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IDENTITY CREATION AS POLITICAL SUBVERSION IN THE MÉMOIRES OF
MADEMOISELLE DE MONTPENSIER

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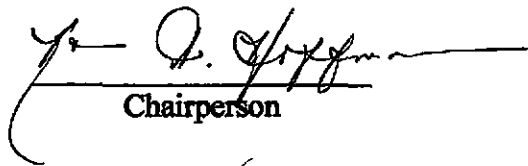
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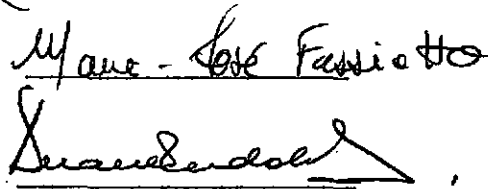
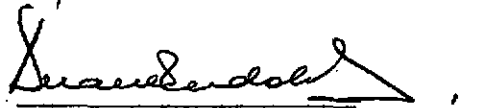



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CHAPTER 1

INTRODUCTION

The duchesse Anne-Marie-Louise de Bourbon de Montpensier inherited from her mother one of the largest portions in Europe during the seventeenth century. Her inheritance, combined with her position as cousin to the young King Louis XIV, provided her with a significant amount of power. Montpensier would be forced to use all of her resources to counteract decisions detrimental to her, decisions made by both Louis XIV and her father, Gaston d'Orléans. In her twenties, Mademoiselle de Montpensier became a rebel, a *frondeuse* in the struggle against Louis XIV's minister, the Cardinal Mazarin. After the rebellion was suppressed, Montpensier was exiled to Saint-Fargeau, where she dedicated her time to writing and other creative projects. During this time she began her memoirs, which document her struggles with the sociopolitical system. Montpensier's memoirs offer a glimpse at the increasing repression of the French nobility by an absolutist king; but more than that, her memoirs demonstrate how writing itself is an act of resistance to the oppressive regime.

Previous scholarship on Montpensier's Mémoires, especially contributions by Joan DeJean and Jean Garapon, has focused on the work's commonalities with the themes and style of seventeenth-century fiction. Other important research has examined the Mémoires in comparison to other seventeenth-century autobiographies and memoirs, or to the autobiographical writings of later centuries. For example, Faith E. Beasley's work on autobiography and memoir – in particular her treatment of the way that women's identities are constructed and presented in those genres – includes significant analyses of Montpensier's Mémoires. The other vital studies on Montpensier's texts concentrate on

her strategies as a specifically female writer struggling to assert independence under the systems of absolute monarchy and patriarchy. Patricia F. Cholakian and Juliette Cherbuliez have contributed enormously to this aspect of the field. My analysis also centers on Montpensier's narrative strategies, but more specifically, on her character portrayals as tools for sociopolitical critique and subversion. Montpensier's identities – and her representations of other characters – change in relation to the narrative events, sometimes even to the point of seeming contradiction, but Montpensier's insistence upon her rights of self-analysis, self-expression, and self-determination remains consistent throughout the text. No matter the details of any specific character portrayal in the Mémoires, the overall assertion of those rights is maintained.

Montpensier opens her text with an example of scene setting and character portrayal that can be seen as representative of the rest of the Mémoires. The first paragraph establishes the versatility of Montpensier's character portrayals in the text, as well as the overarching themes of self-expression and self-determination. La Grande Mademoiselle opens her Mémoires with a statement that seems to contradict her reputed grandeur:

J'ai autrefois eu grande peine à concevoir de quoi l'esprit d'une personne, accoutumée à la cour et née pour [y] être avec le rang que ma naissance m'y donne, se pouvait entretenir lorsqu'elle se trouve réduite à demeurer à la campagne ; car il m'avait toujours semblé que rien ne pouvait divertir dans un éloignement forcé et que d'être hors de la cour, c'était aux grands être en pleine solitude, malgré le nombre de leurs domestiques et la compagnie de ceux qui les visitent. Cependant, depuis que je suis retirée

chez moi, j'éprouve avec douceur que le souvenir de tout ce qui s'est passé dans la vie occupe assez agréablement, pour ne pas compter le temps de la retraite pour un des moins agréables que l'on passe. Outre que c'est un état très-propre à se le représenter dans son ordre, l'on y trouve le loisir nécessaire pour le mettre par écrit, de sorte que la facilité que je sens à me ressouvenir de tout ce que j'ai vu et même de ce qui m'est arrivé ("La Grande Mademoiselle" 21).¹

Montpensier thus begins her text by characterizing herself as a victim: she has been reduced to living in the countryside by someone more powerful than herself. She transitions from this image of pitiful exile to her surprising pleasure of reliving the past in memory, buoyed by another newfound pleasure, writing. By moving from tedium and punishment to new entertainments, Montpensier challenges the idea of her subjugation in exile. Instead, Montpensier indicates that she benefits from her exile because now she has time to reflect upon her life, enjoy it anew, and write her Mémoires. The language that describes her exile changes from "éloignement forcé" to "la retraite," reflecting Montpensier's revalorization of her situation (21). Therefore, the first two sentences of the Mémoires demonstrate how Montpensier literally rewrites the history of her life. Moreover, Montpensier's reinvention of herself – from victim to artist – is a subtle attack on Louis XIV's power. Montpensier seems to suggest that Louis XIV might banish her, but without imprisoning her, he cannot take away her power of self-expression. Instead

¹ See Appendix A for the entire first paragraph of Montpensier's Mémoires; ("La Grande Mademoiselle" Duchesse de Montpensier Mémoires, Paris: Librairie Fontaine, 1985). Unless otherwise indicated, all quotes of Montpensier's Mémoires will come from Bernard Quilliet's abridged edition (Mémoires, Paris: Mercure de France, 2005). In this instance, I cite the Librairie Fontaine edition because Quilliet has deleted half a sentence.

of bowing to the privations of exile, Montpensier glorifies her liberty in writing and points out the king's weakness.

Montpensier's artistic efforts, be they literary, theatrical or architectural, are her fundamental coping strategies in exile. However, Montpensier's writing, entertaining, and building do not merely sustain her in exile; Montpensier's artistic productions are of such grandeur and complexity that they rival the cultural center that Louis XIV attempts to anchor at his court. In creating a cultural center that rivals the king's, Montpensier represents a real political threat. She not only siphons physical resources away from the king, such as architects, artisans, writers, actors, and other nobles, but her actions also challenge the ideology of absolute monarchy that Louis XIV attempts to codify in the seventeenth century. The absolute monarchy embodies not only the political center of France, but its moral and cultural centers as well. In this ideology, nearly all aspects of life should emanate from Louis XIV's aegis. Peter Burke describes Louis XIV's centralizing tendencies in his book The Fabrication of Louis XIV: "it is tempting to suggest a link between the rise of the centralising state in the seventeenth century and the rise of the cult of the king, who represented – indeed, incarnated – the power of the centre" (153). Montpensier's artistic creations are insubordinate to the "cult of the king" because she undertakes them without the king's approval, and uses them to represent sociopolitical ideals that counter those of the king (153).

In terms of Montpensier's writing style, the opening paragraph demonstrates Montpensier's tendency to juxtapose contrasting elements, especially between herself and another character or between different aspects of her own personality. In the opening paragraph, her identity changes; she is no longer victim, but agent. In other parts of the

text, Montpensier applies this same technique to other characters, revising her interpretations throughout the work. The trend of identity invention and reinvention continues throughout the Mémoires and is a crucial part of Montpensier's narrative strategy. The following analysis of her memoirs, especially as related to theories of self-presentation in autobiography, is primarily informed by the works of Philippe Lejeune and Jean Starobinski. These theories on autobiography are particularly relevant because Montpensier's narrative choices and structuring of the text anticipate those of eighteenth century autobiography, even though Montpensier writes in a different genre, the memoir. The genre of memoir is viewed by some scholars as being distinct from that of autobiography because of a perception that memoir focuses less on personal history and internal struggle than does autobiography, and that instead, memoir tends to chronicle the major sociopolitical events that occur in the memoirist's lifetime.² For instance, Lejeune excludes memoirs from the autobiography genre, stating that memoirs in general (along with other literary forms, such as the self-portrait) do not conform to his requirement that the narration must revolve around the narrator's life and personality (Le Pacte Autobiographique 14). Lejeune defines autobiography as: "récit rétrospectif en prose qu'une personne réelle fait de sa propre existence, lorsqu'elle met l'accent sur sa vie individuelle, en particulier sur l'histoire de sa personnalité" (14). However, Lejeune also admits that there is a certain fluidity in his definition, as autobiography is "un mode de lecture autant qu'un type d'écriture, c'est un effet contractuel historiquement variable"

² Sonya Stephens demonstrates this perception by arguing that women's memoirs are often an exception to the rule: "[i]n contrast to the previous examples of the genre, women's memoirs have a more interiorized perspective, are occasionally introspective, and focus on aspects of life considered unimportant for the historical record – women's activities in the 'private' and public realm" (A History of Women's Writing in France 76).

(45). Thus Lejeune recognizes the difficulties in establishing generic parameters across the centuries.

Lejeune's theories from Le Pacte Autobiographique can be applied to Montpensier's Mémoires because the text meets with the overall definition of autobiography. While Montpensier recounts historic events and relates asides about others' adventures which she did not witness, she is nonetheless at the center of her narrative. The emphasis of the Mémoires is on "sa vie individuelle, en particulier sur l'histoire de sa personnalité" (14). For example, Montpensier describes her project at the beginning of the Mémoires as the representation of that which she has seen and experienced in life:

j'éprouve avec douceur que le souvenir de tout ce qui s'est passé dans la vie occupe assez agréablement, pour ne pas compter le temps de la retraite pour un des moins agréables que l'on passe. Outre que c'est un état très-propre à se le représenter dans son ordre, l'on y trouve le loisir nécessaire pour le mettre par écrit, de sorte que la facilité que je sens à me ressouvenir de tout ce que j'ai vu et même de ce qui m'est arrivé, me fait prendre aujourd'hui à la prière de quelques personnes que j'aime, une peine à laquelle je n'aurois jamais cru pouvoir me résoudre ("La Grande Mademoiselle" 21).

This initial description of her project clearly situates Montpensier as the center of her text; the main organizing principle in the work is her life. The fact that some of the events in Montpensier's life coincide with the major events of the seventeenth century in France – as will be explored later – is a testimony to the sociopolitical significance of

Montpensier's life. Montpensier's Mémoires thus belong to a special category of seventeenth-century memoir that conforms to Lejeune's theories on autobiographical writing, wherein Montpensier's personality and her life anchor the text.

Outside of Lejeune's designation, the other generic distinction between autobiography and memoir seems to be primarily a consideration of time. Works that follow Lejeune's definition, but written prior to Jean-Jacques Rousseau's Confessions, are generally held to be memoirs, while those following the Confessions are called autobiography (Nussbaum xi). Felicity A. Nussbaum questions this classification in her book The Autobiographical Subject: Gender and Ideology in Eighteenth-Century England. She traces the emergence of contemporary generic rules for autobiography to the nineteenth century and she states that when these rules are applied to previous centuries, they can exclude many kinds of autobiographical writing, including memoirs (2). Nussbaum attributes this exclusion to the fact that nineteenth-century theorists searched in autobiographical writings for a certain sense of self, and that this concept of selfhood was not codified in the seventeenth and eighteenth centuries, but rather, reflected nineteenth-century ideas on selfhood, such as a unified self that remains stable over time (6 -- 9). Furthermore, Nussbaum writes that the failure of even canonical autobiographical texts -- such as Rousseau's Confessions -- to reflect nineteenth-century ideas due to their "fragmentary nature" is often ignored "by modern critics in the interests of defining a genre" (22). In other words, generic guidelines are not applied equally. Nussbaum's comment about scholarly double standards is a reminder that contemporary theorists and readers perform textual interpretation while carrying the social and philosophical presumptions of their cultures, and that these paradigms can cause readers

to “expect the text to imitate [their] own concept of the self which [they] think of as natural” (8). Therein lays the danger of classifying Montpensier’s Mémoires based on a twentieth-century definition. The work risks being classified as non-autobiography simply due to chronology, because theorists (including Lejeune) apply nineteenth- and twentieth-century ideas about textual cohesion and selfhood to seventeenth- and eighteenth-century texts.

Having established the benefits and drawbacks of using Lejeune’s autobiographical theories, it is equally important to explore the various facets of his theories. One crucial aspect of Lejeune’s theory in Le Pacte Autobiographique is the author-reader relationship. Lejeune explains that the pact between the author and the reader represents an agreement on the part of the author to follow a certain narrative structure and include certain tropes in his/her works. The essence of the pact is that the narrator acts as if he/she were the same person as the author, in effect, as if the narrator were representing the interests of the name on the cover of the book (27). This structure helps to distinguish autobiographical writing from fiction. Furthermore, implicit in this definition is that the autobiography has a readership. Lejeune does not determine a minimum number of required readers, so perhaps having only one reader other than the author him/herself, would be sufficient to constitute a readership. Or, perhaps what is most important is that the work was written with an intended audience, that the autobiographical writings were meant to be in public view, at least in some capacity. Montpensier’s intended – and actual – readers will be addressed later in my analysis.³

³ See page 24.

