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General Editor: John F. Boitano
Department of Languages
Chapman University
Orange, CA 92866 USA
(714)997-6797 FAX: 997-6823
jboitano@chapman.edu
Editorial Assistant: Naomi Castillo

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Comment peut-on être femme?

by
Claude Abraham

Est-il besoin de rappeler que, pour l'intelligence et l'esprit, Marie de Médicis valait beaucoup mieux que son fils, mais ne put régner que pour lui en tant que régente et que si Louis XIV appelait Madame de Maintenon «votre solidité», ce n'était pas pour sa musculature, et aussi que la plus riche héritière de son temps, la Grande Mademoiselle, ne put disposer librement ni de son bien ni de sa personne? Comment, sous de telles conditions, une femme intelligente se définit-elle? A la question trop facilement provocatrice par laquelle débute mon propos, on pourrait en substituer une autre: comment, étant femme (au dix-septième siècle), peut-on *être?* Et par suite, *que* peut-on être? C'est à la recherche d'une réponse que je me suis (re)penché sur un sujet qui m'intéresse depuis longtemps : le portrait ... au féminin. C'est plutôt sur l'avatar littéraire de ce dernier que sur le pictural —largement étudié— que je voudrais attirer 1'attention du lecteur et, pour mieux cerner le sujet, je me suis limité à un milieu restreint, celui de la plus haute aristocratie.

D'abord, qu'entendons-nous par «portrait»? Rappelons-nous que la plupart des soi-disant «portraits» littéraires ne sont vraiment que des travestissements, tout comme les représentations d'êtres dans les paysages mythologiques ou mythologisés. Ne sont véritables portraits non plus. ceux délibérément typologiques, tracés par les moralistes. Ces travestissements, ces typologies, ont tendance à cacher autant qu'à révéler. Comme l'a dit L. Mochalov, «Every age has its own ideal conception of woman»(5). Non moins utile est ce que dit David R. Smith sur le portrait. C'est, selon lui, «a representation of an individual human being and […] the crux of his individuality lies in what we call his character»(4). Mais à cette vérité première, il faut ajouter ceci: quand une personne de qualité se fait peindre au dix-septième siècle, elle contrôle le travail de l'artiste, et ce portrait, comme celui écrit par le sujet, représente comment l'individu entend être vu, l'image qu'il en-tend projeter,

et cette image correspond inévitablement à ce que le sujet croit que son monde attend de lui. Donc, tout individuel, tout spécifique soit-il, un portrait n'en représente pas moins une vérité plus générale, plus typologique. Quand Mademoiselle de Montpensier se décrit, il est indéniable qu'elle décrit *une* femme, mais non moins vrai qu'elle décrit *la* femme, du moins en tant qu'elle espère être représentative du type, voire de l'idéal. Cela dit, il faut remarquer une énorme différence entre le portrait gravé et celui écrit. Pour le premier, vient d'abord le physique, moyen de nous faire capter le caractère. Et pour les grands portraitistes du temps —je songe à un Champaigne ou à un Nanteuil— le mensonge ou l'euphémisme n'est jamais permis car c'est par les particularités, qu'il s'agisse de beauté ou de laideur, que nous reconnaîtrons l'individu en question. Les sujets comprennent cela, et à en juger par les résultats, n'ont jamais demandé de la flatterie pour le physique. Ce physique, donc, est la base que l'artiste devra faire vivre. C'est le mot dont s'est servi Anne d'Autriche en regardant le portrait de son fils gravé par Nanteuil. «Venez, Madame,» dit-elle à Marie-Thérèse, «voir votre mari en peinture: il vit! » Comme le dit Bouvy en commentant le portrait gravé par Nanteuil de la reine-régente, «sur son visage vieilli mais non flétri, subsiste toute entière, à défaut de la beauté qui charme, la majesté qui en impose jointe à la bonté qui captive» (189). Pour le portrait écrit, c est une toute autre chose. La description physique demeure enlisée dans la généralité, l'euphémisme et le cliché, et l'on voit sans cesse l'équivalent du «eyes of blue, lips like cherry wine» des chansons *Country and Western* américaines. Voyez comment la Grande Mademoiselle décrit son aspect physique en 1657 (elle avait alors trente ans):

> Je suis grande, ni grasse ni maigre, d'une taille fort belle et fort aisée. J'ai bonne mine; la gorge assez bien faite-, les bras et les mains pas beaux, mais la peau belle, ainsi que la gorge. J'ai la jambe droite, et le pied bien fait, mes cheveux sont blonds et d'un beau cendré; mon visage est long, le tour en est beau, le nez grand et aquilin, la bouche ni grande ni petite, mais façonnée et d'une manière fort agréable, les lèvres vermeilles; les dents point belles,

> mais pas horribles aussi, mes yeux sont bleus, ni grands ni petits, mais brillants, doux et fiers comme ma mine. (Galerie, 411)

Comme l'a fort justement remarqué Denise Mayer, «chaque trait défavorable est immédiatement corrigé» (21) et c'est surtout dans ces «corrections», ces «mais» qu'elle abuse des clichés coutumiers. Pourtant, remarquons que dans la dernière phrase citée —et nous ne sommes alors qu'au début d'un long autoportrait— les adjectifs commencent à passer du purement physique à ceux révélateurs du caractère.

Voyons donc quel est ce caractère que la Grande Mademoiselle et ses amies disent avoir —mais d'abord un petit avertissement. Le portrait est un genre qui a ses conventions et coutumes comme tous les autres. Ainsi que le dit D. Mayer, «le portrait littéraire comporte des règles strictes, petit préambule, description physique du modèle, son comportement en société, ses talents, ses qualités et ses défauts, viennent ensuite ses dispositions à la galanterie, puis à la dévotion, et, pour finir, un mot d'esprit, une 'pointe'»(16). A cela if faut ajouter que, puisqu'il s'agit d'un exercice artistique et que l'auteur est pleinement consciente de ce fait, sa présentation se fait à travers le crible de ce que Rémy Saisselin a très justement appelé «the two exigencies of truth and style»(3). J'ai donc essayé de comprendre —restant, je l'espère, toujours conscient de cette dernière mais importante considération— comment, malgré ces restrictions et limites imposées par le genre —ou grâce à elles— une femme se présente au dix-septième siècle. Voyons donc quelles sont les qualités ou les défauts qu'elle affiche ou préfère ne pas afficher. «J'ai l'air haut, sans l'avoir glorieux [entendons 'orgueilleux']. Je suis civile et familière, mais d'une manière à m'attirer plutôt le respect qu'à m'en faire manquer». (411)

Dans cette société, la mesure contrebalance l'orgueil. A en croire la mémorialiste, il lui a fallu un grand effort pour arriver à ce juste équilibre, car dans sa jeunesse —elle a trente ans quand elle fait son portrait— elle était dotée d'un orgueil qu'elle qualifie franchement d'excessif. Dans le portrait de Mademoiselle d'Orléans fait par M. de Bouillon, la «majesté» est accompagnée

par la «modestie qu'elle tient de race». (Galerie 26-27) Et c'est à cause de sa race que Mademoiselle de Vandy est trop orgueilleuse: «Vous êtes fière au dernier point, et quelquefois glorieuse, et j'ai découvert que cette fierté et cette gloire vous sont naturelles, et que ce sont des maladies de race-, car, comme votre maison est venue d'Allemagne […]»

Et la Grande Mademoiselle de conclure que ce qui serait au grand dam d'une Française est «naturel» pour une Allemande (426-427). Puisqu'elle est française, l'air de Mademoiselle d'Aumale se définit par un mélange de «pudeur et fierté» (32). Devançant La Rochefoucauld, c'est Mademoiselle de Montpensier elle-même qui dit «Je suis toute propre à me piquer de beaucoup de choses, et ne me pique de rien» (412). D'ailleurs, si beaucoup de ces dames et demoiselles demandent le respect dû à leur sang, d'autres préféreraient le mériter. Ainsi, Mademoiselle de Rohan dit dans son portrait que

> «la profonde humilité dans laquelle je sais qu'il faut vivre, comme étant toujours en la présence de Dieu, n'empêche pas que je n'aie pour la belle gloire toute l'inclination que peuvent avoir les jeunes personnes, mais je voudrais bien devoir à quelqu'une de mes actions le respect qu'on peut avoir eu pour ma naissance ou pour mon sexe». (Galerie 66-67)

Par ailleurs, dans ce monde qu'elles fréquentent —et qu'elles définissent en grande partie par leur présence même— ces jeunes personnes savent qu'elles seront jugées encore plus par leur esprit, leur aptitude à la galanterie, que par leur seule mine. «Vous parlez bien, délicatement et juste» dit la Grande Mademoiselle de Mademoiselle de Choisy. «Personne ne fait plus galamment ni plus plaisamment un récit que vous. Vous avez un grand charme pour la conversation, quoique vous ne soyez ni railleuse ni médisante» (236). Ce «quoique» me paraît assez intéressant. S'agirait-il alors d'un défaut social ou d'une vertu? La raillerie et la médisance seraient-elles considérées comme nécessaires au charme de la conversation? La raillerie

revient dans maint portrait, et sans signification péjorative évidente, mais deux passages dans deux portraits différents éclairent la chose. Dans son autoportrait, Mademoiselle insiste n'être «point médisante, ni railleuse» et n'avoir «nulle pente» pour la galanterie. De plus, les bagatelles l'ennuient (412-414). Ces deux qualités seraient donc le signe d'une certaine légèreté, admise et même peut-être louée dans son monde, mais qu'elle rejette pour son propre compte. Le deuxième passage révélateur se trouve dans le portrait féroce et accablant que trace la Grande Mademoiselle de la comtesse de Fiesque, femme qu'elle avait toutes les raisons de haïr:

> 'Elle a beaucoup d'esprit, elle l'a plaisant et agréable au dernier point, fournissant toujours à la conversation, et ne tarissant point de raillerie sur quelque sujet que ce puisse être'. Et si cela 'n'est soutenu d'aucune solidité', tant mieux, puisque cela 'fait admirer la beauté de son naturel'. (433)

Tout le long de ce portrait, le sarcasme de l'auteur indique que, pour le sujet, la conversation est un bien en soi et pour soi, qui n'a d'autre but que d'affirmer une présence dans un milieu. Il me semble donc que pour elle, la raillerie, bien ménagée et bien maniée, peut rester un attribut valable, même s'il n'est pas pour elle. Son jumelage avec la médisance dans le passage en question n'en demeure pas moins problématique. «Je suis incapable de toute action basse et noire», affirme la Grande Mademoiselle. «Fort constante en mes amitiés», peureuse de devoir «pâtir de l'inconstance des autres». Elle est «la personne du monde la plus secrète, et n'en n'égale la fidélité et les égards que J'ai pour mes amis.» S'il y a médisance, c'est parce qu'elle peut être implacable pour certains autres: même si elle est fière d'être maîtresse de ses sentiments, une juste colère peut l'animer et elle devient alors une «fort méchante ennemie, étant fort colère et fort emportée» ce qui, en raison de sa naissance, peut bien faire trembler ses ennemis. «Mais j'ai l'âme noble et bonne», écrit-elle en conclusion. Accès de colère, oui, mais médisance? La juxtaposition reste problématique.

Cette notion de la maîtrise de soi nous ramène à la dichotomie de Saissellin, style et vérité, mais sur un tout autre plan. Le Courtisan de Castiglione devait, rappelons-le, porter un masque en public, «poi, secretamente in camera» même avec ce prince, «dee vestirsi un'altra persona» (219). Ce courtisan peut bien être une personne, un individu avec sa propre personnalité et ses tendances, mais en public, il joue un rôle, revêt une *persona* un masque de théâtre. A Champigny comme au palais royal, il ne peut en être autrement. Dans ce milieu, il y a un art, un style du paraître et, quoique cet art dérive d'une conception de soi, de la compréhension d'une essence, il n'en est pas moins style, ce qui ne doit pas surprendre. Mais notons que, malgré ce style, il y a ici un dépouillement d'éléments rhétoriques —oserais-je songer aux *Pensées* de Pascal?— qui nous permet d'autant mieux de capter le message, de nous montrer ce qui est au cœur de la pensée de la Grande Mademoiselle. N'empêche que ce style nous montre bien qu'au dix-septième siècle, il n'y a pas qu'à l'Hôtel de Bourgogne que l'on fait du théâtre. Il est indéniable —elle l'avoue— que la Grande Mademoiselle peut avoir des accès de colère. Ce qui importe, c'est de savoir si elle leur permet de régner sur elle. Elle dit que non et semble attacher une grande importance à cela, même si elle n'est «ni comédienne, ni façonnière» ; elle est toujours maîtresse de son cœur, prétend-elle. «Jamais personne n'a eu tant de pouvoir sur soi, et jamais esprit n'a été si maître de son corps». (413)

Il semble en être ainsi de toutes les dames qui l'entourent. Si les «premiers mouvements» de Madame de la Trémouille sont «prompts et rudes, ils ne vont pas loin», et si son humeur est franche, elle est aussi «égale et sans emportement», et retient «ce que la prudence l'empêche de faire éclater» (36-40). De même, Madame de Châtillon a certaines inclinations naturelles qu'elle «corrige […] par la crainte de déplaire» (472), Et Mademoiselle de la Trémouille, suivant l'exemple de sa mère, dit qu'elle « témoigne si peu [s]a colère que personne ne la pourrait remarquer que par [s]on silence» (52). Si toutes ces dames veulent agir ainsi, elles n'y parviennent pas toujours. «On m'accuse d'être un peu prompte», avoue Madame de Tarente (49)- «la promptitude me domine» nous dit la comtesse d'Esche, mais elles reconnaissent que c'est un dé-

faut, et c'est ainsi qu'un portraitiste anonyme en use quand il accuse Madame d'Uzès d'être facile à se fâcher (59). Il est donc indéniable que si toutes n'y parviennent pas, elles semblent toutes vouloir imiter la reine-mère laquelle, selon Madame de Motteville, se met «rarement en colère; sa passion ne la domine pas, elle n'éclate par aucun bruit indécent à une princesse, qui, commandant à un royaume, doit se commander elle-même» (488).

Pour cette vie éminemment sociale, il faut donc un style, mais cela ne suffit pas, et ni la grâce ni la galanterie n'excusent la niaiserie et le vide intellectuel. «Vous suivez trop votre pensée, et vous vous refusez les réflexions nécessaires» dit Monsieur de Vineuil de la comtesse d'Olonne. (463) «Je parle beaucoup sans dire des sottises», claironne Mademoiselle (410), ajoutant «Je ne parle point de ce que je n'entends pas». Certaines de ses compagnes, les plus jeunes, surtout, se vantent qu'elles n'ennuient pas (72), mais la vaste majorité insiste que toute conversation qui vaille doit avoir un certain fond. Madame de Montglat semble avoir été aimée et respectée de tout le monde à la cour comme à Champigny, et quand Mademoiselle fait son portrait, elle loue particulièrement son art de la conversation: «Vous avez beaucoup lu, et cela vous a acquis quelque science dont vous vous servez à propos dans la conversation. Il n'y a point de gens raisonnables qui ne vous reçoivent avec joie dans la leur, vous ne la troublez jamais et vous savez la rendre meilleure quand vous voulez» (441).

Résumons : dans ce milieu des plus raffinés —sans être précieuses, ces dames blâment à l'unanimité la rudesse qui subsiste dans certains cercles, même de haute noblesse— ce qui prime, c'est l'art de plaire, mais entendons par cela l'art de contribuer de façon très positive à toutes les activités qui se présentent. Ainsi tous ces portraits touchent-ils, à un moment ou un autre, à ce que les portraitistes appellent *le domestique*, la vie privée, en famille. Là aussi, par sa présence et son caractère, la femme doit rendre meilleure la vie de ses proches, et dans le domestique comme dans le public, l'intelligence, la maîtrise de soi, la loyauté, la franchise —mitigée par les demandes de la politique sociale, s'entend— sont des vertus capitales dont la galanterie et les bonnes manières ne sont que des véhicules. Dans les portraits faits par d'autres que le

sujet, le plus grand compliment que l'on puisse lire c'est que ce dernier contribue à son milieu de façon à le laisser meilleur qu'avant, que la présence du sujet plaît par ses actions et ses paroles. Combien d'entre nous pourraient-ils en dire autant avec franchise dans un autoportrait ?

Roseville, California

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Mirrors, Cross-dressing and Narcissism in Choisy's
Histoire de Madame la Comtesse des Barres

by
Nancy Arenberg

The Abbé de Choisy was one of the most intriguing figures in Louis XIII's entourage and, most notably, Louis XIV's court. A prolific author, he composed the Sun King's memoirs, his own personal memoirs, and in his old age wrote an ambitious twelve volume-work entitled *Histoire de l'Eglise.* Although he led a ecclesiastic career, his writing and intellectual interests reached well beyond the Church into politics; he was even chosen by Louis XIV as part of his official embassy to travel to the exotic land of Siam, an experience that was later recorded in his travel documentation. In 1687, Choisy's professional life was further enhanced when he was elected to the Académie Française, where he served along with Racine and Boileau. But to scholars of the seventeenth century, Choisy is perhaps the most renowned for his flamboyant cross-dressing, a secret never hidden from literary peers such as Madame de La Fayette, Bussy Rabutin, Madame de Sévigné and La Rochefoucauld, who openly acknowledged and even encouraged his fetish for women's clothing.

It is the Abbé's confessional work, *Mémoires de l'abbé de Choisy habillé en femme*, which allows the modern reader to study the complexity of his self-representation. Even though the text is structured by a series of fragmented, brief stories, his memoirs provide a surprisingly cohesive portrayal of his transvestite adventures during the Classical Age. In particular, Choisy demonstrates a fascination with his own image as he disguises his masculinity by slipping into feminine attire. Dressed in luxurious fabrics, the Abbé's pleasure of gazing at his own reflection evokes Ovid's myth of Narcissus. Moreover, the obsession with self-reflection and the narcissistic pleasure of being admired by others is a recurring textual phenomenon in the staging of Choisy's cross-dressing.

Although this recent edition includes another memoir that deals

with his transvestism, the *Histoire de la Comtesse des Barres* offers a more insightful, detailed account of the Abbé's experience of living the life of a fictitious country widow. In essence, Choisy's ambiguous body is represented as an elastic, malleable surface, oscillating between masculine and feminine polarization. From the outset, Choisy constructs his feminine masquerade by relying initially on realistic objects such as mirrors and, secondly, on a more internal reflecting surface - the approving gaze of his peers. Within his private domestic theater, he freely satisfies his passion for adorning himself in feminine garb, but he also exploits his gender ambiguity by incorporating illusion into his tranvestite performance, thus revealing that the body is a dangerous erotic site.

To preface this discussion, a brief look at the intertextual rapport with Ovid's myth of Narcissus will provide a point of departure for studying Choisy's own narcissism, which will be analyzed from a psychoanalytical perspective. Since his inherent narcissism is based on self-reflection and exhibitionism, these traits also establish a link to his love of feminine costume. Current interdisciplinary approches to transvestism will enable us to broaden the scope on related aspects such as gender reversal, role-playing and improvisation. In this study of narcissism and its relationship to transvestism, particular emphasis will be placed on the visual and theatrical aspects of his masquerade.

Since there are many versions of Ovid's tale, it is important to clarify some of the most interesting aspects that are germane to Choisy's narcissism. According to the myth, Narcissus, a beautiful youth, is most celebrated for attracting men, women and nymphs, but he remains indifferent to their emotions and even rejects these suitors. One day, the famous nymph Echo, condemned to speak only by repeating the utterances of others, meets Narcissus, and falls hopelessly in love with him. But when the young maiden boldly attempts to embrace him, he rebuffs her affectionate gestures. Out of anguish, Echo retreats into the woods and is slowly transformed into a disembodied voice. After he breaks Echo's heart, Narcissus continues to spurn a series of other smitten admirers until Nemesis eventually curses him, "Let him, like us, love and know it is hopeless. And let him, like Echo, perish of anguish"

(73). These harsh words prefigure the most famous part of his story, which focuses on the reflecting pool. Weary from hunting, Narcissus bends over to drink from a pool of water only to become enraptured by his own image. At first sight, he does not recognize that the eyes staring at him are his own. He tries to kiss the watery image, but it seems ever fleeting, an impossible shadow beyond his reach. Unfortunately, Narcissus does not realize that he has been deceived, for he is in love with his own self-image and no other, but this revelation comes too late. It is when he rests his head upon the refreshing, cool grass that Narcissus closes his eyes for the last time. Death tragically claims him, a victim of his own self-love.

Although Choisy does not ultimately meet a tragic fate, his memoir contains intertextual echoes of some key visual images identified with Narcissus, as represented by the themes of the gaze, illusion, doubling, and beauty. Most of all, the reflecting image in the pond resurfaces in his memoir, but it is transformed into a more modern visual object, the mirror, an integral part of his physical decor, enabling him to successfully stage his travesty. Like Narcissus, Choisy also has a love of beauty, but it is directed to material objects such as luxurious fabrics and other feminine accoutrements. The other significant parallel is that he also possesses an uncanny capacity to create illusion, a trait linked to his inherent artistic ability as a transvestite. In particular, Choisy demonstrates a remarkable talent for perfecting his feminine appearance to the extent that his peers accept his masterful production of femininity.

Yet there is a deeper, more complex connection to the myth of Narcissus. Some critics have pointed out that Narcissus was searching for the image of his mother in the unattainable and eternally elusive reflection in the water, an idea also rooted in Ovid's text. According to the legend, Narcissus' mother was Liriope, a water nymph who lurked perhaps within the shimmering pool, the site of her son's tragic deception. As the embodiment of a more modern Narcissus, Choisy was also identified with a strong maternal presence. From a young age, Choisy's mother, seeking to further her social ambitions in the court, dressed her son as a girl in the hopes of cultivating the friendship of the King's brother. She succeeded in her plan since Choisy was a frequent visitor to the

court; he soon became the playmate of Philippe d'Orléans. Their mutual fondness for feminine fashion, jewelry, make-up and other accessories was never concealed at court. In fact, Philippe's travesty of gender was even encouraged, since it would diminish any threat to Louis' absolute power. Choisy's growing taste for women's clothes did not, however, disappear as he grew up and became a man. During the course of his life, he alternated between periods of cross-dressing and reverting to his masculine clothing, and more often than not to his ecclesiastic robes. He confesses this weakness for feminine attire in the introduction to his *Histoire de la Comtesse des Barres*: "depuis mon enfance j'avais toujours aimé à m'habiller en fille, mon aventure de Bordeaux le prouve assez" (16). In the opening pages of the memoir, Choisy inadvertently points to the encouragment of his mother, describing how his skin was treated with a special preparation to prevent him from growing a beard in adolescence. When he was a little boy, his mother even had his ears pierced, thus cultivating an early interest in decorating the body with jewelry. His mother's influence in these formative stages of his childhood merits a closer look since it plays a significant role in the development of his transvestite tendencies.

