [Mme] de Clèves l'avait prise sans faire semblant de la reconnaître pour avoir été à M. de Nemours. Après qu'elle eut achevé son ouvrage avec une grâce et une douceur que répandai[ent] sur son visage les sentiments qu'elle avait dans le cœur, elle prit un flambeau et s'en alla, proche d'une grande table, vis-à-vis du tableau du siège de Metz, où était le portrait de M. de Nemours, elle s'assit et se mit à regarder ce portrait avec une attention et une rêverie que la passion seule peut donner (386).]

Overjoyed at the sight of his beloved passionately occupied with so many things connected to him, Nemours futilely attempts to make the princess aware of his presence, and eventually alludes to his voyeurism a few days later. His overtures are ultimately refused, however. Madame de Clèves remains faithful to a self-imposed, austere conception of virtue even after her husband's untimely death leaves her free to remarry. She declines to return to court and lives out the rest of her short, exemplary life in semi-seclusion, spending half the year in a convent and the other half *chez elle* ("at her own home").¹³

Although critics across the centuries have viewed this scene from the violating perspective of the triangulated male gaze, in which two "desiring" male subjects observe the princess as desired object, as Joan DeJean has demonstrated, the princess' carefully premeditated reverie of passion can also be said to constitute a radical refashioning of triangulated male

¹³ This decision has often been linked to Lafayette's alleged Jansenist sympathies. See further Simone Guers, "La Religion dans *La Princesse de Clèves*," *Cahiers du dix-septième: An Interdisciplinary Journal* 2, no. 1 (1988): 133–141. As Christian Biet describes in "De la Veuve joyeuse à l'individu autonome," *XVIIe Siècle* 187, 2 (avril-juin 1995): 307–30, however, there may have been other factors involved in what made a widow's choice typical or unusual. See also, Jacques Poumarède: "Le droit des veuves sous l'Ancien Régime (XVIIe–XVIIIe siècles) ou comment gagner son douaire," in *Femmes et pouvoirs sous l'ancien régime*, ed. Danielle Haase-Dubosc and Eliane Viennot (Paris: Rivages, 1991).

ALLISON STEDMAN

desire.¹⁴ In transferring her own desire for Nemours onto a selection of meticulously chosen objects, the Princess de Clèves in fact asserts herself as a unique, desiring subject who in turn triangulates the *object* of her desire, supplanting the authentic Duke de Nemours with a convergence of signifiers that allow the duke as desired object to function simultaneously in both reality and reverie. As such, the princess is able to displace the power that the actual Nemours holds over her by redirecting that power onto a series of objects that she alone has acquired and that she alone can manipulate.¹⁵

As Faith E. Beasley points out in *Revising Memory: Women's Fictions and Memoirs in Seventeenth-Century France*, the care that Lafayette's heroine, the Princess de Clèves, took in building, landscaping and decorating the interior of her country house at Coulommiers provides in many ways the fictional counterpoint to the care that the author herself took as a historian when she constructed the novel's historical context. This care, as Beasley describes, is evident throughout the novel, but is particularly apparent in the author's decision to situate her story's most controversial scenes at the anachronistic chateau de Coulommiers.¹⁶ According to the land-title transfer records of the Department of Seine and Marne, which are reproduced in Rouget's 1829 *Notice Historique sur la ville de Coulommiers*, although the chateau at Coulommiers was not built until 1613, the feudal estate, or seigneurie, was indeed presided over by the Clèves family throughout the majority of the sixteenth century. These lands had become the Clèves' property as part of a dowry agreement in 1505 when Marie d'Albret, Duchess de Nivernois married Charles de Clèves, Count de Nevers. Upon the duchess' death in 1549, she passed the estate to her son François de Clèves, Duke de Nevers, who retained control of it until his death in 1562.¹⁷ Although François de Clèves was the first son of the Count de Nevers, as opposed to the second son of the Duke de Nevers as Lafayette's historical prelude attests, and although he did not die without an heir as Lafayette's Monsieur de Clèves did, a Mon-

¹⁴ DeJean, "Female Voyeurism," 213.

¹⁵ For arguments concerning the princess' agency in procuring the large painting of the siege of Metz, in which Nemours' portrait figures, see DeJean, "Female Voyeurism," 213 and François Gebelin, "Sur une nouvelle édition de *La Princesse de Clèves*," *Plaisir du bibliophile* VI (1930): 154.

¹⁶ Faith E. Beasley, *Revising Memory: Women's Fiction and Memoirs in Seventeenth-Century France* (New Brunswick, NJ: Rutgers UP, 1990), 225.

¹⁷ Rouget, *Notice historique sur la ville de Coulommiers, Département de Seine-et-Marne, depuis sa fondation jusqu'à ce jour* (Paris: Tourneux, 1829), 67–9.

