

ISSN: 1040–3647

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The Valet: The Marquis de Louvois's Invited Guest in the Mystery of the Man in the Iron Mask

**by
Sarah Madry**

Prefatory Remarks on the Spelling of Names

The last name of the man known as the Man in the Iron Mask is spelled “Dauger” except where another author’s spelling is quoted.

A seventeenth-century Paris family of minor nobility will be discussed. That family’s name is spelled “d’Auger de Cavoye,” except where another author’s spelling is quoted.

Why Solving the Problem of the Man in the Iron Mask Is Important for Scholars of French Seventeenth-century History

This article addresses one description of the mysterious prisoner called *L’Homme au masque de fer* written in a letter, dated 19 July 1669, by the government official who oversaw his transfer to prison, Louis XIV’s (1638–1715) twenty-eight-year-old secretary for war, François-Michel Le Tellier, the marquis de Louvois (1641–1691). Louvois characterized Dauger in that letter as “only a valet.” Scholars have been compelled to incorporate this description of the prisoner into their theories about his identity. The search for the answer to this mystery has been tangled up in the demand of the “valet” to be consequential.

This paper shows that, contrary to what has always been assumed, Louvois’s characterization of the prisoner as “*un valet*” does not describe the prisoner’s background or previous occupation, nor did Louvois intend it to. The word “valet” is a keyword in a pun that Louvois inserted into the state document that he wrote to the prison jailer, whom he knew personally. It does not indicate that Louvois knew the prisoner’s identity. This conclusion has been reached through interdisciplinary research on seventeenth-century playing card design, French name spelling differences, salon culture word games, and a personal life episode of one of the *Ancien Régime*’s most redoubtable military administrators, the marquis de Louvois himself. The elimination of the “valet” will upset assumptions about Louvois’s comment about the famous prisoner; it will neutralize the only description in the official French archives of the prisoner’s occupation before his arrest.

Louvois's valet description has been a barrier to a launch of serious historical research to settle the question of whether the mysterious man was genetically related to Louis XIV. If, freed from the parameter of the valet, future researchers on the Man in the Iron Mask mystery would find clarity on the genetic issue, then the problem would migrate into the supervision of a larger set of *Ancien Régime* historians who would have to accept that Eustache Dauger threatened Louis XIV's political and familial status. If Dauger's existence threatened Louis XIV's personal and legal royal rights, we must reconsider Louis XIV's role in the *Grand Siècle*.

Introduction

L'Homme au masque de fer (?–1703) was a man imprisoned by Louis XIV in July 1669 for an unknown reason (Iung 56). Neither do we know the reason that he wore a cloth mask over the top of his face during the latter part of his imprisonment when he was out of his cell or when strangers came into his cell (Iung 51). His identity, his name, and his appearance were carefully hidden from everyone except a very small number of jailers (Iung 51). These three facts—his unknown crime, his mask, and the very stringent security given to him unceasingly for thirty-four years—are the reasons that members of the court and the public became interested in him as soon as they were aware of him.

The first person at court to speak publicly about him was Louis XIV's sister-in-law, Princess Palatine Elisabeth-Charlotte (1652–1722). She told her aunt in a letter on 11 October 1711, only eight years after the prisoner had died in the Bastille (Orléans 187), that she had heard there had recently been a mysterious prisoner at the Bastille, always masked, who had been forbidden to speak under pain of death. Voltaire (1694–1778) became interested in the prisoner, perhaps during his own imprisonment in the Bastille in 1717, and spurred the public's interest in the story incessantly, including treating it in his *Siècle de Louis XIV* (1751) and *Supplément au Siècle de Louis XIV* (1753). Voltaire was the first writer to say that the prisoner's mask was made of “fer” when he wrote to the abbé Dubos on 30 October 1738 (Voltaire “À M. l'Abbé Dubos” 305) that he had knowledge of “*l'homme au masque de fer*” — that he had spoken with people who had served him. In 1746, the chevalier de Mouhy wrote *Le Masque de fer ou les aventures admirables du père et du fils*. The book tells a story about a prisoner who wore an iron mask. Mouhy tells of metal masks used on prisoners in Turkey, Scotland, Spain, and Sweden. Duvivier suspects that Mouhy shared with Voltaire his research on masking (Duvivier 17). Whether Mouhy encouraged Voltaire to add the metal mask

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or not, Voltaire inserted it in his description of the masked man in his *Siècle de Louis XIV* (Voltaire *Siècle* 311). Witnesses who actually saw the masked prisoner do not mention a metal mask, but say that he certainly always wore a cloth mask when out of his prison cell.

In Liège in 1769, the Jesuit R. Père Henri Griffet (1698–1771) published *Traité des différentes sortes de preuves qui servent à établir la vérité de l'Histoire*, which included quotations of journal entries taken from a journal made by the lieutenant of the Bastille in 1698 named Etienne Du Junca (1642?–1706) that described in detail both the Mask's entry into the Bastille and his death five years later (Griffet 307–08). The journal entries are eyewitness reports of the prisoner by a state official: a date stamp of his entry into the confines of the Bastille; confirmation that he was always masked; confirmation that he had never had a jailer other than Saint-Mars, and that the prisoner had no name (Griffet 303–09). Saint-Mars (1626–1708), on the day that Du Junca wrote his first journal entry on the prisoner, 18 September 1689, was taking command of the Bastille after formerly being governor of Pignerol, Exiles, and Sainte-Marguerite prisons. “Saint-Mars” was a *nom-de-guerre* (Rousset 170 and Dijol 56); the name his family gave him was Bénigne Dauvergne. On 10 January 1673, the king gave him letters of nobility (Barine 20). Here is Du Junca's entry from the prison register located in the Bibliothèque de l'Arsenal that describes the arrival of the new prisoner in September 1698:

Du judy 18e de septembre 1698 a trois heures apres midy, monsieur de St Mars, gouverneur du chateau de la Bastille, est arive pour sa premiere entree, venant de son gouvernement des illes St Marguerite Honorat aient mene avec queluy dans sa litiere un ensien prisonnier quil avet a Pignerol le quel il fait tenir touiours masque dont le nom ne sedit pas et laient fait mettre en de sendant dela litiere dans la premiere chambre delatour de la basiniere en atandant la nuit pour lemettre et mener moy mesme aneuf heures du-soir avec Mr de Rosarges un des sergens que monsieur le gouverneur a mene dans la troisieme chambre seul delatour dela bretaudiere que javes fait mubler de touttes choses — quelques jours avent son arrivee en aient reseu lhordre de monsieur de St Mars le quel prisonnier sera servy et sounie par Mr de Rosarge que monsieur le gouverneur norira. (Du Junca 37 v^e)

Griffet's publication showed proof that the masked prisoner had really existed and gave credibility to Voltaire's insistence that the subject was

important (Duvivier 22, 28). These two historians fueled a detective search which continues today.

Pioneer nineteenth-century researchers went to the archives to identify all the prisoners of Saint-Mars, the jailer of the masked prisoner, realizing that inevitably (Iung 5), among this set of people, one would have to have been the masked prisoner. Their results and that of many subsequent authors might today be called a mashup of state prisoners who were incarcerated in the relevant time period arranged on a framework of event dates (such as the prisoners' transfers between prisons), witness reports, and political events with the goal being elimination of as many candidates as possible.

Each writer on the Man in the Iron Mask mystery has had at least three tasks: telling the story of the man's arrest, where and with what special security he was kept, and the witness accounts of his appearance and activities; a review of the most likely candidates with an historical account of each; and the writer's own conclusions, including why he or she chose one candidate over the others.

General Theodore Jung in *La Verité sur le Masque de Fer (Les Empoisonneurs) d'après des documents inédits des Archives de la Guerre et autres dépôts public* (1873) believed that the Mask was one of a group of conspirators who wished to assassinate Louis XIV; Emile Burgaud published *Le Masque de fer, révélation de la correspondance chiffrée de Louis XIV* (1893), claiming the Mask was Vivien Labbé de Bulonde, who made a serious military mistake that embarrassed Louis XIV (failed to hold the siege of Coni in the Piedmont in 1691); John Noone concluded in *The Man Behind the Iron Mask* (1988) that the prisoner was a fictional character created by the governor of Pignerol prison to advance his own interests. Paul Sonnino's usual thorough research described in "On the Trail of the Iron Mask: The Candidacy of Claude Imbert" shed light in 1992 on a likely candidate, who, although Sonnino admits that the archives produced an *échec* for his suspect, nevertheless showed masterfully the length to which researchers should go to investigate each lead (Sonnino "Imbert" 104). Sonnino said in 2014 that the testament of Cardinal Mazarin (1602–1661), specifically, changes made in the different versions of Mazarin's will written by Jean-Baptiste Colbert (1619–1683), Mazarin's intendant, after Mazarin's death, indicate the identity of the prisoner (Sonnino "Three Testaments" 16). Michel Vergé-Franceschi of the university François Rabelais de Tours in his 2009 *Le Masque de fer, enfin démasqué* believed that the prisoner was a valet of the duc de Beaufort (1616–1669), a militant and popular cousin of Louis XIV, who wit-

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nessed the murder of his master (Beaufort) and was taken prisoner to prevent the death's announcement.

Not only have professional scholars researched the identity of the *masque de fer*, but the highest officials of the French eighteenth-century state felt they had a right to know the truth of the matter. Louis XVI (1754–1793) and Napoleon I (1769–1821) sent state officials to the archives for the man's Bastille imprisonment records. Matthioli, an Italian double agent, was officially documented as the masked prisoner (Markale 236). But Matthioli's candidature has been eliminated through archival research done after the French Revolution (Topin 329–30 and Duvivier 62).

Data found in the twentieth century eliminated all possibilities except Eustache Dauger, arrested at the request of Louis XIV near Calais, France, at the end of July 1669 and escorted under guard to Pignerol prison in the Italian Alps.¹ In the summer season the journey from Calais to Pignerol for one prisoner and a small company of guards would have taken about twenty-one to twenty-five days. That approximation is based on the journey to Pignerol of Nicolas Fouquet, prisoner of musketeer Charles d'Artagnan, in winter 1664, which took twenty days from Paris (Petitfils d'Artagnan 145). We know that Dauger and his guards arrived at Pignerol on approximately August 21 because Louvois wrote a letter to Saint-Mars on 10 September 1669 that is a reply to a letter from the governor dated 21 August indicating that Pignerol had received the new prisoner. We have the letter of Saint Mars only in a transcription that was made by citizen Pierre Roux-Fazillac in 1801, *Recherches historiques et critiques sur l'Homme au masque de fer, d'où resultent des notions certaines sur ce prisonnier, ouvrage rédigé sur des matériaux authentiques* (Roux-Fazillac 105).

Vergé-Franceschi asked:

Peut-on être aujourd'hui absolument sûr que le prisonnier surnommé Eustache Dauger est bien le Masque de fer?

¹ Particularly decisive in the election of Dauger as the masked prisoner was the elimination of Matthioli, who had been a primary suspect in nineteenth-century research, but, according to Saint Mars himself in 1681, Matthioli did not accompany Saint-Mars when he left Pignerol to be governor of Exiles, and letters from Louvois to Saint-Mars confirm that there would be only two prisoners going to Exiles with Saint-Mars, one of whom was La Rivière (?–1687), formerly a valet of Fouquet. The other prisoner that the king ordered to go with Saint-Mars, Matthioli, being ruled out, was Dauger. See Topin 329–30 and Vergé-Franceschi 309.

Oui. Quand on dresse la liste de tous les prisonniers de Pinerolo à cette époque, il est le *seul* à y avoir été admis en 1669² (Vergé-Franceschi 260).

Objectives and Spelling

The two objectives of this paper are: (1) to review Louvois's letter and learn why Louvois called Eustache Dauger a valet; (2) to use this answer as support for the thesis that this was the prisoner's real name. In seventeenth-century France names of prisoners listed on official documents were often false names, created by the jailers to limit identities. A nickname might be given to a prisoner based on an instance of his actions in prison, a reference to a previous occupation, where he or she was kept in the building, or a completely fake first and last name might be put in the records. Seekers of the solution to the mystery of the Man in the Iron Mask have never known if Eustache Dauger was the prisoner's name as Louis XIV understood it to be when he ordered him arrested.³

Solving the valet puzzle requires a reminder about French seventeenth-century family name spelling practices. There was much more misspelling of names of people in past generations than there is now—or let us call it multispelling, because misspelling means erroneous spelling and we do not discern an authoritarian attitude toward spelling; one did the best one could to write the name so that the reader recognized it, and the exact combination of letters was secondary. It was accepted in the seventeenth century that in one instance a man's last name could be written “Du Vivier” and the next person would write “Duvivier.” Meanwhile, the person himself would always sign his name “du Vivier.” Then there was the added possibility that a misspelling might occur, where “Duvivier” becomes “Devivier.”

² Researchers who have also come to the conclusion that Dauger is the Man in the Iron Mask are Marcel Pagnol, Jules Lair, Andrew Lang, Maurice Duvivier, Rupert Furneaux, Harry Thompson, and Marie-Madeleine Mast, among others.

³ Bernard Caire in his essay “Eustache et Son Secret,” which was included in the white paper resulting from a colloquium of Mask scholars in 1987 (Caire 43), believes the spelling is “Danger.” Jean-Christian Petitfils in *L'Homme au masque de fer* also believed this. Other researchers, including Jules Lair, Andrew Lang, and Maurice Duvivier, all having believed Eustache Dauger had an important part in this mystery, write the name “Dauger.” The argument presented below about Louvois's characterization of Eustache Dauger as a valet will show that the correct spelling is “Dauger.”

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We must loosen for a moment our modern rigidity about *nom et prénom* spelling in order to understand the problem at hand, because the variations of the spelling of the last name of the prisoner, Eustache Dauger, are linked to the reason that the marquis de Louvois styled him “*un valet*.”

François-Michel Le Tellier, the Marquis de Louvois

Most historians know Louvois as the waster of the German Palatinate in the course of the War of the League of Augsburg (1688–1697). If one were to rebut that statement and say that Louis XIV’s orders to Louvois were responsible for the Palatinate’s devastation, one could reply that by 1688 it was difficult to know if Louis XIV or Louvois was responsible for military decisions (Rousset 6). Louvois was war minister and since wars provided his job security, he made sure that Louis XIV had plenty of them (Mongrédien *Louis XIV* 175, Sonnino *Louis XIV* 5–7, 192).

The marquis de Louvois was Louis XIV’s secretary of war for much of his reign. Today we often title administrators in this high position ministers for defense, but what was called defense by Louis XIV and Louvois was more about thirst for territory and glory than it was about drawing lines beyond which foreign powers could not pass. Rather, it was Louis XIV who passed over the lines of others (Ekberg 175). Louvois and his father, Michel Le Tellier, marquis de Barbezieux, seigneur de Chaville et de Viroflay (1603–1685), created a French army that became the strongest and most feared military power in Europe, supplying Louis XIV’s redundant need for extreme attention. Louis XIV squeezed his people, his court, his nobles, his army, his enemies, and his friends to get a steady supply of glory that was only acceptable in its densest form.

Louvois directed the royal postal system from 1669 to his death in 1691 (Vaillé 7), and following Jean-Baptiste Colbert’s death in 1683 he was the government minister in charge of building projects. Louvois and the Paris chief of police conducted an investigation into a poisoning scandal in the capital in the 1680s, some parts of which touched members of the royal court and Louis XIV’s closest circle. An unpublicized assignment given to Louvois by the king was oversight of the Man in the Iron Mask’s needs, security, location, and treatment.

Louvois’s Letter to Saint-Mars Dated 19 July 1669

We do not know who Eustache Dauger was, but the reason that many of the most credible specialists in this subject tailor their conclusions to

the prisoner having been a valet—a servant—is that the marquis de Louvois, in a letter dated 19 July 1669 to Monsieur de Saint-Mars, governor of Pignerol prison, to forewarn him that a prisoner named Eustache Dauger would soon be coming to Pignerol, wrote that since the prisoner was only “*un valet*,” his needs for furniture were negligible. The letter carries the earliest date of about 150 extant letters between Louvois, the off-site manager of the prisoner’s incarceration, and Saint-Mars. Saint-Mars had to receive orders from Louvois before he could change the routine of his prisoners, get them medical attention, buy them items, etc. His questions and Louvois’s answers went by couriers between Pignerol and Paris.

In the marquis de Louvois’s communication on 19 July 1669 about the prisoner, Louvois broke all the rules, before there even were any rules about Dauger. There would be hundreds of royal warnings over the next thirty-four years to those who were managing his incarceration that there should be no hint of what the man had been doing before his arrest, and if Dauger said anything at all about his former life to anyone, the jailers had instructions to immediately kill him (Delort *Détention des philosophes* 156; Orléans 187; Petitfils *Homme* 37; Voltaire *Siècle* 311).

This is the very first document that mentions Eustache Dauger by name.

À Saint-Germain en Laye, ce 19 juillet 1669

Monsieur,

Le Roy m’ayant comandé de faire conduire à Pinerolo le nommé Eustache d’Auger, il est de la dernière importance à son service qu’il soit gardé avec une grande seureté, et qu’il ne puisse donner de ses nouvelles en nulle manière, ni par lettres à qui que ce soit. Je vous en donne advis par advance, afin que vous puissiez faire accomoder un chachot où vous le mettrez seurement, observant de faire en sorte que les jours qu’aura le lieu ou [sic] il sera, ne donnent point sur des lieux qui puissent estre abordez de personne, et qu’il y ayt assez de portes fermées, les unes sur les autres, pour que vos sentinelles ne puissent rien entendre. Il faudra que vous portiez vous même à ce misérable, une fois le jour, de quoy vivre toute la journée, et que vous n’escoutiez jamais, sous quelques prétexte que ce puisse estre, ce qu’il voudra vous dire, le menaçant tousjours de le faire mourir s’il vous ouvre jamais la

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bouche pour vous parler d'autre chose que de ses nécessités.

Je mande au sieur Poupart de faire incessamment travailler à ce que vous desirerez, et vous ferez préparer les meubles qui sont nécessaires pour la vie de celui que l'on vous amènera, observant que, comme ce n'est qu'un valet, il ne luy en faut pas de bien considérables, et je vous feray rembourser tant de la dépenses des meubles, que de ce que vous desirerez pour sa nourriture.

Je suis, monsieur, vostre très affectionné serviteur, De Louvois (Delort *Détention des philosophes* 155–56).

The *Lettre de Cachet* and the Arrest

On 28 July 1669, nine days after the letter above, a *lettre de cachet*, signed by Louis XIV and co-signed by Michel Le Tellier, Louvois's father, ordered M. de Vauroy, sergeant-major of the citadel and town of Dunkirk, to arrest Eustache Dauger and take him to the fortress of Pignerol in the Alps, a prison reserved for political prisoners (Vergé-Franceschi 256). Another letter to Vauroy's superior was signed by the king, also dated 28 July, giving a false excuse for Vauroy's absence from his regular duties (Noone 151, Pagnol 123). No explanation was given in the *lettre de cachet* as to where the sergeant-major would find Dauger, so we may assume, since the arrest took place very soon after he received the order, that Vauroy had a separate communication as to the location of his target from either the king or someone else. It is also possible that Vauroy knew where to find Dauger without having to be told.

We do not know where Dauger was arrested. It may have been Calais. Vergé-Franceschi refers to a certification of reimbursement to Vauroy of travel expenses that researcher Stanislas Brugnon found in the mid 1980s in the *Mélanges Colbert*:

Vauroy commence par aller de Dunkerque à Calais avec trois hommes. A Calais, il récupère le prisonnier.... Stanislas Brugnon a retrouvé dans les *Mélanges Colbert*, à la Bibliothèque nationale, une "conduite," c'est-à-dire un ordre de remboursement de frais de déplacements, comme pour les fonctionnaires d'aujourd'hui. On constate que le roi a payé ces frais à hauteur de trois mille livres pour quatre hommes de Dunkerque à Calais (Vauroy et trois soldats d'escorte); et pour cinq hommes de Calais à

Pignerol (Vauroy, les trois soldats et le Masque de fer); puis trois mille autres livres pour quatre hommes de Pignerol à Calais (une fois le Masque de fer laissé aux mains de Saint-Mars) (Vergé-Franceschi 261).

Vauroy obeyed orders and took Eustache Dauger to Pignerol where Saint-Mars was waiting.

Post Script

Immediately after 28 July 1669, the date on the arrest warrant, Louis XIV or Louvois or both of them decided that the prisoner's last name should not be spoken or written again because "Eustache" was thereafter not written for nine and a half years in any correspondence that has come down to us, and "Dauger" was almost never written again. The jailers had nicknames for Dauger so that they could be clear about which prisoner they were speaking of in a practical situation, but these names are the jailers' inventions, not official ones. If he had to be spoken of, witnesses tell us that his jailers said, "the one whose name is not said aloud" (*le nom ne se dit pas*), or "the longtime prisoner," or "the man who was brought by sergeant Vauroy." For a time he was called "*La Tour*" due to the location of his cell at Pignerol (Iung 40). A false name was given to him on his death certificate and burial record: "Marehiel" or "Marchiel" (Furieux 6).