Robert Stoller's psychological case studies on sex and gender shed light on the rapport between the mother's encouragement of cross-dressing and the boy's eventual preference for female clothing. In his book entitled Sex and Gender, Stoller provides a clear definition of transvestism:

> Let us define transvestism as completely pleasurable; it is fetishistic, intermittent cross-dressing in a biologically normal man who does not question that he is a male-that is, the possessor of a penis. (176)

He observes that in the early years there is an excessive identification with the mother, the father being strikingly absent. This was in fact the case in Choisy's family: his bourgeois father was known to be an absent figure; he is rarely mentioned in the memoirs. Moreover, mothers of cross-dressers often demonstrate a love

of clothes and fabrics. In dressing their boys in lavish, soft fabrics, they create a work of art, which enhances their male child's beauty that the mother and others have noticed since birth. Cross-dressing, then, can be viewed as a creative work in which the mother, the artist, contributes to the feminization of her son by transforming his physical appearance into that of a beautiful girl. Stoller also posits that in essence it is the mother who is responsible for the original blurring of gender boundaries. This artistic aspect of the mother's role appears to be common among studies of boys who become transvestites. In addition, the transvestite demonstrates exhibitionistic behavior, alternating between cycles of proper masculine attire and of feminine dress, but he is always proud of the hidden masculine power of his penis, veiled beneath his skirts.

The harmonious rapport between travesty of gender and exhibitionistic displays is also associated with contemporary psychological theories on narcissism. Heinz Kohut's illuminating psychological work on the treatment of narcissistic disorders confirms Stoller's theories on inherent exhibitionism among transvestites. Furthermore, he provides another insightful dimension to our study of mirrors, but his theory stipulates that reflecting images are internalized within the psyche.[1] Kohut observes that in the developmental stage of the self the child undergoes an original narcissistic stage where s/he commonly acquires a grandiose self, which, in turn, establishes a mirror transference. The focus of this mirror transference is on the child's contemplation of his own self. In addition, it is the grandiose self that allows the child to pursue his narcissistic pleasures. This phase is also identified with the mother, who participates in the child's exhibitionistic displays. As Kohut posits, "The most significant relevant basic interactions between mother and child lie usually in the visual area: the child's bodily display is responded to by the gleam in the mother's eye" (117). Here, the gleam in the mother's eye functions as an internal mirror, providing the child with a positive gaze; it is her embrace of the child's narcissistic-exhibitionistic behavior that also contributes to the growth of the child's self-esteem.

The emphasis on appearances in the psychological theory of narcissism establishes an interesting parallel with the cultural sign

of visual importance in the seventeenth century. For aristocrats, one of the crucial aspects of social acceptance was following the vestimentary code as dictated by the king and his entourage. The royal style of dress served as an external mirror for the court to emulate. But Choisy's mother also provided a more private reflecting surface, an internal mirror intended for her son's self-contemplation. It was her affirmative gaze that enabled him to pursue his fetish for feminine clothing. Choisy's identification with the mother as well as her encouragement of his preference for elaborate dresses had a formidable influence later in his life.

In fact, after his mother's death, he found that he could not suppress his urge to wear women's clothes. As a young man, he began to embellish his delicate features by adding earrings and applying the fashionable "mouches" of the day. Since he had not quite mastered his female image, his friend, Madame de la Fayette, gave him some important advice, which he refers to in the opening pages of the *Histoire de la Comtesse des Barres:*

> Il arriva même que Madame de La Fayette, que je voyais fort souvent, me voyant toujours fort ajusté avec des pendants d'oreille et des mouches, me dit en bonne amie que ce n'était point la mode pour les hommes, et que je ferais mieux de m'habiller en femme. (17)

This remark gave him the courage to cut his hair and add more elaborate jewelry, make-up, and hair ornaments. After improving his appearance, Madame de la Fayette voiced her approval, "Ah! la belle personne! Vous avez donc suivi mon avis, et vous avez bien fait" (18). With this approval, Choisy became more daring by flaunting his masquerade in public. He recalls one noteworthy incident at the Opéra in which he paid a visit to the Dauphin's private box, but the Marquis de Montausier, the royal tutor, surprisingly undermined the young Dauphin's welcome of Choisy:

> J'avoue, madame, ou mademoiselle (je ne sais pas comment il faut vous appeler), j'avoue que vous êtes belle, mais en vérité n'avez-vous point honte de porter un pareil habillement et de faire la femme, puisque vous êtes assez

> heureux pour ne l'être pas? Allez, allez vous cacher, M. le Dauphin vous trouve fort mal comme cela. (21)

Despite Monsieur de Montausier's scathing attack on Choisy's ornate dress, the Dauphin's own words do not show criticism. In fact, he ostensibly expresses his approval of the Abbé's attire, "je la trouve belle comme un ange" (21). Nevertheless, this unforgettable, crushing incident marked Choisy's definitive retreat from Paris to the province of Bourges. These early memories not only show that he developed an early love of feminine toilette, but more importantly, they highlight his flair for the dramatic, another aspect of his inherent narcissism. Although he suffers humiliation at the Opera, the public theater, it is in his domestic domain where he freely pursues his love of flamboyant spectacle in presenting himself as the Comtesse des Barres.

From his arrival in the provincial town of Bourges, Choisy describes his fancy attire for a trip to the country. Dressed as a woman, he appears to test his cross-dressing prowess by brilliantly disguising his true masculine identity. Choisy devotes the beginning of the memoir to a detailed account of the domestic routine of choosing a château and settling into a quiet life away from the court. In these vivid descriptions, he includes several references, underlining the importance of creating an attractive decor for a rich widow's country retreat. For instance, Choisy places an emphasis on filling his home with the proper furnishings, trustworthy servants, and tasteful works of art. Among the items mentioned are the curious lack of mirrors, a necessity in preparing his daily toilette as a countess. Once again, he resembles Ovid's Narcissus, as he needs a reflecting object so he can revel in viewing his own beauty. His exhibitionism plays a fundamental role in the development of the appropriate behavior in order to carry out his travesty of gender. But he quickly compensates for the lack of reflecting images by acquiring several mirrors from a deceased neighbor. After the furnishings and other objects of the decor are carefully arranged, Choisy prepares his social entrance into Bourges. He again reinforces the importance of the visual as a vital part of his masquerade. Choisy deviates from the private to the public, alluding to the importance of social acceptance. As he ven-

tures beyond the comforting walls of his home, he chooses another public theatrical setting- - the Church- - for his first major appearance. Similar to the social space of the Opera, the Church, too, offers another dramatic stage where he can test the "vraisemblance" of his elaborate costume:

> On me regarda tant et plus; ma parure, ma robe, mes diamants, la nouveauté, tout attirait l'attention. Après la messe, nous passâmes entre deux haies pour aller à notre carrosse, et j'entendis plusieurs voix dans la foule qui disaient: 'Voilà une belle femme', ce qui ne laissait pas de me faire plaisir. (31)

Here, the emphasis is placed on the pleasure of gaining public respect as an attractive, stylish woman. His enjoyment is derived from constructing a convincing image of femininity that he presents to the public. For Choisy, the pleasure is double: he not only succeeds in assuring the others that he is indeed the newly arrived Comtesse des Barres, but he also benefits from their collective admiring gaze, which functions as an external mirror, reaffirming his finesse as a cross-dresser. The importance of being seen in public, without reproach, gives Choisy the confidence to proceed to the next level of socialization, as he makes his foray into provincial society.

The core of the memoir's narrative focuses on Choisy's social adventures with several prominent members of Bourges. From his dramatic arrival, he seems intent on finding the appropriate participants in order to play out his narcissistic fantasy of gender travesty. In particular, Choisy draws the reader's attention to his early acquaintance with Madame de la Grise, the mother of a strikingly beautiful young woman. It is under the guise of assisting in her education that Choisy persuades the mother to allow her daughter to stay at his château for eight days in order to improve her hairdressing skills, so that she can attain the elegance of the Comtesse des Barres. Madame de la Grise's consent and her desire to mold her daughter's hair into a replica of the Countess' coiffure once again serves as a public affirmation of Choisy's credibility as a

woman. Her respectful gaze ostensibly seals her approval of his clever disguise. But although Choisy's body projects the image of a sophisticated widow, his secret seductive scheme undermines his innocent objective. In fact, he inverts his visual appearance of a maternal aristocratic lady, as he stages an elaborate game of "trompe-l'œil " in which he will reveal a more duplicitous image of himself. Dirk Van der Cruysse confirms the importance of the theatrical in the Abbé's memoirs, shedding light on the relationship between the dramatic and transvestism, observing that "le théâtre offre au travesti un travestissement au second degré, un trompe-l'œil qui en trompe un autre" (93). Choisy himself highlights his natural predisposition for the theater and his acquaintance with many of the popular actors of the day. It is possible that his passion for acting also influences his penchant for cross-dressing. The Abbé also enjoys incorporating his amateur theatrical experience into his cross-dressing fantasies. For example, he immediately stages a scene in his own domestic theater in his desire to find a way to spend intimate time with Mademoiselle de la Grise. To be with her, he must deceive her into believing that his intentions are honorable. For the reader, what you see is not what you get, since there is a progression towards illusion. Here, Choisy differs radically from the classical Narcissus. Unlike the young man, he is not deceived by appearances, but he declares himself a master artist of illusion, thus revealing a baroque influence in his flamboyant production of cross-dressing.

Choisy's role as educator of Mlle de la Grise incorporates a popular theme of the day, as seen in some of Molière's most famous comedies, but he ostensibly creates a unique version of "trompe-l'œil." In the text, Choisy quickly extends his lessons into a more private domain, the bedroom, which is more reminiscent of an eighteenth-century libertine's seductive adventures. The Abbé quickly advances the lessons from hair-styling to a more provocative area of education. Using the preface of sharing routine nightly prayers before bedtime, Choisy devises a clever ruse, duping the young woman by convincing her that she is innocently kissing a doting, affectionate older woman. Beneath this illusion of feminine innocence, he, is, however, orchestrating a clever game of gender reversal. His appearance of a respectable widow is abandoned, as

he symbolically dons the mask of a hungry predator:

> Dès que nous fûmes couchées, il ne fallut pas lui dire de s'approcher, elle pensa me manger de caresses; je crevais d'amour et je me mis en devoir de lui donner de véritables plaisirs.
> Elle me dit d'abord que je lui faisais mal, et puis elle fit un cri qui obligea madame Bouju de se lever pour voir ce que c'était. (40)

Choisy's feminine attire deftly conceals his masculine desire for the naive young virgin. As an ambiguous being, he vacillates between feminine and masculine sexual polarization, but here his body is transformed into a dangerous site of illicit desire. Masked by his lavish feminine attire, he becomes aroused by his power to secretly seduce Mlle de la Grise. Although he wears a dress, the Abbé never represses his true heterosexual nature, a trait often seen with male cross-dressers. The erotic aspect of his masquerade is also a part of the tranvestite's daring transgression in which he destabilizes gender boundaries. Marjorie Garber elaborates on this aspect in her fascinating study on the cultural phenomenon of cross-dressing:

> the transvestite in this scenario is both terrifying and seductive precisely because s/he incarnates and emblematizes the disruptive element that intervenes, signaling not just another category crisis-but much more disquietingly- a crisis of "category" itself. (32)

Moreover, Garber affirms the interrelationship between cross-dressing, substitution, role-playing or theatrical improvisation. She posits that the fetishism for costume and disguise constitutes the integral elements of masquerade in the transvestite performance. In his attempt to entice his young prey, Choisy shakes up the innocence of his feminine appearance. It is his concealed sexual desire that turns the external image of his femininity into ambiguity, thereby creating a sense of confusion in the gender distinctions.

The theatrical aspect of his cross-dressing is further developed,

thus constituting a key element of the memoir's thematic content. In another episode with Mlle de la Grise, the Abbé enriches her exposure to the theater by offering her acting lessons. In a scene from Corneille's *Polyeucte*, he chooses the part of Pauline and gives the young woman that of Sévère. His fantasy of perfecting his feminine pseudo-identity extends beyond his own personal pleasure of playing Pauline, as he invents a way to reverse the gender categories. In this role-playing game, it is his naive student who conceals her femininity by wearing a masculine disguise. Here, too, he indulges his narcissistic fantasies in which he becomes a master of creating illusion. Jeffrey Berman observes that "the narcissist seeks admiration but is more concerned with appearance than with reality" (21). To place this into the cultural context of the seventeenth century, Choisy, as an ambiguous being, derives his pleasure from creating this baroque game of "trompe-l'œil." Interestingly, the baroque in the seventeenth century also emphasizes the visual and lends itself to the use of masks, illusion, mirrors, and disorder. Choisy's penchant for illusion resembles Adrian Marino's idea of the baroque: "L'homme baroque se déguise dans un monde de théâtre et de décors, peuplé de travestis et de faux rôles" (59). Indeed, the staging of Corneille's play allows him to experiment with physical appearances and travesty. In essence, the invented world of the theater is liberating, allowing him to visually destabilize the gender boundaries by switching masks and costumes. Since Mlle de la Grise's acting ability is relatively weak, the Abbé finds another excuse to keep her in his tutelage, which her mother graciously accepts. Madame de la Grise inadvertently reaffirms Choisy's masquerade, showing her approbation by yet another reference to the visual:

> Toutes les dames ne vous ressemblent pas, me dit madame Gaillot, et il faut être aussi belle que vous êtes, pour avoir si peu besoin de secours étrangers; votre miroir vous suffit et vous dit continuellement que vous avez tout par vous même. (52)

Seen through the gaze of the young woman's mother, the adverb "tout" ostensibly signals her confirmation of Choisy's success in carrying out his masquerade. This external mirror, the gaze of

the beholder, also encourages Choisy's narcissism; he becomes more daring in his private adventures.

In another fragment from the memoir, Choisy describes a more shocking seductive scheme in which he lures Mlle de la Grise to his bed. This time he kisses her before a private audience in his bedroom. Once again, the Abbé maintains the emphasis on the visual perspective of the scene. The mirror image is, however, significantly enhanced: the small group of friends serves as a more grandiose external mirror. Moreover, the intimate group seems to encourage Choisy's dangerous theatrics. As noted in Kohut's theory of the mother's approving gleam in her eye, his friends' affirmative gaze fulfills the same function: they give Choisy the confidence and assurance to complete his seduction, thus reinforcing his narcissistic behavior. In addition, Choisy's personal pleasure of being seen collides with the excitement of fostering voyeurism among his friends. But the innocent display of affection that they think they are watching in the bed actually reveals the staging of a very different scene that occurs between Choisy and the girl. By stimulating their desire to observe them, Choisy satisfies his exhibitionistic needs; he not only dupes Mlle de la Grise, but also the spectators. Like Mlle de la Grise, they believe that he kisses the girl as a part of his well-intended maternal instincts:

> En disant cela, je la fis remettre à sa place, et repris, sous prétexte de la baiser, l'attitude convenable à nos véritables plaisirs. Les personnes qui les regardaient es augmentaient encore; il est bien doux de tromper les yeux du public. (54)

Mitchell Greenberg points out that the seventeenth-century audience often believed what they thought they were seeing.[2] For Choisy, he launches another elaborate "trompe-l'œil," enabling him to experience great pleasure in carrying out this outrageous behavior before the spectator's very eyes. This episode also has baroque overtones, since there is an element of concealed surprise and illusion. Choisy creates an inverted, double reflection by appearing merely to kiss the young woman goodnight. But he is really engaging in more scandalous amorous activity. Choisy clev-

erly choreographs Mlle de la Grise's body movements, dissimulating his seductive gestures so deftly that he does not attract the attention of the audience. In this masterful performance, Choisy highlights his artistic talent. Stoller observes that an inherent artistic ability such as dancing, mime, and acting are characteristic of boys that become transvestites. In Choisy's case, he possesses this amazing talent for acting, and for turning visual images into illusion. Furthermore, he creates illusion by his skill in playing with costumes and masks. Once again, he shakes up the gender boundaries, creating a displacement or a blurring effect in the distinction between masculinity and femininity. As a master of illusion, the Abbé even wins the approval of the local cleric, "qu'y a-t-il de plus innocent? C'est une sœur qui baise sa cadette" (55). Greenberg points out that there is, however, a more "unarticulable threat of lesbianism" (251). He transgresses not only in his brillant invention of a ruse to seduce the young virgin, but in his masquerade as the Comtesse des Barres he molds her into a potential lesbian by this intimate show of affection witnessed by his friends.

One of the most outstanding aspects of Choisy's adventure with Mlle de la Grise reveals another fascinating case of gender reversal. With his friends gathered around him, the countess tells the cleric that Mlle de la Grise is his wife, and the girl, in turn, announces that the countess is her husband. The cleric offers his blessing for their fictitious union. In this game of role-play, the spectators are unaware of the true identity of the Comtesse des Barres. Without their knowledge, the transvestite swings back to his masculine gender assignment. It is as if the body is represented as a blank canvas that changes according to the vestimentary code. Choisy's ambiguous body has an elastic, fluid quality, enabling it to easily adapt to the gender of the clothes placed upon it. The theatrical marriage pays tribute to his ability to freely vacillate between both genders, a natural trait of his innate transvestism.

Before concluding his adventures with Mlle de la Grise in the first part of the memoir, Choisy describes a ball given at her mother's home. To prepare the young girl, the Abbé lends her some of his most treasured jewels. He adorns her with his diamond earrings and also attaches a hair ornament: "je lui mis aussi dans les cheveux mes poinçons de diamants. J'étais ravie de la voir si

belle, et je la baisais de temps pour ma peine" (58). Curiously, the shimmer of the diamonds reflects his own image; it is this image of feminine beauty which he projects onto the young girl. The Abbe's flair for using accessories to emphasize the girl's features highlights his artistic talent. As Martin Bergmann postulates, the association between mirrors and beauty evokes Narcissus: "the artist can create his own mirror when he paints a self-portrait" (405). Like Narcissus gazing at his reflection in the pool of water, Choisy uses the reflecting surface of the diamonds as a visual substitute for a mirror, exalting his grandiose self. Empowered by his grandiose self, Choisy becomes the creator of Mlle de la Grise's sparkling image of beauty. The ball signals the conclusion of the more outstanding moments spent with Mlle de la Grise. She is eventually saddened by Choisy's neglect; he abandons her for a more enticing girl. The abrupt dismissal of Mlle de la Grise as well as her relatively silent voice in the memoir evokes Narcissus's bitter rejection of Echo.

The second part of the memoir focuses on Choisy's adventures with another young girl named Rosalie, an actress who comes to Bourges with her theater troupe during Carnaval. Choisy becomes particulary impressed by her portrayal of Chimène in Corneille's *Le Cid*. As he puts it, "la petite fille me plaisait, elle était fort jolie, j'étais né pour aimer des comédiennes" (63). Here, he writes himself in the masculine whereas in his previous episodes with Mlle de la Grise, he often referred to himself in the feminine. The swing back to the masculine gender accentuates his body ambiguity, enabling him to formulate his intentions to satisfy his predatory instincts. To lure Rosalie into his private domain, Choisy uses strategies already employed with Mlle de la Grise. He begins by constructing an intimate theater for the actors to perform in his home before his friends and the influential local archbishop. Once again, he places himself in the role of educator, asking her aunt's permission to assist Rosalie in improving her acting abilities.

But it is in his role as educator that Choisy reveals other pedagogical intentions.

Choisy soon discovers that his new charge appears more

knowledgeable than her predecessor. For the lusty predator, wooing Rosalie promises to be more difficult:

> Fiez-vous à moi, lui disais-je; vous voyez mon petit cœur, que je me fie à vous; mon secret, le repos de ma vie est entre vos mains. Elle ne répondait point et soupirait, je la pressais de plus en plus, je sentais que sa résistance mollissait, je redoublai mes efforts, et achevai cette sorte de combat où le vainqueur et le vaincu se disputent l'honneur du triomphe. (67)

Adhering to his role as as her acting teacher, Choisy vividly describes his struggle to seduce her, using heroic rhetoric strikingly close to that found in Corneille's dramas. The text shows, however, an odd lack of strategic planning. Choisy does not create an elaborate illusion to dissimulate his conquest, as seen in the previous 'ruelle' scene with his friends. The writing is more fragmented and less embellished, as if he were merely recording the highlights of his adventures with Rosalie. Yet there are other similiarites with Mlle de la Grise, which show role-play, gender disturbance and other instances of scandalous carnal encounters.

In his experiences with Rosalie, the Abbé dedicates himself to enhancing her education beyond acting. He parades her around town, attired luxuriously in fine clothing and jewelry. Since she is wearing his lustrous diamonds, he places a symbolic object on her body, a mirror, as noted in the ball scene at Madame de la Grise's home. Once again, he is cast in the role of an artist who creates her in his own image, thus feeding his own narcissistic impulses. Reuben Fine points out that early psychoanalysts believed that artists were by nature narcissists who transferred their own sense of creative satisfaction to their artistic productions.[3] In Choisy's case, molding Rosalie into his image as a beautifully adorned woman constitutes an artistic production represented by external objects such as jewelry and dresses. However, he ventures beyond the mirror into gender bending, melding the theatrical into his narcissistic instincts.

The key scene in this second part of the memoir highlights Choisy's fascination with fictional role-play, costumes and travesty. In this episode, Choisy uses the context of hunting as a ruse for a clever game of gender reversal. He dresses himself in feminine attire, and then casts Rosalie in the masculine role. He even cuts her hair, puts a wig, a hat, and pants on her, thus blending the realism of her garb with this visual spectacle of a "trompe-l'œil." In this relationship, Choisy even refers to Rosalie as "mon petit mari" (72), indicating a reverse travesty in their role-play. Garber posits that transvestism is in essence an inversion, a notion which reveals some Ovidian echoes. She, too, identifies the themes of doubling and illusion with characteristics associated with the transvestite performance. Indeed, the penchant for gender travesty is carried out by the ambiguity of Choisy's body. His ambiguity is what creates that space of undecidability where he floats constantly between femininity and masculinity. Moreover, his travesty is infused with his narcissistic-exhibitionistic tendencies in which he indulges his love of female attire by viewing his beautiful image in reflecting objects. Every time he gazes at himself in the mirror, he flatters his own vanity and reaffirms his talent to dupe the people of Bourges through the art of his masquerade.

In sharp contrast to his previous adventures with Mlle de la Grise, the episode with Rosalie culminates in a much more dramatically shocking way. The young woman suddenly becomes pregnant, marking an abrupt termination of her masquerade as M. Comtin, the male identity given to her by Choisy for their role-play Here, Choisy again draws on his creative talent as an artist; he conceals her pregnancy by carefully staging an illusion, garbing her in voluminous dresses so that Rosalie's condition does not attract a lot of public attention. Despite the Abbé's effort to keep the pregnancy secret, the scandal begins to circulate around town, forcing Choisy to abandon his quiet country life and return with Rosalie to Paris. The city offers them anonymity as well as protection from scathing gossips. As the Abbé puts it, "il fallait aller à Paris où l'on se cache aisement" (73). After the birth of the child, Rosalie resumes her interest in her acting career. Choisy ultimately chooses a suitable husband for her and marries her off. In the absence of his young charge, he is free, once again, to seek out his

pleasures.

The Abbé closes the memoir with the insertion of another Ovidian parallel. Like Narcissus contemplating his own self-beauty, the image of the mirror magically resurfaces:

> Dès que la petite fille fut mariée, je ne songeai plus qu' à moi l'envie d'être belle me reprit avec fureur; je fis faire des habits magnifiques, je remis mes beaux pendants d'oreilles qui n'avaient pas vu le jour depuis trois mois, les rubans, les mouches, les airs coquets, les petites mines, rien ne fut oublié; je n'avais que vingt-trois ans, je croyais être encore aimable, et je voulais être aimée. (77)

The reflection emanating from the earrings shows the theme of doubling originally identified with Narcissus. As the Abbé looks at his elaborate costume, he sees a double image. Choisy is gratified by gazing at himself, but moreover the grammatical switch to the feminine reveals his inner desire- -he wants to receive the admiring gaze of his peers, affirming his formidable talent to appropriate the feminine.