Le Pacte Autobiographique also emphasizes the structure of identity in an autobiographical work. Lejeune writes that “[l]’identité est le point de départ réel de l’autobiographie” (38). This identity, central to the autobiographical work, is fractured by Lejeune into three separate personifications: the author (*l’auteur*), the narrator (*le narrateur*), and the character (*le personnage*) (35).⁴ Each of these personifications has a specific function within the autobiographical text. For instance, the narrator and the character belong to the interior of the text (“l’intérieur du texte”), while the author is the subject of the narration (yet outside of the narration) to which the narrator and character refer (35). This structure creates a separation within the “I,” a separation between author and character/narrator. Despite this separation, Lejeune stresses the coherence within the shared identities of the author, narrator, and character. Indeed, he states that this shared identity is essential to the pact between author and reader: “[l]e pacte autobiographique, c’est l’affirmation dans le texte de cette identité, renvoyant en dernier ressort au *nom* de l’auteur sur la couverture” (26, emphasis original). Other theorists view the functional separation between author and character/narrator as leading to a split in the overall “I” of the text. For example, Nussbaum states: “[t]he “I” is a shifter, always changing its referent in time and space. The split subject, then, allows for the recognition that the “I” who is writing is distinct from the “I” who is written about” (31 – 32). Nussbaum’s perspective emphasizes the fact that the narrator/character of autobiographical writings remains a literary invention. She thus blurs the lines between non-fictional writing, such as memoir or journal writing, and works of fiction such as the novel. Once again, the overall effect of Nussbaum’s analysis is to soften generic boundaries.

⁴ Jean Starobinski first describes a tripartite system at work in autobiographical texts in his 1970 article, Le style de l’autobiographie.

Montpensier frequently blurs the distinction between author and narrator/character in her writing, especially through her use of personal pronouns. She uses both first- and third-person pronouns to describe the narrator and the main character in her Mémoires, sometimes switching from first person to third person in the same sentence. For example, Montpensier mixes first- and third-person pronouns when she describes her personality as a young child:

s'il paraît en moi quelques bonnes qualités, elles y sont naturelles et que l'on en doit rien attribuer à l'éducation, quoique très bonne ; car je n'ai jamais eu l'appréhension du moindre châiment. Ajoutez à cela qu'il est très ordinaire de voir les enfants que l'on respecte, et à qui l'on ne parle que de leur grande naissance et de leurs grands biens, prendre les sentiments d'une mauvaise gloire. J'avais si souvent à mes oreilles des gens qui ne me parlaient que de l'un et de l'autre, que je n'eus pas de peine à me le persuader, et je demeurai dans un esprit de vanité fort incommode, jusqu'à ce que la raison m'eût fait connaître qu'il est de la grandeur d'une princesse bien née de ne pas s'arrêter à celle dont on m'avait si souvent et si longtemps flattée (26).

Lejeune explains that the narrator in an autobiography is often marked in the text by the use of the first person, the "I," but he then mentions that, in certain autobiographies, the narrator is instead marked by the use of the third person, and that the third person demonstrates the character's "transcendence," either spiritually or historically (Le Pacte Autobiographique 15 – 16). Montpensier's description of herself as a child demonstrates that tendency, as she is at once herself ("je demeurai dans un esprit de vanité") and at the

same time, one of those “enfants que l’on respecte” (26). Montpensier thus places herself, and her weakness, in a larger category. By depicting her childhood vanity as a common problem among “enfants que l’on respecte,” Montpensier excuses the fault in the little girl and distances the critique from the adult (26). In this way, the adult Montpensier rises above her previous vanity. Moreover, the fact that Montpensier reproaches herself in the first place, even as a child, is further proof of her moral superiority.

Another result of Montpensier’s mixing of the first- and third-person pronouns is that she seems to situate her youthful personality, with its defects, among other historically significant facts. She presents her youth as something that happened to a grand person. Garapon states that “[u]ne idée courante dans l’aristocratie frondeuse voulait que l’histoire fût faite par les grands hommes” (La Culture d’une Princesse 132). Montpensier uses variations of the word *grand* three times in the narration to describe privileged children like her, but never once does she apply *grand* to a first-person pronoun. It seems clear that Garapon’s statement is mirrored in Montpensier’s narration, except that Montpensier includes herself as one of the “grands hommes” despite the obvious gender difference (132). In this case, her social status and wealth trumps her gender. In her book Revising Memory, Beasley suggests that the use of third-person pronouns in self-representations blurs the line between autobiography and history, as well as fiction and history.⁵ Thus, the narrative style at once accentuates Montpensier’s elevated status and depersonalizes her self-portrayal precisely because the narration links

⁵ Beasley also connects this narrative style to both Montpensier and Madame de Lafayette; the commonalities between Montpensier’s Mémoires and fiction of the seventeenth century will be discussed further. See the section “Writing as Rebellion,” page 34.

her personality with the general tendencies affecting high-status children of the time period. A corollary affect of this depersonalizing is that Montpensier's gender does not stand out as a marked difference in her account. Montpensier's self-portrait begins to resemble universal history, and the narrator, a credible historian. Therefore, the combination of the first- and third-person description is especially powerful because it lends the Mémoires a historical, and universal, veracity by showing Montpensier's faults, but at the same time, it smoothes over those faults. The overall affect of the passage suggests that Montpensier's analysis of her own personality is trustworthy because the narration is represented as factual and does not attempt to minimize her faults.

In addition, the narrative technique of mixing first- and third-person pronouns enables Montpensier to use the various facets of herself and her identity almost as separate characters. Where one identity is critiqued (the child), another (the adult) can offset that critique by highlighting a positive aspect of Montpensier's identity, such as her ability to represent a historical, self-critical perspective. Montpensier's use of this technique opens up almost limitless possibilities for the exploration and explanation of her life and personality. Montpensier's mixing of the first and third person is not merely a splitting of the narrative identity common to autobiography. In Montpensier's text, that split serves to create both personal identity and a sense of historical reportage.

CHAPTER 2

LA GRANDE MADEMOISELLE: HER PERSONIFICATION AS HEROIC NOBILITY

One identity that Montpensier introduces and develops early in the Mémoires is that of a heroic noble. This identity is primarily characterized by her courage and righteousness, and is rooted in her noble blood. Montpensier establishes her exceptional status even among fellow nobles in the second paragraph of the text. She describes her beginnings, and more importantly, the beginnings of her house(hold): “Le commencement du malheur de ma maison arriva peu après ma naissance, le 29 mai 1627, puisqu’elle fut suivie de la mort de ma mère : ce qui a bien diminué de la bonne fortune que le rang que je tiens me devoit faire attendre” (“La Grande Mademoiselle” 21). While she expresses her regret at her mother’s death, she also emphasizes the enormous wealth that her mother’s death endows her with: “on constitua ma maison et l’on me donna un équipage bien plus grand que n’en a jamais eu aucune fille de France” (26). In writing thus, Montpensier emphasizes the fact that, even as an infant, she outranked most women in France. Indeed, to follow her syntax, it would seem that she is a source of power before she is even born. She mentions “ma maison” – the foundation of her wealth and power – before she mentions “ma naissance” – the source of her life (25). In this description of her power and importance, Montpensier uses the first-person possessive pronoun, as if to emphasize her control over the subject, namely, her social position.

Montpensier continues to highlight her identity as a noblewoman, but she does so in a way that downplays her role as woman. French noblewomen were not equal to French noblemen because Salic law prevented a woman from inheriting the throne, unlike England and Spain (Briggs 29). By the time Montpensier takes pen to paper, she

has struggled on account of her gender, so part of her strategy includes calling attention to her nobility, while ignoring the inconvenience of her gender. In the first years of the Fronde, before either Montpensier's father or she herself join the rebellion, Montpensier depicts herself as much-beloved by the Parisians simply because she was born and raised in Paris (65). Moreover, she emphasizes that she is loved by the Parisians despite her nobility. She writes :

Le peuple de Paris m'a toujours beaucoup aimée, parce que j'y suis née et que j'y ai été nourrie ; cela leur a donné un respect pour moi et une inclination plus grande que celle qu'ils ont ordinairement pour les personnes de ma qualité (65).

Her choice of words – “les personnes de ma qualité,” or “people of my quality” – are specifically gender-neutral in this sentence (65). She is special, not only among women because of her large inheritance, but among all the French nobility. Furthermore, she again uses a third-person description mixed with a first-person possessive pronoun to stress her unique position and to underline the fact that she owns her “quality”: “les personnes de ma qualité” (65).

Once Montpensier begins to experience friction with other nobles, she draws upon this noble personification to justify her actions. For example, after having entered Orléans (at her father's instructions), she attempts to convince the city's leaders to allow the army of the Fronde into the city by invoking the rights that her father enjoys over the city (his “*apanage*” (138)). Le marquis de Sourdis opposes her by arguing that her father may have power over the city, but that *she* does not, and that Monsieur cannot simply graft his power onto her: “Monsieur pouvait bien lui commander, mais non pas donner ce

pouvoir à un autre, et qu'il n'y avait point d'exemple que jamais fils de France en eût usé de cette manière dans son apanage" (138). Montpensier replies: "il me semble qu'en l'état où j'étais à Orléans rien ne me devait être impossible et que, quand il n'y aurait point d'exemple de chose pareille, je serais bien aise d'en faire un pour l'avenir" (138). This is not the end of her confrontation with Sourdis, however. In fact, he treats her so poorly that she is nearly reduced to tears (139). She describes their confrontation at length and her word choice indicates that it is a harsh test to her power outside of life at court. Montpensier depicts her debate with M. de Sourdis as if he were beating her: "ma colère ne se diminuant pas, elle me mena jusqu'aux pleurs, me récriant que l'on croirait que M. de Sourdis tirait au bâton contre moi et qu'il l'emporterait" (139). The vocabulary she uses here – especially the phrase "tirait au bâton contre moi" – evokes a profound humiliation on her part. In the seventeenth century, the *bâton* was used only to beat inferiors, such as servants, children, or dogs. The entry for *bâton* (or, *baston*) in the Furetière dictionary of 1690 defines it as an object used as a weapon specifically to beat peasants, and that to use it against a noble person would be to gravely dishonor that person:

une arme naturelle offensive et defensive, quand on se bat seulement à coups de main. Ces paysans se sont battus à coup de baston. c'est un affront irreparable à un Gentilhomme de recevoir des coups de baston.⁶

For Montpensier to describe M. de Sourdis as beating her with a *bâton* indicates that he acts in complete disregard of her nobility and rank as the king's cousin; he treats her as if

⁶ Spelling, punctuation and capitalization have been left unchanged for all Furetière dictionary entries; all emphasis as in original text.

she were a child, or worse, a peasant. While Sourdis does not specify that he refuses to obey Montpensier due to her gender, this is implied by his flagrant disrespect.

In her threat to break with tradition, it is as if the grandeur of her person and her spirit is large enough to overcome even Salic law. Montpensier is traditionally not allowed to be her father's "man" (representative), because she is his daughter and not a son, but she manages to convince her detractors otherwise, with her rhetorical skill, after a four hour harangue (139). After this verbal battle, she relates, "Le matin, ils vinrent me dire que j'étais la maîtresse" (139). This reinforces what she mentions just after her arrival at Orléans, "lorsque les personnes de ma qualité sont en un lieu, elles y sont les maîtresses, et avec assez de justice" (121). Thus, her initial declaration of non-gendered power (people of my quality) is realized only after a struggle against the traditional view that relegates women – even noblewomen – into the political shadows. This incident is but one of many that reveals Montpensier's conflicts with the rules of the nobility and it demonstrates the underlying tension of her narration: she strives to direct her life and control the events around her, but she is not always able to do so, or only after great struggle. The text itself can be viewed as part of a continuing effort to order and control her life.

A later incident also evinces Montpensier's textual efforts to turn a seemingly negative event to her favor. Soon after her success at Orléans, Montpensier finds herself in disgrace with her father because she acted without orders: "Monsieur était en colère contre moi de ce que j'étais revenue sans ordre" (148). From this point on in the narration, Montpensier is at odds with her father. She is aggrieved by his cold behavior toward her, and she avows that she let him know of her disappointment: "il me semble

que d'agir civilement n'est pas assez pour un père à une fille telle que moi" (160). In this sentence, Montpensier depicts herself not as an exception among the nobility, but among daughters. She demands special treatment from her father, not mere courtesy, which is the very least to be expected from him. Moreover, Montpensier does not describe herself in gender-neutral language. Instead of choosing "child," she writes "daughter." She is accentuating that her actions, especially at Orléans, were extraordinary for a woman, worthy even of comparison to Jeanne d'Arc, as the exiled Queen of England mentions later (151). And as such, Montpensier's father should appreciate her all the more. Having succeeded heroically at Orléans, Montpensier does not hesitate to stand up to her father when she believes his actions to be weak. She even criticizes him to one of his men – Count Béthune – by suggesting he has not done his duty: "je lui témoignais le déplaisir que j'avais de quoi Monsieur n'avait pas fait tout ce que je croyais qu'il devait faire envers Monsieur le Prince et pour lui-même" (170). Montpensier feels herself a sufficient authority that she can even correct her father, and this authority is not only grounded on her nobility this time, but also on her heroic experiences. Thus, Montpensier's depiction of events highlights her success (this time due to her moral superiority), so that even in the face of failure, the writing serves to increase her authority.