Considerable thought and many chapters of books have been dedicated to the valet problem. Many authors have taken the marquis de Louvois at his word that the new prisoner was a valet, a manservant of moderate rank, and have eliminated from suspicion anyone who was not a valet. Other writers have been sure these words were deliberately used to hide the identity of the prisoner. But the characterization of the prisoner as a valet is the only mention of his social status by any of the very few people who had contact with him, so we have not ever been able to evade Louvois's description. Historians and sleuths have had to consider the possibility that the Mask was formerly a servant. This has been the biggest stumbling block preventing investigators from believing that the Man in the Iron Mask was a royal relative of Louis XIV—a cousin, a brother, or a twin. If the prisoner had been a valet, he could not have been a prince.

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Eustache Dauger (? –1703)

This paper does not attempt an overall answer to the question of the identity of the Man in the Iron Mask but it might be helpful to know a few things about the person described by Louvois as a valet.

The prisoner's life before his arrest in July 1669 is unknown. Toward the end of his life he wore a cloth mask over the top of his face whenever he was outside his cell or when a stranger went into his cell. We are not sure if he wore a mask before that, and we do not know if the report of a metal mask, seen only once while the prisoner was traveling, was accurate. Voltaire's report about the man in 1751 said, "*Ce prisonnier, dans la route, portait un masque dont la mentonnière avait des ressorts d'acier, qui lui laissaient la liberté de manger avec le masque sur son visage*" (Voltaire *Siècle* 311). This is the sentence that started the myth of the iron mask. But Voltaire did not say that the prisoner wore an iron mask, only that he had a mask on that had steel springs in the chin area. He assumed this apparatus had to do with eating because it was located, so he had been told, near his mouth.

Voltaire tells that he got this information from the son-in-law of a doctor who treated the Mask and who had been the doctor of the maréchal de Richelieu (Armand de Vignerot du Plessis 1696–1788). Also testifying to this information, said Voltaire, was, "...*M. de Bernaville, successeur de Saint-Mars, me l'a souvent confirmé*" (Voltaire *Siècle* 312).

He heard regular Catholic mass so he was Catholic, whether from birth or from conversion from Protestantism. We know he could read because he was given as many books as he wanted (Delort *Détention des philosophes* 157). We deduce he could write because after his death his cell walls and floors were taken apart to uncover any writing he might have hidden (Griffet 311). He had lips and teeth, because eyewitnesses tell us they saw them under his mask (Petitfils *Homme* 94–95). We know he spoke French (Duvivier 120). We know that in 1703, not long before his death, he said to an apothecary of the Bastille that he thought he was about 60 years old (Delort *Histoire de l'homme au masque* 71), which indicates he was not sure of his age so we do not know how old he was when he died.

His first eleven years in prison were at Pignerol, where Saint-Mars had been governor since 1664. He was moved to Exiles, not far from Pignerol, when Saint-Mars was transferred there. Then the jailer and prisoner went to the island prison of Sainte-Marguerite, near Cannes, and finally in 1698 Saint-Mars got a promotion to the governorship of the Bastille, and

Dauger went with him, traveling, as before, in the same cavalcade of carriages and soldiers that formed Saint-Mars's moving van. Also following the governor's path through all the stages of his career were his aides: his major, Jacques Rosarges (1633?–1707); his manager of the keys, Antoine Ru (?–1713); and two trusted infantry officers, one of these being a cousin of the governor and the other a childhood friend.⁴ No one other than Saint-Mars and these officers ever guarded Dauger. The prisoner, Saint-Mars, and his team of guards were inseparable for thirty-four years.

Eustache Dauger was assigned an extremely high level of security. In 1670 Saint-Mars wrote to Louvois:

Il y a des personnes qui sont quelquefois si curieuses de me demander des nouvelles de mon prisonnier, ou le sujet pourquoi je fais faire tant de retranchements pour sa sûreté, que je suis obligé de leur dire des contes jaunes pour me moquer d'eux (Markale 271).

Some of the precautions were typical for all prisoners, like having three doors to his cell, each closing separately upon the other (Fougeret 27). But there was extra security for Dauger. Not long after Dauger was taken to Pignerol, Louis XIV sent the sieur Vauban (1633–1707), his chief military engineer, to inspect the cell and the fortress to make sure everything was as it should be.

Eustache Dauger died suddenly in his cell in the Bastille on 19 November 1703, probably of a heart attack or stroke, his only sign of impending death being a slight malaise the day before at mass, indicating that he was not in the throes of a wasting disease. He was buried the next afternoon in the Saint-Paul church cemetery, the parish cemetery for the Bastille.⁵

He must have had remarkable inner reserves. Saint-Mars writes more than once that Dauger did not complain of his situation and was polite, accepting his fate from “God and the king” (Thompson 99). He quietly lived thirty-four years in confinement and then died a peaceful, quick death.

⁴ There were an extremely limited number of priests and doctors who saw him, always with his mask on, but these men do not concern us in the limited analysis of the valet problem.

⁵ Only a remnant of one of the supports of the church west façade is extant. The west portal of the church would have been approximately 30, rue Saint-Paul, Paris 4ème.

Playing Cards in the Seventeenth Century

John Noone says that there were many varieties of the spelling of the last name of the Man in the Iron Mask, “Dauger.” Spelling, especially of names of people, was often approximated according to pronunciation. No one seemed to mind if a name was spelled one way in one text but differently in the next one. Here are the other variations of the name that Noone printed: “Daugier, Doger, Dogier, d’Auger, d’Augier, d’Oger, d’Ogier, Auger, Augier, Oger, Ogier” (Noone 212). Maurice Duvivier was the first writer to muse on the many spellings of Dauger (Duvivier 120).

There are an unusually large number of spelling variations that can be made in this last name, especially because the first letters can be O or A or d’O or d’A or D’O or D’A. It can even start with H, as we will see below. In the rest of the name there are also many possible placements of letters. When the “i” in the spelling of Ogier is dropped, it creates Oger. When the name is spelled Doger, there are two deformations, the dropping of both the “i” and the apostrophe.

Since there was a French nobleman in Louis XIV’s court, Eustache d’Auger de Cavoye (also sometimes spelled “Eustache d’Ogier de Cavoye”), who had almost the same name as the famous prisoner, Noone referenced the origin of the d’Auger de Cavoye name to illustrate the many ways in which d’Auger and Dauger could be written. He said the Cavoye family claimed to be “...descended from Oger the Dane (Hogier the Ardennois) one of the twelve peers of Charlemagne” (Noone 212). A biography of Eustache d’Auger de Cavoye’s younger brother, Louis, titled *Le Marquis de Cavoye 1640–1716: Un Grand Maréchal des Logis de la Maison du Roi*, tells that the family believed this was the origin of their family name (Huguet 87).

Then Noone, as an interesting expansion about the Danish companion-at-arms of Charlemagne, noted that in old packs of French playing cards, the face cards, that is, the King, Queen, and Knave (also called Jack) cards, were assigned to an accepted set of famous people from the historical French court. The Knave or Jack of Spades was often personified by Hogier le Danois (sometimes spelled Ogier, sometimes Oger). Hogier probably was a real courtier in the court of emperor Charlemagne, although there are aspects of his story that seem mythical.

The assignment of names of historical characters to the picture cards in decks of playing cards is not practiced now except in imitation of old designs but it was conventional in seventeenth-century Europe. In an article on seventeenth-century card games, Orest Ranum (Ranum 556)

cites an article in *Bulletin du Vieux Papier* that gives 1640 as the time when card makers in the French provinces began to use the same naming practices as Paris card designers, thus giving a general point of French consciousness as to the regularization of the historical characters on the cards.

The Bibliothèque Nationale's online web site *Gallica* has many images of playing cards that show, on the face cards, the names of the historical characters pictured. We are able to see the deck called *Jeu de cartes au portrait de Paris* (Trioullier), made in the early 1760s, which has these assignments for the face cards: the King, Queen, Jack/Knave of Hearts are named Charles (Charlemagne), Judic (Judith), and La Hire (*nom de guerre* of Etienne de Vignolles, knight under Charles VII of France's command (van Rensselaer 167–168); Clubs are marked Alexandre (Alexander the Great), Argine (anagram for *regina*), and the Jack/Knave carries the name of the creator of the card deck, Jean-François Trioullier; Diamonds are marked César (Caesar), Rachel (the *Bible's* Rachel), and Hector (Hector de Galard, captain of the guard to Louis XI of France, although sometimes he is also the Trojan warrior); Spades are David (the *Bible's* King David), Pallas (Pallas Athena), and Hogier.

Card games are ideal entertainment for people who have a sedentary profession, such as prison guards and governors, and also for those people that a government forces to be sedentary: their prisoners. While King Louis XIV and his marshals and chancellors gambled at cards during evening *appartements* at Saint-Germain-en-Laye and Versailles, the people they had put in prison played too. High-ranking prisoners played cards with their jailers when there was an inclination on both sides to do so. We have mostly to rely on our general feeling that this goes without saying because there are few references in scholarly literature to seventeenth-century card playing in prison. Georges Mongrédien says that the prince de Condé (1621–1686), cousin of the king, imprisoned during the Fronde, played cards with his guards (Mongrédien, *Condé* 89).⁶ We are also told by Antonia Fraser that François d'Aubigné's (later Madame de Maintenon, Louis XIV's second wife, 1635–1719) father played cards with his jailers at the Niort prison where he was incarcerated and she was born (Fraser 150).

⁶ In particular, Guillaume de Peichpeirou Comminges, Comte de Guitaut (1626–1685), Condé's chief of his personal guards. He was the nephew of comte François de Guitaut-Comminges (1581–1663), captain of guards for Anne of Austria.

THE VALET: LOUVOIS'S INVITED GUEST

With few actual historical references but with a great deal of confidence, we can say that it is very likely that Saint-Mars, the prison governor to whom the marquis de Louvois wrote a letter about the valet who would soon be coming as a prisoner, would be familiar with cards and would have played his fair share of games, both as a soldier, which he was before he was governor of Pignerol, and as a prison superintendant in charge of a bored staff and a handful of miscreants in an isolated prison in the Alps. He would have seen the face, the weapon, and the name of Hogier the Dane practically every day of his life.

Who Was the “*Valet*”?

In French, the Knave or Jack, the third-ranking picture card in a suit of cards, is called the *Valet*.

The Knave of Spades is called the *Valet de Piques*; “*pique*” translated literally as “spade” in English. The remaining three picture cards of the third rank are the *Valet de Coeurs*, the *Valet de Trèfles*, and the *Valet de Carreaux*.

When Louvois said that Eustache Dauger was “*un valet*” in his letter to Saint-Mars, he was making a pun on Dauger’s last name.

A homophonic heterograph is a pun that makes a link between two words that sound the same but are written differently, in this case, Dauger and Hogier. Before even getting that far with this particular pun though, you have to know another connection that is not a sound-alike set of words but which is a set of interchangeable words: *valet* and Hogier. One of the *valets* in a deck of cards is customarily Hogier.

The structure of the joke is that the prisoner’s last name sounds exactly like the historical character (Hogier) anthropomorphized on *Valet* (Jack, Knave) playing cards. Eustache Dauger does not need extravagant furniture because he is only “*un valet*.”

We sense that “*un valet*” carries a pejorative connotation in this joke. There are historical precedents for the use of this word as an insult. One reads in Dr. Héroard’s (1551–1628) diary, the exact record of King Louis XIII’s (1601–1643) health and activities kept by his doctor from his birth, that the most infuriating thing his father Henri IV (1553–1610) could do to his son was to force him to admit he was his father’s valet (Héroard 1: IV). At a critical point in the Grand Condé’s relationship with the king, Anne of Austria, and Mazarin between the Fronde of the Parlement (1648–1649) and the Fronde of the Princes (1650–1653), the Condé family, who were

opposed to Mazarin, began calling their eldest brother a valet of Mazarin to indicate they disdained his alliance with the slippery cardinal (Motteville 422). We have then, in the pun, three passages: Dauger is Hogier; Hogier is a *Valet* in a deck of cards; to be a valet of someone is humiliating. Both Saint-Mars and Louvois lived in sections of society where card playing was popular, so both men knew that Hogier le Danois was a *Valet* and both would enjoy having that connection turned into a laugh by Dauger being verbally dressed as valet.

Dix-septièmistes will already have made the connection between this complicated joke and the *préciosité* of the Paris salons. Madame de Rambouillet, whose house had seen so many delicious *conversations d'esprit*, had died only a few years before Louvois wrote the letter we are discussing, but her traditions lived on in the living rooms of her imitators. Writers, poets, *bon vivants*, and an occasional deep thinker came together at the homes of hostesses at regular moments in the week to talk, but more than that, to talk cleverly using historical, mythological, and literary allusions to describe current society matters, preferably current amorous endeavors by members of the society in the house or outside of the house. To belong to *salon* society, one was expected occasionally to launch a *bon mot* for the group. The *précieuses* counted points for wit, shock, and arbitrary connections held together by elaborate lattices of poetry and prose. Saint-Mars knew nothing of the salons other than that they existed, but Louvois had social connections that required him to be a player in these word games:

In a highly conversational and aristocratic milieu their object was to distinguish themselves where possible by originality of thought or expression. It was given to only a few, such as Voiture, to achieve originality of thought, and the others, wisely, concentrated on the art of rendering their ideas more striking by the piquancy of their vocabulary or by the ingenious construction of their phrases (Maland 56-57).

So let us not give credit to Louvois for originality; these plays on words were all the rage in his social circle; he was merely following fashion by inserting clever, hidden messages into communications with friends.⁷ As to the execution of this pun, however, we must credit Louvois with a real coup. His play on words juggles Dauger, Hogier, and the miscreant, imaginary valet. It is a beautiful pun. Unfortunately for Louvois, it is this

⁷ Saint-Mars's wife's sister was Louvois's mistress.

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stunning joke which may prove to be the critical weakness in the sturdy barriers the regime built to hide Eustache Dauger that scholars need to make progress in solving the mystery of the man that Louvois was charged with keeping anonymous and hidden.

But there is more historical content in this joke. There are not just three “people” in the joke, but a fourth, who is the protagonist, the most important player: Louis d’Auger de Cavoye.

There is a heretofore little known chapter in the extramarital love life of the marquis de Louvois that is the mainstay of the argument that the minister of war’s “valet” was a personal joke, that Eustache Dauger must have been the famous prisoner’s real name, and further, that the marquis de Louvois, contrary to what has always been assumed, did not have any background knowledge about Eustache Dauger on the date of 19 July 1669—that he was catering to his own sense of humor and to that of the old Musketeer, a *parent* of his mistress.

The married marquis de Louvois, in 1668, the year previous to his 19 July letter, had been attempting to have an affair with a young, beautiful, rich, married girl named Marie Sidonie de Lenoncourt, marquise de Courcelles (1650–1685). His efforts to experience double adultery had not been successful, however.

The marquise de Courcelles had preferred to give her favors to Louis d’Auger de Cavoye (1639–1716), a young noble at court and friend of the king (Pougin 21). We have referenced him above in connection with the history of the d’Auger name. Jacques Hillairet, historian of Paris, said of Louis de Cavoye, “*Le marquis de Cavoie avait été élevé avec Louis XIV; il fut l’un des plus brillants seigneurs de son temps, sut gagner l’affection de Turenne, de Luxembourg, de Racine, mais s’attira l’inimitié de Louvois*” (Hillairet 501). While keeping Louvois on her *boudoir* doorstep, the teenage marquise had an affair with Louis d’Auger de Cavoye, infuriating her husband, the marquis de Courcelles, who challenged de Cavoye to a duel. Dueling was illegal, and both duelists were arrested in the first week of July 1668 and taken to the *Conciergerie* to serve sentences (Pougin 16). In January 1669, six months later, Marie Sidonie appeared to be pregnant. In April, the marquis de Courcelles, while still in jail (as was Louis d’Auger de Cavoye), began a court prosecution against his wife for adultery (Pougin 16). She was taken into custody and gave birth on 5 July to a child that soon died.

What the story above shows is that Louvois and Louis d’Auger de Cavoye were rivals for the sexual favors of Marie Sidonie. Cavoye had

gotten what Louvois had not, Louvois found an excuse to put him in prison, and did so. It would not be unusual in those circumstances for Louvois to have been pleased with his consolation prizes, the incarceration of his rival and the downfall of the girl who had spurned him. These events had been taking place a few months before and even one week before 19 July 1669, when Louvois wrote the letter to Saint-Mars in which he called the prisoner Eustache Dauger a valet.

Louvois was referring to his rival for the attention of Marie Sidonie de Lenoncourt, marquise de Courcelles, more than to Eustache Dauger, an unknown nobody whose name furnished Louvois an opportunity to make fun of Louis d'Auger de Cavoye. D'Auger and Dauger had the same name. Writing the pun to Saint-Mars nursed Louvois's smarting self-confidence, which only someone as spectacular⁸ as Marie Sidonie was able to damage, his self-confidence being normally solid. Saint-Mars' wife's sister was Louvois's mistress, so Saint-Mars would have known of the failed pursuit of Marie Sidonie and Louvois's "enmity" for Louis d'Auger de Cavoye.

Why Has the Explanation of "*Un Valet*" Been Difficult?

We are grateful to previous researchers for highlighting the different spellings of Dauger. Duvivier and Noone came to within a hair's breadth of solving this difficult game of nomenclature, card playing, and male rivalry that Louvois unintentionally set for us.

First of all, a pun like this one is impossible to understand when one does not have the requisite knowledge of the compared items. If there is no knowledge of Louis d'Auger de Cavoye and none of his rivalry with Louvois—if there is no experience looking at a hand of playing cards with Hogier the Dane's face and name printed on one of them, then it is impossible to hear the bell ring when these three items are likened to Eustache Dauger.

But that has not been the only obstacle. Here are some others:

1. We are not accustomed to a family name being interchangeably spelled with a buffet of choices. The multiple possible spellings of the prisoner's last name, Dauger, have confused us.

⁸ Her biography is well worth reading: Paul Pougin, *Mémoires et Correspondance de la Marquise de Courcelles publiés d'après les manuscrits avec une notice des notes et les pièces justificatives* (Paris: P. Jannet, Libraire, MDCCCLV).

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2. Our playing cards are no longer labeled with the names of knights, kings, queens, and famous royal mistresses who lived in myth, ancient history, or distant history. So one key to unlock Louvois's pun has to be knowledge of archaic customs in gaming, a recondite scholarly subject.
3. The design of playing cards is not where scholars would expect to find hard historical data. Seasoned Mask researchers, locked on to facts about prison cell construction and the swollen list of Mask might-have-beens, have not placed enough emphasis on interdisciplinary studies. They have not asked art historians to join their search. Art and architecture historians should be consulted on historical mysteries because creators of history in every era often want to show their *préciosité* by using allusions to ancient or contemporary literature, characters, battle sites, love affairs, and other nests of specialized knowledge in their paintings, poems, stories, and building details. Art historians have the plaintexts for these codes.
4. English-, German-, Spanish-, and Italian-speakers have never used the word "valet" for the third-ranking picture card because the word, at least when used in connection with playing cards, is French. English speakers use the word "valet" only for a servant. Researchers using any language but French have been at a disadvantage.
5. In old English, German, Spanish, and Italian playing cards that follow the tradition of using names of famous people on the picture cards, the historical figures might not be French kings, queens, and heroes, so Hogier the Dane would possibly not appear on cards in non-French card decks, again limiting the number of people who might have understood the joke.

So the connections between Dauger, Hogier, and "*un valet*" have been hidden by haphazard spelling, language barriers, geographical distance, and the discontinuation of a historical tradition in designing playing cards. As for the link between Louis d'Auger de Cavoye and the marquis de Louvois, it is but one small sexual rivalry of Louis XIV's court of which there were thousands, which almost never creep into scholarly research, unless one is studying just such things. Biographies of Louvois, if they

mention her at all, do not connect the restless Marie Sidonie with Louvois's valet.⁹

Conclusions

First, Louvois's show of his pent-up jealousy for Louis d'Auger de Cavoye in the 19 July letter indicates that, at that first moment of his experience with the prisoner whose name had been given to him as "Eustache Dager," Louvois had no knowledge of the prisoner other than his name and that he was to be arrested and sent to Pignerol prison, a prison for people who had been on the wrong side of a political matter. If Louvois had known how important this prisoner was to Louis XIV, he would never have dared to joke about him in a written document using a reference to his own failed lechery. He was a young man, just taking on the weight of his position after being tutored by his father, Michel Le Tellier, his predecessor, for many years. His father was still checking his son's job performance and was a stickler for proper conduct. He would not have approved of his son's light-hearted comment about a prisoner, especially one committed to paper that seemed to characterize the prisoner.¹⁰ And the cautious, wily Le Tellier would have been right. We see the consequences of Le Tellier junior's mistake. By this bravado, we have been given information about a very mysterious prisoner for whom the official, royal directive was that we should know absolutely nothing.

The larger picture becomes clear. Louvois was making a joke about someone he knew and hated, not about Eustache Dager, a man it appears he did not know. And in the beginning there was no reason for Louvois or anyone else to spend two minutes wondering who Eustache Dager was. There were secret arrests of boring evildoers all the time. Louvois, at this starting line, did not foresee the long race he would run with this particular prisoner, nor the gravity of the case that would gradually be revealed to him. He had been ordered to take care of this fiddling matter by his master, and, as always, he scrambled to obey. His flippant, surly bit of old boys' club humor peddled to Saint-Mars tells us he did not consider the prisoner a challenge or a threat. The threat he minded was Louis d'Auger de Cavoye.