Choisy's travesty as the Comtesse des Barres points to a visual fascination with his own self-image, linking his inherent narcissism to that in Ovid's classical tale of Narcissus and Echo. In particular, his obsession with mirrors provides him with an essential prop to stage his masquerade as the sophisticated Comtesse des Barres. Choisy's formidable talent for carrying off feminine dress enables him to win the approval of his peers, which is shown by the gleam within the reflecting surface of their gaze. It is his friends' approbation that also gives Choisy the confidence to explore his theatrical fantasies. But at same time, his clever disguise as a maternal, stylish woman serves as a brillant cover-up, concealing his genuine masculine predatory nature. This more illicit aspect of the memoirs describes his licentious, scandalous behavior with Mlle de la Grise and Rosalie. As a master of illusion, the Abbé exploits his sexual ambiguity to subvert the gender categories, thereby creating confusion between the clearly delineated poles of

femininity and masculinity. The blurring of these boundaries facilitates his seduction of these innocent girls, who are deceived by his appearance as a doting, proper lady. Although the Comtesse des Barres is a lively, fascinating text, it also unveils one of the Abbé's darker masks, thus showing a glimmer of Narcissus' tragic fate. Choisy, devoid of dresses and mirrors affirming his narcissistic-exhibitionistic tendencies, becomes a tragic, grotesque figure trapped on his own private stage where he vacillates constantly between masculine and feminine apparel. Without a dress and the approving gaze of his private spectators, his travesty seems destined to disintegrate, revealing a portrait of a pathetic, ambiguous being whose real identity seems eternally masked.

University of Arkansas

NOTES

[1]Heinz Kohut's psychological work on narcissism, mirrors and the identification with the mother also resembles some aspects of Lacan's conception of the mirror stage. The intention is not to overlook the importance of Lacan's approach, but to focus on the relationship between the mother's affirming gaze, and the influence of this internal mirror in the development of a child who has narcissistic-exhibitionistic tendencies. Moreover, this study on the theatrics of Choisy's transvestism is more conducive to Kohut's approach, since he focuses primarily on the relationship between mirrors and narcissism.

[2]Mitchell Greenberg offers the most recent illuminating study of the Abbé's memoirs. Hwever, his focus is on the relationship between the Abbé's transvestism and the politics of absolutism. In particular, he studies the erotic and political implications of the transvestitic body from a psychoanalytical, historical and cultural perspective. Although Greenberg also discusses mirrors, narcissism, and illusion, this study differs in that the psychoanalytical perspective is grounded in the intertextual rapport with Ovid's myth of Narcissus and Echo, which provides the foundation for the analysis of the interrelationship between narcissism and transvestism. Mitchell uses Lacan and Freud for his theoretical discussion

of mirroring whereas this paper utilizes Kahut's theory of narcissism and mirror transference as well as Stoller's psychological analysis of transvestism.

[3] Reuben Fine talks about the relationship between narcissism and artists, which includes a brief reference to Freud's work on Leonardo da Vinci. Freud associated narcissism with autoeroticism and homosexuality. Other psychoanalysts postulated that narcissism allowed artists to circumvent suffering. At the same time, narcissism could be potentially dangerous for artists; it was believed to be a contributing factor to emotional breakdown.

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The Mediatization of Politics during the Fronde: Condé's *Bureau de Presse*

by
Mark Bannister

The Fronde is a very complex phenomenon. Scholarship in recent years, that of Lloyd Moote, Orest Ranum, Michel Pernot and others, has ensured that the old idea of the Fronde as a "guerre en dentelles" is dead, and Hubert Carrier's monumental work on the mazarinades has shown that the key to understanding the political subtleties of the time lies in the mass of pamphlets produced on a daily basis rather than in the memoirs of self-interested individuals written usually long after the event.[1]

The Prince de Condé seems to have largely missed out on this rethinking of political rôles. It is less than forty years since one historian of the Fronde was repeating as fact the old story that Condé had been persuaded to start a civil war by his sister who wanted a good excuse not to have to rejoin her husband in Normandy.[2] Kossmann, writing in 1954, declared that Condé's ambition was insatiable but also aimless. He wanted power, wealth, prestige, but had no policy whatsoever. His view has been influential and is still being repeated in some quarters.[3] Unfortunately, it is not so very far removed from the idea of a man who would go to war to please his sister.

It is certainly true that Condé was ambitious, arrogant and keen to acquire wealth, but it is demonstrably untrue that he had no program or policy during the civil war against the Court in 1651-52, as a study of the pamphlets published for him and the journals kept by contemporary observers reveals. Moreover, in presenting that program to the public, the team of pamphleteers who wrote for him developed a number of techniques which can justifiably be compared with modern '*médiatique*' methods.

In 1648, Condé had returned triumphant from yet another victory over the Spanish and had been drawn reluctantly into the

confrontation that had arisen between the Court and the Parlement. He was asked to take charge of the military blockade of Paris when Mazarin's policies provoked open rebellion, and he thereby earned himself the hatred of a good proportion of the population.[4] When a kind of order was restored, he expected to benefit from the outcome and, for a time, his arrogance and his low opinion of Mazarin were very apparent. The result was that he was arrested and imprisoned, and from that point onwards it is possible to trace the rapid development of an ideological commitment on his part. He was never brought to trial, but the Court formulated their charges against him in a number of published documents which they hoped would convince the public that the arrest was justified. It is here that the conflict between two concepts of the state becomes clear and explicit.

Condé was accused of wanting ever more positions of power and authority within the state because he was ambitious and avaricious. He wanted an area of sovereignty of his own and it was hinted that he aimed to usurp the royal power itself. Most offensive of all, the Court attacked the very basis of his heroic status, by suggesting that his glorious deeds were motivated primarily by self-interest rather than by service to the king: "l'esprit qui le portoit dedans les batailles n'estoit pas le vray genie de la pure generosité, […] Il a seruy l'Estat & son Roy, mais son premier motif estoit de se seruir soy-mesme." [5] These charges have to be seen in the light of the theory of absolutism as it had been developing for thirty or forty years. Cardin Le Bret, Silhon and others had predicated their political writings on the assumption that the subject had always to be defined in relation to the monarch. All authority, all power, all *gloire* derived solely from and were vested solely in the king, and the subject could therefore do no more than reflect them. Consequently, a subject who became too powerful or acquired too much authority within the state posed a political threat to the king and could be imprisoned, even though he had committed no crime.

Condé's arrest clearly took him by surprise, but, during the thirteen months of his imprisonment, he and his supporters went through a rapid learning process as regards both the need to define

what exactly he stood for and also the need to find effective methods of putting his case before the public. This process is very evident in the pamphlets published between January 1650 and February 1651. When Condé was first arrested, his family and supporters responded in a predictable and frankly unimaginative way. The Court had published its charges against Condé: they therefore responded by taking up those charges and setting out to refute them one by one. The result was a series of pamphlets of great length, resembling the traditional treatise, full of classical and biblical references. For instance, the *Apologie pour Messieurs les Princes,* written by Sarasin, runs to 96 quarto pages and is pedantic in its insistence on picking up each point in the Court's charges and worrying it to death. If we look at what was being published seven or eight months later, it is apparent that Condé's team had realised that long and detailed appeals to justice and fairness were of limited use and that they had to adopt a more eye-catching approach.

Some of their efforts made a considerable impact. At dawn on November 4th, 1650, the population of Paris were surprised to find that several of the *poteaux à carcan* in the streets[6] carried a printed effigy of Mazarin hanging by a noose of rope and, underneath each effigy, what purported to be a court judgement sentencing the Cardinal to be hanged for crimes against the state. The effect was immediate and telling.[7] A month later, a letter from Condé to the Parlement was published, written by Condé himself in pencil and smuggled out of his prison. Unlike the earlier justifications, this one was short (only seven pages) and merely expressed the resignation of the great hero at being unjustly treated by his enemies: he was determined to suffer with constancy and asked for no more than the goodwill of the Parlement. He regrets that his enemies have

> terny à moins de rien ma gloire, flétry mes palmes, effacé la memoire de mes illustres actions, de l'eternel souuenir de la posterité, & chassé honteusement comme vn second Phaëton d'aupres de ce Soleil, dont la seule veuë me faisoit reuiure. […] Mais comme ie n'ay iamais manqué de constance n'y de

> valeur dans toutes les occurrences qui le pourroient requerir, Ie ne manqueray point aussi de patience dans vn lieu où les plus hardis perdroient toute leur contenance.

His style and his technique of referring to himself at times in the third person make it read like a passage from *Le Grand Cyrus*, or perhaps more accurately from *Cassandre* which had been one of his favorite novels, but it clearly appealed to the *romanesque* sensibilities of the population and achieved its aim of swinging the sympathies of the Parlement towards him.[8]

In July 1651, five months after the release of the Princes and Mazarin's departure into exile, it became apparent that Gondi and the other Frondeurs were plotting to have Condé arrested again. He therefore found it necessary to withdraw from Court, but this time he was well prepared. He had an experienced team to form his *bureau de presse* and he had an ideological justification for his political stance. On the ideological side, Condé presented an alternative vision of the state to that expounded by the Court, one which allowed him to counter the accusation that he was trying to usurp the royal authority. He postulated a state in which the king was sovereign but not absolute. According to his vision, the *lois fondamentales*, which supposedly formed a kind of unwritten constitution, predated the monarchy and were therefore binding on the king as much as on his subjects. The various estates and orders had their own rights and areas of privilege in which the king could not interfere and the Parlement acted as a check on the exercise of the royal power. The great nobles in particular could claim their own sovereignty, for instance by being *seigneur* of a territory recognized as sovereign or by signing treaties with foreign princes, provided they did not thereby infringe the sovereignty vested in the king. The great nobles were also responsible for governing the provinces on behalf of the king, not as functionaries but as plenipotentiaries, using their networks of *fidèles* to maintain order and carry out the royal policy according to their own judgement. The Princes du Sang had a special function in that they acted as the king's chief advisers. During the king's minority, his senior male relative acted as Regent and chaired the Conseil du Roi, made up

of the Princes du Sang and any specialist advisers they might choose to appoint. Women and foreigners were specifically excluded from the Regency and from the Conseil.

This vision of the state, expounded progressively in a number of pamphlets, was held out to the French as the one established by their forefathers, the only authentic one and certainly the only one that could guarantee their individual and corporate liberties against the ever-present threat of tyranny. It allowed Condé to claim that those who wished to usurp the royal power, notably the devious and machiavellian foreigner, Mazarin, were trying to persuade the king that his power was absolute, to undermine the rights of every section of society and to replace the legitimate governmental and financial structures with their own separate networks of *créatures*. It may well be that, if Condé had been successful, his commitment to the traditional liberties of others would have been less than he liked to claim, but there is no evidence to support the charge that he was interested in usurping the royal power.[9]

From this base of political theory, Condé's team set out to manipulate public opinion, using a range of techniques which arguably had much in common with modern media methods. They were very professional and were certainly more effective than the teams supporting Mazarin and Gondi. Condé's printer, Nicolas Vivenay, moved his presses into the Hotel de Condé in July 1651 so that he was out of the reach of the *lieutenant-civil* and his police. At that time, Naudé complained to Mazarin that "il n'y a personne qui prenne le soing de faire escrire pour leurs Majestez pendant qu'on ne void que des manifestes de la part de Monsieur le Prince": several months later, he was still inveighing against those who published pamphlets "avec tant de soin parce qu'ils reconnoissent evidemment le bon effect que cela produit en leur faveur. "[10] Between 1650 and 1653, according to Carrier, Condé's *bureau de presse* published more than 400 pamphlets, reaching at the busiest times an output of four or five a week.[11]

These pamphlets were intended to fulfil a number of functions. First, the public were presented with what might be called a news service, giving accounts of military and political events. The offi-

cial *Gazette* was the mouthpiece of the Court (even though Mazarin felt that Renaudot was not sufficiently critical of Condé) and Condé's *bureau de presse* naturally wanted to correct the balance. In reports on military engagements, they made sure that every skirmish between Condé's troops and those of Mazarin appeared as a victory or at least as giving the advantage to Condé. Factual accuracy was less important than the overall impression. When Condé routed the royal army at Bléneau, for instance, Turenne was said to have had to swim across the river to escape after the defeat, although he was not actually present at the battle.[12]

In political matters, they often scored highly with the public because Condé had an extremely good intelligence service which could provide and publish information on, for instance, Mazarin's movements as he prepared to re-enter France or the arrival of Mazarin's agents in Paris and their activities thereafter. They provided details of the manoeuvrings and in-fighting at court. They got hold of the secret agreement between Mazarin and the Frondeurs conspiring against Condé, and published it. Because their reports were frequently accurate, they had sufficient credibility with the public to allow them to embroider the circumstances, such as when they claimed to have got hold of Mazarin's orders to the Queen Mother being carried by his agent, Ondedei: some of the facts they put forward were incorrect but their overall interpretation of Mazarin's intentions was very plausible and in fact the Queen was later to carry out all the actions they had predicted.[13]

Secondly, they built on the base of this information service to manipulate public opinion and provoke action among selected sections of the Parisian populace. The use of placards was very effective in this respect, partly because it was applied judiciously so that its effect was not weakened. Although less striking than the effigy of Mazarin hanged for his crimes, the *Second Avertissement aux Parisiens* issued on July 14th, 1651 is a typical example of the technique, aimed in this case at persuading the people to stand firm against the likely return of Mazarin. Whereas the *affiches* put out by the Court almost always consisted of royal edicts of some length couched in legal terminology, the message here is structured very simply. On the one hand, the main theme comes through

strongly: Mazarin is the sworn enemy of the people of Paris, determined to return and avenge himself in the most bloodthirsty way. He is on his way even now. There are traitors among us helping his cause, quite possibly including the Parlement. Short phrases emphasize the reality of the threat: "la perte de ton sang & de tes biens" , "ta perte seroit ineuitable", "la ruyne entiere de tout le Royaume, & principalement celle de Paris." Counterpointed around the main theme is the consolatory message: Monsieur le Prince is with you. If you support him, he will make sure that Mazarin cannot harm you. If you do not, he will have no option but to move to Bordeaux and leave you to your fate: "ce grand Prince te monstre le chemin, seconde ses bons desseins", "Monsieur le Prince est encore à tes portes", "offre luy ton bras & tes assistances, donne luy ton secours." Condé's party was uniquely successful in mastering the technique of presenting direct messages in this way, as is shown by the placard that appeared on the streets on April 2nd, 1652, when news came that Condé was about to arrive back in Paris after the victory at Bléneau. It urged the population to assemble on the Pont Neuf to show their support and a huge crowd turned up, estimated variously between 3000 and 6000. This was perhaps the best result achieved by Condé's party and represented the high point of his popularity.

Like some elements of the modern press, Condé's *bureau de presse* made attempts to use their news function to bring about the results they wanted to achieve. On May 14th, 1652, the Parlement were holding a debate on how law and order could be restored. Orléans arrived and announced that, since the people generally respected him, he was prepared to take charge of the situation but he would require the Parlement to invest him with full authority. Outside, the Princes were telling the crowd that the Parlement had voted to grant Orléans absolute authority and, later in the day, pamphlets appeared reporting on these decisions and on the rapturous response of the people. Unfortunately for the Princes, the Parlement chose not to vote in favour of Orléans and the attempted *coup* failed.[14]

The ability of the *bureau de presse* to work at great speed was crucial to their success. The Battle of the Faubourg Saint-Antoine

took place on July 2nd, 1652 and the next day five accounts of the events were published, interpreting the outcome as a victory for the Princes, showing how Condé had risked his life for the Parisians. Speed, however, was achieved at the expense of editorial coordination and the writers were uncertain as to how they should present the part played by the citizens of Paris themselves. Some claimed that a large troop of volunteers had insisted on going outside the gates to support Condé's efforts; others criticized the bourgeoisie for being influenced by the mazarinists and failing to provide the necessary backing for the man who was fighting on their behalf.[15]

The third and vital function of Condé's *bureau de presse* was to maintain a constant polemical output, in order to convince as many sections of society as possible that Condé's cause was legitimate. Part of the operation involved responding to polemical pamphlets from opposing camps and, here again, Condé's men worked with remarkable speed. If the Court issued an edict against Condé or one that affected his position in some way, or if Gondi or one of his supporters published a justification of their position, a response and in some cases several responses would normally be on the streets within a week. So, at the height of the power struggle between Condé and the Frondeurs in August 1651, Gondi's pamphlet *Avis desinteressé sur la conduite de Monseigneur le Coadiuteur* provoked three substantial refutations of varying degrees of virulence within no more than seven days.

The main polemical function, however, was to keep reiterating Condé's case, adjusting the presentation in the light of changing circumstances but always hammering home the same message. The chief polemicist was Dubosc-Montandré, who produced about fifty substantial pamphlets. He was extremely skilled at finding effective ways of catching the public eye and came to exercise a major influence on the methods employed by all sides. Two of his pamphlets, *Le Point de l'ovale* and *La Franche Marguerite*, both published in March 1652, became notorious because they called for a general uprising including the killing of known supporters of Mazarin. The Parlement was horrified and had them publicly burned by the hangman (though significantly they did not launch proceedings against Montandré himself). This has tended to feed

the myth that Paris was in the hands of the mob and that Condé was trying to use it to start a reign of terror. Christian Jouhaud has used *Le Point de l'ovale* as evidence in his enquiry into the extent to which the mazarinades were revolutionary.[16]

However, it is necessary to analyze Montandré's output in the context of Condé's policy. In March 1652, the immediate aim was to bring about "l'Union des Princes et de la Ville" with the Princes du Sang and the Parlement all speaking with one voice so that Mazarin and his supporters were clearly isolated and the program put forward by Condé was legitimated beyond doubt. The problem was the Parlement. They kept issuing statements against Mazarin and sending deputations to the Queen to ask for his exile, but two-thirds of their members never made any serious move to support the Princes. An increasing number of them were being bought off by Mazarin's agents. Condé therefore had to put pressure on them to convince them that the mass of the population supported the Princes and that they would be in trouble if they did not do the same. The key to success was the class of Parisian between the *menu peuple* and the prosperous bourgeoisie, the large number of *artisans, boutiquiers* and lower-level professional people who had a vested interest in stability as they understood it but who did not have *rentes* or offices on which to live. They were convinced that all their troubles were caused by Mazarin and a supposed legion of *financiers* who were draining away the money which they produced by their labours and which rightfully belonged to them. Aware of the level of discontent, Condé had been cultivating this particular section of society since his withdrawal to Saint-Maur in July 1651. He made a point of taking part in their festivities, dancing with their wives. They were the people who spontaneously surrounded his coach when they thought he was going to be arrested by a regiment of the Guards, who came to Orléans saying there were 4000 of them who would fight in the Princes' army because trade was so bad and they wanted to bring order back again, who formed the rank-and-file troops of the bourgeois militia but at one point refused to guard the Parlement because they were a bunch of mazarinists.[17]

Montandré developed a technique specifically to persuade this class, which might in the twentieth century be categorized as

lower-middle or perhaps skilled-working class, to support Condé. It can be seen in all his major pamphlets published in the second half of 1651 and beyond, but *Le Point de l'ovale* is one of the best examples. The key is a clear and supposedly irrefutable line of argument. The title-page gives a concise five-point summary of what is to come so that there is no doubt about the message: (a) we should all support one party so that the war is brought to an end; (b,c) the party that has justice on its side, maintaining and being maintained by the law, is the one to support; (d,e) having identified that party, we should rise up and destroy the other. The argument is then presented methodically stage by stage. Each paragraph makes a specific point, building on the previous one, and all are kept short, with an average length of eight lines as against the twenty or more in the majority of polemical mazarinades. As the case for an uprising is developed, the key points are reinforced by ideological statements which can serve as rallying-cries:

> Quand les guerres dureroient cent ans, ceux qui les fomentoient n'en seroient iamais moins gras.
>
> Ne le dissimulons plus: les grands se ioüent de nostre patience: & parce que nous endurons tout, ils pensent estre en droit de nous faire tout soufrir.
>
> Voyons que les grands ne sont grands que parce que nous les portons sur nos espaules: nous n'auons qu'à les secoüer pour en ioncher la terre.
>
> C'est vne folie au pauure peuple que de se laisser succer iusqu'à la derniere goute de son sang, pendant qu'il ne tient qu'à luy qu'il ne s'engraisse de celuy de ses tyrans.

As the reader follows the stages of the intellectual argument in favour of an uprising, he also absorbs the emotional reassurance that he is drawn from the solid and hard-working core of the nation. He and his fellows are suffering from the depradations of the blood-suckers above, specifically those who support Mazarin and who are therefore opposed to the traditional liberties of the people,

while at the same time the common people below are shown to be volatile and unreliable. The anti-Mazarin uprising in 1648 had failed because the *artisan*-class had not carried it through to its logical conclusion. Now that Condé has taken up the defense of the nation's rights, they must support him and help him to finish the task. It is not surprising that the Parlement felt *Le Point de l'ovale* deserved to be burnt.

Montandré's methods were so successful in seizing the attention of the public that they were adopted by pamphleteers of all parties, but in general they were much less well handled by others. *Le Flambeau d'Estat*, for instance, shows what the form was likely to become in less skilled hands. Published in August 1652, it was written by one of Condé's partisans (but not Montandré) and was still calling for a general uprising even though the Princes claimed by then to be in control of the Parlement and the City of Paris. The front page contains what purports to be a straightforward summary of the argument, but it lacks a strict logic. The sections of the pamphlet setting out the argument pass from calm, measured discussion to heights of indignation and back again to a rational conclusion. Section I is a discussion of the definition of justice in basically abstract terms. Section II then makes excessive and heavy-handed use of anaphora and hyperbolic cumulation in an attempt to make the need for justice in the current situation seem irrefutable, leading awkwardly to the conclusion in Section III that justice requires the people to rise up against Mazarin. Section IV assures the reader that such an uprising is entirely justified and brings the argument back to the theoretical level in Section V with copious references to Aristotle, Aquinas, the Book of Kings, etc. to show that a people has the right to seek justice for itself. There is more than a touch of the pulpit and the court-room in *Le Flambeau d'Estat* and, in showing how difficult it was for many writers in the mid-seventeenth century to let go of the heavier techniques of rhetoric, it underlines the success of those such as Montandré who had grasped the need for more direct polemical techniques to serve an active and immediate political cause.

It is no doubt anachronistic to look too closely for parallels between the mazarinades and modern journalistic methods, if only

because the mazarinades were a response to a very specific and abnormal political situation of a sort that the modern press does not have to deal with and in a world that has long since disappeared. None the less, the pamphleteers of 1652, and particularly those working for Condé, can claim the credit for having prepared the way for the polemicists of the pre-Enlightenment, such as Pierre Bayle, because they refined the techniques of debate and argument and sharpened up the use of the language. As Carrier has suggested, « c'est la souplesse, l'agilité de la langue qui constitue la plus importante et la plus durable des conquêtes littéraires de cette période." [18] Where a Balzac or a Silhon had felt it necessary to write treatises of considerable length to put across their political points, Condé's *bureau de presse* showed the advantages of the condensed presentation, the repeated slogan, the ironic aside, the rapid response. They demonstrated how to respond flexibly and effectively to a complex political situation, a skill that was to prove invaluable as the seventeenth century moved towards the Enlightenment, and they consequently represent an important stage in the movement towards modern methods of persuasion.