Garapon attributes Montpensier's heroic representation of herself to the tradition of warriorship in her Bourbon lineage, describing it as "l'héroïsme guerrier, traditionnel pour le sang Bourbon" (La Grande Mademoiselle Mémorialiste 113). But this lineage of warriorship would normally be expressed by the male descendants, and thus, while remaining true to her heritage in one way, Montpensier breaks with tradition in another.

At times, Montpensier stresses her double importance because of this unique quality, as shown above with her phrase “une telle fille que moi” (160), and yet at other points in her narration, she glides over the surface of that anomaly, choosing to downplay her gender. For instance, during yet another confrontation with her father, Montpensier defends his critique of her actions at Saint-Antoine, when she fired the canons on the king’s troops; she states, “Je ne crois pas vous avoir plus mal servi à la porte Saint-Antoine qu’à Orléans” (197). She justifies her actions by calling upon her royal heritage, which she uses to explain her unusual actions rather than an extraordinary heroism. She writes:

Je ne sais pas ce que c’est que d’être héroïne : je suis d’une naissance à ne jamais rien faire que de grandeur et de hauteur en tout ce que je me mêlerai, et l’on appellera cela comme l’on voudra ; pour moi, j’appelle cela suivre mon inclination et suivre mon chemin ; je suis née à n’en pas prendre d’autre (198).

Her interpretation of noble duty and heroism runs counter to her father’s on this point. In using her royal lineage to authorize her rebellious activities, she is continuing a trend that previous rebellious princes embraced. For example, in 1649, when Duke d’Elbeuf sided with the Parlement in Paris against Cardinal Mazarin, he “offered his services as commander to protect the city on behalf of the king” (Ranum, The Fronde 188). The Parlement accepted, due to his lineage with the “House of Lorraine,” ignoring the contradiction that the Duke was offering to create an army for the Parlement with which to oppose the forces of the king, while acting “on behalf of the king” (188). The Fronde was a political struggle of prince against prince (among other things), and having royal blood was perceived as an asset no matter which side the blooded prince supported.

Indeed, Parlement diminished the power of d'Elbeuf's command when the Prince de Conti joined with them, simply because Conti's lineage was greater than d'Elbeuf's (190). The difference between these noblemen and Montpensier is that Montpensier's heroics place her in opposition to not only the state apparatus (Mazarin and the king) but also to her family, as embodied by her father's wishes. As an unmarried, female prince, Montpensier is supposed to recognize (and obey) the paternal power over her, as well as that of her king, because traditionally, a woman's nobility comes not from her relationship with the king but through her paternal ancestry (Lougee 152). Thus, the fissure between Monsieur's interpretation of events, and that of Montpensier, is that her father views her actions primarily as disobedience.

Nonetheless, Montpensier believes to be operating in accordance with her father's wishes, as she did at Orléans, and she explicitly compares her actions of Saint-Antoine to her success at Orléans to highlight that fact. During the battle at Saint-Antoine, she describes how all the colonels looked for her guidance and assistance. In short, she describes her military command: "Tous les colonels des quartiers envoyaient recevoir mes ordres pour faire sortir de leurs soldats. Je croyais encore être à Orléans, voyant que je commandais et que l'on m'obéissait" (168). Montpensier contrasts her industriousness with her father's lack of action: "Monsieur avait tort de n'avoir pas monté à cheval" (170). Montpensier subsequently represents this difference between them as being the seed for her father's resentment against her; she acts heroically whereas her father hides inside his house. She writes: "Il [Monsieur] me vint dire qu'il était satisfait de moi, mais non pas avec la tendresse qu'il aurait pu faire. J'attribuai cela au repentir qu'il devait avoir que j'eusse fait ce qu'il devait faire" (173). It is this resentment against which

Montpensier later defends herself by explaining that she did not intend to serve Monsieur badly at the gate of Saint-Antoine, by acting in his stead (197). In Women and the Politics of Self-Representation in Seventeenth-Century France, Cholakian interprets Montpensier's written defense as "a denunciation of a social structure that made no provision for *heroic* daughters" (75, emphasis added). Cholakian moves Montpensier's discourse beyond a family squabble into the realm of sociopolitical critique. The French nobility and family structure of the seventeenth century simply had no space for warrior women. Montpensier earlier uses the voice of the exiled Queen of England to compare herself to Jeanne d'Arc (151). This comparison is bitterly apt in light of Montpensier's future success. Just as Jeanne d'Arc's execution was partly motivated by her subversion of the patriarchal order (one of the charges against her included cross dressing)⁷, Montpensier's rebellious heroics turn her father, and eventually her king, against her.

Although the narrator paints Montpensier's quarrels with her father and her king in a heroic light, Montpensier is also revealed to be a rebel, at least in relation to the dominate sociopolitical beliefs of the time. Her heroics place her outside of the accepted political ideologies for women precisely because she uses them as grounds for chastizing the male political leaders. Wendy Gibson explains in Women in Seventeenth-Century France, that "women had the theoretical right to govern and administer, and even the necessary expertise was not altogether denied," but that this theoretical right is withdrawn when a woman's actions seem to threaten masculine power (141). Gibson elaborates that "men were prepared to declare women *capable* of anything so long as they were not obliged to abdicate any of their own power and dominion to provide concrete outlets for

⁷ See page 228 in Handbook of Medieval Sexuality by Bullough and Brundage (n.p.: Garland Publishing, 2000).

feminine capacities” (141, emphasis original). Montpensier situates this inherently hypocritical ideology in her father, especially his criticisms of her heroics after his own political position begins to sour. Montpensier reports that Gaston tells her, “[v]ous avez été si aise de faire l’héroïne,” and that he then suggests that she can console herself later with memories of her heroics and people’s praise (197). These words not only suggest that Montpensier’s renown is meant to be fleeting, a memory, but also that she was playing the heroine. Gaston does not use the verb *être*, but *faire*, indicating that Montpensier acts as a heroine, but is not one. In other words, Gaston’s words diminish Montpensier’s success and imply that her heroics do not reflect her true nature. The readers have only Montpensier’s testimony of Gaston’s words, but in her version of the events, Montpensier’s father refuses to admit any real valor in her actions; instead, he suggests that she represents heroism, but does not embody it. Montpensier’s depiction of her reply to Gaston’s critique takes up significantly more space than the criticism itself, which indicates that his (supposed) aspersions upon her character carry more import than a simple father-daughter quarrel.

Despite the lack of support for Montpensier’s heroics within her family, and the lack of a political structure that truly encouraged female military success, she is able to draw upon a wealth of literary culture. According to Joan DeJean in Tender Geographies, the figure of the Amazon was “the dominant female icon” in seventeenth-century literature (10). Montpensier would have been exposed to such imagery as she frequented various salons. However, Montpensier herself states that she depicts her heroics, not for prestige, but rather, for herself: “mais je n’écris point pour me faire louer, ni pour faire dire que rien n’est mieux écrire, mais pour moi” (373). Garapon attributes

this stance to Montpensier's sense of duty, which he views as Corneillian; he even compares the character of Montpensier in her Mémoires to the character of Don Rodrigue in Le Cid (La Grande Mademoiselle Mémorialiste 156). Her sense of duty, then, is another result of her noble nature, one that emerges in the face of conflict. Garapon interprets Montpensier's depiction of her criticisms of Gaston d'Orléans as a way to show, by contrast, that her soul (and perhaps her blood) is more pure than her father's. In fact, Garapon links the romanesque heroics of the Mémoires with Montpensier's exceptional lineage. In La Culture d'une Princesse, Garapon writes that "[c]'est dans la mystique d'une race royale autant que dans les rêves épiques et romanesques de sa culture que la princesse puise la haute idée qu'elle se fait d'elle-même" (77). As she herself remarks in the narration – "je suis d'une naissance à ne jamais rien faire que de grandeur et de hauteur" – it is Mademoiselle's lineage that enables her to perform such heroics as the defense of the gate of Saint-Antoine. Montpensier presents her heroism, romanesque though it may be, as being solidly founded on her Bourbon roots (198).

Moreover, Garapon is explicit in reading Montpensier's display of heroism as a result of her inner sense of duty. He states, "sa gloire vient du fait qu'elle a fait son devoir" (La Grande Mademoiselle Mémorialiste 156). Garapon is less clear in explaining what Montpensier's duty is, but he does situate it in "le domaine politique," rather than in the realm of feminine duty via child-bearing and child-rearing (160). Montpensier expresses this sentiment by suggesting that she fulfills her duty in protecting the rebellious troops at Saint-Antoine, but that her father fails in his (explicitly, military) duty. She says of her father's subsequent bitterness toward her, "[j]'attribuai cela au repentir qu'il devait avoir que j'eusse fait ce qu'il devait faire" (173). Montpensier

therefore uses her understanding of duty and honor as a tool, with which she undermines her father's political stature by suggesting his lapse and weakness.

The fact that Montpensier stresses the self-control she has over her actions is further indication of her sense of duty; this time, her duty to herself and her desires. She ranks her goals and her duty to herself as important as her loyalty to the king.

Montpensier further reinforces this idea by stating that she is incapable of offending the king: "*j'étais incapable de faire aucune chose indigne de la qualité où Dieu m'avait fait naître et d'une bonne Française*" (211). She seems to suggest that her inner sense of right and wrong – which she owes to her "qualité" or social position – would not allow her to behave inappropriately (211). The narrator here paints a Montpensier who is so secure in herself that she dares – however indirectly – to correct the king, and calls upon her innate superiority to do so.

CHAPTER THREE

WRITING AS REBELLION

Montpensier turns to writing after her rebellious actions result in her exile. The Mémoires were not published until after her death, in 1729, but they probably circulated in manuscript form during her lifetime among members of her (mostly elite) social circle (Moureau, La plume et le plomb 669). Garapon mentions that Montpensier frequented the literary salon of the marquise de Rambouillet, and beginning in the 1660s, she started her own salon at Luxembourg (La Grande Mademoiselle Mémorialiste 11, 22). Garapon also names some of the attendees of Montpensier's Luxembourg salon: Mme de Sévigné, Mme de Lafayette, and Mme de Longueville (81). While Montpensier no longer had the audience of the king, she was able to converse with some of the century's preeminent writers. Garapon suggests that Montpensier's contact with the salons influenced the style of the Mémoires, giving it "dans ses maladresses mêmes, une saveur de parole directe" (33). More importantly, Garapon postulates that parts of the Mémoires may have been read aloud by Montpensier to her friends and ladies-in-waiting. He states "[u]ne preuve de cette destination orale du texte peut être la fréquence, surtout au début du texte du pronom vous" (41). Thus, Montpensier's commentary regarding her father's behavior and the degradation of the glory of French nobility in general would have had an audience in her lifetime. The narration confirms this idea within a few sentences of the beginning of the Mémoires; Montpensier shows concern for her audience and promises them that they will not be bored in reading her text: "la lecture n'en sera pas ennuyeuse" (25). Later in the text, Montpensier makes reference to her friends – the countess de Fiesque and Mme de Frontenac – that might constitute her first audience. Montpensier

explains that she undertakes the project after reading the Mémoires of Marguerite Valois, and also, at these friends' behest:

J'avais lu les Mémoires de la reine Marguerite; tout cela, joint à la proposition que la comtesse de Fiesque, Mme de Frontenac et son mari firent de faire mes mémoires, me fit résoudre à commencer ceux-ci (218 – 219).

Implicit in this statement is the idea that Montpensier shared her Mémoires with the countess de Fiesque and Mme de Frontenac.

Montpensier indicates another immediate reader for her Mémoires: her secretary, Louis de Préfontaine (219). He reads her manuscript version as she writes it and evidently recopies it in order to make it legible: “comme j’écrivais fort mal, je donnais à Préfontaine, au fur et à mesure que j’écrivais, à mettre au net” (219). Moreover, near the end of her text, Montpensier offers a critique of her own writing, something that she would not be likely to do if she thought that no one would read her text (374). After criticizing her writing for being repetitive she excuses herself, explaining that she writes not to receive praise, but simply for herself: “J’avais oublié (et j’ai souvent dit cela, ce qui n’est pas bien agréable à répéter souvent, mais je n’écris point pour me faire louer, ni pour faire dire que rien n’est mieux écrit, mais pour moi)” (374). The fact that Montpensier is conscious of her writing style and then analyzes it is further support for a readership. She is addressing her audience and the potential critics, not of her actions, but of her writing style. In addition, Beasley stresses that Montpensier’s relationship with her readers is an inherent motivation to her writing. Beasley claims in “Altering the fabric of history” that “Montpensier and other female memorialists clearly inscribe a

public into their works and advance them as additions to the collective memory” (76 – 77). On the other hand, an idea of Julia Kristeva’s calls into question the need to establish Montpensier’s readership. Kristeva asks in “My Memory’s Hyperbole,” “isn’t any autobiography, even if it doesn’t involve ‘us,’ a desire to make a collective public image exist, for ‘you,’ for ‘us’” (220). Kristeva sees the concept of an audience as being inherent for any autobiographical writing, much as Lejeune defines autobiography by the writer-reader relationship or pact. While it may be impossible to pinpoint all of Montpensier’s seventeenth-century readership, it is clear that she composed her Mémoires with an audience in mind, and it is equally clear that her immediate circle was instrumental in the writing process.