⁹ This paper found the connection d'Auger/Louvois/Courcelles through a book on the history of Paris streets. She is given by Jacques Hillairet, *Dictionnaire des rues de Paris*, 2, 501, as a former mistress and previous owner of Cavoye's hôtel at 52, rue des Saints-Pères.

¹⁰ Vergé-Franceschi also referred to the impropriety of Louvois's joke, 257–58.

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Second, the analysis of Louvois's joke confirms that the spelling of Eustache Dauger's last name is "Dauger" and not "Danger." "Dauger" has been contested by some of the major writers on this subject in favor of "Danger," but Louvois's comparison of the prisoner to two other men, one of whom is Hogier and the other being d'Auger, confirms that the "Dauger" spelling is the correct one.

Third, despite the use of the name in a few official documents, Louvois's letter being one, investigators have never been sure that Eustache Dauger was the prisoner's real name, because often the authorities fabricated names of prisoners. The finding in this paper that Louvois allowed himself to make a pun on the prisoner's name in a communication about official war office business is the basis for the theory that the authority that ordered the arrest of Eustache Dauger, Louis XIV, believed that Eustache Dauger was the name the man had used for himself until then. Eustache Dauger, to the best of Louis XIV's understanding, was the real name of the prisoner he ordered sergeant-major Vauroy to arrest in July 1669 near Calais.

Louis XIV therefore gave this name to Louvois when he asked his minister to instruct the governor of Pignerol to prepare a cell. If Louvois had been told by Louis XIV that there was a problem saying the prisoner's name, Louvois would not have written it to Saint-Mars. He would have given the new prisoner a false name.

It is not likely that Louvois would have made up "Eustache Dauger." The joke would not have had value to Louvois if he himself was making up the name "Dauger" to serve as the nickname of the presumed criminal. The joke was born out of a naturally occurring conflation of names, which was the pattern of *salon* jokes. The subject material had to be a real artifact picked out of the actions or names of others and then appended to another action or event that showed the opinion of the author. Making up the root of the joke would have been cheating. He used the name the king gave him.

Fourth, we see that Louis XIV had a secret that he wished to hide from everyone else, including his closest advisors. Louis XIV's knowledge of the prisoner is part of what must be determined before the mystery of the Man in the Iron Mask can be solved. The solution to the valet problem intensifies that point, which has been made by many writers. Louis XIV kept to himself the nature of the "dissatisfaction" he had about the man he arrested. He gave his colleagues Dauger's name, but not his identity. It begins to appear that Louis XIV did not tell any of the operatives who captured and incarcerated Eustache Dauger anything at all about the man

they arrested and supervised. Probably even the veteran advisor and highly trusted Michel Le Tellier, Louvois's father, who co-signed Dauger's arrest order, was told a fable, as were Saint-Mars, Rosarges, Ru, and the doctors who treated his illnesses. All these characters were in file behind Louvois, the man through whom Louis XIV personally managed Eustache Dauger's imprisonment. It was Louvois who took Louis XIV's directions, sent them to the governor of the prison, who in turn gave orders to his staff. If Louvois was not told who the prisoner was, or at least was not told enough to keep him from being surly and personal in an official communication, then not one of his subordinates knew. At first Saint-Mars was curious. His pride in the fables he was telling people about Dauger attests to that. But instinctively we feel that this braggadocio came from his own lack of knowledge. Was Louvois curious? Eventually, probably, but at the point of arrest, Dauger didn't interest him at all.

It is tempting to say that the discovery of Louvois's pun on the name of Dauger proves that Dauger was not a valet, but we cannot yet be certain of that. He could still have been a valet without Louvois knowing it. But we are closer to that certainty, based on the logical consequences of Louvois's statement being a joke rather than a description of the prisoner. Previously, it was probable enough that he was a valet that all authors on the subject have examined this description at length and many of the most erudite have formed their theories based on the valet. Now we see that Eustache Dauger was as likely a valet as he was a shoemaker or a bureaucrat. We now have no hint as to what his former occupation was and we never really did.

If there is a broad lesson for historical studies in this matter, it is that an interdisciplinary approach to a tough problem is likely to lead to success. Deciphering the marquis de Louvois's letter to Saint-Mars has required knowledge of numerous sidebars of seventeenth-century history. It has also required a generous amount of skepticism about previous strategies and assumptions. Historians studying the Man in the Iron Mask have suspected that the jailers of Eustache Dauger, including Louis XIV, were devious and desired to mislead. They have been aware of M. de Louvois's reputation for cold deceit in other official ministry of war business. But many who have read his July 19, 1669 letter to Saint Mars have credited him with honesty and candor in it. With that credit in place, the problem was not solved.

Jean Markale comes to a conclusion that deeds were done in this matter that is unpleasant to look at:

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Que de cachotteries! Que de duplicité! A la lecture de ces documents parfaitement authentiques et conservés dans les Archives, on a l'impression désagréable de se trouver au fond d'un panier de crabes. Mais les crabes dont il s'agit ici sont ceux qui ont fait la grandeur de la France et dont on vante les mérites aux petits écoliers comme aux grands lycéens de la noble patrie française. (Markale 275)

Théodore Lung, perhaps the most thorough early archival researcher on the Mask, wrote to us in 1873 about the agonizing conclusion he came to after years of research on the Mask in the French archives of war:

On n'est en droit, d'ailleurs de ne négliger aucune dépêche, en apparence insignifiante, car celle-là justement se trouve avoir souvent une importance réelle. Or, par où commencer, dans quel sac puiser? Que de temps perdu! Que de patience! Que de richesses d'ailleurs non classées encore un peu partout! Et l'on pourra conclure avec moi, que, malgré les quatre mille dépêches nouvelles environ que j'ai trouvées concernant cette question, on est encore loin d'avoir obtenu tout ce qu'on est en mesure d'attendre. (Lung 51)

He says to his readers that he could not do everything that has to be done to solve the mystery; he can only provide some leads that will serve others who follow him. "*Aidez-moi,*" he pleads.

Issues Raised by the Absence of the Valet

The argument that has always defended the royal Bourbon family from connection with Eustache Dauger has been that the marquis de Louvois said he was a valet. We have assumed that Louvois knew the details of the man's crime and background. We could not argue a blood connection with the Bourbons when we were told by the war minister that the prisoner was a valet. A valet is a servant, and not even the contemptuous Louvois would call a royal prince a valet; that would be much against the code of respect for royals and nobles. If Louvois wrote in an official document that Dauger was a valet, then he was most certainly not a Bourbon family member. But now we see that Louvois was not describing the prisoner; he was just using an accidental collision of identical names to make fun of a rival.

Now we can begin to ask if Eustache Dauger was a direct threat to Louis XIV and to his reign. If the king was not open with his most trusted

confidants, then this matter must have been illegal. Resolving the valet issue faces us with the possibility that an extremely cruel act was committed by Louis XIV for his personal convenience and possibly for reasons of state. Depending upon the rank of Eustache Dauger, whenever we discover it, the explanation of this crime may have consequences for our basic assumptions about the policies and life of the Sun King, which would lead to some reassessments of Louis XIV's place in the European seventeenth century. For that reason, historians must continue to ask why Louis XIV imprisoned Eustache Dauger.

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“Meh”: The Unmarked Jews of Nicolas Boindin’s *Le Port de mer*

by

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A priori assumptions about Jews abounded in seventeenth-century France. Originating in the Middle Ages, some of these assumptions drew from superstition; many French people believed that Jews engaged in the ritual murder of Christian children, that they were lustful, and that they held a lifelong pact with Satan. Others stemmed from historical events and realities such as those that held that Jewish men were feminized through circumcision, that Jews were Christ killers, that they were traders of second-hand goods and usurers.¹ The playwright and theorist Nicolas Boindin was born in 1676 into a society that espoused such beliefs and inevitably came in contact with these biases. Yet, he depicts two Jewish characters in his now little-known 1704 play, *Le Port de mer*, in a manner that suggests that his own perspective was largely unformed by them.² Although Nicolas Boindin includes characters he either explicitly identifies as or suggests are Jewish, these characters remain fundamentally “unmarked” by their Jewishness. In using the term “unmarked,” I am adapting Judaic Studies scholar Irvn M. Resnick’s concept of “marking” that he indirectly defines as the referencing of an indelible nature, in this case a Jewish one (11). While Boindin’s characters do have superficial markings of Jewishness, I argue that they remain fundamentally unmarked in that he does not attribute any indelible Jewish nature to these characters, nor do the other characters appear to respond to any such perceived nature. For this reason, *Le Port de mer* represents a significant departure from how most of Boindin’s contemporaries thought about the Jews.

Henry Lancaster underscores the importance of these characters in noting that *Le Port de mer* “is the first French play in which one of the leading male characters is a modern Jew and in which the heroine is a modern Jewess” (270). The characters in question are Sabatin, a father who is a merchant, and his daughter, Benjamine, who is looking for a hus-

¹ See Esther Benbassa’s *Histoire des Juifs de France*, Robert Michael’s *A History of Catholic Antisemitism*, Joshua Trachtenberg’s *The Devil and the Jews* and Myriam Yardeni’s *Anti-Jewish Mentalities in Early Modern Europe*, among others, for an overview of the perception of Jews throughout French history.

² I would like to thank Perry Gethner for introducing me to this work.

band. As historian Adam Sutcliffe remarks, “Judaism was [...] widely used in the seventeenth century as a form of conceptual token, deployed for its particular rhetorical authority” (87). Indeed, Jewishness was a powerful concept, incorporated into a text less to say something about the Jews themselves than to give authors a foil that allowed them to say something about their own society instead. That Boindin included Jewish characters in his play suggests that he did so for a strategic purpose. While literary scholar John Dunkley has addressed Boindin’s approach to the “other” in his article “Nicholas [sic] Boindin: The Presentation and Representation of Alterity,” the present work goes further in that it will consider a dynamic fundamental to *Le Port de mer* itself, yet distinct from any religious tension, as an indication as to why Boindin depicts Sabatin and Benjamine as he does. Specifically, I show that instead of emphasizing these characters’ Jewishness, Boindin focuses on the tension that exists between the father and the daughter over the choice of a husband. While Sabatin and Benjamine are on one level simply playing out the sort of money vs. love generational dispute common to comedic father-daughter pairings of the past (cf: Molière), it is through his focus on this storyline played out by two Jewish characters that Boindin is, in fact, commenting on the place of otherness in late seventeenth-century French society.

Nicolas Boindin was not a prolific writer, and his stint as a fiction writer was a particularly short one.³ One of only four authors of comedies performed at the Comédie-Française during the last years of Louis XIV’s reign (Lancaster 266), Boindin published three comedic plays between 1701 and 1707; a fourth appeared posthumously in 1753.⁴ Three of these plays are only one act long. Accepted into the Académie des inscriptions et belles-lettres in 1706 at the age of thirty and supported by influential peers such as Voltaire, Boindin nonetheless never came to occupy one of the coveted chairs of the Académie française. A nineteenth-century biographer attributes this rejection to Boindin’s rather public and unabashed atheism which, as I later show, helped define the role Jewishness plays in *Le Port de mer* (*Bibliographie* 15). Whatever the reason, Boindin’s rejection did not appear to deeply trouble him. Indeed, he gloried in his reputation as a contrarian and used his atheism as conversational fodder during his regular visits to Paris’s cafés. It was most likely at the popular

³ Boindin also wrote memoirs, letters and one discourse, some of which were published after his death in 1751.

⁴ Lancaster casts some doubt on the attribution of *Le petit maître de robe*, thought to be Boindin’s fourth and last play (267).

Café Laurent that Boindin met Antoine Houdar de La Motte who became a close friend and collaborator on two of his comedies. While they are said to have co-written *Les trois Gascons* in 1701, it is thought that La Motte only contributed advice on the later *Le Port de mer* (Dunkley “Alterity” 84).⁵ It was this play that enjoyed the greatest success among Boindin’s contemporaries, with sixty performances by the end of 1715 (Lancaster 272).⁶ Despite his popularity at the time and *Le Port de mer*’s success, little current scholarship has been written on Nicolas Boindin.⁷

It is easy to understand why audiences found *Le Port de mer* appealing. It is a light, comedic love story in the manner of Molière, set in a seaport and populated by a cast of characters with tongue-in-cheek names. Sabatin is the molièresque father, an unscrupulous man with his eye on the bottom line who has arranged for his daughter, Benjamine, to marry Doutremer, a seafaring fellow who has a way with pirating. But Benjamine finds Doutremer’s coarse manners and the prospect of a life at sea with him repugnant; she prefers his more refined nephew, Leandre, who is besotted with her, too. Fortunately, they have loyal servants to help them find a way to be together. Leandre’s valet, La Saline, and Benjamine’s lady’s maid, Marine, devise a scheme to dissuade Sabatin and Doutremer from pursuing the marriage. They stumble upon Leandre’s thieving former footman, Brigantin, who has been sent to the galleys for stealing from theatergoers. Facing little choice, Brigantin quickly offers to help Leandre as a means of compensating for his earlier wrongdoings while in his service. Disguise is at the heart of their scheme. La Saline dresses as a Turkish slave trader, Brigantin as a female slave, and Leandre as a Moor—complete with blackface—and head to the slave market where

⁵ Repeated disputes with La Motte over authorship credit among other issues led to the dissolution of their friendship. Boindin began to frequent the Procope instead (Bibliographie 16).

⁶ Lancaster notes that “it was acted more frequently than any other play by an author who began to write after 1700” (272). *Le Port de mer* opened for *Bérénice*, *Ariane*, *Les femmes savantes* and *L’école des femmes*, among others. Its format (and, perhaps, its exoticism) lent itself to popularity. As a result of the Querelle du théâtre incited by Madame de Maintenon in 1694, fewer tragedies were performed and the most successful productions were short, one-act plays. As Dunkley explains, “Afin de lutter contre la désaffection du public et la concurrence de la Foire, les Comédiens-Français trouvèrent deux expédients: diminuer le nombre relatif de représentations de tragédies et jouer fréquemment les petites pièces en un acte [...]. Le moment était donc favorable pour les compositions de Boindin” (“Introduction” xxix).

⁷ A search of the MLA database on May 3, 2014 turned up only four titles, three of which were written by Dunkley.

they expect to run into Sabatin. As anticipated, he is there, and La Saline easily convinces him to bring home the two slaves to try out for free. Once at Sabatin's house, Brigantin and Leandre seek out Marine and Benjamine, to whom they reveal their true identities once they are convinced of Benjamine's feelings for Leandre. They return to their disguises when Sabatin interrupts them. Brigantin, in character as a female slave, explains that she was describing to his daughter that she had married a pirate only to discover she was his thirteenth wife. This pirate, Doutremer himself, was now back on shore seeking his fourteenth wife. Sabatin is sufficiently outraged, but as luck would have it, Doutremer shows up right at that time, and the three schemers are no longer able to maintain their masquerade. Rather than punishing their treachery, Sabatin instead asks Doutremer whether he would prefer to allow Leandre to marry Benjamine. In exchange for the return of some jewels his nephew has stolen from him, Doutremer hands over Benjamine to him. A singing, dancing *Feste Marine* follows, complete with Australian women and a monkey.⁸

The seaport setting of *Le Port de mer* surdetermines the entire play, from the names of the characters to their cavalier attitude toward women. The play abounds with foreigners, common criminals, slaves and pirates—the usual suspects in any seaport world. The two Jewish characters, Sabatin, and his daughter, Benjamine, are right at home with this motley crew, all of whom, with the exception of those who are already enslaved, appear to live without fear of prejudice or imprisonment. This is surprising given the stigma popular imagination attached to such characters at the time. In fact, Boindin draws our attention to the absence of such prejudice in his play through his choice of setting. *Le Port de mer* takes place in a Tuscan port town called Livorno,⁹ which is known for its “Leggi Livornine” or Livornian Laws. Enacted in 1590 by Ferdinando I of Medici, these laws

⁸ While it is tempting to regard Shakespeare's *The Merchant of Venice* as inspiration for this play due to its seaport setting and the Jewish father-daughter main characters, it is highly unlikely that Boindin had read or seen it. John Pemble remarks that “The French did not discover Shakespeare until they discovered England; and they did not discover England until Voltaire, the abbé Prévost, and the baron de Montesquieu crossed the Channel at various times in the 1720s” (1). He goes on to explain that Shakespeare's plays were not performed in France until the early nineteenth century (35). Furthermore, I have not found evidence that Boindin knew English or that Shakespeare's plays were readily available in France at this time either in English or in French translation (see Pemble xiii and Mancewicz). (I would like to thank Melissa Walter for suggesting these references.) Lancaster attributes Boindin's inspiration instead to Molière's *Sicilien* and Champmesle's *Rue de Saint Denis* (270).

⁹ “Leghorn” is the town's English name.

provided amnesty for some criminals, established privileges for merchants that included tax benefits, Tuscan nationality, and the right to own property and, most importantly for our present study, allowed freedom of worship. Livorno became a thriving, cosmopolitan city, a haven for petty criminals, merchants, pirates, and religious refugees from around the world. Jews from Spain and Portugal were the first of their religion to immigrate to Livorno following their expulsion from their home countries in 1492 and 1497, respectively. In 1667, a second wave of Jews arrived from what is now Algeria. Livorno was exceptionally accommodating to this population. Unlike their experience in almost all other places in Europe, Jews of Livorno were not required to live in a ghetto in this city, nor were they obliged to wear identifying clothing; they could also hire Christians as domestic help, as Sabatin himself does. While elsewhere Jews would be indelibly marked as other and treated as such, in Livorno they received the same treatment as everyone else. The concept of “otherness” was, ironically, foreign to Livorno.

This location calls to mind Foucault’s heterotopias, spaces that exist within societies, each of which serves a function (761). There are different types of heterotopias, but Foucault provides the following overarching definition:

des lieux réels, des lieux effectifs, des lieux qui sont dessinés dans l’institution même de la société, et qui sont des sortes de contre-emplacements, sortes d’utopies effectivement réalisées dans lesquelles tous les autres emplacements réels que l’on peut trouver à l’intérieur de la culture sont à la fois représentés, contestés et inversés, des sortes de lieux qui sont hors de tous les lieux, bien que pourtant ils soient effectivement localisables. (755–56)

Heterotopias are, in essence, realized utopias. Examples include theaters and gardens as well as convalescent homes, psychiatric wards, and prisons. While only some of Foucault’s heterotopias are localities in which people find themselves voluntarily, all of them are demarcated in space. Specifically, Livorno is a type of “heterotopia of deviation” which Foucault defines as “celle dans laquelle on place les individus dont le comportement est déviant par rapport à la moyenne ou à la norme exigée” (757). I would add that even the suspicion that these individuals’ behavior deviates from the norm justifies their inclusion in such spaces. As does a prison, Livorno houses criminals, but it also welcomes those such as Jews whose mere presence elsewhere gives rise to concerns. However, unlike a prison or the other heterotopias Foucault identifies, Livorno does not have

strictly defined boundaries. This seaport town opens onto the Ligurian Sea and thereby allows for a freedom of movement uncharacteristic of most heterotopias. It is this freedom of movement that Dautremer references toward the end of *Le Port de mer* and which I will analyze below as it relates to the particular function of this heterotopia. Like Jewishness in seventeenth-century writing and therefore the Jewishness of *Le Port de mer*'s characters, Livorno as a heterotopia that welcomes Jews among others serves a particular function in this play.

As mentioned above, the two heroes of *Le Port de mer* are Jewish and enjoy the freedoms life in Livorno affords them, and I maintain that Boindin's depiction of Sabatin and Benjamine reflects their status as Jews in Livorno. Boindin does identify Sabatin as Jewish and Benjamine as such by relation, but the Jewishness of these characters does not get in the way of their interactions with those around them, nor does it determine the storyline. Indeed, there is a collective "meh," a social indifference to what was generally perceived as a significant and remarkable religious difference at the time. In other words, others do not seem to treat Sabatin and Benjamine differently because of their Jewishness; their Jewishness is "unremarkable," so to speak.

Nonetheless, Sabatin and Benjamine are dissimilar to each other in the degree to which they are unmarked, and I will argue below that this distinction is key to understanding their respective roles in the play. First, Sabatin and Benjamine are presented differently from the outset. The author (or perhaps his editor) identifies Sabatin as Jewish in the character list at the beginning of the play, and the other characters repeatedly mention his Jewishness to each other, referring to him as "nôtre Juif" [sic] and "le Juif." Benjamine's Jewishness, on the other hand, is never made explicit. We assume she is Jewish because her father is, but neither Boindin nor his characters mention this fact. Second, Sabatin's name is explicitly Jewish. Derived from the Italian "sabato" meaning "Saturday," it refers to the Jewish day of rest or Sabbath. The following humoristic exchange between Brigantin and La Saline in scene two further emphasizes the ethnic origins of the father's name:

Brigantin

A qui en veut donc ton Maître icy?

La Saline

A la fille d'un certain Juif, chez qui je me suis introduit.

Brigantin

Son nom ?

La Saline

Je n'en ai pû encore retenir que la moitié ; Hazaël-Raka-Nimbrod-Isarioth-Sabatin.