TRANSFIGURATION OF THE SOCIAL SPHERE

sieur de Clèves, himself the Duke de Nevers, would nonetheless have been in control of the Coulommiers estate between 1558 and 1559, the years in which Lafayette's novel takes place.

The association of the title "princess" with the Clèves family estate conveys yet another testimony to Lafayette's intimate familiarity with the history of Coulommiers and with the genealogy of the Clèves family. In one of the more intriguing marriage contracts of the late sixteenth century, François de Clèves' second daughter, Catherine de Clèves and de Nevers acquired the title "princess" in 1560 upon her marriage to Antoine de Croÿ, Prince de Porcien. Widowed at the age of nineteen, she went on to marry Henri I, Duke de Guise in 1570 and became involved in a very public title dispute over the Coulommiers estate with her sister Henriette de Clèves the following year, usurping its title for half a year before her sister and her brother-in-law managed to reassert their legitimacy.¹⁸ Upon exchanging her title of Princess de Porcien for Countess d'Eu and Duchess de Guise in 1564 and 1570, respectively, Catherine de Clèves would go on to become one of the most politically influential women of the late sixteenth and early seventeenth centuries. Following her husband's assassination in 1588 during the War of the Three Henris (1584–1598), she took over as matriarch of the powerful and influential de Guise family, furthering the interests of all fourteen of her children, including the ambitions of her son Charles, Duke de Guise for the French throne. Through her involvement in the Catholic League, she helped to bring an end to the French Wars of Religion by encouraging the assassination of King Henri III in 1589. In 1593, upon her cousin King Henri IV's conversion to Catholicism, she reconciled with the royal family, assumed an honorable position in the retinue of Henri's wife, Marie de Medicis, and continued to support the Queen throughout the remainder of Henri IV's reign and during the minority of Louis XIII between 1610 and 1617.¹⁹ In bestowing upon her heroine the title of "princess," and in associating this princess

¹⁸ Rouget, *Notice historique*, 69. Upon his death in 1562, François de Clèves had passed the estate to his oldest son, François II de Clèves, who died the following year. The estate would subsequently pass through the hands of almost all of his children: to Henri de Clèves in 1563, to Jacques de Clèves later that same year, and to sisters Marie de Clèves and Henriette de Clèves in 1564. Upon Marie's death in 1571, Catherine de Clèves disputed Henriette for the estate but acquired only a temporary victory. See Rouget, *Notice historique*, 67–9.

¹⁹ Following the death of her daughter, the Princess de Conti, Catherine de Clèves retired to her chateau at Eu and remained there until her death in 1633. For all accounts of the de Guise family, see Henri Forneron, *Les ducs de Guise et leur époque: étude historique sur le seizième siècle* (Paris: E. Plon, 1877), and René de Bouillé, *Histoire des ducs de Guise* (Paris: Amyot, 1850).

ALLISON STEDMAN

with the chevalier de Guise,²⁰ who figures as one of the Princess de Clèves' most ardent suitors in the context of the novel, Lafayette creates the first of a series of implicit associations between her fictional heroine and a historically-verifiable, political heroine of recent French history.

As Beasley has demonstrated, for seventeenth-century readers, the contemporary historical connotations of the chateau de Coulommiers would have continued to echo its sixteenth-century legacy with images of powerful, innovative and unintimidated women who were champions of worldly society, who constructed the chateau as a monument to female glory, and who made use of the chateau as a retreat from court life and from revolutionary activities.²¹ The widowed Catherine de Gonzague de Clèves, Duchess de Longueville,²² who built the chateau in 1613, caused a stir among her contemporaries when she had it decorated as what Micheline Cuénin has described as a veritable shrine to female achievement, filling it with busts, sculptures and reliefs of illustrious women from history and mythology.²³ Upon her death in 1629, Catherine de Gonzague de Clèves left the chateau to her son Henri II d'Orléans, Duke de Longueville, who in turn bequeathed its title to his wife, Anne-Geneviève de Bourbon-Condé, Duchess de Longueville upon his own death in 1663.²⁴

This particular Duchess de Longueville would have needed little introduction to Lafayette's worldly, seventeenth-century contemporaries. Born in the prison of the Chateau de Vincennes, where her father and mother had been incarcerated for their opposition to Marie de Medici's favorite, the Maréchal d'Ancre, she went on to become the star of the Marquise de Rambouillet's salon during the 1630s and 40s. She married the widowed Duke de Longueville, son of Catherine de Gonzague de Clèves, in 1642 and quickly distinguished herself as the guiding spirit of the first *Fronde* and the unequivocal leader of the second *Fronde*, rallying her husband, as well as the Viscount de Turenne, and both of her brothers (the Princes de

²⁰According to Alain Niderst's notes, the "chevalier de Guise" refers to François de Lorraine, chevalier de Guise (1534–1563), the paternal uncle of Catherine de Clèves' second husband. See Lafayette, *Mme de Lafayette Romans et Nouvelles*, 446.

²¹Beasley, *Revising Memory*, 225–7.