Oxford Brookes University

NOTES

[1] A.L.Moote, *The Revolt of the Judges: the Parlement of Paris and the Fronde (1648-1652)* (Princeton: UP, 1971); O.Ranum, *La Fronde* (Paris: Seuil, 1995); M.Pernot, *La Fronde* (Paris: Fallois, 1994); H.Carrier, *La Presse de la Fronde (1648-1653): les mazarinades*, 2 vols. (Geneva: Droz, 1989-91).

[2] P.-G.Lorris, *La Fronde* (Paris: Albin Michel, 1961), p. 244.

[3] E.H.Kossmann, *La Fronde* (Leiden: U.P., 1954), p. 196.

[4] For the most complete expression of that hatred, see Du Portail, *Discours sur la deputation du Parlement à Monsieur le Prince de Condé* (s.l.n.d. [1649]).

[5] *Discours et considerations politiques & morales sur la prison des princes de Condé, Conty, et duc de Longueuille* (Paris, 1650), p. 8. The official charges were published in the *Lettre du Roy sur la detention des princes de Condé et de Conty, & duc de Longueuille*

(Paris, 1650) but Lionne's *Discours* provided a much more theoretical gloss on them.

[6] Used for fastening chains across the streets when it was necessary to prevent unrest.

[7] A facsimile of the placard has been published by Carrier in *La Presse de la Fronde*, I, 350.

[8] *Lettre de Monseigneur le Prince de Condé à Messieurs de Paris* (Paris, 1650).

[9] These political theories are embedded in a dozen or more pamphlets, of which the principal ones are *Les Decisions du censeur monarchique* (Paris, 1651); *La Decadence visible de la royauté* (s.l., 1652); *La Franche Marguerite* (s.l.n.d. [1652]); *Le Grand Ressort des guerres ciuiles en France* (s.l., 1652).

[10] *Considérations politiques sur la Fronde: la correspondance entre Gabriel Naudé et le cardinal Mazarin*, ed. K.Willis Wolfe and P.J.Wolfe (Paris, Seattle, Washington: Biblio 17, 1991), pp. 51, 93.

[11] *La Presse de la Fronde*, I, 143.

[12] *Relation de toutes les particularitez de la grande et signalée victoire obtenue par Monsieur le Prince de Condé* (s.l., 1652).

[13] *Lettre d'vn marchand de Liege à vn sien correspondant de Paris* (s.l., 1652).

[14] *Resultat veritable de ce qui s'est passé dans le Parlement […] le quatorzieme May 1652* (Paris, 1652); *Les Dernieres Resolutions faites en Parlement […] le 14. May* (Paris, 1652).

[15] The 'official' version published by Vivenay and possibly written by Marigny (*Relation veritable de ce qui se passa le Mardy deuxieme de Iuillet au combat donné au Fauxbourg Saint Anthoine*, Paris, s.d. [1652]) describes bourgeois volunteers assembling with cries of joy and making a foray outside the gates to support Condé's troops.

[16] *Mazarinades: la Fronde des mots* (Paris: Aubier, 1985), pp. 168-73. See also A.Viala, *Naissance de l'écrivain: sociologie de la littérature à l'âge classique* (Paris: Minuit, 1985), pp. 60-68.

[17] August 22, 1651, April 3, 1652 and May 12, 1652 respectively.

[18] *Les Muses guerrières: les mazarinades et la vie littéraire au milieu du XVIIe siècle* (Paris: Klincksieck, 1996), p. 634.

Célimène's Last Word

by
Roger W. Herzel

"Go!," says Alceste, "I reject your hand, and disenthrall/ My heart from your enchantments, once for all" (Wilbur 150):

> Allez, je vous refuse, et ce sensible outrage
> De vos indignes fers pour jamais me dégage.
> (Molière V.iv.1753-54)

And Célimène does go, without speaking. This, to my mind, is the most puzzling moment of this very puzzling play, and the smaller puzzle is the key to the larger one. Célimène, I think, is not expecting this response from Alceste, nor is the audience; and her reaction to it, which is certainly of importance to us, would be the final comment -- Célimène's last word -- on their relationship. But she says nothing, and that comment is therefore missing from the text.

It is not, however, missing from the performance, because the actress playing Célimène has to find a way to get off stage. This is no simple matter, nor is it trivial. Her body language as she makes the exit will say a great deal about her state of mind: is she crushed, humiliated, amused, angered, relieved, even perversely triumphant?

We may be uncertain, but we can be sure that Molière was not. In the original performance, which was the only one he was concerned about, he played Alceste, his wife played Célimène, and the manner of her exit was part of his artistic plan. If that did not find its way into the printed book, the omission proves only what we should already know: that Molière was, in the first instance, creating not literature but theatre, and the text is only the residue of performance.

Célimène's silent exit is all the more striking in the context of the way the last scene is choreographed. The disastrous reading of the letters is followed by a series of exits, by inverse order of the characters' importance. Clitandre, Acaste, and Oronte have had their egos bruised, and as they leave, each uses his exit speech to try to regain the upper hand. Clitandre, the least important character, is the first to go and has the simplest speech: in four lines he threatens to spread the news of Célimène's treachery. Acaste, in another four-line speech that is only slightly less childish, says that he can get other girls:

> Et je vous ferai voir que les petits marquis
> Ont, pour se consoler, des cœurs de plus haut prix.
> (1697-98)

Oronte has eight lines directed to Célimène in which he declares that she, not he, is the one who has lost:

> J'y profite d'un cœur qu'ainsi vous me rendez,
> Et trouve ma vengeance en ce que vous perdez.
> (1705-6)

This is followed by a couplet to Alceste bestowing Célimène upon him, as if it were in his power to do so.

> Monsieur, je ne fais plus d'obstacle à votre flamme,
> Et vous pouvez conclure affaire avec Madame.
> (1707-8)

Still more complex is Arsinoé's turn in the spotlight. She gloats over Célimène and praises Alceste, who sees where she is headed and cuts her off by saying, with striking but justified, and even enjoyable, brutality, that if he wants another woman, it won't be her.

> Et ce n'est pas à vous que je pourrai songer,
> Si par un autre choix je cherche à me venger.
> (1721-22)

So now it is Arsinoé who has lost face and must recover it in her ten-line exit speech, this time directed to Alceste, in which she echoes the techniques of both Acaste and Oronte.

> Hé! croyez-vous, Monsieur, qu'on ait cette pensée,
> Et que de vous avoir on soit tant empressée?
> [...]
> Vous ferez bien encor de soupirer pour elle,
> Et je brûle de voir une union si belle.
> (1723-24, 1731-32)

Four characters have left, four remain. Now comes the scene in which Alceste demands that Célimène retreat with him to his château in the country, she makes the counteroffer of Paris and marriage, and he sandbags her with his refusal. She is the fifth person to be humiliated in this scene, and the other four managed to find words that turned their exits into some appearance of triumph. Is it too much to expect that Célimène could do the same? She certainly has the skill, more than any of the others. The obvious, and possibly correct, answer is that unlike the others, she has suffered a wound to her heart, not just her vanity. But that interpretation commits us to the idea that Célimène has a heart, and there is a long tradition of productions that, rightly or wrongly, deny this idea.

On the other hand (and with this play there is always another hand), we could say that the four exit speeches that were just delivered were all transparent failures, and anything that Célimène said in this situation would be received the same way. Her silence then could be seen as a tactical choice to rise above the battle, to not dignify Alceste's rejection with an answer.

Placing these questions of content on hold for the moment, the immediate issue is one of form. Molière has set up a pattern, repeated four times, of humiliation, face-saving speech, and exit. With Célimène he breaks the pattern by eliminating the middle element; and this change, this silence, serves to focus attention even more on the attitudes expressed by her carriage and movement as she leaves.

Mlle Mars, called “la Célimène la plus accomplie que le Théâtre-Français ait jamais connue,” displayed in this moment

> toute la fierté de la coquette, qui n'avouera jamais sa blessure . . . Dès le premier mot d'Alceste, elle préparait sa retraite, commençant une révérence qui s'achevait avec le dernier vers. En sortant, elle reprenait un air de défi ; elle avait un coup d'éventail par-dessus l'épaule qui voulait beaucoup dire et lui donnait l'air de congédier qui la quittait. (Descotes 122-24)

This was exactly the same effect in gesture that Oronte and Arsinoé were striving for in words.

Cécile Sorel, in 1912, surprised the critics by displaying a clear preference for Alceste (which shows how entrenched the idea had become that the *grande coquette* had no feelings at all): “Elle observait un instant son amant avec tendresse et, comme il demeurait impassible, elle sortait avec un geste qui signifiait : ‘Il reviendra.’” (Descotes 127) (It is wonderful to know what the gesture signified, but it would have been useful if the critic had described the gesture itself.)

In a Comédie-Française production of 1977, Béatrice Agenin, after the refusal, made a long cross to Alceste more than halfway along the front of the stage from right to left; placed her left hand on his left breast, while he stared stonily straight ahead; inclined her head briefly on his shoulder, her face averted from his and from the audience; then, the picture of dejection, continued a long, slow, painful progress back to the right, diagonally upstage and off to the side. There was no way the exit could have been staged to drag it out more or make her walk a greater distance. It was a beautiful exit; it made no sense, but it was beautiful, and the audience was, reliably, in tears (Herzel 350).

When we look at the play with the realistic sensibility of Antoine and Arnavon, it can seem a little excessive to allow Alceste

to throw Célimène out of her own living room, and some directors have changed the setting between Acts IV and V so that she will have some place to retreat to. Of course, with the technology and conventions of the modern theatre it is possible to avoid having her exit at all. In the National Theatre production of 1975, Diana Rigg sent the *Newsweek* critic into this rhapsody:

> In the final scene after Alceste has left her [note the reversal], she moves upstage to a window as the stage darkens, until finally she is caught in a web of light and shadow like a painting by Molière's contemporary, Georges de la Tour. The centuries merge in a timeless twilight, and Célimène is the fatal angel of beauty that even Molière could not laugh away. (Kroll)

In 1986 the Guthrie Theatre in Minneapolis took an opposite and even more extreme view of the ending. The play was set on the eve of the Revolution, and the final stage picture was this: "At the end of the play, her glass doors shattered by rocks from the street, she remained alone, caught in a merciless spotlight like Marie Antoinette, humbly yet vainly kneeling for mercy."

In short, Molière's decision not to provide a final speech for Célimène created a void at the end of the play that is much more apparent in performance than on the printed page: a void that every director and actress, starting of course with Molière himself and his wife, has needed to fill. Some of the stage effects may seem excessively showy, and some are certainly misguided; but the showiness itself makes the point that any interpretation of the play, good or bad, must hinge on the staging of Célimène's final silence -- a moment crucial enough to justify the use of whatever technical means are available to the director.

Molière, of course, did not have controllable lighting at his disposal. He did not even have the option of ending the play with the final picture of Célimène forlornly, or defiantly, alone on stage as the curtain slowly fell, because there was no curtain. The only way he had of ending the play was to have all the actors leave the stage.

But strong effects can be achieved by simple means, especially when they clash with a well-established set of audience expectations, as Célimène's silent exit certainly did. An exit without a covering line is not only a shock in the immediate context of the last scene; it is very rare in Molière's plays generally.

Furthermore, it is fair to say that an exit without a line violated a kind of stage protocol that was seen as a completely natural extension of the art of acting before the realism of the late nineteenth century changed our perceptions of what "naturalness" in the theatre was all about. There is a world of sheer performance in pre-Chekhov, pre-Antoine theatre that was very rich and that we tend to miss when we read these plays with modern ideas of stage decorum in mind.

Consider Shakespeare. The actors may have been speaking blank verse or prose, but when the time comes for one of them to leave, he will break into rhyme, with an especially snappy couplet to propel him through the door:

> I'll have grounds
> More relative than this. The play's the thing
> Wherein I'll catch the conscience of the King.

This pattern is most common at the end of scenes, when the stage is cleared, but also occurs frequently within scenes, when one important character leaves and others are left behind. The frequency of the pattern may be due in part to the structure of the Elizabethan stage, on which the exit doors were far upstage and in full view of the audience. The actor performing downstage, close to the audience, would either have a long walk to make at the end of the speech, or would have to work his way to the door during it, ending with the verbal flourish that might signify nothing more than "the speech is over." But even in eighteenth-century English comedy, in which the actors are much closer to the exits, the tradition continues to be strong.

A variation of the same pattern occurred in seventeenth-century English opera: a singer, at the end of particularly triumphant piece

of vocal display, would obligatorily make an exit, whether the dramatic sense of the scene called for it or not. My own reading of this custom is that by leaving the stage the singer made it possible for the audience's applause to call him back, blushing modestly. The whole ritual is still an essential part of contemporary ballet performance.

As late as 1885, in Pougin's *Dictionnaire du Théâtre*, we find this entry for “coups de talon”:

> Les coups de talon étaient fameux jadis, à l'époque où le drame et le mélodrame étaient en pleine efflorescence et passionnaient le public des théâtres de boulevards. Certains acteurs de ces théâtres avaient pris l'habitude, pour forcer l'effet et enlever les applaudissements, de donner, sur la dernière phrase d'une longue tirade, un violent coup de talon sur le plancher. Ce moyen assez singulier d'accentuer la péroraison de la tirade et de montrer qu'elle était finie manquait rarement son but, et l'acteur était effectivement couvert de bravos.
> (I, 251)

Pulling applause: a grave breach of decorum in the modern theatre, in which the audience has been trained to hold its applause until the end of the act or, increasingly, the end of the play. But this modern inhibition is out of the mainstream of theatrical history. Molière mocks the actors of the Hôtel de Bourgogne for pulling applause, but his point is not that the audience shouldn't applaud but that the actors shouldn't beg for it so transparently. Applause was for many centuries a perfectly natural way for the audience to acknowlege the skill of the actor at a high point, not after but during a performance, even in the most serious moments of tragedy, as an eyewitness account of David Garrick's acting makes clear:

> . . . the ghost goes off the stage. Hamlet still remains motionless, his sword held out so as to make him keep his distance, and at length, when the spectator can no longer

> see the ghost, he begins slowly to follow him, now standing still and then going on, with sword still upon guard, eyes fixed on the ghost, hair disordered, and out of breath, until he too is lost to sight. You can well imagine what loud applause accompanies this exit. It begins as soon as the ghost goes off the stage and lasts until Hamlet also disappears. (Lichtenberg 161)

Such protracted and self-indulgent bits of stage business were of course exceptional, but only in degree: they are extreme examples of an utterly routine and necessary system, which on a more commonplace level included Shakespeare's ending couplets, of sending signals to the audience. These signals alerted the audience to the fact that not only the character, but the actor was about to leave; and the applause helped carry him to the door.

Clitandre, Acaste, Oronte, and Arsinoé are brilliantly written characters; but they are also roles that were written to elicit brilliant performances from the members of Molière's troupe. As each actor left the stage for what was clearly the last time, it was right and natural for the audience to reward them with its applause, for which the exit line serves as cue. But what of Célimène, who has no exit line? Should we assume that the audience, deprived of its cue, was so Pavlovian that it failed to give Mlle Molière the applause which she clearly had earned? This would be a hard fate indeed; it would cheat both the actress and the audience. I can only conclude that Mlle Molière made her final statement about Célimène, and that Célimène made her final statement about Alceste, through mime that was expressive, clear, and a recognizably skilful piece of performance. If only Molière had found a way to write it down, we would have much less to argue about in *le Misanthrope*.

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Opening Moves, Dialectical Opposites, and Mme Pernelle

by
Allen G. Wood

Tartuffe begins with an ending. Mme Pernelle departs from the Orgon household, commanding her servant: "Allons, Flipote, allons, que d'eux je me délivre." (1). She does not leave, however, without having the last word, or series of last words, as she showers criticism on every member of her extended family, the "eux" (them) from whom she disdainfully distinguishes herself. Dorine is "impertinente," Damis a "sot," Mariane is too "discrète," (meaning sneaky). Elmire "dépensière," while, finally, Cléante is sententious.

Her attitude is "têtue et incivile" (Ledoux, préface), but Mme Pernelle is both correct in her assessment, if wrong in her conclusions. Guicharnaud points out that each portrait is an :

> Erreur de jugement seulement, puisque le contenu de *faits* de ses portraits est exact. Cette erreur la conduit à des accusations graves. ...La suite de la pièce mettra chaque personnage dans une situation telle qu'il démentira précisément le jugement particulier que Mme Pernelle a porté sur lui au début du premier acte. (25)

As the initial scene, it performs the important task of introducing the main characters and the principal subject matter to the audience. As we know, this is especially crucial in a comedy, where neither characters nor plot elements are known by the spectators. But the way in which this is achieved in *Tartuffe* is atypical, even extravagant. The conventional opening scene of the time, and also found in Molière's other plays, has a couple of characters discussing their situation and that of other characters. Arnolphe and Chrysalde expound their differing views on women and marriage in *L'Ecole des femmes*, Philinte and Alceste exchange ideas on social graces and sincerity in *Le Misanthrope*, and Valère and Elise declare their love for each other as *L'Avare*

begins. Yet a dialectics of opposition operates from the very first line of *Tartuffe*, with a beginning that is an end, or which announces an imminent end, of at least of one particular episode in which a whole stage full of characters is present. It is a quantitative and qualitative switch, with a multitude of voices, and the movement and activity of seven members of the household shown before our eyes. Such crowd scenes are typically reserved for the end of a play.

Another important opposition is found in the irony of the opening scene of *Tartuffe* and the rhetorical strategy required to understand the scene. The household has been thrown into disorder due to Tartuffe's presence, and we begin to see the extent to which values have been distorted, even inverted. Mme Pernelle is presented as an unsympathetic character through her arrogant manners and harsh criticisms. She was further discredited in the 1669 performances by her outdated clothing and the fact that she was portrayed by Louis Béjart, Molière's brother-in-law who walked with a limp. On stage, Mme Pernelle was a travesty, both in her cross-dressed portrayal and in her exaggerated, ridiculous expressions. In this first scene, the spectator may already be wary of her words and judgments, and soon realizes that she praises folly and vice, and rebukes those who are reasonable and good. Larry Norman sees her as a satirist who is herself satirized in the play —as was the case of Arnolphe in *L'École des femmes*. From the very beginning of *Tartuffe*, we are presented with an ambiguous or double message, and, as Larry Norman writes, "The audience thus must separate the author's satire of Mme Pernelle's bitterness from the character's own satire of her family; it is a question of intelligently pulling information, and laughter, from both" (172-173). Things have been turned topsy-turvy in the household, which, in Mme Pernelle's words resembles "la cour du roi Pétaud," and we can begin to understand characters and situations only when we believe the opposite of what she says. As Jacques Scherer notes, "Molière montre qu'on ne peut attacher ni importance ni valeur aux jugements que prononce dès le début cette vieille dame ridicule" (126).

She can be believed, however, about her intention to depart, for she does leave, after slapping her sleeping servant Flipote into action. Departure is followed by arrival, or rather by the return of the master, as Orgon is spotted on his way home after an absence of two days. The scene with Mme Pernelle may be seen as a prelude to the play, setting the stage, as it were, since the action does not really begin until Orgon is back home. An analysis of the beginning and ending of the play *Tartuffe* raises many complex issues in a play well suited to the topic.

The text to which we refer is that of the 1669 performances. But this is not where the play begins. First performed in 1664, during the *Plaisirs de l'Ile enchantée* at Versailles, it was then banned. Presented to a Paris audience August 5, 1667 under the name *Panulfe*, during the absence of the king, the comedy was again banned. Neither of these earlier texts survives, although what resulted in the author's attempts to have the bans lifted now form a textual prologue to his work, a *Préface* and three *placets au roi*, providing explanatory commentary placed before his work. These documents are unique in the Molière cannon, setting *Tartuffe* apart from the other plays. The ban was finally lifted in 1669, perhaps due in part to the recent death of Anne d'Autriche, the queen mother, a strong *dévote* whose pious convictions supported the ban. Much speculation has focused on the possible structure of the earlier versions, and the possibility that much of the beginning of the 1669 text was added in order to make clearer the play's intent of satirizing only false devotion, and not all devotion. Such additions would have helped make the play more acceptable.

The fact that the comedy begins with Mme Pernelle's departure, and ends with the king, through his envoy, restoring the house to Orgon is relatively clear. But when we ask where the beginning ends, and the end begins, in other words, where the middle of the play really lies, then matters become less clear. There is movement and change in the play, but it is such that it does not involve development of character or plot so much as a switch from one side to the other, from one extreme to its opposite. Either one believes Tartuffe to be a vrai *dévot*, or a false one.

Cléante's long list of analogies in I, v (*masque* vs. *visage*, *artifice* vs. *sincérité*, *apparence* vs. *vérité*, *fantôme* vs. *la personne*, *fausse monnaie* vs. *la bonne*, etc.) is one of the best indications of this basic, bipolar structure underlying characters and plot in the comedy. Now as a comedy, the play has young lovers (Mariane and Valère) whose union is blocked by the young woman's father, but the play is more significantly about the hold that Tartuffe has on Orgon, and therefore the whole family. But everything changes immediately and diametrically, from the opening situation, to that of the close, when Orgon comes out from beneath the table. He is disabused as to Tartuffe's real intents, recognizes the *dévot* to be false, and (although not stated yet) the obstacle to the Mariane-Valère union is removed. If it had been Orgon in the cabinet in Act III rather than Damis, the play would be one act shorter. All this reveals the minimal aspects of the play's "middle," a point Orgon briefly passes as he switches his opinion of Tartuffe from one extreme to the other. For, indeed, there are several layers of beginnings that lead into, and many stages of endings which lead from, a comparatively small nucleus at the heart of the play: the double seduction scenes in Acts III and IV.

In order to determine a beginning, one element involves the protagonist. Yet in this play the role is split between Orgon and Tartuffe. In other Molière comedies the action is clearly begun and starting to develop once the central character is present for a few scenes, whether it is Arnolphe, Alceste, or Harpagon. But Orgon is not on stage as much as the other protagonists. Even when he is present in Acts I and II, he is still not wholly there, his words and actions are deferred, he is the spokesman for his *directeur de conscience*. We see that the character inversion is complete, the host has been invaded by the parasite, the master has become the servant. Orgon evades his brother-in-law's questions, threatens his maidservant, intimidates his daughter, as he follows the dictates of, and in a sense in order to please, Tartuffe. Yet all the while Orgon is not completely there, because he is separated from Tartuffe.

Even Molière states, in the *Lettre sur l'Imposture*, that the first two acts serve as a long exposition, so that when Tartuffe appears

in Act III, there can be no doubt that he is a *faux dévot*. The long wait is over, and the action can truly begin (the first two acts have shown him to be central to the plot and character interaction), once Tartuffe appears in Act III. We can begin to judge him for ourselves. He barely has a chance to act like a *dévot*, however, and he is given to extravagant displays of an exaggerated piety. He gives his hair shirt and whip to his servant Laurent, and tells Dorine to show a little less cleavage. For a spiritual man he seems to focus on carnal pain and pleasure, and Dorine rightly comments that he appears quite "tendre à la tentation." At this point, he is more caricature than character. But primarily Tartuffe enters, quickly moves to his interview with Elmire, and, at that point, shows his true nature as a hypocrite, a faux *dévot*, mixing the language of piety with that of seduction. There can be no doubt for the audience, which hears and sees the real Tartuffe from the "beginning." Our opinion does not change, it has no development, and we are ready to proceed to the end of the play.