Brigantin

Quoi ! Benjamine, la fille de M. Sabatin ?¹⁰ (145)

In contrast, Sabatin's daughter is identified only by her first name, Benjamine. This name has its origins in the Old Testament but is a common name not only in Jewish but also in Christian families. It is a more ambiguous identifier than that of Sabatin, whose Jewishness is reinforced by La Saline's enumeration of his other names of biblical origin. Finally, Sabatin is a merchant, one of the few professions exercised by Jews in the seventeenth century.¹¹ Benjamine's primary occupation, on the other hand, entails convincing her father to allow her to marry the man she loves rather than the man he has chosen for her. Given Benjamine's lack of superficial markings of Jewishness, that her mother is never mentioned in the play should come as no surprise. Judaism is a matrilineal religion and the mother's absence further underscores Benjamine's unmarkedness.¹² In short, Benjamine's Jewishness is presumed but never identified explicitly, while Sabatin has explicit superficial markers of Jewishness.

This dissimilarity extends to Sabatin and Benjamine's respective natures, and while these natures do reflect the degree to which each character is identified as Jewish, I maintain that it is not their relative Jewishness that determines these natures, and that their natures are not perceived as particularly Jewish. On the one hand, Sabatin is the greedy patriarch simi-

¹⁰ It is worth noting that it is not Sabatin's Jewishness that evokes Brigantin's surprised reaction but the situation in general. His Jewishness is not the obstacle here; instead, it is, as we learn soon after, Sabatin's dubious character.

¹¹ Adam Sutcliffe asserts that "no ethnic group of the seventeenth and eighteenth centuries was more closely associated with commerce than the Jews" (71).

¹² While it is possible that Benjamine was conceived out of wedlock, the more plausible scenario for a daughter of a Jewish merchant of the time is that she is the product of an arranged marriage. There is therefore a strong likelihood that her mother, too, is Jewish. As Marsha L. Rozenblit explains, "Before the invention of the concept of civil marriage in the modern era, all marriages were conducted under religious auspices, and intermarriage in the technical sense did not take place." She continues, "The widespread practice of arranged marriage in the Jewish middle classes virtually guaranteed that Jews married other Jews" (277-78). Rozenblit also notes that civil marriage became widespread in Europe only in the twentieth century (278).

lar to the ones who populate Molière's plays: stubborn and somewhat shady in his dealings but able to be won over. Benjamine, on the other hand, does not seem to have inherited any of her father's character flaws. La Saline's continued discussion with Brigantin highlights this distinction. La Saline asks Brigantin if he knows M. Sabatin, to which Brigantin replies:

Trait pour trait. Tien, l'usure, la dureté, la défiance, la fraude, & le parjure, avec quelques règles [sic] d'Arithmétique n'est-ce pas ce qu'on appelle ici M. Sabatin ?

La Saline responds,

Justement, mais en récompense, la générosité, la tendresse, la franchise, & la constance, avec une taille divine, le visage le plus gracieux, les yeux les plus brillants du monde, & mille autres menus attraits, c'est ce qu'on appelle ici Benjamine. (146)

As we can see, Sabatin's many shortcomings are well known by others. It is true that popular imagination at the time often associated these particular shortcomings with Jewish merchants, as Dunkley observes.¹³ However, Boindin, through Brigantin, enumerates these character flaws not as traits specifically associated with Jewishness—after all, Benjamine has none of them—but instead as those particular to the traditional father figure who seeks an advantageous marriage for his daughter. Brigantin fears for Leandre not because he is courting the daughter of a man who is Jewish but because he is courting the daughter of a man who is greedy and stubborn. Brigantin knows that his former master, Leandre, will face a formidable opponent in trying to marry Benjamine for love, since he lacks the financial resources her father seeks.

In *Le Port de mer*, Boindin dissociates Jewishness from any particular indelible mark of a Jewish nature. Instead, it stands in for the system of Old Regime values that had slowly begun to unravel by its 1704 publication date. The dissimilarity in the degree to which Boindin identifies both Sabatin and Benjamine as Jewish does not mark them as having dissimilar—not to mention specifically – Jewish natures. Instead, it serves to identify them relative to a value system that maintains religion as a

¹³ "Marchand d'esclaves, usurier et homme d'affaires en train de méditer une banqueroute frauduleuse, Sabatin constitue une caricature de Juif tel que la mentalité populaire se le représentait alors" (Dunkley *Quatre comédies* lxi).

valid basis on which to pass judgment, a value system that Boindin, a self-professed atheist, does not espouse. When Boindin attributes superficial and easily recognizable markers of Jewishness such as a name and a trade to Sabatin, he is really identifying him as a patriarch who subscribes to the old world value system by which one person's being Jewish means something to another. It follows that Benjamine's lack of even superficial Jewish markers signals her disengagement from that system and thereby her modernity.¹⁴ For the atheistic Boindin, Jewishness is a signifier he appropriates to communicate new meaning rather than a source of interest in and of itself. Dunkley writes,

Boindin ne s'occupe nullement de la religion de Sabatin, sans doute parce qu'il regarde du même œil le judaïsme et le christianisme. C'est uniquement l'inhumanité du personnage et la malhonnêteté de ses affaires qu'il évoque. ... [S]on indifférence sentimentale n'a rien de spécifiquement juif ; la majorité des pères-*'obstacles'* des comédies lui ressemblent assez. (LXII-LXIII)

One only has to look back at Molière's Harpagon (*L'avare*), Sganarelle (*Le Médecin malgré lui*), Géronte and Argante (both in *Les Fourberies de Scapin*), among others, to find comedic incarnations of the traditional father figure who resemble Sabatin. None of them is Jewish, yet all take their role as old world patriarch to an extreme.

Like that of his literary predecessors, Sabatin's indelibly marked characteristic is not his Jewishness but his greed. Just as Sabatin is not the only father figure in early-modern French literature with this vice, he is also not the only inhabitant of Livorno with it. Based on his depictions of Sabatin and Benjamine, we can neither say that Boindin suggests that there exists a causal relationship between Jewishness and avarice nor that he disparages Jews. As Lancaster maintains, "The play cannot ... be considered anti-Semitic, for to [Sabatin's] daughter is attributed all the generosity, tenderness, and beauty that he lacks, while the Gentiles are not better than he" (271). Sabatin's greed results from his particular interpretation of patriarchal values that mark him as old school; after all, "l'avarice devient un vice avec l'âge" (Desan 118). What feeds this avarice is not Sabatin's Jewishness but his trade. Philippe Desan calls capitalism an institutionalized form of greed (115), and merchants such as Sabatin—not to mention pirates such as Doutremer—depend on and exploit this eco-

¹⁴ Even her name, which recalls that of Benjamin, the eternally youthful youngest child of Jacob, suggests that she belongs to a new, modern generation.

conomic system for their livelihood. Sabatin might be superficially marked as Jewish while Benjamine is not, but what fundamentally distinguishes him from his daughter is his stubborn adherence to and exploitation of a traditional system of values that prioritizes financial gain over love when deciding whom she should marry. While being superficially marked as Jewish does not entail being treated as “other” in Livorno, it does signify a generational difference that, in Sabatin’s case, plays out through his unscrupulous mercantilism.

Le Port de mer’s heterotopic setting functions to support the schemes of characters such as Sabatin. With its easy access to the sea, Livorno facilitates transactions both kosher and not; indeed, the seaport enables the greedy to thrive because it allows them freedom of movement between land and water. Literary critic Frank Lestringant remarks on the fact that people first displayed greediness around the same time the possibilities for their travel expanded, a statement that implies a co-dependence between greed and travel: one travels in order to satisfy one’s desire for material gain and one has a desire for material gain because one knows it is now possible to achieve it (149). As mentioned above, seaports such as Livorno lack strictly defined physical boundaries and thereby facilitate such travel. Livorno itself also lacks moral boundaries, as is evidenced by its openness to deviant populations. The seaport setting therefore lends itself well to the flourishing of greed and other potential harbingers of criminal behavior. Lestringant explains how, in turn, greed itself entails a further blurring of boundaries:

Ainsi donc l’avarice entraîne, avec l’expansion première de l’humanité hors d’elle-même, le brouillage des limites; elle établit la communication contre nature des lieux séparés et provoque le court-circuit de l’enfer et du ciel, de la terre solide et de l’élément liquide. (150)

Here, Lestringant references the moral gray zone in which greed resides and that, in *Le Port de mer*, echoes Livorno’s physical openness and its inclusiveness. While it is clear that this heterotopia plays an important role in support of its heterogeneous population, it also serves a broader function in relationship to its surrounding space.

Foucault states that “[les hétérotopies] ont, par rapport à l’espace restant, une fonction” (761), and it is this function that is the key to understanding that of the unmarked Jewish characters in Boindin’s play. In spite of its seediness, Livorno can be considered in a positive light as an unusually tolerant place where Old Regime values are relativized and reinterpreted. As I argue above, Sabatin’s superficial markers of Jewish-

ness suggest that he subscribes to—at least partially—a traditional value system that prioritizes financial gain over love in a marriage. While Livorno facilitates his mercantilism, it also fosters his greed, which is what defines him as other in the eyes of those with whom he interacts. Although he has a Jewish name and trade, Sabatin does not face criticism because of them but because of his unscrupulousness. In contrast, Benjamine, with her lack of superficial markers of Jewishness, embodies the modern values of Livorno itself. Because Boindin tells his public that her father is Jewish, it is particularly notable that he does not do the same for her even though she clearly is. I maintain that this is because Benjamine does not subscribe to the outmoded system of values of her father. Although Benjamine is Jewish, she remains outside the concept of otherness, a concept that Livorno does not recognize or foster. Despite this difference between the father and his daughter, neither is indelibly marked as Jewish, just as none of their compatriots is indelibly marked as other. I agree with Dunkley that “[i]t is in Jewishness that ... alterity is located. But this does not affect Jewishness as a whole” (“Nicholas [sic] Boindin” 91). In Livorno, all types come and go, and the concept of “otherness” remains foreign. It is no surprise that Boindin’s play is entitled “Le Port de mer” rather than “Benjamine” or even “Sabatin,” for it is the seaport itself that represents the modern values Boindin loudly touted in Paris’s cafés. After all, Boindin “était naturellement contradictoire” (*Biographie* 16). It is through an analysis of this author’s seemingly indifferent treatment of Jewishness at a time when most perceived it as a threatening other that we arrive at this understanding.

Le Port de mer is clearly a modern play set in a town where being called a pirate, a criminal, or a Jew is akin to being called brunette, green-eyed, or tall. In this play, these markers of identity have lost their meaning and operate as empty signifiers of the system that established their original values. Toward the end of the play, the pirate, Doutremer, reveals how slippery these markers have become. By that time, we have learned that he has another name, “Salomin,” which is most likely his birth name. Although no characters refer to him as Jewish, this Old Testament name referring to one of the kings of Israel certainly suggests that he is also Jewish.¹⁵ Just as Doutremer has given up a life on land in favor of one at sea,

¹⁵ This would indicate that Doutremer’s nephew, Leandre, is Jewish as well and that a marriage between him and Benjamine would therefore be considered proper. However, the fact that Doutremer is probably Jewish and, by relation, his nephew, seems to have eluded some of Boindin’s contemporaries who criticized the play’s ending. See Lancaster 272.

so too has he given up his birth name for one that reflects his seafaring ways. Doutremer chastises La Saline when he refers to him as “Monsieur Salomin” by responding, “Tais-toi, je ne suis Salomin qu’à Merseille [*sic*], & je suis ici Doutremer. Je change de nom & de pavillon, selon mes intérêts” (189). It is worth noting here that King Solomon’s best-known attribute was his wisdom.¹⁶ It is certainly no coincidence that Boindin put such a declaration in the mouth of a character the public would readily identify as wise. In doing so, Boindin is predicting the ultimate triumph of a value system in which superficial markers of identity serve simply as linguistic currency while one’s nature is now defined by the choices made by the individual. In other words, he predicts a triumph of the *modernes* over the *anciens* as we find in Livorno. Through his depiction of unmarked Jews, Boindin expresses his anticipation of a post-monarchal society in which citizens are no longer subject to the identities bestowed upon them by birth, and Old Regime rigidity is rejected in favor of a less stratified and less prejudiced mental frame.

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¹⁶ The name, however, means “peace.”

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***Le Mercure Galant* and its Student Body:
Donneau de Visé's Inclusive Pedagogy**

by
Deborah Steinberger

Twenty-first-century scholars have characterized *Le Mercure Galant* in many different ways: they have described it, for instance, as a forerunner of the modern newspaper, a propaganda vehicle in the service of Louis XIV, a literary journal promoting the esthetic of *galanterie*, and a compendium of scientific and social information.¹ No single description does justice to the publication, founded in 1672 by Jean Donneau de Visé, who served as editor in chief until his death in 1710.² The essence of the *Mercure Galant*, indeed its founding principle, is its appealing diversity. The preface to the inaugural edition announces, “Ce livre doit avoir de quoi plaire à tout le monde à cause de la diversité des matières dont il est rempli” (“Le libraire au lecteur,” *Mercure Galant* 1672, 1: n.pag.).³ Despite this stated ideal of universality, some scholars, notably Monique Vincent, have claimed that the knowledge the periodical seeks to impart is

¹ In addition to the studies by Monique Vincent, Joan DeJean, Jennifer Perlmutter, and Allison Stedman cited in this article, I refer here to points of view expressed by Chloé Hogg, Sara Harvey, and Alain Viala in their respective works (please see “Works Cited”).

² Thomas Corneille joined Donneau de Visé at the helm of *Le Mercure Galant* in 1682, and the two collaborated until Corneille became too ill to continue in this role, around 1700. Charles Rivière Dufresny (1648–1724) took over as editor in chief after Donneau de Visé's death in 1710. Since Donneau de Visé conceived the project and laid its groundwork, when I allude to “the editor” I am mostly referring to him, though admittedly it is at times difficult to distinguish his contributions to the publication from Corneille's.

³ Nearly all citations from *Le Mercure Galant* are taken from the edition available on Gallica (gallica.bnf.fr). The few issues of the periodical from the period 1672–1710 that have not yet been digitized are available on microfilm created by the Bibliothèque Nationale and held by major research libraries.

Issues of *Le Mercure Galant* published between 1672 and 1677 appeared irregularly and were assigned volume numbers, which I cite in my references. In 1677 only, the publication's title was modified to *Nouveau Mercure Galant*. After 1677, the periodical returned to its original title and appeared monthly; volume numbers were used only exceptionally, when the quantity of material was so great that a single month's issue was divided into multiple tomes issued simultaneously.

gender-specific. Vincent pronounced *Le Mercure Galant* “la première revue féminine d’information et de culture” in the subtitle of her important 2005 study of the publication. She cites as evidence the *Mercure*’s fictional female *destinataire*, an inquisitive and well-read Parisian lady living in the provinces, referred to throughout as “Madame”; she also emphasizes the prevalence of literary forms thought to be popular with women, such as love stories, poems, and songs (Vincent, *Le Mercure Galant* 10–11).⁴ But Jennifer Perlmutter has remarked, and even Vincent has noted, that after its initial “période d’essai” of 1672–1677, a span of years during which the periodical experimented with different formats, genres, and publication frequencies, the *Mercure* seems less “feminine,” and more “unisex”: in Perlmutter’s words, it becomes “an exemplary text for both women and men” (58).⁵ The present study argues that this change is linked to Donneau de Visé’s evolving resistance to classification of his readership by gender, and to his ultimate rejection of divisive gender stereotypes, in favor of a more inclusive editorial approach. Analysis of a number of *nouvelles* and other texts from the *Mercure* leads to the conclusion that the publication’s founder came to regard his magnum opus as neither “feminine” nor “masculine,” but rather as an all-embracing “coeducational” project, providing information and instruction for the benefit of both sexes.

In fact, in December 1677, the editor refers to the characterization of the *Mercure* as a women’s magazine as an error, and signals that the periodical has now found another audience:

Je sais que le titre a fait croire d’abord que le *Mercure* était simplement *Galant* et qu’il ne devait tenir place que dans la bibliothèque des femmes, mais on est sorti de cette erreur . . . il est devenu le livre des savants et des braves après avoir été le divertissement du beau sexe. (*Nouveau Mercure Galant* Dec. 1677, 10: n.pag.)

⁴ In her analysis of the *Mercure*’s role in the Quarrel between the Ancients and the Moderns, Joan DeJean cites the paper’s “pro-female bias” (*Ancients* 66).

⁵ Perlmutter emphasizes Donneau de Visé’s dedication of his periodical to the Dauphin starting in 1677, which “further legitimizes it and provides a male counterpoint that represents the male readership to the ‘Madame’ figure to which he addresses each issue of the journal” (58). According to Monique Vincent, after 1677 “[*Le Mercure Galant*] complétait son image en ne dissociant pas belles-lettres et galanterie, savants et beaux esprits, lecteurs et lectrices” (“*Le Mercure Galant* à l’écoute” 194). For more on *Le Mercure Galant*’s different phases, see Vincent, *Donneau de Visé et le Mercure Galant* 121.

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It is not immediately clear whether the editor is implying that the publication has evolved and become something new, leaving behind *le beau sexe* and its predilection for *divertissement*, or simply that its audience has expanded. But in view of the publication's trend away from classification of subject matter according to reader gender, the latter scenario seems more plausible. The *Mercure* becomes increasingly gender-neutral: editorial categorizations and assumptions about the preferences of male and female readers voiced during the periodical's first years (early to mid-1670s) seem to fade as the *Mercure* finds its footing and its public. At first, the editor had assumed that women would want to read *nouvelles* and fashion news, while men would favor war reports. In 1673, for example, the editor feels the need to apologize to some of his female readers for the paper's extensive war coverage (4: 263–266). By 1684, however, “Madame” is clamoring for war news. Speaking of the paper's reports on the taking of Luxembourg and Genoa, the editor tells her, “J’ai beaucoup de joie de ce que vous me temoignez estre satisfaite du soin que j’ay eu de n’oublier aucune circonstance essentielle dans les deux relations dont je viens de vous parler” (July 1684, 4–5). “Madame” is an insatiable consumer of all sorts of information and current events. This ideal reader wants to know about politics as well as arts and culture: the editor tells her, after reporting on new plays by the Corneille brothers, “Je voudrois bien ne vous parler que de divertissemens; mais il faut, *puis que vous voulez tout sçavoir*, que je reprenne le Chapitre de la guerre” (1673, 4: 227–228; emphasis added). The following year, the editor makes a point of distinguishing “Madame” from the ladies with whom she socializes in the provinces:

Je vous entretiendray des affaires de la guerre, mais j’en laisseray les raisonnemens aux politiques, et ne parleray de sieges et des combats, que pour louer toutes les belles actions de nos braves, dont je ne pretends laisser échaper aucune. Le récit n’en sera toutefois pas si long, qu’il puisse ennuyer celles de vos belles provinciales qui n’aiment que les histoires. (1674, 5: 2)

The worldly, inquisitive Madame has more diverse interests than the provincial ladies among whom she lives: a Paris transplant who is unlike her neighbors, a woman who appreciates military accounts, in her pursuit of knowledge she bridges and transcends social and gender categories, thereby embodying the spirit of *Le Mercure Galant*.

The description of the *Mercure* as a “coeducational” project aligns generally with Joan DeJean’s assertion that Donneau de Visé, a proponent of the Modern movement, sought to create a “gender blind” public (*An-*

cients 66) as part of his program; it also confirms Allison Stedman's recent characterization of *Le Mercure Galant* as "a liberal and inclusive socio-literary enterprise" (Stedman 97). While DeJean states that "[n]o Modern spokesperson ever bothered to compose a work of educational theory" (*Ancients* 138), it is nonetheless true that the *Mercure's* pioneering promotion of the education of men and women together was a defining element of its journalism and in its way, a contribution to the theory of education.

Although the entire *Mercure* is ostensibly addressed to a lady, Donneau de Visé goes to great lengths to appeal to readers of both sexes, sometimes sequentially, but most often simultaneously. The point of view varies: the male authorial voice is balanced by intermittent contributions from celebrated women writers such as Antoinette Deshoulières and Madeleine de Scudéry, as well as from numerous lesser-known female authors. Furthermore, the editor displays evenhandedness, even egalitarianism, by occasionally printing "his and hers" versions of matching articles. A piece by a Monsieur Taisand, a lawyer from Dijon, which examines the advisability of marriage, is divided into two sections, "Si une femme doit se marier" and "Si un homme doit se marier" (*Extraordinaire* April 1679, 6:10-23).⁶ The text, which takes for granted women's subaltern status, could certainly not be called feminist, but it is remarkable that the author assumes a mixed readership as he presents advice for both sexes. The author of this article had proposed the previous year another piece geared to a mixed public, which asked the question, "La condition des femmes est-elle plus commode et plus avantageuse que celle des hommes?"⁷ Both of Taisand's pieces seem intended to encourage men and women to enter into dialogue with each other on these questions. A comparable structure exists in two complementary stories from January

⁶ The *Extraordinaire*, a supplement to the *Mercure*, appeared quarterly starting in 1678, and showcased contributions from readers on a wide variety of subjects and in numerous genres. *Questions*, or topics for debate, a salon-inspired activity, were a frequent feature; readers were invited to respond, often in verse. Monique Vincent finds little to distinguish the monthly *Mercure* from the *Extraordinaire*: "[P]arues sous le titre d'ensemble du *Mercure Galant*, [ces publications] n'en font qu'une et la matière qui les compose s'interpénètre de telle manière qu'une dissociation systématique entraînerait une confusion ou des répétitions regrettables" (Vincent, *Donneau de Visé* 219). Nonetheless, a distinct editorial voice is mostly lacking in the *Extraordinaire*, and its wholly reader-generated contents appear more random, and more clearly the product of amateurs.