Montpensier’s nobility – and her honor and heroism that derive from it – dominate the personification of the “I” in the early part of the Mémoires. Rather than starting her Mémoires in an effort to minimize the damage between her and the royal family, Montpensier uses her writing in order to continue her battle against unjust authority. If the incident at Saint-Antoine epitomizes Montpensier’s independent action, as well as her rebellion against father and king, her writing the Mémoires signifies that the war is not yet finished. Orest Ranum situates Montpensier’s writing, and especially the Mémoires, in the political climate of her lifetime; he writes, “[i]n French political culture, writing about political action is political action” (The Fronde 346). Given that idea as a starting point, Montpensier’s representations of herself and the other actors in the text are obviously of central importance in the analysis of her Mémoires. Over the years, Montpensier’s ideas and self-representation in the Mémoires change. The “I” of the Fronde years is heroic, whereas the “I” of Montpensier in her forties is a proud patron

of the arts (Montpensier, Mémoires 332). Therefore, when discussing the “I” of Montpensier’s text, it is important to ground the analysis not only in theories of autobiographical representation, but also in the historical context of her life and writing. Along with the narrative changes that accompany the evolving “I,” these changes in identity and subject-position will be discussed in the following sections.

However, Montpensier does not begin her literary career with her Mémoires. She previously composed several works, including the beginnings of a satire called Vie de Mme de Fouquerolles, which includes pieces by members of her coterie as well as her own writing (217 – 218). One of the first things that the Mémoires mentions when the narration reaches the years of Montpensier’s exile is that soon after her arrival at Saint-Fargeau, she finishes Vie de Mme de Fouquerolles and sets up a printing press in her château in order to print and distribute copies of it. Montpensier attributes this to her desire to answer to Mme de Fouquerolles’ printed accusations against her. Montpensier expresses it thus: “l’envie me prit de faire imprimer cette œuvre avec un manifeste pour me justifier des plaintes qu’elle avait faites de moi” (217). Montpensier expressly describes this piece of writing as having a social and political purpose. The text attempts to demonstrate that Mme de Fouquerolles, and not Montpensier, is in the wrong. More importantly, Montpensier specifically represents her self-publishing as a way to redress a wrong done against her. This statement has profound implications on Montpensier’s possible motivations for the composition of her Mémoires.

Montpensier’s publishing of Vie de Mme de Fouquerolles is also significant because it offers evidence that she turns to literature as a way to maintain order in her environment. Mme de Fouquerolles was allowed into Montpensier’s household and

affections, and according to Montpensier, Fouquerolles betrayed her (217). In order to punish Fouquerolles and revenge herself, Montpensier expressly uses literature. In fact, Montpensier is so attached to this piece of writing, that when she is in flight from Paris to Saint-Fargeau, after her retinue was attacked by soldiers, she professes that of all her belongings, the papers that make up Vie de Mme de Fouquerolles (among other works) are the most precious to her. Montpensier describes her attachment thus:

quatre ou cinq soldats vinrent attaquer le carrosse de Préfontaine, qui suivait les miens; [...]. Dans ce carrosse étaient toutes les cassettes de Préfontaine, où étaient tous mes papiers les plus importants ; mais ce qui m'inquiétait le plus, c'était une certaine *Vie de Fouquerolles* que j'avais faite, un *Royaume de la Lune*, des vers de Mme de Frontenac et des papiers de cette conséquence (206).

This is the first time in the narration that Montpensier mentions her fiction. She does not allude to the content of Royaume de la Lune, nor does she explain the full significance of Vie de Mme de Fouquerolles at this time. However, the narration places careful stress on the value that Montpensier bestows upon these works. Without yet knowing what the papers describe, the readers are made to know that Montpensier believes that they are more important than anything else in her carriages, including money. The narration reveals Montpensier's strong attachment to the work despite Préfontaine's anger with this preference:

Pour mes papiers, ils [les soldats] les laissèrent tous dans les cassettes et s'étaient contentés de prendre de l'argent, le linge et les habits de Préfontaine, dont je me souciai guère, dès que j'eus les papiers qui me

tenaient au cœur. Pour lui, qui aimait mieux le sérieux, il aurait fort plaint son argent, si l'on n'eût recouvré que ceux-là (206).

This passage risks alienating Montpensier's readers in that it shows her indifference to her secretary's loss. After all, it was Préfontaine's carriage that was attacked and he lost his clothes and money, while Montpensier would have lost only some private papers. When Montpensier does reveal the contents of those papers, it becomes clear why she would have valued them more than money or household goods, for Vie de Mme de Fouquerolles contains Montpensier's means of reestablishing control over her friends and household, via literature.

In Exclusive Conversations: The Art of Interaction in Seventeenth-Century France, Elizabeth C. Goldsmith discusses the importance that gossip and slander (both oral and written) held during this time period for the nobility as well as the bourgeoisie, in so much as they function as "resource[s] for acquiring status and social success" (83). Gossip and slander can function to prevent others from obtaining success, or they can diminish any preexisting renown.⁸ Montpensier's attachment to Vie de Mme de Fouquerolles might be similar to a soldier's attachment to his/her weapon. Montpensier's satire of Fouquerolles is perhaps, at the beginning of Montpensier's exile and disgrace, the only means of Montpensier's self-defense against the attacks on her reputation and honor. Moreover, the satire is not a weapon that Montpensier would want to fall into enemy hands, as it is a critique of a member of Louis XIV's court. Goldsmith recounts how Roger de Rabutin, comte de Bussy, was later imprisoned in 1666, for the accidental distribution of a satire against certain members of the court (79). Montpensier, already

⁸ See also Gossip by Patricia Meyer Spacks (New York: Alfred A. Knopf, 1985).

banished by Louis XIV, is hardly in a position to foster more displeasure. She, too, could have been imprisoned, as were the prince de Condé and the prince de Conti, her cousins and principal combatants in the Fronde (Ranum, The Fronde 243).

Her subsequent printing and select distribution of Vie de Mme de Fouquierolles shows that Montpensier recognizes the power of, and is willing to use, written accusations in a controlled and directed manner. The Mémoires stress how important physical control over her texts, as well as their audience, is to Montpensier. After having obtained the work from Préfontaine, Montpensier describes the process of printing Vie de Mme de Fouquierolles:

Enfin, tous ces ramassis-là, je les fis imprimer; j'envoyai quérir un imprimeur à Auxerre, à qui je donnai une chambre, et je me divertissais à l'aller voir imprimer. C'était un grand secret : il n'y avait que Mme de Frontenac, Préfontaine, son commis et moi qui le sussions (218).

It seems evident that Montpensier is aware of the possible danger of printing the texts because she keeps her actions secret. Although Montpensier describes the procedures as being pleasurable for her ("je me divertissais"), the printing of the texts is clearly more significant than a simple pastime (218). Garapon describes the event as "la politique, en définitive, qui se trouve assimilée à un divertissement" (La Culture d'une Princesse 136). Given that Montpensier worries so much for the texts' survival during her flight from Paris, followed by her immediate efforts to have them printed, the texts are clearly important to her. Cherbuliez argues that "out of Montpensier's exile at Saint-Fargeau emerged a site of cultural contestation to rival monarchical authority, a counter-court" ("Before and beyond Versailles" 130). Moreover, Cherbuliez views the creation of

literature – especially what she calls “leisure literature” – as the central means of socializing at Montpensier’s court (The Place of Exile 15). According to Cherbuliez, this literature obtained crucial political significance for those who produced, circulated, and read it [...] by imagining different relationships to authority, and by allowing a social practice that created exclusive communities based in the materiality of place and object (23).

This aspect of Montpensier’s exilic existence is also linked to the theories of *honnêteté*. Domna Stanton states that “[t]he notion of secret, ritual activities carried on within a secluded space underlies not only the spirit of specific seventeenth-century circles, but the corpus of *honnêteté* itself (The Aristocrat as Art 83). Thus Montpensier’s first defiant act in exile – the secret printing of Vie de Mme de Fouquerolles – can be read not only through the lens of social control, as directly related to slander and gossip – but also as part of the larger philosophy of *honnêteté* that is based on exclusion. In this case, it is the king and court that are excluded from Montpensier’s society.

Montpensier practices her right to censure those beneath her in social stature (Fouquerolles) and subsequently reaffirms her own seigniorial powers, even in exile. Ranum explains in Artisans of Glory, that “in addition to conferring status, noble rank, no matter how imperfect, allegedly included a degree of authority over others, a sphere of power upon which no one might infringe” (60). Montpensier’s sphere of power extends to exile, where she takes hold of the resources at her disposal, especially the written word, to castigate those who would challenge her authority. Cherbuliez situates Montpensier’s authority specifically in literary production; she states:

For Montpensier, performing the printing of her first publication is indeed a social and cultural practice: she asserts control over the book in its entirety, from its composition to its circulation as manuscript, to its actual printing (“Performing Print, Forming Print: Montpensier and the Politics of Elite Textual Production” 160).

Cherbuliez demonstrates that throughout the process of composition, and then printing, Montpensier operates as a patron, but also as a writer, who is keenly aware of her personal stake in cultural production. Cherbuliez’s interpretation also complements Goldsmith’s idea that gossip, either spoken or written, was a way to obtain power and influence in seventeenth-century France. Thus, in publishing Vie de Mme de Fouquierolles, and seeing the work circulated within her inner circle, Montpensier redresses the wrongs done against her and resets the balance of power in her favor.

Montpensier’s use of writing to air grievances (and to answer charges laid against her in society) continues through her composition of the Mémoires. Indeed, the memoir genre in the seventeenth century was often used for self-explanation or self-justification; Cholakian maintains of seventeenth-century memoirs by male writers, that they “became a means of setting the record straight and defending traditional feudal values against social change” (Women and the Politics of Self-Representation 37 – 38). As Montpensier’s Mémoires also reflect this tendency, the “defending of traditional feudal values” in memoirs cannot be said to be limited to male memoirists. Montpensier seems keenly interested in protecting her seigniorial rights, such as the nobility’s independent control over his/her domain, against the encroaching absolutism of Louis XIV. Indeed,

Montpensier advocates active resistance to the loss or diminishment of traditional seigniorial powers:

il [Gaston d'Orléans] se plaignit à moi de la persécution que les amis de Monsieur le Prince lui faisaient d'aller à Orléans ; que s'il abandonnait Paris, tout était perdu et qu'il n'irait point. Toutes les conversations que l'on avait avec lui, lorsqu'il n'était pas satisfait des gens qui le voulaient faire agir, finissaient toujours par des souhaits d'être en repos à Blois et par le bonheur des gens qui ne se mêlent de rien. À dire le vrai, cela ne me plaisait point. Je jugeais par là qu'à la suite du temps cette affaire irait à rien et qu'on se verrait réduit, comme on a été, chacun chez soi. Ce qui ne convient guère aux gens de notre qualité et convenait encore moins à avancer ma fortune (113).

Without composing a specifically philosophical text, Montpensier includes her political beliefs throughout the Mémoires, as in this example, wherein she proposes armed rebellion rather than acceptance of the social restructuring by Louis XIV and his ministers. Having failed in the military arena, Montpensier turns to literature and refashions her fight into words

The Mémoires of Montpensier are a mix of several literary styles, including romanesque and theatrical elements. This is particularly in evidence during the episode of Montpensier's flight from Paris after having been evicted from the Tuileries Palace by Louis XIV (Ranum, The Fronde 341). In this scene, Montpensier depicts an amusing encounter that she has with a priest in a country inn. The scene is stylistically distinct from the surrounding narration, especially in its fast pace and extensive use of dialogue.

Throughout the scene, Montpensier is masked and pretends to be a Protestant widow whose house was burned by the king's pillaging army (204). This disguise enables Montpensier to ludically critique the king's actions while maintaining a safe distance from her words, as she speaks not as "Montpensier," but as the Protestant widow. By taking on this persona and enlivening her Mémoires with a comedic style, Montpensier at once analyses her position as an exile relative to her nobility and power, and introduces stylistic variation into her text.

The passage in question begins by situating the action in "un village à deux lieues de là [Paris], nommé Sourdun" (204). Montpensier takes care to establish a concrete context for what follows. The passage then continues with a physical description of the inn and the priest, much like the beginning of a scene in a play:

En arrivant du logis je mis pied à terre et j'entrai dans la cuisine du logis ;
il y avait un jacobin qui était à table et, comme il n'avait point son
manteau noir et qu'il était vêtu de blanc, je ne savais de quel ordre il était
(204).⁹

The essentials of fiction are present. The characters and the location have been named and described – the "jacobin" and Montpensier at "Sourdun" – and the main action begins with the verbs "arrivant," "mis," and "entrai" (204). If the reader were to read this passage out of context, it could easily be mistaken for a novel. Because the passage is so detailed and romanesque, this part of the text stands out from the rest of the narration. The stylistic difference thus draws attention to the passage and underlines its significance.

⁹ See Appendix B for a full citation of this episode.