²²Louis de Gonzague, Duke de Nivernois and Henriette de Clèves gave the Coulommiers estate to their eldest daughter Catherine de Gonzague de Clèves in 1588 as a wedding gift upon her marriage to Henri d'Orléans I, Duke de Longueville (Rouget, *Notice Historique*, 69).

²³Micheline Cuénin, "Châteaux et romans au XVIIe siècle," *VIIe siècle* 118–9 (1978): 118.

²⁴Rouget, *Notice historique*, 67–71.

TRANSFIGURATION OF THE SOCIAL SPHERE

Condé and Conti) to the front lines of the revolution. In 1652, during the last year of the war, she allowed the Duke de Nemours²⁵ to accompany her into the battle of Guyenne, and her intimacy with Nemours caused her famous lover, the Duke de la Rochefoucauld, to abandon her. Heartbroken and disgraced, Longueville retired to her country estate in Normandy until her husband passed away, at which point she returned to Ile-de-France and devoted herself to religious activities until her death in 1679, taking advantage of the solitude of her numerous country chateaux and ultimately dividing her time between the convent of the Carmelites in the faubourg Saint-Jacques, where she had been educated as a young girl, and a house she had built for herself near the Jansenist monastery of Port-Royal.²⁶ At the time of *La Princesse de Clèves*' publication, the historical chateau de Coulommiers would thus have been entitled, if not inhabited, by a woman whose reputation as a *femme forte* ("strong woman") revolutionary would still have amply preceded her.²⁷

Reading the avowal and reverie scenes that take place at Coulommiers in the context of Lafayette's novel against the contemporary historical context of the novel's first readers causes these scenes to resonate with multiple additional layers of signification. Since Lafayette's fictional heroine resembles the historical Catherine de Gonzague de Clèves both onomastically and in the sense that both women meticulously oversaw the construction of a chateau at Coulommiers, the Princess de Clèves' subsequent redefinitions of both marriage and passion, which take place at this chateau in the context of the novel, are implied to be analogous to Gonzague de Clèves' transformation of the historical Coulommiers into a public, visually striking monument to female glory during the early part of the

²⁵ Charles-Amédée de Savoie, 6th Duke de Nemours (1624–1652), a well-known womanizer, was killed in a duel shortly after entering the revolution.

²⁶ Joan DeJean, *Tender Geographies: Women and the Origins of the Novel in France* (New York: Columbia University Press, 1991), 233. A second commonality between the historical Duchess de Longueville and Lafayette's fictional heroine the Princess de Clèves is thus the unconventional manner in which these women choose to spend their widowhood. Choosing a convent as a *secondary* residence would have been highly unusual. See futher, Geneviève Reynes, *Couvents de femmes: la vie des religieuses cloîtrées dans la France des XVIIe et XVIIIe siècles* (Paris: Fayard, 1987).

²⁷ For the seventeenth-century evolution of the *femme forte*, see Ian Maclean, *Woman Triumphant: Feminism in French Literature, 1610–1652* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1992), 64–87. For the Duchess de Longueville's role in the *Fronde*, see DeJean, *Tender Geographies*, 37. For her role as an icon of female heroism, see Maclean, *Woman Triumphant*, 214, 268. For general information on the *Fronde*, see Oreste Ranum, *The Fronde: A French Revolution (1648–1653)* (New York: W. W. Norton, 1993).

ALLISON STEDMAN

seventeenth century. The Princess de Clèves' innovations in the realm of the sentimental are thus implied to be the contemporary equivalent of the previous owner's innovations in the realm of interior décor; whether of a visual or a verbal nature, both women's innovations pay testament to female exceptionality.

By the same token, the role of Lafayette's Princess de Clèves as the actual proprietor of the chateau in the context of the novel begs a second implicit association between the novelistic heroine and the chateau de Coulommiers' contemporary titleholder at the time of the novel's publication: the Duchess de Longueville. This additional association implies that the princess' socio-sentimental innovations, which take place in the private context of her country chateau, can serve as a contemporary equivalent to the revolutionary, socio-political innovations initiated in the public context of military heroism during the earlier part of the century. The fact that both the Princess de Clèves and the Duchess de Longueville retire to Coulommiers after experiencing heartache over their supposed intimacy with a certain Duke de Nemours²⁸ only lends further impetus to the implication that Lafayette's heroine can be said to constitute a new brand of *femme forte*, one who draws strength from the private, architectural spaces she constructs in order to amass an arsenal of emotional resolve with which to defend her psychological and sentimental independence. The Princess de Clèves' association with the Duchesse de Longueville thus tangentially implies that her retreat from court life, desire for sincerity in marriage, and rejection of non-mediated passion can provide modern equivalents for the roles that military action and overt political revolution had played in the past. If Lafayette's heroine represents the modern day equivalent of the Duchess de Longueville, then a modern *femme forte* who wishes to emulate her exceptional military achievements must likewise turn inward, defending her psychological and emotional independence by reaching into the deepest recesses of her inner resolve and by embracing a