⁷ These pieces are cited in Vincent, *Donneau de Visé* 264. The question was announced in the *Extraordinaire* of October 1678 (391), and a response appeared in the following issue (*Extraordinaire* January 1679, 136-138).

and February 1681, “Histoire de mon cœur” and “Histoire de mes conquêtes,” both written by Fontenelle, where a man and a woman exchange accounts of their sentimental history.⁸ Although these are fictional pieces written entirely by a man, the idea of balance, of dialogue between equals, is noteworthy. According to the same principle of equal time, or balanced reporting, right after an article about a male child prodigy, there follows an account of the exploits of a “jeune fille philosophe” from Lyon who amazed the university professors who examined her in Latin on erudite topics (Sept. 1684, 161–164). This young woman, excluded from participating in a public thesis defense because of her sex, is in effect given a voice in the *Mercure*.

Donneau de Visé’s efforts to remain gender-neutral, or at least (to borrow the Fox News slogan) to appear “fair and balanced,” extend to other genres featured in the periodical, *nouvelles* and *questions d’amour*. The *Mercure*’s numerous stories about women disguised as men prove that women can do everything that men do, both good and bad. Disguise may facilitate daring or violent deeds, but the capacity to perform them is not determined by a person’s sex. For example, in one *nouvelle* a young woman disguised as a man serves ably in the army in place of her fiancé, whom she had wanted to protect from the dangers of war (April 1692, 103–116). On the other hand, extreme emotions such as jealousy, the *nouvelles* show us, can drive either sex to senseless acts of violence. Similarly, traits like inconstancy and fidelity are never portrayed as gender-specific: for every *nouvelle* about a fickle female, there is one about a faithless man. One month after the publication of the “Histoire tragique arrivée à Arles” (March 1680, 251–274), which recounts a man’s crime of passion—he murders his mistress for her infidelity—the *Mercure* publishes “L’Infidèle puni,” the story of a woman who disguises herself as a man, ambushes her ex-lover, and commits a revenge murder. The narrator reminds readers that women, too, are capable of such bloody actions:

Vous avez blâmé avec beaucoup de justice l’emportement furieux du Cavalier d’Arles, qui s’est vengé si cruellement de la prétendue infidélité de sa Maîtresse. Les belles ne sont pas exemptes (sic) de ces sortes de fureurs. En voicy la preuve. (April 1680, 276)

The *Mercure* seems to suggest that the passions of men and women are indistinguishable. An article in the *Extraordinaire* of July 1679 asks the

⁸ Bernard Le Bovier de Fontenelle (1657–1757) was the nephew of the Corneille brothers, and a frequent contributor to *Le Mercure Galant*.

question “Si les femmes aiment plus fortement que les hommes,” but after a brief, perfunctory discussion of the beliefs of the Ancients and the theory of the humors, the author dismisses the question as fruitless, leading to “travaux inutiles” (294–297)—a decidedly pro-Modern conclusion.

In sum, there seems to be a conscious effort on the part of the *Mercure*’s editor to discredit gender stereotypes. Instead, the periodical purports to portray life as it is—as befits a news publication.⁹ In the *Mercure*, Donneau de Visé claims to strive to tell the whole story. For instance, when recounting a battle, he boasts that unlike other contemporary chroniclers, he assembles accounts from multiple viewpoints.¹⁰ Another way he endeavors to hold a mirror up to life, as we have seen, is by providing both male and female perspectives on the same question. It stands to reason that women readers would seek out a publication that treated their sex with respect, fairness, and objectivity. This evenhanded approach is of course strategic as well as ethical: it is in large part a question of marketing, a calculation aimed at selling subscriptions and maximizing the *Mercure*’s readership. The journalist’s interest in entrepreneurship and his prowess as a businessman led Victor Fournel in the nineteenth century to call Donneau de Visé “un industriel littéraire” (*Les Contemporains de Molière* 445, qtd. in Vincent, *Donneau de Visé* 2). Jean Sgard attests to the editor’s financial success: “Il passe pour avoir été le plus riche des écrivains du temps” (*Dictionnaire des journalistes*).

To ensure his publication’s universal, “coeducational” appeal—and thereby to reach the largest audience possible—Donneau de Visé carefully controls tone and content. A preface to both the September and October 1684 issues states, “On mettra tous [les mémoires] qui ne desobligeront personne, et ne blesseront point la modestie des dames” (n.pag). Often, the paper appears to take the side of the wife in domestic issues. A 1684 verse piece called “La Bourse du bon sens,” by a certain Monsieur de la Barre, from Tours, celebrates the stratagem used by a clever and virtuous wife “Pour tirer son Epoux des bras d’une coquette,/ Et pour le rappeler au gi-

⁹ We see this trait in Donneau de Visé’s theater as well as in his journalism. His dramatic production includes unique “slice of life” comedies, usually centered on women’s experiences; they treat the moments surrounding childbirth, or the loss of a husband (*L’Embaras de Godard* and *La Veuve à la mode* respectively, both first performed in 1667). For more on these comedies, see Steinberger, “The Difficult Birth of the Good Mother: Donneau de Visé’s *L’Embaras de Godard* ou *l’Accouchée*.”

¹⁰ Describing the French victory at Genoa, for example, he says of his sources, “Ces diverses lettres écrites par divers particuliers qui se sont trouvez aux endroits dont ils parlent, sont des preuves convaincantes de la vérité” (June 1684, 3: 200).

ron de l'Hymen" (October 1684, 44–59). A question for debate proposed in the July 1685 *Extraordinaire* asks why so many men take ugly mistresses when they have attractive wives. Can one show support for wronged wives without seeming anti-male (or at least anti-husband)? Despite the periodical's overarching goal of inclusiveness, the publication of tendentious questions such as this one sometimes make the world of the *Mercur*e's readership appear more polarized than integrated. However, this apparent contradiction can be resolved when we consider that marital harmony was seen as beneficial for all of society, and that the reigning patriarchy had a vested interest in preserving marriage's strength and sanctity.¹¹ Good husbandly conduct is a recurring theme, a value that *Le Mercure Galant* tirelessly promotes. Donneau de Visé brings in celebrity instructors to teach by example: in July 1683, we hear about the admirable affection of M le Dauphin for Mme la Dauphine: "Il est bien doux et bien agréable, de trouver dans un Mary la galanterie d'un amant" (282). Similarly, a year later, the *Mercur*e approvingly notes that this model husband refused to retire to his chambers when the Dauphine was ill, and passed the entire night at her bedside (August 1684, 306). But we also hear about wayward husbands, and there are numerous stories about praiseworthy or model wives who tolerate and sometimes even reform their unfaithful spouses: for instance, the September 1683 account of a young woman who patiently bears her husband's infidelity and resists her family's attempts to separate her from her unworthy spouse. She dies of grief, but her unfailing virtue and devotion ultimately inspire her widower to change his life and enter a monastic order.¹² The story's moral, "L'amour le plus violent n'est pas celui qui dure le plus," announces an important lesson for men and women alike.

A school for both husbands and wives, *Le Mercure Galant* is at heart a mass-educational enterprise, one that aims to instruct as it informs and entertains. The publication may be seen as a precursor of the correspondence course, and even as a distant ancestor of the MOOC (massive open online course), for Donneau de Visé places emphasis on accessibility: thanks to the *Mercur*e, one need not leave one's home to become well-informed about a wide range of subjects. While we take it for granted today that newspapers perform this function, nationwide circula-

¹¹ See Sarah Hanley's examination of this subject, "Engendering the State: Family Formation and State Building in Early Modern France."

¹² Monique Vincent includes this story in her *Anthologie des nouvelles du Mercure Galant* (324–336).

tion of a periodical to readers from varying social backgrounds, from the middle classes to the upper echelons, was something quite new in the seventeenth century, as DeJean and Stedman have shown in their respective studies. The editor speaks of his goal of providing readers with convenient and inexpensive routes to learning, helping them to “s’instruire à peu de frais de tout ce qui arrive de jour en jour touchant [les] arts,” and to “apprendre ce qui se passe dans toute la terre parmi le monde politique et galant” (“Avis,” Jan. and Feb. 1686, n.pag.).¹³

What can one learn in the *Mercure*? Its highly diversified “course content” distinguishes the publication from its precursors and competitors (*La Gazette*, most notably);¹⁴ it extends beyond news from the court and battlefield to include such topics as Chinese characters, literary news, algebra, geometry, numismatics, and architecture, just to name a few.¹⁵ Science writing becomes more prevalent in the *Mercure* around 1681, the year the passage of Kirch’s comet stimulated scientific speculation and spurred popular interest in astronomy: numerous articles and stories in the paper were inspired by this event. This was also the year when the philosopher and mathematician Claude Comiers started writing for the publication, contributing pieces on optics, astronomy, health, and medicine, including a letter “Sur l’art de se conserver en santé et de prolonger sa vie” (March 1687, 227–236). The *Mercure* also provides advice for readers suffering from maladies such as gout (Nov. 1685, 239–242), hernias (Feb. 1686, 1: 69–82), and the vapors (Nov. 1691, 85–116).

Cultural anthropology is another frequent topic: a treatise on burial and tombs appears in the July 1685 *Extraordinaire* (24–93), and in December 1691, Comiers contributes a “Lettre sur les cérémonies à la synagogue” (244–261). Starting in March 1685, the *Mercure* publishes what may be the first “multicultural course,” a series of nine “dialogues des choses dif-

¹³ See also *Time and Ways of Knowing*, in which Roland Racevskis highlights the “accelerated processes of knowledge acquisition and transmission” facilitated by both the *Mercure Galant* and the newly-instituted postal service.

¹⁴ Jean Loret’s gazette *La Muse Historique* (1650–1665) did provide literary news, but its circulation was much more restricted than that of *Le Mercure Galant*; it was originally intended solely for Marie de Longueville and her circle.

¹⁵ For additional topics covered in the periodical, see Monique Vincent’s subject index (*Mercure Galant, Extraordinaire, Affaires du temps: Table analytique contenant l’inventaire de tous les articles publiés 1672–1710*), an invaluable resource for *Mercure* research.

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ficiles à croire” by the abbé Laurent Bordelon.¹⁶ The dialogue, the editor tells us, is a teaching method especially suited to readers who are pressed for time (he refers to “les curieux, qui sont bien-aises d’apprendre beaucoup, et de s’épargner la peine de longues lectures,” April 1685, 49). The purpose of Bordelon’s dialogues is to introduce readers to a range of unusual social practices from all over the world. Readers also learn to battle prejudice and superstition in similar pieces, like the “Discours contre la superstition populaire des jours heureux et malheureux” by a contributor from Marseille named Malaval (June 1688, 1: 32–119). As one might expect in a publication that calls itself “galant,” there are many articles dealing with savoir-vivre and civility, for example, “De la manière dont on doit avertir ses amis de leurs défauts” (Dec. 1696, 39–57). The *Mercure* places special emphasis on discoveries and stories that transcend barriers, be they national, linguistic, psychological, social, or gender-related. For instance, one finds articles on “l’écriture universelle,” a number-based writing system for use by people of different nations, as well as this praise of the visual arts as a universal means of communication:

[Les estampes] parlent également par tout aux yeux, et tous les yeux voyent également ce qu’elles représentent. Ainsi rien n’est plus agréable, rien n’est plus utile, et rien n’instruit en moins de temps, sans qu’il soit besoin d’aucune étude pour apprendre à voir ce qu’elles contiennent. (Feb. 1686, 1: n.pag.)

For those whom we would call today visual learners, the *Mercure* supplies countless diagrams and illustrations. In 1686, the editor announces a plan to make instructive images even more readily available by including in each month’s issue a list of all newly printed engravings, with notes on where they can be purchased. All in all, the periodical presents itself as an educational treasure chest: “On y ramasse mille choses curieuses qu’on n’auroit pû trouver ensemble, si le *Mercure* n’avoit jamais esté fait...” (“Au lecteur,” *Nouveau Mercure Galant* Dec. 1677, 10: n.pag.; qtd. in Vincent, *Donneau de Visé* 187).

Whether in the form of treatises or *nouvelles*, *Le Mercure Galant* devotes many pages to moral teaching.¹⁷ Often the stories have moralizing

¹⁶ The connection between one of the *Mercure*’s principal authors, Fontenelle, and our modern notion of multiculturalism has been drawn by Joan DeJean (*Ancients* 125–126).

¹⁷ For a perceptive discussion of the “injunctive exemplarity” of the *Mercure*’s *nouvelles*, see Perlmutter, “Sociopolitical Education.”

titles, maxims such as “Les amants qui ont le plus de traverses ne sont pas toujours les plus malheureux” (May 1680), or “L’amour sincère est souvent récompensé” (Jan. 1689).¹⁸ Notably, the titles of the *nouvelles* are almost always gender-neutral: they seem to reflect a studied effort on the editors’ part to avoid characterizing the sexes in any particular way. For example, use of the neutral “on” is frequent: “On ne perd souvent rien pour attendre” (June 1680), or “De quoi n’est-on point capable quand on aime véritablement?” (Jan. 1697). This principle took shape early on in the publication’s history, when the *Mercure* published its very first *nouvelle* featuring a moralizing title, “Les Femmes sont souvent cause de la perte des Hommes” (1674, 6: 207–248). The narrator is an old woman who tells the story of Clitandre, a man suffering from venereal disease. The sick man makes a deal with a mysterious stranger: he exchanges a cure for his malady for a promise, on pain of death, never again to lie with a woman. Clitandre eventually falls in love and breaks his promise; shortly thereafter, the man who had cured him reappears and tells him he must choose to die by the sword or by poison. Clitandre takes the poison, goes mad, and jumps from an attic window into a well. His body is never found. The water in the well becomes subsequently so clear and fresh that the site attracts visitors from miles around.

The old woman reveals at the end of her tale that this is not actually a *nouvelle*, but rather a centuries-old story. As such, the editor points out, it is an anomaly that really had no place among the news stories (“histoires nouvelles”) he had promised to “Madame”:

[Cette aventure] ne devoit pas avoir icy de place, puis que je ne vous dois envoyer que des Histoires nouvelles; mais puis qu’elle est écrite, vous souffrirez, s’il vous plaist, Madame, qu’elle tienne son rang parmy les autres. (1674, 6: 247-248)

The aged storyteller, who defends the truth value of orally-transmitted folk stories like this one, represents unenlightened tradition:

Il y a plus de deux cens ans, continua-t-elle, que cette aventure est arrivée, et qu’on la sçait par tradition; et comme les choses qu’on sçait de la sorte sont toujours très-véritables, on ne doit point douter de cette Histoire, qui doit faire connoistre à tout le monde, que les Femmes sont souvent cause de la perte des Hommes. (246–247)

¹⁸ The first of these two *nouvelles* is reprinted in Vincent’s anthology, pp. 241–250.

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However, her modern, enlightened listeners, who represent the *Mercur*'s readership, are skeptical. With ironic smiles, they dismiss her unbelievable tale, along with its misogynistic message:

Toute la compagnie n'approuve à cette Histoire qu'en
souriante; il y eut mesme quelques malicieux qui plainirent
la catastrophe du malheureux Clitandre, mais ce fut d'une
maniere qui fit connoistre qu'ils n'ajoutoient guere de foi
à son aventure. (247)

The framing text thus discredits the old woman's tale and the anti-woman tradition it represents, presenting the story as an object of skepticism and even ridicule. This account of the tale's reception signals a break with tradition: the *Mercur Galant* will never blame the fair sex in general for men's ills, nor will the shortcomings of some men be imputed to men as a group: the *nouvelles* are about individuals. This principle is in keeping with the core values of the Modern movement, which according to Joan DeJean included, along with "an openness to cultural difference," "a defense of the right to individuality" (*Ancients* 131).

The *Mercur*'s resistance to gender stereotypes and traditional prejudices extends also to lighter topics, like fashion. After a discussion of the latest women's styles, published during the paper's first year (1672, 3: 283–308), a lady named Lucesse asks the narrator-editor to give equal time to men's style trends. Men, she argues, are just as interested in fashion novelties:

Il me semble que nous avons assez parlé de Modes qui
regardent les Femmes, et que vous devriez à vostre tour
nous entretenir de celles des Hommes; car vôtre Sexe en
Amour et en Mode n'a pas moins d'inconstance que le
nostre. (308)

The narrator concedes that men are no less slaves to fashion than are women:

[J]'ajoutay que pour faire voir que j'étois persuadé de
cette verité, j'allois montrer que les Hommes avoient en tres
peu de temps fait changer huit ou dix fois les modes de
leurs manches, et que j'estois assuré qu'on ne me mon-
treroit point parmy les Femmes pour ce qui regardoit les
Modes un exemple de pareille inconstance. (309)

This attribution of fashion fickleness to men makes a favorable impression on Lucesse and her friend; the narrator tells us that “Cette réponse de bonne foy, et qu’elles n’atendoient point, les fit soûrire” (310).

Here too, the narrator is attempting to discredit a stereotype, demonstrating that men and women are not as different as we have been accustomed to believe. To prove this point, the *Mercure* shows its readers individuals who defy accepted norms and *idées reçues*, such as fashion-obsessed men and hardy women soldiers who distinguish themselves in battle. Dianne Dugaw’s work early-modern English female warrior ballads—popular songs about real or mythical cross-dressed women soldiers—provides a useful way of thinking about the representation of women in the *Mercure*. Dugaw writes,

If the ballads suggest anything, it is that “masculine” (or “feminine”) behavior—playing the part—and “male” (or “female”) identity—being the person—can be two different things. Thus the ballads do not in fact privilege the “masculine” at all, because at a deeper level they actually subvert not only the privilege of one gender over the other, but the very category of gender itself. How reliable is such a category that can so easily conceal as much as it reveals? (Dugaw 158–159)

Characters who transgress traditional gender-based behavioral norms lead us to reexamine the assumptions upon which these norms depend.¹⁹

Concealed sex and questions of gender identity lie at the heart of one the *Mercure*’s most famous *nouvelles*, the “Histoire de la Marquise-Marquis de Banneville,” published in the periodical first in 1695, and then again in 1696 in a revised and expanded version. In her introduction to the MLA critical edition of this novella, Joan DeJean attributes the piece to a trio of authors: François-Timoléon de Choisy, Marie-Jeanne L’Héritier, and Charles Perrault. DeJean, who had previously distinguished the story as “the first true fin de siècle literary work” (*Ancients* 119), notes that it “presents the frontier between femininity and masculinity as . . . thoroughly permeable” (“Introduction” xix). The “Histoire de la Marquise-Marquis de Banneville” is a sort of fractured modern fairy tale where a boy raised from birth as a girl, the ravishingly beautiful Marquise de Banneville, who for most of the story does not know she is biologically a

¹⁹ Marjorie Garber makes a similar argument about transvestism in her *Vested Interests: Cross-Dressing and Cultural Identity*.

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man, meets and falls in love with the Marquis de Bercourt, a girl who has decided to dress and live as a man. After a courtship complicated by the secrets of their sexual status, they marry, and once they experience and understand their sexual compatibility, live happily after ever.

One may interpret the story's title character, La Marquise-Marquis de Banneville, as a metaphor for the treatment of gender in *Le Mercure Galant*. Joan DeJean has already demonstrated that the story, published during the Quarrel between the Ancients and the Moderns, represents Modern principles. One could further argue that the Marquise specifically emblemizes the *Mercure's* "coeducational," gender-blending pedagogy. The "Histoire de la Marquise-Marquis de Banneville" contrasts starkly with the 1674 Clitandre tale ("Les femmes sont souvent cause de la perte des hommes"). Unlike the hoary venereal disease legend presented as the antithesis of the *nouvelle*, the Marquise's story is an explicitly contemporary tale, as befits the Modern sympathies of its authors and of Donneau de Visé; it is complete with allusions to recent literary news and trends, such as the publication of Perrault's "La Belle au bois dormant" in the *Mercure* in 1695, or the fairy tale vogue in general. The moralizing title of the Clitandre story, a tale dismissed as inane and outdated by the storyteller's listening public, suggests that sexual categories are immutable: women will be women and men will be men, and women often bring men's downfall. In "La Marquise-Marquis," however, sexual categories are not fixed.²⁰ This *nouvelle*—like the *Mercure* itself, with its stories of valiant female warriors and learned women—demonstrates that differences between the sexes are sometimes arbitrary, that outward appearances can be deceiving, and that for this reason, we should combat prejudice and stereotypes.²¹ When the young Marquise criticizes the

²⁰ The question of the tale's attribution emphasizes the instability of these categories. In his 1695 introduction to the *nouvelle*, the *Mercure's* editor refers to its author as a woman. However, when "La Belle au bois" was published in the *Mercure* in 1696, the editor indicated that the author of this story was the same person who wrote "La Marquise." At the same time, it was common knowledge that Perrault was the author of "La Belle," and in fact, within the narrative of "La Marquise-Marquis," the author of "La Belle" is referred to as a man (Choisy, L'Héritier, and Perrault 51). Joan DeJean cites these discrepancies as evidence that the "Histoire de la Marquise-Marquis" was the product of collaboration by both male and female authors. On the other hand, the fact that the author's gender appears undetermined or unstable perfectly suits the story's main themes ("Introduction" xvii).