The departure of Mme Pernelle, the return of Orgon, the unconventionally delayed appearance of Tartuffe, all these can be viewed as beginnings to the play. And if we shift our attention away from the couple Orgon-Tartuffe and consider the love story, quite obscured in this comedy, between Mariane and Valère, is not even mentioned until the end of Act I as Orgon and Cléante exchange opposing views. It does become the focus of Act II, but this act has often been seen as superfluous, a pleasant digression ending in the opposition between the lovers in the *dépit amoureux* that closes the act. One of the reasons for the multiple beginnings to the play is caused by the multitude of characters, as found in the opening scene, and an exposition that explores the effects of Tartuffe's presence, and Orgon's changed behavior, on several of them individually.

The departure of Mme Pernelle, which acts as the first beginning of the play, introduces the audience, as according to contemporary custom, to a situation *in medias res*, a beginning that is situated at the middle of a story. In so doing, the action can be limited to the *unité de temps*, the final day of an extraordinary event. We go back to the beginning, or rather before the begin-

ning, as significant incidents that occurred prior to the day represented on stage are presented in discursive allusions to antecedent actions. The beginning of the play's action (*récit*) is not the beginning of the story (*histoire*), as significant incidents that occurred prior to the day represented on stage are presented in discursive allusions to antecedent actions (verbal flashbacks).

In *Tartuffe*, four significant passages refer to antecedent actions which, as the play progresses, present incidents from further back in the past. At or near the play's beginning, two of these passages occur. The first, and referring to a most recent past, is found as Orgon returns home in Act I, iv. He alludes to his two day absence without giving a precise description of the nature of his trip. It is plausible to assume that, like many bourgeois of the time, he was visiting or inspecting property in the country. There then follows the well-known scene in which Dorine describes Elmire's recent fever and illness, which Orgon ignores in favor of hearing news of Tartuffe, who ate, drank and slept to contentment —"le pauvre homme." Orgon shows from the very beginning that his priorities are flipped topsy-turvey, proving what Cléante had just observed in I, ii that "[Orgon] l'appelle son frère et l'aime dans son âme / Cent fois plus qu'il ne fait mère, fils, fille et femme" (185-186). Rather than being concerned for his wife, who really was sick (truly "une pauvre femme"), he shows a disregard for her and an excessive, nonsensical sollicitude for the hale and hearty Tartuffe.

We are not told the circumstances of the first meeting of Mariane and Valère, but we do hear from Orgon the story how his association with Tartuffe began:

> Chaque jour à l'église il venait, d'un air doux,
> Tout vis-à-vis de moi se mettre à deux genoux. …
> Et, lorsque je sortais, il me devançait vite
> Pour m'aller à la porte offrir de l'eau bénite. …
> Enfin le ciel chez moi me le fit retirer
> Et, depuis ce temps-là, tout semble y prospérer.
> (I, 5 283-84, 289-290, 299-300)

An ironic description, it reveals far more than the teller realizes, since we see how Tartuffe's exaggerated gestures mark him as a *faux dévot*, and how it was Tartuffe who insinuated his way into Orgon's protective care. Impressed with what he sees as piety, Orgon wanted to take this valuable man out of circulation by taking him home.

Near the play's end the other two allusions to antecedent actions are found. Whereas the first two contribute to a depiction of character, primarily that of Orgon, and interaction (Orgon/Elmire, Orgon/Tartuffe), the last two are crucial to the plot. In 1669, the Fronde (1648-52) pertained more to earlier generation, yet Orgon finds himself compromised by events from that time. In V, I, he considers himself under suspicion, and unable to pursue the restitution of his house, because of papers which his friend Argan, implicated in the Fronde, had left in his safekeeping in a *cassette*. Orgon had foolishly given this *cassette* to Tartuffe, his *directeur de conscience*, who now threatens to use the contents to maintain (by blackmail) his claim on the house, the other gift from Orgon. By this means Orgon considers himself silenced, blocked in his attempt to get justice from the law, which is ultimately the king (we see, of course, that he is wrong in this perception, and the papers hold no threat to him ultimately).

The final antecedent action alluded to in the play occurs at the very end, in the long discourse of the Exempt. We see, as elsewhere, dialectical opposition at work in this scene. The representative of the king arrives supposedly to evict Orgon and his family from their house in order to give it to Tartuffe, while in reality the house is restored to les *bons bourgeois* and the *faux dévot*, unmasked, is led off to prison. As the Exempt explains the miraculous turn-about, the past is brought into the present in a circular movement, and Tartuffe's repeated crimes have finally caught up with him. The king's gaze penetrates all ("les yeux se font jour dans les cœurs" 1907), and, in this case, Orgon learns that Tartuffe:

> Venant vous accuser, il s'est trahi lui-même
> Et, par un juste trait de l'équité suprême,
> S'est découvert au prince un fourbe renommé
> Dont sous un autre nom il était informé;

Et c'est un long détail d'actions toutes noires
Dont on pourrait former des volumes d'histoires.
(V, vii, 1921-1926)

Rather than arrest Tartuffe on the spot, the king shows the extent of his vast powers. Vernet comments that "cette intervention arrive au moment où il n'est plus possible de discerner l'ordre du désordre," and that for the king "différer la justice, c'est démontrer sa perspécacité exceptionnelle, puisque c'est démontrer que sans son intervention, Tartuffe deviendrait Orgon sans que le monde, hors de la famille ainsi dépossédée, puisse juger de l'imposture." (261) He is able on the one hand to pardon Orgon's "offense secrète" of the compromising papers because he remembers Orgon's supportive "zèle [d]'autrefois" (1939) during that time, and on the other hand, the king allows Tartuffe to think that his scheme succeeded, in order to reveal further the hypocrite's perfidious actions.

The play's ending has been considered, of course, as Molière's praise to Louis XIV, who by 1669 was finally able to lift the ban on the comedy and allow its performance. The creation of this final scene, if not in fact the entire fifth act, has long been viewed as one of the additions in the change from the three act play of 1664, that has not survived, to the five act version of 1669, the play as we know it. The ending is satisfying in that Orgon moves from ignorance to knowledge, from *folie* to *raison*, joing the rest of his family (except his mother) in their rejection of Tartuffe. If not exactly character development, there has been a reversal of Orgon's earlier position. He is, unlike Arnolphe, Alceste or Harpagon, cured of his obsession, or at least his obsessive, blind trust in this one man. He seems all too ready to switch from credulity to cynicism, rather than find a middle position of justly ascertaining a person's worth. In response to Orgon's equally foolish plan to not trust a single *dévot*, "je renonce à tous les gens de biens" (1604), Cléante exclaims "toujours d'un excès vous vous jetez dans l'autre" (1610). In this particular case of Tartuffe, Orgon has finally seen the light, but he cannot move from particulars to universals, or rather he takes Tartuffe's behavior as typical of all *dévots*, true and false. But in this case, with Tartuffe discredited

in Orgon's new opinion, Mariane and Valère's can eventually wed, as the comedy concludes with the father's promise: "Et par un doux hymen couronner en Valère / La flamme d'un amant généreux et sincère" (1961-1962). The artificial ending to the play (nothing new for Molière) in the ancient theatrical tradition of the *deus ex machina*, or, in this case, *rex ex machina*, was nonetheless effective in providing a satisfactory conclusion to the plot, a restoration of the house to its rightful owner, and an acknowledgement of the king's beneficial powers for both Orgon and Molière. Although more recently some critics have seen (quite rightly, it seems) the final passage in praise of Louis in a more ironic or sinister light, as a monarch able and intent to "surveiller et punir" his subjects, the praise operates, or is meant to operate, on a literal level at least, as genuine. Perhaps L'Exempt is a naive narrator, like Orgon relating his first encounter with Tartuffe, who tells something more, or differently, than intended.

From beginning to end, the play moves from "la cour du roi Pétaud" to the court of Louis XIV, from Mme Pernelle leaving the house, to the entire family being able to remain at home. Mme Pernelle, on stage only in Acts I and V, is a character of beginnings and endings (as is also Cléante). She is indeed a most unusual character, and requires some further attention. It is as an exception that we see the mother of the authoritative father, the *obsédé* in a Molière comedy, for we certainly never see the mothers of Arnolphe, Harpagon or Alceste. In *Tartuffe* we have a great number of characters, with doublings and repetitions substituting for development of character or plot. Mme Pernelle's presence has been observed as revealing a kind of "telle mère, tel fils" explanation of Orgon's comic vice of gullability. Her blind faith in Tartuffe also poses a greater threat to the household than if Orgon alone believed in him, since she is by extension a figure of the authority that is supposed to lead the family. It is also extremely important that, in Act V, after Orgon has understood Tartuffe's identity as a *faux dévot*, that he is unable to convince his mother. As Dorine states, "Juste retour, monsieur, des choses d'ici-bas; / Vous ne vouliez point croire, et l'on ne vous croit pas" (V, iii, 1695-1696). It is only when words give way to actions, and Monsieur Loyal comes to order the family from its home that she

finally realizes Tartuffe's true intents, exclaiming "Je suis toute ébaudie, et je tombe des nues" (V, v 1814). This is the counterpart, the corrective, to all of her remonstrations of the first scene.

Positioned as she is at the opening of the play, as a theoretical authority figure with no actual authority, Mme Pernelle stands in sharp contrast to the figure, the image of the king at the comedy's close. If praise is due to him for having brought order to chaos, and for having restored possessions to those who were duped and manipulated (by the barest of legal chicanery) out of them (the king transcends the law since he is the Law), then in this play which has its structured on so many dialectical opposites, it seems that Mme Pernelle is to blame as much as the king is praiseworthy. And, given the other structuring and thematic element of doubling, we see in Mme Pernelle, mother of an authority figure (the father), the possibility of another reading, or ascription, of her character, that other mother who was instrumental in the banning of *Tartuffe*, the mother of the king, Anne d'Autriche. On the same subtextual level, a level of multiple, ambiguous readings, that we find the praise of Louis XIV providing a glimpse of something more sinister, so we raise the possibility that at the play's outset there is portrayed a grotesque rendition, a kind of medieval farcical Mère Sote, of a woman not-unlike the queen mother, perhaps if only as an inside joke to the comedians.

It was primarily the secret Compagnie du Saint-Sacrement, founded by the duc de Ventadour in 1629, that was instrumental in the interdiction of the play, an action approved or carried out by the président de Lamoignon (the 1667 version), Hardouin de Péréfixe, archbishop of Paris, and other notable men. Yet Anne d'Autriche was one of the strongest supporters of the *dévots*, and her death in January 1666 was a blow to them. It has been observed that, in 1664, the king, who at first enjoyed the comedy immensely, did not want to contradict his ailing mother "Louis XIV ne voulait pas heurter sa mère qu'il savait très malade" (Rossat-Mignot 14). Molière's critics at the time even went so far as to impute Anne's death to her violent reaction to his plays: "le sieur de Rochemont prétend, dans ses *Observations sur le Festin de Pierre*, que l'auteur faisait mourir la reine-mère par le chagrin

que lui causaient des œuvres impies." While the death of the queen mother did not lead immediately to the lifting of the ban on the play, which occurred some three years later, it represents the removal of one of the most powerful opponents to the play who exerted influence on the king.

Among other factors, the play also needed some revisions, such as changing Tartuffe from a character who, in the beginning (1664) wore an ecclesiastical collar, to a lay *directeur de conscience* in 1669. This change allowed him to be promised in marriage to Orgon's daughter, and the entire second act was probably added to increase this dimension of the play. It also seems possible that the first scene may have been added, that a sufficiently distorted caricature of Anne d'Autriche take shape in the form of a woman of a contemporary age, but whose bourgeois origins would distance her far from the Louvre.

Purdue University

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Desert, Fortress, Convent, Body: the Allegorical Architecture of Nervèze's *L'Hermitage de l'Isle saincte*

by
Barbara Woshinsky

The history of conventual representation in early modern France roughly parallels the historical movement from desert to social enclosure which took place in the formative centuries of the Christian era. In the late sixteenth and early seventeenth centuries, the *topos* of the *désert*, or deserted place, was very much in vogue in both secular and spiritual literature. As Danièle Duport explains, "Sur un fond de guerres et de doutes, les influences conjuguées des définitions du bonheur chez les Anciens font surgir le rêve d'un âge d'or pastoral et agricole" (Duport 89). "Cette vogue de la retraite aux champs" is reflected in Montaigne's "De la solitude" as well as in Camus' *Elise*: "Agreables deserts, sejour de l'innocence, où loing des vanitez de la magnificence/ Commence mon repos, et finit mon tourment;/ Valons, fleuves, rochers, plaisante solitude,/ Soyez-le desormais de mon contentement" (Camus, *Elise*, 353). Like popular pastorals of the time, conventual fictions of 1600-1620 tend to be episodic, chronicling the wanderings in deserted places of voluntary and involuntary exiles from society.

Antoine de Nervèze (1570? - 1625?) was *secrétaire de la chambre* to Henri IV and an author of pastorals and religious poetry. His *L'Hermitage de l'Isle Saincte*, which was published in 1612 with the approbation of the Sorbonne [1] is liminal for religious writings of the turn of the century period. Through it, we see how Renaissance neo-Platonism and counter-Reformation zeal shaped the concept of sacred space at the beginning of the seventeenth century, establishing persistent patterns of thought and imagery. *L'Hermitage de l'Isle Saincte* is an illustrated allegorical work, divided into Meditations. Like Bunyan's better known *Pilgrim's Progress*, it shows the advances and backslidings of the soul as it navigates its way through the world. Its complex structure--the work contains not only narrative and illustrations but allegorical glosses on the illustrations--calls for a reading on sev-

eral levels. In the most immediate and literal sense, Nervèze enjoins the Christian to escape from the world (*le monde*) into a sacred refuge. Quoting the Gospel according to St. John, chapter 2, Nervèze characterizes the world as a place of sin, totally removed from God and given up to carnality: "N'aymez point le monde ny les choses qui sont au monde… car tout ce qui est au monde est la convoitise de la chair" (129). In this total dichotomy between world and God, the former is portrayed almost as a projection of the body, and described in the negative terms ascetics use for corporeal functions: "cette grande Babilone du monde n'est qu'un bourbier d'immondices." We are trapped in the body with the same fatality as we are trapped in sin: "Le corps n'est pas plus naturellement suivy de son ombre, que le peché l'est de son chastiment" (85). Thus, whoever remains in the world is determined physically to be lost spiritually. Nervèze prays: "ne me laissez pas esgarer dans ce labirinthe du monde" (36). From the perspective of the text, both Babylon and the labyrinth are pagan architectural constructions associated with sin and sensuality.

In this gloomy situation, the only hope of escape is to leave society for *le désert*. Using military imagery going back to the early desert fathers and reiterated by Saint Teresa (Carrion 263), Nervèze describes the desert retreat as a fortress against temptation:

> Et quels sont ces lieux? Les deserts et les solitudes ou l'on fait les retrenchements dedans et dehors pour fermer les advenuâs à l'ennemy dedans par la mortification de la volonté, dehors par l'esloignement des objets mondains.

At the same time, one goes into the desert for a more positive reason: to find God. Alluding to both the Old and New Testaments, Nervèze states:

> C'est en ses retraicts solitaires ou Dieu se comunique & converse avec les hommes: *Je t'ay cogneu au desert en la terre de solitude*. (124)

> Car c'est en ces demeures de solitude & de silence, ou les oracles du Ciel se font entendre, & non dans les bruits & foules populaires… Dieu ne s'est apparu à Moyse, qu'aux deserts, & aux montagnes. (285)

The text and its illustrations combine forest, mountain and island to create a privileged site of retreat. At the same time, this desert contains a variety of buildings which represent various steps along the spiritual journey. The frontispiece shows a pilgrim crossing a bridge to a rustic island hermitage. On a metaphorical level, the desert retreat also represents the convent in which, paradoxically, physical imprisonment brings spiritual liberation:

> Il est vray qu'en ceste condition captive il nous reste toujours le pouvoir de racheter nostre liberté comme font ces belles ames qui devotement honteuses de vivre en ceste captivité terrestre se mettent en franchise dans les sainctes prisons de Iesus Christ. (136)

Both the desert hermitage and the convent are *Isles Sainctes* where the soul can take refuge from the world. In the first case, one retreats into a space outside society; in the second, one locks oneself away from society, in a sacred counter-labyrinth which protects against *le labirinthe du monde.*

Finally, as the narration unfolds, evocations of a physical retreat to desert or convent gives way to a purely allegorical journey. In this evolution, the illustrations play an important role. Thus in Figure 1, we see the Soul entering with alacrity into a *palais*: a "modern" neo-classical style building which looks incongruous in its forest setting. The clouds hovering over the palace the roof line and divide the picture, like a medieval painting, into levels representing Earth and Heaven. This hierarchical vision is emphasized by the artist's use of space and proportion. More space is given to Heaven than to Earth; the palace is squeezed into a corner of the picture by the many crosses on the left (which the soul has refused to bear). In addition, Christ and the angel are drawn in a dispropor-

tionately large scale, overwhelming the smaller figure of the Soul below.

The next two illustrations display an identical image with different *explications* or glosses. In figure 2, the angel's right arm is pointing upward to Christ on the Cross, the rising path, or Heaven. At the same time, its right wing is projected protectively over the Soul. However, the Soul's posture, with arms raised and palms up, seems to resist this protection. According to the explication, the Soul is looking back at the *vanités du monde* represented by a portrait of a fashionably dressed woman. In the background, we see an austere, fortress-like building (in contrast to both the hermitage and the palace), with a suggestion of a further retreat sketched yet higher against the mountains.

The next illustration in *L'Hermitage* is a duplicate of figure 2, but this time the *explication* "reads" the *repentance* of the soul into its closeness to the cross: "L'Ame touchée de repentance s'approche de Jésus Christ" (194). The gloss further reinterprets the visual allegory by stating that the cherubic figure (*l'amour*) holding the frame is in fact *l'amour du monde*, and that the image is not a painting, but a reflection; "l'amour . . . luy veut faire voir comme dans un miroir les beautez humaines qu'elle a jadis aymees. .." (194).[2] Both the mirror and the female figure within it are representations of *concupiscence*, or attachment to the flesh.

In the following illustration (figure 3), the Soul is kneeling in front of the cross, showing further progress towards repentance and salvation. The building in the background is closer and more accessible. It is no longer the forbidding fortress of figure 2 but a small church or chapel with an open door. In front of the structure stands the *bon ange* awaiting the Soul's arrival. But the Soul's journey is not yet over: three cherubs, flitting about like flies in front of it, represent the senses which still attach the Soul to "ces folles amours du monde."

In figure 4, finally, Christ himself has descended to lead the Soul by the hand into retreat. The three cherubs of the previous illustration are shown drowning in a sea of penitent tears which

serves to separate the Soul from the world. This scene marks the closest *point de rencontre* between illustration and main text:

> [J]e vous propose une Isle que vous formerez pour vous & en vous mesme, vostre corps sera la terre, & vos pleurs les eaux qui l'environneront et couleront d'une vie repentante. (24)

Significantly, there are no buildings in this figure; in contrast to human habitations, the dwelling place of God is an open space:

> O mon Dieu et mon Createur… que mon Ange me montre dans un *espace*, orné & divinement embelly de vos hierarchies celestes. (190)

To summarize, Nervèze's allegory is both macrocosmic and microcosmic, expanding and contracting in vertiginous fashion like Pascal's infinite universe. On the one hand, the whole earth *(terre)*, as distinguished from the world (*monde*), is an *Isle saincte*, "un Hermitage aux esprits solitaires et contemplatifs" (444). On the other hand, the place of sanctuary is localized within the human body, which becomes a whole world unto itself. The narrator compares himself to Aeneas who, arriving on an island, nailed his arms to the door. "Ces armes, c'est la Croix, la porte c'est le coeur; ou les cloüant avec des cloux d'amour elles y demeureront eternellement" (445-6). Within the microcosmic earth/body, the heart becomes the sanctuary which Christ's arms (the Cross) identify as his own. In addition, the nails which pierce the heart as the crosses are nailed to it reproduce Christ's sufferings as his body was nailed to the cross. Finally, the crosses nailed to the door recall the medieval tradition of planting crosses outside the church door to indicate the limits of *clôture* (as was also the medieval custom at Fontrevraud). There is no attempt to illustrate this conceit; perhaps the result would have been too baroque! In a move which can be conceived of allegorically if not represented visually, the soul takes refuge within the heart, protected by its dedication to Christ, as the

religious take refuge behind convent walls. Paradoxically, in the end it is the body which offers the soul a retreat from the world.

The question then arises: whose body? *L'Isle saincte* is dedicated to a woman, Magdalene de Monteclair, who is directly apostrophized as "vous" in the text. In her honor (if the word is appropriate) the narrative contains a meditation on Mary Magdalen who cries an ocean of penitent tears (as illustrated in Figure 4.) It hardly seems flattering for Nervèze to compare his patroness to this personage; Mary Magdalen, fragile woman *par excellence*, represents human carnality in its most aggravated form. But she also was redeemed by Christ.

Like Mary Magdalene, the soul of the first-person narrator is both female and "une miserable pecheresse" (101). But unlike Magdalene de Monteclair, who is addressed formally as "vous", the Soul is addressed as "tu" and personified as a girl child towards whom the narrator assumes a protective, avuncular attitude: "Et me souvient qu'en un jardin sacré ou ie t'ay autresfois solitairement entretenuë, tu as apprins de moi plusieurs secrets de la vie contemplative" (94). The *jardin sacré* suggests both a real cloister garden and the *hortus conclusus* of the virgin body. It also evokes associations with the *mariage mistique* of female Soul and male Savior to which Nervèze alludes in the text (34-35).

On the point of gender, however, text and illustration are found to be in disharmony. While the narrator defines the Soul as allegorically (and not just grammatically) female, the drawings depict it as a naked, somewhat epicene, but clearly male being. The only female figure in the illustrations is the woman in the mirror, who plays the role of temptress and embodiment of concupiscence. The reason for this disparity is unclear; after all, from the Middle Ages on, allegorical illustrations had typically represented spiritual qualities as female (Woshinsky 151). Perhaps the illustrator of Nervèze's work, which was published under the authority of the Sorbonne, felt reluctant to give the Soul a nude female form.[3]

Whatever the reason, in *L'Hermitage de l'Isle Saincte* feminine attribution is only allowed to take place in the context of allegori-

cal narrative. within the strange, shifting and infinitely malleable discourse of allegory, it is possible for the (female) Soul to take refuge within a (male) body (the hermitage, the convent, the Church) which will protect its frailty and seal its purity with the arms of Christ. In Nervèze's particular "construction of femininity," the Soul can retain her femaleness as long as she is disembodied and invisible. But in the "real world" of the Catholic Reformation, is the body male or female, temple or temptation? The failure to resolve this issue helps set the scene for a somber, if not tortured, classical spirituality.

University of Miami

NOTES

[1] The first edition of *L'Hermitage de l'Isle Saincte* (chez Antoine du Brueil et Toussaincts du Bray, 1612) is in the Reserve of the Bibliothèque Nationale. The edition used in this article (Rouen: chez Nicolas Loselet, 1615) is in the collection of the Folger Library. References to *L'Hermitage* are drawn from the 1615 edition and will be indicated in the text by page number.