²⁸ Cuénin, "Châteaux et romans," 119. Cuénin also emphasizes the importance of the coincidence of the names Clèves and Nemours in the context of Lafayette's novel. However, she cites this coincidence only in reference to the Duke de Longueville's daughter from a previous marriage, Marie d'Orléans-Longueville (1625–1707), who acquired the title of "Duchess de Nemours" when she married Henri de Savoie, 7th Duke de Nemours in 1657. Like her stepmother Anne-Geneviève de Bourbon-Condé, duchesse de Longueville, Marie d'Orléans-Longueville was also actively involved in the first Fronde. Although Marie d'Orléans-Longueville did not inherit Coulommiers until 1694, she was in the process of contesting her stepmother over its inheritance at the time of *La Princesse de Clèves*' publication. The onomastic coincidence of the names Clèves and Nemours would thus indeed have resonated on multiple levels of signification for seventeenth-century readers.

TRANSFIGURATION OF THE SOCIAL SPHERE

largely private existence with as much tenacity as her exceptional female predecessors had displayed when they turned outward, rallying military allies from among their families and friends to defend their very public desire for social and political autonomy.²⁹

In choosing the chateau de Coulommiers as the setting for her heroine's most exceptional gestures of originality and independence, Lafayette's novel ultimately both reflects and revises the Old Regime social field's increased dependence on spatial mediation in the decades following the Fronde. During the Fronde years, common political philosophies and visions of government had forged social ties among diverse members of the aristocratic community and defined them socially both in relation to one another and in opposition to those who did not share their perspectives. In the years following Louis XIV's victory, however, both monarchists and revolutionaries began to turn increasingly to the mediation of physical, geographic space to define and secure their social identities. While the crown developed the majestic, almost mythological space of Versailles as a means of mediating the social interactions of royal subjects by traversing this space with elaborate systems of court ritual, the rise of the salon as a social haven for disgraced Frondeurs and members of the likeminded worldly community similarly relied on the common association of an individual's social identity with their presence in a particular geographic locale. Literary production of the 1660s and 70s reflects this rise in the importance of space as a social mediator. While at court, such production largely took the form of performative genres such as theatre and opera, which depend on the physical presence of its intended audience in order to be enjoyed; in the salon the new reliance on physical space as a social mediator gave way to a form of novelistic production whose composition was collective, and thus dependent on the physical presence of a variety of interlocutors for its ultimate realization.

In using the common geographic space of Coulommiers to imply a social connection between the Princess de Clèves, the Duchess de Longueville, and a host of illustrious female predecessors associated with the same estate, Lafayette demonstrates a revolutionary new conception of the spatially-mediated social sphere, a conception that, while it still relies on the mediation of physical space to forge connections among individuals, no longer relies on the common physical presence and interface of

²⁹ For women's military heroism during the Fronde, see DeJean, *Tender Geographies*, 19–45. For the political implications of these interventions, see Nina Rattner Gelbart, *Feminism and Opposition Journalism in Old Regime France* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1987), 16–21.

ALLISON STEDMAN

these individuals within such a space to forge socially-identifiable associations. For Lafayette, the social field remains spatially mediated, but the identity of an individual with a particular locale is no longer defined in relation to the common presence of other individuals within the same space. The use of commonly identifiable geographic spaces for the purposes of solitary retreat, rather than as loci of social interaction, thus becomes a revolutionary new option for the definition of one's social identity; an identity that is grounded in absence rather than presence. In giving individuals the capacity to construct geographic spaces for the purpose of solitude rather than interaction, Lafayette in fact forges an alternative form of social community among Coulommiers' diverse proprietors, both fictional and historical, in which the association with a common geographic space as a place of anti-social retreat becomes a new common denominator among a diverse and disparate community of exceptional women.

Revising Fiction: Murat Rewrites Lafayette

At the turn of the eighteenth century, Murat's decision to set the *Voyage de campagne* at the fictional chateau de Selincourt, rather than at a historically verifiable location, provides an indication of the degree to which an even more radically different conception of the social sphere was already emerging in the literary imagination of the late 1690s. Although at the time of the novel's publication, there was a seigneurie by the name of Selincourt located in Picardy,³⁰ in the context of Murat's novel an eponymous estate provides the setting for a sumptuous aristocratic residence, about a day's drive from Paris, located on the banks of the river Seine, and complete with fountains, a labyrinth, an orangerie and a series of statue-lined walkways capable of rivaling those of Louis XIV's court at Versailles. Unlike Lafayette's novel, which focuses on the socio-sentimental evolution of a singular individual, the *Voyage de campagne* details the daily activities of a select group of Parisian aristocrats who decide to spend the summer together at the home of the Count de Selincourt in order to take advantage of the pleasant weather and of the brief period of peace following the end of the War of the League of Augsburg.³¹

³⁰ At the turn of the eighteenth-century, the Selincourt seigneurie belonged to the family of Charles-Nicolas Manessier, Viscount de Selincourt, an infantry captain in the king's army. The chateau, which had been destroyed in a fire, was not rebuilt until 1734. See "Château de Selincourt," *Monuments historiques*, last modified June 26, 2006, <http://www.culture.gouv.fr>.