Montpensier and the priest exchange civilities, and then the priest asks Montpensier to verify that the news he has heard of the fighting is true. This question begins a humorous conversation between the two characters:

Ensuite il me dit: « Les nouvelles que j'ai apprises à Troyes, que le roi devait venir à Paris, sont-elles véritables? » Je lui dis que oui et qu'il y était arrivé il y avait deux jours, et que M. le duc d'Orléans et Madame s'en étaient allés. « J'en suis fâché, me dit-il : car c'est un bonhomme. Pour Mademoiselle, c'est une brave fille ; elle porterait aussi bien une pique qu'un masque : elle a du courage. La connaissez-vous point ? » Je lui répondis que non (204).

The narration thus gives the priest a distinctive voice and character, and he expresses *frondeur* sympathies. Through the voice of the priest, Montpensier demonstrates that she and the other *frondeurs* enjoy popular support. This passage also establishes that the priest is a braggart who claims more familiarity with Montpensier than he actually has. The priest goes on to say that he has spoken with her “[m]ille fois” and he claims that he would recognize her out of “cent personnes,” while Montpensier, on the other hand, denies knowing “Mademoiselle” (204). It seems that the priest knows Montpensier better than she knows herself. The priest then admonishes Montpensier by saying “Quoi! ne savez-vous pas qu’elle a sauté les murailles à Orléans pour y entrer et qu’elle a sauvé la vie à Monsieur le Prince à la porte Sainte-Antoine?” (204). Montpensier replies, “Je lui dis que j’en avais entendu parler” (204). Thus, the feisty priest’s pretense is on display to Montpensier and her readers, who can enjoy mocking the priest’s ignorance while listening to his tales about Montpensier. Furthermore, Montpensier’s professed

ignorance highlights her superior position and reveals the priest's real ignorance.

Because Montpensier, and her readers, are aware of her true identity, Montpensier's position is superior to the priests'; she has knowledge where he has only pretense.

Stanton argues that identity creation among nobles in the seventeenth century centered on such expression of superiority. She writes that "[e]very signifier which the aristocrat can control – looks, clothing, gesture, manners, speech – will be recruited into the expression of his superiority" (5). Montpensier's depiction of herself and her conversation with the priest takes place within this paradigm. Thus, her self-representation in this episode is not only meant to be a humorous diversion, but also a reminder – an active promoter even – of her superiority.

Montpensier's inclusion of comedic elements during a low part of her recitation (her banishment and flight from Paris) demonstrates her willful rewriting and reinterpretation of historic events. Montpensier seems determined that her story will end happily, rather than tragically in her destruction or death. This episode with the priest appears after Montpensier has already described the events of Orléans and Saint-Antoine through a first-person perspective. Montpensier's incorporation of another character's high opinion of her actions reinforces the previous representations of her heroism, and the priest's words are especially salient because he is presented as a third-party observer who has no significant connections with Montpensier. Therefore, Montpensier uses the priest as a mouthpiece for self-praise as part of her strategy to counter the ignominy of banishment. She once again presents favorable ideas about her own personality and behavior during the Fronde, but this time through another character, and with humor.

Disguises and confusion of identity are common tropes in seventeenth-century comedies, as well as in previous centuries. Molière's play Amphitryon, for example, places mistaken identities and disguises at the heart of the comedic action. In the Mémoires, when the priest begins his description of "Mademoiselle" to Montpensier, ignorant that he is face to face with her, the effect is all the more humorous because he refers to "Mademoiselle" wearing a mask, which she does even at the very moment, unbeknownst to him (204). The priest says, "elle porterait aussi bien une pique qu'un masque," probably meaning that Montpensier would be as fierce a fighter as she is an elegant courtier (204). Montpensier thus uses both the priest's ignorance and his depiction of Montpensier's public persona in order to present herself favorably. Montpensier evinces a nuanced understanding of her new role in society through her choice of masked persona. With the mask, Montpensier takes on a new identity, one that appears very different from her own, at least on the surface. The rich and renowned duchesse de Montpensier transforms into a Protestant widow traveling to Champagne to visit relatives (204 – 205). The disparity is sardonic.

However, despite the superficial differences between Montpensier and the widow she impersonates, the two share significant similarities. For example, the widow's house was pillaged by the king's army. Montpensier also recently lost her home as a result of the conflicts, by way of exile. The widow is on her way to a different part of the country, to restart her life, just as Montpensier will do at Saint-Fargeau. Merry E. Wiesner states in her book Women and Gender in Early Modern Europe that the status of widows during that time period afforded them more social and economic freedoms than unmarried or married women (90). Montpensier is unusual in this regard because she enjoys similar

freedoms due to her high noble status and wealth. Then there is the question of the widow's professed religion: why would Montpensier state that she poses as a Protestant during a period of, at best, insecure religious pluralism? Perhaps, Montpensier fleeing from the king's soldiers feels persecuted much as she could imagine a religious dissenter being persecuted. At the very least, Montpensier's exilic status would render her unwelcome and barred from much acceptable society, especially by those anxious to keep good relations with the court. Cherbuliez defines exile in these terms: "[t]he mechanism of banishment participates in the construction of royal authority insofar as it tacitly defines the border of acceptable society" (*The Place of Exile* 19).¹⁰ Thus, Montpensier's representation of the widow persona not only demonstrates her wit, but also provides a platform for her social commentary. Her mask is also used to reflect back upon the Montpensier hidden behind it and it unearths new insights into Montpensier's representation of her personality and her exile.

Montpensier's invocation of the mask may acknowledge her reversal of fortune, as well as her struggle to ensure that her demeaned social position remains temporary. By making herself into a character who is at once a heroic figure and a fallen noble, Montpensier represents both the irony and the tragedy of her situation. The vignette thus appears as a tragi-comedy that trumps Montpensier's potential detractors by laying first claim to literary interpretations of her life and its events. It is as if Montpensier tries to control in the *Mémoires* all elements that might be used against her, including parody.

¹⁰ Theories about exile and marginalization are abundant. For a sampling of other scholarship on exile, see Henri Lefebvre, *The Production of Space* (Oxford: Blackwell, 1991), Edward Saïd's *Reflections on Exile and Other Essays* (Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 2000), or *Exile and the Narrative Imagination* by Michael Seidel (New Haven: Yale University Press, 1986).

Having used satiric discourse to ridicule another – with Vie de Madame de Fouquerolles – Montpensier is obviously aware of its power and its danger (217). Thus, Montpensier uses this adventure with the priest to strengthen her image as a heroic noblewoman.

This vignette is exemplary of the style of literary portraiture and auto-portraiture that emerges during this time period (Starobinski, “Sur la flatterie” 132). This type of verbal portraiture belongs to the elite, and Montpensier’s inclusion of it in the Mémoires acts as a reminder of her elite status and reinforces her connection with her noble readership, even in exile. Indeed, such auto-portraiture, or self-fashioning, is at the heart of Montpensier’s literary techniques. Stephen Greenblatt explains in his book, Renaissance Self-Fashioning, that “the power to impose a shape upon oneself is an aspect of the more general power to control identity – that of others at least as often as one’s own” (1). Through “Mademoiselle” Montpensier represents herself as a double(d) character; she is at once the character of Montpensier, more or less stable since the beginning of the Mémoires, pretending to be the Protestant widow, as well as the “brave fille” described by the priest (204). Thus, not only does Montpensier invent a basic (false) identity for herself, for the purpose of conversing with the priest, but she also links this false identity to that of Mademoiselle, by saying that she (as the widow) unfortunately left Orléans the day that Mademoiselle arrived. Montpensier tells the priest: “Pour moi que j’étais retirée à Orléans, d’où j’avais été assez malheureuse de sortir le jour que Mademoiselle y arriva” (204). The two of them piece together a history of events in which Mademoiselle participated. All the while, Montpensier knows full well what actually happened, but she seems to enjoy participating in the story-telling with the priest.

Montpensier has several alter-egos in this one episode; the entire passage is a *mise-en-abîme* of Montpensiers. Greenblatt uses the Hegelian concept that identity must be constructed in opposition to an Other, and that in literary texts, “[s]elf-fashioning is achieved in relation to something perceived as alien, strange, or hostile” and moreover, that “the alien is always constructed as a distorted image of authority” (9). While Montpensier does compare her achievements to those of others through the Mémoires, in this episode with the priest, she seems to construct an Other out of her fallen self, as represented by the Protestant widow. She is no longer (exclusively) the heroic Mademoiselle as painted by the priest; instead, Montpensier is someone forced to hide her identity (and her authority that goes along with it) for fear of persecution until she can reach a safe haven, on the margins of society. This cautious, castigated Montpensier is “alien, strange, or hostile” compared to her normal glorious state (9). In The Autobiographical Subject, Nussbaum links this Othering tendency to the genre of autobiography: “public and private self-writing, for men and women, is part of the conquest over meaning and the contest over the power to name the real” (xxi). By using the widow to represent the troubled events in Montpensier’s life, Montpensier can still assert her noble dignity and continue her struggle to maintain the traditional rights of a French noble in the face of Louis XIV’s consolidation of power. Montpensier thus names the heroic Mademoiselle as the true Montpensier. Just as Louis XIV attempts to control “the real,” in Nussbaum’s words, Montpensier likewise harnesses that same power of identity-creation in her memoirs (xxi).

Yet another example of Montpensier’s novelistic style is found in her depiction of the battle of Saint-Antoine. Garapon points out that Montpensier’s representation of

the battle observes the three classical unities: the unity of place, time and action (La Grande Mademoiselle Mémorialiste 149). Montpensier represents only one day of battle and in one location. Montpensier's narration of the events surrounding the battle at Paris is full of direct quotes, both of her words and those of others'. In one particularly dramatic incident, Montpensier recounts how during the battle, the Prince de Condé, in full despair over the deaths of his friends and soldiers, throws himself onto a chair and weeps:

en entrant, il se jeta sur un siège, pleurant et me disant: « Pardonnez à la douleur où je suis. » Et après cela, que l'on me dise qu'il n'aime rien !
Pour moi, je l'ai toujours connu tendre pour ce qu'il aime (167).

In three lines, Montpensier captures the portrait of the suffering prince and turns him into a romantic hero. Montpensier's technique of literary portraiture is not limited to herself in the Mémoires and she shares the heroic space with the Prince de Condé during this episode. Cholakian writes that Montpensier "refashioned herself as a romantic heroine," but in this example, Montpensier equally transforms the Prince de Condé into a romantic hero (Women and the Politics of Self-Representation 78).

Wendy Gibson notes that this tendency to mix elements of fiction with elements of truth was a common occurrence in seventeenth-century texts; she further specifies that memoirs, in particular, "blur the dividing line between fact and fantasy" (186). By introducing fictional devices into the Mémoires, Montpensier allows herself latitude to describe events that happened years in the past. For example, she can quote the direct speech of herself and others, as shown by the Prince de Condé's emotional outburst. She can also indulge in detailed imagery of the sounds, smells and appearances of the people

and places she describes, without needing to prove their existence, because her writing functions as a testament to her lived experience. Montpensier is drawing upon her memory, and her imagination, in order to depict her past, but ultimately, her rendition cannot truly be challenged, unless by one of the other characters featured in the text.¹¹

Montpensier clearly borrows elements from various literary and/or theatrical genres. In Tender Geographies, DeJean attributes such genre mixing to the literary experimentation in the salons. She identifies that “[w]ith the outbreak of the Fronde, however, two major traditions of women’s writing are inaugurated”: memoirs and the “modern (French) novel” emerged as distinct literary forms (44). Moreover, DeJean infuses these literary forms with political power: “even places with an existence no more “real” than in the pages of a book...were far from socially impotent” (18). Beasley also links *frondeur* action with literature, writing that “many *frondeuses* turned their energies to literature, where they waged a war whose stakes were perhaps even higher” (“Altering the fabric of history” 65). Similarly, DeJean interprets Montpensier’s switch from overt political insurrection (such as firing upon the king’s troops at Saint-Antoine) to the more subversive technique of writing, not as a weakening in tactics, but rather, as “the clearest indication of her [Montpensier’s] intention to *replace the making of history with the writing of history*” (55, emphasis added). After all, history is “always someone’s story,” as Nussbaum says (17). Montpensier’s Mémoires manifest this idea by recounting her

¹¹ However, by circulating her manuscript only amongst her supporters and members of her entourage, Montpensier is unlikely to encounter that form of literary critique. François Moreau explains:

le manuscrit peut se faire imprimé quand le lectorat est censé être devenu indifférent à son contenu politique ou social : c’est le cas des mémoires ou autobiographies diverses qui circulent d’abord sous forme manuscrite, se publient ensuite dans des lieux pèlerins et parviennent rarement à obtenir droit de cité privilégié (La plume et le plomb 669).

Therefore, because the text is not printed in Montpensier’s lifetime – it appears in print for the first time in 1729 – she avoids widespread scrutiny (669).

life's events as if they make up the plot of a novel. It is not enough to simply state that certain events happened, Montpensier's characters must act them out, and it is the performances that lend credibility to Montpensier's version of history. The Mémoires thus claim an interpretative space that is usually reserved for the crown, and in so doing, Montpensier continues her assault upon the king's authority.¹²

¹² Peter Burke, for example, mentions that Louis XIV's ministers, "Colbert and Chapelain made unusual efforts to find historians who would record and celebrate the king's achievements" (The Fabrication of Louis XIV 53).