[2] The juxtaposition of classical/Renaissance and religious motifs in the illustrations reinforces the opposition between world and retreat, sin and salvation; for example, in figure 2, mythological Amour nearly brushes wings with Christian angel. To distinguish them, the Angel always wears a robe while the Cupids are represented nude and carrying bows and arrows.

[3] The illustrator of the 1612 edition was a certain Léonard Gaultier. I have not been able to consult this edition and do not know whether the illustrations are the same as in the 1615 Rouen edition for which the name of the illustrator is not given. Cf. Léonard Gotter, *Livres à figures édités en France de 1601 à 1660* (Paris:J.Duportal,1914) 156-160.

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L'éducation du noble dans le *Dictionnaire universel* d'Antoine Furetière

par
Sonia Gadhoum

Parler d'éducation au XVIIème siècle c'est parler de « *nourriture* ». *NOURRIR* : « *Eslever, instruire* » propose Furetière dans son *Dictionnaire universel.* Synonymique, la définition ne dit rien sur l'instruction même, mais dit tout lorsque le lexicographe l'introduit dans un contenu qui parle du monde : « *Il faut nourrir les enfants dans la crainte de Dieu, dans l'amour des Lettres et de la vertu* ». Il s'agit donc, de faire du futur adulte un « *homme de bien* », donc un bon chrétien, instruit et vertueux. Par la vertu, il s'agit de se conformer à une certaine norme sociale : *VERTU* : « *Disposition de l'âme ou habitude à faire le bien, à suivre ce qu'enseignent la loi et la raison* ». Dans la société d'ordres, cette conformité est dictée par la condition, le rang. Parler de l'éducation du noble c'est donc parler de sa condition, de ce qu'elle a de spécifique dans la construction d'un modèle de conduite propre.

Il s'agit de rechercher dans un premier temps les principes fondateurs de l'éducation du noble à travers la / les définition(s) que propose le *Dictionnaire* de la noblesse elle même, de relever ensuite les aspects pratiques de cette éducation et de confronter enfin théorie et pratique dans une société de fin de siècle que le *Dictionnaire,* dans un discours éminemment didactique, livre dans « tous ses états ».

I- Nature et éducation

La recherche d'indices permettant de relever les principes fondateurs d'une éducation exclusive au noble implique le passage en revue des termes clés désignant le noble même. *NOBLE* : « *Gentilhomme, celuy qui est eslevé au dessus des roturiers par sa naissance, par ses charges ou par la faveur du Prince* ». *GENTILHOMME* : « *Homme noble d'extraction qui ne doit sa noblesse, ni à sa charge, ni aux Lettres du Prince* ». Ainsi, la no-

blesse est définie comme étant une entité juridique ayant des formes multiples, mais se trouve également ramenée à une définition plus restreinte fondée sur le seul critère de la naissance. La confrontation des deux définitions à l'aide des catégories décrites par Alain Rey dans sa réflexion sur le travail lexicographique de Furetière, s'impose. Rey distingue deux grandes catégories : celle de l' « *être* » qui pourvoit les mots de ce qu'il appelle « *une identité essentielle* » comme dans les emplois techniques et fondamentaux ; celle du « *dire* » s'inscrit dans le langage que Furetière restitue « *comme tel lorsque l'homme discourt* », il peut concerner le « *discours quotidien de l'usage* » à travers des formules telles « *on dit* », « *il se dit* », ou bien « *le discours élaboré du savoir parfois dû à un sujet reconnu (les Anciens, les Poètes, les Anciens naturalistes etc.*) (Rey 88) . C'est dans les définitions principales, juridiques, fondamentales de *NOBLE* et de *GENTILHOMME* précédemment citées que nous croisons l' « être ». *NOBLE* (naissance, charge, faveurs du Prince confondues) se situe à l'intérieur d'une macro-structure (Noble s'oppose à Roturier) ; *GENTILHOMME* est dans un espace plus réduit (Gentilhomme-naissance s'oppose à Noble-charges et faveurs du Prince). Tous les deux sont en définitive la « Noblesse » qui se distingue de la « roture ». Cet « *être* » correspond donc à ce que nous pourrions appeler l' « ordre institutionnel », les choses telles qu'elles doivent être que Furetière, constamment effacé, ne fait que transcrire. Or, on lit à *NOBLE* : « *Noble, se dit aussi de ce qui appartient au Gentilhomme* ». Il s'agit ici de désigner à travers « *se dit de* » ce qui relève fondamentalement de la noblesse d'extraction et seulement de celle-ci, et par conséquent de pourvoir de sens dans et par l'emploi. En effet, c'est à un autre « *être* » noble que renvoie l'énoncé définitoire. Cet « *être* » se distingue de celui précédemment défini comme un état juridique ayant des formes variées : dans le « *dire* » de la société de l'époque il n'y a qu'une noblesse, celle du gentilhomme, celle de la naissance. Le fief et la profession des armes en sont les symboles intrinsèques : « *Un fief est noble par sa nature* » et « *la guerre est un mestier noble, la profession des nobles* » lit-on dans le sillage de la même définition. La confrontation de l' « *être* » et du « *dire* » dans ces définitions impose donc un constat : si dans la catégorie de l' « *être* », les diverses formes de noblesse, quoique distinctes, se valent (il n'y a

pas de principe affirmant la supériorité de l'une sur l'autre malgré leur présentation dans un certain ordre), il semble bien que dans celle du « *dire* » c'est la noblesse d'extraction qui émerge à l'exclusion des autres. Il en va de même pour les définitions proposées à *NOBLESSE*. On lit à l'entrée principale : « *qualité qui rend une chose noble* ». Commode sur le plan de l'écriture lexicographique par le biais du « vice » tautologique, la définition ne dit rien sur la noblesse même de cette « *chose noble* ». Pourtant, lorsque la noblesse « *se dit aussi des Gentilshommes particulièrement quand ils sont assemblez* », elle ne renvoie plus qu'à l'ensemble des gentilshommes et uniquement à ceux-ci. Ainsi, l'usage de part sa dimension collective, se trouve être le reflet d'un imaginaire, d'un système de représentation partagé qui consacre la noblesse dite de « *race* », qui fait d'elle la seule, la « *vraie* » noblesse digne d'une reconnaissance sociale suprême. L'on ne s'étonnera point alors de lire immédiatement après la définition principale de *NOBLE* ceci : « *Les vrais nobles sont les nobles de race, de sang, d'extraction* ». La noblesse se définit donc de deux manière : elle « *est* » juridiquement (ce sont les définitions principales de *NOBLE, GENTILHOMME, NOBLESSE*) elle correspond alors à un état propre fondé sur une grande distinction noblesse / roture ; elle « *est* » socialement sous une forme unique, la noblesse de race distincte de toutes les autres.

A *NAISSANCE,* apparaîssent parmi les différentes entrées, une définition et un exemple qui lui succède tout à fait attendus : *NAISSANCE* : « *signifie aussi noblesse* » et « *Cet homme a de la naissance, c'est à dire, il est noble* ». C'est plutôt à *NE* que l'information donnée impose que l'on s'y arrête : *NE* : « *part. pass. et adj. verb., il se joint quelquefois avec des épitètes : comme mort né, aveugle né, bien né, mal né pour expliquer de bonnes ou mauvaises inclinations* ». Les bonnes inclinations résultent donc d'une bonne naissance et les mauvaises d'une vile et basse naissance. Il s'installe alors, d'emblée, une dichotomie entre le bien né et le mal né, mais il n'y a pas plus de commentaires et l'information est donnée comme une vérité immuable que le lexicographe enregistre telle qu'elle. On continue à lire à *NE,* un emploi introduit par « *on dit aussi* » et marquant un effet de sens car le critère bien né / mal né cède la place à une idée plus générale : « *On dit aussi qu'un*

homme est né à quelque chose, pour dire qu'il y a de grandes dispositions naturelles à la bien faire ». Il y a là, l'idée qu'il existe en tout homme une sorte de penchant naturel avec lequel il naît, qui le pousse, l'oriente dans une certaine direction. *DISPOSITION :* « *se dit aussi du génie et de l'inclination* ». L'exemple qui suit est éclairant : « *Ce jeune homme a une grande disposition pour les armes, pour la danse, pour faire des vers* ». Enfin, *INCLINATION* ne dit pas autre chose : « *se dit figurément en choses spirituelles des affections de l'âme, et signifie alors une pente ou disposition naturelle à faire quelque chose* » . Ainsi, « *les uns ont de l'inclination aux armes, les autres à l'estude ; les uns à la vertu, les autres à la desbauche* ». Un homme peut donc aussi bien s'adonner à la vertu qu´à la débauche selon son « *inclination* », « *disposition naturelle* » qui, en l'occurrence, provient de la nature.

> *NATURE* : *se dit aussi d'une connoissance qui est née avec nous de ce qui est bon, ou mauvais, de ce qui nous sert, ou qui nous nuit, laquelle n'a point était desniée aux payens, ni même aux animaux, chez lesquels on l'appelle instinct* .

C'est dans sa relation avec l'idée de nature que se pose donc la question de l'éducation en général et du noble en particulier. Elle prend racine dans la distinction fondamentale entre le bien né et le mal né. Le premier jouit naturellement, à la naissance, d'avantages que le deuxième n'a pas. La nature le comble de « *dons* » : « *On appelle aussi dons de nature ceux qui viennent de la naissance, comme l'esprit, la force, la beauté ; et en ce sens on les oppose à ceux de la fortune* ». Une « *mauvaise* » naissance n'offre que « *vices* » et « *défauts* » (*NAISSANCE* : « *se prend aussi en mauvaise part pour marquer les défauts de l'extraction, de l'origine, des vices, des père et mère ou de la nature* »). Pourvu de qualités morales, physiques et esthétiques, le bien né est disposé à cultiver cette bonne « *nature* », il est armé d'avance pour bâtir une conduite qui devrait être vertueuse. En principe, le bien né ne doit pas aller contre sa nature et entreprendre de mauvaises actions. On lit à *NAISSANCE* : « *il ne faut rien faire indigne de sa naissance, qui déroge à sa naissance, qui démente sa naissance* ». L'idée que la naissance bienfaitrice pousse vers de nobles actions se trouve

exprimée dans la phraséologie. *SANG :* « *on dit aussi que bon sang ne peut mentir pour dire qu'on a de la peine à faire des actions indignes de sa naissance* ».

Comment empêcher le noble de s'écarter du chemin qu'il est naturellement destiné à suivre sinon par l'éducation. Une fois de plus, les phrases proverbiales sont tout à fait édifiantes. *NATURE* : « *On dit aussi que l'accoustumance est une autre nature ; que nourriture passe nature, pour dire que l'éducation change le naturel de l'homme* ». On lit à *NOURRITURE :* « *on dit proverbialement [...] que nourriture passe nature pour dire qu'une bonne éducation peut corriger les mauvaises inclinations naturelles* ». L'éducation a donc un impact indéniable sur la conduite de l'homme quel qu'il soit. Dans le cas du bien né elle épouse, cultive la nature en ce qu'elle a de bon, mais elle la corrige aussi en ce qu'elle a de mauvais. Venant de l'homme, l'éducation est une entreprise qui peut donc être bonne ou mauvaise, dans les deux cas elle est liée aux parents. Un emploi proverbial exprime cette idée :

> *RACE* : *on dit proverbialement que bon chien chasse de race : ce qui se dit figurément de l'homme. Cette fille chasse de race, elle est galante*[1] *comme l'a été sa mère. Ce garçon chasse de race, il est avare et usurier comme son père* .

Il est remarquable que le discours sur l'éducation en général et du noble en particulier, soit présent à travers les emplois proverbiaux. Relevant du « *dire* », les emplois proposent une définition sociale de l'éducation qui restitue une vision partagée, ancrée dans le principe de la distinction par la naissance. Ainsi, bien qu'avantagé par sa naissance qui le porte naturellement vers de nobles actions, le bien né a besoin d'une bonne éducation qui lui permet de maintenir sa qualité spécifique. Reste à savoir quel type d'éducation lui donner.

II- De la théorie à la pratique

Les entrées consacrées à l'éducation abondent dans le *Dictionnaire* : on y perçoit un monde particulier avec ses institutions, petites et grandes (petites écoles, collèges, universités) quasiment toutes décrites à travers une histoire, une hiérarchie et une pédagogie propres. « *Professeurs* », « *Régents* », « *Maistres* » et « *sous-maistres* », quelquefois savants et ayant de l'esprit, souvent pédants, ont sous leur houlette de jeunes adultes, des adolescents, des enfants studieux, quelquefois « *frippons* ». En tant que pratique institutionnelle, l'éducation est profondément nourrie d' « *Humanités* » (grammaire, rhétorique, poétique) et de philosophie (logique, physique, métaphysique et morale) elle allie donc la « *Science* » (« *Connaissance des choses* ») à la « *Morale* » (« *doctrine des moeurs, science qui enseigne à conduire sa vie, ses actions* »). Il s'agit, en effet, de « *cultiver l'esprit, instruire les jeunes gens aux sciences, aux arts et aux bonnes moeurs* » (Furetière *ESLEVER*), de les nourrir « *dans la crainte de Dieu, dans l'amour des lettres et de la vertu* » (F. *NOURRIR*).

Dans le foisonnant champ lexical de l'éducation, le noble en tant que tel apparaît peu, mais ses apparitions traduisent bien la spécificité de son statut. Lorsqu'il fréquente le collège, il est autrement désigné que ses camarades. Le langage de la distinction puise, en effet, dans un emploi ancien qui, transposé au présent, sert aussi bien à désigner qu'à valoriser l'origine noble :

> *INGENU* : *Chez les Romains signifiait, celuy qui était né de parents libres ; et au collège on emprunte cette phrase quand on donne des images signées aux escoliers, à qui on donne la qualité d'ingénus, pour dire qu'ils sont nez d'honneste famille* .

Ces images ont une utilité particulière :

> *IMAGE* : *On donne des images aux enfants qui ont bien dit leur Catéchisme, des images signées aux escoliers, lesquelles leur sauvent le fouet quand ils l'ont mérité.*

Les uns reçoivent donc une récompense pour un travail bien fait, les autres en bénéficient aussi, mais pour les dissuader de faire de mauvaises actions. Le traitement n'est pas le même. Les inclinations du bien né sont naturellement bonnes, l'image est une sorte de miroir qui le lui rappelle constamment : un « *ingénu* » ne doit faire que de bonnes actions.

Une éducation accomplie, c'est une éducation qui allie le savoir, transmis par l'enseignement des « *sciences* » et des « *arts* », à l'honnêteté dans sa conception morale, chrétienne imposant un modèle de conduite conforme aux bonnes moeurs. Port-Royal est un modèle du genre : « *Il ne faut pas s'étonner si ce Seigneur est sçavant et honneste homme, c'est un élève de Port-Royal* » (F. *ELEVE*).

La fréquentation du collège n'apparaît pas comme l'unique moyen de formation du jeune noble, le préceptorat qui a lieu dans l'enceinte familiale est recommandé, voire même préféré : « *Il vaut mieux faire étudier les enfants de qualité à la maison que de les envoyer en classe* ». Ainsi, le modèle de formation traditionnel par le biais du précepteur est toujours en vigueur et Furetière l'enregistre tel quel : « *Les Grands Seigneurs donnent à leurs enfants des Gouverneurs et des Précepteurs* ». Mais il note aussitôt l'imitation bourgeoise de ce modèle noble qui apparaît comme un fait social admis qui se veut distinct dans et par le langage : « *Les Bourgeois leur donnent* (aux enfants) *des Répétiteurs et des gens qui les conduisent au Collège, qu'ils appellent précepteurs* ».

Etre « *page* » au service d'un grand seigneur et profiter en échange d'une éducation de gentilhomme renvoie également à la tradition :

> *Enfant d'honneur qu'on met auprès des Princes et des Grands seigneurs pour les servir avec leurs livrées, et en même temps y avoir une honneste éducation et y apprendre leurs exercices.*

L'apprentissage de la civilité, de l' « *honnesteté* » se double donc de la pratique des « *exercices* ». Ceux-ci s'appuient sur la culture du corps et le maniement des armes :

> *Exercices, au pluriel, se dit particulièrement de ce qui s'apprend dans les Académies d'Escuyers, aux Gentilshommes, à monter à cheval, à danser, à faire des armes, à voltiger, tracer des fortifications etc.*

Il y a donc dans l'éducation traditionnelle du noble deux versants : les arts de la cour et les arts de la guerre se rencontrent pour faire du gentilhomme un être civil, poli en même temps qu'un homme de guerre.

Haut lieu de l'instruction du gentilhomme, l'académie apparaît à travers divers exemples. *ACADEMIE* : « *se dit aussi des maisons des Escuyers où la Noblesse apprend à monter à cheval, et les autres exercices qui lui conviennent* ». Cet énoncé définitoire est suivi de deux exemples qui constituent un témoignage direct de grande importance car ils renseignent sur les pratiques éducatives de l'époque ainsi que leur histoire. Si le noble a souvent un précepteur, il va aussi au collège. La combinaison collège-académie était une pratique courante : « *Au sortir du Collège, on a mis ce Gentilhomme à l'académie* »[2]. Le deuxième exemple renvoie aux toutes premières académies fondées en France par Pluvinel : « *Guy Allar dit que Pluvinel est le premier qui a étably en France des Académies pour apprendre à monter à cheval. Il était du Dauphiné* ».[3]

L'académie est le véritable « *temple du cheval* », les entrées consacrées à l'animal et indirectement aux termes de manège offrent une description riche en détails pratiques et en vocabulaire spécifique. En somme, un précieux témoignage sur l'art équestre.[4]

Cultiver le corps par le maniement du cheval et de l'épée, il n' y a rien là de surprenant en définitive. « *Un Gentilhomme est naturellement un homme d'espée, il est né pour porter l'espée : et est opposé en ce sens à la robe* » (F. *ESPEE*) ; « *la guerre est un mestier noble, la profession des Nobles* » (F. *NOBLE*). Le métier des armes se confond avec la condition de gentilhomme et cela per-

sonne ne le conteste au moment où Furetière écrit même si de nombreux roturiers, aisés et modestes confondus, choisissent la voie militaire. A défaut d'anoblir (sauf décision exceptionnelle du roi pour services rendus), l'épée ennoblit. Pour certains, la caution des armes est recherchée à un moment donné lorsqu'on a choisi d'autres voies que militaires pour s'élever. A cela, le *Dictionnaire* fait écho à *MESTIER* : « *La profession des armes est le mestier d'un Gentilhomme* », mais Furetière ajoute aussitôt que « *c'est le mestier des honnestes gens* ». Or, qualifier d' « *honnestes gens* » ceux qui, comme les gentilshommes, pratiquent le métier des armes est en fait un détournement de l'usage traditionnel de l'honnêteté, concept civil par excellence, au profit d'un autre concept, militaire en l'occurrence, qui se trouve alors pourvu d'une qualité d'ordre moral, valorisante, ennoblissante. La notion d'honnêteté participe ici d'une conception dans laquelle le métier des armes, métier du noble authentique (le gentilhomme) devient pour tous les autres une caution nécessaire à la reconnaissance sociale, cette noblesse authentique étant dans le fond inaccessible. Il va sans dire que l'exercice des armes se rattache naturellement au service du roi, c'est un devoir du gentilhomme : « *La Noblesse* (ensemble des gentilshommes) *est tenue de marcher quand on publie le ban et l'arrière-ban* » (F. *NOBLESSE*).

Tout en décrivant les pratiques éducatives exclusives au noble, le *Dictionnaire* en montre aussi les failles. Un long article est consacré à « *Page* », Furetière y donne une définition sans commentaire qui correspond à l'emploi fondamental du terme : « *Enfant d'honneur qu'on met auprès des Princes et des Grands Seigneurs...* ». Suit un passage en revue des pages du roi selon leurs tâches (la Chambre, la grande et la petite écurie, la musique) une description vestimentaire importante distinguant les pages des autres gens de livrée et enfin l'étymologie à travers laquelle apparaît l'histoire de l'institution selon des autorités différentes pour lesquelles Furetière, comme à l'accoutumée, ne prend pas partie. Introduite par « *on dit* », une nouvelle « séquence » commence alors, elle ne dit plus ce qui « *est* » mais renvoie aux désignations dans le langage du terme « *Page* » : « *On dit aussi d'un impudent, qu'il est effronté comme un Page de Cour* ». La désignation se trouve étendue à d'autres termes : « *On dit encore un tour de Page,*

d'une malice ou fripponnerie que font les jeunes gens, soit Pages, Laquais, Escoliers etc ». D'autres exemples font écho à ceux-ci à *FRIPPER*, *FRIPPON*, *FRIPPONNER*, *FRIPPONNERIE* mais avec une plus grande fréquence d'évocation des laquais et écoliers. On lit cependant à *FRIPPON* : « *Les pages, les laquais sont souvent frippons* ». Sans commentaire, aucun, le lexicographe enregistre donc à travers des usages établis, ce qui semble se perpétuer d'une éducation traditionnelle toujours en vigueur. Un siècle plutôt, François de La Noue décrivait les méfaits de cette éducation : « *les enfants se rendent dissolus en paroles, incontinents des effets, jureurs de Dieu et surtout moqueurs et injurieux et pour la fin très experts à mentir et faire milles tromperies* » (Chartier 169). Il incite alors les pères qui le peuvent de « *revoir leurs enfants quelquefois pour juger de la corruption et de l'amendement et selon l'un ou l'autre, les retirer ou les continuer* » (Ch. 169).

La littérature s'est emparée de ce page « *fripon* » à des degrés divers et à des fins diverses. Un exemple bien connu, *Le Page disgracié* de Tristan L'Hermite, dans lequel toute la première partie qui décrit l'enfance du petit page, abonde en exemples de tours malicieux que le personnage joue à son précepteur et aux autres pages. Le récit de ces aventures est un élément essentiel dans la structure narrative du roman construit comme un voyage initiatique: du monde de l'enfance, le personnage passe peu à peu à l'âge adulte, de l'innocence, de l'insouciance, à la réalité, au drame. Lorsqu'il quitte, obligé, la cour de son jeune seigneur et devient le centre des événements, l'histoire *comique* commence véritablement.

Avoir un précepteur et / ou aller au collège, combiner collège et académie, cela renvoie donc à l'institution. C'est dans la vie en société que le noble devra avoir une conduite spécifique : « *un vray Gentilhomme ne doit point manquer de parole, ne doit faire que des actions d'honneur* » (F. *GENTILHOMME*). « *On impose la taille à ceux qui n'ont pas vécu noblement, qui ont dérogé, qui ont fait quelque trafic* » (F. *NOBLEMENT*). Le refus de toute activité manuelle à but lucratif provient de l'opposition établie, admise par tous entre les « *Arts méchaniques* » et les « *Arts libéraux* ». Les premiers sont considérés comme étant serviles alors que les se-

conds, par la recherche intellectuelle qu'ils nécessitent permettent l'élévation et l'épanouissement de l'esprit. Dans une entrée aussi anodine que AU *DESSOUS*, on lit cette affirmation : « *Les arts méchaniques sont au dessous d'un Gentilhomme, sont indignes de luy* ». La distinction puise son fondement dans l'origine des mots. A *MESCHANT*, Furetière s'interroge sur l'étymologie du terme, il en donne deux sans trancher, la deuxième dit ceci : « *D'autres le dérivent de mechanicus parce que les gens pauvres et méchaniques sont sujets à estre meschants* ». Ajoutons, par ailleurs, que si le terme « *travail* » pouvait aussi bien désigner des activités physiques que spirituelles, les « *gens de travail* » sont définis comme les « *gens qui sont nez pour porter ou remuer des fardeaux, labourer la terre* etc. » (F. *TRAVAIL*).