³¹ The period of peace lasted from 1697–1702, between the end of the war of the League of Augsburg and the beginning of the War of Spanish Succession. The summer in question is likely either the summer of 1698 or 1699.

TRANSFIGURATION OF THE SOCIAL SPHERE

Thanks to the relaxed chaperoning presence of the Duke de..., Selincourt's elderly uncle, the six young, unmarried protagonists are quickly able to pair off, Selincourt with the narrator's dear friend Madame d'Arcire, with whom he has been involved for several years; the count's friend the Chevalier de Chanteuil with the young widow Madame d'Orselis; and the narrator herself with the Marquis de Brésy, a military comrade of Selincourt's who joins the group shortly after their arrival. Written as a first-person account in the form of a letter, the *Voyage* is addressed to an anonymous "Madame" who is reportedly a member of the same social circle as the novel's protagonists, and who has not been invited to join the group as the result of an amorous falling out that she has had with Selincourt some years prior. During their stay in the country, the characters pass the time by entertaining houseguests, mocking their provincial neighbors, arranging gallant parties in one another's honor, taking daytrips and telling stories. Although Selincourt's attempts to make the Marquise d'Arcire jealous by feigning an amorous attachment to the narrator initially cause a lengthy misunderstanding to develop, the narrator's persistent refusal to sacrifice her friendship with Madame d'Arcire for the sake of her own vanity eventually restores order, and the narrator pairs up with the Marquis de Brésy. By the time the characters return to Paris at the end of the novel, Selincourt and d'Arcire are engaged to be married, as are the narrator and the Marquis de Brésy. Only the rocky love affair between the Chevalier and Madame d'Orselis dwindles away with the summer season.

Just as Lafayette created the illusion of historical fidelity at the beginning of *La Princesse de Clèves* with the meticulously researched description of the court of Henri II, so also the Countess de Murat opens the *Voyage de campagne* by cultivating the illusion that her novel will remain faithful to the novelistic tradition of the previous century, created in large part by Lafayette and by her predecessors Marie-Catherine Desjardins (Madame de Villedieu) and Madeleine de Scudéry. This tradition not only includes accounts of amorous adventures enlivened by interpolated portraits and personal anecdotes (Scudéry), but also the in-depth analysis of the private and public motivations behind well-known historical events (Villedieu), and of the psychological effects of such events on the individuals involved (Lafayette). As Murat's narrator announces to the novel's intended recipient:

You ask me, madam, for the story of the trip that I took to Selincourt; I found it too agreeable for its recollection not to give me pleasure; my only fear is to make it too long;

ALLISON STEDMAN

but since you desire an exact account, I am obliged, with your permission, to follow the example of our novelists, acquainting you with the conversations that we had, and with the stories that were recounted there (25).³²

[Vous me demandez, Madame, le récit du Voyage que j'ai fait à Selincourt; il m'a été trop agréable pour que le souvenir ne m'en plaise pas: toute ma peur est seulement de le faire trop longue. Mais puisque vous le voulez exact, il faut bien, s'il vous plait, qu'à l'exemple de nos romanciers, je vous apprenne les conversations que nous y avons eues, et les histoires qu'on y a contées (I. 1).]³³

As the *Voyage de campagne* unfolds, however, Murat's departure from the novelistic tradition established by her predecessors becomes immediately apparent. While the *Voyage* does include portraits and interpolated autobiographical accounts of almost all of the novel's seven main protagonists,³⁴ it largely overshadows these more traditional novelistic subgenres with the rampant interpolation of three significant generic innovations, the literary ghost story, the literary anti-fairy tale, and the proverb comedy.³⁵ As such, the novel in fact reveals itself to be an extension, not of traditional novelistic production, but rather of an alternative mode of hybrid literary fiction that persisted virtually undocumented and uncontested throughout the seventeenth century before gaining mainstream popularity in the 1690s—a popularity it would retain throughout the 1700s.³⁶ In proffering the work of her novelistic predecessors as a tradition to be revered rather than as a complacent trend to be revolutionized, Murat in fact employs the same strategy of novelistic exposition as La-

³² Henriette-Julie de Castelnau, Countess de Murat, *A Trip to the Country by Henriette-Julie de Castelnau, Comtesse de Murat*, ed. and trans. Perry Gethner and Allison Stedman (Detroit: Wayne State University Press, 2011). References are to this edition.