CHAPTER FOUR

THE POWER OF EXILE

Another illustration of Montpensier's power struggles with the king can be found in their communication after her exile. In her letters to Louis XIV, Montpensier promotes an image of herself as a righteous, independent agent. For example, when Louis XIV contacts Montpensier at Saint-Fargeau to assure her of her security there, her reply indicates that she would never have thought otherwise, for she has done nothing to draw the king's displeasure, and that her conduct follows only his will, as well as her own. She writes, "*ma conduite avait toujours été telle pour le service de Sa Majesté, et mes intentions*" (211, emphasis added). Rather than using the first-person pronoun *je*, Montpensier presents herself here via a possessive pronoun, and a noun ("conduite"), conduct, which stand in for her self (211). The word "conduite" represents Montpensier's exemplary behavior toward the crown without Montpensier having to justify herself in detail (211). By foregoing the use of the first-person pronoun, the truth of Montpensier's conduct – that it is as impeccable as she supposes – is further emphasized by her impersonal stance. Moreover, Montpensier stresses her control over events; she even dares to correct the king's interpretation. Montpensier concedes that she might have been forced into exile at Saint-Fargeau, but emphasizes that she does not, in fact, surrender her free will. She writes that she chooses to stay at home in Saint-Fargeau: "*j'avais choisi pour ma demeure ma maison à Saint-Fargeau*" (211). Again, the importance Montpensier places on *her* residence at *her* house indicates that rather than recognizing the king's power over her, she retrenches and changes strategies, by embracing the power of culture over that of the cannon.

Even in her letters to others, Montpensier continues to apply oblique pressure on the King's attempts to consolidate the nobility and their resources under his exclusive control. DeJean edited a series of letters exchanged between Montpensier and Madame de Motteville, published under the title Against Marriage: The Correspondence of La Grande Mademoiselle, which discuss how men and women can live outside of the court, according to their own values. Janet Gurkin Altman notes, "[p]rior to the nineteenth century [...] even missives of the most intimate nature were in no sense private property" ("Women's Letters in the Public Sphere" 100). As such, the letters exchanged between Montpensier and Motteville can be read in the same light as the Mémoires, as a continuation of Montpensier's struggle for self-determination. In her letters to Motteville, Montpensier explains her theories regarding the importance of writing for social maneuvering. For instance, in one letter dated May 14, 1660, Montpensier outlines her philosophy regarding an idealized society that exists on the margins of court life:

On ne romprait point le commerce qu'on aurait avec ses amis de la Cour et du monde, mais je pense que nous pourrions croire qu'il leur serait plus glorieux de nous écrire qu'à nous de leur faire réponse [...] On nous enverrait tous les livres nouveaux, tous les vers, et ceux qui les auraient les premiers auraient une grande joie d'en aller faire part aux autres. Je ne doute point que nous n'eussions parmi nous des personnes qui mettraient aussi quelques ouvrages en lumière chacun selon son talent (Against Marriage 26 – 30).¹³

¹³ This version, edited by Joan DeJean, is bilingual, with the original French text placed always on the left-hand page. To follow the citation in the book, a reader would look at only pages 26, 28 and 30 (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 2002).

The retreat that Montpensier describes revolves chiefly around literary consumption and production, outside of the king's court and the academies. Montpensier thus affirms her right to literary interpretation and invention, as well as her right to an audience. Moreover, she suggests that her select circle of friends and fellow writers would be more sought-after than members of the court; thus, Montpensier's literary court is set up in direct competition with the king's. Beasley links this kind of literary and social rivalry to the salon milieu, where "writers, academicians, courtesans, intellectuals, and learned worldly figures were all drawn to certain salons and combined to create an alternative space to traditional academies or to the purely social space of the court" (Mastering Memory 28). Beasley sees this process as a renegotiation of power structures in France: "[s]eventeenth-century France witnessed the same recognition of the power inherent in language and culture and many of the discussions were focused on determining who would share in this power and according to what terms" (50). Montpensier's exilic social group, as described in her letter, recreates just such a discussion. Montpensier suggests that her group's glory does not depend upon contact with, or approval by, the outside world. She writes, "il leur serait plus glorieux de nous écrire qu'à nous de leur faire réponse," implying that her group possesses a greater cultural and social power than the court (Against Marriage 28). Montpensier's recreation of social boundaries and prestige based on literary production can be viewed as a continuation of her political engagement, repositioned to a different theater of action, as can her decision to depict her participation in the Fronde, even after political disgrace.

The art of writing is not the only art that Montpensier uses to contain and order her universe. Just as Louis XIV's court had rules of exclusivity that centered around

cultural productions, such as ballet, dance and court ritual, so Montpensier's court revolved around entertainment, be it hunting, the theatre, literary production, or conversation.¹⁴ During her exile, and even after her reintroduction to the court, Montpensier heavily develops her lands. Montpensier states that she increases her spending during her exile, rather than holding back. She lists her specific expenses, hunting dogs and horses: "Je ne diminuai point ma dépense ordinaire les années d'après, ni même pendant mon exil; je l'augmentai, ayant des chiens courants et des chevaux plus qu'à l'ordinaire" (234). But most of Montpensier's money must have gone to her architectural projects. She renovates and builds châteaux; she has gardens and theaters constructed. Two paragraphs after describing her decision to write the Mémoires, Montpensier goes on to describe how she builds a theater at Saint-Fargeau in order to watch plays with her companions:

À mon arrivée ici, je ne songeai qu'à faire accomoder un théâtre en diligence. Il y a à Saint-Fargeau une grande salle qui est un lieu fort propre pour cela ; j'écoutais la comédie avec plus de plaisir que je n'avais jamais fait. Le théâtre était bien éclairé et bien décoré (219).

Her dedication to the theatre even seems to rival her literary desire; Montpensier says that she dreamt only of arranging her theater. This might be exaggeration, but it points to the theater's importance in Montpensier's life. Furthermore, the structure of the narrative – the juxtaposition of the writing of the Mémoires with the construction of the theatre – also underlines how literary and architectural creation are linked; both are creative outlets for Montpensier and both are demonstrative of her glory. She was entertained

¹⁴ Peter Burke writes regarding King Louis XIV's court: "[t]here were formal rules for participation in this spectacle" (The Fabrication of Louis XIV 89).

("divertie") by the printing of Vie de Mme de Fouquerolles, enough to want to write the Mémoires, but not enough to give up other *divertissements* (218). Construction and use of the theater serves not only to amuse Montpensier and her circle, but also to establish that she still lives the life of the nobility, even in exile, and thus she still enjoys the amusements of a noble.

The revitalization and even institutionalization of amusement (especially through the theatre) is central to Montpensier's continuing rebellion. Montpensier might technically be in exile, because she is physically away from Louis XIV's court, but because she is still surrounded by cultural events and cultured people, the text implies that she does not live in true exile. The text thus questions the very idea that the king is the cultural center of France¹⁵ and it rejects the traditional view of exile as banishment and loss of power and prestige. Cherbuliez mentions that the theater at Saint-Fargeau, after being renovated by Montpensier, was the largest in France before Louis XIV built his at Versailles, measuring "three hundred square metres" ("Before and beyond Versailles" 135). Montpensier employed her own theatrical troupe and at Saint-Fargeau she presented "the most fashionable and innovative kinds of stagings, notably, 'un ballet mêlé de chant: *les Plaisirs de la campagne*'" as well as "a production of Corneille's *Andromède*" (136). Cherbuliez reads these theatrical events as belonging to "a site of cultural contestation to rival monarchical authority, a counter-court" (130). Montpensier's choice of theatrical productions supports this theory. The title of the ballet – *les Plaisirs de la campagne* – seems to celebrate Montpensier's residence at Saint-Fargeau, away from the court. Rather than bemoaning her retreat, Montpensier's

¹⁵ (Burke, The Fabrication of Louis XIV 153).

patronage of the theater seeks to glorify her status; Cherbuliez calls the ballet “a revindication of its pastoral context” (136). Moreover, throughout the Mémoires, as has been previously shown, Montpensier dwells upon her social life, of which theatrical entertainment is only one part. As audience to the ballets and the plays, there is Montpensier as well as her entourage: “la compagnie à la vérité n’était pas grande, mais il y avait des femmes assez bien faites” (219). Thus, Montpensier’s construction of the theatre and renovation of the château at Saint-Fargeau can help her to attract and maintain company. This, in turn, helps Montpensier maintain her status as an important and cherished member of the French nobility.

The choice of ballet and innovative theatre also has political implications. During this time, Louis XIV and his ministers sought to tighten control of cultural production. As Beasley explains, the literature that is produced and exported to other countries represents France:

Literature is also a direct determinant of the status of the French nation and for this reason also must conform to certain rules [...] Only certain kinds of literature, sanctioned by a specific, carefully selected public, can be sent out in the world to represent France (Mastering Memory 113).

The king tried to control this representation of the French state and culture: “Louis XIV and his ministers recognized the power inherent in literary culture and language itself, and sought to harness this power for their political interests” (84). Mitchell Greenberg mentions in Subjectivity and Subjugation that one of the primary results of the king’s control over artistic production is that “classical dramaturgy, an art of ellipses, of abstraction and of ideality, becomes the privileged form of representation in the

seventeenth century” (15). Montpensier’s fiction, such as Vie de Mme de Fouquerolles, and the ballet *mêlés* that she presents on her stage at Saint-Fargeau, do not conform to such “classical dramaturgy” (15). As a patron, she is thus diverting funds from this style of drama. Her taste and that of other salonnières determine what type of drama is presented within their circles without relying on the king’s approval.

However, Montpensier’s building projects are not entirely dedicated to entertainment and diversion. Equally important are her investments in her heritage. Her lands and the buildings on them are, according to the traditional system of nobility, what give Montpensier her status.¹⁶ The Mémoires makes it clear that Montpensier is conscious of this fact, and that she uses her property to reinforce her heritage and legitimacy. Montpensier describes at some length how Saint-Fargeau came to be in her family’s possession, placing particular emphasis on the fact that the property was legitimately acquired. She writes that “tout ce que je possède est venu par de bonnes voies” (227). Montpensier traces only the origin of Saint-Fargeau in her family history, and from its legitimacy, she states that *all* of her possessions are legitimate. Montpensier then moves from the legitimacy of her goods to the legitimacy of her nobility, stating, “j’étais de la plus grande et de la plus illustre maison du monde” (227). Moreover, the narration specifically links this claim (the supreme eminence of Montpensier’s family) to Montpensier’s stay at Saint-Fargeau. She writes that “le séjour de Saint-Fargeau m’a servi; car il m’a appris ma généalogie” (227). It is this power base and historic authority of the nobility that Louis XIV’s centralizing powers weaken. Robin Briggs notes in Early Modern France that “[t]he nobility was losing its old cohesion, as the great

¹⁶ See Early Modern France 1560 – 1715, the second edition, by Robin Briggs, especially chapter two; (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1998).

magnates detached themselves from their local roots, to concentrate on their careers and contacts at court” (57). Montpensier’s descriptions of her lands and *divertissements* challenge this centralizing authority.

While only a limited circle saw Montpensier’s Mémoires in her lifetime, all of her guests at Saint-Fargeau could see her portrait gallery. Montpensier built a portrait gallery wherein she displayed the portraits of her illustrious family, from both her father and her mother’s lines. Montpensier describes the room thus:

Il y avait une antichambre, où j’avais toujours mangé, une galerie devant ma chambre, où je fis mettre des portraits de mes plus proches, du feu roi mon grand-père et de la reine ma grand-mère; du roi et de la reine d’Espagne, du roi d’Angleterre et de la reine sa femme; du roi, de la reine, de Son Altesse Royale et de ma mère et ma belle-mère, et de Monsieur (223).

Montpensier continues on at some length naming her other relatives whose portraits she has placed in the dining room. At the end of her description she is proud of her work:

enfin j’étais ravie et croyais avoir fait la plus belle chose du monde. Je montrais mon appartement à tous ceux qui me venaient voir avec autant de complaisance pour mon œuvre qu’aurait pu le faire la reine ma grand-mère, lorsqu’elle montrait on Luxembourg (223).

It is significant that Montpensier specifically calls the portrait gallery/dining room her work (“œuvre”) (223). She stakes a claim over its production as much as she does the printing of Vie de Mme de Fouquierolles, or over the writing of her Mémoires. As the portraits are on permanent display to Montpensier’s guests, her invocation of her

impressive heritage has an immediate impact. Indeed, Montpensier even compares her dining room with the Luxembourg palace in Paris. During this time of her life, Versailles was not yet built, and thus Montpensier is comparing her residence with the official royal palace of France. Not only is Montpensier contradicting the idea of Paris and the king as the cultural center of France, she specifically offers her abode and her court its rival. This is not mere rhetoric; Montpensier's property housed the largest theater in France (at the time of its construction) as well as a vast portrait gallery (Cherbuliez, "Before and beyond Versailles" 135). Through her artistic patronage, Montpensier presents herself as a repository for the glory of France, both via its past glory (as shown in the portraits), and its present (through the theatrical performances).