Le métier de verrier est bien entendu l'exception notable (« *La profession de Verrier est Noble, les verriers ont eu le privilège de ne point déroger* »). Si le droit à l'activité de verrier est exposé sans une quelconque référence événementielle ou temporelle relative à sa mise en application, le droit du gentilhomme de « *faire toute sorte de trafic sur mer, pourvu qu'il ne vende point en détail* » est quant à lui justifié par « *la dernière Ordonnance de la Marine* » (F. *GENTILHOMME*). Le commerce de mer pose pourtant un problème que le lexicographe, fidèle à sa vocation de didacticien détaché, ne signale pas. L'histoire a révélé, en effet, que les ordonnances royales destinées à inciter la noblesse à pratiquer ce commerce tout en l'exemptant de déroger, étaient nombreuses, mais qu'en même temps, la noblesse plutôt fière s'attachait obstinément à préserver son statut social et refusait donc de s'engager dans le négoce craignant d'être assimilée à la bourgeoisie commerçante et entachée ainsi de roture[5]. Le langage restitue clairement le mépris pour le gain : « *On dit proverbialement, faire troc de Gentilhomme pour dire troquer but à but sans retirer d'argent* » (F. *GENTILHOMME*). Le gentilhomme doit haïr l'avarice qui est une « *tare* » : « *L'avarice est une vilaine tare, un grand défaut à un Gentilhomme* » (F. *TARE*). Sa générosité doit être à la hauteur de sa condition, il s'agit de tenir son rang et cela doit être visible : « *Ce Seigneur marche à grand train, il a carrosse, chevaux, mulets, pages, laquais etc.* » (F. *TRAIN*). « *Recevoir* » relève de l'honnêteté (« *Un honneste homme reçoit fort bien ses amis, il leur*

fait bonne chère »). Cet art de recevoir peut atteindre parfois des sommets de raffinement, d'élégance et de magnificence: « *Les Grands Seigneurs de la Cour se sont régalés pendant ce Carnaval, ils se sont donnez tour à tour des festins, des bals et des Comédies* » (F. *REGALE*).

Accomplir une vie noble, c'est aussi « *ne faire que des actions d'honneur* ». *HONNEUR*, « *Témoignage d'estime ou de soumission qu'on rend à quelqu'un par ses paroles ou par ses actions* ». Le travail sur le mot, ses « *différences* », « *gradations* » et ses écarts, termes propres au lexicographe, introduit à travers les entrées restantes une nouvelle acception : « *Honneur, se dit en général de l'estime qui est due à la vertu et au mérite* ». L'estime est ainsi le résultat d'actions vertueuses qui font que l'on est estimé par autrui, l'accent est donc mis ici sur la personne estimée et non sur celle qui estime. Un emploi particulier renvoie à la noblesse : « *Honneur, s'applique plus particulièrement à deux sortes de vertus, à la vaillance pour les hommes, et à la chasteté pour les femmes* ». La vaillance des hommes est évoquée à travers divers exemples : « *Les Gentilshommes sont plus courageux que les autres* » (F. *COURAGEUX*) ; « *On dit d'un brave homme qu'il a fait une action digne de luy, digne de sa naissance* » (F. *DIGNE*) *;* « *Pagnote, Poltron, lâche, peu hardy. Un Gentilhomme pagnote est fort méprisable...* » (F. *PAGNOTE*).

L'honneur c'est, par ailleurs, la « *réputation* », le « *bruit* », la « *gloire* » :

> *C'est un homme avide d'honneur, jaloux de son honneur. Au contraire on dit c'est un saoul d'honneur, un perdu d'honneur, qui n'a eu aucun soin de sa réputation* ». « *On dit aussi, cet homme a l'honneur de sa maison à soutenir, la gloire de ses ancestres* .

Assurer la gloire du lignage, son renom, cela prend dans le cas du gentilhomme un sens tout à fait particulier : marcher sur les pas des ancêtres signifie d'abord préserver sa race, la perpétuer aux moyens d'alliances adéquates. En effet, l'angoisse de la souillure

par la mésalliance est fortement présente, le langage en restitue sensiblement le poids :

> '*Un noble qui se mésallie, qui épouse une courtisane, fait déshonneur à sa race*' ; '*Un noble qui s'est mésallié recule beaucoup ses enfants des Prélatures et dignités ou il faut faire preuve de Noblesse*' ; '*On dit aussi pour vanter une ancienne Noblesse qui ne s'est point mésalliée qu'il n'est point entré de sang impur dans cette maison*' ; '*Cette maison est bien noble, elle s'est alliée plusieurs fois avec des Princes, elle ne s'est jamais mésalliée...*'

Souiller sa race d'un « *sang impur* » signifie rompre la chaîne héréditaire qui permet la transmission des aptitudes, des qualités spécifiques qui font le noble, qui le prédisposent aux actions vertueuses. Ne pas se mésallier revient à dire, en définitive, conserver sa noblesse même.

III- Education et réalité sociale

Malgré son éducation, le noble se mésallie. C'est un fait que le *Dictionnaire* enregistre : « *La Noblesse s'avilit par des alliances indignes* » (F. *AVILIR*) ; « *Cette dame s'est bien oubliée de faire une si basse alliance, elle a bien oublié ce qu'elle estoit* » lit-on dans un emploi particulier donné à oublier (« *signifie encore, manquer à ce qu'on doit à soi ou à autruy* »). Si le noble se mésallie c'est parce qu'il est essentiellement pauvre : « *Cette maison noble est pauvre et dépourvue des choses nécessaires à la vie* » (F. *DEPOURVOIR*). Les proverbes témoignent de la gueuserie des nobles : on dit d' « *un homme* » qui « *n'a que l'épée et la Cape [...] qu'il n'a rien vaillant, qu'il n'a aucune fortune établie...* » ; « *une noblesse qui n'a que l'épée et la cape* » (F. *CAPE*). C'est le « *Hobereau* » qui est particulièrement pauvre, le terme désigne « *figurément et ironiquement des petits nobles de campagne qui n'ont point de bien, et qui vont manger les autre*s... ». La pauvreté se double donc ici de l'ignorance. Le noble de campagne est également traité de « *Gentilhomme à lièvre* » qui est un « *pauvre*

Gentilhomme qui vit à la campagne du gibier qu'il prend » (F. *GENTILHOMME*) car la chasse reste sa principale ressource : « *Ce petit hobereau vit de chasse* » (F. *CHASSE*). Mais s'il est une expression qui résume bien la détresse du noble c'est bien celle que Furetière donne à « *Beauce* », entrée a priori surprenante pour un dictionnaire de langue, mais le lexicographe justifie ainsi de sa présence :

> *Ce mot est venu en usage dans la langue en ces proverbes. C'est un Gentilhomme, de Beauce qui se tient au lit quand on refait ses chausses, pour marquer que la noblesse de ce pays est fort pauvre... .*

A *CHAUSSES*, l'emploi proverbial s'étend désormais à toute la noblesse : « *On dit pour se moquer de la pauvre noblesse, c'est un Gentilhomme de Beauce, qui se tient au lit quand on raccoustre ses chausses* ».

Outre la pauvreté, le *Dictionnaire* donne à voir un noble violent, voire tyrannique. Parfois justifiée, cette violence est inhérente au caractère noble : *BASTON,* « *est aussi une arme naturelle offensive et défensive, quand on se bat seulement à coups de mains* ». Le gentilhomme conçoit cette méthode d'une manière particulière : « *C'est un affront irréparable à un Gentilhomme de recevoir des coups de baston* ». La violence est quasiment ritualisée. Généralement suivi d'un « *démenti* » (« *Reproche qu'on fait à quelqu'un d'avoir parlé faussement, avec cette formule injurieuse, vous en avez menti* »), le « *soufflet est un des plus grands affronts qu'on puisse faire à un Gentilhomme* ». En effet, « *Un gentilhomme a bien de la peine à ne se ressentir pas d'un soufflet qu'il a receu, à le pardonner* ». Mais s'il est une violence exacerbée, pratiquée à l'envi c'est bien celle des duels pourtant interdite par plusieurs édits : « *Le Roy a fait des édits si sévères contre les duels, qu'ils sont entièrement abolis* » (F. *DUEL*). L'exactitude historique de l'information est indéniable, mais surtout, c'est par la violence des mots que Furetière choisit de traduire la violence des nobles : « *La fureur des duels a fait périr la fleur de la noblesse* » lit-on à « *Duel* ». Et à « *Misérable* » : « *Pour un misérable honneur ou s'égorge* ».

L' « *honneur* » renvoie ici au « *point d'honneur* » devenu un véritable culte :

> *Les braves sont délicats sur le point d'honneur, vont mourir au lit d'honneur à la guerre. Ils prennent au point d'honneur les moindres reproches, ils se piquent d'honneur pour combattre au premier rang...*

Qualifier l'honneur noble de « *misérable* » ce n'est pas aller à l'encontre d'une conception établie qui incite le noble à suivre l'exemple de ses ancêtres, à les surpasser mais c'est condamner la pratique du point d'honneur dans ce qu'elle a de plus horrible, de suicidaire pour la noblesse elle même et pour la société entière dans laquelle les valeurs nobles doivent demeurer les garantes d'un modèle auquel tout le monde aspire.

La violence du noble se manifeste aussi envers ceux qui ne sont pas de sa caste. Les nobles de province sont les premiers désignés. On lit à *PROVINCE* : « *Les nobles de Province sont de petits tyrans* », notoriété qui demeurera jusqu'à la Révolution. A *NOBLE* : « *les paysans sont toujours ennemis des Nobles et surtout des Nobles de campagne* ». Ces nobles sont par ailleurs usurpateurs de titres : « *Les Nobles de Provinces jouissent de plusieurs droits sans titres dont ils sont usurpateurs* » (F. *USURPATEUR*). Ils ont été, d'ailleurs, la cible des campagnes successives de recherche de faux nobles : « *On fait de temps en temps la recherche des faux Nobles* ». La violence du noble campagnard s'accompagne d'un manque notoire d'instruction, il est systématiquement traité de paysan, l'être qui accumule toutes les tares : la grossièreté, l'ignorance, la saleté et l'incivilité ; « *Ce Noble de campagne est encore un vrai païsan* » lit-on à *PAISAN*. « *Les Nobles qui demeurent à la campagne sont traitez de campagnards* » (F. *DEMEURER*). Mais si l'ignorance du noble campagnard est une constante, le noble citadin, notamment le noble de cour est quasiment épargné. Il y a bien des nobles fainéants : on lit à *NOUVELLISTE* : « *les Nobles ruinez et fainéants sont d'ordinaire nouvellistes ou généalogistes* ». Un clin d'oeil ironique du juriste renvoie au zèle dont certains font preuve dans la « fabrication » de nouveaux nobles : « *Les généalo-*

gistes ont fait plus de nobles que le Roy ». La rareté des exemples évoquant l'ignorante noblesse citadine, notamment de cour traduit, une fois de plus, une réalité historique et témoigne d'une véritable évolution. Il est loin le temps où la noblesse hermétique au savoir et à la connaissance s'attachant à ses valeurs guerrières ancestrales, était constamment traitée d'ignorante. Souvent citée, l'*Histoire comique de Francion* de Charles Sorel est une oeuvre du début du siècle qui dresse le portrait de cette noblesse ignorante. Le héros de Sorel devient ami d'un seigneur de la cour à qui il va apprendre :

> *à discourir en compagnie, sur toutes sortes de subjets, bien d'une autre façon que ne font la plus part de ceux de la Cour, qui tiennent des propos sans ordre, sans engagement, et sans politesse...* (Sorel 251).

Dans la deuxième édition (1626) Sorel décrit l'accueil que réservent les courtisans à Francion lourdement chargé de papiers contenant les vers qu'il avait composés pour le ballet royal : « *Les sciences leur estoient si fort en horreur qu'ils avoient mal au coeur quand ils avoient seulement un papier, et en tiroient le sujet de leurs moqueries* » (Cha. 179). Dans le *Dictionnaire* « *La cour est une bonne escole où on apprend à vivre dans le grand monde* » (F. *ESCOLE*). Haut lieu de l'apprentissage de la civilité, la cour « *dépaïse* » : « *On est pas un an à la cour, qu'on y est bien dépaïsé, qu'on y a pris un autre air de vivre et de parler* » (F. *DEPAISER*). Quant au courtisan, il est à la fois « *sage* », « *habile* » et « *rusé* ». Il intrigue beaucoup : « *Il s'est fait de grandes intrigues à la cour pour destruire ce favori, pour en mettre un autre en sa pla*ce » (F. *INTRIGUE*). Les courtisans ne sont donc pas des hommes libres puisqu'ils peuvent être « *le jouet de la fortune* » (F. *FORTUNE*). Poussés par l'ambition, ils vivent « *dans un vray esclavage* » (F. *ESCLAVAGE*), ils « *ne doivent pas dire tout ce qu'ils pensent* » (F. *COURTISAN*). L'art de la dissimulation, la théâtralisation des attitudes sont restitués une fois de plus à travers le « *dire* » : « *On appelle des visages fardez, des visages qui se démontent, ceux des Courtisans qui cachent leurs sentiments, qui changent de discours suivant leurs différents intérêts* » (F. *VISAGE*). Divers exemples burlesques apparaîssent à *PIED* (comme « *faire le pied*

de grue ») qui fixent le courtisan par la gestuelle et le rituel des salutations dans un statut d' « *esclave* ». Le portrait qu'offre le *Dictionnaire* du noble de cour évoque donc bien autre chose que le manque d'instruction. L'état moderne s'affirme peu à peu et c'est d'une noblesse instruite mais soumise dont il a besoin.

Conclusion

Répondre à la question « qu'est-ce que l'éducation du noble? » c'est tout d'abord ramener celle-ci aux origines même de la noblesse. Multiple en tant que concept juridique, la noblesse apparaît sous une forme unique dans la société, c'est la noblesse de race, d'extraction. A partir du concept du déterminisme héréditaire, celle-ci invente une idéologie de la distinction entre le bien né et le mal né fondée sur l'inégalité naturelle. Personne ne conteste la supériorité de la « bonne » naissance sur la « mauvaise » et les pratiques éducatives cultivent ce modèle de pensée : les maîtres se doivent de rappeler à leurs élèves nobles qu'ils ne peuvent et ne doivent faire, par principe, que de bonnes actions. Pourtant, le *Dictionnaire* montre un processus majeur en cours de réalisation : tout en conservant un modèle de formation traditionnel (préceptorat, service d'un prince, mais aussi la fréquentation des académies qui exaltent les valeurs nobles) la noblesse entre peu à peu dans la modernité par la fréquentation des collèges et semble saisir l'enjeu que soulève l'instruction dans une société qui reconnaît désormais à son élite moins bien née, le talent et le mérite.

Université de Provence, Aix-Marseille

NOTES

[1] « *Une femme galante, qui sçait vivre, qui sçait bien choisir et recevoir son monde* » dit Furetière, mais il prévient un peu plus loin : « [...] *quand on dit c'est une galante, on entend toujours une Courtisane* ».

[2] « *les nobles n'ont longtemps utilisé le collège que partiellement, le combinant avec préceptorat et apprentissage pratique* » (Bluche

350). Une évolution s'effectue lorsque peu à peu « *combinant collège et académie, le modèle aristocratique de pensionnat d'élites […] fort rare vers 1680 va se généraliser tout en se démocratisant, souvent sous forme de pensions privées de niveaux fort variés, parfois très modestes* » (B. 350).

[3] Richelieu qui lui même avait fréquenté l'académie de Pluvinel s'est érigé tel un La Noue ou un Du Souhait, en véritable théoricien de l'éducation nobiliaire. Penser un modèle de formation qui unit « *dans un même établissement collège et académie, en articulant harmonieusement humanités et exercices* » était un « *projet original* », mais celui-ci « *ne prendra forme qu'un siècle plus tard avec la création des écoles militaires* » (Chartier 183 184 185).

[4] Pierre Serna compte 881 entrées consacrées au cheval contre 122 au noble et se demande si Furetière n'est pas « *fondamentalement plus intéressé par le cheval* » ! (Serna 231).

[5] Contrairement à la noblesse anglaise, « *une noblesse commerçante* » n'a pu voir le jour. Pourtant, « *la noblesse la plus ancienne participe aux opérations maritimes. Ainsi, l'on voit le père de Chateaubriand se faire armateur et même négrier ; il n'est pas le seul. La grande noblesse ne dédaigne pas de placer ses capitaux sur mer et aux Iles : elle employait simplement des hommes de paille ou des prête-nom...* » (Goubert 181).

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Frisquemore: A Northern Passage to Literary Creation

by
Andy Wallis

Charles Sorel's *Relation de ce qui s'est passé au Royaume de Frisquemore* constitutes one of the more obscure pieces of the Sorel anthology. Perhaps this is not surprising since it does not fall easily into any category of writing normally associated with him. Though it contains elements often linked with history, satire, pastiche or allegory, *Frisquemore's* connections to these genres are often fleeting and offer little reward to those who wish to understand its origins or its motivations at the generic level. It differs from *Description de l'isle de Portraicture* or the *Relation de ce qui s'est passé au Royaume de Sophie,* since it does not overtly take over—or take on—any one literary model.[1] Given this unspecific nature, and the fact that *Frisquemore* is little known today, the first part of this paper will briefly outline the work's narrative while weighing it against other comparable texts to account for the presence (or absence) of intertextual links or secondary codes that will aid in better defining what I believe is another one of Sorel's forays into nonconformist literary forms. The second part of this paper will discuss what this text may mean. Observing what is absent from the text, what it is "lacking," seeing it "en creux" are operative terms because the map of Frisquemore is in many ways a map whose surface seems perfectly smooth at first glance and when viewed directly face-on. However, seen from a slight angle, indentations and bumps suddenly appear that bring the map and/or text literally *into* perspective. They move the two-dimensional cartographic world into the three-dimensional and serve as reminders of its representational status, and it does so much in the same way intertexts recall a written work's textual dependence, its layered origins. Understanding Frisquemore *en creux*, therefore, is not necessarily recognizing the precise generic parentage of the work, or knowing where exactly to trace the work's origins, it is understanding that the work must necessarily contain traces or umbilical scars of its creation, a photographic negative, that it is not a work *sui generis* or, as Sorel wrote, "une nouvelle découverte.[2]

At the heart of the entire book (map, narration, prefacial material) that is Sorel's *Relation de ce qui s'est passé au Royaume de Frisquemore* (1662), lies the narration of the voyage to Frisquemore and the description of its lands. It tells the story of Lozières and Courtais, two captains trying to make their way from St.-Malo to the Indies by a northerly route. We get no information of their trip, nor of the exact course they take. And, as the title of the work suggests, the captains never make it to their intended destination, but they do discover the lush kingdom named Frisquemore. Not only is Frisquemore abundant in fruit, vegetables and all sorts of game, it is, as Lozières and Courtais find out, inhabited by a generous and gentle people. As if this were not fortuitous enough, Lozières and Courtais also happen upon an interpreter, a man forced to flee Moscow who, during his northerly flight, found and stayed in Frisquemore. Thanks to *truchement*, the captains and the reader learn a few facts, but not much more, about Frisquemore: it is Christian, has a king, a court and many of the same institutions found in France. These details are mostly mentioned matter-of-factly in the manner of a rather blasé report, and *Frisquemore* in that sense is very much a relation, a report or report-like structure that shies away from exaggeration and a signals its aim to be taken seriously. Such even-handedness even shows through it the relation's moment of suspense. It comes towards the end of the narrative section when the king of Frisquemore announces he has a secret to communicate to the two captains. Sorel begins by building up the episode:

> [Lozières et Courtais] remarquerent en passant par la Salle des Gardes & les Antichambres, ce qu'a de coûtume de produire à la Cour, l'ombre d'une faueur naissante, ayans pensé estre estouffez par les embrassemens & caresses des Courtisans, qu'ils eurent à leur rencontre ; desquels s'estans enfin démeslez auec assez de peine, il paruinrent jusquà la porte de la Chambre du Roy, dans laquelles ils furent introduits par le premier Gentilhomme, & presentez à sa Majesté de nouveau, qui leur fit un accueil tout plein de bonté, & les fit passer avec lui

> dans un Cabinet, où il ne voulut admettre avec eux que *Simeboisky, Nainroziers, & trois ou quatre plus considerables de la Cour, & où ils trouuernet*
> Le Chancelier & les quatre Secretaires d'Estat qui s'y estoient aussi rendus par ordre de sa Majesté. Le Roy ayant pris sa place, leur dit en peu de mots, que son Chancelier leur exposeroit de sa part le sujet pourquoy il les auoit ainsi mandez. (47-50)

The scene is thus set for the revelation and voice is given to the King's chancellor:

> …[L]e Chancelier reprit aussi-tost la parole pour leur faire entendre que sa Majesté les auoit fait venir en ce lieu pour leur faire part d'un secret qui luy tenoit au coeur depuis deaucoup d'années, & qu'il n'auoit point voulu, ny deub divulguer jusqu'à ce iour, pour ne auior pas eû lieu ny raison de le faire […] *Que pour entrer donc en matiere, il esoit bon qu'ils sçeussent qu'il auoit depuis longtemps le dessein d'establir par la Nauigation le commerce des marchandises, & des les porter non seulement chez ses voisins, mais mesme dans les païs les plus reculez de Frisquemore.* (50-51) [My emphasis.]

After the crowds, the aura of secrecy and a large dose of diplomatic turn of phrase, the great secret is revealed: establish, through navigation, the commerce of merchandise. Lozières and Courtais promise to guard this classified matter with their lives and agree to help bring this plan to fruition and the narrative comes to an end. It should be noted in this passage that the author uses a third-person voice that is more akin to fictional narrative than to this type of relation, which one would expect to be in the first person using either Lozières or Courtais as a diary writer.

The remaining 40 or so pages of this 118 page work is a minute description of the different regions of Frisquemore. No shipwrecks, political intrigue, detours, intercalated stories or other narrative devices to surprise the reader, just promises of trade and

commerce and a new opening on the world. What becomes striking, therefore, when wading through this last half in search of metaphors and meanings to give depth to this landscape, something to place these names in time and space—whether allegorical, utopian, realistic or other—is the very lack of a hook to latch onto. As an example of the description of Frisquemore shows, literal flatness (Le pays est plat, excepté aux extremitez des Prouinces qui sont situées vers le Nord & la Mer glacialle" [67]) is accompanied by figural counterparts such as the town by town description of the kingdom:

> Hactéograde est une autre ville située sur une des emboucheures de Viuiersky, aussi fort peuplée & fort marchande: il s'y fait grand debit de sel, biere ceruoise, vinaigre, eau-de-vie, & de diverses autres denrées […] Bertigorod situé sur la troisième emboucheure du Viuiersky, estant plus petite que les deux villes susnommées, ne leur cede pas en richesse… (91-92)

And so on an so forth. In spite of some phrases that might paint Frisquemore as some kind of utopia—debtors cannot be arrested in their houses there and convents do not exist, for example—the description of the kingdom goes little beyond the most banal facts. Reading *Frisquemore* as an allegory in the vein of Sorel's *Sophie* or *Isle de la portraicture* becomes a search for occult meaning in face of the apparently void and superficial. But I would argue here that smoothness or banality can be tricky. Sorel appears to give his text too much luster, so to speak. The description of the kingdom, like the map, appears to exist almost exclusively on the superficial plane of the signifier. This becomes doubly true since motivation seems to flow not from "underneath" the text—whether underneath means allegorical or intertextual richness—but from linguistic similitude, phonemes that resonate, that evoke otherness like the suffixes "-eograde," "-ersky," or "-insky." Such linguistic similarities suggest that the place names of Frisquemore are largely derivative based on maps of northern Europe and the discoveries of Willem Barents during the previous century.[3] In order to add credence to these onomastic inventions, the author/mapmaker

enhances the text with Scricfinie, Finmarchie, Lapponie, Samoeides and Nova Zembla (all real places appearing in maps of the time).