³³ Henriette-Julie de Castelnau, Countess de Murat, *Voyage de campagne par Madame la Comtesse de M*** Avec les Comédies en Proverbes de Madame D**** (Paris: Prault Père, 1734). References are to this edition. Quotes have been checked for accuracy against the novel's original 1699 edition (Paris: Veuve de Claude Barbin, 1699).

³⁴ Excepted from this is most notably the novel's main character, the female narrator addressed on one occasion as Mademoiselle de Busansai, who not only refuses to entertain her anonymous reader with a self-portrait, but also refuses to entertain her companions with a story of her past. Instead, she uses her turn to create an insulting narrative designed to scandalize a female rival whose attentions to the narrator's suitor, the Marquis de Brésy, had become increasingly unpalatable.

³⁵ For the history of these genres see Stedman, *Rococo Fiction*, Chapter 4.

³⁶ For the evolution of this alternative tradition, see Stedman, *Rococo Fiction*, pages 2–5 and chapters 2 and 3.

TRANSFIGURATION OF THE SOCIAL SPHERE

fayette's earlier work, professing fidelity to a generally accepted set of novelistic norms in order to present a radical revision of this same tradition on the level of plot, just as Lafayette proposed to create a narrative faithful to official history only in order to undermine this very same official version of political events by subsuming the monarch and his entire court within the less official realm of gallantry.³⁷

Murat's tenacious investment in engaging and revising the novelistic tradition that Lafayette in large part had helped to establish does not stop with her novel's introduction, however. When, in the context of an interpolated autobiographical story, the Chevalier de Chanteuil's former lover Madame d'Arsilly confesses to him that she desires to take on a second lover, and asks Chanteuil to wait for her to come back to him after the novelty of her latest passion has worn off, he exclaims in disgust: "Ruin yourself, madam, ruin yourself, I no longer want to be involved in this: you are a very flawed imitation of the Princess de Clèves: your crime is more complete and more outrageous and your remorse is not as real as hers" (76) ("Perdez-vous, Madame, perdez-vous, lui dis-je, je n'y veux plus prendre d'intérêt: vous êtes une copie bien imparfaite de la princesse de Clèves: votre crime est plus entier et plus outrageant et votre remords ne l'égalé pas" [Murat I: 135]). The characters of the novel who listen to the chevalier's story are shocked by d'Arsilly's sincerity regarding her ongoing infidelity much in the same way that the fictional members of Henri II's court, and even Lafayette's own contemporaries had been shocked by the Princess de Cleves' sincerity about a passion she endeavored to avoid.

In exploiting the shocking sincerity of both d'Arsilly and the Princess de Clèves' confessions, Murat in fact undertakes a significant revision of Lafayette's earlier re-conception of female heroism and exceptionality. If a woman as flighty and inconstant as Madame d'Arsilly can use sincerity to excuse ongoing acts of infidelity taking place beyond the bounds of an already extramarital relationship, then sincerity, at the turn of the eighteenth-century, can no longer constitute a quality uniquely associated with women of exceptional moral virtue. Although both confessions distinguish themselves by their unprecedented sincerity, the exceptionality of Madame d'Arsilly's confession lies not in its contribution to an innovative strategy of preserving moral virtue, but rather in its gall, its brazen disregard for moral codes, and its unrepentant self-righteousness. Those who learn of d'Arsilly's exceptional confession in the context of Murat's novel do not puzzle over her motives or marvel at her singular approach; rather

³⁷ For Lafayette's revisions of sixteenth-century French history, see Beasley, *Revising Memory*, 192–224.

ALLISON STEDMAN

they dismiss her as everything from *une personne bien particulière* (I: 141) (“a very peculiar person” [78]) to *une folle* (I:130) (“a madwoman” [74]) unworthy of the chevalier’s attentions.

In eliminating the link between virtue and exceptionality, Murat’s revision of Lafayette’s confession does more than revise the terms of female heroism, as Lafayette had done when revising recent history. More importantly, it calls into question the basic premise of female heroism under the old regime: the notion that virtue, whether moral or military, provides an absolute barometer of social distinction. In distinguishing herself by her eccentric and idiosyncratic behavior, rather than by her ability to exceed the expectations of a publically-recognized standard of social excellence, Madame d’Arsilly inserts herself into the worldly, late seventeenth-century social field in a remarkably autonomous manner, accruing an exceptional identity based on her own intrinsic, individual uniqueness, rather than through the radical interpretation of a publicly recognized social ideal, as the Princess de Clèves had done when she used sincerity as a pathway to virtuous inimitability. In refusing both the universal and the elitist implications inherent in the old-regime relationship between virtuous behavior and social exceptionality, Murat’s rewriting of Lafayette thus ultimately calls into question the degree to which such absolute barometers of social distinction can continue to function in the emerging Age of Enlightenment, an age in which many old-regime social signifiers, previously reserved for an elite few, would either become accessible to the masses or eliminated entirely.