By surrounding herself with familial portraits, Montpensier rewrites her family history. She determines their relative importance by the manner of display or style of representation. The most powerful example of her revisionist tendency is in the portraits she commissioned of her and her family. In a portrait that she installs at her new house, in Choisy, she displays herself, holding a smaller portrait of her father: "et moi sur la cheminée, qui tiens le portrait de mon père" (332). The reversal of power relations between father and daughter is obvious. Rather than Gaston holding his daughter's image, as the one who created her (both biologically and socially), Montpensier literally controls his image. Gaston's personification and glory has become dependent upon Montpensier's largesse, in her visual interpretation of their relationship. Montpensier's written explanation for this artistic choice is that she does not want to force her mother to share visual and symbolic space with her step-mother, and thus Montpensier cannot place her father with his wives, as she does with her other relatives. Montpensier feels that her

mother's rank is higher than her step-mother's, if only sentimentally: "[i]l m'a semblé mieux là qu'entre ses deux femmes, étant bien aise de ne mettre personne au rang de ma mère" (332). In essence, Montpensier also elevates her mother's importance above her father's because Montpensier's emotional attachment to her mother is the stated reasoning for Gaston being visually smaller, separated from his wife, and ultimately, contained by his daughter.

Cholakian comments upon Montpensier's attachment to her maternal heritage, noting that Montpensier begins "identifying herself more and more with her mother's line" during exile ("A House of Her Own" 8). The portraiture arrangement supports this argument, as does Montpensier's statement regarding her genealogy at Saint-Fargeau. As already noted, Montpensier writes: "[v]oilà à quoi le séjour de Saint-Fargeau m'a servi; car il m'a appris ma généalogie" (227). In fact, Montpensier inherited Saint-Fargeau from her mother and it is her mother's lineage that she learns in more depth. She boasts of this heritage, saying "j'étais de la plus grande et de la plus illustre maison du monde" (227). This is a change from her earlier behavior, when she favored her paternal heritage, that of Marie de Médicis and Henry IV. Montpensier recounts that she snubbed her maternal grandmother as a child, saying, "[e]lle est ma grand-maman de loin; elle n'est pas reine" (26). From this slighting to her statement that her maternal line was "de la plus illustre maison du monde," the change is clear (227). Garapon attributes this shift to the beginning of the writing process of Montpensier's Mémoires. Garapon *emphasizes the fact* that Montpensier read the Mémoires of Queen Marguerite Valois and that Montpensier was subsequently inspired to not only write her memoirs, as she herself attests, but also to actively interpret the writing thereof as political action. Garapon

states: “[à] leur exemple, Mademoiselle se sentira forte d’ambitions politiques et littéraires” (La Culture d’une Princesse 90). In this part of the narrative, Montpensier’s period of exile, she no longer focuses on her military daring – the heroic father’s daughter – but rather, on her stable and ancient maternal heritage. In this way, the narration manages to present a glorious Montpensier in whatever circumstances the story places her. The narrator’s manipulation of various thematic threads – martial, artistic, and *galant* – serves always to justify and aggrandize Montpensier’s actions.

Montpensier’s portrait gallery at Choisy belongs to a later period of her life, after she has been reintegrated with Louis XIV’s court. Choisy was not part of her maternal inheritance; she acquired the village after deeding the sovereign territory (“la souveraineté”) of Dombes to the Duc du Maine, the illegitimate son of Louis XIV and Mme de Montespan (Montpensier, Mémoires 330). Montpensier donates Dombes– the source of her royal title of princess because Dombes was a sovereign state – to the Duc du Maine in order to secure the freedom of M. de Lauzun, the man she loves.

Montpensier explains the transaction thus: “si je n’exécutais ce que j’avais promis, on le mettrait à la Bastille. Cela m’alarma fort. Enfin je consentis à ce qu’ils voudraient et je fis une donation à M. du Maine de la souveraineté de Dombes” (330). Directly after this action, Montpensier expresses her desire of buying property:

[t]oute ma vie j’avais eu envie d’avoir une maison auprès de Paris ; j’avais toujours cherché et, toutes celles que j’allais voir, quelque jolies qu’elles fussent, j’y trouvais toujours quelque défaut [...] On m’en indiqua une qui était à deux lieues de Paris, à un village nommé Choisy [...] je la trouvai à

ma fantaisie, au moins de la situation ; car il n'y avait point de bâtiment.

Je l'achetai quarante mille francs ; j'y menai Le Nôtre (331).

After years of searching, Montpensier chooses Choisy, which becomes “a house of her own,” replacing her lost property, her lost sovereignty, in Dombes (Cholakian, “A House of Her Own” 13). At Choisy, Montpensier is able to build according to her fantasy; she even ignores the advice of the notable architect Le Nôtre, in order to form the property to her desires: “[j]e le plantai là et fis accommoder ma maison et mon jardin à ma mode,” using “Gabriel, un fort bon architecte, et qui fit ma maison à ma mode” (331). Burke discusses the importance of material culture for nobles of Montpensier’s standing: “[m]aterial culture was, and is, an important vehicle for expressing views of the self. Palaces and country houses expressed the self-images of their owners” (“Representations of the Self from Petrarch to Descartes” 24). In rejecting Le Nôtre’s advice regarding the landscaping and fountains, “il y a des fontaines autant qu’il en faut; et, si j’en voulais davantage, j’en aurais,” Montpensier emphasizes that the property is meant to reflect her tastes, not those that may be temporally in fashion (331). Close textual analysis reveals Montpensier’s insistence upon this point. Two times in swift repetition Montpensier employs the phrase “à ma mode” (331). This phrase is indicative of her possession (“*ma mode*”) and at the same time of her singular taste (“*ma mode*”), both of which are the determining factors for creation of Montpensier’s personal, even sovereign, space at Choisy (331, emphasis added). The narration here echoes the beginning of the Mémoires, where Montpensier describes her household and her birth, in that order: “Le commencement du malheur de ma maison arriva peu après ma naissance” (25). The narrative repetition insists on Montpensier’s independent stature; she begins life already

in charge of others and in possession of lands. This quality of leadership shines forth during the Fronde years, but does not diminish thereafter, and the narration at this point in the text emphasizes Montpensier's control via Choisy.

Although Montpensier regains the king's graces, unlike other nobles, she does not consent to live in apartments at Versailles. She acquires new property, close to Paris and the court, but nonetheless separate. This passage is all the more significant because the narrator previously mentions the pressure tactics of the crown: placing M. de Lauzun in the Bastille in order to force Montpensier to gain land for M. du Maine (330). In that instance, Montpensier bows to the pressure in order to obtain a larger goal: permission to marry the man of her choosing, M. de Lauzun. In attempting to choose her own husband, Montpensier again works counter to the centralizing tendencies of Louis XIV's reign, for she denies his authority over her marriage, which is undeniably a marriage of state given her wealth and prestige. However, just as Montpensier declares that she loves Lauzun – “c'était M. de Lauzun que j'aimais” (289) – she also declares that she loves her property: “[i]l paraît, par le détail où je suis entrée sur Choisy, que je l'aime” (335). Perhaps because both Lauzun and Choisy are signs of her independence, Montpensier reports similar feelings toward them. Moreover, Montpensier exercises control over both Lauzun and Choisy. Choisy she describes as being all her own work: “c'est mon ouvrage : je l'ai toute faite” (335). The same could be said for her aspirations for Lauzun. Montpensier gives him the duchy of Montpensier and insists that he be thereafter called the duc de Montpensier: “[v]oilà le duc de Montpensier que je vous amène; je vous prie de ne le plus appeler autrement” (301). Instead of the woman taking her husband's title, Montpensier tries to share her title (and her glory) with her would-be

husband. Cholakian calls attention to this action, writing that Montpensier “is planning to establish Lauzun in exactly the same way that men establish women – in order to found the house of Montpensier” (Women and the Politics of Self-Representation 80). Montpensier’s command of Lauzun-cum-Choisy, is similar to that which she displays in the portrait of Gaston, wherein she holds her father, and not vice versa. The house of Montpensier – her lineage, rather than a brick and mortar building – is represented through her artistic and political machinations; her power is inscribed symbolically and physically on her possessions. Montpensier symbolically possesses her father through the portrait, and Lauzun, by bestowing him with her name and lands.

The textual focus of the Mémoires thus changes once the narration reaches the years of Montpensier’s exile. Montpensier’s focus is no longer on the glory of her estate, as it was during the Fronde, but on her personal glory. Her glory has been cut off from her father’s, just as the relations between them have soured. Goldsmith proposes in Publishing Women’s Life Stories that distance from a woman’s habitual sphere is a key element in her literary success; Goldsmith states, “[i]n order to write of herself, even to speak of herself, the early modern woman had to dislodge herself from the space she habitually occupied” (157). Montpensier’s physical space begins to occupy more space in the text as the work progresses. For instance, when Montpensier begins her exile, the Mémoires make reference to the harsh physical environment that she finds there. When she first arrives at Saint-Fargeau, Montpensier is shocked to find the castle in disrepair:

il fallut mettre pied à terre, le pont étant rompu. J’entrai dans une vieille maison où il n’y avait ni porte ni fenêtre, et de l’herbe jusqu’aux genoux dans la cour ; j’en eus une grande horreur. L’on me mena dans une vilaine

chambre, où il y avait un poteau au milieu. La peur, l'horreur et le chagrin me saisirent à tel point que je me mis à pleurer : je me trouvais bien malheureuse, étant hors de la cour (212).

Montpensier's description here is above-all, physical; what she depicts is the opposite of her former lifestyle: dereliction. Furthermore, she admits to her readers that her horror is such that she cannot prevent herself from crying. Montpensier's description of her arrival at Saint-Fargeau presents a distinct contrast to her previous noble heroics. During her military campaign at Orléans, Montpensier hardly needed to walk, but rather, was carried above the dung-filled streets by supporters. During that incident, Montpensier eventually tells her porters that she would rather walk: "[a]près avoir fait quelques rues, portées dans ce triomphe, je leur dis que je savais marcher" (121). Now, in her own home, she is reduced to enter on foot, in a manner altogether untriumphant. Moreover, her new home is so degraded that she bursts into tears. The details about the broken bridge and her room only serve to emphasize Montpensier's sudden feelings of alienation from the court, as well as from her normal living standards. She does not yet lament the lack of good society, however, or the lack of entertainment. Instead, Montpensier worries about her security. On the day of her arrival, Montpensier makes queries for craftsmen to repair the roads and doors, the defensive elements of her château: "[d]ès ce même jour, je voulus changer les cheminées et les portes" (213). Having just escaped from the king's soldiers, Montpensier's immediate efforts veer toward establishing a defensible fortress rather than creating a charming residence, although she does feel its lack.

Montpensier's initial choice of vocabulary reveals her profound discomfort with her new status as an exile. The first word Montpensier uses to refer to her change in

status is “réduite” (25). The Furetière dictionary lists the verb *réduire* as a synonym for “[d]ompter, vaincre, subjuguier.” Montpensier has been subjugated, made to follow another’s will. Her “réduite” status is an abject humiliation. Furthermore, Furetière decrees that “[u]n *exil* perpétuel est une mort civile” and that “[l]’*exil* de la Cour est l’enfer des Courtisans.” Furetière’s definition for *exil* is thus worded even more strongly than that for *réduire*. Montpensier does not use the word *exil* in the first paragraph, nor does she include the word banishment. She does not have to, as her invocation of “réduite” already expresses a significant loss in freedom (25).

After this dismal portrait of life outside of court, Montpensier’s vocabulary offers a slight respite. She designates her country life as “un éloignement forcé” (25). The Furetière dictionary defines “Esloignement” as “une espece de bannissement. On a été surpris de la disgrâce de ce favori ; de son *esloignement* de la Cour.” The definition of *éloignement* contains the idea of banishment, but it also can be used to express a voluntary retirement : “Il s’est *esloigné* & banni volontairement de la Court pour vivre en retraite.” Thus, *éloignement* also contains the idea of *retraite*, which Montpensier will subsequently use to soften the representation of her state in exile. It is Montpensier’s juxtaposition of the adjective “forcé” with “éloignement” which clearly expresses the idea of banishment (25). This juxtaposition, combined with her use of “réduite,” provides the opening sentences of the Mémoires with a general impression of malaise and ennui in the countryside (25). From the initial shock of being someone in (profoundly) reduced circumstances, Montpensier then repositions herself and finishes her description of exile with the idea of a retreat, which according to Furetière, can be simply a “maison, logis où on demeure.” Furetière offers an example of someone who “s’est basti une

petite retraite à la campagne pour y vivre en repos dans la solitude. ” This example significantly brightens the portrait of Montpensier’s situation, even including the ideas of peace and quiet. Therefore, in one paragraph, Montpensier expresses both the horror and the positive side of her situation, gradually moving from one idea to the next. This reinterpretation and reclamation of Montpensier’s status represents the main goal of the Mémoires. When the narration once again reaches this part of her life, Montpensier returns to this strategy of narrative reinterpretation. She describes her place of exile in these terms:

à force de faire couper les broussailles et porter de la terre, l’on trouva une belle allée ; mais, ne la jugeant pas assez longue pour faire un mail, je la fis allonger de cent pas en terrasse. Ce qui fait un fort bel effet : car, de cette terrasse, l’on voit le château, un faubourg, des bois, des vignes, une prairie où passe une rivière, qui est l’été un étang ; ce paysage n’est pas mal agréable. Saint-Fargeau était un lieu si sauvage, que l’on n’y trouvait pas des herbes à mettre au pot, lorsque j’y arrivai (217).