²¹ Except perhaps when it comes to Protestants. See Steinberger, "Obstinate Women and Sleeping Beauties in the Kingdom of Miracles: Conversion Stories in the *Mercure Galant's* Anti-Protestant Propaganda."

choice of a minor character, Prince Sionad, to dress in flamboyant feminine fashion, the Marquise's mother reprimands her daughter with a message of tolerance. She advises her to refrain from judging others and instead to focus on her own conduct: "Contentez-vous, ma chère enfant, de faire votre devoir et ne trouvez jamais à redire à ce que font les autres" (15). The fact that the story enjoyed special, "signature" status in the *Mercur*e bolsters my claim that it presents in microcosm some of the publication's guiding pedagogical principles. "La Marquise-Marquis" is one of the few texts, if not the only one, to be published twice in the *Mercur*e's pages, presumably because its first printing met with success and its reappearance helped sell issues of the periodical. Furthermore, within the story, the Marquise "sells" the *Mercur*e with this somewhat backhanded "product endorsement": "Je l'ai lue ["La Belle au Bois Dormant"] quatre fois, et ce petit conte m'a raccommo*d*ée avec le *Mercur*e *Galant* où j'ai été ravie de le trouver," 51). The Marquise-Marquis, at once male and female, promotes the publication even as she symbolizes its inclusive, "coeducational" approach. This close relationship between the character and the periodical in which her story was published should not surprise: in classical mythology, after all, the messenger god Mercury, god of eloquence, commerce, boundary-crossings, communication, and, by extension, journalism, is the father of the hermaphrodite. The publication that bears his name sets out to entertain and instruct without prejudice polite society, a public composed of men and women.

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**Emploi d'« objets magiques » et prédiction de phénomènes célestes
dans les *Relations* des jésuites: une stratégie originale de conversion
en Nouvelle-France au dix-septième siècle**

**par
Vincent Grégoire**

Au professeur Gérard Chaix

Lorsque les jésuites reviennent en Nouvelle-France en 1632, après que Québec a été rendu à la France par le traité de Saint-Germain-en-Laye, leur but est d'évangéliser les peuplades amérindiennes, soit d'instruire religieusement puis de baptiser les autochtones pour assurer le salut de leur âme, et d'agrandir ainsi le Royaume de Dieu. S'étant vu accorder le monopole de la mission au dépens des récollets chassés comme eux par les anglais en 1629, ils savent que la tâche sera ardue. Néanmoins cette tâche doit être facilitée par l'absence de sophistication culturelle des Amérindiens dont les croyances sont, dans l'esprit de ces missionnaires, aux antipodes des croyances orientales et se résument à un amas de superstitions¹.

Pour pouvoir évangéliser plus facilement, les jésuites se mettent sur le terrain des croyances animistes amérindiennes et acceptent d'être perçus comme des sorciers qui guérissent les maladies, comme des magiciens qui prédisent les éclipses de lune et de soleil, font animer des objets (soit leur donnent littéralement vie : à des horloges, par exemple) et, à l'occasion, font pleuvoir. Ils peuvent atteindre leur but, dans la stratégie de conversion qu'ils poursuivent, s'ils arrivent à impressionner les Amérindiens et à se faire plus puissants que leurs chamans, ce qu'ils ne peuvent faire qu'en mystifiant, pour la « bonne cause » s'entend, les autochtones. Par exemple, le père Le Jeune confronte de la manière suivante le sorcier huron Pigarouich lors d'une mission en 1636 :

ie l'estourdy & ses compagnons, par ce que je vais
dire ; ie pris une fueille [sic] de papier, & ie leur fis tenir

¹ Consulter, au sujet du travail de conversion des jésuites en Nouvelle-France mais aussi de la différence d'approche qu'ils adoptent selon les cultures à évangéliser, notre article intitulé : « “Pensez-vous venir à bout de renverser le pays?” : la pratique d'évangélisation en Nouvelle-France d'après les *Relations* des jésuites » (cf. 691, 696).

par les quatre coins, puis ayant mis par dessus quelques aiguilles, ie passois doucement ma main par dessous, tenant entre mes doigts une petite pierre d'aymant : Ces aiguilles attirées par cette pierre, alloient & venoient, avançoient ou reculoient selon le mouvemēt de ma main : cela les estona voyas courir & tourner ces aiguilles sans qu'on les touchast. Les voyant dans l'estonnemet ie dy au sorcier qu'il en fist autant : il respondit par les yeux me regardant sans dire mot (Thwaites, *JR [Jesuit Relations]*, vol. 11, 258–260)².

Le Jeune a non seulement stupéfié Pigarouich et les membres du groupe par ce « tour de magie », même s'il leur explique peu après que c'est un phénomène naturel, mais il a aussi affiché la supériorité de sa culture et de sa religion (les deux étant intimement liées) et finalement humilié le chaman en exposant à tous les limites des pouvoirs du sorcier.

Les missionnaires sont aidés, dans cette approche pour émerveiller les autochtones au moyen de leur « arsenal magique » (Jacquin 336), par une prétendue absence d'esprit d'examen de ces derniers, la manière amérindienne d'appréhender le monde étant effectivement très différente parce que reposant sur une compréhension animiste. De ce fait, aussi longtemps que les pères ont la possibilité d'imposer leur interprétation des phénomènes surnaturels, physiques ou technologiques, ils peuvent espérer convaincre les Amérindiens de la supériorité de leur culture et, par la même occasion, de leur religion. Prenant pour source les *Relations* écrites par les jésuites de Nouvelle-France et publiées annuellement à Paris entre 1632 et 1673, nous allons, dans cette étude, analyser en un premier temps la pratique d'évangélisation de ces missionnaires découlant spécifiquement de leur « puissance magique », de leur pouvoir d'animer des objets, de communiquer à distance, ou de prédire des phénomènes célestes. Dans un deuxième temps, nous allons observer dans quelle mesure cette approche marginale de diffusion de la foi va effectivement provoquer admiration et émerveillement, mais aussi, sans pleinement échouer, être soumise aux aléas du moment et de l'époque, et se retourner à l'occasion contre les pères.

Les missionnaires utilisent traditionnellement la crainte de l'enfer pour frapper l'imagination des Amérindiens, un enfer symbolisé par l'image

² Nous allons, dans cette étude, essentiellement parler de l'effort missionnaire entrepris par le père Le Jeune.

terrifiante du feu qui brûle les damnés. Or, il s'avère que les autochtones ont une grande peur du feu, le feu qui est l'un des « outils » privilégiés pour torturer les prisonniers victimes des guerres tribales, quand ces derniers ne sont pas adoptés par les vainqueurs. Jean Delumeau, évoquant la stratégie d'évangélisation par la crainte, l'a qualifiée de « pastorale de la peur » (*La Peur en Occident*, 45 ; expression reprise pour titre de la troisième et dernière partie de *Le Péché et la peur*), une pratique que les jésuites en Nouvelle-France comme en Bretagne, ou les capucins en Savoie, deux ordres qui ont beaucoup œuvré pour le renouveau catholique en cette époque de Contre-Réforme, jugent efficace (cf. Deslandres, *Croire et faire croire*, 168, notes 517–18 ; 183–85, notes 521 ; 439–41, notes 562). Le père Le Jeune, évoquant par exemple les images terrifiantes dont il se sert pour évangéliser, explique : « la crainte est l'avancouriere de la foy, dans ces esprits barbares » (*JR* 1637, vol. 11, 88).

Si la « pastorale de la peur » intimide effectivement les Amérindiens et en amène certains à se convertir au christianisme, elle peut aussi en faire fuir d'autres à qui cette représentation de l'« au-delà » répugne. Les jésuites l'ont vite compris et s'empressent d'allier à la « pastorale de la peur » une « pastorale de l'émerveillement », comme nous allons la qualifier, que ce soit par la musique, les chants, le jeu des cloches, les vêtements richement ornés, etc., lors des services religieux, ou par des processions très ritualisées, hautes en couleur et à l'effet impressionnant.

Cette « pastorale de l'émerveillement », « de l'admiration »³, peut aussi avoir lieu plus informellement dans le cadre de la vie quotidienne :

A propos de leurs admirations [explique le père Le Jeune dans la *Relation* de 1635] i'en pourrais icy coucher plusieurs faites au sujet de la pierre d'aymant ; en laquelle ils regardoient s'il y avoit de la colle, & d'une lunette à onze facettes, qui leur representoit autant de fois un mesme obiet, d'une petite phiole dans laquelle une pulce paroist comme un hanneton, du verre triangulaire, des outils de menuiserie. Mais sur tout l'escriture... (*JR* 1635, vol. 8, 112–14)

Le Jeune explique ainsi le but atteint par l'utilisation de cette panoplie d'objets usuels aux effets plus intrigants les uns que les autres :

³ Bernard Dompnier a, lui, parlé d'une « pastorale de la séduction » pour évoquer la pratique d'évangélisation des capucins (voir son excellent article intitulé « Pastorale de la peur et pastorale de la séduction : la méthode des missionnaires capucins »).

Tout cela sert pour gagner leurs affections, & les rendre plus dociles, quand il est question des admirables & incompréhensibles mystères de nostre Foy. Car la croyance qu'ils ont de nostre esprit & de nostre capacité, fait que sans replique ils croient ce qu'on leur annonce. (*JR* 1635, vol. 8, 114)

L'admiration rend docile et muet, en ont conclu les missionnaires qui sont de bons psychologues. Or, il faut de la bonne volonté empreinte d'obéissance aux autochtones pour s'efforcer de comprendre les « mystères » du christianisme si laborieusement expliqués par les pères, des « mystères » si éloignés des croyances amérindiennes.

Il est intéressant de noter qu'il n'y a pas de mauvais moyens, aux yeux des missionnaires, pour convertir ces quasi *tabula rasa* que seul un épais écran de superstitions empêche de découvrir la « vraie » religion. Comme l'explique Claude Sutto, dans « Le Dieu des Français et les divinités amérindiennes au Canada », les pères n'hésitent pas « à utiliser leurs connaissances scientifiques, ou à jouer habilement du hasard pour impressionner les Amérindiens, mais toujours en se posant comme les agents de Dieu » (172). Ils ne cherchent cependant pas à tromper ou à manipuler sans scrupules ceux qu'ils cherchent à évangéliser. Et ils se veulent « transparents » aux yeux des lecteurs des *Relations* qui vont parcourir ces récits représentant des Amérindiens remplis d'admiration.

Si le phénomène naturel des « aiguilles aimantées » crée la surprise chez les autochtones, l'effet obtenu par les objets fonctionnels que sont le moulin et l'horloge les sidère. Parallèlement à la fascination provoquée par le moulin, « l'adoration de l'horloge » est peut-être l'un des meilleurs exemples pouvant illustrer cette « pastorale de l'émerveillement » née en fait du hasard:

Comme j'ay dict [explique encore Le Jeune dans la *Relation* de 1635], on ne laisse pas de nous venir visiter par *admiration* ; principalement depuis que [...] notre moulin [pour faire la farine] & notre horloge ont commencé à jouer. On ne sçauroit dire les estonnemens de ces bonnes gens, & combien ils *admirent* l'esprit des François. (Mots mis par nous en italique ; *JR* 1635, vol. 8, 110)

Admirer est un mot fort. Le *Dictionnaire de l'Académie française* de 1695 (2^{ème} édition) définit ainsi ce verbe : « considérer avec surprise, avec estonnement une chose qui est extraordinaire en quelque manière que ce soit. *Admirer les œuvres de Dieu, la grandeur du ciel, une beauté par-*

faite » (vol. 2, 45). « Extraordinaire » est exactement l'impression produite par l'horloge qui s'anime devant les yeux incrédules des autochtones :

Pour ce qui est de l'horloge [écrit Le Jeune], il y auroit mille choses à dire. Ils croyent tous que c'est quelque chose vivante ; car ils ne se peuvent imaginer comment elle sonne d'elle mesme, & quand elle vient à sonner, ils regardent si nous sommes tous là, & s'il n'y a pas quelqu'un de caché, pour luy donner le branle. Ils ont pensé qu'il [l'être caché] entendoit, principalement quand pour rire quelqu'un de nos François s'escrivoit au dernier coup de marteau ; c'est assez sonné, & que tout aussi tost elle se taisoit. (*JR* 1635, vol. 8, 112)

Les missionnaires s'amuse de la méprise provoquée par cet objet animé et n'expliquent pas immédiatement, cette fois, son mécanisme. Ils se présentent d'autant moins, d'ailleurs, que les Amérindiens, incapables de comprendre cette technologie inconnue de leur culture et dont ils n'ont guère besoin parce qu'ils peuvent évaluer le passage du temps au soleil, sont pleinement sous le charme de cette « vie créée ». Pour les jésuites, cet instrument est donc un « jouet » pour faire temporairement illusion (*illusio*, de *ludus* : jouer), un outil faisant incidemment partie de leur « pastorale de l'émerveillement », un objet moins utile pour donner l'heure que pour fasciner et convaincre les autochtones de la supériorité des chrétiens.

Le Jeune poursuit, évoquant l'anthropomorphisation de la pendule par les autochtones :

Ils l'appellent le Capitaine du jour. Quand elle sonne, ils disent qu'elle parle, & demandent quand ils nous viennent veoir, combien de fois le Capitaine a déjà parlé. Ils nous interrogent de son manger. Ils demeurent les heures entières, & quelquefois plusieurs, afin de la pouvoir ouyr parler. Ils demandoient au commencement ce qu'elle disoit ; on leur respondit deux choses, qu'ils ont fort bien retenües ; l'une que quand elle sonnoit à quatre heures du soir pendant l'hyver, elle disoit, Sortez, allez vous en, afin que nous fermions la porte ; car aussi tost ils lèvent le siège, & s'en vont : l'autre qu'à midy, elle disoit *yo eiouakaoua*, c'est à dire, sus dressons la chaudière [la marmite], & ils ont encore mieux retenu ce langage. (*JR* 1635, vol. 8, 112)

Les Amérindiens fréquentant la maison des pères sont devenus des « sujets » réguliers de ce « Capitaine » qui sonne l'heure de la sagamité⁴ à midi, puis le moment du départ à quatre heures, quand, en hiver, la nuit commence à tomber. Grâce à cette fascination pour « l'horloge animée », les jésuites ont ainsi réussi à inscrire un certain nombre d'Amérindiens « dans leur temps », à les faire passer dans le monde strictement ordonné et rythmé des colonisateurs français. Un pas, même modeste, a été effectué dans le processus d'acculturation des autochtones.

Plus extraordinaire encore que « l'horloge vivante » est, aux yeux des Amérindiens, le phénomène de l'écriture. Le Jeune concluait, dans l'histoire mentionnée au début de cette étude, après avoir évoqué une série d'objets magiques : aimant, prisme à onze facettes, fiole à verre grossissant et outils de menuiserie qui suscitaient l'admiration des autochtones :

Mais [c'est] sur tout [...] l'écriture ; car ils ne pouvoient concevoir comme ce qu'un de nous, estât au village leur avoit dit & couché en mesme temps par escrit ; un autre qui cependant estoit dans la maison esloignée, le disoit incontinent en voyant l'écriture. Je crois qu'ils en ont fait cent experiences. (*JR* 1635, vol. 8, 114)

La communication par l'écrit, un thème minutieusement étudié par James Axtell dans *After Columbus* (chap 6), fascine les Amérindiens pour qui cela est nouveau, incroyable, magique. « Marquer avec une raquette » est la description que donne un Huron pour expliquer à quoi ressemblent les signes laissés par l'encre sur le papier (cf. Trigger, *Les Enfants d'Aataentsic*, 426). Plus tard dans le siècle, d'autres hurons emploieront le terme d'« écorce parlante » (*JR* 1677–80, vol. 61, 248). Le procédé relève clairement, pour les autochtones, du surnaturel et s'inscrit en fait bien dans leur manière de concevoir un monde où les esprits sont partout.

Ainsi, une convertie à l'agonie va chercher à enfermer sa voix dans une peau de castor, imitant les missionnaires qui enferment la leur par l'écrit dans leurs lettres et messages. Des gens de sa famille remettent cette peau à un père jésuite en l'accompagnant de ce discours :

Robe Noire, [...] c'est une defunte qui a enfermé sa voix dans ce paquet avant que de mourir : elle luy a donné charge de déclarer tous ses péchez, puisqu'elle ne l'a pû

⁴ La sagamité est un mets amérindien consistant en une bouillie à base de maïs bouilli et de viande.

faire de bouche ; vostre esriture vous fait parler aux absens ; elle pretend faire par ces Castors, ce que vous faites par vos papiers. (*JR* 1659-60, vol. 45, 50)

L'écrit est perçu comme un « concentré d'oral » que la page en papier, à l'image d'une boîte, contient avant qu'il ne soit « relâché » au destinataire.

Lorsqu'un autochtone lui demande d'écrire sur son « livre », devant un parterre de membres de plusieurs peuplades amérindiennes, la liste d'une douzaine de tribus du nord puis d'en prononcer tout haut le nom, le père Buteux s'exécute :

Quād ces Estrangers entendirent nommer ces Nations, ils s'estonnoient de voir tant de Peuples renfermez dans un petit morceau d'écorce, c'est ainsi qu'ils appeloient les feuillets des Tablettes. (*JR* 1636, vol. 9, 194)

La manière par laquelle le papier et l'écrit peuvent « renfermer » l'expression d'un monde réduit, mais pas moins réel pour ces peuples, provoque l'émerveillement des autochtones, les laisse bouche bée, les « étonne » au sens fort qu'à ce mot au dix-septième siècle.

L'écrit est ainsi, pour les « Néophytes » amérindiens (soit les nouveaux convertis), quasiment un objet de vénération, aussi bien pour son contenu que pour son contenant. Si le contenu recèle un pouvoir magique de conservation des paroles permettant de communiquer à distance, le contenant peut, lui, prendre une valeur de fétiche et se voir accorder un pouvoir semblable à celui des reliques chrétiennes.

Un Algonquin, rapporte la *Relation* de 1639, ayant ainsi appris prières et litanies « les demanda par escrit; ce que luy estant accordé, il faisoit grand estat du papier qui les contenoit. » (*JR* 1639, vol. 16, 42) Peu après, retournant en son pays, cet autochtone fait naufrage et croit avoir perdu le précieux papier. Par chance, il le retrouve en parfait état : « il fut bien estonné quand il vit ce papier tout sain & entier [...] [I]l admiroit cela comme un prodige, & le racontoit comme un miracle. » (*Ibid.*) De retour dans sa communauté frappée par une maladie, il va le faire vénérer dans un rituel semblable à une pittoresque « cérémonie du drapeau » : « il assembloit tous les iours ses voisins dans une grande cabane, pendoit ce papier à une perche, & tous se mettant à l'entour, chantoient ce qu'ils sçavoient de ces Litanies » (44). Cette anecdote édifiante, exposant la ferveur religieuse de ces Algonquins pour un texte qu'ils ne savent pas lire mais peuvent réciter, finit d'une façon prévisible. Dieu les entend et « la maladie qui les affligeait cessa entièrement. » (*Ibid.*)

La valeur de fétiche est encore plus prononcée dans l'exemple suivant où un chef algonquin explique qu'il va venir à Québec rencontrer le « Capitaine des Français », le gouverneur de Montmagny, qui est, paraît-il, « un grand amy du Soleil » et qui « donne des lettres qui empeschent de mourir, du moins si tost [soit, pas dans un proche avenir] » (*JR* 1637, vol. 12, 180). Cet exemple est symptomatique d'un malaise chez les Amérindiens décimés par les maladies apportées par les Français. Certains convertis veulent croire que les lettres et écrits du gouverneur et des jésuites peuvent faire office de talismans contre les épidémies. Ils vont vite se rendre compte que ces papiers, s'ils s'en voient donner, n'ont pas le pouvoir magique, à but prophylactique, qu'ils leur accordent. Très rapidement, les Amérindiens sceptiques ou ouvertement hostiles aux Français, parce qu'ils ne comprennent pas que les colons ne meurent pas de ces maladies, vont associer à l'écrit un pouvoir magique destructeur, dévastateur, mortel.

En 1637, le père Le Jeune évoque, dans la *Relation* annuelle, l'anecdote selon laquelle un Amérindien a accusé un colon basque d'avoir écrit les « noms [d'un groupe d'autochtones] sur un papier, & peut estre par ce moyen [...] [les] a-il ensorcelé et fait mourir » (*JR* 1637, vol. 11, 194). Un an plus tôt, le même père rapportait le témoignage d'un Amérindien qui expliquait que l'alcool n'était pas à l'origine de la grande mortalité frappant sa communauté :

Non, dit-il, ce ne sont pas ces boissons qui nous ostent la vie, mais vos écritures : car depuis que vous avez decry notre païs, nos fleuves, nos terres, & nos bois, nous mourons tous, ce qui n'arrivoit pas devant que vous vinssiez icy. (*JR* 1636, vol. 9, 206)

Comme pour l'histoire précédente racontée au gouverneur de Montmagny, la première réaction des Français est d'en rire et de se moquer de la naïveté des Amérindiens. Il y a clairement, en l'occurrence, un malentendu culturel dans la mesure où, pour les autochtones, l'écrit ne se réduit pas à ce qui est écrit mais comprend son support, le papier, papier et écrit chargés d'un fort pouvoir magique dont les effets sont clairement néfastes si les Amérindiens croient qu'ils sont à l'origine des épidémies qui les déciment.