An emerging reconception of the old-regime social field’s most prevalent social signifiers is perhaps even more apparent in Murat’s revision of Lafayette’s carefully constructed reverie of passion, which follows the declaration scenes both in *La Princesse de Clèves* and in the *Voyage de campagne*. In Murat’s rewriting of this famous scene, the distressed heroine in question, the Marquise d’Arcire, seeks out a clearing in the garden of a country house near the Selincourt estate, where she and the other main characters have decided to take a day trip, to indulge her emotions at the height of her jealous misunderstanding with the Count de Selincourt. Just as Nemours had observed the princess in her pavilion at Coulommiers, so also Selincourt crouches in the palisades surrounding the clearing where the marquise sits and strains to glimpse clues as to his lover’s true feelings by scrutinizing her actions and expressions. Due to a few alterations in the objects that the marquise chooses to stage her reverie, however, the Count de Selincourt is not able to achieve the same positive sense of satisfaction

TRANSFIGURATION OF THE SOCIAL SPHERE

as his novelistic predecessor, the Duke de Nemours.³⁸ Here is the scene as Murat's narrator, accompanied by the Count de Selincourt, observes it:

While we were having that conversation, we made our way, without realizing it, toward the wood: I had never seen it before; and since it is delightful, owing to the fountains of various shapes, and to the marvelous marble statues located at the end of all the walkways, I traversed a part of this agreeable place with the count; but while crossing it from one side to the other, I spotted the marquise reclining on a grassy area adjacent to the palisade on the side where we were. "Come, count," I whispered to Selincourt, "behold an adventure out of a novel; come see your beloved in a posture of distress." He did indeed approach, and looking through the hedge, he saw that she was playing with a cane in a fountain located at her feet, and that she was holding in her other hand a little portrait, the features of which he could not recognize because the branches were too thick (79–80).

[En nous entretenant ainsi, nous tournâmes insensiblement nos pas vers le bois : je ne l'avais jamais vu ; et comme il est délicieux par des fontaines de diverses figures, et par des statues de marbre merveilleuses qui en terminent toutes les allées, je parcourus avec le comte une partie de cet agréable endroit ; mais en traversant d'un côté à l'autre, j'aperçus la marquise couchée sur un lit de gazon qui tenait à la palissade du côté où nous étions. Venez, comte, dis-je tout bas à Selincourt, voyez une aventure de roman ; venez voir votre maîtresse dans une attitude désolée. Il s'approcha en effet ; et regardant au travers de la palissade, il vit qu'elle badinait avec une canne dans une fontaine qui était à ses pieds et qu'elle tenait de l'autre main un petit portrait dont il ne put connaître les traits, à cause de l'épaisseur des branches (I : 144–5)].

Seated on a *lit de gazon* ["bed of grass"] as opposed to a *lit de repos* ["day bed"] the Marquise d'Arcire likewise occupies her restlessness by manipulating a cane. However, instead of choosing *une canne des Indes*,

³⁸ Murat is not the first author to rewrite this particular novelistic scene. As Armine Kotin points out in "La Canne des Indes: Madame de Lafayette Lectrice de Villedieu," *XVIIe siècle* 31 (1979): 409–11, a similar scene appears in Madame de Villedieu's *Cléonice ou le Roman Galant* (Paris: Claude Barbin, 1669).

ALLISON STEDMAN

fort extraordinaire [“a very unusual malacca cane”], which Nemours had easily recognized as previously belonging to him, the marquise grasps a decidedly nondescript cane whose origin and history are unknown. Similarly, instead of weaving ribbons around the cane, which, in the context of Lafayette’s novel had enabled Nemours to recognize his own tournament colors, the marquise instead uses the cane to make rivulets in the clear surface of a fountain at her feet. Finally, instead of gazing at a portrait of her lover that situates him in a larger public context, as the Princess de Clèves had done with the portrait of Nemours embedded in the larger depiction of the royal siege of Metz, the marquise gazes longingly at a miniature portrait so small that Selincourt is unable to tell whom it represents. The resulting effect of the marquise’s mediated desire on the observing lover is thus one of despair, rather than elation. In removing the public frame of reference from the objects she chooses to stage her reverie, the marquise similarly removes the ability of onlookers to read and interpret her private emotions. At stake in this rewriting of the Princess de Clèves’ reverie of passion is thus a simultaneous redefinition of how the old-regime public sphere is constituted. While the Princess de Clèves had understood the public sphere only in terms of its spatial delineations, and thought to shield herself from it by removing herself from it geographically, the Marquise d’Arcire understands the public sphere as an abstract convergence of common cultural signifiers and ideals. In choosing objects whose referential significance is of a personal rather than a public nature, the marquise is thus able to conceal her emotions from the metaphorical “public eye” of her lover, even while remaining on the grounds of the same country home.