It is obvious now that I do not believe Frisquemore to be a real place or another typical allegorical satire from Sorel. In fact, the longitudes and latitudes on the map place this region nearer to the Urals than to the northern tip of Norway and next to Nova Zembla. All the evidence therefore points to a fabricated land for which Scrifinie, Finmarchie, Mer Blanche and Nova Zembla serve as buttresses,[4] as "effets de reel" that sustain an illusion. Like all effects, they distort; here, they are pull at the edges of the map, framing, distorting, and ultimately tearing at its center, revealing imperfections that belie the text's lustre. Looking at what lies beneath the tear, the outline of a process appears, the layers of which may help explain Frisquemore's existence, its generation if not its genre.

Subtexts

In the layers that work to both underpin and undermine the text lies the pressure exerted by the "real"—i.e., the rich literary and cartographic knowledge available to the writer of *Frisqumore, La Science universelle* and *Discours sur la jonction des mers*. Of course, what specific knowledge the author had about the region is impossible to discern, but almost certainly Sorel would have heard of the Willem Barents voyage, which was one of the earliest adventure stories about survival in the frozen wilderness. Possible also is the influence of the equally adventurous—but fictional—*De I Commentarii del Viaggio* (1558), which tells of an island named Frisland. Unfortunately for those looking to decode Sorel using Frisland as a guide, the two works are totally different.[5] The true story of the Barents trips (by Gerrit de Veer) was translated into French from the Latin and published by Cornille Nicolas in 1609. It is a detailed and adventurous account (compared to *Frisquemore*) of travel to the S*eptentrion* as its complete title shows:

> Vraye description de trois voyages de mer tres admirables fait en trois ans, a chacun an un, par les

> navires d'Hollande et Zélande, au nord par derrière Norwege, Moscovie, et Tartarie, vers les royaumes de China & Catay, ensemble les découvrements du Waygat, Nova Sembla, & du pays situé sous la hauteur de 80 degrez, lequel on presume estre Groenlande, où oncques personne n'a esté, plus des ours cruels & ravissans, & autres monstres marins, & la froidure insupportable, d'avantage comment a la derniere fois la navire fut arrestee par la glace, & les matelots ont basti une maison sur le pays de Nova Sembla, situé sous la hauteur de 76 degrez, où ils ont demeuré l'espace de dix mois, & comment ils ont en petites barques passé la mer, bien 350 lieues d'eauë, non sans peril, a grand travail, & difficultez incroyables.

A look at the many images from de Veer's work reveals its spectacular content: Men fight for survival against a polar bear, a ship trapped in ice and "monstres marins" (called, incidentally, "walrusces"), and pictures of indigenous peoples wearing exotic outfits fill the pages along side scientific observations of latitude, longitude, water depth and coastline conditions. So how did Sorel go from a true and great adventure yarn upon which he might have based his very own map and story to this mechanical non-adventure? Is the author indeed trying to hide its "imperfections" rather than exploit them in narrative word games *à la Francion* or the *Berger extravagant*? Uncharacteristically, Sorel seems to be "smoothing over" this works literary heritage, eschewing his usual anti-novel or satirical stance. Such smoothing over invariably reveals the very ruptures it seeks to hide, a fact with which the author proved himself familiar in his anti-novels and in his dedication/preface to *Frisquemore*.

Origins: Paratext/*Père-à-texte*

When the author dedicates his work to the "TRES-HAUT ET TRES-PUISSANT SEIGNEUR, MESSIRE GASTON GOTH, duc d'Espernon, Pair de France, Sire de Lesparre, Marquis de Rouillac, etc.", he inserts reality into a fictional world to create an ambi-

guous mélange. Like Scricfinie or Nova Zembla for the map, a relation to the real exists in the dedication carries over to the entire text, upholding it while revealing its weaknesses. This merits an explanation of course. The Duc d'Epernon, also known as Jean-Baptiste Gaston de Goth, was, in fact, a real person. His father, Jacques de Goth, marquis de Rouillac, died in 1662, the same year as the publication of *Frisquemore*. The circumstances of the manuscripts history are quite explicit, as the author explains as he write to Gaston de Goth:

> Monseigneur, Ie viens vous restituer un meuble de la succession de feu Monsieur vostre Pere, qu'on n'a pas compris dans son Inuentaire, & qui pourtant ne vous appartient pas pas que ceux que vous possedez aujourd'hui si legitimememnt. La bonté qu'il auoit pour moy me fit prendre auant sa mort la liberté de luy faire voir des Memoires qu'un Gentilhomme de mes Amis m'auoit enuoyez sur la nouvelle découuerte du Royaume de Frisquemore; & il y auoit trouué quelque chose de si conforme aux lumieres qu'on luy en auoit autrefois données, que nonobstant toute la resistance qu'il rencontra dans mon esprit, il m'auoit incessamment porté par ses persuasions à les mettre en ordre pour leur faire voir le iour sous son illustre nom. (i-iii)

Thus, under the "douce loy" (iii) of the duc's father, the author begins rewriting the text, working to "oster par mon industrie ce qu'ils auoient de plus rude & de plus sauvage…pour les rendre en estat de parestre avec asseurance dans le monde" (iii). At this point, however, fate intervenes: "… [L]a mort l'ayant enleué aux hommes, au moment de l'execution [du projet], me causa de sa perte un douleur si sensible qu'elle alloit faire enseuelir dans son monument le projet & l'ouvrage, si ie n'eusse en mesme temps, MONSEIGNEUR, ietté les yeux sur vous" (iv). How providential is it that the author sees Gaston? Very much so, since inheriting this manuscript is a heavy responsibility, as the author notes after laying eyes on the young heir, "celuy qui deuoit suruiure à ses dessins aussi bien qu'à sa gloire" (iv). What is most interesting at

this point in the text is that Sorel positions the work within the almost dithyrambic encomium of the younger Duke's father and he stresses simultaneously the circular nature of life and death processes, and the linearity of geneaology: “Vous n’estiez pas moins l’heritier de ses vertus que de ses grandes Terres, & qu’on pouoit encore adiouster, sans pourtant faire tort à sa mémoire & violer le droit du Tombeau; que vous possediez une qualité sur-eminente, qui vous est propre, & et que vous tenez purement que de Dieu…” (iv). And moreover:

> [C’]est cette liberalité qui sied si bien aux grandes ames, ce rayon de la Diuinité, qui seule les distingue du commun des homes; c’est aussi, MONSIEGNEUR, le partage de la haute naissance, telle qu’est la vostre, qui est aussi ancienne que la Monarchie, & si auguste qu’on n’en peut faire la Genealogie sans découvrir dans sa source des Princes et des Souverains. I’en dirois dauantage, si la crainte de blesser votre modestie ne me retenoit & ne m’obligeoit à finir, pour vous supplier tres-humblement, MONSEIGNEUR, de permettre à cette petite narration de courre sous vostre protection (iv-v).

Sorel’s motivations are clear here since such flattery could only entice Gaston to fulfill his filial duties by bringing this work to publication. Not to do so would not only offend his father but a whole line of ancestors as old as the French monarchy, not to mention God who gave him his unique “rayon de Diuinité.” Publication, it is implied, will allow the son to honor his father with a monument to his life while taking full possession of his glory. What is less clear here is whether the author is simply following decorum in honoring the Gaston’s father, or whether he is purely and simply sarcastic. Reading Tallémant de Réaux’s *Historiettes* about the Goth family open the door to irony, for the Marquis de Rouillac, was well a known excentric, an “extravagant,” according to Réaux (141). De Réaux, perhaps

coincidentally, also speaks to Gaston de Goth's lineage, if in decidedly sarcastic terms:

> Le Marquis de Rouillac est de la maison de Got, bonne maison de Gascogne; son père avoit épousé la soeur de feu Mr . D'Epernon avant que Mr. D'Epernon fût en faveur. Mais il pretend un bien plus illustre d'origine, car il veut être de Foix et d'Albret tout ensemble..Un jour qu[e le Marquis] rompoit la tête au prince de Gueménée…et qu'il lui disoit bien sérieusement : 'Canelle de Foix épousa…..—Oui' dit M. de Gueménée, en l'interrompant, Canelle 'de Foix épousa Girofle d'Albret' (141).

Such stories throw serious doubt on Sorel's statements that Gaston de Goth's family is "aussi ancienne que la Monarchie" and full of "Princes" and "Souverains." Yet, if the *Historiettes* are definitely sarcastic, this does not necessarily mean Sorel's work is, only that it may be. In this context, the manuscript for Frisquemore has equivocal roots tied to the Duke's father, on the one hand, but with the father's family, taste and discretion seeming rather dubious on the other.

Over three hundred years later, it is difficult if not impossible to balance Sorels sarcasm and/or his sincerity. What Sorel stresses—sarcastically or genuinely—is the importance of lineage, of origins, and this would seem necessary. Indeed, according to Conley, cartographic writing almost always "..seeks to account for origins, to chart out the past, and to legitimate the present state of things…" (16). If this is true, the author/mapmaker would clearly need to articulate his role as articulator, to imbue his narration with the trappings of authority. Unlike the son who inherits "vast lands" and "gloire" from the father, the author inherits a "rude" and "sauvage" text he must transform. Here genesis and geneaology rise to the surface of the text to inform and justify the signifiers. The narrator states that the Kingdom of Frisquemore got its name from "…un mot Hebreu corrumpu, qui signigie froid, & d'*Amorrhaeus* fils de Chanaan qui donna le nom aux *Amorrhéens*" (61). Etymol-

ogy and geneaology thus run parallel courses for Frisquemore: words and families are tracable, understandable, motivated through time. Indeed, Sorel does not dwell on the nature of the Amorites, but on their traceability to ancient times (i.e., the fact that the name "Frisquemore" could be derived from Hebrew). That the word has been "corrupted" over time evokes less the idea of "corruption" than the notion of natural linguistic evolution, of the accretion/transformation of meaning over time. It serves to remind the reader of birth and origins, to give the text historical depth. The author further seeks to explain Frisquemore's origin by noting that, pushed by Saxons, Moscovites and Prussians, a detached (and forgotten) branch of Charlemagne's army wandered for several centuries before joining the Frisquemoreans and bringing the Christian ways and gentle mores one finds there. This also justifies their king (monarchy being the natural tendency of the Gauls, of course). All in all, Sorel wants to paint Frisquemore with a certain intrinsic history, give it an essence in much the same way he lauds the Duke d'Epernon's family. Lineage means reinstating links between close and not-so-close generations in order to establish history in recognition of the formal power of historical tropes within his "petite narration." Father figures, like the Marquis, Charlemagne or the Amoreans stand in homage to the historical trope, to family narratice (*Genesis*); they are, in other words, the *père-à-texte*s who exert power in the text.

Nova S/Zembla

Sorel's etymology of corrupted Hebrew (cold + Amorean) runs parallel to real-world names of lands along the northern borders of Finland, Norway and Russia. "Frisquet," in French, means of course "cold," while "more" is Russian for "sea." The homonymic resemblance of "more" and "mort" further etches out the parallel workings of Sorel's project. Indeed, though in description Frisquemore's lands abound in fruit, vegetable, animal and mineral (in spite of harsh winters), the kingdom is surrounded my ominous signs: desert, glacial sea, and the ambivalent tone of "mort." The two main rivers of Frisquemore, the "Viuiersky" and the "Morinsky," are at the very heart of the map. Heavy with the psychological symbolism that reflects not only the quandaries

linked to inheriting a name, glory and lands, but also the compulsions that push us to fulfill the unsaid contracts of family, these two rivers reflect the oscillating movements of the text: father to son, readership to authorship, old to new. They constitute evidence of how the modern consciousness blurs the lines of disposition and elocution: how one places/sees oneself and others physically in the world (cartographically) and how the writer relates it. This also affects invention: the mythological and allegorical frameworks are replaced with History (or the modern myth of historical truth); values are no longer a transparent code, but must be established through traceability. The progressive replacement of the figural by an abstract language of visual signs becomes obvious—influenced of course by the geometrical world of maps. Likewise, the map exemplifies graphically of the transformation of psycho-linguistic space during the seventeenth century, of the circularity of the voyage from self to other, and back to self—a reminder of one's own genetic, social or psychological space within a frame of otherness. As Conley puts it: "The development of atlas-structures and of two-dimensional views confirms the rapid attenuation of the mixture of scientific and mystical dimensions in the history of cartographic literature from the age of the incunabulum to the triumph of the Cartesian method" (13). [6] The unknown (i.e., unknown lands, death, the unthinkable), as sign, unifies and regulates the *terrae incognitae* as part of a repeating equation; the multiple unknowns of the past come to be singular otherness (Conley 13). Louis Marin is pertinent here as well. "La topographie," writes Marin, "devient topique" (152). And so is it true of Frisquemore: life, death and restitution become rivers, hills and valley. The rituals of life and death, once expressed through the "external" system of allegory, now pass through an internal symbolic matrix.[7] Nova Zembla, that "real" island, is case in point. As latitude and longitude attest, this map does not exactly *refer* to Nova Zembla (or any real or fictional place near there) in the strictest sense of referral, of denoting the "real" object. Rather, while acknowledging the representative action of words, the text privileges an accretion of multiple meanings that are built up from the inside of the text. Where the allegorical text/society accepts for example that a nude female figure represents Truth and depends on a pre-established and well-developed

order of meaning-making,[8] this is less true for symbolic literature whose goal is to constitute an autonomous literary object in which the value of symbols depends on interdependence structured *within* the text—"Zem" becomes "sème," or "sym." Likewise, the translator ("le truchement") in the text is named *Sim*eboisky. Without anachronistically stating that *Frisquemore* is symbolist literature, it nonetheless prefigures such a literary concept. While retaining the hallmarks of a text that promotes transparent circulation of words as images and without denying external reference, Sorel's texts accumulates meaning for and by itself. In Frisquemore the literature and language of symbol triumphs over traditional allegory and marks the passage of one system of representation to another becoming a cornerstone of a unique creative enterprise. Frisquemore, eschewing dependence on the same linguistic pacts one finds in the usual allegorical literature of the times, creates its own in a unique combination with genres familiar to the author: history, pastiche, allegory, realism. By integrating familial and textual ontology into the topographic fabric, Sorel succeeds in creating a literal voyage of sublimation in which the self is always present and elsewhere, and whose verbal and visual expression reveal the strengths and the straining points of the map/text.

Sorel's propensity for creating books in which image plays a central role stresses the importance he must have placed on the graphic conceptualization here. Space no longer reiterates the physical, but the psychological. Discourse, being and space bind to from an inextricable knot that is quite different from Lysis' (*Berger Extravagant*) confusion of St-Cloud and Forez, or Scudéry's map of sensibility. The complexes of inheritance and parentage are mapped out to guide the reader through the work that follows, to explain and colonize new and old territories. This colonizing tendency is taken even farther by Sorel since his desire to frame and control the work leads him to the paradox of reproduction: he needs Gaston de Goth to bring the work to light, but he refuses to let the Marquis de Rouillac's importance overshadow his own by embedding the work in ambiguous flattery. Again, Sorel has found a way to reinvent and recombine genres and codes in novel ways. Regardless of whether a "clef" can be found for each

and every name on the map of Frisquemore, another key, which is that of literary creation and recreation exists to enrich this work.

Whittier College

NOTES

[1] Emile Roy lists *Frisquemore* in his bibliography of "oevres galantes ou précieuses" (410), but does not discuss it in his critique. Without any discussion of the work, one can only guess that Roy categorized *Frisquemore* there because of its title, which is similar to that of Sorel's allegorical satires. Gabrielle Verdier does not list the work, however. Paul Zumthor mentions the existence of 5 allegorical utopias written by Sorel, but again, does not really discuss *Frisquemore*. In his long analysis of allegory in Sorel (19-46), Wim de Vos also eschews *Frisquemore.* Sorel himself does not mention it as an allegory in *La bibliothèque françoise* (166-74).

[2] I am indebted to Tom Conley's work *The Self-Made Map* for his explanation of the umbilical in Guy Rosolato's *La relation d'inconnu*. The layers of Sorel's text in this case are, in the words of Tom Conley and Guy Rosolato, like the navel, "a site where the unknown has its first physical trace" (Conley 9). Such traces refute the work's self-sufficient pretenses by recalling binary poles of life/death, conscious/unconscious. Conley speaks of Freud's notion that consciousness can be depicted as a small circle within the much larger circle of the unconscious (11). This is not unlike Frisquemore: the narration, seemingly "smooth" and "uncorrupted" like Freud's center circle, consciousness finds itself subject to unknown surrounding forces such as its paratexts, the map of Frisquemore and the *Dédicace*. As this paper later explains, at work in the creation of Frisquemore are, literally and figureatively, the forces of life and death.

[3] Barents discovered Novaya Zemlya in 1594 during his search for a northern passage to the Pacific. The first map of the region was in the diary of Gerrit de Veer (1598).

[4] The author is precise but gives impossible latitudes and longitudes: "Le païs de Frisquemore est situé entre le cinquante-sept & le soixante-unième degree, quarante huit minutes de latitude, & confine du costé de l'Est & Nordest, à la *Lapponie* ou Lappie…" (66).

[5] *De I Commentarii del Viaggio,* reports the fictional travels of Nicolo and Antonio Zeno in the Northern Atlantic. They were supposed to have

sailed extensively in these relatively unknown waters, including to the new lands of Frisland, Icaria, Estotiland, and Drogio. A descendant of the Zeno brothers, supposedly found the manuscript along with a map, which he published in Venice in 1558. Though this volume was completely fictional, it was widely accepted as true when first issued. Gerard Mercator, in his seminal world map of 1569 included the Zeno geography, and this depiction was followed closely by Abraham Ortelius in his influential map of the Northern Atlantic in 1573. Frisland is located nearer to Greenland and Nova Scotia on Ortelius' map, a fact which further distances it from *Frisquemore.*

[6] I am again employing terms of Conley here, in particular chapter 8. Conley notes "The expanding number of toponyms in the drawn and printed between the time of Bougereau and the end of Henry's reign show that a *consciousness* of a *collective population* of *subjects* was materializing in graphic and strategic ways" (301 [my italics]). Naming, being and spacing for a grid of subjectivity.

[7] Though perhaps anachronistic, the 19th century definitions of symbol vs. allegory seem pertinent here.

[8] This is exactly the opposite case of Sorel's *Sophie*, in which the transparent language of traditional allegory is primordial and necessary for its irony.

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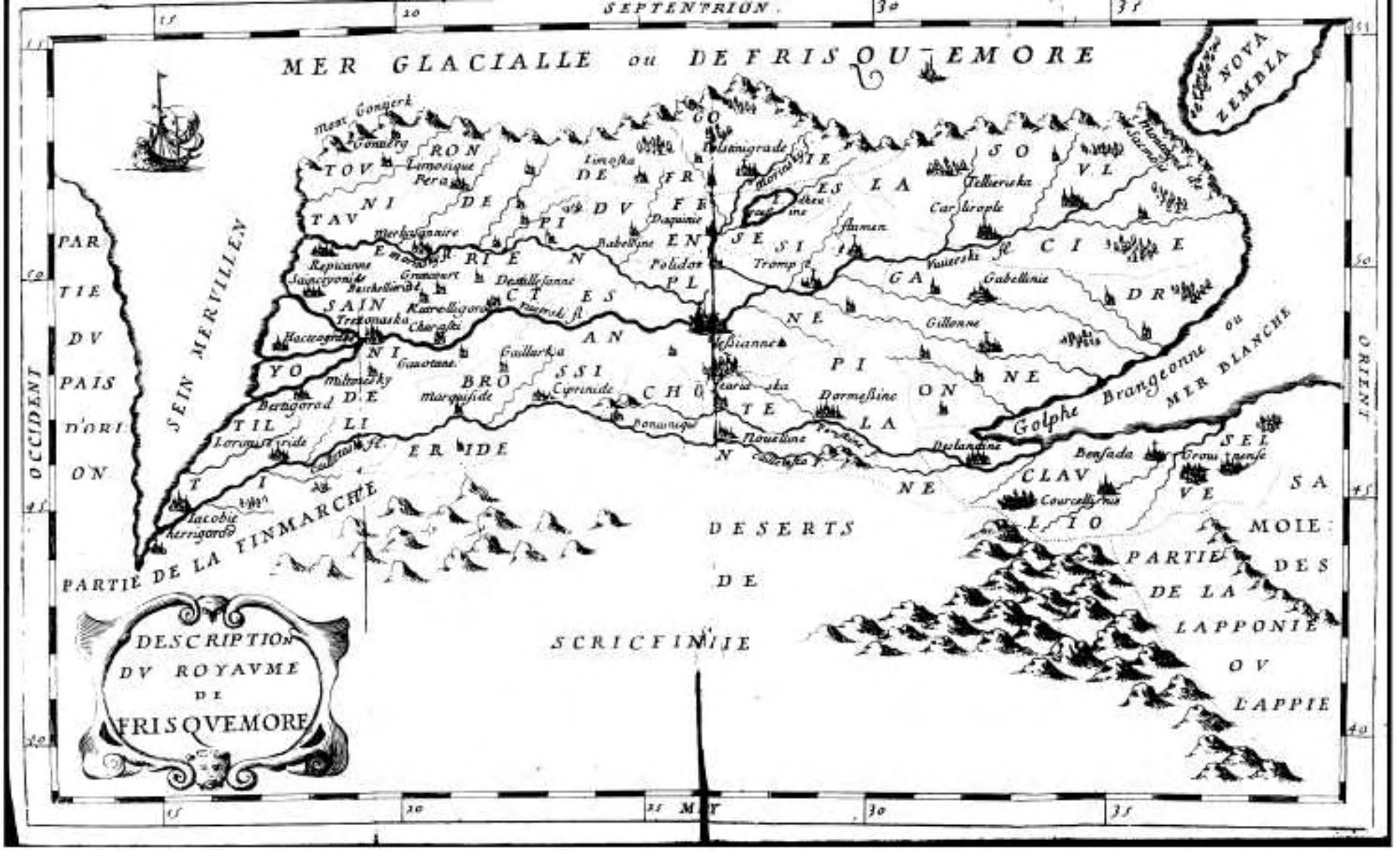

Carte de Frisquemore (n.p., dans Relation de ce qui s'est passé dans la nouvelle découverte du royaume de Frisquemore. Paris: Thomas Jolly, 1662.)