Cependant, pour les pères, « l'écrit absolu », en matière d'évangélisation, réside dans les Ecritures saintes qu'ils présentent comme l'inaltérable vérité (cf. Bressani, *JR* 1653, vol. 39, 149), une vérité écrite indépassable qui ne peut que l'emporter sur la tradition amérindienne orale

véhiculant de « sottes superstitions ». Certains autochtones ont compris que cet ouvrage était différent des autres écrits, lettres, notes et messages, comme l'atteste le témoignage suivant rapporté par Le Jeune :

Comme ie leur disois que nous avions un livre qui contenoit la parole & les enseignemens de Dieu, ils estoient bien en peine comme nous pouvions avoir eu ce livre, quelques uns d'entre eux croioient qu'il estoit descendu du Ciel, pendu à une corde, & que nous l'avions ainsi trouvé suspendu en l'air, cette simplicité me fit rire. (*JR* 1637, vol. 11, 208)

À nouveau, le rire de supériorité du missionnaire français fuse, comme si l'adulte s'amuse du propos naïf d'un enfant, un rire de supériorité qui serait quasiment inimaginable dans le cadre des missions jésuites en Inde, au Japon, ou en Chine⁵.

L'évangélisation est clairement en marche quand ce sont les Amérindiens eux-mêmes qui se font les promoteurs de la Bible et des Ecritures saintes dans leur communauté. Dans un passage extrait de la *Relation* de 1645, un vieillard converti en vient à critiquer sa propre culture parce qu'elle n'a pas de livres qui prouveraient la validité des croyances autochtones. Aux yeux de ce dernier, le livre dans sa matérialité même donne une crédibilité certaine au message religieux contenu dans la Bible. À un « Capitaine » traditionnaliste huron, ce vieillard rétorque :

Où sont les escritures qui nous fassent foy de ce que tu dis [récit de la création du monde : que les terres sont sorties des eaux sous la poussée d'une Tortue d'une prodigieuse grandeur]? [...] Mais les Français ne parlent point par cœur, ils conservent de toute antiquité les livres Saints, où la parole de Dieu mesme est escrite ; sans qu'il soit permis à aucun d'y altérer le moins du monde. (*JR* 1645–46, vol. 30, 62)

Les convertis sincères sont en cela les meilleurs représentants du message religieux et le répandent avec zèle une fois qu'ils ont pleinement rompu avec leurs genre de vie et croyances antérieurs, une épreuve néanmoins

⁵ Tandis que les Amérindiens sont régulièrement perçus comme des mineurs par les missionnaires de Nouvelle-France (jésuites, ursulines, etc.), ce n'est pas le cas en Orient et en Extrême Orient (voir notre étude intitulée : « Les “réductions” de Nouvelle-France : une illustration de la pratique missionnaire jésuite », 523–525).

des plus compliquées dans la mesure où cette décision individuelle va avoir un impact sur toute leur famille et, à l'occasion, sur la communauté.

L'écrit, par son pouvoir de communication à distance, de même que l'horloge, par sa capacité anthropomorphique à rythmer le temps par la frappe régulière de son bras, sont des produits de l'ingéniosité humaine, des outils que les missionnaires récupèrent dans leur effort de tous les instants pour évangéliser. Un autre moyen, d'origine naturelle celui-là mais lui aussi utilisé pour provoquer l'admiration des Amérindiens, est la prédiction des éclipses qui va littéralement stupéfier les autochtones.

Si les éclipses relèvent de phénomènes célestes, leur apparition, pour les missionnaires, est cependant tout aussi facile à prévoir que les battements d'une horloge ou la capacité d'un père à lire un message qu'il vient de recevoir, mais leur effet est autrement plus impressionnant sur les autochtones dont la vie est fortement influencée par ces phénomènes célestes terrifiants. Pourquoi les missionnaires en sont-ils venus à prédire les éclipses en Nouvelle-France quand le travail d'évangélisation est immense et pourrait solliciter tous leurs instants ? S'il est vrai que les pères, de par leur éducation, ont l'esprit curieux et des intérêts intellectuels souvent éclectiques, la prédiction des éclipses de soleil et de lune n'est pas, pour eux, une distraction, mais une nécessité parce qu'elle leur permet d'établir les longitudes des nouveaux pays qu'ils explorent ou dans lesquels ils sont établis. De fait, ils y font très régulièrement allusion dans leurs écrits. Il est dès lors logique à leurs yeux d'utiliser les prédictions de ces phénomènes célestes dans le cadre de leur mission d'évangélisation. Pour la « bonne cause », soit l'agrandissement du Royaume de Dieu, aucun moyen n'est à négliger.

Les éclipses, dans nombre de cultures, sont perçues comme de mauvais présages qui annoncent de grands maux : épidémies ou défaites militaires. Au Moyen Âge, en 1350, la Faculté de Médecine de Paris déclare que les effets de la peste sont en grande partie dus aux éclipses (cf. Homet, « Astronomie et superstition. Chroniques des éclipses de soleil », 64–65). La France et l'Europe du dix-septième siècle ne sont guère différentes de celles du quatorzième siècle, et tout aussi effrayées par ces « signes du ciel ». Ainsi, l'éclipse du 12 août 1654 va-t-elle, selon l'historienne Elizabeth Labrousse, susciter une « anxiété exceptionnelle dans un large public » (*L'Entrée de Saturne au Lion. L'éclipse de soleil du 12 août 1654*, 4), une « sorte de panique populaire » (23) qui n'est pas seulement due aux exagérations de quelques prédicateurs

millénaristes⁶. C'est pourquoi l'évêque de Coutances demande à Gassendi d'écrire un opuscule sur l'éclipse à venir pour rassurer l'opinion. De là naîtront les *Sentimens sur l'Eclipse qui doit arriver le 12 du mois d'Aoust prochain. Pour servir de réfutation aux faussetez qui ont esté publiées sous le nom du Docteur Andreas* (livret daté du 20 juillet 1654).

Il n'empêche : comme Honoré Bouché l'écrit dans sa *Description de Provence*, toute l'Europe tremble et nombre de gens renouent avec l'Eglise et ses pratiques :

A l'occasion d'une Eclipsé qui arriva sur les neuf ou dix heures du matin, le 12. du mois d'Aoust, il se fit de plus grandes sottises, non seulement en Provence, mais encore par toute la France, l'Espagne, l'Italie et l'Allemagne, qu'on ait jamais entendu raconter. [...] [S]ur le bruit qui couroit qu'en ce jour-là tout le monde devoit perir, on ne vit jamais tant de conversions, tant de confessions generales et tant d'actes de pénitence : les Confesseurs eurent grand employ durant plusieurs jours auparavant, et dans cette fiction et peur imaginaire, la seule Eglise profita dans les folies du peuple. (Cité par Labrousse, 25–26)

Et, de la même manière que l'Eglise tire le plus grand profit de cette « panique divine » en France, de même, les missionnaires de Nouvelle-France vont exploiter au maximum la peur des Amérindiens à l'égard de ces manifestations célestes.

En 1650, il y a déjà longtemps que l'Eglise ne voit plus dans les éclipses et autres phénomènes naturels (comme les tremblements de terre), même impressionnants, des signes d'une prochaine fin du monde. Cette croyance a essentiellement disparu dans les milieux catholiques. Cela n'empêche pas les missionnaires jésuites de jouir des effets de cette « saine peur » si elle arrive à faire abandonner aux Amérindiens leurs croyances animistes et à les conduire à la « vraie religion ». Dieu utilise des moyens variés et parfois détournés (comme par exemple l'intervention du Diable) si cela permet de mieux assurer le salut du « troupeau ».

⁶ Jean Delumeau écrit, dans *La Peur en Occident*, que cette panique s'explique principalement par l'importance accordée à la date de 1656 par les théologiens et pronostiqueurs protestants. Étant le résultat de savants calculs, cette date annoncerait la fin des temps. La peur développée dans les pays et milieux réformés, une peur renforcée par l'éclipse de 1652, en vient ainsi à influencer les milieux catholiques français (cf. 298).

Les autochtones ont, eux, une explication des éclipses très différente de celle des Français. Elle n'est en rien scientifique mais allie, au contraire, imagination et anthropomorphisation dans la mesure où ils voient dans le soleil et la lune des astres humanisés (cf. Demers, 226)⁷. La discussion suivante, rapportée par Le Jeune dans la *Relation* de 1634, quoiqu'elle se veuille insidieusement moqueuse et cherche à montrer la naïveté des Amérindiens aux lecteurs, est un exemple intéressant de la représentation autochtone du monde dans laquelle s'inscrit le phénomène des éclipses (même si certaines croyances et explications diffèrent selon les peuples indigènes) :

Ie leur ay demanday d'où venoit l'Eclypse de Lune & de Soleil ; ils m'ont respondu que la Lune s'eclypsoit ou paroissoit noire, à cause qu'elle tenoit son fils entre ses bras, qui empeschoit que l'on ne vist sa clarté. Si la Lune a un fils, elle est mariée, ou l'a été, leur dis-je, ouÿ dea, me dirent ils, le Soleil est son mary qui marche tout le jour, & elle toute la nuict : & s'il s'eclypse, ou s'il s'obscurcit, c'est qu'il prend aussi par fois le fils qu'il a eu de la Lune entre ses bras : ouÿ, mais ny la Lune ny le Soleil n'ont point de bras, leur disois-je, tu n'as point d'esprit : ils tiennent touiours leurs arcs bandés devant eux, voila pourquoy leurs bras ne paroissent point ; & sur qui veulent ils tirer ? hé qu'en sçavons nous. Ie leur demanday que vouloient dire ces taches qui se font voir en la Lune : tu ne sçay rien du tout, me disoient ils ; c'est un bonet qui luy couvre la teste, & non pas des taches. (*JR* 1634, vol. 6, 222)

Le Jeune s'apitoie sur ces « superstitiōs », des « sottises » (222) qu'il est cependant possible, selon lui, d'éradiquer pour peu que le barrage des langues soit franchi.

Prédire les éclipses et les expliquer, comme le font les missionnaires, provoque ainsi l'admiration sans borne des autochtones et les pères savent en tirer le meilleur parti. La prédication à but de conversion suit souvent de près une prédiction réussie :

⁷ Les références aux explications des éclipses par les Amérindiens sont nombreuses dans les *Relations* : *JR* 1634, vol. 6, 222–23 ; *JR* 1636, vol. 10, 58 ; *JR* 1637, vol. 12, 72 et 142 ; *JR* 1643, vol. 22, 294 ; *JR* 1672–74, vol. 58, 160–62. Pour ce qui est de la position de l'Eglise, et plus précisément des missionnaires jésuites au Canada, à l'égard des tremblements de terre, consulter notre article intitulé : « L'interprétation du tremblement de terre de 1663 en Nouvelle-France d'après les écrits des missionnaires. »

GREGOIRE

Une eclipse de Lune [qui arriva le 31 décembre 1637] [...] nous donna icy un grand credit pour faire approuver ce que nous croyons. Car (leur disions nous) vous avez veu comme la Lune est eclipsée le mesme jour au mesme moment que nous avions predict. Au reste, nous n'eussiōs pas voulu mourir pour vous maintenir cette verité, cōme nous sommes prests de faire, pour vous maintenir que Dieu vous brûlera eternellement, si vous ne croyez en luy. (*JR* 1638, vol. 15, 138)

La prédiction des éclipses donne aux pères une crédibilité à laquelle seuls peuvent prétendre les chamans. L'admiration qu'engendre cette pratique de divination provoque aussi, de la part des autochtones, des attentes, comme de se faire prédire l'avenir dans le quotidien : que ce soit au sujet des récoltes et des cultures, des événements sociaux ayant trait à la vie de la communauté, ou de la guerre :

Sur ce que nous leur predisons les Ecclipses de la Lune et du Soleil, dont ils ont beaucoup de peur, ils se sont imaginez que nous en estions les maistres ; que nous sçavions toutes les choses à advenir ; & que c'est nous qui en disposons. Et en ceste cōsideration, ils s'adressent à nous pour sçavoir si leurs bleds reüssiront ; où sont leurs ennemis ; & en quelle quantité ils viennent. (*JR* 1639, vol. 17, 118)

Les missionnaires prennent un double risque en s'engageant dans le jeu des prédictions. Certes, les éclipses sont prévisibles et le résultat de ces prédictions impressionne car elles stupéfient les Amérindiens et les amènent plus facilement à la foi par l'admiration qu'ils portent aux pères et à leur culture. Mais les jésuites risquent de se faire prendre pour des sorciers, une possibilité dont ils sont conscients et qu'ils accueillent avec une grande sérénité si cela peut favoriser leur effort de conversion (par la neutralisation des chamans incapables de rivaliser avec eux, par exemple), mais qui devient très problématique lorsqu'ils sont accusés d'être à l'origine des épidémies qui déciment les tribus qu'ils évangélisent. Ironiquement, une raison pour laquelle ils ne vont pas être massacrés est que les Amérindiens craignent les pouvoirs magiques de ces « sorciers chrétiens ».

Le deuxième danger engendré par la pratique des prédictions réside dans le fait que les missionnaires pourraient, à l'extrême, se prendre au jeu, soit jouer aux apprentis sorciers en cherchant à rendre l'imprévisible prévisible : faire pleuvoir ou guérir des cas désespérés, par exemple. Lire

l'avenir est l'apanage de Dieu, déclare formellement le pape Sixte V dans une bulle du 5 janvier 1586, dénonçant par là même toute pratique de divination. Tout le reste n'est que diablerie. La seule exception retenue l'est en cas de prédictions de phénomènes naturels, comme les éclipses, que l'on peut annoncer à l'avance.

Sans se prendre au jeu, nombre de missionnaires jésuites à l'époque, en Nouvelle-France comme en Bretagne où ils opèrent aussi, se voient « comme des agents personnels de Dieu, appelés et mandatés par lui pour accomplir de grandes choses, voire des miracles », ainsi que l'explique Dominique Deslandres (« Des ouvriers formidables à l'enfer » 258–59)⁸. Le père de Brébeuf est un bon exemple de jésuite qui ne doute pas d'avoir reçu, après que ses vœux ont été exaucés, des faveurs très particulières pour le plus grand bien de l'Eglise missionnaire.

Lors de la grande sécheresse du printemps 1635, après avoir expliqué aux membres de la communauté huronne d'Ihonatiria au sein de laquelle il s'est installé, qu'ils devraient s'adresser au Dieu des chrétiens plutôt qu'aux sorciers qui les trompent pour obtenir ce qu'ils désirent, et que lui-même ne contrôle en rien la pluie et le beau temps, Brébeuf offre une neuvaine de messes à St-Joseph et organise une procession pour obtenir l'aide divine :

Or il avint iustement [rapporte le père] que la neufvaine étât accomplie, qui fut le treiziesme luin, nous ne peusmes parachever la Procession sans pluye, qui suivit fort abondante, & dura à diverses reprises l'espace de plus d'un mois avec un grand amandement & accroissement des fruits de la terre (*JR* 1636, vol. 10, 40).

Lors d'une nouvelle sécheresse, en juillet, une seconde neuvaine, en l'honneur de saint Ignace cette fois, est récompensée par une grande abondance de pluies qui permet aux Amérindiens d'obtenir une très bonne récolte de blé. Brébeuf conclut ainsi le récit de ses deux neuvaines couronnées de succès dont les résultats profitent à tous sauf aux chamans :

Or ces pluies ont fait deux biens ; l'un en ce qu'elles ont accru les fruits de la terre, & l'autre en ce qu'elles ont étouffé toutes les mauvaises opinions & volonteز conçeuës

⁸ Dominique Deslandres, parlant des missionnaires jésuites en Bretagne et en Nouvelle-France, écrit encore qu'« Ils jouent le jeu, pour sûr, et ils ne sont pas loin de se croire eux-mêmes des guérisseurs guidés par Dieu » (« Des ouvriers formidables à l'enfer », 260).

GREGOIRE

contre Dieu, contre la Croix, & contre nous ; car tous les Sauvages de notre cognoissance, & notamment de notre village, sont venus expressément nous trouver pour nous dire qu'en effet Dieu estoit bon, & que nous estions aussi bons, & qu'à l'avenir ils vouloient servir Dieu, adioustant mille poüilles [insultes] à l'encontre de leurs ArrendioVane [Arendicouane], ou devins. A Dieu soit pour jamais la gloire de tout ; il permet la secheresse des terres, pour arrouser les cœurs de ses benedictions. (42)

En fait, Brébeuf l'a peut-être évité belle dans la mesure où plusieurs Amérindiens, mais aussi le sorcier du village ridiculisé pour son incapacité à faire tomber la pluie, lui en voulaient d'être à l'origine de la sécheresse et d'œuvrer à la destruction de la communauté.

Le père de Brébeuf s'est ainsi imposé comme plus puissant sorcier que le sorcier indigène, temporairement du moins. Il explique que certains chamans

font estat de commander aux pluyes & aux vents ; d'autres de predire les choses à venir ; d'autres [...] de rendre la santé aux malades, & ce, avec des remedes, qui n'ont aucun rapport aux maladies (*JR* 1636, vol. 10, 192–94),

et parfois y arrivent parce que le « Diable leur tient la main » (194). Si les missionnaires ne prétendent pas avoir ces pouvoirs, ils espèrent néanmoins que Dieu les entendra et qu'ils pourront obtenir les mêmes résultats, le moment venu, que ceux que revendiquent les chamans. Comme l'écrit très justement Bruce Trigger :

même si les jésuites ne croyaient pas, dans le véritable sens du mot, au pouvoir magique des rites catholiques de maîtriser automatiquement les lois de la nature, ils étaient néanmoins convaincus que leur Dieu répondrait à leurs prières réclamant la pluie ou de bonnes récoltes, si cela pouvait convaincre les Amérindiens de sa gloire et aider à miner le respect que les Amérindiens avaient pour leurs propres chamans. (*Les Enfants d'Aataentsic*, 481)

Missionnaires et sorciers, malgré une croyance commune en des forces surnaturelles qui régissent l'ordre du monde et son fonctionnement, une croyance commune qui les rapproche en fait beaucoup, diffèrent en ceci que les jésuites, dans leur pratique d'évangélisation, espèrent une intervention divine le moment venu mais ne l'attendent pas nécessairement, alors

que les chamans risquent de perdre gains matériels et réputation si leurs dons de devins ou de guérisseurs ne sont pas confirmés. Mais comme l'écrit Dominique Deslandres, « les jésuites finissent par jouer avec le feu, et paraissent alors plus puissants qu'ils ne le sont—plus puissants donc plus dangereux » (*Croire et faire croire*, 323) aux yeux des sorciers dont ils cherchent à miner la crédibilité, et plus généralement aux yeux des Amérindiens.

Les jésuites ont rapidement compris qu'il leur fallait rivaliser avec les sorciers et les battre sur leur propre terrain des pratiques magiques pour pouvoir espérer amener les autochtones au christianisme. Mais miner la crédibilité des chamans, des chefs religieux, revient à déstabiliser les communautés qui, en périodes d'épidémies ou de défaites militaires, peuvent se retourner contre ces « nouveaux sorciers ». Les pères doivent donc toujours s'efforcer de démontrer la supériorité que leur confèrent leurs croyances et leur culture, pour pouvoir poursuivre avec un certain succès l'effort de conversion⁹.

L'effet de surprise obtenu par un procédé perçu comme magique par les Amérindiens est, en résumé, l'un des moyens les plus sûrs d'amener ces derniers à la religion. Le père jésuite Jouvency, dans un ouvrage publié en 1710, rapporte l'un des cas les plus révélateurs de l'ingéniosité des missionnaires français en Nouvelle-France au début du dix-septième siècle, un cas dans lequel l'effet de surprise suscitant stupeur, crainte et admiration aura favorisé le processus d'évangélisation. L'épisode porte sur un groupe d'Amérindiens qui refuse de croire les discours d'un missionnaire cherchant à les convaincre de la réalité des feux d'un enfer éternel. Les autochtones expliquent qu'un feu si intense et sans fin consommerait trop de bois et que c'est donc concrètement impossible. Le père, n'arrivant pas à les persuader de la vérité de ses propos, déclare que dans le monde de l'enfer brûle un feu qui ne consomme pas de bois. Lorsque fusent les rires des autochtones, il les invite à venir voir, quelques

⁹ Déjà, au début du dix-septième siècle, dans la colonie de Port-Royal, en Acadie, le père Biard raillait les sorciers amérindiens pour leurs connaissances médicales primaires (*JR*, vol.3, 116). Elie de Comminges, auteur de l'étude intitulée : « Les récits de voyage des Jésuites en Nouvelle-France : la mission du Père Biard (1611–1613) », commente avec ironie la moquerie de ce jésuite : « M. Diafoirus lui, en connaissait donc plus ? » (853), la médecine en France n'étant, à l'époque, guère plus avancée que celle des Amérindiens.

jours plus tard, se consumer un morceau de cette terre infernale qui brûle toute seule.