The revolutionary understanding of the social sphere inherent in this scene anticipates the well-known restructuring of the public sphere over the course of the French Enlightenment, a restructuring that would ultimately result in the liberation of both the individual and the literary field from traditional venues of spatially-mediated social interaction, emerging instead as components of a diasporic, international republic of letters constructed and perpetuated by the production and circulation of texts.³⁹ In the reverie of passion that Lafayette constructs at the height of political absolutism, the princess’ spectacle of mediated desire comes to an abrupt

³⁹ This concept of the Enlightenment public sphere has emerged as the result of much significant, recent work on the part of literary historians, cultural historians, revisionist historians of the French Revolution and historians of ideas. For a summary of the convergence of these fields of research on both sides of the Atlantic at the turn of the twenty-first century, see Elena Russo, “Editor’s Preface to *Exploring the Conversible World: Text and Sociability from the Classical Age to the Enlightenment*,” *Yale French Studies* 92 (1997): 1–7.

TRANSFIGURATION OF THE SOCIAL SPHERE

end when the Duke de Nemours, heartened by the certainty of being the object of her desire, seeks to enter the pavilion and to engage the princess in a face-to-face conversation—a strategy whose reliance on spatial mediation ultimately backfires when Nemours’ scarf becomes entangled in a window and the startled princess quickly retreats into a different room. In Murat’s version of the scene, the Count de Selincourt makes no such attempt to penetrate the space in which marquise’s reverie takes place, settling instead for the procurement of her writing tablets, which the narrator pulls through the bushes as unobtrusively as possible, and which the count immediately seizes upon, exclaiming: “here is the means to enlighten us” (80) [“Voici de quoi nous éclaircir” (I: 146)], before making off with them into the wood. Although the poem that the tablets contain is not specific enough to confirm or deny Selincourt’s conclusion that the marquise has been unfaithful to him, the fact that he seeks an explanation of the marquise’s behavior by turning to her writing, rather than by trying to engage her in a face-to-face conversation, suggests the degree to which texts were already replacing physical space as the preferred mediator of social interaction at the turn of the eighteenth century.

The Question of Genre

A final point of commonality between Lafayette and Murat is the nature of the genres they choose to manipulate when revising their respective socio-political contexts. As Beasley points out, Lafayette’s decision to innovate upon the genre of official history, or *Histoire*, in many ways capitalizes on the chaos of this genre during the early decades of Louis XIV’s personal reign, a time in which history was becoming increasingly synonymous with both monarchical propaganda and popular consumption.⁴⁰ Lafayette’s appropriation of history for non-absolutist ends can thus be said to constitute a form of resistance to the absolutist political project in and of itself, an innovation that is similar to the Princess de Clèves’ subtle redefinition of the spatially-mediated social field, a field that in the late 1670s was increasingly succumbing to the pressures of monarchical manipulation as Louis XIV sought to exert control over his aristocratic subjects by constraining them to live at court.

At the time when Murat published the *Voyage de campagne*, the French novelistic tradition established by Scudéry, Villedieu and Lafayette during the earlier part of the century is well documented to have been in a

⁴⁰ Beasley, *Revising Memory*, 20–31.

ALLISON STEDMAN

similar state of chaos.⁴¹ In capitalizing on the permeability of the novel at the turn of the eighteenth century, Murat's work can thus be said to advocate for a similar degree of cultural reform within the socio-political institution most invested in her genre of choice. In Murat's case, however, the institution is not the court, but rather the salon, a socio-discursive network that, like the Princess de Clèves' confession and reverie of passion, was similarly predicated both on a generally accepted relationship between elitism and exceptionality, and on the geographically-mediated spatial limitations of the salon itself as a guarantor of exclusivity. In re-vamping the relationship between elitism and exceptionality, and in modeling the advantages of non-spatially-mediated social interaction, Murat's rewriting of Lafayette likewise urges her salon contemporaries to renegotiate the parameters of socio-cultural autonomy in the face of impending cultural change. In modeling the liberation of the literary field from traditional venues of aristocratic sociability such as the salon, Murat's text encourages her contemporaries to turn to literary production as a primary form of mediation among a newly emerging diaspora of like-minded individuals united by ideals rather than by an association with a particular geographic space. Although the ends that Lafayette and Murat hope to achieve through their innovative literary creations are drastically different, their common strategy of novelistic hybridization and revision nonetheless attests to literature's crucial role in creating and mediating cultural change, both at the height of political absolutism and at the dawn of the Age of Enlightenment.

University of North Carolina, Charlotte

⁴¹ For more on the chaos of the French novel at the turn of the eighteenth century, see Coulet, *Le Roman jusqu'à la Révolution*, I. 288; Showalter, *The Evolution of the French Novel 1614–1782*, 5; Godenne, *La Nouvelle française*, 29; Deloffre, *La Nouvelle en France à l'âge classique*, 53; and Georges May, *Le Dilemme du roman au XVIIIe siècle: Étude sur les rapports du roman et de la critique (1715–1761)* (New Haven, Yale University Press, 1963), 1.