However, the initial emphasis on her horror and the wildness of Saint-Fargeau will be counterbalanced by much description of all that Montpensier does to improve both her physical and social conditions. Out of “un lieu si sauvage” Montpensier creates a proper French establishment (217). Indeed, given the savagery of exile and Saint-Fargeau, Montpensier’s civilizing achievements seem even more spectacular.

Montpensier repairs the château, plants gardens, and in short, constructs a cultural center to replace that which she left in Paris; she refuses to accept that she must live as one exiled and her literary and architectural are central to her revitalization projects, not

only of her physical environment, but also of her reputation. For instance, soon after her arrival at Saint-Fargeau, Gaston requests that she relocate to her house at Châtellerault, which is closer to his residence at Blois. Montpensier refuses, explaining, “[j] n’avais nulle envie de changer de demeure : je commençais à m’établir à Saint-Fargeau : j’avais dessein d’y faire bâtir” (222). In this refusal, Montpensier’s desire to stay at Saint-Fargeau, a location which she originally chooses with no direction from her father or the king, is more important than her father’s will that she be closer to him. Montpensier emphasizes her freedom of choice and thus minimizes the impression that she was forced to leave Paris under duress. Because Montpensier chooses to stay at Saint-Fargeau, even though she has other options, it is as if it is no longer a true place of exile for her.

Additionally, Montpensier’s text repeatedly mentions her social activities at Saint-Fargeau and elsewhere. This emphasis on company and socialization is in distinct contrast to the opening paragraph of the Mémoires, where Montpensier paints exile as full of “pleine solitude” (25). During her exile, Montpensier is hardly ever alone, but rather, is always conversing with someone. It is possible to open her Mémoires nearly at random and find an example of her sociability. For instance, shortly after installing herself and her retinue at Saint-Fargeau, Montpensier describes receiving guests, even before all of her furniture has arrived: “Mme la duchesse de Sully et Mme de Laval me vinrent voir peu après mon arrivée. Je fus dans la plus grande honte du monde de n’avoir pas de quoi les loger dans ma maison” (213). Indeed, the text suggests that Montpensier is always surrounded by friends, even when she is away from Saint-Fargeau. She writes, “[a]près avoir été quatre jours à Fontainebleau, je m’en retournai à Saint-Fargeau, où je

reçus des lettres et des envoyés de tout le monde, hors de la cour et de Leurs Altesses Royales” (235). Montpensier then details her visitors during her trip to Forges:

Le lendemain, je reçus des visites de tout ce qui était à Forges ; il y avait assez de monde. Les dames avec qui je fis le plus d’habitude, ce fut Mme de Noailles, et Mme d’Estrades, Mme l’abbesse de Caen, fille de Mme de Montbazon (237).

Montpensier’s near-endless lists of activities and friends in the Mémoires are offered as proof of her continued importance. Indeed, this flush of visitors and trips hardly conforms to the idea of exile as hardship and isolation. Montpensier even uses the same adjective as before, when she emphasizes her nobility and heroism, to specify that her visitors are worthy; they are “personnes de *qualité*” (238, emphasis added). Montpensier creates her own “acceptable society” (Cherbuliez, The Place of Exile 19). She defines that this aspect of life – being surrounded by friends – as that which keeps her entertained and happy: “je suis la personne qui m’ennuie le moins, m’occupant toujours et me divertissant même à rêver. Je ne m’ennuie que quand je suis avec des gens qui ne me plaisent pas ou que je suis contrainte” (218). The subtext in Montpensier’s repeated descriptions of her social life is that she is so liked, she cannot be in exile, and thus, her actions during the Fronde were not so ignominious as to merit banishment.

CHAPTER FIVE

CONCLUSION

Montpensier's Mémoires offer groundbreaking material for new scholarship. As a historical figure, Montpensier lived during a tumultuous time period and she was eyewitness to some of the greatest events of the century. Nearly every adjective used with Montpensier's name must be in the superlative form: she was among the wealthiest and most powerful people of Europe, and the diversity of her activities, from writing to war, demonstrates the complexity of her character. As a literary figure in the Mémoires, it may be possible that Montpensier is even more fascinating. Her narrative choices as author and narrator of her autobiography draw on techniques from the theatre, salon conversations, and the new literary form, the novel. Montpensier literally changes her very personhood with words. In one moment she is scolding her father for cowardice, and in the next, constructing a vast dynasty in portraiture that commemorates her ancestors, including her father. It is Montpensier's manipulation and control of these diverse environments and identities that make her Mémoires revolutionary, both socially and in terms of literary development. And yet, despite the vast field of events and characters that the Mémoires include, Montpensier's prose is not overwrought; the narration retains the freshness of conversation, as was the salon style at the time (DeJean 55).

Montpensier's approach to the memoir genre benefits greatly from her borrowings of fictional and dramatic devices. Her incorporation of dialogue, or direct quotation, in particular lends liveliness to the text. This technique also imparts an air of veracity to the Mémoires. If Montpensier can cite her words and others', the impression given is that

the words, and thus Montpensier's interpretation of events, are correct. At the same time, the use of fictional elements in the text seems to give the work an ever greater historical credibility. This is perhaps the ultimate triumph for Montpensier, who writes for self-vindication, and in fact, for self-preservation. Montpensier begins her Mémoires as a way to maintain status in society, but by the end of the narration, the text guarantees her fame for generations to come. Montpensier has literally preserved herself in words against the passing of time.

However, Montpensier's memorializing efforts are not limited to the Mémoires. At the same time that Montpensier immortalizes herself in description, she repeats the process in pigment, and in brick and mortar. Montpensier's portrait galleries and her estates of Saint-Fargeau and Choisy, still well-preserved, are testaments in another material to her legacy and concrete durability. In this way, Montpensier anticipates Versailles and Louis XIV's projects. She builds her personal palace before Louis XIV and she begins recording her life before he does. Moreover, unlike Louis XIV, Montpensier actually (physically) writes her life story (Hoffmann, Society of Pleasures, 14). Her handwriting might be messy and her grammar in need of correction at times (for this she had her secretary Préfontaine (Montpensier, Mémoires 219) but Montpensier can be firmly identified as the author of her Mémoires.

Montpensier began her life as an extraordinary young girl: with blood as noble as the king's and wealth to surpass his. But it is her personal efforts and actions, and not her heritage, for which she is remembered: her extraordinary insight into the culture around her, as well as her ability to manipulate it and create awe-inspiring and challenging works of art.

APPENDIX A

OPENING PARAGRAPH OF MONTPENSIER'S MÉMOIRES

“J’ai autrefois eu grande peine à concevoir de quoi l’esprit d’une personne, accoutumée à la cour et née pour [y] être avec le rang que ma naissance m’y donne, se pouvait entretenir lorsqu’elle se trouve réduite à demeurer à la campagne ; car il m’avait toujours semblé que rien ne pouvait divertir dans un éloignement forcé et que d’être hors de la cour, c’était aux grands être en pleine solitude, malgré le nombre de leurs domestiques et la compagnie de ceux qui les visitent. Cependant, depuis que je suis retirée chez moi, j’éprouve avec douceur que le souvenir de tout ce qui s’est passé dans la vie occupe assez agréablement, pour ne pas compter le temps de la retraite pour un des moins agréables que l’on passe. Outre que c’est un état très-propre à se le représenter dans son ordre, l’on y trouve le loisir nécessaire pour le mettre par écrit, de sorte que la facilité que je sens à me ressouvenir de tout ce que j’ai vu et même de ce qui m’est arrivé, me fait prendre aujourd’hui à la prière de quelques personnes que j’aime, une peine à laquelle je n’aurois jamais cru pouvoir me résoudre. Je rapporterai donc ici tout ce que j’ai pu remarquer depuis mon enfance jusqu’à cette heure, sans y observer pourtant d’autre ordre que celui des temps, le plus exactement qu’il me sera possible. J’espère de l’heureuse mémoire que Dieu m’a donnée, qu’il ne m’échappera guère de chose de celles que j’ai sues ; et ma curiosité naturelle m’en a fait découvrir d’assez particulières, pour me pouvoir promettre que la lecture n’en sera pas ennuyeuse” (Montpensier, “La Grande Mademoiselle” Duchesse de Montpensier Mémoires 21).

APPENDIX B

FLEEING FROM PARIS

“J’envoyai de là La Guérinière trouver Monsieur le Prince et M. de Lorraine, pour leur donner part de la manière dont j’étais sortie de Paris et comme Monsieur en avait usé avec moi ; que je m’en allais à Pont, où j’attendrais de leurs nouvelles devant que de m’en aller dans des provinces plus éloignées. Je partis de bon matin, le lendemain, sans rencontrer personne qu’à Provins. Comme j’étais descendue à une montagne, il passa l’enseigne des gendarmes de la reine qui nous salua, comme on fait ordinairement des femmes qui ont l’air d’être de quelque qualité ; et, après être passé, il se retourna et nous regarda, et ensuite fit force force révérences bien basses. Je me tins droite, pour ne pas montrer que je croyais que ce fût à moi. Nous allâmes faire repaître nos chevaux à un village à deux lieues de là, nommé Sourdun.

En arrivant du logis je mis pied à terre et j’entrai dans la cuisine du logis ; il y avait un jacobin qui était à table et, comme il n’avait point son manteau noir et qu’il était vêtu de blanc, je ne savais de quel ordre il était. Je le lui demandai ; il me répondit : « Vous êtes bien curieuse. » Je lui répartis que ma curiosité était raisonnable ; sur quoi il me dit : « Je suis jacobin. » Je lui demandai d’où il venait : « De Nancy ; et vous d’où venez-vous ? – De Paris. » Je lui demandai ce que l’on disait de M. de Lorraine en son pays et si on l’aimait bien ; il me dit que oui et que c’était un brave prince. Ensuite il me dit : « Les nouvelles que j’ai apprises à Troyes, que le roi devait venir à Paris, sont-elles véritables ? » Je lui dis que oui et qu’il y était arrivé il y avait deux jours, et que M. le duc d’Orléans et Madame s’en étaient allés. « J’en suis fâché, me dit-il : car c’est un bonhomme. Pour Mademoiselle, c’est une brave fille ; elle porterait aussi bien une pique

qu'un masque : elle a du courage. La connaissez-vous point ? » Je lui répondis que non. Il me dit : « Quoi ! ne savez-vous pas qu'elle a sauté les murailles d'Orléans pour y entrer et qu'elle a sauvé la vie à Monsieur le Prince à la porte Saint-Antoine ? » Je lui dis que j'en avais entendu parler.

Il me demanda : « Ne l'avez-vous jamais vue ? » Je lui dis que non. Il se mit à me dépeindre et me dit : « C'est une grande fille, de belle taille, grande comme vous ; assez belle ; elle a le visage long, le nez grand ; je ne sais pas si vous lui ressemblez autant de visage que de la taille ; si vous ôtiez votre masque, je le verrais. » Je lui dis que je ne le pouvais pas ôter ; que j'avais eu la petite vérole depuis peu et que j'étais encore rouge. Je lui demandai s'il avait parlé à elle ; il me dit : « Mille fois ; je la reconnaîtrais entre cent personnes, si je lui parlais. J'ai été souvent aux Tuileries, où elle logeait. Je connaissais son aumônier et elle venait quasi tous les premiers dimanches du mois à notre maison de Saint-Honoré avec la reine. »

Je lui demandai : « Est-elle dévote ? – Non ; il lui prit une fois envie de l'être ; mais elle s'en ennuya et cela est passé ; car elle s'y était prise trop violemment pour que cela pût durer. – Et sa belle-mère, la connaissez-vous ? – Vraiment oui ; c'est un de ces saints qu'on ne fête guère. C'est une femme qui est toujours dans une chaise et qui ne fais pas un pas, et qui est une lendore ; et Mademoiselle a de l'esprit, va vite : il y a bien de la différence entre elles. Mais qui êtes-vous, Madame, qui me questionnez tant ? » Je lui dis j'étais veuve d'un gentilhomme de Sologne ; que ma maison avait été pillée par l'armée, lorsqu'elle avait passé en ce pays-là. Pour moi que j'étais retirée à Orléans, d'où j'avais été assez malheureuse de sortir le jour que Mademoiselle y arriva ; que je m'en allais en Champagne demeurer avec mon frère et ma belle-sœur qui était là. Il me dit :

« Si vous venez jamais à Paris, venez nous voir dans notre couvent de Saint-Honoré. » Je lui dis que j'étais de la religion réformée. Il voulut me convertir ; mais je lui dis que c'était une affaire trop sérieuse pour la traiter en passant ; que j'espérais d'aller faire l'hiver un tour à Paris ; qu'alors nous parlerions de controverse. Il me dit son nom, mais je l'ai oublié ; puis nous nous séparâmes. En partant, il se plaignit d'être las ; je lui demandai si les jacobins n'allaient point à cheval ou dans les coches. Il me dit que oui ; qu'en partant de Troyes il avait voulu se mettre dans le coche ; mais que, le cocher étant trop cher, il s'était dépité ; que depuis il l'avait trouvé par le chemin ; qu'il n'avait personne ; qu'il l'avait prié de s'y mettre pour rien ; qu'il ne l'avait pas voulu et qu'il avait du cœur ; que l'habit qu'il portait n'empêchait pas que l'on ne sentît le bien et le mal. Cette aventure me réjouit tout à fait et me fit bien augurer de la suite de mon voyage" (Montpensier, Mémoires 203 – 205).

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