Au jour convenu, ce missionnaire, devant un parterre de douze membres prééminents de la tribu, sort un morceau de soufre qu'il fait passer dans l'assistance. Tous admettent qu'il provient du sol. Puis, le prêtre effrite la pierre de soufre sur des charbons ardents et provoque une odeur suffocante. Après qu'il a réitéré par trois fois l'expérience, les Amérindiens se lèvent, ébahis et désormais convaincus des dires ce qui concerne du père en l'existence d'un monde infernal (cf. *JR* 1610–13, vol. 1, 289). Les autochtones sont subjugués et remplis d'admiration devant la démonstration très spectaculaire de la supériorité du Français. L'ingéniosité du missionnaire a porté ses fruits, comme elle en portera bien d'autres tout au long du dix-septième siècle. L'« agrandissement du Royaume de Dieu » en Nouvelle-France s'accommode en effet de tous les moyens, même des plus originaux et surprenants.

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Call, Michael, *The Would-Be Author. Molière and the Comedy of Print*. West Lafayette, IN, Purdue University Press, coll. "Purdue Studies in Romance Literatures," 2015. ISBN 978-61249-385-5. Pp. 292. \$45

In response to René Bray's provocative question in *Molière homme de théâtre* (1954): "Molière pense-t-il ?," Michael Call, in this well-documented and perceptively argued study, repudiates the traditional image of Molière as the exemplary "philosophe/farceur," i.e., the actor, author, and thinker seemingly disinterested in the publication process. He draws attention to the ironic interplay of these roles throughout the playwright's career. More specifically, he sheds light on the multiple permutations of Molière's printing career. This results in the construction of his authorship via his continuous interactions with the Parisian publishing world, notably the legal implications underlying the workings of the seventeenth-century book trade: for example, the relationship between cultural capital and literary property in early modern France. The history of these battles is intimately linked, Call argues, to the emergence of Molière's authorial *persona*.

Jean Ribou's pirated editions of several of the dramatist's early plays constitute the major struggle of the aspiring playwright during the early part of his career (1659–1661). Taking legal action against Ribou, and beginning with *L'Ecole des maris*, Molière crafts a privilege which will protect him more effectively against illegal editions of his work. He thus establishes his play as his exclusive intellectual property guaranteed by royal authority. Having been granted a royal pension in 1663, Molière's authorship was clearly valorized and his popularity as the première court entertainer was officially acknowledged. The publication of his *Oeuvres* in 1666 represented the ultimate vindication of Molière vis-à-vis his adversaries and the triumph of his authorial strategy or, more precisely, his professional legitimacy.

Examining the evolution of the authorial *persona* in a great number of the comedies, Call highlights the problematic of reading and writing in Molière's theater. His compelling comparison between Molière the playwright incapable of exerting complete control over his script and the frustrated, solitary status of his protagonists at the end of several plays (e.g., Arnolphe, Sganarelle, Alceste) evokes the comic defeat of authority/authorship. Call thereby illustrates the triumph of the author/craftsman behind the scenes. He clearly delineates in *L'Ecole des femmes* the textual identity of both Arnolphe and Agnès, including Arnolphe's ironic reference to the authorship of the *maximes* and their religious dimension as

well. Agnès' liberation is based not only on her discursive talent vis-à-vis Arnolphe but also on her access to authorship, and her italicized letter matches Arnolphe's italicized *maximes*. Call rightly underscores the farcical dimension of the play, but also points to Donneau de Visé's contention, during the *querelle*, that *L'Ecole des femmes* exemplifies the principal tenets of *la grande comédie*. Even though Molière thus succeeded in bringing the comic genre to its point of perfection, de Visé sought to create a wedge between the dramatist and the courtly aristocrats by undermining his attempt to satirize members of the Court. Downplaying the originality of both *Ecoles*, he aimed to turn the *rieurs* into adversaries of the comic playwright. Moreover, although Molière was a superb comic actor, critics such as Montfleury called into question his skills as a writer.

As for the significance of the role of authorship in *Le Misanthrope*, Call aptly notes the complementarity of reading and writing as intellectual competencies. Given Alceste's intransigent notion of authorship, Molière no doubt projected upon his comic protagonist his own misgivings concerning seventeenth-century publishing practices. Oronte appears as a burlesque poetaster, and his sonnet is pertinently compared to Mascarille's off-the-cuff poetic reading in *Les Précieuses ridicules*. Although Alceste's "vieille Chanson" is, as Call argues, devoid of authorship, it nonetheless offers an ironic commentary on the protagonist's relationship with Célimène and a subtle foreshadowing of the dénouement. Regarding Alceste's rhetorical artifice during his altercation with Oronte (I, 2), it should be noted that he seriously equivocates ("Je ne dis pas cela") before revealing his true opinion of Oronte's sonnet. And although it is beyond debate that Célimène's choice of the epistolary form leads to her final undoing, we should not neglect the fact that her duplicity is perfectly acceptable to Alceste since he is willing to believe—"Efforcez-vous de paraître fidèle" (IV, 3)—her untruthful assertion that she has been faithful to him.

Despite these interpretive differences, Michael Call's *The Would-Be Author. Molière and the Comedy of Print* represents a significant contribution to Molière studies. It offers a systematic and persuasive treatment of the authorial strategies underlying the playwright's remarkable success. All *moliéristes* stand to benefit from this analysis of the professional side of "le premier farceur de la France."

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Meere, Michael, Editor. *French Renaissance and Baroque Drama: Text, Performance, Theory*. Newark: University of Delaware Press, 2015. ISBN 978-1-61149-548-5. Pp. 336. \$90

French Renaissance and Baroque Drama is a collection of fifteen essays that grew out of two panels at the 2012 Renaissance Society of America conference in Washington, D.C. The essays, by both early-career and senior scholars, are divided in a more or less chronological fashion. The volume's purpose, as stated in the introduction, is threefold: to introduce scholars and students to the diversity of French baroque drama, to emphasize the performative aspect of drama (rather than adopt a narrowly textual approach), and, ultimately, to return neglected drama to the stage. The volume admirably executes the first two. It covers a wide range of dramatic texts, some familiar (e.g., Garnier's tragedies), others less familiar (e.g., Puget de la Serre's theater) and a wide range of critical approaches, from Victor Turner's anthropological "social drama" (Meere and Gates) to Lacanian psychoanalysis (Guild). In addition, the term "drama" is broadly construed to mean not only theater, but also rituals, festivals, demonic possession and exorcism, trials, and other social "dramas." In turn, many of the contributions address either the material conditions of baroque performance (Chevallier-Micki), its broader cultural context (Beam, Noirod, Welch, Calhoun, O'Hara), or the interplay between politics and performance (Usher, Hillman, Cavaillé). There is, however, much less about staging renaissance and baroque plays today. Only Szabari's contribution considers (and then only briefly) recent productions of renaissance theater. There is otherwise very little about how one might bring these plays to the contemporary stage or why. Nevertheless, by bringing to light an underappreciated dramatic corpus and drawing attention to its performative aspects, the volume does represent an important first step toward the entry of renaissance and baroque drama into the contemporary repertoire. *French Renaissance and Baroque Drama* would be of interest to students and scholars of theater, theater history, and early modern France more generally.

The first essay, by Andreea Marculescu, examines the representation of demonic possession in mystery plays and prose narratives. The author notes that narratives of demonic possession adopt a vocabulary that was developed in mystery plays, but deny the demoniac the agency that he or she had in the earlier dramatic tradition in order to focus on the Church's purchase on truth. The essay draws on a wide range of critical approaches, from affect theory (Cvetkovich) to performance studies (Roach). In particular, the novel approach to representation, following Taussig rather

than Aristotle, offers a fresh perspective on mimesis in the early modern period.

John Lyons reads Théodore de Bèze's *Abraham sacrificant* against the Biblical account and in light of Aristotelian dramatic imperatives, showing the theological consequences of dramatic adaptation. Lyons focuses especially on the introduction of Satan, whose rationalizing was meant to recall Scholastic, which is to say Catholic, philosophy. The playwright made Abraham more human by introducing an element of human reason, only to make the human disappear. This is the sense in which *Abraham sacrificant* heralds an "end of ethics": yoked to human reason, ethical deliberation becomes the enemy of God.

Turning toward Rabelais, Carolien Gates and Michael Meere offer a close reading of the Chiquanous episode in the *Quart Livre* in light of anthropologist Victor Turner's theory of play as a creative and cohesive force. Taking to task the view that cruelty and farce are destructive, the authors show that violence and laughter together become an organizing principle for social cohesion. This contribution makes the case for the application of an anthropological approach to resolve the problems posed by violence in dramatic texts.

While we often place Protestantism on the side of antitheatricity, Sara Beam's contribution recovers the neglected role of the theater in Protestant evangelization. Beam discusses two plays written, published, and performed in Geneva in the 1560s. Neither play says much about theology, which Beam shows is strategic: by smoothing over the differences between the various Protestant churches, the plays present Protestantism as a unified front against Catholicism. Thus the purpose of the plays, Beam concludes, was not to demonstrate the finer points of Protestant theology, but rather to "intensify contempt for the Catholic hierarchy, strengthen the resolve to combat corruption, or evoke a sense of satisfaction or even joy of belonging to the party of truth" (75).

Corinne Noirot takes on the failure of erudite comedy in the Renaissance by asking who might have been the audience of Jean de la Taille's comedic plays. Through close readings of paratexts, Noirot shows that the plays suffered from a tension between pragmatism (thereby reaching a wider audience) and poetic conventions (thereby appealing to an erudite, but restricted, audience). Making the case for a tiered audience comprised of "those who can" (nobles) and "those who know" (humanists), Noirot argues that La Taille's comedies fell victim to a desire to reach both audiences.

The next essay, by Ellen Welch, similarly engages with the question of the audience. Reading court ballet in the context of diplomacy, with a particular focus on the 1573 *Ballet des Polonais*, Welch convincingly argues that the audience of court ballet (e.g., the presence of foreign observers) necessarily disperses power and thus has consequences for interpretation: multiple interpretations and constant negotiation of meaning. Moreover, court artists (e.g., Dorat), Welch argues, anticipated the multiple perspectives of the audience. Ultimately, the negotiation inherent in the performance of the ballet mirrors that of diplomacy itself. This essay, like Noirot's, shows how attention to reception bears upon our interpretation of renaissance and baroque performance.

The next essay, by Antonia Szabari, offers a fascinating contextualization of Garnier's Greek tragedies with respect to ancient sacrificial practices and contemporary religious violence. Noting "Garnier's familiarity with classical rituals" (117), Szabari examines how ritual practices function in theatrical performance, concluding that "Garnier's plays look at this 'barbarous' ritual of the past in order to allude to the return of violence in France" (134). In this way, Szabari shows how drama might reactivate ritual to give it contemporary religious or political significance.

In the second essay on Garnier, Phillip John Usher examines the association of the tragedies with the *parlement*. Considering the dedicatory letters of the tragedies as well as Garnier's dramatization of the material, Usher argues that Garnier makes the Greek material "appear as public trials worthy of the *parlement*'s attention" (149) and in this way brings his tragedies into a public sphere. Garnier's tragedies thus become an appeal to negotiate for peace at a time when France was torn apart by religious conflict. Usher's approach has the great merit of overcoming the pitfalls of contextualization, where a piece of literature becomes the "expression" of contemporary events, by looking at the ways in which an author consciously and actively engages with the public sphere.

Fabien Cavaillé also considers the public sphere in an analysis of the representation of festivals in Montaigne's *Essais*. Turning, like Gates and Meere, toward Turner's definition of play, Cavaillé proposes an anthropological understanding of early modern festivals as an alternative to a "poetic" paradigm according to which the arts are useful insofar as they convey particular content. The anthropological paradigm, on the other hand, focuses on the collective nature of performance, regardless of "what one performs or not" (162).

Elizabeth Guild's contribution joins psychoanalysis and skepticism in reading Montaigne's 1562 encounter with "cannibals" in Rouen. Guild

argues that “Montaigne’s representation [of the encounter with the “cannibals”] dramatizes the significance of waiting until later for understanding, rather than—whether through the illusion of knowing already, or driven by fear of being too late—rushing to have the last word and thereby excluding other possible pasts and futures” (170). This essay is the most heavily theoretical of the volume and assumes some familiarity with psychoanalytic criticism. It nevertheless offers a compelling interpretation of Montaigne’s dramatization of his encounter with the other.

Christian Biet’s contribution, a translation of an article that some may already be familiar with, reads Jacques de Fonteny’s pastoral play *Le beau berger* (1587) as a kind of “experiment” (189) with dramatic genre. Biet reads Fonteny’s innovations, particularly the celebration of male homosexuality between the shepherds Chrisophile and Chrisalde, as nationalistic: Fonteny thus creates a specifically French pastoral, which returns to an ancient tradition the celebrated male love. The monstrous satyrs, then, become parodic figures of Italian and Spanish pastoral drama, exposing the generic limitations of pastoral drama based on heterosexual love only.

Sybille Chevallier-Micki looks at the material conditions of performance in Rouen from 1600–1620 and considers the complex relationship between stage design and the reality of public trials, executions, and other forms of spectacle. In addition, it was not only memory of real spectacles (e.g., mystery plays) that informed stage design, but also the collective memory of recent religious conflicts. Chevallier-Micki’s contribution ends on a speculative, but promising, note, asking us to consider the ways in which new dramatic forms recycled or reappropriated preexisting scenic elements and recast them according to new political demands.

Alison Calhoun considers the relationship between dignity, an essentially public affect, and emotion, which is private, in burlesque ballets by looking closely at the *Bal de la douairière de Billebahaut* (1627). Rather than enact power and control, the leaders perform their own weaknesses. Building upon recent work in affect theory, Calhoun argues that in the ballet, political problems are “felt” before they are addressed in the political, public arena (236), in much the same way that affect is “felt” before it is identified as emotion.

Stephanie O’Hara examines the “dramaturgy of poison” in the development of tragedy, noting that poison moves toward metaphor in neoclassical tragedy. Although this is not especially surprising, given the dual imperative of verisimilitude and decorum that rendered the neoclassical stage inhospitable to gruesome scenes of violent death, O’Hara also

shows that the stylized dramatic representation of poison coexisted with vivid pamphlet literature. O'Hara's contribution shows how dramatic representation offers fictional resolution to "intractable political and social problem[s]" (261) like poison crimes.

In the volume's final essay, Richard Hillman addresses the question of topical allusions in early modern drama by looking closely at two minor plays by Puget de la Serre and André Mareschal. Considering both authors' relationships with Marie de Medici at the time of her exile, Hillman looks at how both plays work with English material (i.e., Sidney). This exceptionally lucid essay demonstrates how we might investigate the "allusive operation of theatrical intertextuality" (285) in order to tease out the relationship between theater and its immediate political context.

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Turcat, Eric. *La Rochefoucauld par quatre chemins. Les Maximes et leurs ambivalences*. Tübingen: Narr Verlag, 2013. ISBN 978-3-8233-6803-8. Pp. 220.

L'ambition d'Eric Turcat dans cet ouvrage est de dépasser les querelles sur les *Maximes* de La Rochefoucauld en analysant l'œuvre sous quatre angles différents. 1. Approche rhétorique, centrée sur la figure de l'ironie (polycentrique, polyphonique, polysémique) et l'analyse des figures oppositionnelles (antithèse, antiphrase, antanacrase, chiasme). Turcat met en doute *l'honnêteté* de La Rochefoucauld en montrant comment une figure elliptique la rapproche ironiquement de *l'habileté*. 2. Approche psychologique *psycho- vectorielle*. Dans le cadre de l'étude de la communication non verbale, la méthode d'analyse *psycho-vectorielle* est élaborée dans les années 1970–80 par le psychologue américain Shirley (*Mapping the Mind*, Chicago, Nelson-Hall, 1983). Shirley distingue quatre émotions majeures : fierté, désir, affection, curiosité. À chacune correspond une variante anxieuse ou agressive. « Ces douze émotions de base peuvent alors se combiner [...] de telle sorte à former ce que [Shirley] appelle alors des psycho-vecteurs » (72). Turcat identifie les combinaisons possibles dans les *Maximes* et pose la *honte* comme pivot de l'amour-propre, plutôt que le *mépris* ou la *fierté*. 3. Approche anthropologique, centrée sur *l'amour* : E. Turcat établit un parallèle entre le « *triangle culinaire* » de Lévi-Strauss et une « *cuisine du sentiment amoureux* » où le discours « *souvent sexiste* » privilégierait un amour « *libertin* », entre « *passion* » et « *amitié* » (18). Les représentations triangulaires de John A. Lee et Robert Sternberg sont utilisées pour définir « *le discours amou-*

reux » de La Rochefoucauld. 4. Approche linguistique, centrée sur la *fortune*, à qui la modalisation des maximes donnerait une forme carrée.

L'ouvrage se veut une remise à plat audacieuse, basée sur un retour au texte analysé aux prismes de différentes disciplines. Les approches choisies sont originales, particulièrement l'approche psychologique. Turcat affirme l'importance d'un travail stylistique pour sortir des « *querelles idéologiques* », auxquelles il se dit étranger, et se livre lui-même à de nombreuses études de maximes—ce qui lui permet de dégager les motifs de l'ellipse, du triangle, du carré... La lecture augustinienne de La Rochefoucauld est tellement dominante qu'elle rend difficile une autre approche ; une recherche d'alternatives telle que celle d'E. Turcat est donc audacieuse et appréciable. Mais, d'un côté, la remise à plat l'amène à caricaturer les thèses augustinienes pour en diminuer l'influence, les présentant comme des « *préjugés* », en faveur d'un « *pessimisme gnomique* » qui n'aurait existé en réalité « *que pour ceux qui préféreraient enfermer La Rochefoucauld dans un ordre classique* » (19) ; d'un autre côté, Turcat favorise les hypothèses libertines ou épicuriennes, pour les mettre au même niveau que les premières. Il présente de façon expéditive les deux écoles, ce qui lui évite de procéder à une réfutation en règle de la première, pourtant la plus établie. Il la sous-estime et donne parfois l'impression qu'il la méconnaît, déplorant par exemple que le parti augustinien ait occulté l'humour de La Rochefoucauld... « *Pourquoi [...] ce déni d'ironie ? En un mot : l'augustinisme. En effet, [...] même la critique, certes surtout française, des dix dernières années, de Lafond à Plazenet en passant par Sellier, reste fortement influencée par le travail de Sainte-Beuve, et donc par l'hégémonie culturelle du jansénisme au Grand Siècle. Saint Augustin ne rime apparemment pas avec boute-en-train* » (12). C'est ignorer les travaux de J. Lafond (notamment), qui a analysé l'ironie et le trait d'esprit de La Rochefoucauld dans un chapitre entier de son ouvrage de référence (III, « L'ambiguïté et la transparence » in : *La Rochefoucauld, augustinisme et littérature*, Paris, Klincksieck, 1986). Paradoxalement, Turcat prend lui-même au sérieux des affirmations évidemment ironiques de La Rochefoucauld. Il tombe dans le travers des travaux de Louis Hippeau (*Essai sur la morale de La Rochefoucauld*, Paris, Nizet, 1967): ce qui est « *une pure constatation de fait* » est interprété de façon discutable comme « *une morale pragmatique du succès* » (Lafond, *op. cit.*, p. 99). Turcat expose longuement l'influence de Faret mais ne mentionne pas Castiglione ou Della Casa, écarte d'autres influences possibles, niant carrément celle de Port-Royal : La Rochefoucauld n'est plus que légèrement influencé par un *amor sui* augustinien « *culturellement incontournable* » (105). C'est prêter bien peu

d'esprit au moraliste que de lui refuser la capacité à accueillir diverses influences à différents degrés... Et une duplicité peu commune que de lui supposer un double visage radical, de janséniste et d'épicurien, comme L. Hippeau en son temps. De plus, Turcat ne prend pas en compte l'évolution du texte à travers les éditions successives et s'en justifie légèrement, par une continuité lexicale essentiellement (105). En même temps, il convoque quelquefois des maximes supprimées en les mettant au même plan que les autres. Ce mélange entretient un certain flou que l'on retrouve dans l'ensemble de l'ouvrage. Ainsi, dans le deuxième chapitre, E. Turcat ne définit pas clairement s'il analyse le point de vue de La Rochefoucauld sur la psychologie humaine, ou s'il prend le texte comme un témoignage permettant l'analyse de la psychologie de l'auteur. Dans la troisième partie, le jargon spécifique à l'anthropologie culinaire qu'E. Turcat ré-utilise pour classer les maximes et définir leurs « *ambivalences* » rend la lecture fastidieuse.

En conclusion, E. Turcat tente courageusement de réhabiliter un point de vue libertin sur La Rochefoucauld, remis en cause depuis longtemps. Il ébranle les certitudes et, à elle seule, cette entreprise fait toute la valeur du livre. Malgré de bonnes idées, toutefois, il échoue dans son projet en raison d'une justification insuffisante qui contredit les travaux précédents sans les réfuter. La diversité des approches est intéressante, mais elle finit par être instrumentalisée pour servir à une démonstration forcée. E. Turcat évacue toute dimension spirituelle, théologique, philosophique de l'œuvre, au profit d'un travail de classement considérable mais qui donne à l'ensemble un air parfois scolaire, avec un certain excès dans l'utilisation des étiquettes *classique* / *baroque*. Néanmoins, on trouvera dans son ouvrage une source d'inspiration précieuse pour explorer le texte insaisissable de La Rochefoucauld à travers de nouveaux angles d'interprétation.

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